

KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts

Marcello, i.e. Adèle d'Affry

1836 Fribourg (Switzerland) - 1879 Castellammare di Stabia

Born Adèle d'Affry in Fribourg, western Switzerland, to a distinguished aristocratic family, Marcello's artistic talent was evident at an early age. She received tuition from the Swiss sculptor Heinrich Max Imhof in Rome but broke off her studies before her short-lived marriage to the Duke of Castiglione Colonna. Through her marriage, she gained access to the highest echelons of Italian and French society. After the Duke's sudden death in 1857 she resumed her artistic training under Imhof in Rome, where she deepened her interest in the sculpture of classical antiquity. Its themes and aesthetic were to have a formative influence on her own sculptural oeuvre.

D'Affry left Rome in 1859 and moved to Paris to further her studies under Antoine-Louis Barye and Jean-Baptiste Auguste Clésinger, the two leading sculptors of the Second Empire. As a woman she was denied access to institutional exhibitions. She therefore resolved to exhibit at the 1863 Paris Salon under the male pseudonym *Marcello*. Although it was not long before her true identity was disclosed, three of her portrait busts caught the attention of Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie, with whom she developed friendly ties. Her atelier became a popular meeting place for elegant Parisian society. She herself savoured a lifestyle between bohemianism and aristocratic privilege.

During a stay in Rome in 1869 Marcello created what was to be her sculptural chef-d'oeuvre – a statue of *Pythia*. Tradition has it that Pythia was the name of the high priestess of Apollo in Delphi. She was consulted for her prophecies which she delivered in a trance-like state induced by gaseous vapours rising from a crevice in the rock. The figure of *Pythia* represents the high point of Marcello's preoccupation with the heroic female figures of classical mythology. But it is also one of the leading examples of statuary under the Second Empire. In 1870, a life-size bronze cast of the figure unleashed an astounding response when it was exhibited at the Paris Salon. The piece was acquired for the Paris



Edouard-Théophile Blanchard,
Portrait of the duchesse Castiglione, 1877

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opera house by the architect, Charles Garnier. Under construction from 1861 to 1875, the opulent building is now known as the Palais Garnier.

Her energy sapped by the physical exertions of work on the statue of *Pythia*, Marcello decided to turn to painting. But the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1 put an end to her earlier successes. The Second Empire was over and the former imperial family went into exile. Marked by serious illness, she began to compile her memoirs, put her papers in order and draw up a will. In it she bequeathed a large part of her work to the canton of Fribourg. Today, the remarkable career path of a woman who pursued the profession of sculptress in a male-dominated art world is movingly documented in the Galerie Marcello at the Musée d'art et d'histoire in Fribourg.