

# Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



**Aimé-Jules Dalou (1838 - Paris 1902)**

**La Berceuse or The Rocking Chair**

Unique lost wax cast

54 cm

Signed 'DALOU', and stamped 'Cire Perdue. A.A. Hébrard '

In this wonderfully familial and timeless scene, Dalou portrays a young mother gazing lovingly down at her full-faced, newborn baby who lies cradled in her arms in peaceful slumber. As she does so, the mother's half-open mouth suggests the song of a lullaby escaping her lips to serenade the infant, its rhythm being kept by the gentle oscillations of the rocking chair into which she leans. Dalou has expertly rendered the precarious nature of the child's contented sleep which, despite the mother's best efforts to comfort the baby with her warm embrace and dulcet tones, might be broken at any moment - a fragility highlighted by the suggestion of movement, as the woman pushes the rocking chair back with her feet.

Dalou's precocious young talent had been noticed by the great Jean Baptiste Carpeaux, who brought him to join the "petite école" followed by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He found success with a similarly appealing domestic portrayal of a woman seated, embroidering, and known as *La Brodeuse* which was exhibited at the Salon of 1870 where it was purchased by the state – so beginning a series of early works relating to the imagery of Womanhood of which the present can be included alongside *Maternity* (also known as *Paysanne française*, undated), *Maternal Joy* (c.1872), *La Lecture* (1874), and *La Liseuse* (1877).

Only a year after his Salon breakthrough, Dalou's involvement in the uprisings of the Commune forced

him into exile in London (a more commercial destination than the alternative, Brussels), until 1879. Having become a father himself, and given the political backdrop he had escaped, Dalou decided to explore more intimate subject matter, creating different types of sentimental scenes of motherhood that illustrate the maternal love common to all social classes, from the peasant to the prosperous bourgeois - taking his wife and own daughter as models.

Having debuted at the Royal Academy in 1872 with Maternal Joy, Dalou exhibited a terracotta of the present subject at the same institution entitled Hush-a-bye-baby, (after the English lullaby) in 1874 (now in the V&A Museum, London) where it was received to great public and critical acclaim, being praised for offering 'a new future for the plastic arts'. One of its admirers was the Duke of Westminster, who was so taken by its tenderness that he immediately commissioned a version in marble from the artist, which was exhibited in 1876 under the same title.

Dalou's period in England, had a profound impact on British Sculpture, both in terms of his teaching and the works that he exhibited during that time – including Hush-a-bye-baby.

Arguably, other than Edouard Lantieri, no other sculptor had a more important role in the dissemination of the 'French style' than Dalou, whose practice deeply informed many generations of British sculptors, including those of the 'New Sculpture' movement during the 1870-90's. Indeed whilst in Britain, Dalou taught both first informally and later formally at the newly opened Slade School (invited by Sir Edward Poynter) as well as briefly at the South London Technical Art School, Lambeth. As such a whole host of young British sculptors including Henry Bates, Frederic William Pomeroy, and George Frampton (amongst others) would benefit from the great stimulus that Dalou's teaching and work – with its sensitive, measured naturalism – would offer them during his time spent in London. Marion Henry Spielmann wrote in 1901, "Since the year 1875 or thereabouts a radical change has come over British sculpture... To Carpeaux, no doubt, the inspiration of the new trend was initially due... But it was to Monsieur Dalou that we chiefly owe the great renaissance in England."

The present lost wax cast by Hébrard is the only other known example of the group. Given that the terracotta and the marble remained in England, our bronze was most likely created at the sculptor's request as a sentimental souvenir of the popular composition, modelled from his wife Irma Dalou, and their daughter Georgette. It likely passed from Dalou into the collection of the French art critic Henri Lapauze (1867-1925) before entering the Lafarge collection.

### **Provenance**

Provenance:

Henry Lapauze Collection;

Anonymous sale; Paris, Hotel Drouot, Me Bellier, December 8, 1937, No. 70;

Anonymous sale; Paris, Palais Galliera, Me Rheims, December 10, 1962, No. 161 (5,000 francs) where purchased by;

Fernand Lafarge, his collection until 2019

### **Literature:**

#### Literature:

Albert Flament, "The deserted house", in "The Renaissance of French art and luxury industries", No. 4, April 1926, p. 216 (visible in a photograph of the office of Henry Lapauze)

Henriette Caillaux, 'Dalou. The man - the work ', Paris, 1935, p. 81 and 128

#### Comparative Literature:

Maurice Dreyfous, 'Dalou, his life and his work', Paris, 1903, p. 62 -64

'Jules Dalou, the sculptor of the Republic', cat. exp. Paris, Petit Palais, 2013, p. 356, model and its variants referenced as No. 286

(C. Corbeau-Parsons, Ed.) 'Impressionists in London: French Artists in Exile 1870-1904', exh. cat, Tate, London, 2017.