XAVIER EECKHOUT



François POMPON (Saulieu 1855 - Paris 1933)

"Pigeon Nicolas"

Bronze

Signed « Pompon » in the wax, at the back of the right leg

Stamped by the C. Valsuani foundry

First state “A” from 1926, without base, tail down, resting on the ground

Model exhibited at the Salon d’Automne, 1926, conceived and realised in 1926

29,5 x 26,5 x 15 cm.

Related work in museum :

Plaster model kept at the Musée d'Orsay under inventory number RF 3840, Pompon bequest 1933, assigned to the Musée d'Orsay in 1986.

History of the model :

A new model in 1926, that marks the beginning of a series, the Pigeon Nicolas is a companion to Rue Campagne-Première in Paris, which was Pompon's studio. Archive photograph showing François Pompon with his Pigeon Nicolas in his arms, Rue Campagne-Première.

Auction Houses lots :

Anonymous sale, “Piasa”, 5 april 2006, lot 68 ;

Anonymous sale, “Audap”, 28 november 2024, lot 63.

Literature

Roger Brielle, *Les Albums d’art Druet XXVI*, 1930

Liliane Colas, *Pompon, L’œuvre complète*, Norma éditions, Paris, 2025, pp. 355, n. 119, repr.

Pingeot, Anne ; Le Normand-Romain, Antoinette ; Margerie, Laure de, *Musée d'Orsay. Catalogue sommaire illustré des sculptures*, Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux, 1986, p.222

Artist description:

Ten years before his death, Pompon created two of his most emblematic artworks, the White Bear in 1922 and the Black Panther in 1925. Made of stone, its uniqueness rises it to the echelon of a quality museum piece.

Its prestigious provenance gives its exceptional character. Bought by the collector Jacques André in 1928 at the Salon des Tuileries from François Pompon himself, it has been kept in the family until now. Painted by Bernard Boutet de Monvel, patron of Gustave Miklos, Jacques André (1882-1970) was passioned by the art of his time, he was not very well known by the public but he was very important at that time.

There is a lot of literature on this artwork, which Pompon mentions in the accounts books. It was sold in 1928 for the amount of 7 000 ancient francs.
Modelling his animals with an important economy of graphic resources and sobriety of the shapes, Pompon explained: «I keep many details intended to disappear. I create the animal with almost all its frills. Otherwise, I am losing myself. And then, little by little, I erase in order to keep only what is essential». The sculptor syntheses the appearance of the animal so that he can express its very essence. His rendering of the movement, learnt from Rodin, consists in the combination of several gestures to concentrate the expression. His panther moves forward, motionless, surrounded by an unfinished line.

At the dawn of the XX century, Pompon managed to find an alternative to the Cubism’s deconstruction, « the sculpture without any hole or shade », as he liked to say, building a work with full shape, rounded outlines, refusing geometric and favouring traditional materials.