



**DORÉ, Gustave**

Strasbourg, Bas-Rhin 1832 - Paris 1883

*Ménades dans les bois*

*Maenads in a Wood*

1879

plaster

relief

47  $\frac{1}{4}$  x 77  $\frac{3}{16}$  x 9  $\frac{7}{8}$  in.

on front, on lower right edge: Gve Doré

Acc. No.: 1994.192

Credit Line: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Gardner in honor of Perry Townsend Rathbone and European Decorative Arts and Sculpture Curator's Fund

Photo credit: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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**Provenance**

- Le Mesnil le-Roi, Collection of Dr. Bibring
- By 1994, Bahamas, Samuel Clapp, Fiduciary Trust Company Limited
- 1994, June 22, sold by Clapp to the MFA, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Gardner in honor of Perry Townsend Rathbone and European Decorative Arts and Sculpture Curator's Fund

**Bibliography**

- Museum's website, 27 February 2012 and 20 March 2012

2007 Zafran

Eric Zafran, *Fantasy and Faith - The Art of Gustave Doré*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007, p.172, repr.

1991 Clapp, Lezni

Samuel F. Clapp, Nadine Lezni, "Une introduction à la sculpture de Gustave Doré", Paris, *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français*, p. 220-253, p. 242, repr.

## **Comment**

Museum's website, July 13, 2011:

Large scale plaster sculpture depicting in high relief the death of Orpheus. Placed against a wooded setting, a dozen nymphs in a triangular configuration dance in revelry before a depression. Most of the voluptuous, twisting figures are presented nude, although some are partially covered with drapery and foliage. The central figure holds a tambourine above her head and three others clutch tree branches.

Gustave Dore, known primarily for his book illustrations, prints, and paintings, turned to sculpture late in his career. It was only in 1871 that he began to learn to model, and he exhibited his first sculpture at the Salon of 1877.

This plaster relief is the second version of a sculpture inspired by his 1879 painting of the Death of Orpheus. Doré used the same background and composition in both reliefs; however, here the dead Orpheus is absent and the female woodland figures are not armed. He has depicted a bacchic dance of the Maenads, followers of Dionysus, god of the Orphic religion, who in a delirious frenzy killed Orpheus. This relief may have been intended to serve as an architectural decoration.

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