

# BOWMAN SCULPTURE

## **HERBERT WARD (British, 1862-1919)**

Herbert Ward was born in London in 1863. From an early age he harboured a fascination for exploration and travel, becoming a sculptor, writer and anthropologist. He grew up in a time when society had gained renewed interest in voyaging to undiscovered places, not to conquer, as their predecessors had, but to explore and gain knowledge.

In 1887, aged 24, Ward's obsession finally took him to Central Africa. He supported himself by working for various trading companies managing the transport of goods and supplies to and from European posts along the length of the Congo River. In 1888, he joined Henry Morton Stanley's Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, serving the two-year expedition in a similar capacity.

Ward journeyed extensively through Africa and his love of the native people, and their customs inspired him to produce work of rare beauty. He learned their customs and languages and drew inspiration from their way of life.

After travelling to New Zealand, Australia and Borneo, Ward returned to Europe to complete his academic studies. Initially enrolling at the Academie Julian, he later went on to study sculpture at the Royal Academy and at the Salon des Artistes Francais.

In 1902, Ward moved permanently to Paris. He found that Paris provided easier access to African and Caribbean models for his sculptures — the French had excellent foundries for bronze casting — and he enjoyed a greater acceptance of his Congolese subjects by the French art academy and the public. He made his debut at the Paris Salon in the summer of 1902 with *Le Sorcier*.

His work earned him many accolades and he was rewarded for his talent and skill, receiving numerous medals and honourable mentions, including gold medals from the Societe des Artistes Francaise for his work *Le Chef de Tribu* in 1908 and *L'Artiste Congolais* in 1910. After a collection of his work was exhibited at the Salon des Orientalistes, several pieces were purchased by the French State, including *La Tete de Jeune Fille* in 1908 and *La Tete d'Indigine Aruwimi* in 1911. Shortly after this exhibition, Ward was made a Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur.

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A skilled writer, Ward's books documenting his travels in Africa reveal much of his thinking and inspiration behind his sculptures. In his work entitled *Five Years with the Congo Cannibals* (originally published in 1890) he writes about his desire to achieve "honest observation".

He developed enormous understanding and sympathy for his subjects, so much so that his representations are disturbingly real. Although often brutal and cruel by nature, he saw a gentle side to the Congolese tribes and as a result his sculpture often portrays the tension between these emotions.

Ward's work has been praised for its detailed ethnographic accuracy, but Ward was always adamant that his pieces were, above all, art and not scientific studies. Theodore Roosevelt wrote of Ward: "All the mystery and the savagery and the suffering ... and the harsh beauty of the African forest come out in Mr Ward's works. Only an artist could have done what he has done, and no artist could have done it had there not lain within him the soul of a great man, a man both strong and pitiful."

Around 1906, Ward installed his Congo collection on the upper floor of his Paris studio. In this private museum, Ward carefully and painstakingly designed the installation of objects to maximize the display's aesthetic effect and to serve as a foil for his bronze sculptures of Congo. His collection included over 1,000 weapons and many textiles, carved figures, musical instruments and personal ornaments.