

Export bar placed on rare bronze sculpture by François Girardon

- The statuette, valued at £1.2 million, is an example of the Baroque style prevalent at the Court of Louis XIV

An export bar has been placed on a 17th-century bronze figure of Apollo in a bid to keep the work in the UK.

The £1.2 million sculpture by François Girardon (1628-1715), depicts the mythological sun god Apollo. The figure is holding a lyre, representing his association with music, and is crowned with a laurel, alluding to his pursuit of the nymph Daphne.

Girardon defined the sculptural style of French Baroque and made a significant contribution to the decoration of the Palace of Versailles which was the principal royal residence of the French kings from the late 1680s until the French Revolution.

This particular piece epitomises the tastes of the French 'Sun King' Louis XIV and may have been made for him personally. The figure is a rare statuette and one of only two known extant bronzes based on an earlier terracotta model made by Girardon.

The decision follows the advice of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA). The Committee noted that the statue was an exceptional example of Baroque sculpture, comparable to some of the best French bronzes of the period.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the statue's outstanding beauty and outstanding significance for the study of the history of French bronzes, François Girardon and his working practises.

Committee Member Stuart Lochhead said:

Produced on a grand scale, this sumptuously cast bronze of Apollo with his lyre and a flaming torch epitomises the splendour of the court of Louis XIV. François Girardon, sculptor to the self-styled Sun King himself, played a leading role in the decorative schemes at Versailles.

As this bronze represents only one of a handful of works by Girardon in UK collections, its export abroad would certainly be a loss to active scholarship in this field and to the nation in general."

The decision on the export licence application for the bronze statuette will be deferred until 24 February 2020. This may be extended until 24 June May 2020 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £1,200,000 plus VAT of £240,000.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the statue should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.□
2. Details of the statuette are as follows: □ A statuette of Apollo; model c.1675; cast before 1715, possibly c. 1675 Bronze H. 69.5 cm Model by François Girardon (1628-1715); founder unknown.
3. Provenance: The early provenance of the bronze is unknown; Acquired by the dealer Cyril Humphris before 1967; purchased for private collection in 1970; passed to current owner in 2019
4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria. □
5. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.□