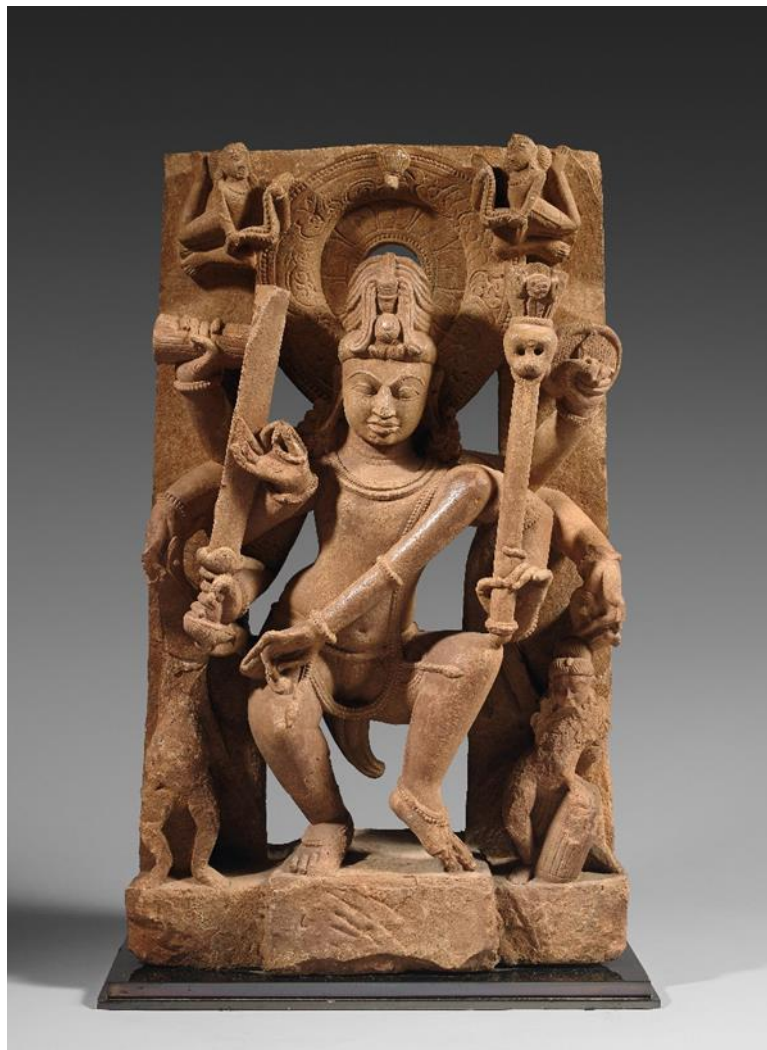


Galerie Hioco

Śiva Nataraja (P374)



What do we like in this sculpture?

- The serenity of the god despite the violence of his destructive action.
- The softness of the plastic reinforced by the play of light and shadow created by the openings.
- The purity of the facial features with their idealized contours.



I. Detailed description

Śiva Naṭarāja (P374)

Red sandstone

Northern India

Circa 11th century, Pratihāra period

H. 63 cm or 24 7/8 in

The destructive dance of Śiva, a fundamental mythological episode

This magnificent stele dated to the 11th century depicts Śiva Naṭarāja, in the pose known as chatura-tāṇḍava. This is a dance of cosmic destruction, which, despite its terrible nature, allows the renewal of the universe. The god treads on the demon of ignorance (apasmāra puruṣa) with his right leg, while his left leg is half raised. This image of trampled ignorance symbolises the liberation of souls and the path to salvation for beings. Śiva as Naṭarāja represents the cosmic dancer; he is the master and source of all forms of dances at the origin of primitive chaos.

Special attention to adornment

Śiva's hair is styled in jaṭāmukūṭa, the ascetic's bun. A thin scarf surrounds the waist. He wears a tiara, several earrings, a train of flowers on each shoulder, a yajñopavīta, a necklace, an udarabandha, spiral bangles, rings and anklets. Śiva's stoic face connotes his neutrality and the flames surrounding him represent the universe.

