

EARLY 20TH CENTURY ITALIAN TERRACOTTA SCULPTURE OF FOUR BOYS BY S. MELANI

$2,200

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This charming antique terracotta sculpture from Italy, circa 1930, depicts four young boys grouped shoulder to shoulder in a lively, intimate composition. Each figure wears a wide-brimmed hat and is rendered with distinct facial expressions, ranging from soft smiles to joyful laughter, capturing a moment of youthful camaraderie. The sculptor skillfully varies the tilt of each head and the treatment of the garments to create movement and personality across the piece, giving it a narrative quality that draws the viewer in.

The sculpture is modeled in terracotta and finished with a warm ochre-toned patina, enhanced by subtle glazing that accentuates the details of the hair, faces, and drapery. The surface shows a beautifully time-softened finish, with gentle variations in tone that highlight the depth of the modeling. The reverse is incised with the number “723” and marked “Déposé,” indicating a registered design, along with the signature “S. Melani.”

Salvatore Melani (1902–1934) was an Italian sculptor known for his expressive figural works produced in terracotta, plaster, and occasionally bronze. His compositions often depict children or genre scenes with a naturalistic and sentimental quality, aligning with early 20th century decorative sculpture trends. Some sources suggest a possible association with European workshops and publishers, including links to Belgian production houses such as Arnova, which distributed decorative figures across the continent. Due to his short career, signed works such as this example are increasingly sought after for their character and craftsmanship.

In excellent condition commensurate with age and use, this engaging antique sculpture would make a delightful focal point on a console, bookshelf, or mantel, adding warmth and personality to a Country French, rustic, or eclectic interior.

Dimensions: 22"W x 5.5"D x 11"H

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