

Bacchante and Infant Faun

Frederick William MacMonnies

Created in 1894 in Paris, the original bronze stood at 7 feet tall. The original, over-life-sized nude depicts an exuberant woman (a bacchante) celebrating while holding an infant. MacMonnies gifted it to his friend, architect Charles F. McKim, to repay a \$50 loan. McKim offered it to the Boston Public Library for a courtyard that his firm was designing. It was accepted by the Library, but public outcry led McKim to retrieve it and donate it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Ironically, about a century later, the Boston Public Library commissioned a full-sized casting for the courtyard. It was installed in 1999.

The BPL's rejection and the controversy surrounding it led MacMonnies to sell many smaller versions of the figure. While looking for statuary for her newly-built gardens, Florence Bixby purchased a 2 ½-foot-tall reproduction in 1931. She may have been inspired by the version at the Henry Huntington estate in San Marino. Florence's sister Leslie was married to Howard Huntington, Henry's son.

Correspondence with the Olmsted brothers during the creation of the Rose Garden and Olive Patio reveals that the figure was originally slated for a fountain. Florence, however, changed her mind about a fountain, and the landscape architects convinced her that the figure was best viewed from below. According to family history, the bacchante was placed in the center of the Olive Patio wall.

As with the Friesseke painting "The Fancy Dress" in the Music Room, Florence's family teased her about the statue. In her book *Is There a Thing Called Spring?* (1936), she mused that some art is "not to be well-considered by all . . . those who really do understand pictures . . . like the "Fancy Dress," and those who do know little, do not."

Bacchante and Infant Faun was damaged by vandals sometime after Florence died in 1961. Katharine Bixby Hotchkis removed the figure for restoration and kept it at her home San Marino. It was inherited by her daughter Joan Hotchkis, who passed it to her daughter Paula Chambers.

Paula has graciously donated the bronze back to Rancho Los Alamitos. With the guidance of our conservation expert, John Griswold, *Bacchante and Infant Faun* will be installed in its original location on the Olive Patio wall. It is currently on view downstairs in the Ranch Center offices.