

F R A N Ç O I S P O M P O N

COQ DORMANT (before 1914-1923)

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Bronze, H : 20,6 cm, L : 31 cm, D : 12,4 cm

Lifetime cast signed "Pompon", cast and edition by "A.A.Hébrard cire perdue"(seal), numbered "(9)". Cast in 1925



Born in 1855, during a triumphant Second Empire and builder, Pompon is an artist whose career was more than original. Indeed, until the age of 63, he lived only thanks to the practice for other sculptors (Rodin, Claudel, Saint-Marceaux, Mercié, Falguière, Lecourtier etc.). This is to say that the Sculpture that he exhibited at the Salon quite regularly since 1879, busts, portraits, and Cosette, proposed in an unsuccessful edition by Siot-Decauville, had met almost no success; neither sale, nor order, only the practice to survive, which apparently satisfies the artist who seems to be content with this state. It was at his main employer, the sculptor Saint-Marceaux, for whom he knew how to prove indispensable, that he would observe and study at the turn of the century animals, at the time mainly those of the farm.

It was not until the exhibition by Hébrard at the 1906 Salon de la *Poule Cayenne* that the Pompon as we know it appeared at the age of 51 ; however, the success was really here since he sold only 23 animal bronzes to Hébrard from 1906

to 1919. In fact, it was not until the exhibition of the *Ours blanc* with a rather complete set of his works at the Salon d'Automne in 1922 that his career as Animalier developed in a lightning-like manner: at the age of 67, he was then part of innovative artists, and became immediately recognized by the new generation of animal sculptors as the guide of the « Ecole du Lisse » until his death in 1933.

Observation and representation of the animal «with all its falbalas»; simplification not reductive; it is the movement that creates the form, a sculpture «without any hole or shadow», these are essentially the guidelines of the artist's approach. Rich approach, because the surface of the smooth is in turn animated by movements, incised by hollows and enriched by reliefs. And as Bourdelle congratulated him at an artists' banquet: "Your works, my dear Master Sculptor, have the spirit, the stream of rapid observation, taste and measure and – too rare quality of all time – they are seen deep and they are pushed far away: they can be said finished."

THE EDITION

Pompon remained editor of «his little beasts» as he himself called them, except for four of them, the *Poule Cayenne*, the *Coq dormant*, the *Truie* and the *Pintade*, cast by Hébrard until 1933. The *Coq dormant* was one of the models of Pompon's first solo exhibition at the Hébrard Gallery in 1919. The latter is the best founder-editor of the 20th century, his examples of the models by Pompon, always very beautiful quality, are sometimes retouched by the sculptor.

THE EXAMPLE

This example belongs to the corpus of bronzes cast from 1918 to 1932, this one in 1925 and acquired by the Count of Grunne, one of the great collectors of Pompon.

Settled in Belgium, in Brussels, he acquired from Pompon some thirty works, bronzes, stones and marbles, including the only copy of the Pelican (life size) in lifetime cast.

Artist description:

Pompon was the son of a carpenter and first studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Dijon. In 1875 he travelled to Paris, where he worked as a jobbing sculptor, whilst pursuing his studies at the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs under the sculptors Aimé Millet and Joseph-Michel Caillé (1836–81); there he also met the animalier sculptor Pierre-Louis Rouillard (1820–81). At the Salon of 1888 Pompon exhibited Cosette (plaster; Paris, Musée Victor Hugo), inspired by Hugo's *Les Misérables*. However, until 1914 his livelihood was gained as a sculptor's assistant. In this capacity he served many of the prominent sculptors of the day, including Rodin. It was his long-term employment with Charles-René Paul de Saint Marceaux that furnished him with the means to pursue his own career as a sculptor of animals. His studies of animals in the open air began in earnest in 1902, but it was only in 1923 with the exhibition of his Polar Bear (marble; Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts) at the Salon d'Automne, that Pompon was acclaimed for his refined simplification of nature. His ability to contain the essential character of creatures in smooth and abbreviated form parallels the more audacious abstraction of Brancusi. The collection of 300 works that Pompon left to the French State were eventually installed in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, in 1948. The Musée d'Orsay in Paris has a large collection of Pompon's plaster models.