



AIMÉ-JULES DALOU (1838-1902)

Hush a Bye Baby

Brown ink

Signed and dated: Dalou 1874

Collector's mark: YB

H. 27; W. 19 cm

Provenance

Paris, Alfred Beurdeley collection (5th sale, modern drawings, 1st part, Galerie Georges Petit, June 2-4, 1920, #94).

This drawing, signed and dated 1874, is of a marble sculpture, *La Berceuse* (*Hush a Bye Baby*), that Dalou had just finished for the Duke of Westminster.[\[1\]](#) The sculpture was shown at the Salon of the Royal Academy in 1876.[\[2\]](#)

During his years of exile in England (1871-1879), which fell right at the beginning of his career, Dalou concentrated on intimate subjects taken from daily life. Inspired by watching his young wife, Irma, caring for their daughter, Georgette, he created several pieces that focus on maternity. In addition to *Hush a Bye Baby*, there is *Maternal Joy*, the first version of *Parisian Breastfeeding*, *French Peasant Breastfeeding*, and *A Boulonnaise Breastfeeding*. He treated the subject in a modern and naturalist style, breaking with the traditional Christian representation, which is often overly idealized.

And though the composition of *Hush a Bye Baby* is traditional, it's freely reinterpreted. The mother and child are arranged circularly, with the mother's

body absorbing the child's in a unified whole. Furthermore, the orientation of the two heads, angled in the same direction, allows their gazes to blend into a single diagonal axis. The work emphasizes the tenderness that unites the two beings. The title, *Hush a Bye Baby*, refers to a popular English lullaby, and no doubt expresses the homesickness that Dalou suffered.[\[3\]](#)

Dalou's sketches are well-known and are well represented in public collections, but his large-scale finished drawings are much more rare. Those from the 1870s, which were very elaborate, detailed, and done after he'd finished a sculpture, were sometimes published in *l'Art*. Dalou carefully oversaw the diffusion of any images made of his works, and he often had photographs or engravings done of recent pieces, not only to give them to prospective clients, but above all to have them published in journals.

The ink drawing of *Hush a Bye Baby* is representative of Dalou's efforts to get his work known. The drawing was made either directly from the sculpture or from one of the photographs that was taken of it. The musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris (the Petit Palais) has one of these photographs in its collection. Acquired from the Galerie Malaquais in 2007, the photo (inv. PPPH00549) carries a photographer's stamp that states: "Friedr Bruckmann's Verlag / Munich, Berlin & London." It is dated, signed, and dedicated by Dalou "To Mademoiselle Marguerite de Rothschild / J. Dalou / 1876 / After the marble belonging to the Duke of Westminster."

Dalou used a dense network of fine, tight cross-hatchings to indicate the shadows, as would an engraver, and the drawing was no doubt used as the basis for an engraving published in the *Illustrated London News* on August 26, 1876, which is also no doubt why the signature and the date are so prominently positioned.

Alfred Beurdeley (1847-1919) acquired this drawing for his extensive collection, which was broken up after his death and sold at several auctions in 1920. *Hush a Bye Baby* was sold under the number 94 in the 5th sale of modern drawings.

"Sculptors sometimes make the error of attending too closely to highly colorful painters who don't draw or don't draw enough. Sculpture (a drawing with many faces) has very little in common with coloration; it has its own coloration, which comes above all from drawing; the modeling is produced by its contours. It's better, therefore, to study and be inspired first of all by nature and then by masters such as Raphaël, Ingres, etc." Aimé-Jules Dalou.[\[4\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) An article appeared in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* around 1898 (?) praising it.

[2] It was shown as #1441, collection of the Duke of Westminster. The plaster or the terra-cotta (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. A. 39-1934) was shown at the 1874 Salon of the Royal Academy under #1530.

[3] Dalou was allowed to return to France in May 1879, when all the participants of the Paris Commune were pardoned.

[4] Cited in Copel, Déborah, *Recherches sur Jules Dalou (1838-1902)*, a thesis for a masters degree in art history written under the direction of Mr. Bruno Foucart at the Université Paris IV, 2003-2004, p. 82.