Successful Philanthropist Alfred Boucher

Alfred Boucher (1850–1934) was a French sculptor and painter. He achieved significant recognition during his lifetime and received numerous public commissions. Supported by a scholarship from the town of Nogent-sur-Seine, he enrolled at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1869 and studied under Paul Dubois and Auguste Dumont. He later became the mentor of Camille Claudel and a close friend of Auguste Rodin. In 1881, he won the Grand Prix du Salon (with his work *La Piété Filiale*) and subsequently moved to Florence, Italy. From then on, his fame grew thanks to the artistic production of bronze reductions of his own works and numerous busts made of marble and Sèvres porcelain. He immortalised René Laennec, the French scientist, physician and inventor of the stethoscope, as well as writers such as Guy de Maupassant, and political figures including King George I of Greece and President Jean Casimir-Perier. He became one of the most sought-after French artists for public commissions and successfully worked across a wide range of themes, including the “rediscovery” of antiquity and the ideal of the Olympic Games. At the height of his fame, he received the Grand Prix for Sculpture at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

Toward the end of his life, Boucher focused primarily on funerary sculpture and on the construction of war memorials in Nogent-sur-Seine and Aix-les-Bains (1922), employing a new material – reinforced concrete. Faithful to the town that had supported him in his formative years, in 1902 he founded the Dubois–Boucher Museum in Nogent-sur-Seine, which in 2017 became the Camille Claudel Museum and houses a collection of his works. Another generous and philanthropic act of his was the founding of the Cité de la Ruche in Paris (1902) to support young artists, for whom he established studios and whom he also supported through artistic mentorship.