

A SELECTION OF HIGHLIGHTS PRESENTED AT BRAFA 2020 BY VICTOR WERNER



**Antonio De Val (Italy, 1895 - 1977)**

**Man in front of a seahorse**

**Art Deco period**

**Dark patinated bronze**

**Signed on the base *De Val***

**H. 111 cm, W. 95 cm, D. 45 cm**

Antonio De Val was married to Luisa Marino, daughter of sculptor and ceramist Raffaele Marino (1868 - 1959). He made his debut as a sculptor in 1921 at the exhibition Mostra dei Grigio-verdi di Napoli. He also created a series of Art Deco works in ceramics. As a ceramist, like other fellow ceramists such as Vincenzo Strio (1871 - 1949), Zina Aita (1900 - 1968) and Giuseppe Macedoni (1906-1986), he worked for the ceramics manufactory A. Freda & Figli in Naples, where his work was also exhibited.

In 1934 he took part in Naples in the second exhibition of colonial art, Il Mostra d'Arte Coloniale di Napoli - which ran from October 1934 to January - with works in bronze and some sculptures in ceramics of animals, and in the 19th art biennial in Venice, XIX Biennale d'Arte di Venezia.

He then exhibited his creations at the annual exhibition Esposizioni Annuali di Arte Sindacale di Napoli and in 1937, together with Giuseppina De Feo and Antonio Marone, he founded the Ceramica di Posillipo manufactory for the production of artistic ceramics, which was housed in part of his house in Via Manzoni 54 in Naples. His father-in-law Raffaele Marino was also active in the company.

In 1940 the magazine Emporium discussed one of his sculptures, Vittoria alata, which he had exhibited at the Triennale d'Oltremare di Napoli.

After an interruption of activities due to the war, Antonio De Val reopened the manufactory together with new members. But in 1948 he was again forced to close the company and went to work for the Ceramiche Artistiche Napoletane manufactory.

The Museo Provinciale della Ceramica di Raito in Vietri sul Mare preserves numerous ceramic works by Antonio De Val.



**Carmelo Cernigliari Melilli (Italy, Trapani 1870 - 1944 St. Lizaigne)**

**Triton, circa 1900**

**Important bust in white marble representing the sea god as a young man with pointed ears like a faun and a scaly body.**

**Signed on the front**

**H. 79 cm**

Carmelo C. Melilli is an Italian writer, playwright, poet and sculptor based in France.

Carmelo Cernigliari-Melilli was born in 1870 in Trapani, Sicily and died in 1944 in St. Lizaigne, where he settled in 1930 in the Château de Villiers-les-Roses.

Carmelo Cernigliari Melilli wrote for the theatre and then, in French, acoustic sonnets.

As a sculptor he made breast portraits and figurines. It was fashionable at the beginning of the 20th century; the newspaper Le Matin of 27 March 1907 described it in their article as "the great Italian sculptor who portrayed so many French celebrities".

He also produced tin in the Art Nouveau style.



**Marguerite Cossaceanu-Lavrillier (Bucharest 1893 -1980 Paris)**

**Chinese Poet**

**Bronze bust, enhanced with gold leaf**

**Foundry mark on the back *Andro Fondeur Paris***

**Date and location on the back *Paris, 1923***

**Ideograms on the right-hand side of the front "*I add you a twin*"**

**Signed lower left *Marguerite Cossaceanu***

A work of youth, it seems that this majestic bust can be compared to that of Taen y Lou, exhibited by the artist at the Salon des Tuileries in 1923 and at the Salon des Artistes Français in 1925. It would then be the Chinese diplomat Lou Tseng Tsiang (1871-1949), converted to Catholicism and ending his days as a monk in Belgium. The ideograms reproduced on his chest make up a play on words, which can be translated as 'I add you a twin'.

**Margaret Cossaceanu or Margaret Cossaceanu-Lavrillier** (born Margareta Cosăceanu; January 4, 1893 in Bucharest - September 22, 1980 in Paris) was a French sculptor of Romanian origin.

