



La chambre à coucher de l'empereur

Reuben Nakian

(1897–1986)
Worked in New York, NY, and Stamford, CT

Year created: 1954



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38" x 76" x 30"

Bronze

deCordova Permanent Collection 1999.46, Gift of Mrs Helen Stern

Translated as "The Emperor's Bedchamber," this piece alludes to an image of Emperor Napoleon and his wife Josephine in a passionate embrace. Its complex forms indicate the drapery of bed linens, the curves of human forms, and the structure of furniture. The most recognizable shape is the Emperor's cornered hat, quite visible at the upper left. Each of these elements, blended together in one dynamic form, creates an illusion of all-over movement, as if many things are happening simultaneously.

As one of very few artists who applied the principles of Abstract Expressionist painting to three-dimensional work, Nakian was one of the most important sculptors of mid-century America. This abstract monumental piece, *La chambre à coucher de l'empereur* represents a turning point in his artistic career. This was his first work on a monumental scale, cast in bronze, and intended for outdoor display.

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