Bacchante and Infant Faun
Tradition, Controversy, and Legacy

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
Summer 2019
MACMOUNIES'S "BACCHANTE."—Acceptance by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This is the week of art that was not on display at the New Museum, and when many a score of continental sculptors. They were showing in the very heart of the city, and the Metropolitan Museum, who had commissioned it to the Barnes of which he was the patron, was the most important. The Metropolitan received the Bacchante, and the

BACCHANTE COMING TO NEW YORK.

MACMOUNIES ACCEPTED BY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.

JULIET BY BOSTON TOWN.

Unprecedented Beauty of the Paintings—Humbled the Beautiful—Intrigue—Philosophy.

SHELL FINDS WELCOME HOME.

Work is the Gift of C. F. MacMoniel, Artist, to the New Museum.

May 5, 1897.

THE NEW YORKER.

May 5, 1897.

THE BACCHANTE. By Robert.
Bacchante and Infant Faun

Tradition, Controversy, and Legacy

Thayer Tolles

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
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The Metropolitan Museum of Art
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In just three years, between 1893 and 1896, Frederick William MacMonnies’s *Bacchante and Infant Faun* evolved from a clay sketch in the artist’s Paris studio to the most controversial sculpture in the United States. In 1897, The Met knowingly accepted the gift of this much-debated bronze female nude, not to mention the prospect of ensuing protests and deliberation. Perceptions of the sculpture ranged—and still range—from provocative to innocuous, acknowledgment that all works of art justly inspire a multiplicity of viewpoints.

As The Met approaches its 150th anniversary year, in 2020, it is fitting to look closely at objects that represent defining moments in the institution’s history and consider the age-old issues they raise. At the time of the *Bacchante*’s arrival, Luigi Palma di Cesnola, the Museum’s first director, took a conscious stand that this museum should not censor its collections to avoid disagreement surrounding aesthetic and moral concerns. Works of art, he believed, are presented to an audience who voluntarily visits the galleries and for “whose enjoyment and instruction the Museum has been founded and is to be perpetuated.” Documentation in the Metropolitan Museum Archives bears out Cesnola’s position, although that policy was not maintained consistently over the decades. In 1905, for example, the trustees ordered the loan of Ernesto Biondi’s multifigure sculpture *Saturnalia* (1899) removed from display for its “immorality”; it was installed in the Great Hall next to the *Bacchante*, drawing comparisons and wide publicity. Decades later, in 1957, when Jackson Pollock’s *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)* (1950) entered The Met collection, trustee approval was equivocal owing to aesthetic and financial reservations. Today it is the cornerstone of our holdings in Abstract Expressionism, much as the *Bacchante* is for American sculpture.

We are grateful to Thayer Tolles, Marica F. Vilcek Curator of American Paintings and Sculpture, for her wide-ranging assessment of the *Bacchante and Infant Faun* at a moment when museums are particularly attuned to the collective right to protest and be heard. We extend our thanks to the William Cullen Bryant Fellows of The Metropolitan Museum of Art for generously underwriting this issue of the *Bulletin*. Finally, we also acknowledge the Lila Acheson Wallace Fund for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, established by the cofounder of *Reader’s Digest*, for its support of The Met’s quarterly *Bulletin* program.

Max Hollein
Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Since its acquisition in 1897, Frederick William MacMonnies’s overlife-size bronze sculpture *Bacchante and Infant Faun* (1893–94) has been displayed in a prominent location at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, from the Great Hall to the Charles Engelhard Court in the American Wing, where it remains on view today.

Greeting visitors as they enter the court from the galleries of medieval art, the *Bacchante* is one of the American Wing’s most iconic and popular sculptures, a favorite of selfie-takers and those who assume its pose in a game of sculptural charades, perhaps unaware of its storied history. Indeed, for the cognoscenti, MacMonnies’s spry reveler is most often associated with the controversy that led to its acquisition: a public uproar over the alleged impropriety of the figure’s nudity and intemperance, which spurred its original owner, the architect Charles McKim, to withdraw it as a gift to the Boston Public Library and donate it instead to The Met. “No piece of art in modern times has made so much stir,” observed the *Brooklyn Citizen* at the time of the gift. 1 While scholarly writing on the *Bacchante* has tended to focus on issues of decorum and censorship in Boston, the sculpture merits a broader, multidimensional assessment. To that end, the following pages tell the story of the *Bacchante* within the arc of MacMonnies’s distinguished career; the history of bacchantes in visual imagery; the sculpture’s critical and popular reception; its long tenure at The Met; and the artistic and cultural legacy of a work of art that in its day was known by almost all.

MacMonnies’s pagan merrymaker (fig. 1) is unquestionably one of the most vivacious images in American art. She gleefully holds aloft a bunch of grapes in her raised right hand, while in the crook of her left arm she supports a male infant, her hand gripping his torso like a football. The wide-eyed, open-mouthed baby peers eagerly at the grapes beyond his reach. The blithe bacchante has downcast, twinkling eyes. Her unfocused gaze and toothy, mirthful grin suggest this is no self-conscious nude; she is, to use a turn of phrase, comfortable in her skin. She simultaneously springs forward in a skip and up on tiptoe, her figure connected to the circular base just at the ball of her foot, testament to the remarkable tensile strength of bronze. She is arrested in motion, in a freeze-frame, and yet also an elastic moment that somehow belies a fixed pose. Her spiraling form resembles a corkscrew, a clever compositional device that, along with the lively silhouette created by the extended limbs, leads the viewer’s eye around the piece and encourages engagement from any vantage point. At 84 inches high, the *Bacchante* is commanding in scale, approachable yet somewhat detached, especially when seen from below. The texture of the black-green patinated surface, from skin to hair to grapes, is modeled so as to catch the pulsating play of light and shadow, granting the sculpture further buoyancy. Perhaps more than any other bronze of its time, the *Bacchante* epitomizes the naturalistic, fluid qualities of the French-inspired Beaux-Arts style that dominated American sculpture at the turn of the twentieth century.

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Before the Bacchante: MacMonnies to 1893

Frederick William MacMonnies—Willie or Max, as he was variously known—was born in Brooklyn on September 28, 1863, at the height of the Civil War, to William and Juliana (née West) MacMonnies. His mother was a descendant of the influential painter Benjamin West. MacMonnies’s upbringing was relatively modest, however, after his Scottish-born father’s importing firm suffered severe wartime financial reverses. In 1880, at the age of sixteen, MacMonnies began working in Manhattan in the studio of Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907), who burst upon the art scene when his monument to Admiral David Glasgow Farragut (1877–80; Madison Square Park, New York) was unveiled in May 1881. After nearly two years of menial tasks, from sweeping floors to wetting clay to running errands, MacMonnies sufficiently impressed his boss that he was promoted to such basic sculptural tasks as pointing up models and designing lettering and decorative details, including work on the palatial Manhattan residences of Cornelius Vanderbilt II (1882–83) and Henry Villard (1882–84). Saint-Gaudens, who mentored his assistants and other young artists, encouraged MacMonnies to pursue formal art training. He enrolled in free evening modeling classes at the Cooper Union and also studied at the National Academy of Design, drawing from the collection of antique plaster casts (1881–84) and from live models (1882–83), a typical course of study for both painters and sculptors. He also worked from time to time at the Art Students League.

In September 1884, MacMonnies, like so many aspiring American artists of his day, went to Paris, then the art world’s training and proving ground. He drew at the private Académie Colarossi and sketched from antique casts in Jean-Léon Gérôme’s open classes at the École des Beaux-Arts for unenrolled students (fig. 2). He also studied French and completed drawings after collections at the Louvre. After just two months, however, a cholera outbreak forced MacMonnies to remove to Munich, where he took classes at the Royal Academy of Art, charcoal drawing from life with Johann Caspar Herterich and modeling with Johann Widmann.

2. MacMonnies’s student card for the École des Beaux-Arts (recto), Paris, 1884

His large-scale drawings from this period, completed in Munich and Paris, reveal MacMonnies’s remarkable facility at capturing on paper the three-dimensionality of human form (fig. 3).

