

# BOWMAN SCULPTURE

## **EDWARD ONSLOW-FORD (English, 1852-1901)**

Edward Onslow Ford was born in London in 1852. Unlike many of his contemporaries, the artist initially studied in Europe. At the age of 18, he studied painting for one year in Antwerp, at the Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten. He was then encouraged by one of his professors, Michael Wagnmüller, to take up sculpture at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich.

Ford returned to London with his newly wed wife, Anne Gwendoline von Kreuzer, in 1874. Ten years later, the sculptor took a studio opposite Alfred Gilbert in Fulham, and they became firm friends, sharing their European experiences and experimenting with the *cire perdue* method of casting.

Having established his practice as a portrait sculptor, it was only in 1884 that Ford plead his allegiance to the New Sculpture movement. In that year, *Linus* was exhibited at the Royal Academy together with Rodin's *Age of Bronze*, which was first created in 1876 and made the fortunes of the master in Paris. As well as deriving inspiration from the French master's composition, *Linus* also demonstrated Ford's ability to assimilate the contemporary English taste, imbuing his model with mythological references.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Ford had a number of successes at the Royal Academy. His models *Folly* (1886), *Dancing and Music* (1890), *The Singer* (1889) *Peace* (1891) and *Applause* (1893) set a new standard for the representation of female subjects in the late-Victorian period and are some of the artist's most accomplished works. In particular, *Singer* and *Applause* (now at TATE Britain) are agreed to be two of the best examples of 19<sup>th</sup>-century mixed media sculpture.

The success Ford received at the Royal Academy attracted many commissions for monuments and public works. Amongst these are the monument to *General Gordon* (1890), which depicts the distinctive general proudly sat astride a camel. While the piece's composition is particularly impressive, it is the *Shelley Memorial* (1892) at University College, Oxford, which has been considered by many Ford's most exceptional memorial sculpture.