Siva's specific iconography

Śiva's uppermost right hand holds a small drum whose shape resembles an hourglass (reṇugarbha), which represents the primordial meaning of creation. The specific hand gesture (mudrā), called ḍamaru-hasta, is used to tap the drum. It symbolises the sound giving origin to creation and the beating of the drum its passage through time. The lower left hand holds an akṣamalā (rosary) made of a rudrākṣa which symbolises concentration. Rudrākṣa mālā was used by Hindus and Buddhists as a rosary at least from the tenth century onwards for meditation as well as to sanctify the mind, body and soul.

Śiva's middle left hand makes the gesture of fearlessness (abhaya mudrā) with a snake coiled on the forearm. This iconography invites the devotee not to fear this terrible dance of destruction.

An admirable play on relief in the service of a transcendent symbolism

The evocative power of the god's supple plasticity, in parallel with his serene face, is intended to create a reassuring image for the faithful who contemplate it. This work bears witness to the symbolism of Śiva in his supreme role for his devotees, as the origin of all things. The symbolic significance of this work is combined with the voluptuousness of the body forms and finely carved features. The hemmed lips, the slightly arched nose and the almond-shaped eyes show an admirable mastery of the art of sculpture.



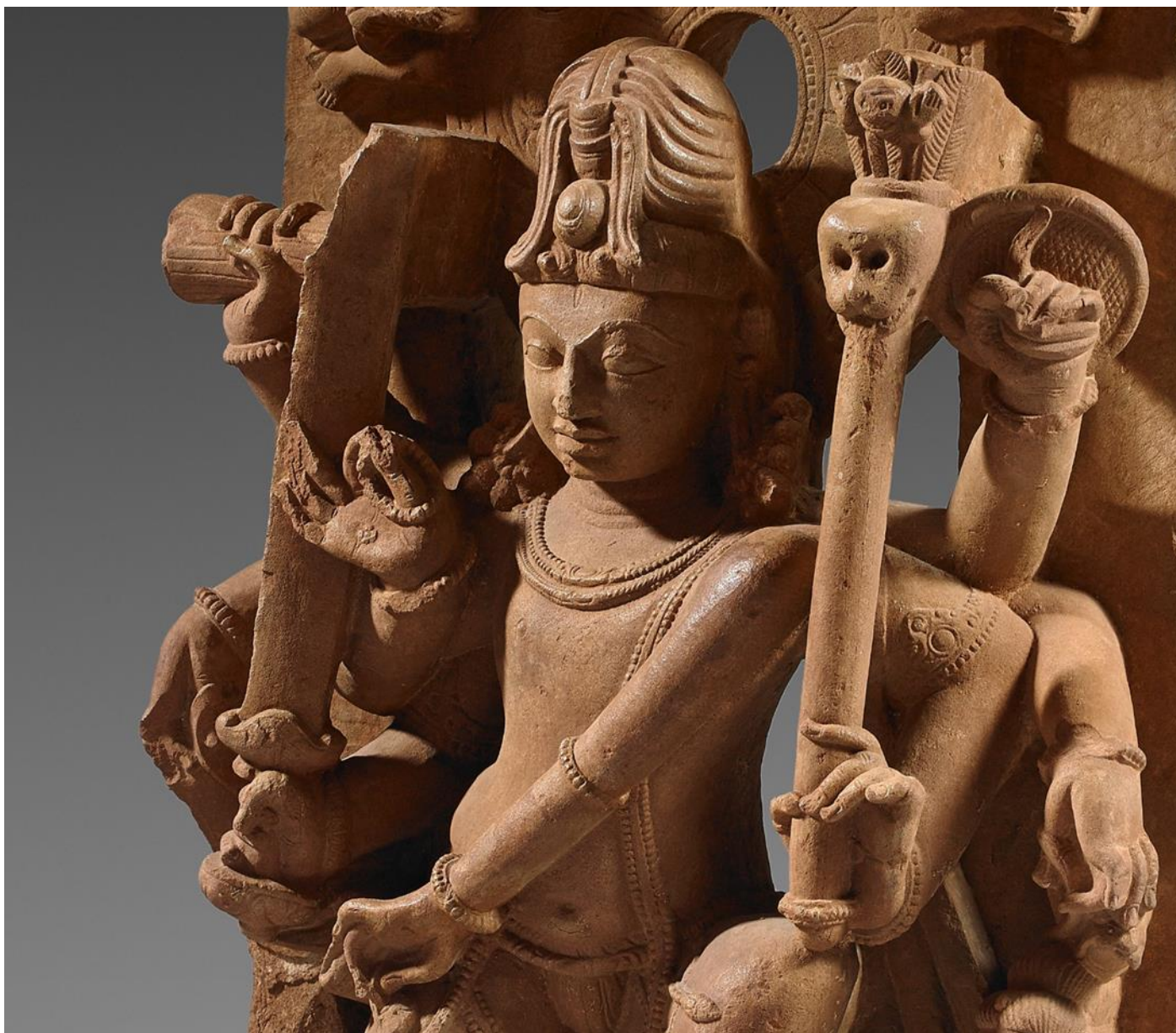
II. Image of the piece – front view



III. Image of the piece – left three-quarter view



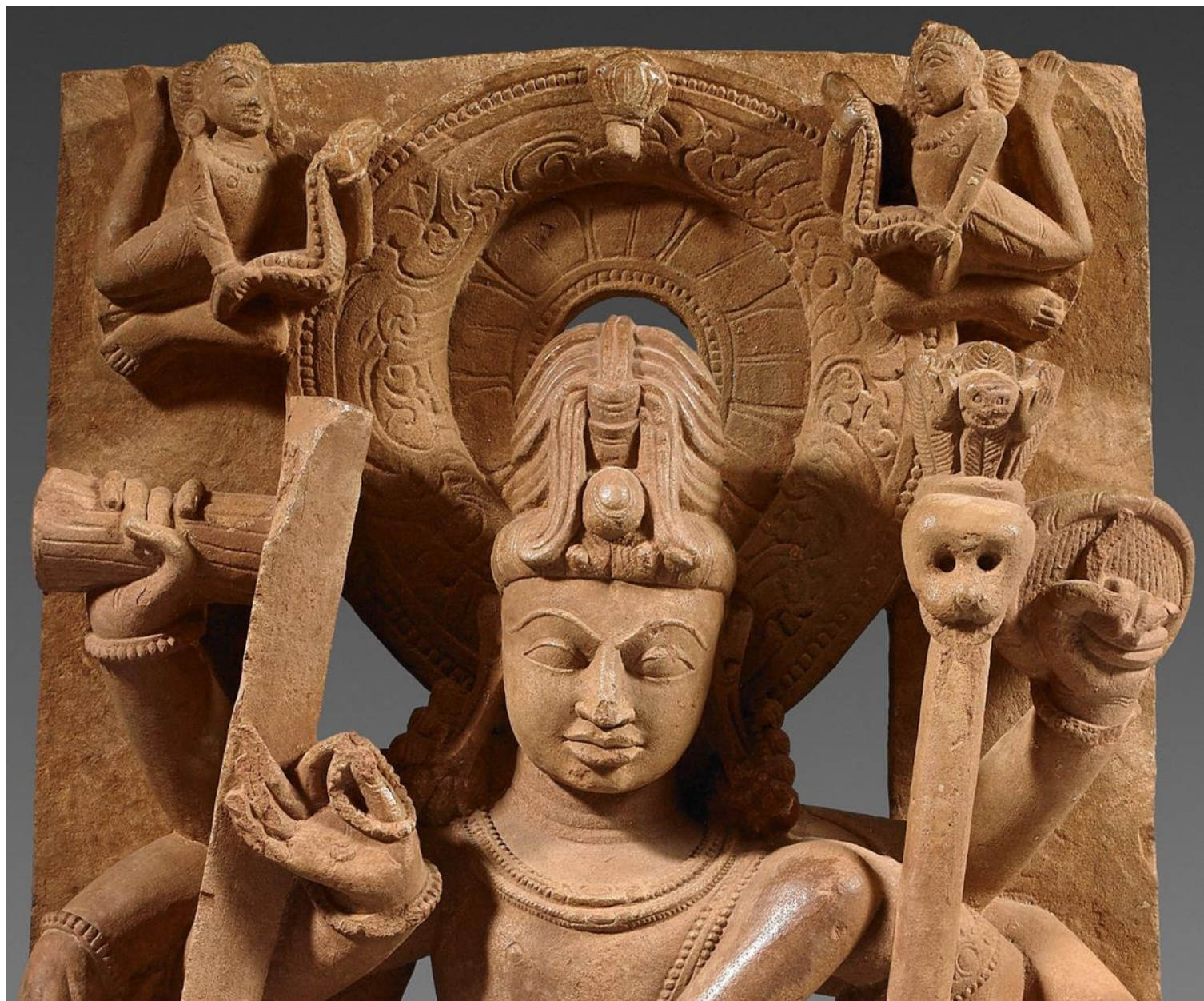
IV. Image of the piece – detailed left three-quarter view



