



GEORGES HILBERT (1900 - 1982)

Young Deer Lying Down

Bronze proof, unnumbered

Sand cast by Alexis Rudier

Logo of the Compagnie des Arts Français: CAF

Signed: Hilbert

H. 28, W. 36, D. 14 cm

Related literature

- Florence Camard, *Süe et Mare et la Compagnie des arts français*, (*Süe and Mare and the Comagnie des arts français*), Editions de l'Amateur, Paris, 1993, p.151-153.
- Thierry Roche, *Dictionnaire biographique des sculpteurs des années 1920-1930*, (*Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors from 1920 to 1930*), Beau fixe, Lyon, 2007, p. 220-221.

The son of a veterinarian, Georges Hilbert studied sculpture first at the fine arts school in Oran, then at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs and then at the École des Beaux-Arts, both in Paris. He also went often to the Jardin des Plantes, an important site for sculptors specializing in animals, such as François Pompon (1855-1933) and Antoine-Louis Barye earlier in the 19th century. Hilbert used the animals in the zoo as his models, working diligently and seriously.

In the *Young Deer Lying Down*, Hilbert depicted the animal quite naturally and at rest. His gaze both peaceful and attentive, the deer has his front legs tucked

under his body, while his head, with its short horns, leans gently toward his left shoulder. In this work, Hilbert's interest in simplified, purified forms with strong formal density is evident, and it was informed by various influences.

—The first is undoubtedly ancient Egyptian sculpture;[\[1\]](#) he was a fervent admirer of it and could have studied it in 1930, when he traveled in Egypt. The *Young Deer Lying Down* reflects this art in its sober pose and its smooth and compact form, which is a bit disconcerting due to its impassive air.

—Hilbert was also inspired by Pompon's art; he borrowed the intense stylization of his animal forms, free of any picturesque details. Like Pompon, he usually worked with direct carving and only rarely went in for castings.[\[2\]](#)

—Hilbert was also influenced by the work of the Spanish sculptor Mateo Hernandez (1884-1949), who lived in Meudon from 1913 on. In 1925, Hernandez did a *Daim ou Biche couchée (Reclining Doe or Buck)*,[\[3\]](#) now in the collections of the André Diligent Museum of Art and Industry in Roubaix, whose form closely resembles Hilbert's *Young Deer Lying Down*. That said, compared with Hernandez's work, Hilbert's forms are more refined and his modeling is more supple.

Several of Georges Hilbert's works are held in national public collections: the Musée national d'art moderne has *Tête bouledogue (Head of a Bulldog)*,[\[4\]](#) and the Fonds national d'art contemporain has three, *Panther*,[\[5\]](#) *Parrot*,[\[6\]](#) and *Head of an Antelope*,[\[7\]](#) all acquired directly from the artist. In addition, the Metropolitan Museum in New York City has one of his sculptures titled *Peccary*.[\[8\]](#)

All of these works are in stone, as is his *Young Deer*,[\[9\]](#) a work in granite held in the collections of the Petit Palais. That *Young Deer*, which was acquired by the city of Paris in 1934,[\[10\]](#) is in every way identical to this work, except that it is twice as large. Hilbert also did drawings of deer; he gave one titled *Head of a Young Stag* to the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1934; another titled *Deer*, which depicts the animal in the same pose as this sculpture, has been in the national fine arts museum in Algiers (Inv. IG1137) since 1929.

In light of these various works, we can date our *Young Deer Lying Down* to the beginning of the 1930s. Once a work had been acquired by a museum, Hilbert would arrange for the model to be editioned in bronze; in this case, he gave the right to cast proofs to the Compagnie des Arts Français (CAF).

Created by Louis Süe and André Mare in 1919, the CAF brought artists together to create coherent, unified interior decoration for domestic spaces. It offered its clients two levels; at the higher level, the furnishings were all unique, whereas at the lower level, standardized furnishings were used. In

1928, Jacques Adnet (1900-1984) took over the running of the Compagnie des Arts Français and updated its aesthetic,[\[11\]](#) including making changes to the CAF logo.[\[12\]](#) The logo on *Young Deer Lying Down* is the modernized one.

The 1930s were particularly propitious for Hilbert. In 1931, he joined the Groupe de Douze (Group of Twelve), an association of sculptors, including Jane Poupelet, brought together by François Pompon. In 1937, he served as a member of the jury and was also a participant in the International Exposition, and later became a member of the Academie des Beaux-Arts. Georges Hilbert gradually reduced his activities as a sculptor toward the end of the 1950s.

[\[1\]](#) The effigies of the goddess Bastet, for example, such as *Statue of the Goddess Bastet's Cat*, bronze, H. 0.205 m, 26th dynasty (664-525), Germany, Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung (SMPK), N°INV: 11385.

[\[2\]](#) Roche, 2007, p. 221.

[\[3\]](#) Mateo Hernandez, *Daim ou Biche couchée*, 1947, diorite, H. 52, W. 102.2, D. 56.3 cm, Roubaix, La Piscine, musée d'Art et d'Industrie - André Diligent, N°INV: AM900S.

[\[4\]](#) Georges Hilbert, *Tête de bouledogue*, sandstone, H. 18, W. 14, D. 22.5 cm, 1930-1940, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne - Centre Pompidou, N°INV: AM 5005 S.

[\[5\]](#) Georges Hilbert, *Panthère*, stone, H: 38, W: 85, D: 34 cm, deposited in the Fonds national d'art contemporain at the town hall of Mulhouse in 1952, N°INV: 7002.

[\[6\]](#) Georges Hilbert, *Ara*, deposited in the Fonds national d'art contemporain at the town hall of Barentin (Seine-Maritime) in 1955, though since 1997, its location has not been known (FNAC-10040139).

[\[7\]](#) Georges Hilbert, *Tête d'antilope*, granite, H. 47, W. 19, D. 28 cm, deposited in the Fonds national d'art contemporain at the town hall of Barentin (Seine-Maritime) in 1962, location unknown since 1997 (FNAC-10017808).

[\[8\]](#) Georges Hilbert, *Un pécari*, granite, H: 43.2, W: 58.2, D: 22.9 cm, 1927, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, N°INV: 28.214.

[9] Grey granite, H. 59, W. 70, D. 35 cm. Inv. PPS 1661. It seems that the work was acquired at the Petit Palais in the exhibition of the "Ind group of Artists of This Time", March 21st - April 20th of 1934. It was shown in 1953 at the exhibition *Un siècle d'art français, 1850-1950 (A Century of French Art 1850-1950)*, #997, organized by the Petit Palais.

[10] "Conseil municipal de Paris," in the *Bulletin municipal officiel de la Ville de Paris*, Paris, Municipal Printing Office, year 66, n°108, May 9, 1947, p. 767. However, the sculpture is not listed in the basic inventory of the museum.

[11] The lines of the furniture became more austere and purified, and unconventional materials replaced traditional high-end ones. See Camard, 1993, p. 152.

[12] Florence Camard does not specifically mention this change, but the caption on p. 153 seems to suggest it. In addition, an invoice and pages from a catalogue of the CAF from before 1928 have on them an ornamental logo, a kind of stylized "horn of plenty," which is very different from the logo of the new CAF.