



While the three founders of animal sculpture – Barye, Bugatti, Pompon – dealt extensively with wild animals, they were less interested in cats. In old age, Barye modelled a single small but hugely successful representation, the *Chat assis*; Pompon ignored it and Bugatti represented it only twice, in the *Chat à l'écuelle* and in *Femme au chat*. Both artists of the Modern period who extensively dealt with this animal with passion and perfection, restoring its universal characteristics with apparent immediacy, were Foujita and Steinlen. The first in his drawings, engravings and paintings, and the latter, who is the only one to have left us a unique collection of around twenty sculpted models in addition to his graphic and painted works... It has to be said that Steinlen is, as far as we know, the one whose life was most devoted with these domestic animals: in his studio at 58 rue de Caulaincourt, the cats, including twelve Siamese, around thirty occupied the house and garden, known as the "Capital's Cat's cottage". This was the setting for his most astonishing painting, *L'Apothéose des Chats* (The Apotheosis of Cats), which almost single-handedly illustrates a kind of takeover of his life by these animals...

Thus, with a very hieratic *Chat égyptien* – signed with the artist's monogram in the form of a seated cat – we present a study in which it is shown seated and the other three, stretched out in majesty or lying on the ground, ears pricked up in an attitude of wakefulness or simple repose... As for the editions, diversity and a certain vagueness prevail, but an autograph letter from February 13, 1913, which recently appeared on the market, enables us to understand them a little better. It is addressed to a certain Lamberty:

*I wanted to write to you on Sunday but that very day I received from Gilsoul a place for the dress rehearsal of La demoiselle de Magasin ... Nothing very new apart from that. However, the day before yesterday I was able to go and retouch the 10 waxes for the cats at Hébrard's.
It will go quicker than I thought and we'll be able to get the casts at the end of the month...
I haven't seen Richer or Rossi again...
Congratulations for the purchase of the Courbet.
Glad to hear of Rousseau's success.*

This letter tells us that Hébrard's editions, all of which were lost-wax casts, began during the artist's lifetime and that he was able to take over the waxes. Examples bear the stamp "A.A. Hébrard, cire perdue Paris", sometimes with one of the foundry's usual numberings in brackets, a number from 1 to 9 for the units, preceded or not by a letter from A to E for the tens. Otherwise, there are some very fine sand castings, which we might think of as being from the period, with no indication of the cast and edition, while others are stamped or inscribed in a discreet manner (foundry or editor's mark?) with the letters "CM" underneath, mainly sand cast or, more rarely, lost-wax cast. Then, in the 1970s, the heirs extended the editions by examples bearing the stamp "C. Valsuani cire perdue Paris". As far as the signature is concerned, the bronzes are most often inscribed "Steinlen" in cursive script; more rarely, they may bear, with or without a signature, the monogram of the artist's initials with the S in the shape of a seated cat.



Steinlen, *L'Apothéose des Chats*, private collection.



Adapted from the cabaret "Le Chat Noir", Steinlen produced numerous works for Rodolphe Salis's cabaret, including the exceptional painting *L'Apothéose des Chats* and the famous cabaret poster that would later travel the World. He contributed to the many artistic and satirical journals that were forbidden after the 1881 law about press freedom. Yet it was with a darkened palette that his work explored the working classes of Paris, in a world that exuded misery and revolt. In addition to the social dimension of his work, Steinlen was also an exceptional painter and a animal sculptor.

He came to Paris at the age of nineteen and had to devote himself to industrial design. Around 1880, he settled in Montmartre and became a regular visitor at the Chat noir cabaret. He then began to draw for all the humorous newspapers. He contributed successively to *Le Chat Noir*, *Gil Blas Illustré*, *Le Mirliton*, *Le Chambard*, *Le Rire* and *L'Assiette au beurre*. In 1911, he was one of the thirteen founders of the short-lived journal *Les humoristes*, along with Forain, Willette, Léandre, J.Véber and others. His work is considerable. His illustrations include Joliet's novel *L'entrée du clown* by F. Champsaure, *Les chansons de femmes* by P. Delmet, *Dans la rue*, *Sur la route* by Aristide Bruant, *Barrabas* by Lucien Descaves, *L'Affaire Crainquebille* by Anatole France, *Les gueules noires* by Emile Morel, *Histoire du chien de briquet* by Charles Nodier, etc. He also produced some very fine posters, etchings and a number of paintings, including: *Le 14 juillet*, *L'absinthe*, *Le beau soir* and a masterly portrait of *Anatole France*. He exhibited his landscapes, nudes, portraits and flowers at the Salon des Indépendants from 1893 onwards. Steinlen, a painter, draughtsman and engraver, turned to sculpture at the beginning of the 20th century and, like many young artists of his time, worked in plastiline.

CHAT COUCHÉ SUR LE SOL

Salon of the S.N.B.A, 1906 (Bronze); Musée d'Orsay, bronze, Hébrard.

Bronze, richly shaded dark brown patina.
H : 7,1 cm, L : 16,2 cm, D : 16 cm
Lifetime cast signed "Steinlen", lost wax cast, old artist edition - beautiful edition.
Circa 1920



CHAT COUCHÉ oreilles dressées
Bronze, richly shaded brown patina
H : 4,7 cm, L : 12,8 cm, D : 6,4 cm
Cast signed "Steinlen", "cire perdue" details, engraved under "CM".
Circa 1930-1940



CHAT ASSIS SUR UN PROMONTOIRE
Bronze, richly shaded dark brown patina
H : 14 cm, L : 5,1 cm, D : 8,5 cm
Lifetime cast signed "Steinlen", old artist edition - rare
Circa 1920



CHAT COUCHÉ, tête levée, pattes parallèles
Bronze, richly shaded dark brown patina
H : 8 cm, L : 23,2 cm, D : 12,1 cm
Lifetime cast signed "Steinlen", old artist edition (lost wax cast).
Circa 1920



CHAT ÉGYPTIEN ASSIS
Bronze, richly shaded dark brown patina
H : 18,9 cm, L : 14,9 cm, D : 6,8 cm
Lifetime cast signed "Steinlen", numbered "(9)" with the artist monogram seal, cast and edition by "A. A. Hébrard cire perdue, Paris" (seal).
Circa 1920