In the summer of 1885 MacMonnies returned to the United States at Saint-Gaudens’s behest to help with monument commissions. At Saint-Gaudens’s summer retreat in Cornish, New Hampshire (fig. 4), he assisted with modeling storks as well as putti holding fish for the Eli Bates Fountain, *Storks at Play* (1885–87), while Saint-Gaudens created his *Abraham Lincoln: The Man (Standing Lincoln)* (1884–87), both destined for Chicago’s Lincoln Park. Back in New York, MacMonnies then assisted Saint-Gaudens on the memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, an epic production with an architectural setting designed by Charles McKim that was unveiled on Boston Common in 1897 (ironically, the day before McKim presented the *Bacchante* to The Met). MacMonnies was one of Saint-Gaudens’s most gifted assistants; after he established his own career as an independent artist, the two men interacted frequently in a complex, high-strung relationship that saw highs and lows both personal and professional.

Returning to Paris in May 1886, MacMonnies endured rigorous entrance examinations to enroll at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts, as Saint-Gaudens had before him. He matriculated to the École in July and, during his two years of free instruction, worked in the atelier of the esteemed academic sculptor Alexandre Falguière (1831–1900). MacMonnies also studied privately with Marius-Jean-Antonin Mercié (1845–1916), thus having firsthand contact with two of the leading French sculptors of the day, both of whom had trained in the atelier of François Jouffroy (1806–1882), as had Saint-Gaudens. A quick study, MacMonnies readily absorbed the prevailing Beaux-Arts style, with its emphasis on true-to-life form, dynamic motion, texture and light effects, and marginal distinctions between real and ideal, all later expertly synthesized in the *Bacchante*. For two years in a row, in both 1887 and 1888, he won the Prix d’Atelier, the highest honor available to a foreign student, and a remarkable achievement to attain twice. He also worked as Falguière’s private studio assistant, a further endorsement of his talents.

MacMonnies’s first major independent work was *Diana* (fig. 5), a supple nude representing the chaste Roman goddess of the hunt and personification of the moon. Mythological subjects were often thinly veiled excuses for depicting female nudes with few iconographic accoutrements, here a crescent moon headpiece and a bow. Moreover, a well-executed female nude was an established means of proclaiming an artist’s skill and ambition. The life-size plaster earned MacMonnies an honorable mention when it was displayed in Paris in the annual Salon of 1889. The most esteemed exhibition venue of its day, the Salon attracted huge audiences and had the power to make or break artistic reputations. MacMonnies certainly benefited from it as he transitioned from student to professional, as he later acknowledged: “You could get a job on what you had won.”

Unlike most Americans who studied abroad, MacMonnies did not return home to establish a career when his training ended, in late 1888, opting instead to remain in Paris. At first he based his studio at 16 impasse du Maine, in the 15th arrondissement, next to that of his Falguière classmate Antoine Bourdelle (1861–1929; the studio is now the Musée Bourdelle). MacMonnies shrewdly cultivated a base of American patronage, however, and traveled frequently to the United...
States. He was encouraged in that regard by two of America’s leading architects, Stanford White (1853–1906) and Charles McKim (1847–1909), whom he had befriended while working in Saint-Gaudens’s studio. McKim, Mead & White, founded in 1879, was the largest and most prominent architectural firm of America’s Gilded Age. That association alone generated incalculable benefit to MacMonnies’s career, feeding him a steady stream of commissions for public and domestic sculpture through the 1890s. Among the prestigious orders that soon followed were a bronze statue of civic leader James S. T. Stranahan for Brooklyn’s Prospect Park (1890–91) and one of Revolutionary War martyr Nathan Hale for New York’s City Hall Park (fig. 6), the latter a lively idealized historical personification sponsored by the Sons of the Revolution and unveiled in November 1893. In 1891 plaster models of these works earned MacMonnies a second-class medal at the Paris Salon, the highest prize available to foreigners and the first time it was awarded to an American sculptor.

MacMonnies also executed private commissions for McKim, Mead & White’s residential projects, initiating an era of patronage for garden statuary on elaborately landscaped grounds. Pan of Rohallion (fig. 7), a slender boy playing pipes, was commissioned in 1889 for Rohallion, the estate of banker and longtime Met donor Edward D. Adams in Seabright (now Rumson), New Jersey (the bronze has been relocated and is privately owned). For Joseph Hodges Choate, a lawyer and founding trustee of The Met, MacMonnies completed the spirited Young Faun with Heron (1889–90) for an exterior niche at his country residence, Naumkeag, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. These full-size bronzes, each nodding to the antique and infused with a mischievous joie de vivre, inspired editions of parlor and

![6. MacMonnies, Nathan Hale, 1890. Bronze, H. 108 in. (274.3 cm). City Hall Park, New York](image6)

![7. MacMonnies's Pan of Rohallion (1889–90) installed at the estate of Edward D. Adams in Seabright (now Rumson), New Jersey](image7)
garden statuettes in various heights beginning in 1890, including The Met’s exemplary cast of *Young Faun with Heron* marked “First Proof” (fig. 8).

At Saint-Gaudens’s behest, in June 1891 MacMonnies received a $50,000 commission for the Columbian Fountain (fig. 9) for the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, a delayed quadricentennial celebration of Christopher Columbus’s 1492 landfall in America. Displayed prominently at one end of the Court of Honor, the fantastic neo-Baroque creation included the *Barge of State* that carried Columbia, Victory, Father Time, and eight oarswomen representing the Arts and Industries, not to mention accompanying seahorses, putti, and mermaids; thirty-eight figures in all set amid jets of water. Some twenty million people visited the fair during its six-month run between May and November 1893, and the fountain received triumphant acclaim. Although composed of staff, an impermanent medium made from plaster of Paris and such fibrous materials as hemp, fiber, and straw, the fountain’s renown guaranteed MacMonnies’s lasting reputation.

**The Bacchante Conceived**

MacMonnies began modeling the *Bacchante* in 1893 at his Paris studio. On March 31, his close friend and mentor, the French sculptor and art critic Paul Bion, reported to the artist’s wife, Mary Fairchild MacMonnies (1858–1946), herself a painter, that over the past fifteen days the sculptor had brought to perfection “a little gem . . . graceful and true.” After completing a first model, MacMonnies joined her in Chicago so that they could attend to the final details of their respective art installations for the fair’s opening on May 1.
I returned to Europe, and went to Paris and started to work on my Bacchante. I had made this design long before, but I never found a model for it. I feel sometimes that the model creates the work. Then a woman came in and I said “There is my Bacchante!” It was the real Bacchante, who used to laugh herself right out. I created this thing and she was just what I wanted. She was just nineteen.⁵

Journalists of the day speculated on the identity of the model, but MacMonnies never publicly named her. Many assumed she was Sarah Brown, a legendary artists’ model, but as others guessed (correctly) she was actually Eugénie Pasque, who had also posed for one of the rowers in the Barge of State. Nini, as she was known, was a popular model in Paris in the 1890s, remembered by Mary Fairchild MacMonnies as posing “often for us and for our friends, young, extremely pretty, and ‘presque vièrge’ [almost a virgin], as they used to say.”⁶ Her resemblance to the final figure is borne out in an 1894 drawing by Charles Dana Gibson in which she appears seated with MacMonnies (fig. 10), clearly at ease in Parisian café culture alongside his artist confrères.⁷ She also modeled for Gibson, who had briefly overlapped with MacMonnies in Saint-Gaudens’s studio and was then on assignment in Paris for LIFE magazine. Through the youthful and effervescent Pasque, MacMonnies found that he was able to express his bacchante not as an abstract concept but as a real being, marking a bold foray away from a mythological guise.
If finding the right model proved the key stimulus to beginning the sculpture, one might also ask what drew MacMonnies to the bacchante as a subject in the first place. A simple answer revolves around his aspiration to be accepted as an artist of not only national but also global repute, an ambition shared by the leading American sculptors of the day. As MacMonnies and his contemporaries saw it, by drawing thematic and compositional inspiration from works from classical Greece and Rome to the Italian Renaissance to contemporary times, they were joining a distinguished cultural lineage, imbuing their works with resemblance but also resonance in order to create their own independent productions. MacMonnies did just that with his *Young Faun with Heron*, relying on the antique pagan motif of a youth wrestling playfully with a bird while compositionally referencing his teacher Mercié’s well-known *David* (ca. 1872; Musée d’Orsay, Paris). Such an additive process—a combination of touchstone and innovation, past and present—was fundamental to the ethos of American sculpture of that moment, and it informed the genesis and reception of MacMonnies’s *Bacchante* as an original work of art.