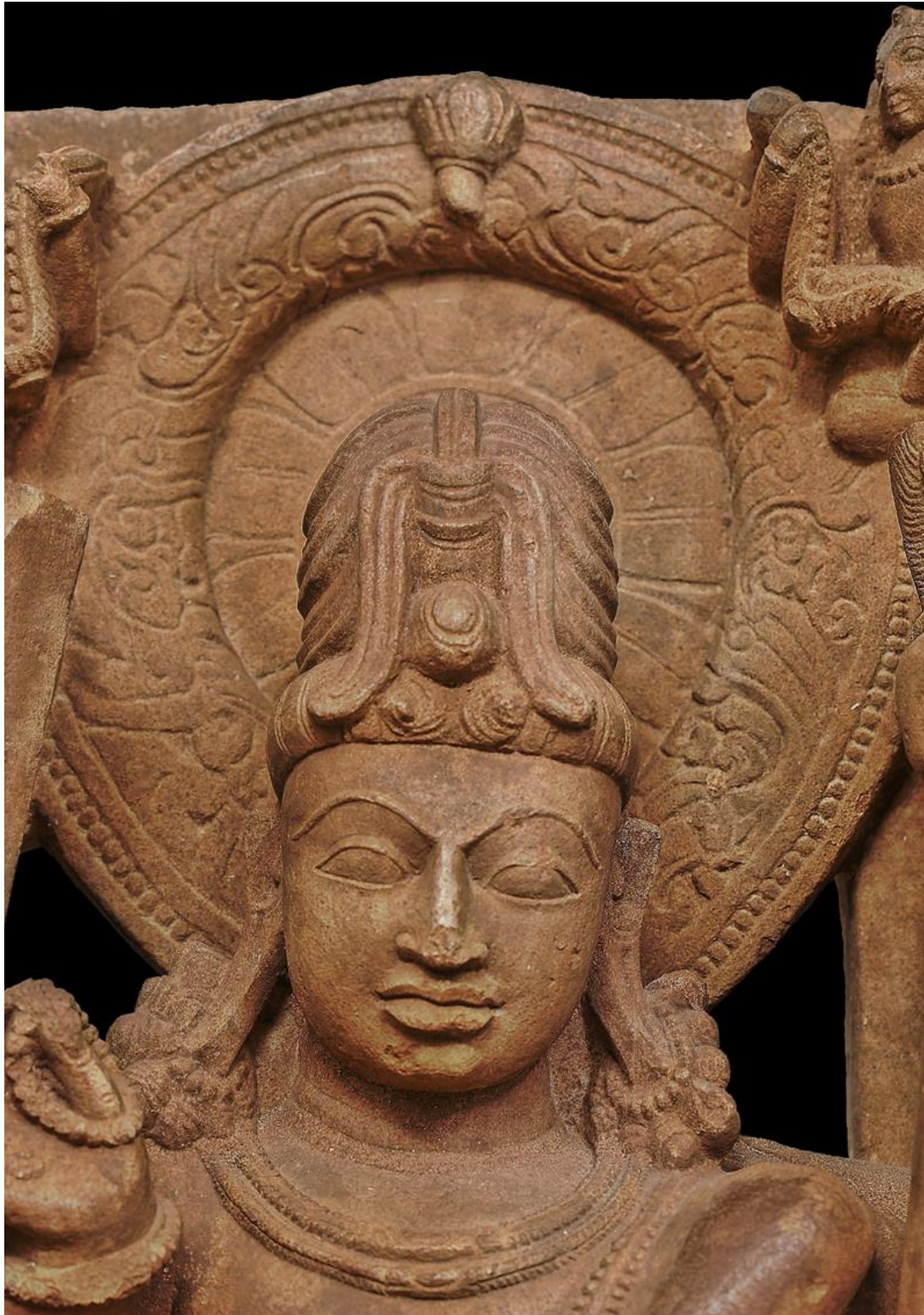
V. Image of the piece – detailed right three-quarter view



