

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

FELIX CHARPENTIER (French, 1858-1924)

Born at Bollene on 10th January 1858 Charpentier's father worked in a brick factory and it was here that the young Charpentier first showed his talents as a sculptor, modelling small figures from the pieces of clay he found on the factory floor.

Initially educated at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Avignon and then on to Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He studied under Pierre Cavelier and exhibited at the Paris Salon from 1882 onwards, winning several medals, including the Silver Medal at the Exposition Universelle of 1889. The following year he won the Paris Salon's first prize for his work *La Chanson* and the Salons highest prize The Medal of Honour for his sculpture entitled *Les Lutteurs*. This work was purchased by the French State and installed in the town of Bollene.

Regarded as one of the outstanding sculptors of his day, his work was characterised by powerful sentiments and expression. "*The execution of his sculptures was marked by freedom of expression and beauty of form and personified modern art at its most harmonious*" (Boucheny de Grandval in Mackay, 1992).

Charpentier was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in 1905, France's highest award, established by Napoleon in 1802. His success at the Salon prompted numerous commissions for public monuments, including a large fountain for the Jardin du Luxembourg entitled *La Source Humaine*, the sculptures for the façade of the Grand Palais in Paris and *Les Lutteurs* (The Wrestlers), shown at the Louvre then given by the State to the town of Bollène.