**The Bacchantes: Forerunners**

The Greek wine god Dionysos (Bacchus in Latin) was one of the most potent and frequently represented deities of the classical pantheon. Characterized by the ecstatic or violently crazed states that he induced in his followers, he appears early in Greek art, probably about the seventh century B.C. His male followers were the satyrs, mythological composite creatures with the upper bodies of men and a changing combination of the horns, ears, and legs of goats and the tails of horses. His female followers, always presented as mortal women, are known in Greek as maenads, from the word meaning to rage, rave, or be mad. In Latin, they are known as bacchae or bacchantes. Under Dionysos’s influence, they abandoned their homes and families to drink, dance, and rove the hills, even dismember wild animals. The god’s devotees were rendered with identifying attributes, notably the thyrsos, a fennel stalk tipped with ivy (fig. 11). They often wore fawn skins, held snakes or sometimes musical instruments, and were accompanied by panthers or satyrs.

![Relief with a Dancing Maenad](https://example.com/bacchante.jpg)

12. Élisabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), *Bacchante*, 1785. Oil on canvas, 34 1/2 × 29 3/8 in. (87.6 × 74.6 cm). The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts; Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1939 (1955.954)

The best-known classical account of the maenads and the Dionysian ritual is *The Bacchae* by the Athenian playwright Euripides, written about 410 B.C. and published posthumously. Here the women are described by Pentheus, king of Thebes:

Scarce had I crossed our borders, when mine ear / Was caught by this strange rumour, that our own / Wives, our own sisters, from their hearths are flown / To wild and secret rites; and cluster there / High on the shadowy hills, with dance and prayer / To adore this new-made God, this Dionyse, / Whate'er he be!—And in their companies / Deep wine-jars stand, and ever and anon / Away into the loneliness now one / Steals forth, and now a second, maid or dame, / Where love lies waiting, not of God! The flame, / They say, of Bacchios wraps them. Bacchios!*

Dionysian festivals, or bacchanalia, continued in Greek-influenced areas of the Roman world from the third century B.C. until they were banned in 186 B.C., although they continued covertly.

Bacchantes were popular figures in the visual culture of continental Europe from sixteenth-century Italy to nineteenth-century France, in both two- and three-dimensional form. From Titian to Rubens, Boucher to Bouguereau, artists focused on the joyful behavior of these devotees of Bacchus, sometimes in his company or with satyrs or fauns, cavorting together in woodland revelries. Alone, in bust-length representations (fig. 12), they evoked sensuality and mystery; as full-length nudes, they projected a subtle but not fully charged eroticism (fig. 13). Even mediated through the thematic and stylistic lenses of the classical past, bacchantes were very much a reflection of their makers’ respective eras and stylistic proclivities.

The few American sculptural antecedents to MacMonnies’s *Bacchante* are idealized, subdued interpretations by mid-nineteenth-century...
expatriates working in Italy in the prevailing Neoclassical style. In Florence, Virginia native Alexander Galt (1827–1863) carved at least twelve marble bust-length versions of a serene nude with an ivy garland woven through her hair, with the only insinuation of merriment coming from the slightly smiling parted lips (fig. 14). Likewise, Chauncey Bradley Ives (1810–1894) eschewed revelry for restraint, producing eight carvings of his similarly composed Bacchante bust for American clients eager for Grand Tour souvenirs.

MacMonnies had no such allegiance to the waning marmoreal Neoclassical style playing out in Italy. In both his aesthetics and his outlook on life, he was the most French of the American sculptors. Given the popularity of the bacchanalia theme, what sculptural forerunners might he have known? In late eighteenth-century France, terracotta statuettes in the exquisitely responsive medium of clay allowed for ambitious figural groupings and brilliant expression of emotion and narrative detail. In particular, Clodion (Claude Michel, 1738–1814) enjoyed extraordinary success with the bacchanalia theme in his terracottas for private collectors, while also excelling in architectural and large-scale groups. Though his statuettes reflect the prevailing fascination with antiquity, they are masterfully eclectic in inspiration, from the Baroque positioning of form with rhythmic Rococo movement to more contained Neoclassical poses and subdued sentiment (fig. 15).

As Clodion’s statuettes and their later-nineteenth-century imitators fed an eager private market, Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux’s (1827–1875) monumental La Danse (fig. 16) was one of four sculptures commissioned to decorate the facade of Charles Garnier’s Paris Opéra. Unveiled in 1869, the figural group presents a central male genius of dance leaping with raised tambourine and encircled by frenetic bacchantes. Critical and popular response to the sculpture was strident. Its uninhibited nature and the contemporaneity of the female nudes horrified Second Empire sensibilities, a refrain that presaged the response to
MacMonnies’s Bacchante. Carpeaux’s group was ordered removed and replaced, but the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War and the artist’s death, in 1875, tempered the scandal. By the time MacMonnies arrived in Paris in 1884, La Danse was already an accepted part of the urban fabric.

Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), who worked for many years for the successful sculptor Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (1824–1887), was savvy to producing subjects calculated to appeal to popular taste. No doubt he was motivated by Carrier-Belleuse’s own success with the bacchante theme: a full-length marble Bacchante purchased in 1863 by the French state (now at the Musée d’Orsay). Rodin’s first large figure, completed soon thereafter, was a bacchante (destroyed). His later Bacchante (Grapes or Autumn) (fig. 17) is a charming if emotionally vacant representation of a calm young woman adorned with grapes and leaves that hews closely to Carrier-Belleuse’s terracottas, especially the bust-length treatments.

As a young art student MacMonnies was a Rodin enthusiast, but he later resented the older artist’s dominance of French sculpture to the exclusion of established Beaux-Arts artists “all at the height of their career[s] and glory when suddenly Rodin began to arrive . . . and all these fellows were thrust aside and were simply broken up.” Among those MacMonnies believed had been “thrust aside” was his own maître Falguière, who explored the bacchante theme in 1886, while MacMonnies was under his tutelage. In Falguière’s Fighting Bacchantes (fig. 18), two femmes fatales, one gripping a pine cone from a thyrsos, are intertwined in a ferocious brawl. Falguière’s allusion to the violent, possessed nature of bacchantes departed from traditional expectations of their joyful nature, presenting instead what may be seen as a sexualized interpretation even by the standards of his often provocative female nudes. MacMonnies’s nearby neighbor on the impasse du Maine, the leading naturalist


sculptor Aimé-Jules Dalou (1838–1902), likewise explored the bacchanalia theme in two major works for public locations: *Bacchanale* (1898; Fontaine du Fleuriste, Auteil), shown in plaster at the 1891 Salon, and *Triumph of Silenus* (1884; Jardin du Luxembourg), acquired by the French state in 1894. Whether or not MacMonnies was specifically aware of Dalou’s head of a laughing bacchante for the latter project (fig. 19), it attests to the ubiquity of the subject.

The bacchanalia theme infiltrated not only the fine arts but also literature, dance, opera, and ballet. Richard Wagner’s ballet *Bacchanal*, added to a revised version of *Tannhäuser*, had a controversial premier at the Paris Opéra in 1861; widely known, it inspired the illustrious Isadora Duncan to choreograph it in 1904. Likewise, as dance modernized in 1890s France, it looked to the past for free-spirited interpretations of mythological characters. American Loïe Fuller, famed for her Serpentine Dance and swirling draperies, epitomized this trend through her performances at the Folies Bergères, for which she assumed guises ranging from nymph to Salome; she choreographed her own *Bacchanal* in 1909. MacMonnies’s circle, particularly his sculpture student Janet Scudder and the architect Stanford White, were Fuller enthusiasts and associates, and so MacMonnies was likely aware of her work.

**Production and Exhibition History**

Back in Paris after the Chicago world’s fair, MacMonnies made progress on the *Bacchante* relatively quickly, completing it by late 1893 in his studio on the impasse du Maine. “I worked nine months, the baby faun I did in a hurry,” he recalled. “The faun had to be an absolutely new baby, just born . . . just big enough to get into the arms.”

