



Roman

End of the 18th
beginning of the 19th century

Moses











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Moses

Bronze with a brown patina
on a white marble and *lumachella*
(fire-marble) marble base
Height: 42 x 16 cm (without base);
57 x 19,5 cm (with base)

PROVENANCE: Private collection.

Executed between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, our bronze of a seated figure of Moses clearly recalls Michelangelo's more famous early sixteenth century figure from the central part of the tomb created for Pope Julius II in San Pietro in Vincoli (Fig. 1). There, the prophet is modelled with his bearded head turned to the left, his right foot planted firmly on the ground and his left foot resting on the base. This position of his legs is similar to that depicted of the Prophet Isaiah by Raphael dating from 1511-12 which Michelangelo greatly admired. His right hand is placed beneath his flowing beard with the Tablets of Stone pre-

cariously tucked under the same arm to prevent them slipping down from his side. Giorgio Vasari extolled the perfection of the figure's voluminous beard, defining it to be "opera di pennello che di scalpello" or more drawn from the pen than the chisel.

The present bronze by a Roman sculptor manages to perfectly capture the majesty and the intensity of Michelangelo's rendering of the biblical figure; the folds of the drapery echo the lively play of light and shade in the marble by the Master whilst the finely chiselled and expressive facial features transmit a similar pathos.

Roman neoclassicism saw the onset of the use of



1 Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Tomb of Giulio II (detail)*, 1515-1542, San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome.

bronze to replicate smaller versions of famous statues inspired by antiquity or by important Renaissance works, of which Michelangelo's Moses is an example. These bronzes, often embellished with marble and precious stone would decorate the homes of the greatest and keenest Italian and foreign collectors.* One of the most important producers of this type of bronze sculpture was Francesco Righetti, a pupil of Valadier, whose Roman studio incorporated silversmiths and bronze makers. Righetti's Moses, published by Alvar González-Palacios in *Il Gusto dei Principi*, is yet further testament to the enduring reputation of the prince of all sculptors, Michelangelo Buonarroti, from whom the sculptor of our bronze must have taken inspiration.**

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

*Roberto Valeriani, entry Francesco Righetti, *Maestà di Roma. Universale ed Eterna Capitale delle Arti*, Electa, Rome 8 March – 29 June 2003, p. 95.

**Alvar González-Palacios, *Il gusto dei Principi. Arte di corte del XVII e del XVIII*, 2 Vols., Milan, Longanesi, 1993, II, p. 268.



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