

ALLEGORY OF FOUR SEASONS



ITALY OR FRANCE, CIRCA 1800

TERRACOTTA

DIMENSIONS: HEIGHT – WINTER 58 1/4 IN, SPRING 62 1/8 IN,
SUMMER 60 5/8 IN, FALL 66 1/8 IN

PROVENANCE: PRIVATE COLLECTION

27, Quai Voltaire, 75007 Paris

Our four life-size terracotta figures represent the allegory of the four seasons. Each allegory is embodied by a young woman dressed in antique drapery emphasizing the grace of their bodies and revealing their shoulders. They are accompanied by characteristic attributes of their season.

Spring has a wreath of various flowers and holds a bouquet in her right hand. The floral abundance emphasizes the renewal of plants in this season, the most fertile of the year.

Summer, very similar to spring in her composition as a twin sister, is crowned with foliage and holds in her left hand a laurel branch, the symbol of summer and peace.

Autumn carries in her right hand a basket of grapes. This fruit is also found at her feet and adorns her head thus referring to the period of oil changes and the generosity of the harvest. The cup that we see in her left hand and the tambourine at her feet without forgetting her big smile probably evoke the festivity and tipsiness of this season.

Winter is the only one of the four allegories to be deprived of garland in her headdress, then covered with a drape. She is holding a theater mask in her right hand and a holly branch in her left hand. At her right foot, sits on a bundle of wood, a firepot to warm it.

The vogue of allegory in the fine arts developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with books of emblems, and is at its peak in Baroque art often inspired by the encyclopedic work of Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (1593).

Our four terracottas are faithful in their representation to the tradition of secular iconography, with the exception of The Winter usually represented by an old man. The choice of the artist to personify the four seasons by young women underlines the omnipresence of nature. Indeed, since the ancient heritage, the abstractions of the seasons are most often of feminine gender since they refer to Proserpine - the goddess of plantations and soil fertility.