MacMonnies scholars, notably E. Adina Gordon, have identified an eclectic lineage of sources going back to the antique that may have offered compositional inspiration. *Hermes and the Infant Dionysos* (fig. 20), commonly associated with the Greek sculptor Praxiteles and dated about 330 B.C.,
was excavated at the Temple of Hera at Olympia in 1877. It depicts the baby in the crook of the god’s left arm while his partially missing right arm is upraised; in some modern reconstructions, the figure holds grapes in his right hand. The French élan infused in the *Bacchante* is evident in Francisque-Joseph Duret’s lighthearted *Dancing Neapolitan Boy* (fig. 21), with its similar extended left leg and lively spiraling form. Hippolyte Moulin’s *A Lucky Find at Pompeii* (fig. 22), displayed in the Salon of 1864 and two years later put on view at the Musée du Luxembourg, bears an astonishing resemblance to MacMonnies’s *Bacchante* in its euphoric demeanor and positioning of the limbs, from the upraised right arm bearing an attribute to the left leg leading the viewer’s eye around the volume in space.

Balancing figures in fluid movement on one foot, a proclamation of technical derring-do, was in vogue. MacMonnies’s highly regarded teacher Falguière produced *The Winner of the Cockfight* (1864; Musée d’Orsay), a bronze male nude then on view at the Luxembourg, and *Hunting Nymph* (fig. 23), shown in plaster in the Salon of 1884. Falguière’s life-size female nudes of the 1880s, drawn from mythology, were unapologetically of their time, individualized in appearance and suggestive in pose. His *Diana* (fig. 24) informed MacMonnies’s interpretation of the goddess (see fig. 5) but resonated in the *Bacchante* as well, notably in the upraised arm. Displayed in the Salon of 1887, Falguière’s *Diana* became a cause célèbre because the model was identifiable, a transgression of the fine line drawn at the time between allegory and portraiture, a charge later leveled at the *Bacchante*.

As dictated by the traditional sculpture process, MacMonnies likely progressed from a succession of small clay sketches, working out his vision, to a full-size version first modeled in clay and then cast in plaster. Rather than publicly exhibiting the *Bacchante* in plaster, receiving critical feedback, and making compositional modifications before casting, as artists often did, MacMonnies moved deliberately to translate the sculpture into the permanent material of bronze. Paris was the hub

of the Western fine-arts bronze casting industry, and he selected one of the leading foundries, Thiébaut Frères. Thiébaut began operation in 1844, first sand casting in bronze and then introducing the millenia-old lost-wax process by 1889, a technical asset in an increasingly crowded field. For his earlier large-scale bronzes MacMonnies had relied on competitors Gruet and Jaboeuf, which also made his small commercial works. Thiébaut Frères was thus a departure for him, perhaps for reasons of cost or scheduling, or because, unlike other firms at that moment, it had a demonstrated track record for lost-wax casting (figs. 25, 26). Thiébaut records indicate that the Bacchante (identified as “Idylle”) was cast on March 3, 1894. Upon visiting the foundry to see the bronze in April, Paul Bion questioned presciently: “What will the temperance societies and other good Puritans of North America say when they see this fruit in full view, leaping on the earth, thinking no evil?”

Ever keen to remain in the public eye, MacMonnies submitted two bronzes to the 1894 Salon of the Société des Artistes Français: The Met’s Bacchante and Infant Faun (as “Bacchante et enfant”) and a theatrical full-length statue of Massachusetts Bay Colony governor Sir Henry Vane (1893), destined for the Boston Public Library. Over the next few months French and American critics and artists alike greeted both works enthusiastically. The writer for the New York–based Art Amateur noted: “His bronze statue of ‘Sir Henry Vane’ has called forth the highest praise from his French brethren of the chisel, and no less successful is his resplendent group in bronze of a ‘Priestess of Bacchus and a Child.’” When Saint-Gaudens first saw the Bacchante, in early 1895, likely in a photograph or reduced form, he wrote to Bion: “I find it a . . . masterpiece, it’s the last word on grace and life. It has never been done better.”

These were halcyon days for MacMonnies (fig. 27). Not yet thirty, he was earning one major commission after the next, usually balancing several simultaneously. While the Salon was on view, he was in the United States from early...
May to late June to consult on current projects, particularly as McKim, Mead & White’s go-to sculptor. The large architectural programs of the so-called American Renaissance often involved multiple artists for their decorative schemes; for example, MacMonnies produced a full-length *William Shakespeare* (1895–96) for the main Reading Room of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., as well as *The Art of Printing*, the central bronze door and tympanum for the main entrance (1896). Between 1894 and 1901, he completed a massive commission for his native Brooklyn: a quadriga, *The Triumphal Progress of Columbia* (1896–98), as well as two high reliefs, *The Army* (1899) and *The Navy* (1900), for the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Memorial Arch in Grand Army Plaza.

Several months after the close of the Salon, MacMonnies learned that the French government intended to purchase the *Bacchante* for the state collection, to be installed in the Musée du Luxembourg, which housed contemporary works by living and recently deceased artists. He was the first American sculptor accorded this honor, joining such American painters as John Singer Sargent and James McNeill Whistler. The *Bacchante* went on view at the museum late in the year, in plaster, as MacMonnies already had plans for the original cast.

### From Paris to Boston

A decade earlier, in 1884, when MacMonnies was first preparing to travel to Paris, Charles McKim, who himself had trained there for three years, loaned him fifty dollars to “strengthen [his] lean purse.” Having repaid the loan, but not forgetting the kind gesture or the many commissions that followed, MacMonnies offered the first cast of the *Bacchante* to the architect “in appreciation of his great kindness and belief in [him]” while he was in the United States in June 1894. He would later produce another bronze replica for the French state, turning down McKim’s offer to pay for a replica so that the Luxembourg would have the original. For his part, McKim had decided to offer the original sculpture to the Boston Public Library as a memorial to his second wife, Julia Amory Appleton McKim, a Bostonian who had died in childbirth in 1887. That same year McKim and his firm had received the commission for a new Boston Public Library (1887–95) on Copley Square. McKim designed it as a Renaissance Revival “palace for the people,” a restrained, classicizing contrast to Henry Hobson Richardson’s weighty Romanesque Revival Trinity Church across the square. As early as 1890 McKim had envisioned a fountain at the center of the library’s interior courtyard. He ultimately rendered it as a shallow four-sided basin rimmed in marble (fig. 28), resembling an impluvium of an ancient Greek or Roman house.

The library, which opened to the public in February 1895, was an immersive architectural and artistic summation, from its murals by Edwin Austin Abbey, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, and Sargent to three sets of low-relief bronze entrance
portals by Daniel Chester French, Siena marble lions by Louis St. Gaudens (brother of Augustus) for the main staircase, and the bronze statue of Sir Henry Vane that MacMonnies had shown at the Salon. Although the sculptor had not conceived the *Bacchante* for a fountain setting, McKim believed that its joyous demeanor was a fitting complement to the building’s exterior decorative program (which was still in process at the time of its opening). In November 1894, he wrote to MacMonnies that “this disposition of her, as the presiding spirit of the fountain and court, is the only excuse I can offer for excepting [sic] so undeserved and sumptuous an evidence of your regard.”

In July 1896, the trustees of the Boston Public Library endorsed the *Bacchante* as a gift and voted to submit it to the Boston Art Commission for approval, as required of any work to be installed in a public building or park. MacMonnies had shipped the sculpture to New York in May 1896, but McKim, rather than forwarding it directly to Boston, provided the commission with a bronze reduction of the *Bacchante* as well as photographs of the large cast. The five-member commission, which included Boston mayor Josiah Quincy, solicited the opinion of a “Committee of Experts,” a group of nine, among them Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Daniel Chester French, who enthusiastically endorsed the bronze, as did future Met director Edward Robinson, then a curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the group’s secretary. Charles Eliot Norton, esteemed tastemaker and professor of the history of art at Harvard, was among the four who opposed the sculpture as contrary to the ideals of a public library.

In addition to an abundance of primary sources, scholarly writing on this chapter of the *Bacchante*’s history is extensive; that narrative will be condensed here. There was little objection to the merit of the *Bacchante* as a work of art or to the correctness of its scale for its intended
location. It was the subject matter, and its perceived moral impropriety for a place of education and knowledge, that set off a firestorm of controversy that raged for almost a year. The dispute attracted national press coverage, as attested by pages upon pages in scrapbooks of press clippings assembled by the Boston Public Library, McKim, Mead & White, and by MacMonnies himself. Supporters touted its innocent, elated manner and Parisian pedigree, while detractors countered that in this case art too closely imitated life. At the crux of the issue, as they saw it, was the suitability of a female nude, most likely intoxicated and debauched, with an infant, perhaps illegitimate, in the central courtyard of a “temple of learning.” Further, according to the objectors, a library was a space for intellectual and social improvement, and the act of viewing this sculpture had the potential not to uplift but to corrupt.