Margaret Cossaceanu, is the niece of scientist George constaninescu, inventor of the Theory of sonics Theory of sonics. She studied sculpture from 1910 to 1913 at the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest under Dimitrie Paciurea.

In 1921, she obtained a scholarship enabling her to go to Rome to pursue her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, (at the same time, painter Lucian Grigorescu was studying there).

It was during this stay in the Italian capital that she met French engraver-medalist André Lavrillier, winner of the Prix de Rome in 1914, and boarder at the Villa Medici. He took her to Paris, and introduced her to sculptor Antoine Bourdelle.

After being awarded the Grand Prize at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1922, she left Rome to settle in Paris, where she attended the workshop of her compatriot Constantin Brâncuși while continuing her studies at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, in Antoine Bourdelle's studio, where she met Germaine Richier and Alberto Giacometti. Bourdelle took her as a collaborator in his workshop at impasse du Maine. He asked her to recreate in larger scale some of his works, as, for example, his Sapho. For these figurative works she used wax, earth, plaster, bronze or stone. She continued to work with him until his death in 1929.

In 1929, she married André Lavrillier, with whom she had three children, including photographer Carol-Marc Lavrillier.

She participated in various Salons and exhibitions, such as the *Salon d'Automne* or the *Salon des Tuileries* and produced pieces for the French state. She was commissioned to create a high relief for the International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life (1937), for the Asian and Romanian pavilions. *The high relief of the Daces* (marble, 3m high) for which she received the diploma of honor is today in Bucharest.

Until 1977, at the request of the Monnaie de Paris, she made several medals (the medal of the deputies of the National Assembly of France in 1968, the portraits of Romain Gary, Anna de Noailles, Giacometti, Jean Effel among others). In 1952, Bernheim-Jeune Gallery organized a retrospective exhibition of her work and the Museum of Modern Art of the city of Paris acquired *The great torso of Woman*.

In 1970, for the fortieth anniversary of the death of her master, she created from memory a portrait of Antoine Bourdelle. Margaret Cossaceanu died in Paris on September 22, 1980, at the age of 87. In 1993, the Galerie Vallois in Paris organized a retrospective show of her work.



**Juana Romani (Italian, Velletri 1869 - 1924 Paris)**

**Portrait of a red-headed woman**

**Oil on panel**

**Engraved metal plaque on the front *Juana Romani***

**Signature at the upper right *Juana Romani***

**H. 118 cm, W. 72 cm**

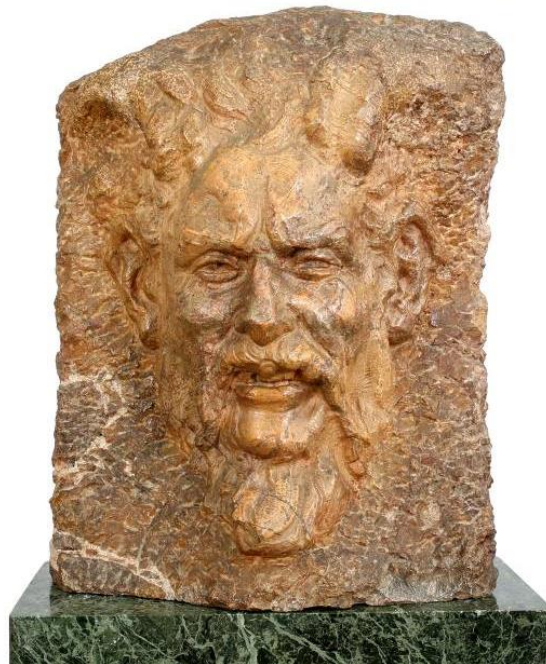
She was born in Velletri. At the age of ten, she went to Paris with her mother and stepfather, Temistocle Romani, an engineer who was seeking employment there. They settled in the Latin Quarter and she was put to work as a model at several art schools. It was not long, however, before Filippo Colarossi (1841-1906), founder of the Académie Colarossi, took a special interest in her; inviting her to work and study at his school.

