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**Josse François Joseph Leriche (Mons, 1738 – 1812), attributed to**

## *Chinese family*

Terracotta with silver patina; height: 26 cm; width: 34 cm; depth: 13 cm

General bibliography:

Stanislas Lami, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs de l'école française*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1898-1921, vol. II, p.74.

Jules Belleudy, "Joseph Le Riche" in *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire de l'art français*, année 1924, Armand-Colin, Paris, 1924.

Josse François Leriche was born in Mons, Belgium, in the province of Hainaut, in 1738. After training with Etienne Falconet (1716-1791), he joined the Sèvres porcelain factory as a sculptor in 1757 at the age of nineteen and held this position until 1768. He then became a modeller and finally, in 1780, took up the post of chief sculptor, to which he devoted the rest of his career, until 1801. No less than forty-

three years of service at the Royal Porcelain Factory enabled him to develop his art of modelling, which was very much in line with the taste of his time.

This beautiful terracotta group with a silver patina is a very good example of this. It represents a Chinese man, his wife and their child who is clinging to his mother's dress. At their feet, chickens are pecking at the grain they have been kind enough to give them. Should we see here an allegory of the fruits of a marriage, producing grain that allows the household to eat? This is not certain. At the Manufacture de Sèvres, Leriche developed a series of characters and scenes related to the theatre, a very fashionable pastime in the last quarter of the 18th century. He did not fail to represent the great actors such as Prévaille, in the role of Figaro.

Our group is rather inspired by the vogue for China that was going on throughout the 18th century and in particular from the 1730s onwards in the wake of Christophe Huet's (1700-1759) decorations for the Château de Chantilly (1737), with the spread of models engraved by François Boucher (1703-1770), Gabriel Huquier (1695-1772) or with the suites engraved by Jean-Baptiste Pillement (1728-1808).

The terracotta group presented here is similar to another similar group (fig. 1), sold at Christie's on 15 November 1984 (lot 318). It was signed and dated: "j. Leriche fec. 1785", which could allow us to date our work to around that date. The subject could be inspired by the cartoons for the Chinese tapestry designed by François Boucher to be executed in tapestry at the Beauvais factory.



Fig. 1 : Josse Leriche, *The oriental family*, 1785, Christie's, 1984, lot 318.