

Stuart Lochhead Sculpture





Jean-François Lorta

Paris, 1752 - Versailles, 1837

A Sacrifice to Love

A Sacrifice to Jupiter

Terracotta, a pair of reliefs in their original frames
28 x 24 cm

Both signed *J F Lorta* at the lower right and dated 1790

Provenance

- Collection of Madame Michel Binoche, Paris

Related literature

- Ch. P. Landon, *Annales du musée et de l'école moderne des beaux-arts: École française*, Paris, 1833, pp. 38-39
- G. Scherf, S. Darroussat, *Jean Jacques Rousseau et son image sculptée 1778-1798*, exh. cat., Musée de la Révolution française, Vizille, 2012
- P. Sanchez, *Dictionnaire des artistes exposant dans les salons des XVII et XVIIIème siècles à Paris et en Province, 1673-1800*, Dijon, 2004

These two delightful terracotta reliefs are signed by a little-known but evidently very gifted French artist. Born in Paris, Jean-François Lorta studied sculpture at the Académie in Paris and was awarded the second Grand Prix de Rome in 1779. As a result he travelled to Italy during his formative years and his direct observation of the arts of antiquity would leave a strong impression on him for the rest of his career, like it did for many of his contemporaries. He exhibited his work at the Salon between 1791 and 1819. His career unfolded as several political regimes succeeded each other in France and he remained able to work for all of them. Appreciated at the court of Louis XVI, he participated to a competition for the creation of a monument in the memory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (terracotta, 1794, Musée de la Revolution française, Vizille) and was also among the sculptors selected to make portraits for the Galerie des Consuls at the Tuileries for Bonaparte when he was First Consul (participating to this commission were also Clodion, Houdon, Boizot and from the younger generation Jean-Emile Dumont, among others).

A few of Lorta's sculptures are in public collections. In the Musée du Louvre, Paris is a pair of marbles representing two dancers, one with a tambourine and the other holding a bunch of grapes, which originally come from the Grand Trianon in Versailles. Like the present reliefs, they illustrate the artist's devotion to the antique. The museum also holds a portrait bust of Correggio (1812) that was commissioned by the French state for the decoration of the Louvre galleries. In the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Nancy there is a Diana Surprised and a portrait of Louis XIV.

Lorta was clearly influenced by Clodion, the outstanding artist of his period, both in his style and choice of subject. One relief shows two young women making an sacrifice to Love under the watchful eyes of a statue of Cupid. The other work depicts a woman pouring liquid into a cup held by Jupiter sitting on a throne, his sceptre in his other hand. One can notice the freshness of the details, as if the artist had just removed his stylus from the clay after having delineated the eagle that accompanies the god, or the throne he sits upon. Lorta's mastery of the medium is noticeable in the subtle contrasts between high and low relief. Some elements of the scenes barely project beyond the surface and in places are only suggested with an incised line, while others are in higher relief, such as the curly strands of Jupiter's hair.