In 1882, she posed for *Diana the Huntress*, a well-known sculpture by Alexandre Falguière. She also posed for Carolus-Duran, Ferdinand Roybet, who gave her lessons, and Jean-Jacques Henner, with whom she had a brief affair. At the age of nineteen 'Il Romani', as she was called, decided to pursue her own career in art. That same year, she changed her first name to 'Juana', the Spanish equivalent of her middle name, 'Giovanna'.

She began to exhibit her works in 1888 at the *Salon of the Société des Artistes Français* and exhibited with them regularly until 1904. She was especially valued as a painter of female portraits, including many women from notable families, often depicting them as mythological or symbolic figures. One of her portraits was awarded a silver medal at the *Exposition Universelle* (1889).

Her work was also well received by the critics. In 1896, *Louis Gonse* of *Le Monde moderne* declared that she was more skillful than her mentor, Roybet. She usually painted directly on the canvas, without preliminary sketching, and sold many works before they were finished.

In her later years, she became mentally unsound and was confined to a psychiatric hospital in Paris. She died there, forgotten, around 1924. Many of her paintings may be seen at the *Musée d'Orsay*.



**Philippe Wolfers (Belgian, Elsene 1858 – Brussels 1929)**

**Mask of Pan, 1918**

**Unique sculpture in marble**

**Signed on the right side at the bottom *Philippe Wolfers***

**H. 42 cm, W. 57 cm, D. 20 cm**

**Exh.: Brussels 1921, Milan 1926, Brussels 1928 s.p.; Antwerp 1929**

Philippe Wolfers was a sculptor, silver- and goldsmith, jewellery designer, ivory carver and glassware designer, mainly during the Art Nouveau movement. Philippe Wolfers is generally reckoned among the select group of great Belgian artists who were pioneers and key figures for the Belgian Art Nouveau such as architect Victor Horta (1861-1947); painter, designer and architect Henry van de Velde (1863-1957); architect Paul Hankar (1859-1910); and architect and furniture designer Gustave Serrurier-Bovy (1858-1910).

He studied sculpture under Isidore de Rudder (1855-1943) at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, earning laureate in 1875. He trained as a goldsmith and jewellery designer at the family business and became adept at all aspects of jewellery making. His father, Louis Wolfers (1820-1892), was by then a well-established goldsmith in Brussels and head of the renowned Belgian court jewellers *Wolfers Frères*. Wolfers was created in 1850 by Louis Wolfers who managed on his own to transform his studio, which almost exclusively made silverware, in five years into one of the main Brussels silver workshops. His children were already prepared for their future career within the company.

In 1885, Louis Wolfers associated himself with his son Philippe. *Louis Wolfers Père et Fils* became a fact and the studio developed artistically under the impetus of Philippe. Being the *protégé* of Isidore De Rudder (1855-1943), sculptor, ceramist, engraver and painter, he became the star designer and in charge of the industrial enterprise. Stylistically a *Wolfers* style was developed. From Japonism and Neo-Rococo, gradually the Art Nouveau style originated.

From around 1897, the Wolfers company and Philippe Wolfers became international renowned. The company had an enormous expansion. It opened a new store and new workshops and *Wolfers Frères* diversified its range of products. Especially the production of Philippe's jewellery is striking. He was even called the *Belgian René Lalique*. Their presence at various international exhibitions is far from 'unnoticed'.

Mainly driven by his three sons Philippe, Max and Robert and their cousin Albert Wolfers, the business became around 1900 one of the major European players in the production of silverware and jewellery. The international profile was only possible thanks to a very sophisticated company structure in which each of the family members had been allocated a strict task. Philippe was certainly the most prestigious Wolfers who looked after the artistic direction of the family business, Max explored the market and managed business contracts; Robert mainly concentrated on the improvement of production capacities and Albert was essentially responsible for the general management. Hence one speaks of the *Wolfers Dynasty*. Although history has mainly remembered Philippe Wolfers' name because he was the author of remarkable artistic achievements, he had never been able to achieve his full artistic potential without the corporate structure, that made the company run as a well-oiled business machine. It's obvious that behind the scenes Max, Robert and Albert fulfilled a key role in Philippe's successful career.