Newspaper headlines blared: “No! No!! Say the Modest Hubites to the Priestess of Bacchus” (St. Louis Chronicle, August 1, 1896); “Fear the Nude. MacMonnies Bacchante Objected To” (Boston Daily Globe, August 5, 1896); “Too Naughty for Boston Library” (New York Herald, October 13, 1896). The Boston Post (October 13, 1896) editorialized: “There are just as beautiful works of sculpture which carry a less offensive idea than that of inebriety.” Conservative members of the local clergy mounted opposition to the statue as a threat to traditional ideals of female decorum and the sanctity of motherhood. Resistance also mobilized at an organizational level by such religious and anti-vice groups as the Law and Order League, the Watch and Ward Society, the Young Men’s Christian Association, and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Underlying the controversy, as scholar Julia

28. Courtyard of the Boston Public Library, ca. 1896
Rosenbaum has demonstrated, was the sculpture’s implicit challenge to the entrenched moral and social hierarchy of the Boston Protestant elite at a moment when civic values were fast moving away from established models of class, ethnicity, and gender.28

Vigorous discussion for and against the Bacchante continued for two months, and then the Boston Art Commission issued its report on October 12, 1896. In a vote of four opposed and one in favor, the commission turned down the sculpture on the following grounds: “While recognizing the remarkable technical merits of Mr. MacMonnies’ statue . . . as a work of art, this commission does not regard it as suited to the Public Library building.”29 Undeterred, McKim sent a petition to its members on October 26, urging reconsideration.30 He rationalized that if they and other influential citizens saw the full-size cast installed at the library, then they would appreciate that, far from being a “monument to inebriety,” its fitness to the surrounding arcaded courtyard warranted its placement. McKim arranged for the temporary display of the sculpture first at the private Century Association in New York and then in Boston, expressing a preference for a viewing as soon as practicable after its arrival to keep the story from leaking to the newspapers. The full-size bronze was installed in the center of the library courtyard with jets of waters spraying around it (fig. 29). On Sunday morning, November 15, 1896, when the library was closed to the public, members of the commission, library trustees, and invited special guests inspected the work. Recognizing what was at stake for the credibility of a new brand of cosmopolitan American sculpture, McKim had ensured that Saint-Gaudens and French would be
present, again to testify as experts, and noted to French: “I . . . ask this of you not as a personal matter, but as a question of the successful outcome of the bully stand you fellows have made. . . . Success or failure depends on our immediate action.”

Two days later, on November 17, the Boston Art Commission reversed its decision, again by a vote of four to one, and accepted the gift. The Bacchante remained on view for another two weeks for public inspection until it was removed and placed in storage for the winter while a pedestal of green Irish Connemara marble designed by McKim was prepared for it. All the while, the architect downplayed the extent of the library controversy to the excitable MacMonnies, first by sending a concise telegram (“bacchante triumphs Set in place Sunday congratulations”) and then writing in a letter in early December:

Now that the strife of battle is over, and the clouds rolling away reveal the fairest of her sex in possession not only of her pedestal in the court-yard of the Library, but of the hearts of the best portion of her fellow-citizens in Boston, I send you the greetings which I have withheld until the question of her fate should be determined.

Despite McKim’s positive report of the sculpture’s acceptance and its approval among many Bostonians, opposition to the Bacchante escalated, and the daily press continued to fan the flames. Social reformers such as the Reverend Edward Everett Hale and Julia Ward Howe doubled down on their objections as events were convened for and against the sculpture. Future Met director Edward Robinson gamely suggested that perhaps renaming the sculpture with a title less redolent of intoxication would resolve the matter, perhaps “A Nymph and the Infant Bacchus.” However, in December the trustees of the library received a petition signed by 250 people stating that the sculpture was unacceptable, “a menace to the Commonwealth,” as pro-Bacchante writer Thomas Russell Sullivan sardonically observed: “Both cats have their backs well up, and the fur is likely to fly before spring comes.” And fly it did.

McKim’s gift, intended to memorialize his wife, was irredeemably guilty in the court of a vocal minority. On April 6, 1897, the architect withdrew his offer, commenting at the time:

. . . petitions were circulated by a certain element in the community, which chose to find in Macmonnaies’ [sic] masterpiece that which neither the Trustees nor the Art Commission were able to discover, and which Mr. Macmonnaies [sic] never intended.

The Trustees being thus harassed by a narrow and prejudiced attack, organized against them, I recently asked permission to relieve them from their embarrassment, by withdrawing the statue from a contention as humiliating to them as to us.

In late May, the library trustees voted to accept McKim’s action.
**The Bacchante Comes to New York**

After consulting with Saint-Gaudens and Stanford White, on June 1, 1897, McKim offered the *Bacchante* to The Met as a gift. “As a resident of New York,” he wrote to trustee Frederick Rhinelander, first vice president and chairman of the executive committee, “it was my original intention to present the statue to the Metropolitan Museum, and I should have done so but for the fact that it seemed to fortunately represent the demands of the Fountain of the Boston Library, designed to be crowned with a bronze figure.”

McKim may also have been motivated by his firm’s ongoing relationship with The Met, having been proposed as designers for the north wing as early as 1890 and acting as consulting architects beginning in 1896. Over many years the unassuming and well-liked architect mingled easily with Museum trustees and donors; in fact, he would become a trustee himself in 1904, serving until his death, in 1909.

On June 4, just three days after McKim tendered his offer, the gift was approved by the Trustees’ Committee on Sculpture and accepted by Board President Henry Marquand, Secretary and Museum Director Luigi Palma di Cesnola, and Treasurer Hiram Hitchcock, acting on behalf of the board of trustees, which had dispersed for the summer. An unsigned note in The Met Archives sheds light on the remarkably quick acceptance: “The incontestable artistic merit of the bronze and the long time wasted in coming to a decision in Boston required, in justice to Mr. McKim, a prompt action on the part of the Museum Authorities in this matter.”

The *Bacchante* and its Connemara marble pedestal reached The Met on June 21, 1897. From the outset it was distinctive within the Museum’s American sculpture holdings. Of the thirty works collected since 1872, the majority were mid-nineteenth-century Neoclassical marbles, donated or bequeathed as they became aesthetically outmoded and fell out of favor with a monied class of merchants and entrepreneurs. Because there were no funds for the purchase of works by living American artists at that time, very few by younger Parisian-trained ones had been acquired. The most significant as of that time was MacMonnies’s fellow expatriate Paul Wayland Bartlett’s (1865–1925) full-size *Bohemian Bear Tamer* (1885–87; cast 1888), exhibited in bronze at the Paris Salon.

31. Louis St. Gaudens (1854–1913), based on a design by Kenyon Cox (1856–1919), *Seal for the Boston Public Library*, 1889–90
in 1888 and presented in 1891 as “Gift of an Association of Gentlemen.” It was followed by George Grey Barnard’s (1863–1938) heroic-scale marble Struggle of the Two Natures in Man (1888; carved 1892–94), donated in 1896. Like the Bacchante, it also had a sensational debut in Paris in the spring of 1894, but at the alternate Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts. These three works by credentialed Paris-trained artists together brought fresh cachet and sophistication to The Met’s otherwise fairly staid collection of American sculpture. In coming years they were installed in proximity to each other (see fig. 36), as they still are today.

The Bacchante’s arrival at The Met attracted sustained press coverage. Director Cesnola had anticipated it, commenting to McKim, “When the papers learn that the Museum has accepted your gift, I suppose I will be overrun with reporters.” In response to journalists’ ongoing questions, Cesnola contended that a visit to an art museum was a voluntary experience: “An art museum is manifestly a suitable location . . . and here it will remain, to delight art lovers. Others needn’t look at it.” Certain New Yorkers were also smug about what they saw as Boston’s prudish and puritanical routing of the sculpture. The society journal Town Topics gave voice to the Bacchante: “New York, I know, won’t turn me down; Here I’ll not need a shawl, My naked charms will meet no frown, But I’ll be loved by all!”

