

The Business of Bronze Casting

As soon as he began making bronzes for public exhibition in the early 1830s, Barye recognized the necessity of collaborating with the best foundries in Paris. After his works were rejected for exhibition at the Salon, Barye was anxious about his business prospects and began to directly oversee the casting process for the reproductions of his bronzes he sold independently. Sometime around 1844, he established a partnership with Émile Martin, an industrialist specializing in iron casting. The two men published an extensive catalogue of Barye's creations that they updated regularly. Barye eventually determined that Martin's almost exclusive interaction with the foundries they employed had diminished his own authority over the final quality of his works, and their company was formally dissolved in 1857. From that time until the end of his life, Barye reasserted total creative control and was the sole person in communication with the founders who realized his bronzes. A final catalogue of new models was published in 1874, only a year before the artist's death. The heirs to his estate auctioned the rights to reproduce his works in the following year. While the founder Barbedienne bought the rights for the majority of Barye's catalogue, the founders Delafontaine, Susse, and Thiébaud and the art dealer Hector Brame each purchased a number of his master models also. Scholars consider the bronzes cast by these founders as late as the 1940s to be authentic posthumous editions of Barye's works.

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