Philippe undertook numerous study trips through Europe, visiting the great world exhibitions in Vienna (1873) and Paris (1889). He was impressed by Japonism: the influence of Japanese culture, art, fashion and aesthetics on Western culture. As a result, from 1882 on, his first designs for silver works and jewellery were influenced by Japanese craftwork and naturalism.

His skills were noticed by the Royal Court and in 1897, he was one of the first Belgian jewellers to use the new medium from Congolese origin, ivory or the so called *white gold*, at the request of the Belgian King Leopold II who had started in the late 19th century colonial expansion in the around then-largely unexplored Congo Basin. He caused a furore exhibiting these refined objects at the world exhibitions in Antwerp in 1894 and in Tervuren (Brussels) in 1897. Wolfers created e.g. for this famous colonial exhibition the magnificent *Album Congolais*. It was a present for the politician Léon de Béthune (1864-1907), who highly contributed behind the scenes to the success of the Tervuren exhibition. It contained 22 original photographs of the exhibition and had a cover that looked like a jewel: made of ivory, silver, gold and bronze decorated with pearls and precious stones. The cover symbolised the Belgian colonisation that projected its civilised and cultural light on a 'dark and barbarian' Africa. The success allowed him to open branches of his jewellery business in Antwerp, Liège, Ghent, Düsseldorf, London and Paris.

The years between 1897 and 1905 proved to be the most productive period of his Art Nouveau designs of jewellery and forgings in gold and silver. Wolfers had artistically and technically been influenced by goldsmith and glassware designer René Lalique (1860-1945), by the Symbolist movement, by flowers,

plants and animals (such as dragonflies, crabs, birds), by sensual female forms, by poetic reverence for the woman in her emancipated status of muse. He finished his creations with semi-precious stones, gems, pearls, enamel, ivory and crystal which resulted in luxurious jewellery.

Philippe Wolfers also created precious glassware and became one of the finest glassware designers for the Belgian glass manufacturer Val Saint-Lambert.

In 1905 he started to carve decorative sculptures, freezes and reliefs, executed in precious metals, gemstones and semi-precious stones. In 1907, Philippe stopped his jewellery production and he devoted himself completely to sculpturing in marble, ivory and bronze; to ceramics, furniture and metalwork.

In 1909, he commissioned the famous Belgian Art Nouveau architect, Victor Horta (1861-1947), to build his headquarters in Brussels.

In the meantime the company had a turbulent period and the turnover became more important than innovation. After the First World War, Philippe Wolfers went looking for that innovation. In the 1920s Wolfers designed in the Art Deco style. His work became more geometrical and abstract. And he made a masterful comeback on the international art scene in 1925 with the participation in the international *Arts and Crafts Exhibition* in Paris. With his design for the tea and coffee set *Gioconda* (1925) in silver and ivory, he reached an absolute climax.

Gradually his son Marcel Wolfers (1886-1976) also came to the fore. Still very young, he was influenced by his father's commitment to innovation. However, he didn't join immediately the company as an artistic associate, but as an independent artist and had a career as a sculptor. During the 1920s, he established a reputation as an artist specialised in lacquer work. In 1928 and 1929 retrospective exhibitions of Philippe Wolfers' work were organised in Brussels.

The artistic succession of Philippe in 1929, with his sudden death, became a serious problem. The gap was eventually filled by Omer de Waegh (1897-1982). There was a slow evolution of careful innovation towards a classical Modernism, which culminated in the table centrepiece *Les Travaux d'Hercule* (*Hercules' Works*) which was very successful at the World Exhibition in 1937 in Paris. After the presentation of the prestigious *Ondine*, which received great attention in the pavilion of the *World Exhibition* in Brussels in 1958, the downfall of the company started. After 1958 the commercial and the artistic direction of Wolfers came both into the hands of third parties until in 1975 the company ceased to exist.

Victor Werner opened his gallery in 1986. At that time he specialized mainly in early 19th century European antiques and works of art. Since then, although the neoclassical style remains an important element in his collection, he has expanded his scope to include paintings, sculptures, furniture and objects from around 1800 up to the 1960s. Victor Werner is a member of the ROCAD.be and of the international federation of art & antique dealer associations CINOA.

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