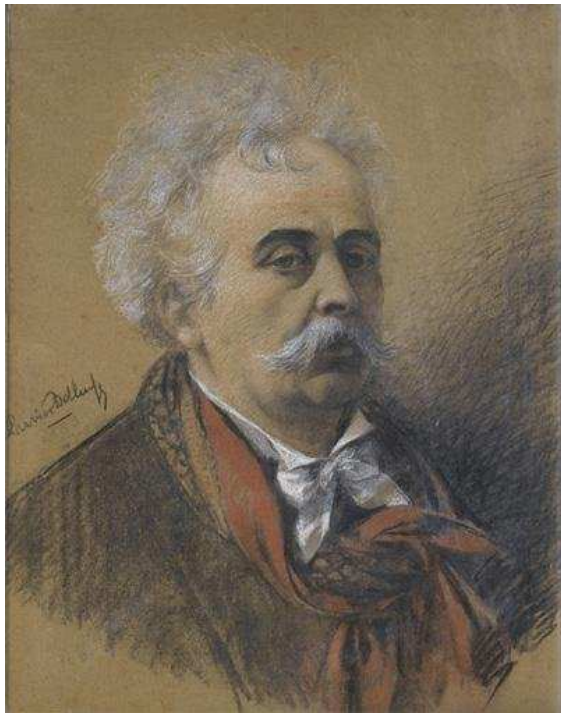


Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse
By Philippe Meunier & Jean Defrocourt



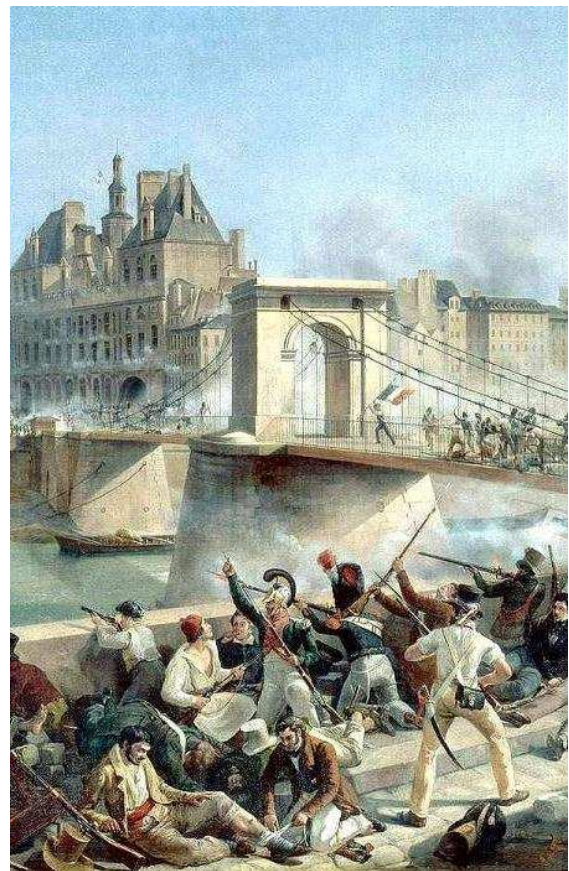
Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (June 12, 1824, Anizy-le-Château - June 4, 1887, Sèvres) was a French sculptor and painter. He was the father of Louis-Robert Carrier-Belleuse.

He was one of the most prolific and versatile sculptors of the 19th century, producing portrait busts, monuments and ideal works, as well as exploiting to the full the commercial opportunities offered by developing technology for the mass production of small-scale sculpture and decorative wares. His style ranged from the unembellished Realism of his male portraits to the neo-Baroque exuberance of his architectural decoration and his art is particularly associated with the amiable opulence of the Second Empire. He signed his works A. Carrier until c. 1868, thereafter adopting the name Carrier-Belleuse.

