Model - Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727)

Object: Model
Place of origin: Great Britain (made)
Date: ca. 1730 (made)
Artist/Maker: Rysbrack, John Michael (maker)
Materials and Techniques: Terracotta
Credit Line: Given by Dr W. L. Hildburgh FSA
Museum number: A.1-1938
Gallery location: British Galleries, Room 54, case 2

Public access description
Object Type
This terracotta figure is a study for the full-size marble by John Michael Rysbrack (1694-1770) for the monument to Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) erected in Westminster Abbey in 1730. Rysbrack's monument was based on a design by the painter, designer and architect William Kent (1685-1748). Design & Designing
Rysbrack adapted and improved Kent's design, a fact which was recognised by his contemporary and friend George Vertue, who noted that the monument was 'a noble and Elegant work by Mr Michael Rysbrack. much to his Reputation, tho the design or drawing of it on paper was poor enough, yet for that only Mr Kent is honourd with his name on it (Pictor et Architect inventor). which if it had been deliverd to any other Sculptor besides Rysbrack, he might have been glad to have his name omitted'. People
Rysbrack was one of the leading sculptors active in Britain in the first half of the 18th century. Born in Antwerp, the son of a painter, he arrived in London in 1720 with his brother, also an artist. Rysbrack specialised in portrait busts and funerary monuments, and executed many in Westminster Abbey, often in conjunction with the architect James Gibbs, or as here, William Kent. Rysbrack's deft and sensitive handling of terracotta may well reflect his Flemish training and background. Materials & Making
Terracotta (fired clay) was often used for sculptors' models, although it could also be employed for finished works. This is likely to have been a preliminary model, and may even have formed part of the sculptor's contract.

Descriptive line
Sculpture model, terracotta, for a memorial to Sir Isaac Newton for Westminster Abbey, by John Michael Rysbrack, Britain, ca. 1730

Physical description
Sculpture, terracotta model for monument of Sir Isaac Newton by John Michael Rysbrack. Newton is shown reclining on an oblong plinth resting his right arm on a pile of books. He wears an ample drapery over classical dress.

Dimensions
Height: 36 cm, Width: 53 cm, Depth: 23 cm

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Object history note

Historical context note
Rysbrack's retirement sale of 24/25 January 1766, Langford's Covent Garden. First day sale, lot 42: 'Two ditto (figures) a sketch of Sir Isaac Newton, and a Bishop' in a section headed 'MODELS', which seems to mean 3 dimensional models, though not specified as terracotta.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O73121/sir-isaac-newton-1642-1727-model-rysbrack-john-michael/