



Ernst Barlach: Sculpture "Woman in the Wind" (1931), reduction in bronze

€1,680.00

Product no.: IN-760180

Ernst Barlach's "Community of Saints": Symbols of Human Existence

Ernst Barlach was highly respected as a writer and sculptor of figurative sculptures until the 1930s. In 1925, he became an honorary member of the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. During this period, he also created various monumental memorials that were to become world-famous (including the "Güstrow Memorial", and the famous "Floating Angel" located in Güstrow Cathedral). In 1934, however, the tables had turned. When Barlach was in his sixties, the Nazis denounced his works as "degenerate" and removed them from the museums. The monuments he created were destroyed. The "Floating Angel" located in the Güstrow Cathedral was even melted down - and if friends had not hidden a second copy until the end of the war, the work would be lost today.

The fate of the sculptures "Woman in the Wind" and "The Singer" were similar. They were confiscated along with around 380 other works by Barlach. Their saviour was also their client: Carl Georg Heise, a museum director in Lübeck. He had encouraged Barlach in 1929 to design a sculpture ensemble with the title "Community of Saints" for the west façade of St. Catherine's Church in Lübeck. There were to be 16, but only three were realised between 1930 and 1932 ("The Beggar", "The Singer" and "The Woman in the Wind"). Three other figures: "The Bound", "The Pilgrim" and "The Hornblower" have been preserved in preliminary models. Carl Georg Heise was dismissed in 1933 but claimed the existing three figures as private property. In 1939, the year after Barlach's death, they were handed over to him, and so they survived the war period "in boxes [...] under the veranda in my mother-in-law's house," he later reported. It was not until 1947 that they finally found their way into the designated niches of St Catherine's Church.

The spatial effect of the Gothic church and the narrowness of the niches as a place of installation determined Barlach's ideas about form. The proximity to medieval sculpture is unmistakable. However, Barlach did not create figures of saints in Christian iconography. He rather created symbols of human existence, and human figures turned towards the world, "suffering and transfigured, each in his way struggling with his God" (Carl Georg Heise).

Sculpture "Woman in the Wind":

The folded garment enveloping the body characterises the physicality of the standing young woman and concentrates the gaze on the head, which serves as the sole vehicle of expression. Bronze after a scaled-down model from 1931, cast by hand using the Lost-Wax-

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