

**GASPARD MOENS (1698-1762)**

ALLEGORY OF THE FOUR SEASONS



FLANDERS, ANTWERP, FIRST THIRD OF 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

TERRACOTTA

EACH FIGURE IS SIGNED : *MOENS*

DIMENSIONS :

H. 38.5 CM – W. 16 CM – D. 12 CM

*H. 15<sup>3/16</sup> IN – W. 6<sup>5/16</sup> IN – D. 4<sup>3/4</sup> IN*

**27, Quai Voltaire, 75007 Paris**

Each of the four allegories is represented by a well-rounded cherub holding, or wearing, an object that signifies its season. Winter is a young boy with crossed-arms wrapped in a blanket; Spring is embodied by a young lightly-dressed girl, leaning with her left hand on a tree stump, with a small bunch of flowers held in the folds of her dress; also a young girl, Summer holds a sheaf of corn, an image that is repeated in the styling of her hair; finally Autumn is a boy wearing a small flask slung over his shoulder leaning against a tree trunk that is covered with winding vines.

This type of plump cherub, with its highly expressive demeanour, can be traced back to the work of François Duquesnoy (1597-1643) who himself drew upon the pastoral figures found in Roman and Flemish art of the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see M. Boudon-Machuel, François du Quesnoy 1597-1643, Paris, 2005, p. 74-75). At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century allegorical representations of the four seasons were, along with mythological allegories, one of the most popular themes for Flemish painters and sculptors and followed on directly from representations of the four corners of the world and the four elements. Many of these artists came and settled in the Dutch Republic after fleeing the religious wars and the persecution by the Catholic Church. There are several references to this type of statuette in the major collections of the time and in 1770 we find in the collection of Ange-Laurent Lalive de Jully, a well known collector of terracotta sculptures, the following “Quatre petits groupes en terre cuite de Bérulé (Berruer), représentant les quatre saisons. Ces morceaux sont bien composés et modelés avec beaucoup d’esprit et de goût ”

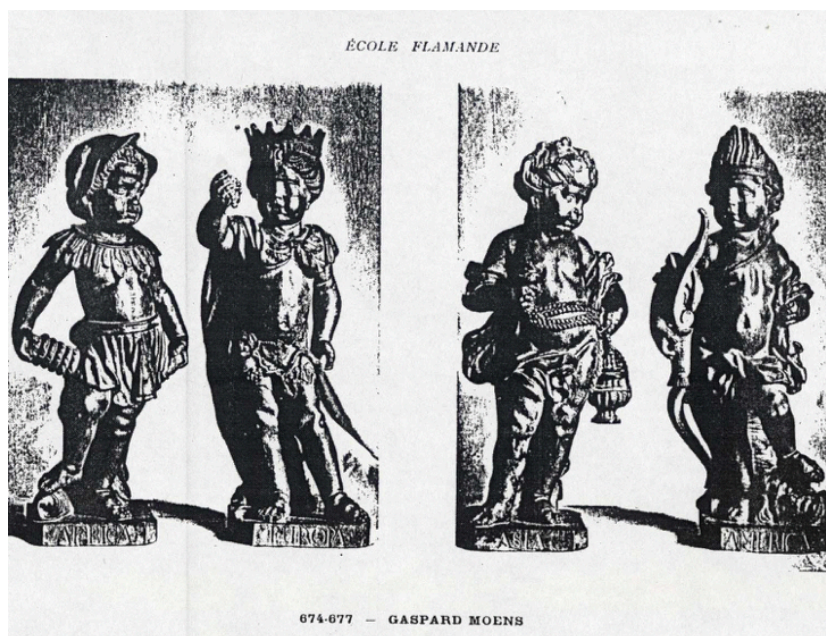


Figure 1  
Gaspard Moens (1698-1762)  
*The Four Parts of the World*  
Terracotta  
Height : 44 cm

Picture taken from the book by  
J.MAGNIN.  
*Un cabinet d'amateur parisien en 1922.*  
*Collections Maurice Magnin.*  
*Peintures, sculptures et dessins de l'École*  
*française.* Tome II, p.439.



This series of figures bears the signature of one of the members of the Moens family, a dynasty of Flemish sculptors based in Antwerp, who most probably all worked in the same workshop. Consequently this makes it somewhat difficult to attribute pieces that are marked with this name. The work that is the most comparable is a serie of terracotta figures representing the four continents that is attributed to Gaspard Moens and now preserved in the Musée Magnin, Dijon (illustrated below in Figure 1 and picture from the book of Jeanne Magnin, *Un cabinet d'amateur parisien en 1922. Collections Maurice Magnin. Peintures, sculptures et dessins de l'Ecole française*, Volume II, p. 439).

Gaspard Moens (1698-1762) was one of the most important sculptors from Antwerp of his day and he produced a number of works for the Church, most notably for the churches of St Jacques and St André of that town. In addition to this he also worked for rich private clients who sought representations of secular themes that were treated with the same elegance and refinement.

#### Bibliography :

Jeanne MAGNIN, *Un cabinet d'amateur parisien en 1922. Collections Maurice Magnin. Peintures, sculptures et dessins de l'Ecole française*, Tome II, page 439.