Other New Yorkers, however, were no more accepting of the sculpture than their Boston brethren, as documented by correspondence and pages of scrapbook clippings in the Museum Archives (see inside covers). Letters of protest steadily arrived over the next several months—from the Reform Bureau (June 9); the American Purity Alliance (June 11); and various branches of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (September 11, September 13, October 26, and October 29)—reiterating the same charges made in Boston but now claiming the Bacchante was “inimical to the best welfare of our Metropolitan public.” A battle-weary MacMonnies wrote McKim to request that he withdraw the sculpture: “I feel that the Bacchante in the Metropolitan Museum would be a source of endless controversy.
and I no longer care to pass as a corrupter.”  

McKim, Cesnola, and the trustees stood firm in their decision, however, disregarding the protests filed against the Bacchante’s acceptance. During the 1890s, censorship of American sculpture extended far beyond the Bacchante. In the wrong context or setting—notably public ones, where viewing was unavoidably participatory—inanimate three-dimensional figures became objects of outrage, convenient lightning rods reflecting the angst of vast societal transformation. When nudity was not cloaked in defensible allegorical or spiritual purity, it particularly rankled those crusading against obscenity in the arts. For example, when the original version of Saint-Gaudens’s Diana (fig. 30) was unveiled on the tower of McKim, Mead & White’s Madison Square Garden in 1891, the gilded sheet-metal weather vane attracted negative notice for its very conspicuous nudity; the 18-foot figure, oversize for its perch, was removed and replaced with a smaller version (now at the Philadelphia Museum of Art), yet it was then placed on top of the Agriculture Building at the World’s Columbian Exposition, visible to millions more. Male nudity also drew ire; the seal above the main doorway for the Boston Public Library, produced by Louis St. Gaudens, was based on a design by Kenyon Cox that featured two male youths holding torches of learning and supporting a shield (fig. 31). Upon its installation in 1894 it attracted opprobrium from the same groups that later criticized the Bacchante, but it remained in place.

The trajectory of refusal that most closely paralleled the Bacchante’s was Barnard’s languid reclining Great God Pan (fig. 32). Presented to the City of New York in November 1896, it was rejected by the Parks Commission for placement in Central Park in June 1897, coincidentally just days after McKim donated the Bacchante to The Met. Following a controversy that played out similarly to what had transpired in Boston, the decision was then reversed. Alone and together, Bacchante and Pan were lampooned in cartoons and verse in which the figures variously appeared unclothed or clothed. Their respective attributes, grapes and musical pipes, were substituted for other symbols, in the Bacchante’s case, pots of Boston baked beans, salted cod, liquor bottles, and volumes of poetry (fig. 34). The bronze cast of Pan was briefly on view at The Met beginning in spring 1897.  


1899, located near the *Bacchante*, and it was later exhibited widely, but never in Central Park. Instead *Pan’s* owners, Elizabeth Scriven Clark Potter and her son Edward Severin Clark, gave it to Columbia University in 1907. Installed on campus through McKim’s auspices, today it faces Lewisohn Hall.

McKim and Cesnola agreed to defer public exhibition of the *Bacchante* until the fall, after the Museum closed for its semiannual cleaning. Writing to MacMonnies days before the sculpture finally went on view, McKim reassured him: “Removed from Puritan surroundings to the Metropolis, where she belongs, I think we may regard the question of her virtue as settled for all time.”

MacMonnies’s *Bacchante* debuted at long last at a season opening held on November 1, 1897, at the same time as Henry Marquand’s gift of Greek, Roman, and Etruscan antiquities and John Singer Sargent’s portrait of Marquand were unveiled. With McKim’s approval, Cesnola installed the *Bacchante* in perhaps the most visible spot in the Museum at the time: the ground-floor gallery centered on the main entrance facing 79th Street, a space installed with bronze statuary and wrought ironwork (fig. 33). This prominent, in-the-round placement was no doubt a deliberate gesture on the director’s part, who in his long tenure never shied away from publicity or controversy.

Indeed, in the years since, the *Bacchante* has often been conspicuously installed. In 1902, when Richard Morris Hunt’s grand Fifth Avenue facade opened as the main public entrance, the sculpture was given pride of place on its Connemara marble base in the Hall of Sculpture (now the Great Hall) (fig. 36). Within the dense presentation of European and American marbles and bronzes, it was placed at the center, near the location of the main information desk today. The *Bacchante* was among the first objects that visitors to the Museum encountered, flanked by Bartlett’s *Bohemian Bear Tamer* and Barnard’s *Struggle of the Two Natures in Man*. Sculptor Lorado Taft (1860–1936), a friend of MacMonnies’s from their Parisian student days, observed, tongue in cheek, that the jubilant figure “needs the open, without hint of prison walls,” referring to its placement
in The Met’s institutional setting rather than outdoors in dialogue with natural or built surroundings.47

The Great Hall was deinstalled for renovations to its domes and roof in 1907 followed by a memorial exhibition for Augustus Saint-Gaudens in 1908. When it reopened later that year, the modern sculpture collection had been dispersed but the Bacchante remained, tacit acknowledgment of its iconic status and institution-bred pedigree. It was positioned at the foot of the Great Staircase outside the Room of Recent Accessions (now part of the main Museum shop), near Bartlett’s Bohemian Bear Tamer and a bronze cast of Jean Antoine Houdon’s (1741–1828) George Washington, which was on loan. In 1918, Robert Philipp depicted the Bacchante in situ, towering over museumgoers, one of whom can be seen earnestly reading the label on its base (fig. 35). For a generation of visitors, its isolated installation in this most public of spaces made the Bacchante a familiar presence, signaling its importance both within The Met collection and in MacMonnies’s oeuvre.

After earning favored status in the Great Hall, the Bacchante was later installed with the American sculpture collection. The holdings of works by living artists, including additional works by MacMonnies (see figs. 5, 8, 42), grew
impressively in the early twentieth century owing to the efforts of Daniel Chester French, who served as a trustee and de facto curator of modern sculpture between 1903 and 1931. In 1926, under French's auspices, two dedicated galleries for American sculpture were opened in McKim, Mead & White's new Wing K (now the Greek and Roman galleries). The *Bacchante* and French's marble *Angel of Death and the Sculptor from the Milmore Memorial* (1889–93; carved 1921–26) dominated a space otherwise dedicated to early twentieth-century small bronzes. In 1933, following French's death, these sculptures were removed to the first- and second-floor corridor galleries flanking the Great Staircase, with the *Bacchante* placed on the main floor amid other large-scale bronzes that French had commissioned for The Met (fig. 37).

**The Bacchante Multiples**
Extensive press coverage and public debate about the *Bacchante* and *Infant Faun* only enhanced MacMonnies's celebrity. “The purists, in not being able to distinguish between art and life,” as the novelist Theodore Dreiser rightly noted in 1898, “have done for the talented sculptor what years of conscientious [sic] toil could scarcely have done—secured for him general public consideration.”

Even before the *Bacchante* transitioned from notable in Paris to notorious in Boston, MacMonnies capitalized on its earning potential. Following the successful examples of Antoine-Louis Barye, Dalou, and, more immediately, Mercié and Falguière, MacMonnies was the first American—before both Saint-Gaudens and Frederic Remington—to successfully issue small bronze statuettes in so-called commercial editions. These reductions provided him with a consistent and substantial source of income between the less frequent payouts for monumental work.

Beginning in 1890 MacMonnies's statuettes were cast at foundries in Paris (and later in New York) and distributed through French and American dealers, among them Durand-Ruel, Theodore B. Starr, and Tiffany & Co. *Diana, Nathan Hale, Pan of Rohallion*, and *Young Faun with Heron* were already in circulation before MacMonnies began issuing *Bacchante* reductions. They brought an American market eager for decoration for the home and garden a measure of French-inspired sophistication. These small-scale bronzes commanded a steady clientele; the sculptor later recalled that Edward D. Adams, who had commissioned the full-size *Pan of Rohallion* (see fig. 7), “bought hundreds of them to give to his friends.”

American small bronze sculpture reached its peak popularity at the turn of the twentieth century, and indeed editions of the most celebrated works were very large, from Remington's *Broncho Buster* (1895; 275 authorized casts) to Harriet Whitney Frishmuth's *Vine* (1921; 396). Artists, including MacMonnies, diligently copyrighted their sculptures to avoid image piracy; he registered the *Bacchante* and several other models on March 16, 1895.

