

# CONNER • ROSENKRANZ

19th & 20th Century American Sculpture

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## Paul Wayland Bartlett (1865-1925) *CROCODILE*, 1895-96

In Paris there is a small zoo at the Jardin des Plantes that has been great source for animal subjects since the Royal Ménagerie was moved there from Versailles in the late eighteenth century. The renowned animalier Emmanuel Frémiet (1824–1910) held lectures at the zoo that were attended by Paul Bartlett when he was still in his teens. The American prodigy soon after embarked on a career that would include commissions for public monuments and architectural sculpture. But it his small scale animal sculptures that charm the collector and impress the connoisseur.

In 1895 Bartlett delighted both his public and his peers with a group of about fifty cabinet-size sculptures he presented at the Paris Salon. Most were creatures modeled either from living denizens of the Jardin des Plantes or from preserved specimens available at the nearby Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle. Included among Bartlett's more unorthodox subjects were a toad perched atop a tortoise, a scarab beetle, a lifesize depiction of a massive Brazilian toad, a sculpin fish, and a crocodile.

The last is a sinuously lifelike representation of what is probably a Nile crocodile, a species that would have been found in a nineteenth century European zoo. The adult animal attains a length of about sixteen-and-one-half feet, which means this sculpture—based on its extended length—is about one-sixth-lifesize. Bartlett's treatment of the reptile's pebbly, shingle-like hide combined with a convincing suggestion of its slithery crawl combine to make an object that is



*CROCODILE*, 1895–96, bronze, 23 inches wide, Conner • Rosenkranz

both beautiful and delightfully scary.

This bronze is a sand cast carrying the mark of Gruet Jeune, the earliest incarnation of one of the finest late nineteenth century Paris founders.

According to his papers, Bartlett's association with owner Charles Gruet began as early as 1885 and continued until the founder's death in 1890, after which Bartlett built his own foundry.



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