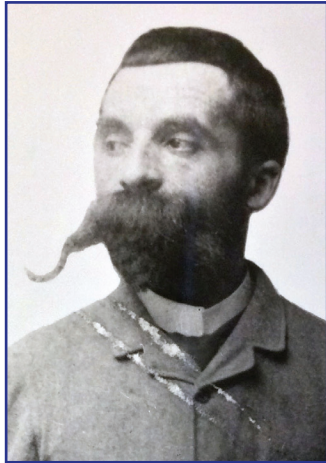


François POMPON (1855-1933)



COSETTE

Bronze, richly shaded clear brown patina

H: 80,5 cm, L : 35 cm, D: 23,5 cm

Lifetime cast signed "Pompon", titled "Cosette", cast and old edition by Siot Decauville fondeur (withtout seal and "3737").

Circa 1893

Edition details :

Only example identified for this first reduction.

one in the life size, 4 for both reductions.

Exhibition & Museum references :

Salon in 1888, U. E. 1889 (plaster; V. Hugo Museum).

Salon in 1890 (bronze).

Salon in 1898 & U. E. 1900 (marble).

Born in Saulieu in 1855 in an craftsman environment, his father was a carpenter cabinetmaker, François Pompon shows a taste and an early talent for sculpture since the priest of his hometown helps him to get a scholarship at the age of fifteen to study Art in Dijon. Pompon then followed the evening classes of the Fine Arts School, in architecture, engraving and sculpture, and to ensure his everyday life, works as an apprentice at a funeral marbrier. After the War of 1870, the French economy was at half-mast and he failed to get a new scholarship requested in Paris this time. Never mind, François still joined the capital in 1875, and thanks to his will and talent as a stonemason, he found a job in a funeral business in the Montparnasse cemetery. Pompon then followed the evening classes of the Petite École and of the École des Arts Appliqués, where Carpeaux, Dalou, Charles Garnier and Rodin were trained before him.

To ensure his daily life, Pompon quickly became a practician for important sculptors from whom he learnt the market strategies and from 1878, he sent regularly portraits, busts and figures to the Salon. Therefore, Practice and Art will constitute the difficult balance of his existence. Among his first important achievements, the *Cosette* from 1888, in the spirit of the period such as the one by Convers (1860-1915), was often exhibited as the one he hoped it would bring the success.

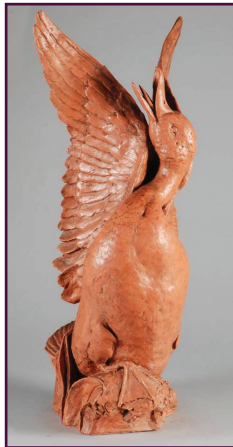
Alas, despite the references from Falguière, Mercié and Rodin, the model was not awarded and the French State refused to acquire it three times, even when the marble was exhibited at the Salon in 1898. This failure did not discourage him and since Success was not there, Pompon continued to devote himself to the sculpture for others. He was only a «practician» for his colleagues, and this becomes usual for him until the age of sixty years. As a simple and happy kind man, the artist was satisfied with this situation, because he was neither intriguing nor ambitious like many of his colleagues. Pompon worked for academic artists such as Falguière, Puech, Mercié or Saint-Marceaux but also Camille Claudel, for her perilous onyx of the *Vague* and the *Persée* in marble.

And above all, he worked for Rodin, on the *Balzac* in particular, and became his studio chief in 1893. But Rodin was complicated, paid little and badly, and Pompon escaped to join Saint-Marceaux. The latter employed him until his death in 1915; Pompon maintained excellent relations with the Saint-Marceaux couple, who often received him for the summer in Cuy, with his wife Berthe. It was in Cuy and its surroundings at the century turn, he usually observed farmyard animals and ended up buying a house. It is in Saulieu in 1888,



Convers Louis, Sketch for *Cosette*, terracotta, Jersey, Hauteville House, inv. 1734.





Canard appelant (1884), former UDB collection.

during a country walk, that François Pompon has the revelation of the strong impression generated by the simplification of animal forms, observing a goose whose shadow was cut out on a bright wall.

Pompon turned almost naturally to Animal Sculpture, surely encouraged in this by the interest of A.-A. Hébrard, the editor of the very young *Bugatti*, when his Gallery presented in 1906 the first bronze of the *Poule Cayenne* at the Salon des Artistes Français.

The First World War brought a halt to public commissions, the art market and galleries. To survive, Pompon is employed in the Samaritan or forced to carry sandbags to protect the statues of Paris.

Yet it was during this period, with the upcoming modernity of the 20th century, that he conceived his bestiary, built with his own vision of the relationship between movement and shapes in sculpture, «Movement creates Shape», he said. Pompon also remembered Rodin's *Balzac* on which he has worked: building the shape from the subject, seeking abstraction and suppressing anecdote. From then, with the *Ours blanc* as an iconic work, his bestiary is booming, with the proper movements of the smooth, its incisions and reliefs. The vitality of his art will become even more vivid when he becomes aware of the importance of enlargements that could be generalized to all his models, such as the *Pélican*, *Taureau*, *Grand Cerf* and *Hippopotame*.

The birds have a prominent place in his Œuvre. Indigenous animals are among the first subjects modeled by the sculptor with the *Canard appelant* from 1884, still naturalist but already in full movement, followed by the *Poule cayenne* in 1906 which, as shown by the picture, not yet entirely smooth, already announces the clear line of the *Canard* from 1911.

Cosette is exhibited in full size, first in plaster, at the Salon des Artistes Français (1888) and then at the Universal Exhibition the following year. It reappears, in bronze this time, at the Salon in 1890 (an only example listed in that size and not localized today) as belonging to the foundries Siot and Persinka, which suggests the beginning of the edition at that time. Aware that *Cosette* can impose herself, Pompon wants to make it in marble in order to propose it to the French state. The latter then

refused three times despite the political support of the member and the senator from his hometown, and the artistic recommendations of his employers.

With the incomes of his practices, Pompon bought the marble block at his own expense and sent his work to the Salon des Artistes Français (1898) and then to the Universal Exhibition the following year.

Despite this rich pedigree, and the ten years of action of Pompon, the marble is not purchased by the French State and the bronze edition by Siot Decauville was stopped progressively. The *Cosette* already presents its helical composition, which will make its success in animal sculpture, « Movement creates Form».



Pompon, *Cosette*, plaster, Jersey, Hauteville House, inv. 1491

