

ARISTIDE MAILLOL (1861-1944)

Head of Spring

Bronze proof, #3
Lost wax cast by Claude Valsuani
Monogram: M
H. 36.2, W. 20, D. 24.5

Provenance

- Weyhe Gallery, New York
- Gertrude Denis, New York
- Façade Gallery, New York
- Private Collection, Maryland (1986-2008)
- Private Collection, France (2008-2015)

Bibliography

- Cladel, Judith, *Maillol, sa vie, son œuvre, ses idées* (*Maillol, His Life, His Work, His Ideas*), Bernard Grasset, 1937.
- Berger, Ursel, et Zutter, Jörg, *Aristide Maillol,* Berlin, Georg-Kolbe Museum, January 14 to May 5, 1996, Lausanne, Musée des Beaux-Arts, May 15 to September 22 1996, Brême, Gerhard Marcks-Museum, October 6 1996 to January 13 1997, Manheim, Städtische Kunsthalle, January 25 to March 31 1997, Flammarion, Paris, 1996.
- *Maillol*, Kunsthal Rotterdam, September 15 2012 to February 10, 2013, Tielt, Uitgeverij Lannoo, Paris, Musée Maillol, Kunsthal Rotterdam, 2012.

The *Head of Spring* comes from *Spring*, a life-d standing figure that Maillol did around 1911 for the great Russian collector Ivan Morosov. Thanks to Maurice Denis, Morosov commissioned four figures from Maillol for the music room of his Moscow palace—*Pomona, Summer, Flora*, and *Spring*. The group was constituted of two pairs, each including a statue with flowers, a reference to spring, and another, a symbol of maturity. The four sculptures in bronze are currently held in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow.

For Maillol, "the four allegories symbolize the idea of youth."[1] At the 1910 Salon d'Automne, Maillol exhibited a plaster titled *Torso of a Young Girl, Youth* [2]; the position of the head, the handling of the hair, and the profile of that work are all similar to those of the *Head of Spring*.

The physiognomy of the face on this sculpture is echoed on other sculptures and in numerous paintings, with the curls and rolls of the hair framing the face, the full lips, the nose blending into the strongly-drawn arched brows, the rounded chin, and the high cheekbones. The architecture of the face is solid with a supple geometry and well-balanced features with a laughing expression. These features recall those of the artist's wife, Clotilde, whose bust he did in 1903-1905.[3] Maillol had already experimented with the slightly raised face that he used for the *Head of Spring* around 1908 in his *Portrait of Marthe Denis* . This *Head* is typical of Maillol's style, but the complete figure of *Spring*, with its very thin body, is relatively unusual in his work; he more frequently represented stocky, voluptuous women.

Maillol worked through several stages when creating a large sculpture such as *Spring*: "He usually started with the torso, to which he added the arms and the legs, and then the head."[4] Thus, in the process of the construction of his large figures, the head was at times an independent element. A photograph of Maillol's studio taken by Brassaï[5] in 1932 shows heads in plaster with vertical cuts from the shoulders to the torso, such as in this *Head of Spring*, that create a traditional Hermes bust.[6] Though heads belonging to complete figures are rarely editioned separately in bronze, this was done in the case of this *Head of Spring*. A photograph taken by Eugène Druet (1867-1916),[7] held in the archives of the musée d'Orsay, shows the *Head of Spring* in bronze, indicating that it was cast during Maillol's lifetime. During the summer of 1911, he showed his sculptures in his garden at Marly. There's a photograph taken outside[8] that includes a head mounted on a column, testifying to the artist's interest in working with the head at the time. Rainer Maria Rilke mentioned the effect: "This simple head in the greenery, lit up from time to time by the caressing rays of the sun [. . .] I've never seen a sculpture impregnated with so much atmosphere; it communed with the seasons, the trees, the flowers, and

the shrubbery."[9]

The Weyhe Gallery[10] in New York, with which Maillol worked, has records in its archives of at least two bronze proofs of the *Head of Spring*, those numbered 3 (which is the one presented here) and 4. The gallery might also have had other proofs from this edition of ten. According to Ursel Berger, a specialist in Aristide Maillol's work, all the bronzes that the Weyhe Gallery owned were bought during the artist's lifetime, and at the end of the 1920s. An unnumbered proof is kept in the collections of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Hartford; it was donated by Erhard Weyhe in December 1955.

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[1] Cladel, 1937, p. 85.
[2] *Maillol, exposition en hommage du centenaire de sa naissance, 1861-1961* (*Maillol, Exhibition in Homage to the One Hundredth Anniversary of his Birth*), galerie Daber, Paris, 1961, n°10, Pl. XVI.
[3] *Portrait of Clotilde Maillol*, 1903-1905, terra cotta, H: 40 cm, Francfort-sur-le-Main, Städelsches Kunstinstitut.
[4] Berger, Zutter, 1996, p. 50.
[5] *Maillol*, exhibition catalogue, Rotterdam, 2012, p. 17.
[6] A bust that ends at the shoulders with vertical or slanted sides, forming a parallelepipoid from the collarbones to the center of the chest. Hermes busts are supported by a square or rectangular form that serves as a base.
[7] Eugène Druet was the official photographer for Rodin's sculptures from 1896 on.
[8] Photograph by the count Harry Kessler in Berger, Zutter, p. 58.
[9] Cited in Berger, Zutter, 1996, p. 59.
[10] The Weyhe Gallery opened its doors in 1919 in New York City. It specialized in editions, particularly of etchings. It still exists today in the form of a bookstore.