



BARYE, Antoine-Louis

Paris 1795 - Paris 1875

Python tuant un gnou

Python Killing a Gnu

1834-1835

plaster retouched with red wax

group

11 x 15 ³/₈ in.

on the base: BARYE

Acc. No.: 85.SE.48

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Los Angeles, California, The J. Paul Getty Museum

www.getty.edu/museum

Bibliography

- Museum's website, accessed 22 March 2012 and August 3, 2018

1997 Fusco

Peter Fusco, Summary Catalogue of European Sculpture in The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1997, p. 3, repr.

Exhibitions

- 1889 Paris
Oeuvres de Barye, Paris, Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 1889

Comment

Museum's website, accessed August 3, 2018:

A large python wraps his winding body tightly around the straining gnu, forcing the much larger animal to the ground and biting him on the throat. The two beasts intertwine in a tangle of struggling legs and snake coils. Sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye posed the animals in contradiction to their natures: the light-footed gnu, whose delicate legs skip over rough surfaces, here is brought to the ground, while the snake, whose lack of legs naturally forces him to shimmy along the ground, strikes the gnu's throat in mid-air. Images like this one of a dramatic and ultimately Romantic struggle between life and death made Barye one of the most popular animal sculptors of the 1800s.

Made out of plaster retouched with red wax, the sculpture is a model for one of nine bronze groups of struggling animals commissioned by Ferdinand-Philippe, duc d'Orléans. The animal groups were designed as part of a large and elaborate table decoration for the Palais de Tuileries that was never completed. A bronze version of the wax model of the Python and Gnu is now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore.
