

Finch & C^o



FINE BOXWOOD BAROQUE EROTIC GROUP OF THE CENTAUR NESSUS ABDUCTING THE WIFE OF HERACLES

A FINE BOXWOOD BAROQUE EROTIC GROUP OF THE CENTAUR NESSUS ABDUCTING THE WIFE OF HERACLES DÄ“IANEIRA

ATTRIBUTED TO JOHANN GEORG KERN (1622 - 1695)

OLD REPAIRS TO THREE OF THE CENTAUR'S FETLOCKS

2ND HALF 17TH CENTURY

SIZE: 20.5CM HIGH, 16.5CM WIDE, 6.5CM DEEP - 8 INS HIGH, 6½ INS WIDE, 2½ INS DEEP / 30CM HIGH - 11¾ INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

LITERATURE

THE MOST FAMOUS OF ALL THE GREEK HEROES, HERACLES MARRIED DÄ“IANEIRA, DAUGHTER OF OENEUS OF CALYDON WINNING HER BY DEFEATING THE RIVER GOD ACHELÄUS IN A WRESTLING MATCH. WHEN HE AND DÄ“IANEIRA DEPARTED THEY CAME TO A FLOODED RIVER, EVÄ“NUS. A CENTAUR, NESSUS CARRIED DÄ“IANEIRA ACROSS AND TRIED TO RAPE HER WHEREUPON HERACLES SHOT HIM WITH A POISONED ARROW. AS HE LAY DYING THE CENTAUR ADVISED DÄ“IANEIRA, APPARENTLY WITH GOOD INTENTIONS, TO KEEP SOME OF HIS BLOOD WHICH SMEARED ON A GARMENT WOULD WIN BACK THE LOVE OF HERACLES IF HE WAS EVER UNFAITHFUL TO HER. THIS DÄ“IANEIRA DID.

JOHANN GEORG KERN'S NUDE AND STOCKY FIGURES SHOW THE INFLUENCE OF HIS CELEBRATED UNCLE, LEONARD KERN WITH WHOM HE WORKED. DISTINCTIVE IN STYLE, THEIR SCULPTURES WERE MOST PROBABLY INFLUENCED BY SOUTH NETHERLANDISH SOURCES SUCH AS RUBENS, BUT FUSED WITH ITALIAN BAROQUE CLASSICAL SUBJECTS AND POSES. TOGETHER WITH LEONARD'S SON, JOHANN JAKOB KERN, JOHANN GEORG RAN THE WORKSHOP AFTER THE DEATH OF THE MASTER IN 1662 AND THEY CONTINUED TO PRODUCE SMALL SCALE PIECES IN A VARIETY OF MATERIALS INCLUDING BOXWOOD, IVORY AND ALABASTER IN THE TRADITION OF 17TH CENTURY CABINET SCULPTURE. MANY OF THESE WORKS, AS IN THIS EXAMPLE, HAVE EROTIC CONTENT; THE NAKED DÄ“IANEIRA STRUGGLES TO BE RELEASED FROM THE CENTAUR'S EMBRACE AS HE CARRIES HER OFF, HIS MUSCLES FLEXING AND HIS LONG HAIR FLOWING.