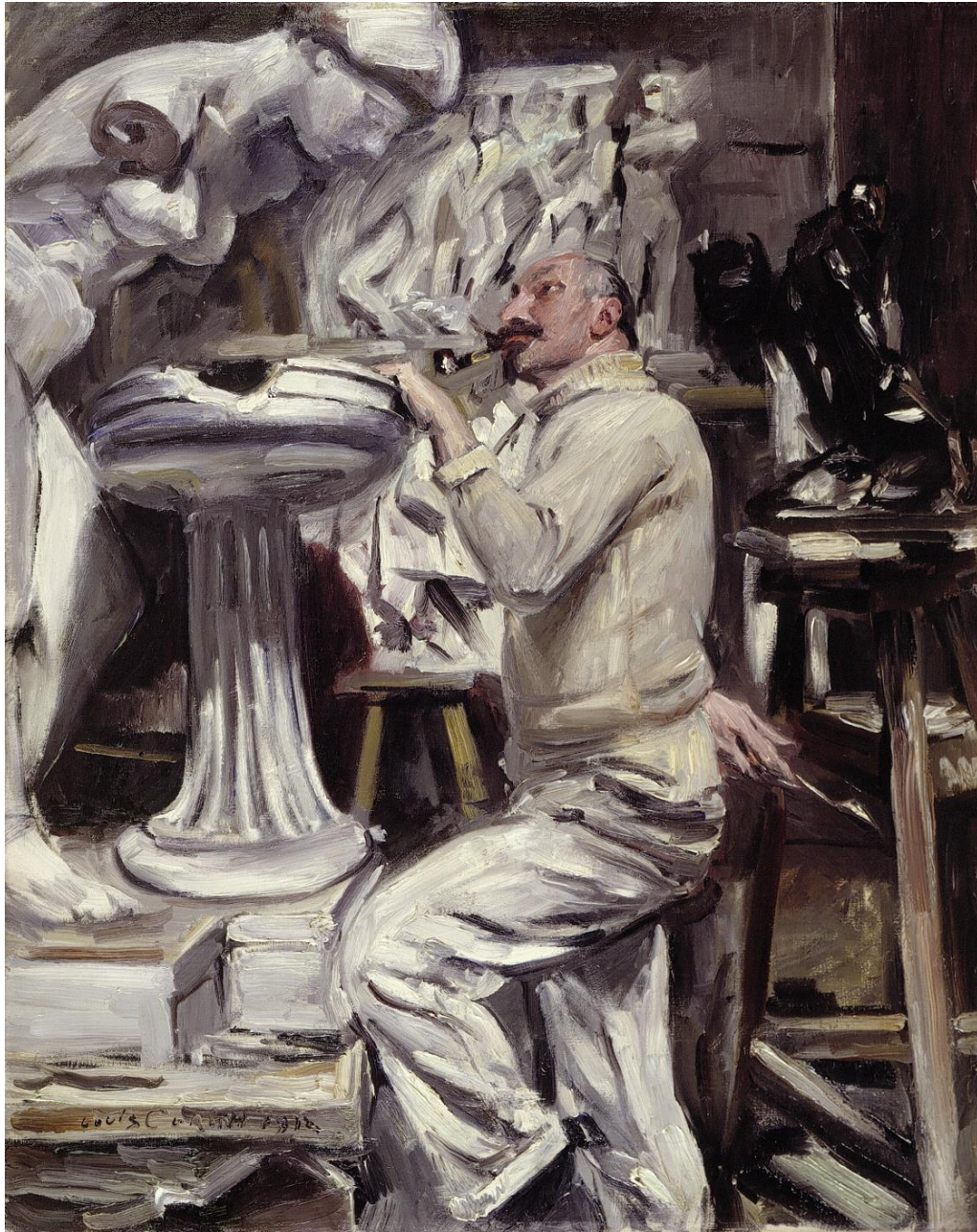


LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

KUNST



LOVIS CORINTH

Tapiau, East Prussia (now Gvardeysk, Russia) 1858 - 1925 Zandvoort (Holland)

Portrait of the Sculptor Nikolaus Friedrich

Oil on canvas; 1912.

Signed and dated lower left in black in the image: *LOVIS CORINTH 1912*.

Verso on the stretcher distinguished exhibition labels such as New Burlington Galleries, London (*Modern German Art*, no. 51) and Tate, London (as 'possible purchase'); stamped twice by Schonemann Galleries, New York.