Carrier-Belleuse began a three-year apprenticeship with a goldsmith at the age of 13, a training that gave him a lifelong sensitivity to intricate surfaces. In 1840

David d'Angers sponsored his entry to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, but his straitened financial circumstances led him to study decorative arts at the Petite Ecole. This left him free to produce small models for such commercial manufacturers of porcelain and bronze, who were beginning to flourish in the 1840s. Few examples of his work of this period are identifiable.

The February 1848 revolution is the second French revolution of the 19th century, it ended the July Monarchy (1830-1848).



By 1850 he was in England, employed as a designer at the Minton ceramic factory, though it is not clear if the revolutionary political events of 1848 were the cause of his departure from France.

In addition to the many decorative objects and statuettes that he modelled for Minton, such as Seahorse with Shell (1855 London, Victoria & Albert Museum), he supplied models for ceramics and metalwork to

other English companies, including such Staffordshire-based firms as Wedgwood and William Brownfield & Sons. In 1855 he returned to France but continued to collaborate with English firms until his death.

From 1857 Carrier-Belleuse regularly exhibited large-scale sculpture at the Salon. His first important success was in 1863 when Napoleon III bought the life-size marble Bacchante with a Herm of Dionysus (Paris, Jard. Tuileries). He often repeated the theme of the beguiling female nude, notably in Sleeping Hebe (marble, 1869 Paris, Mus. d'Orsay). As in the work of his contemporary Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, the neo-Baroque opulence of these statues is tempered by a strain of closely observed Realism.



Bacchante, ca. 1874
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Carrier-Belleuse was one of many sculptors to benefit from Baron

Hausmann's rebuilding of Paris, begun during the Second Empire (1851–70), although in 1870 he was in Brussels working on the decoration of the Bourse and was therefore spared the privations of the siege of Paris in the following year.

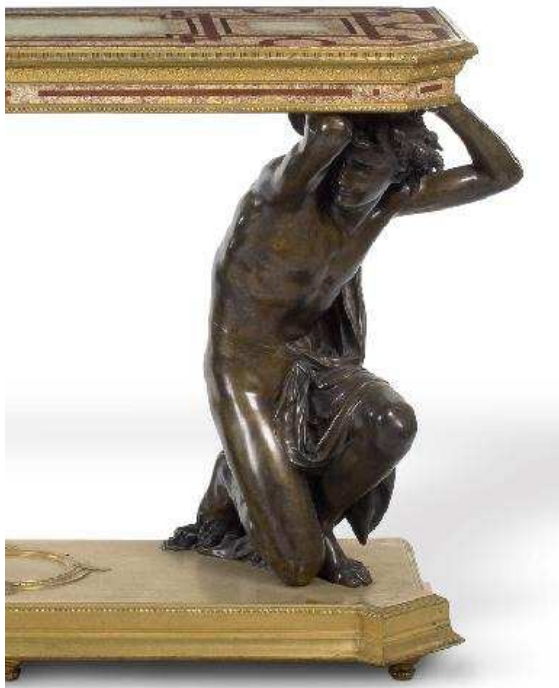


**The grand staircase,
Opéra de Paris**

He contributed to the embellishment of the Louvre, the Tribune du Commerce, the Théâtre de la Renaissance, the Banque de France and Charles Garnier's Opéra. His magnificent electrotyped torchères (1873 in situ) for the grand staircase of the Opéra, each with its three over-life-size figures derived from the work of such 16th-century sculptors as Jean Goujon and Germain Pilon, perfectly illustrate Carrier-Belleuse's talent for combining historicist styling with the most recent technical innovations.

In his many portrait busts, Carrier-Belleuse contributed to the reaction against the static poses and idealizing tendencies of

Neo-classicism. He preferred to draw his inspiration from the 18th-century tradition of lively Realism, and in such lifelike male portraits as the bust of Honoré Daumier (patinated plaster, c. 1865–70; Versailles, Château) he used contemporary dress. Among his few court commissions are two portraits of Napoleon III (e.g. patinated plaster, 1864 Paris, Carnavalet) most of his sitters, however, were well-known artists, writers and politicians, often drawn from his circle of friends.



