

# CALLISTO FINE ARTS

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Aimé-Jules Dalou (1838-1902)  
***La Sagesse soutenant la Liberté***

Bronze

Height 61 cm

Signed & dated: *DALOU 1889*; inscribed: (6); and stamped: *CIRE PERDUE AA HÉBRARD*

*La Sagesse soutenant la Liberté* was originally modelled in 1889 but re-worked to be incorporated into the Monument to Léon Gambetta (1838-1882). The monument was commissioned to be placed in Paris originally, but it was then decided to erect it in Bordeaux, in the Allée de Tourny.

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It was paid for with a public subscription and was completed in 1905, after Dalou's death. In 1961, the monument was dismantled and put in a storage of the Musée d' Aquitaine.

Dalou was a Republican and participated to the Commune. For this reason, he had to leave France, where he had been sentenced to hard labour for life, and spent ten years in Britain. Dalou returned to France only after a change in leadership facilitated a general amnesty in 1879. On his return, he received a number of commissions for large-scale public monuments, including The Triumph of the Republic, which still stands in the Place de la Nation in Paris.

The massive figure of Wisdom bearing the weight of a collapsing Liberty perfectly encapsulates Dalou's own Republican concerns and even on this small scale the monumentality of the strong forms is manifest. The bronze was cast from the plaster model now in the Petit Palais.

The Hébrard casts of this model are the finest and the rarest.

Two female figures are dramatically paired in this sculpture. One is clothed, upright, muscular, and strong. Her costume—an antique helmet and a scaled cape (called an “aegis”) decorated with Medusa’s head—identifies her as the Roman goddess Minerva. She holds up a nearly naked figure, whose limbs are limp and whose hair is loose and disheveled. The latter wears a floppy cap associated with supporters of the French Revolution. The reference to French history suggests that the sculpture is not intended to illustrate a myth. Rather, it is an allegory, in which the figures personify abstract ideas: Minerva, goddess of Wisdom, supports the suffering figure of Liberty. Dalou returned to France only after a change in leadership facilitated a general amnesty in 1879. On his return, he received a number of commissions for large-scale public monuments, including The Triumph of the Republic, which still stands in the Place de la Nation in Paris.