

DESMET

FINE ART



François Lucas (1736-1813)

ANACREON AND CUPID

Marble
Toulouse, 1784
Signed F.LVCAS

Exhibited: The Salon of 1784 (Toulouse)

Published:

L'œuvre toulousaine et régionale du sculpteur François Lucas, 1736-1813:
[Exhibition] Toulouse, Musée des Augustins, juillet-septembre
1958. Toulouse: Musée des Augustins, 1958.

'Catalogue des ouvrages exposés au Salon de l'Hôtel de Ville par l'Académie
Royale de Peinture, Sculpture et Architecture, le 19 Mai 1784.' In *Les
expositions de l'Académie royale de Toulouse de 1751 à 1791*. Edited by
Robert Mesuret. Toulouse: Espic, 1972.

Provenance:

Private Collection, US (State of NY)
ALR Ref: S00248003

H 37 x W 50 x D 5 cm
H 14 1/2 x W 19 1/2 x D 2 inch

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This bas-relief in marble presented in the form of a medallion in a golden oval frame is the work of the French sculptor François Lucas (1736-1813) as attests the signature F. LVCAS on the bottom right corner of the work. The scene depicts Anacreon tending to Cupid, a subject derived from the third ode of the Greek poet. The work is recorded to have been exhibited in the Salon of the Royal Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture of Toulouse in 1784 from the workshop of the sculptor but has not been published since, presenting an occasion to rediscover the work of the French Academician.

François Lucas can be considered the most reputed sculptor from Toulouse of his time. He first trained with his father Pierre Lucas (1692-1752), himself a sculptor, before becoming a student at the Royal Academy in his hometown Toulouse where he received the first prize for sculpture in 1761 for a bas-relief. He eventually becomes professor at the Academy 3 years later, his interest in pedagogy and the formation of young artists becoming very important to the sculptor who is one of the founding figures of the Museum of Fine Arts of Toulouse, nowadays Musée des Augustins. His students include Bernard Lange and Jean-Pierre Vigan as well as Ingres in 1796.

Lucas was notably convinced of the importance of Antique models to train future sculptors. He visited Italy twice, in 1766 and in 1773-74 where he started his collection of antiquities, amongst them an important numismatic one, which enjoys at the time a certain degree of fame. From Italy he brought back various drawings after Antique models as well as marble objects.

Although concerned with mythological subjects, the medallion before us being one example, he worked with a range of subjects from the religious to the funerary, and portraits as busts or bas-reliefs, across a range of fashionable materials at the time, including terracotta and stone. Still, in his own words, he is the first sculptor from Toulouse to have been so prolific in the production of marble sculptures. Most of his famous works are public monumental sculptures commissioned by the city of Toulouse, such as the bas-relief in Carrara marble depicting various allegorical figures including personification of Occitanie and the river Garonne which still adorns the Ponts-Jumeaux nowadays.

A smaller piece in comparison, this bas-relief represents a subject derived from Anacreon's poetry, translated by François Lucas onto marble. Anacreon (c. 573- c. 495 B.C.) was an Ionian lyrical poet whose odes often focused on love and inebriation, wittingly admitting in his first ode that despite wanting to celebrate epic mythical tales, his lyre would only echo with Love. The composition of the medallion draws on the third ode by the poet, who is identified by the presence of a lyre and drinking vessels, in which he is visited in his home at night by Cupid who is wet and cold from a storm. After taking him in, Anacreon brings him closer to the fire where he warms Cupid's hands in his. This moment is the central focus of the sculpture by Lucas as it is precisely this gesture which is highlighted, the hands being the most prominent point of the relief. What follows is Cupid trying his ark to see if it has been damaged by the storm, piercing the heart of Anacreon with an arrow.

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Cent ans de sculpture (1750-1850): la collection du Musée des Augustins. Toulouse: Musée des Augustins, 2002.

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