**Carrier-Belleuse & Aimé-Jules Dalou
Hôtel de la marquise de Païva.**

Carrier-Belleuse produced his own terracotta editions of gallant themes in the Rococo spirit, sometimes reductions of his Salon exhibits. Statuettes and groups were cast in moulds and then reworked while still wet to ensure a fresh, crisp surface. These pieces were sold by the artist, sometimes at auction. A similar diversity of themes and media characterized his applied designs. Supported by his reputation as a serious sculptor, he

executed lavish one-off pieces, for instance a silvered bronze chimney-piece (1866) for the mansion of the courtesan and patron Païva, on the Champs-Élysées, Paris.

A number of his elegant female portraits were reworked as fantasy busts, the features of Marguerite Bellanger, for instance, reappearing in the guises of Diana and Winter. The basic cast would often be varied by changing accessories, costumes or patinas. His portraits of historical figures include a statuette of Michelangelo (bronze, 1855 Berlin, Bodemus.) and a miniature portrait bust of the same artist (silvered version, c. 1860; New York, Met.) and are distinguished by the high quality of their chasing in examples from the artist's studio.



Vase of the Titans Carrier-Belleuse & Auguste Rodin, Choisy le Roi.

Carrier-Belleuse sold reproduction rights to commercial manufacturers who

executed many of these works in metal, terracotta, ceramic and marble.

In order to sustain his many activities, Carrier-Belleuse maintained a busy studio, in which some of the leading sculptors of the next generation.



**Autumn by Carrier-Belleuse,
Choisy-le-Roi manufactory**

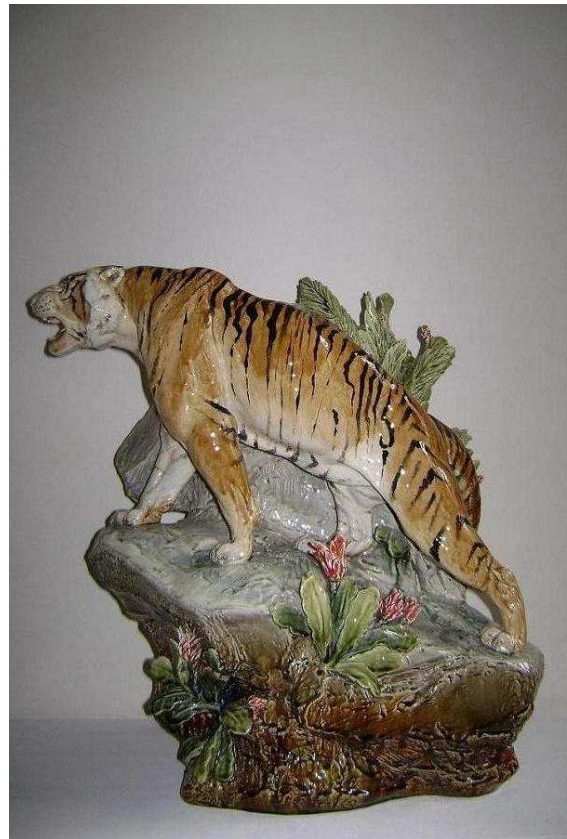
Including Auguste Rodin, Jules Dalou and Alexandre Falguière, learnt to appreciate the value of the applied arts and the benefits of working in series, editions and variations.

He also continued to collaborate with commercial manufacturers to exploit the opportunities inherent in mass production, devoting as much care to the design of such a mass-produced object as his zinc clock case (e.g. 1867 London, V&A) as to a unique de luxe one.

In 1876, Carrier-Belleuse was asked to be the art director of national porcelain

manufacture at Sevres, a position he would retain until his death. He reform what were seen at the time as the aesthetic excesses of the previous decades, devoted himself to revitalizing Sèvres with dozens of new designs.

