

# ADRIAN ALAN

*Fine Art & Antiques*



**PIERRE JULES Mêne (1810 - 1879)**

## **A Bronze Figure of a Horse at a Barrier**

Circa: Circa 1880

30 x 37 x 15 cm (11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 14<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches)

Bronze

France

1880

Inscribed to the base 'P.J.Mêne'.

A Bronze Figure of a Horse at a Barrier by *Pierre-Jules Mêne*.

### **Artist description:**

Mêne was the most successful and prolific animalier of his day, especially in commercial terms. He was born into an artisan family living at 84 rue du Faubourg-Saint-Antoine, the hub of Parisian craftsmanship. Mêne's father Dominique, a skilled metal turner, was a part of this thriving centre and taught his son not only the basics of metal foundry and the work of a cisèler, but also the principles of sculpture.

Mêne developed his natural talents as an animal sculptor under René Compaire and furthered his knowledge at the Zoo in the Jardin des Plantes, interpreting his own sketches and maquettes into bronze cast by his own hand. He rapidly established a reputation for himself and in 1838 exhibited a bronze group of a Dog and Fox at the Salon. In the same year Mêne established his own foundry, exhibiting one or more models almost every year at the Salon until his death in Paris in 1871, and beyond with entries accepted on his behalf until 1879.

Mêne won four medals at the Salon and at major exhibitions, receiving the Cross of the Légion d'honneur in 1861. He was influenced by the French painter Carle Vernet and the English painter Landseer and his bronzes inherited much of these painters warm, friendly style of romanticism. Mêne developed his own style of naturalism to become the most important and in turn, influential realist of his time.

In France he was seen by the purists as a watered down follower of Barye who Mêne rarely, if ever, tried to emulate - where Barye concentrated on the violence of nature, Mêne focused on the more delicate side of animal life, giving his animals a character and natural appeal of their own, capturing in bronze a moment of the subject's life in the wild.

In England Mêne was seen as sculpture's answer to Landseer. He had an eye to the lucrative English market and both the Coalbrookdale Foundry and the Falkirk Foundry (on the banks of the river Carron in

Scotland) cast his models in iron. In fact, Mène s two first class medals were won at the London Exhibitions of 1855 and 1861.