VI. Image of the piece – detailed front view



VII. Image of the piece – detailed front view



VIII. Provenance: in all transparency!

- . This piece comes from an English private collection.
- . We are always very cautious and diligent about the provenance of the artworks we offer. Ensuring the seriousness and reliability of the information given by the former owners is one of our priorities and we then guarantee this origin by engaging our responsibility.
- . In order to reinforce this guarantee, we systematically verify that these artworks have not been registered as missing or stolen. As Interpol has granted us the right to directly consult their database of stolen or reported items, we verify by ourselves and issue a certificate attesting to this.

IX. Condition report: our scientific approach

This 11th-century sculpture is in a very good state of preservation, and offers a very comprehensible reading of the scene. Only a few fragments are missing, for instance on the nose of the god Śiva, as well as on his hand holding the rosary. His feet have also suffered some losses, notably the one that sketches a dancing gesture. The top of his sword also presents some missing parts. The figures flanking the god on either side have an eroded appearance. These gaps do not detract from the aesthetics of the work, and are hardly surprising for a sculpture that is a thousand years old. On the base of the sculpture, traces of tools are visible. More generally, the surface of the stone has been altered due to its placement in a temple, thus being exposed to the weather for several centuries. The color of the stone is due to the presence of iron oxide, sometimes present in concretions. Mineral deposits are visible on the top of the sculpture: this is a consequence of weathering but also of successive applications of ointments or other substances by the devotees; a common practice on sculptures displayed in temples. No traces of modern restoration have been detected.

Please note that since we are not conservators or restorers, it must be understood that any condition report we made is a subjective qualified opinion, even if we do our best efforts. Prospective buyers should inspect the piece to satisfy themselves as to condition.



XI. Comparable museum artwork – The British Museum

A 10th century sculpture of Cāmuṇḍā, in the collections of the British Museum, London:



Figure (dancing Cāmuṇḍā). Made of sandstone.

School/style : Gurjara-Pratihara Style

Cultures/periods : Gurjara-Pratihara

Production date : 10thC

Made in: India

Found/Acquired: India (West)

Technique : carved

Height: 89 centimetres

Weight: 200 kilograms (approximate weight)

Width: 61 centimetres / Depth: 21 centimetres

Acquisition notes : Purchased by John Bridge at the Stuart sale at Christie's in June, 1830. The collection was given to the British Museum in 1872 by Mrs John Bridge and his nieces, Miss Fanny Bridge and Mrs Edgar Baker, on the death that year of George Bridge, brother of John Bridge.

Registration number : 1872,0701.82



XII. Comparable museum artwork – The Cleveland Museum of Art

A 10th century sculpture in the style of the Pratihara dynasty in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art:



Lovers (Mithuna)
c. 973

Northwestern India, Rajasthan, Sikar,
Harshagiri, Pratihara Dynasty, 10th Century
Sandstone with limestone wash

Overall: 35.3 x 34.3 cm (13 7/8 x 13 1/2 in.)

Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund
1962.165

LOCATION
244 Indian and Southeast Asian



XIII. Our guarantees: for a serene acquisition!

- More photos will be sent to you on request.
- In case of purchase, we will establish an invoice that you can pay by bank transfer.
- You will receive our certificate of authenticity with the photo of the artwork, its detailed description and the mention of the provenance.
- We will define together the shipping modalities and we will take care of all customs formalities if you live outside of France.
- If you do not like the piece, we give you the possibility to return it to us and we will assist you with the resulting terms and conditions.