MacMonnies was savvy to the *Bacchante's* marketability, especially after the French state announced it was purchasing the full-size cast. Beginning in early 1895 he cast reductions in two sizes: 34 inches (fig. 38) and 16 inches. By February, statuettes had arrived on American shores, on view at Theodore B. Starr's Fifth Avenue emporium and in the National Sculpture Society's exhibition, available for $250 each. McKim wrote the sculptor that month expressing interest in buying one or two casts, one for himself and one as a present.

Over the next decade reductions of the *Bacchante*, along with others in MacMonnies's small bronze “stable,” circulated to exhibition venues in other American cities. No extant records indicate just how large the editions of the two sizes of statuettes were; there was no set number of casts per model, as some sculptors stipulated. Based on the number of *Bacchante* reductions recorded in public and private collections today, demand must have been strong. To maximize efficiency in the process of creating multiples, and to ensure quality control and a ready supply, MacMonnies invested in so-called pin models (or pattern models) for his more popular statuettes, from which molds were produced to be used in the casting process. When molds are repeatedly taken from plaster models,
the plaster surfaces incrementally lose crispness and form, while bronze models retain exact details and proportions. When not in use, the model for the 16-inch Bacchante (fig. 39) was held together by pins securing the hollow-cast arms and left leg.

Three additional bronze casts of the Bacchante that are at the same scale as The Met’s were made during MacMonnies’s lifetime. A lost-wax cast was completed by Thiébaut in 1897 for the Musée du Luxembourg, but MacMonnies was not satisfied with its quality. In 1901 he cast two more bronzes, this time at E. Gruet Jeune, using a mold taken off The Met’s bronze by special arrangement with the Museum. He substituted one of these for the 1897 cast (private collection, Great Britain). The new cast remained at the Luxembourg until 1954; it is now at the Musée Franco-Américain de Blérancourt. The other 1901 cast, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was originally owned by Charles Tyson Yerkes, a New York streetcar magnate. It was purchased at auction in 1910 by trustee George Robert White, who immediately put it on loan to the museum. In a fitting (or perhaps ironic) coda to the “banned in Boston” episode, in 1993–94 a bronze recast was produced from a mold taken of the Bacchante at the Museum of Fine Arts, and in 1999 it was installed in the courtyard of the Boston Public Library.

As MacMonnies’s career progressed, the Bacchante remained his signature image. Two marble versions, each several inches taller than The Met’s original, vary from the model with the addition of lion-skin draperies and grapevines that trail down the figure’s side to give tensile strength to the fragile stone. One dating to 1905 was displayed in the Paris Salon that year and purchased by the Brooklyn Museum in 1906. Another version (fig. 40) was carved in 1914 for the house of William Randolph Hearst’s mother near Pleasanton, California; it is now at Hearst Castle, San Simeon. There is also an unfinished smaller excerpt of the Bacchante’s head, which emerges from a block of marble in Rodinesque fashion, that remained in the sculptor’s studio (1902–5; Musée Alphonse-Georges Poulain, Vernon). Finally, beginning in 1914, MacMonnies also produced four 68-inch (approximately life-size) bronze casts.

In the mid- to late 1890s MacMonnies continued to pursue the mythological and antique themes for which he had become renowned, further inspired by travels to Naples and Pompeii in the autumn of 1894. He produced a large-scale Venus and Adonis (1895; Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina) in red Numidian marble and later issued it as statuette-scale bronzes. Also joining his growing commercial repertoire were Running Cupid (1895) and Standing Cupid (1895). MacMonnies adapted the latter into a polychrome multimedia showpiece of ivory and semiprecious materials (fig. 41). Shown in the decorative arts section of the 1898 Salon, it sold quickly and profitably through New York dealer Theodore B. Starr for $6,000. The ebullient Boy and Duck (fig. 42) was inspired by the pagan
42. MacMonnies, *Boy and Duck*, 1895–96 (cast 1901). Bronze, H. 29 ¾ in. (75.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.61)
theme of a young child engaging with a feisty animal or bird drawn from antique and Renaissance statuary, earlier referenced in Young Faun with Heron. The first cast was installed in the Vale of Cashmere in Prospect Park in 1899 as a gift from MacMonnies (it was stolen in 1941 and has not been recovered); The Met’s cast was purchased from the artist in 1922.

For the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris, the sculptor submitted eight large-scale works. Along with his distinguished older compatriots Saint-Gaudens and French, MacMonnies earned a Grand Prix, a stirring acknowledgment of his place in the leading triumvirate of American sculptors. A plaster Bacchante was placed in the central glass-roofed area of the Grand Palais (fig. 43), between plaster versions of his two groups called The Horse Tamers (1898), which surmount stone gateposts for the Park Circle entrance to Prospect Park, and next to Saint-Gaudens’s model for the monument to General

43. MacMonnies’s Bacchante and Infant Faun installed at the Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900

44. MacMonnies, Self-Portrait, ca. 1904. Oil on canvas, 31 x 25 in. (78.7 x 63.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Mrs. James W. Fosburgh Gift, 1967 (67.72)
William Tecumseh Sherman (1892–1903) for Manhattan’s Grand Army Plaza. With this award, MacMonnies had achieved the pinnacle of professional success, adding to the prestigious Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur bestowed on him in 1896.

Having worked at a breakneck pace for more than a decade, MacMonnies experienced what he later termed “an indigestion of sculpture and hard work.”

Beginning in 1898 he briefly taught painting with James McNeill Whistler at the Académie Carmen in Paris (it closed in 1901), and over the years he also had a succession of private painting and sculpture students. In the late 1890s MacMonnies turned mainly to painting, executing portraits in France, Britain, Germany, and the United States. He worked in a high-key palette, his brushwork inspired by Velázquez, whose paintings he had examined firsthand and copied in Spain. His reverence extended to including a mirror-image detail of a copy of The Feast of Bacchus (1628–29; Museo del Prado, Madrid) in a self-portrait (fig. 44), implicitly linking himself to the venerated master.
MacMonnies also completed portraits and family groups at Giverny (fig. 45), which he had visited regularly since 1890 (he later purchased property there). After achieving only qualified success exhibiting his paintings, he began to prioritize sculpture again around 1904.

**The Legacy of the Bacchante**

MacMonnies’s *Bacchante* quickly infiltrated the popular imagination. Even before the sculpture became a cause célèbre, in 1895 the Massachusetts-based Watson & Newell Co. issued sterling silver souvenir flatware with a *Bacchante* pattern decorating the handle (fig. 46). During the mid-to-late 1890s the *Bacchante* also inspired jocular songs and was set to meter in poems describing the Boston controversy and relocation to New York. The “Bacchante Skip” (fig. 47) was introduced as a dance step, though it was perhaps less suited to the ballroom than the beer hall. Later, in Robert Grant’s novel *The Chippendales* (1909), the Sunday morning private viewing of the *Bacchante* at the Boston Public Library was described at length, with various characters taking sides for and against (Grant himself was vocally opposed at the time).

The subject of the bacchante was a popular one in the American visual and performing arts at the turn of the twentieth century, carrying with it broader cultural associations, whether connoting joie de vivre, cultural decadence, or sexual liberation. In 1895–96, during an American tour, the popular Parisian cabaret singer and actress Yvette Guilbert, a Moulin Rouge headliner, posed in the guise of a bacchante for a photograph taken by amateur photographer James L. Breese, a McKim, Mead & White client and friend. It was published alongside that of the *Bacchante* in situ in Boston in December 1896. As the accompanying article makes clear, it was done to vivify the bronze and to unsettle the distinction between art and life. The subject of Joseph T. Keiley’s photograph *A Bacchante* (fig. 48) has lowered eyes and a joyful grin similar to MacMonnies’s sculpture, here amid an atmospheric veil created during the printing process. Owned by Keiley’s close associate and

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advocate Alfred Stieglitz, The Met’s print was widely exhibited in the loan collection of the Photo-Secession at the turn of the twentieth century.

To be sure, the Bacchante’s fame drew painters and sculptors to look at the bacchanalia theme afresh, some presumably as a result of firsthand encounters with the bronze at The Met. American figurative sculptors produced their own bacchante models into the 1920s, doubtless piggybacking on the commercial success of MacMonnies’s reductions. Evelyn Beatrice Longman, a former studio assistant of Daniel Chester French, depicted French’s daughter Peggy in the guise of a smiling bacchante (fig. 49), issuing an edition of bronze busts. French’s association with MacMonnies’s original Bacchante may have informed the choice of the allegorical reference, although in this case it was certainly a nod to happiness rather than inebriety. Likewise, the popularity of the theme in dance was widespread in the early twentieth century and informed creative interchange.

