

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

JEAN-ALEXANDRE FALGUIÈRE (French, 1831-1900)

Alexandre Falguière was exemplary for the academic standards of French sculpture in the 19th century. His work garnered him both critical praise and popular admiration for its refinedness and quality, as such today his career epitomises the successful academic artist of the 19th century. Falguière began to study art in his hometown of Toulouse but soon moved to Paris to work for the great sculptors Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse and Jean-Louis Chenillon. Subsequently in 1854 he was admitted into the École des Beaux-Arts, under the tutelage of François Jouffroy, and only five years later won the coveted Prix de Rome.

From then on, his career gathered pace and as he won medals at the Salon in 1864 for *The Winner of the Cockfight* and in 1868 for *Tarcisius*, the latter being a Medal of Honour, by the 1870s Falguière was counted amongst the leading sculptors of France. He enjoyed the patronage of the state and was awarded the Legion of Honour in 1870, being made officer in 1878 and commander in 1889. In 1882 he was made a professor at the École des Beaux-Arts and subsequently taught both at the school and in his studio, whilst also continuing to exhibit at the yearly Salon. He was one of the first established sculptors to praise the work of Auguste Rodin. Upon his death in 1900, a large retrospective was organized in his honour at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts.

As a student, Falguière was very much influenced by the Classics and the models of Renaissance Italy. This is evident in his earlier work, when the artist was greatly inspired by the sculptor Giambologna (1529–1608), whose *Mercury* must have clearly influenced Falguière's *Winner of the Cock Fight*. The artist's more mature work breaks free from this restrictive Classical approach and demonstrates a newly devised liveliness. Falguière was also a talented painter, and his canvasses show the same vigour of his bronzes.