



MARCEL GIMOND (1894-1961)

Portrait of Madame Gimond in a Turban called Head of a Woman in a Turban

Bronze proof with black patina

Lost wax cast by Attilio Valsuani

Signed : "Gimond"

Founder's stamp : "Cire perdue A. Valsuani"

H. 23, W. 18, D. 22 cm

Provenance

- Private collection, France

Bibliography

- George Waldemar, *Gimond et l'esprit des formes (Gimon and the Spirit of Forms)*, Braun & Cie, 1962.
- Marcel Gimond, *Comment je comprends la sculpture (How I Understand Sculpture)*, Arted, édition d'Art, 1969.
- *De Matisse à aujourd'hui, la sculpture du XXe siècle dans les musées et le Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain du Nord-Pas de Calais (From Matisse to Today: Twentieth-Century Sculpture in the Museums and Regional Collections of Contemporary Art in the Nord-Pas de Calais)*, Lille, Association des Conservateurs des musées du Nord-Pas-de-Calais, 1992.
- *Marcel Gimond 1894-1961 Centenaire* [exposition, Aubenas, Château d'Aubenas, August 5 to September 30, 1994].
- Hélène Labbé-Bazentay, *Marcel-Antoine Gimond (1894-1961)*, thesis directed by Thierry Dufrêne, 2003, repr. p. 37, sculpture section, and repr.

p. 37, drawing section.

- Toru Wakiya, H el ene Labb e-Bazantay, Soncho Fujita, Junichi Kurakake, *Marcel Gimond*, Yasakashobo, 2012.

"The goal of sculpture is the creation of a beautiful object, with a plastic rather than a physiological life [...]. Sculptural life is not an imitation of muscles and skin from the outside, but a creation of the spirit: an architectural creation endowed with an internal dynamism."^[1] —Marcel Gimond

After receiving his degree from the  cole des Beaux-Arts of Lyon in 1917, Marcel Gimond undertook explorations in form that earned him a place in the world of independent sculpture. His position was further confirmed by a trip to London in 1920, during which he discovered the artistic masterpieces of ancient civilizations.

Gimond's aesthetic position resulted in a theoretical reflection on the art of sculpture, which was published after his death, in 1969, under the title *Comment je comprends la sculpture (How I Understand Sculpture)*.^[2] He specialized in sculpting busts (he executed over 170 during his career) and thought of the face as an architecture. The influence of his master and mentor Aristide Maillol is noticeable, perhaps because they shared the same ideals: "I do not make portraits; I make heads by which I try to give an impression of the whole. I'm tempted by a head if I can bring out its architecture." —Aristide Maillol^[3]

Here, the sculptor represents his wife, Julie Chorel, the daughter of the Lyon sculptor Jean-Louis Chorel (1875-1946), whom Gimond met at the Beaux-Arts in Lyon. She is presented in a synthetic, hieratic fashion, wearing a turban, an accessory that allowed Gimond to blend his wife's head and hair into a single, unified form. The work, based on the articulation of planes and volumes, has affinities with cubism, the radical movement of the 1910s led by Braque and Picasso. Cubical and cylindrical at the same time, this bust displays a technical achievement through the simplification and geometrization of its forms. "At this period, I wanted to rediscover volume through the creation of willfully geometric figures. It was an exercise for me; I wanted to find denser, fuller forms."^[4] Possibly influenced by Mesopotamian art, this portrait recalls the statue of Gudea, the prince of Lagash, a sculpture in diorite that dates from 2120 BCE and is held in the Louvre.^[5] Marcel Gimond most likely had a head of Gudea in his personal collection.^[6] In addition to this figure's stylistic similarity to Mesopotamian art, its black patina seems to make a reference to the color of diorite.

For Gimond, formal exploration always aimed at expressing the model's inner life, the movements of the soul. "I want to make something human of cubism, not something simply decorative. I want a bust to be an ornament, but an ornament that has an internal secret and a soul."^[7] The sculptor refused a purely mimetic and academic representation of nature, which, according to him, was senseless and unjustified. "A sculpture is a stone. I use the word stone to make it clear that a sculpture is a block of material, unlike the human body, which is composed of diverse elements gathered together within a sack of skin. Anatomy, therefore, has no more relationship to sculpture than does chemistry."^[8]

The *Portrait of Madame Gimond in a Turban* offers a beautiful illustration of Gimond's ideas on statuary art.

Two versions of this bust are held in the Musée national d'art moderne ([Inv. AM 1974-256](#)^[9] and [Inv. AM 515 S](#)^[10]); one of them, similar to the one described here, has been on loan to the Musée des Beaux-Arts et de la Dentelle (The Museum of Fine-Arts and Lace) in Calais since 1977. Apparently acquired by the State in 1931, this piece was shown in the exhibition *Les Maîtres de l'art indépendant* (*The Masters of Independent Art*) in 1937. This bust was also used as the basis for a lithograph titled *Jeune femme à la toque* (*Young Woman in a Hat*), done in 1934 and held in the Château-musée d'Aubenas.^[11]

^[1] Toru, Labbé-Bazantay, Fujita, Kurakake, 2012, p. 178.

^[2] Marcel Gimond, *Comment je comprends la sculpture*, Arted, édition d'Art, 1969.

^[3] Ibid., p. 183-184.

^[4] Ibid., p. 189.

^[5] *Gudea, prince de Lagash. Seated statue dedication to the god Ningishzida*, c. 2120 BCE, Tello, formerly Girsu, Diorite, 46 x 33 x 22,5 cm, Inv. AO 3293 (head) et AO 4108 (body).

^[6] See the catalogue of the Boisseau-Pomez sale, *Succession Pierre Lévy*, Troyes, Salons de l'Hôtel de ville, February 2, 3 and 4, 2007, p. 71. This *Head of Gudea* belonged either to Marcel Gimond or to Pierre Lévy; the catalogue does not say which.

^[7] Ibid., p. 189.

^[8] Ibid., p. 190.

^[9] Marcel-Antoine Gimond, *Portrait de Madame Gimond au turban*, c. 1930, bronze proof, lost wax cast by Valsuani, 23 x 18,5 x 21.5 cm.

^[10] Marcel-Antoine Gimond, *Portrait de Madame Gimond au turban*, c. 1930, bronze proof, lost wax cast by Valsuani, 23.2 x 18.5 x 22 cm, on loan to the Musée de Calais.

^[11] Marcel-Antoine Gimond, *Jeune femme à la toque*, 1934, lithograph, 37 x 44.5 cm.