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XVIII-XIX CENTURY
FURNITURE & DECORATIVE ARTS



**AN EXCEPTIONAL EXHIBITION-QUALITY
BRONZE COUPE BY FERDINAND BARBEDIENNE**

Dimensions: H: 16 in / 41 cm | W: 36.5 in / 92 cm | D: 21 in / 53.5 cm

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An Exceptional Exhibition-Quality Bronze Coupe
By Ferdinand Barbedienne

Designed by Ferdinand Levillain
& Sculpted by Charles Cauchois

The largest bronze coupe available from the famous foundry, this patinated and parcel gilt vessel was especially sculpted by the star 'ciseleur' Charles Cauchois, almost certainly as a special order. Supported on its integral fluted socle with a running band of anthemion, the large oval coupe having a gadrooned bottom surface, both ends with curved twin-handles heightened with a relief of trailing vines, and flanked by large lion masks with flowing manes; the entire coupe depicting a bas-relief of the 'suovetaurilia,' one of the most sacred and traditional rites of Ancient Rome, showing Roman citizens offering a triple sacrifice of a ram, a boar, and a bull to the deity Mars who is represented by a statue on his altar. Signed 'F. Barbedienne,' also 'F. Levillain,' and bearing Cauchois's initials 'Ch. C.' French, circa 1880



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A documented Barbedienne model, a photograph of which is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, this design was the largest coupe offered by the foundry. The casting and finishing of all Barbedienne casts was a very specialised process sometimes taking months to complete. The presence of Cauchois's initials on this piece confirms the importance of the cast as he was the star 'ciseleur' of the foundry. The large coupe was only available by custom order, with a smaller rectangular version available for direct purchase from their catalogue.

Literature:

The Barbedienne Foundry

Ferdinand Barbedienne and Achille Collas, who was the inventor of a machine that would mechanically reduce statues, started the F. Barbedienne foundry in Paris in 1838. At first they produced bronze reductions of antique sculptures of Greek and Roman origin. Their first contract to produce bronzes modelled by a living artist was made in 1843 when they arranged to produce the works of Francois Rude. They barely survived the revolution and financial collapse of 1848, which caused many artists and foundries to declare bankruptcy. Barbedienne actively pursued contracts with the many sculptors of Paris contracting with David D'Angers, Jean-Baptiste Clesinger, and even producing some casts for Antoine Louis Barye as well as others.

Achille Collas died in 1859 leaving Ferdinand Barbedienne as the sole owner of the foundry which by that time had grown to employ over 300 workers at their workshop located at 63 Rue de Lancry in Paris. Ferdinand Barbedienne was made the President of the Reunion of Bronze Makers in 1865 a post he held until 1885. The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870 and the shortage of raw metals caused him to have to stop making sculptures but he did receive a contract from the French government for the production of cannons which kept his foundry open. After the war he resumed his casting of sculptures and put even more effort into signing contracts with various sculptors.

Barbedienne purchased 125 casting models from the late Antoine Louis Barye's sale in 1876. He set about casting and selling editions of these sculptures which was very successful, devoting an entire catalogue to these works.

Ferdinand Barbedienne died on March 21 1892 and was mourned by many in the world of sculpture. It was said that he strove to the highest quality in his castings Albert Susse said of him that he was the "pride of the nation" and that that he "carried the splendor of our industry so loftily to all international competitions". The running of the foundry was taken over by Gustave Leblanc, a



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nephew, and continued the high standards set by M. Barbedienne. The foundry set up agencies in Germany, Britain, and the United States to market their production. Leblanc actively purchased models and production rights from sculptors including Auguste Rodin and the estates of sculptures including Emmanuel Fremiet. The foundry continued under the stewardship of M. Leblanc until 1952.

Charles Cauchois

The initials of '*Ch. C.*' stand for Charles Cauchois, sometimes referred to as Charles Cauchois-Morel. He was Ferdinand Barbedienne's preeminent 'ciseleur' in charge of the specialised task of hand-chasing the most important bronze casts. He was certainly working for the foundry by 1878, as his initials appear on Francois Rude's sculpture of Louis XIII of that year, presented at the Paris Exposition Universelle. It was purchased by the Dijon Fine Arts Museum in 2007 for €300,000. Cauchois paid homage to his employer in an unpublished manuscript dated May 1892, two months after Barbedienne's death.