

Rare Burns sculpture sold at auction

A rare nineteenth century bust of the poet Robert Burns wearing a laurel wreath of holly leaves and berries has fetched £12,700 at auction.

The white marble bust was created in 1858 by the renowned Edinburgh sculptor Peter Slater, inspired by classical antiquity and the winter season that includes Burns' Night.

The 64cm tall sculpture, titled simply "Burns", went under the hammer at Sotheby's in London where it was bought by an anonymous online bidder amid international interest.

Christopher Mason, Head of Sotheby's European Sculpture and Works of Art sales, said: "Busts of Burns are rare on the art market.

"Portrait sculpture was extremely in vogue in that moment, and there was a move to commemorate the great figures of history in marble. This is a finely carved example that would add gravitas to any library collection."

Slater, a renowned portraitist who made various busts of influential Scottish writers, poets, and scientists, was born in Edinburgh the son of a marble-cutter on Picardy Place.

He entered an apprenticeship at the Edinburgh sculpture studio of Samuel Joseph in 1823 and six years later moved with Joseph to London, where he was admitted into the Royal Academy in 1831.

Slater returned to Edinburgh in 1833, and is best known for his contributions to the Scott Monument in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens.

His use of the wreath, symbolising triumph in Roman antiquity, is thought to demonstrate his deep admiration for Burns.



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