

ADRIAN ALAN

Fine Art & Antiques



Karl Sterrer

An Exceptional Pair of Gilt Bronze Repousse Plaques Depicting Apollo and Selene as Allegories of Day and Night

Circa: Circa 1895

Circa 1895

72 x 42 x 10 cm (28 ³/₁₆ x 16 ¹/₁₆ x 1 ⁵/₁₆ inches)

Gilt-Bronze

Austria

Signed to the base of each plaque '*K. Sterrer*'

An Exceptional Pair of Gilt Bronze Repousse Plaques Depicting Apollo and Selene as Allegories of Day and Night, By Karl Sterrer, Cast by the Kalmar Foundry.

Signed to the base of each plaque '*K. Sterrer*' and with the foundry stamp for '*J. Kalmar*' and '*Geschutst*'. (*Geschutst* is an abbreviation of *gesetzlich geschutt*, a German phrase that translates as legally protected or copyrighted).

Finely cast and gilt, the plaques depict the figures of Apollo and Selene (Helios and Luna) as allegories of Day and Night, each figure rising in the sky above vases issuing flowers and fruit, Apollo crowned with rays of sunlight and holding his torch aloft, Selene with billowing drapery and a crescent moon, both figures within a background of clouds and attendant cherubs at play.

The plaques fitted in later giltwood frames with velvet slips.

Kalmar Foundry, Vienna

Founded in Vienna by Julius August Kalmar in 1881, the Kalmar foundry specialised in the production of handcrafted objects and editions cast in bronze.

Working with some of the most important sculptors and architects of the day, they exhibited at many of the international exhibitions of the period including the 1888 Vienna Trade Exposition (Gewerbeausstellung Wien), the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, the 1901 Export Exposition Scandinavia and the 1906 Austrian Exhibition, Earl's Court, London.

At the turn of the century Julius August's son, Julius Theodor, took over the running of the company and shifted the focus of production to lighting and architectural installations. Having studied under Josef Hoffmann at the Vienna School of Applied Arts and the Birmingham School of Art and Design he would go on to position Kalmar by the 1930's at the forefront of modern design and the Viennese style.

The company continued to innovate and to closely ally itself with the leading European architects of the day becoming renowned as a modernist lighting company, a position it retains to this day.

Austrian, Circa 1895.

Artist description:

Karl Sterrer the Elder was born on the 25 May 1844 in Wels, Austria and died on 17th October 1918 in Vienna.

He was a renowned sculptor known for his historical works and belonged to an extensive family of artists: his father Josef Sterrer (1807-1888) was a carpenter and director of an art school, his uncle Franz Sterrer (1818-1901) a painter, his brother Josef Sterrer (1839-1864) lithographer and book printer, his son Karl Sterrer the Younger (1885-1972) a painter and graphic artist.

He first studied with Ferdinand Scheck in Linz from 1858 to 1868 before moving to Vienna, where he continued to study under Johann Schindler from 1868 to 1870 (with whom he would later share a studio) and from 1870 to 1876 with the sculptor Franz Melnitzky.

Sterrer's work was dominated by classical and historical figurative sculptures, often created for the Neo-Baroque and Greek Renaissance palaces built along the Ringstrasse; his most significant works commissioned for the Parliament building and the Neue Burg. In 1888 he caused a sensation amongst other artists with his allegorical group, Die Liebe zur Volke, which he created in the image of Crown Princess Stephanie and her daughter, and which was bought by Crown Prince Rudolf.

Sterrer also produced decorative bronze figures and plaques many of which were successfully edited by foundries such as Kalamar. Amongst his most recognisable works was a series of allegorical plaques depicting subjects such as 'Painting and Sculpture', 'Water', 'Day and Night' and 'Artemis and Ganymede'; he also produced bronze figural groups, clearly influenced by the work of artists such as Clodion but tempered by an emerging Art Nouveau aesthetic.

With the end of government contracts for the expansion of the Ringstrasse, commissions dried up and Sterrer spent the last years of his career focused on restoration of historical sculptures.

Amongst his most important public commissions were:

Portraits of Artists , Kunsthistorisches Museum , Saal XIII, Vienna
Reliefs of the Seasons , Neue Burg , Heldenplatz , Vienna
Tacitus , Parliament Building , Ramp, Vienna (1898)
Triptolemos and Gaius Licinius Stolo , Parliament Building, Vienna
Unity, gable sculpture in the portico, Parliament, Vienna
Cicero , Chamber of Deputies, Parliament (1907)

Literature

Ch. Gruber, G. Kalliauer, A. Nierhaus: 'Sterrer, Karl d. Ä'. In: Austrian Biographical Dictionary 1815-1950 (ÖBL). Volume 13, published by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna 2007-2010, p. 240.