

Truth

ALBERT TOFT (British, 1862 – 1949)

Albert Toft was one of the most productive artists forming the second generation of the New Sculpture movement. His network of friendships and collaborations captures the close-knit relationships that shaped the development of the period, being a close friend of Alfred Gilbert, Frederic Leighton and the painter John William Waterhouse, among others. As a sculptor, he contributed to the development of the discipline in England by mingling the style of his teacher Édouard Lantéri with the more symbolist leanings of Gilbert.

Toft was born near Birmingham in 1862, where his father worked as a modeller for the electroplating firm Elkington & Co. During his teenage years, he was apprenticed at the world-renowned pottery manufacturers Wedgwood, while also taking evening classes at the Hanley and Newcastle-under-Lyme art schools.



George Clausen, *Portrait of Albert Toft (1862-1949)*, 1913, oil on canvas, Birmingham Museums Trust

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In 1880 he received a scholarship to study at the National Art Training School in London, where he was awarded silver medals for his second-, and third-year submissions. It was here that Toft would learn from the renowned sculptor Lantéri, whose influence, along with that of Dalou, can be seen in Toft's best-known 'ideal works', such as *Fate-Led* (1892) and *The Spirit of Contemplation* (1901).

Toft exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1885 with numerous successes. Some of his most notable works are *The Sere and Yellow Leaf* (1892), *Spring* (1897), *The Spirit of Contemplation* (1901) and *The Metal Pourer* (1915). In 1915 his sculpture *The Bather* was purchased using the Royal Academy's Chantrey Fund and is currently part of the TATE collection.

Toft was elected as a member of the Art Workers Guild in 1891. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors in 1938.



This rare work by Toft shows him working under the influence of the Art Nouveau movement with long flowing organic lines and strong symbolism. The figure is Veritas, the goddess of Truth and the daughter of Saturn. She is holding an open book, a symbol of learning and knowledge. In the same way we describe a character as being an open book, the open book in this sculpture represents the record of our lives.

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

Literature

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