Malvina Cornell Hoffman’s spirited Bacchanale Russe (fig. 50) depicts the legendary Russian-born ballerina Anna Pavlova and her partner Mikhail Mordkin performing the Bacchanale, choreographed to the autumn section of Alexander Glazunov’s The Seasons. Hoffman, who first saw the dance performed in 1910 in London and later in New York, represents the bacchante and satyr in a fleeting moment, intoxicated both by wine and frenzied abandon.

Some artists focused on the bacchante’s free-spirited temperament. A watercolor by John La Farge (fig. 51), inspired by antique Roman fresco painting, presents a classicizing bacchante garbed in a diaphanous dress, holding a thyrsos, and dancing on grapes; it is a preparatory study for a window commissioned but never realized for a McKim, Mead & White house in Minneapolis. Other artists favored the bacchante’s association with the grape, pressing her into service to comment on the drive for prohibition, a leading social
issue of the day. John Sloan’s 1915 etching *Mars and Bacchante* (fig. 52) presents the Roman god of war as a steely beat cop with nightstick, while the bacchante, reeling from the ill effects of drink, steadies herself against a wall-mounted mailbox, paradoxically seeking support from the U.S. government.

Into this cultural climate MacMonnies returned from France in 1915. After living as an expatriate for three decades, he settled in New York following the outbreak of World War I. As a modernist aesthetic slowly infiltrated American sculpture during the 1910s and 1920s, he remained true to his now outmoded academic Beaux-Arts roots, but thanks to the abiding American impulse to commemorate and memorialize through sculpture he continued to attract substantial commissions. *The Princeton Battle Monument* (1908–22) and *Civic Virtue* (1908–22) are both weighty, overdetailed groups that lacked the verve of his earlier efforts. The latter was a memorial fountain featuring a male personification of Virtue standing astride two writhing prostrate female Vices. Even before its installation in City Hall Park the fountain attracted the strident opposition of women’s organizations, just as the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, was ratified in 1920. In the wake of opposition to the exploitative message implicit in the subject, the fountain was moved to Borough Park, Queens, in 1941, and, after ongoing protests, to Green-Wood...
 Cemetery, Brooklyn, in 2012, its final resting place. The Bacchante, in contrast, must have seemed by that time like a tame forerunner that no longer induced “moral shivers.” Its continuing popularity as a collectible is evidenced by the availability of 22 ¾-inch plaster reproductions through P. P. Caproni, a Boston firm esteemed for its wide array of casts for sale via its illustrated catalogue.

MacMonnies’s final major achievement was a monument to French soldiers who had fallen in the First Battle of the Marne in September 1914. It was dedicated in 1932, near Meaux, France, a gift from the American people. He died on March 22, 1937, in New York at the age of seventy-three. In his heyday, MacMonnies was an inventive and dynamic artist whose talents were greatly in demand. Although by the time of his death his reputation had been eclipsed by modernist sculptors boldly experimenting with varied materials, themes, and aesthetics, his Bacchante and Infant Faun, still the sculpture with which MacMonnies is most identified, remains a powerful testament to his aesthetic vision and the subject’s popular appeal.


Notes


4 “Un petit bijou . . . gracieuse et vraie” (translation by the author). Paul Bion to Mary Fairchild MacMonnies, March 31, 1893 (copy), box 2, folder 39, MacMonnies Papers, AAA.

5 Lockman interview with MacMonnies, January 29, 1927, p. 32, Lockman Interviews, N-YHS, AAA microfilm reel 503, frame 904.

6 Mary Fairchild MacMonnies Low, undated typescript memoirs, p. 92, box 2, folder 5, MacMonnies Papers, AAA.


10 Lockman interview with MacMonnies, February 15, 1927, pp. 21, 22, Lockman Interviews, N-YHS, AAA microfilm reel 503, frames 92–33.


16 Bion to Saint-Gaudens, April 20, 1894, Augustus Saint-Gaudens Papers, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H. English translation, Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park, Cornish, N.H.

17 H.L., “‘Salon’ in the Champs Élysées,” The Art Amateur 31, no. 2 (July 1894), p. 25.

18 “Je le trouve un chef d’œuvre . . . c’est le dernier mot de la grace et de la vie on a jamais fait mieux” (translation by the author). Saint-Gaudens to Bion, January 25, 1895, MacMonnies Papers, AAA, microfilm reel 3042, no frame number.


21 MacMonnies to Max Farrand, January 7, 1931 (copy), HIA 31.1.1.30.4, Library General Correspondence, Huntington Institutional Archives, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.


23 McKim to MacMonnies, November 2, 1894, Letters, Watson Library, MMA.

24 MacMonnies to McKim, May 28, 1896, McKim, Mead & White Architectural Record Collection, PR42, Department of Prints, Photographs, and Architectural Collections, Manuscript Collections, New-York Historical Society, box 507. McKim had retained the original sculpture to produce a piece mold to cast the replica for the Luxembourg, but did not complete that process before shipping.


26 Clippings in MacMonnies scrapbooks, MacMonnies Papers, AAA, microfilm reel D245, frames 108, 109, 113.


30 Copy of petition to Art Commission of the City of Boston, October 26, 1896, McKim, Mead & White Architectural Record Collection, N-YHS, box 507.


32 Telegram, November 20, 1896, box 1, folder 13, MacMonnies Papers, AAA; and McKim to MacMonnies, December 3, 1896, Letters, Watson Library, MMA.

33 Edward Robinson to Trustees of the Public Library, November 20, 1896, McKim,
Mead & White Architectural Record Collection, N-YHS, box 507.
35 McKim to Frederick Rhinelander, MMA, June 1, 1897, "Charles F. McKim - Gift of Bacchante" files, Office of the Secretary Records, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York (hereafter OSR, MMA Archives).
36 Ibid.
37 Unsigned, undated typescript, OSR, MMA Archives.
38 Cesnola to McKim, June 4, 1897 (copy), OSR, MMA Archives.
39 "Bacchante's Coming Out Day,” *New York Herald*, June 24, 1897, clipping in MacMonnies scrapbooks, MacMonnies Papers, AAA, microfilm reel D245, frame 84.
40 "The Bacchante's Plant,” *Town Topics* (New York), June 10, 1897, clipping in MacMonnies scrapbooks, MacMonnies Papers, AAA, microfilm reel D245, frame 80.
41 Aaron M. Powell, President, American Purity Alliance, June 11, 1897, OSR, MMA Archives. Copies of all of these protest letters are held in "Gift of Bacchante—Protests against acceptance 1897" file, OSR, MMA Archives.
42 MacMonnies to McKim, October 6, 1897, quoted in Smart, *A Flight with Fame*, p. 173.
46 The base remained with the sculpture until the late 1920s–early 1930s. No longer in use, it was subsequently transferred to the American Museum of Natural History in 1934 to be resized and paired with Chestor Beach’s portrait bust of Henry Fairfield Osborn, paleontologist and past president of that museum.
50 Copyright application no. 15224, March 16, 1895, box 1, file 80, MacMonnies Papers, AAA.
51 McKim to MacMonnies, February 27, 1895, Letters, Watson Library, MMA.
52 Lockman interview with MacMonnies, February 15, 1927, p. 11, Lockman Interviews, N-YHS, AAA microfilm reel 503, frame 923.

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*Thayer Tolles*
THE METROPOLITAN.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has acquired the statue of Bacchus, a figure in ancient art, from the collection of Mr. Macmonnies, the noted American sculptor. The statue, which is a marble copy of the original, was created by the sculptor himself and is considered one of his finest works. The statue will be on public exhibition in the Museum of Art, and will be available for inspection by the public. The statue will be on public exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and will be available for inspection by the public.

BACCHUS COMING TO NEW YORK.

Macmonnies's Bronze Accepted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Jaques Davidsen, Amer.

The statue of Bacchus, a favorite subject of the ancient artists, is now being exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and will be available for inspection by the public. The statue will be on public exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and will be available for inspection by the public.

OUR PARK BACCHUS.

One of the Fights of the Metropolitan Museum.

Jaques Davidsen, Amer.

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SHELL FIND WELCOME HERE.

In the Gift of C. O. Finley, Amer.

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Bacchante and Infant Faun
Tradition, Controversy, and Legacy

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin
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