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A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF A GEORGIAN COADE STONE KEYSTONE

hand incised with the maker's mark and date: "Coade' Lambeth 1791"

the lively relief portrait of a lascivious youth, grinning, emerging from the tapered keystone, the maker's mark hand-cut to the underside,

DIMENSIONS: 25cm (9^{3/4}") High, 24cm (9^{1/2}") Wide, 24cm (9^{3/4}") Deep

PRICE: £4,625

STOCK CODE: 47099



HISTORY

The energetic relief – designed to leer at the viewer as they approach the doorway, and to be seen from that angle, is testament to the sculptural sophistication that the Coade manufactory was reaching in the 1790's. There's a good chance that the original of this grinning boy was modelled by John Bacon. That this piece is over 230years old, and will have resided for much of that time outside, also demonstrates the extraordinary longevity of Coade's fired stoneware. Others of this pattern are known – one can be found off Bedford Square (a hotbed of Coade ornament), another was in the collection of the late Alison Kelly and is illustrated in her study (and Gazetteer) "Mrs Coade's Stone" Self Publishing Association, Upton-upon-Severn, 1990, pp158-9.

Condition: The tousled hair has losses to some of the tips of the curls, the corners of the keystone are worn and there are impact cracks to the nose and an eyebrow. The hand-cut stamp to the underside is particularly noteworthy: being 1791 it is an earlier mark and great care has been made in the incision of "Coade" and "Lambeth" in a seriffed typeface.

Eleanor Coade (3 June 1733 – 16 November 1821) was a British businesswoman known for manufacturing Neoclassical statues, architectural decorations and garden ornaments made of her Lithodipyra (Coade stone) from 1769, until her death. She inherited the business her mother – also Eleanor – had founded.

Lithodipyra (stone fired twice) was a high quality, weather-resistant, ceramic stoneware; Coade did not invent 'artificial stone' – various inferior quality precursors had been both patented and manufactured over the previous forty years, but she perfected both the clay recipe and the firing process. The recipe was a closely guarded secret. She combined her high-quality manufacturing and artistic taste, together with entrepreneurial, business and marketing skills, to create the overwhelmingly successful stone products of her age. Her firm went on to produce stoneware ornament for St George's Chapel, Windsor; The Royal Pavilion, Brighton; Carlton House, London; the Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford and the Royal Naval College, Greenwich and many other prestigious Georgian projects.

Shortly after her death, her company produced a large quantity of stoneware used in the refurbishment of Buckingham Palace.

Born in Exeter, her parents were wool merchants and weavers, she ran her business, "Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory"; then "Coade and Sealy" and latterly "Coade" (by appointment to George III and the Prince Regent), for fifty years. The business came into being in late 1769, when her mother bought Daniel Pincot's struggling artificial stone business at Kings Arms Stairs, Narrow Wall, Lambeth, a site now occupied by the Royal Festival Hall. In time, the younger Eleanor took charge. Within two years, they sacked Pincot for 'representing himself as the chief proprietor'. John Bacon, a talented sculptor, worked for Mrs Coade from 1769. In 1771 she appointed him as works supervisor; he directed both model-making and design until his death in 1799. His neo-classical models won awards from the Society for the Encouragement of Arts as well as royal patronage.

Eleanor Coade developed her own talent as a modeller, exhibiting at the Society of Artists between 1773 and 1780. She also employed designers and modellers such as John Devaere (John De Vaere (1755–1830)) before he joined Josiah Wedgwood in 1790), John Charles Felix Rossi, Thomas Dubbin, Benjamin West (later a successful painter), and Joseph Panzetta (1789–1830). Their success meant that the Coade Artificial Stone Manufactory gained the business of all the eminent Georgian architects, including Robert Adam, James Wyatt, Samuel Wyatt, Sir William Chambers, John Nash, and John Soane. The foundry opened a show room, Coade's Gallery, on Pedlar's Acre at the Surrey end of Westminster Bridge Road to display her products.

After 1780 Coade was commissioned by King George III to make the Gothic screen (and possibly also replace part of the ceiling) of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. In 1784 she created a comprehensive catalogue of 746 designs produced by the company. It included statues, busts, friezes, fascia, medallions, paterae, coats of arms, balusters, pinnacles, chimneypieces as well as interior ornaments and mouldings. The robust ceramic moulds could be reused – some had a working life of over 50 years.

In 1784 an uncle, Samuel Coade, gave her Belmont House, a holiday villa in Lyme Regis. She decorated the house extensively with Coade stone. In 1799 Mrs Coade recruited her cousin John Sealy as a partner in her business. The company then traded as 'Coade and Sealy' until his death, aged 64, in October 1813, when it reverted to 'Coade'.

In 1813 the company recruited William Croggon as manager to succeed Sealy; he was a sculptor from Grampound in Cornwall. Croggon worked as manager until Coade's death in 1821, when he bought the firm from her estate for about £4,000 (he had hoped to inherit it). The business continued to be successful long after Coade's death, but Croggon went bankrupt in 1833 due to both changing tastes and the failure of the Duke of York to pay his debts.

A devout Baptist, Eleanor Coade died unmarried in Camberwell and was buried in Bunhill Fields in a family grave that was later destroyed in the Blitz.