XAVIER EECKHOUT



François POMPON (Saulieu 1855 - Paris 1933)

Polar Bear

Bronze

Signed « Pompon », on the left back leg

Stamped by the foundry C. Valsuani, to the right of the signature

Model conceived in 1922 and this one cast in 1925, according to Liliane Colas' certificate dated 18 September 2025

Our model is one of the first twenty editions out of thirty-one cast between 1923 and 1928

H. 25 ; L. 45 ; P. 13 cm

History of the model :

The monumental plaster model, created in 1922 for the Salon d'Automne (2m45), is kept at the Musée national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris, to which it was bequeathed upon the death of François Pompon, on deposit at the Musée de l'Homme.

Our model is the first 45 cm reduction, with the legs touching, produced from the marble ordered by the members of the Salon d'Automne for President Frantz Jourdain (offered in 1924) and realised by Jean Joachim Supéry in 1923.

Pompon removed the gap between the legs for the adaptation of the bronze model after the marble was carved, destined for a series of casts from 1924 by the Valsuani foundry in 45 cm, and limited to twenty editions between 1924 and 1925.

Literature

L. Colas, *Pompon, L'œuvre complète*, Norma éditions, Paris, 2025, p. 332, n. 94C,

repr.

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.