In 1884 he published *L'Application de la figure humaine à la décoration et à l'ornementation industrielles*, a collection of 200 designs of anthropomorphic objects, which underlined his belief that since the human figure was traditionally the focus of art, its application to everyday objects would elevate their status. In the same year he was made an officer of the Légion d'honneur for his services to the decorative arts.

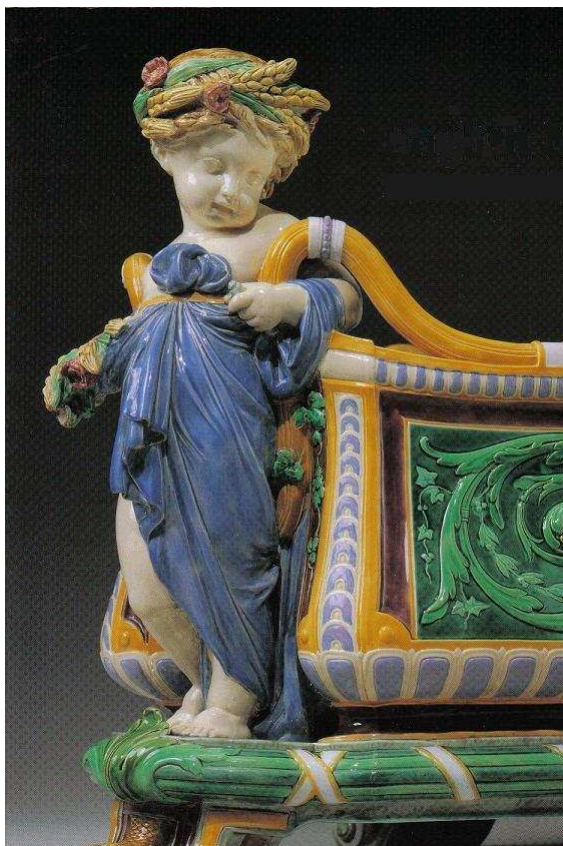


**Tiger by Louis-Robert Carrier-Belleuse,
Choisy-le-Roi manufactory**

A man's real legacy can be difficult to evaluate. When Carrier-Belleuse died in 1887, he received a state funeral and the sale of the contents of his studio took a full 5 days. But it may say more about the man

chiefly remembered for his employment of Rodin, that his 8 children adoringly referred to him as “Papa-Bon” and that every one of them chose to emulate him by becoming an artist.

Herbert Minton was unquestionably the right man in the right place at the right time. It was during this period that the factory sought to supply the growing demand for French-style “Sevres” porcelain and other items that reflected the rococo revival.



**Minton by Carrier-Belleuse
Courtesy Sotheby's**

Herbert Minton was quick to secure the services of eminent designers such as August Welby Northmore Pugin, the godfather of the Gothic revival and Leon Arnoux, the celebrated French potter who introduced brightly coloured Majolica glazes.

Historians of ceramics have stated that the choice of this modeller was made by Léon Arnoux, Minton's Art Director from 1849, a post in which he remained until retirement in 1892.

However, in the instance of Carrier Belleuse the most talented of the group, there seems good reason to suppose that the initiative of his appointment came from outside the profession. His connection with the Sutherland family suggest a different background to his employment by the firm



**Minton by Carrier-Belleuse
Courtesy Christie's**

and had some interesting repercussions for his career (Philip Ward-Jackson “Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, Jean-Jacques Feuchère (Paris, 1807-1852) and the Sutherlands” *The Burlington Magazine*, Volume 127 no. 984, March 1985, page 147.



**Minton Majolica wall bracket, Merman
by Carrier-Belleuse 19 in.**



**Minton Majolica wall bracket, Mermaid
by Carrier-Belleuse 19 in.**



**Minton Majolica wall bracket, young
faun by Carrier-Belleuse 19 in.**



**Minton Majolica wall bracket, young
faun by Carrier-Belleuse 19 in.**