101.7 x 81 cm

PROVENANCE: Dr. Alfred Ganz, Lucerne and St. Niklausen – Kunsthandlung Bühler, Munich - Galerie Meissner, Zurich – Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge MA – German private collection

LITERATURE: Charlotte Berend-Corinth, *Lovis Corinth. Werkverzeichnis*, Munich 1958, no. 524 – Hans-Jürgen Imiela, *Die Portraits Lovis Corinth*, (Diss.) Mainz 1955, see p. 90 and p. 93-4; note 262, p. 208 – Thomas Corinth (ed.), *Lovis Corinth, Eine Dokumentation*, Tübingen 1979, see p. 136

EXHIBITION: *Lovis Corinth, Das Lebenswerk*, Berlin Secession, 1913, no. 207 (as *Der Bildhauer*) – *Deutsche Malerei im 19. Jahrhundert*, Galerie Ernst Arnold, Dresden 1913 – *Lovis Corinth, zum 60. Geburtstag*, Berlin Secession, 1918, no. 107 – *Lovis Corinth*, Kunsthaus Zürich 1924, no. 22 – *Eine Luzerner Privatsammlung* [Sammlung. Dr. Alfred Ganz], Kunstmuseum Luzern 1947, no. 34 – *Deutsche Impressionisten. Liebermann, Corinth, Slevogt*, Museum Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen 1955, no. 54 – *Lovis Corinth Gedächtnis-Ausstellung, Zur Feier des hundertsten Geburtsjahres*, Stadthalle Wolfsburg 1955, no. 99 – *Lovis Corinth entre Impressionisme et Expressionisme*, Musée d'Orsay, Paris 2008, no. 65 – *Lovis Corinth und die Geburt der Moderne*, Museum der Bildenden Künste Leipzig and Kunstforum, Ostdeutsche Galerie Regensburg, 2008-9, no. 4/23

Corinth's *Portrait of Nikolaus Friedrich* is not a portrait in the classical sense. The painting is a powerful portrayal of a highly focused individual, the sculptor Nikolaus Friedrich (Cologne 1865-1914). His eyes fixed on his work, Friedrich shows no engagement with the viewer. He is depicted in the studio amid a diverse assortment of pieces of varying scale ranging from monumental figures to small-scale sculptures and what appears to be a relief.

Corinth met and befriended Friedrich at the Berlin Secession, a progressive artists' association which Friedrich joined in 1899. They were only seven years apart in age. In a three-quarter portrait of Friedrich executed in 1904 [Fig.1],¹ Corinth depicts his friend bare to the waist, holding in his raised left hand a bronze statuette, perhaps a working model, which he scrutinizes while wielding a tool behind his back. The pose emphasizes his musculature and strength, which had prompted Corinth to nickname him the 'starker Mann' [strong man].

¹ Charlotte Berend-Corinth, op.cit., no. 295

Both portraits depict Friedrich engaged in intense visual dialogue with his work. However the message that the present work conveys is notably different. It is more than just an individual portrait but goes beyond that to represent an idealized image of the modern sculptor, incorporating allusions to Pygmalion, the legendary sculptor of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the earlier portrait the viewer's attention is drawn to the contrast in scale between the statuette and the sculptor's torso, a juxtaposition that emphasizes his muscularity and strength. But in the present painting contrasts in scale are set aside and the sculptor and his works seem to combine into a harmonious, balanced whole. This impression of unity is enhanced by the muted palette and the figure's carefully orchestrated pose. The flesh tones of the hands and features provide rare colouristic accents. The sculptor's light-coloured clothing suggests that he is working with plaster and marble. His pose recalls contrapposto in sculpture, when turn and counter-turn, lifting and lowering, the static and the dynamic are balanced against each other. Friedrich stands with his weight on one leg, the other leg bent at the knee, his torso erect, while his lower left arm and the tool in his right hand – again held behind his back – form a diagonal. The asymmetry of his body is also echoed in the studio sculptures around him.

This exuberant portrait may also be read as Corinth's contribution to the 'paragone' – the debate on ranking order in the arts which focused on the rivalry between painting and sculpture. Here, he exploits his role as a painter and naturally - albeit playfully - declares himself the victor, while at the same time paying tribute to his friend, the 'modern sculptor'.



Fig. 1: *Portrait of the Sculptor Friedrich*, 1904.
Oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm.
Busch-Reisinger-Museum, Melvin R. Seiden Purchase Fund
in honour of Frederick Deknatel, [inv. 1992.75]