"ARISTOTLE AND PHYLLIS" MICHAEL POWOLNY WIENER KERAMIK CA. 1910

Ceramic figurine "Aristotle and Phyllis", design Michael Powolny, manufactured by Wiener Keramik, ca. 1910, pale earthenware colorfuly glazed, marked

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"Aristotle and Phyllis" is based on a tale according to which the beautiful Phyllis outwitted and exposed the philosopher Aristotle out of revenge. Aristotle had demanded virtue from his protégé, the Macedonian prince Alexander, and forbade him to meet his beloved Phyllis. However, Aristotle himself fell victim to the seductive charms of the young beauty and became a laughingstock at the entire court as a lustful old man. In the figurine Powolny captures the moment when the love-struck old man allows himself to be mounted like a horse by Phyllis, thus exposing himself to ridicule.

The statuette’s design dates back to 1910, to Powolny's Secessionist period, and was artfully manufactured at his own workshop, the Wiener Keramik.

On this piece Powolny displays all his virtuosity. Phyllis’s finely designed nude with her rhythmically arranged hair and the drapery on the old man's robe impressively demonstrate Powolny’s tremendous skills. Other details as well enthuse, such as detailed drawing of Aristotle’s head, standing out almost naturalistically from the idealized face of Phyllis. A “signature” element is the garland of stylized flower forming the reins.

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