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Sigalle,

his life and his work

*A short notice
taken from original documents*

by

Georges Pelissier

521p

RTP

New-York 1907

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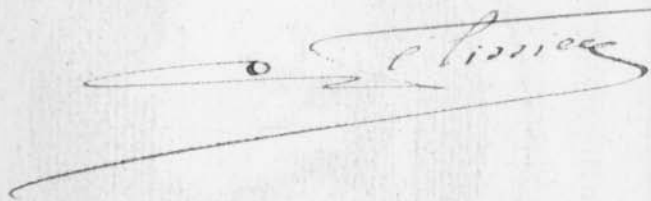


A short notice
from original documents

by
George Pelissier

New-York
1907

A Monsieur S. Reinaer
hommage tres respectueux.

L. L. L.



Tiffany & Co.

from an original engraving
National Library, Paris

New York

Jean Baptiste Pigalle,
born in Paris, 26th January 1714⁽¹⁾
was the seventh child of Jean
Pigalle, joiner, Rue Neuve St
Martin, and Geneviève Ledreux
they had in all eleven children.

His father not wishing to
bring him up to his own tra-
de, one of his brothers following
already the same, apprenticed
him to a stone mason. Whilst
engaged in cutting cubes, flag-
-stones etc, the boy amused

(1) Archives de l'Etat civil, paroisse Saint Nic-
-olas des Champs. Année 1714. -

himself by hewing figures, beads etc. A neighbour of the family, Robert le Torrain, sculptor, author of the celebrated "Galathée" and of the "Horse of Apollo" (Hotel de Rohan - Soubise, now Imprimerie Nationale, Paris) noticing these artistic attempts of the boy recognized in him a future artist. He received him in his studio, and took charge of his education. This was in 1722, and Pigalle was then only 8 years of age.--

At Le Lorrain's Studio
he became acquainted with a
much older pupil, Jean Bap-
-tiste Lemoyne, born in 1701
they formed solid ties of
friendship, which were only bro-
-ken by death.

Although the vocation
of Pigalle existed beyond doubt
yet there was never a pupil of
less ability; especially the art
of drawing presented to him
almost insurmountable difficulties

At 14 years of age, on the
11th August 1728, he lost his

father who left the family destitute. A neighbour, Gabriel Christophe Allegrain (the future celebrated Sculptor, son of Allegrain the painter, a proud and independent character, but thoroughly good and benevolent, having witnessed the life of hard work and honesty of the Pigalle family, paid marked attention to our artist's sister Genneviere Charlotte, and although the son of a painter already celebrated and member of the

Academy, did not hesitate to
marry the daughter of a poor
joiner whose only dowry consis-
-ted in her youth's purity and
virtue, and who proved the
faithful companion of his life.
The marriage took place at
Saint Nicolas des Champs on
the 7th February 1733. ⁽¹⁾

His master Le Lorrain
having died, Pigalle entered
the Studio of his friend Le-
-moigne where he met another
pupil, Etienne Maurice Fal-
-conet, who in aftertimes be

(1) Carbi - Pigalle

-came a rival of a jealous and
malevolent disposition.

Pigalle worked hard,
but without arriving at en-
couraging results. He com-
petes repeatedly for the Prix
de Rome, but always failed
in a pitiful manner.

Knowing that only the
study of the Antique could
purify his taste, and temper
his talent, he did not loose
courage, and planned going
to Rome at his own expense.
Collecting his few resources

augmented by the gifts of some
generous friends he set out
on foot with another young
man (1)

On his arrival at Rome
he frequents the various stu-
dios and is remarked for his
ardour, application and pa-
tience; but his small re-
sources are soon exhausted;
embarrassment becomes actual
poverty, overwork rapidly af-
fects his health, and he is
on the point of becoming a

(1) Suard, *Éloge de Pigalle* - *Mélanges Litt.*
- *Étranges* -

week for ever, when one of his
fellow-artists, a young man of
fortune, bearer of a famous na-
me, Guillaume Coustou II
son of the immortal author of
the Chaux de Marly, de-
-ining his distress assures
him of food and shelter under
his own roof, but in order not
to offend his delicacy, he has
to pretend that he is afraid
of living alone and proposes
to make one common purse⁽¹⁾

His material existence

(1) Suard - Eloge de Pigalle - Melanges
littéraires

being thus assured Pigalle
returned to the Studio. His
fellow-artists would see noth-
ing in him but a workman
son of a workman and besto-
wed many nick-names on
him such as "Côte de
Boeuf" (bull's head) "Le
Mulet de la Sculpture"
(The mule of Sculpture)

Day and night he
worked on copies of the Om-
-tique which he sold at any
price to earn his bread and
to use as little as possible the

purse of his friend.

A small marble copy of "La jeuneuse d'osselets" first called the attention of his masters to his talent. This piece was bought by the French Ambassador, and is now in the Royal Museum in Berlin. The sale of this statuette permitted him to satisfy his longing to return to France. Want of money however stopped him on his arrival at Lyons, where he had the chance of obtaining



Mercury

Tiffany & Co

Musée du Louvre

New-York

The order for some small work
and the Bas relief of the
Evangelists for the Dome of
the "Chartreuse" (1)

Assured of his bread he
now adopts a plan for his dai-
ly work, which he strictly ad-
hered to ever afterwards: From
5. a.m. to 2. p.m. he devoted
himself entirely to remunerative
work, after that hour he worked
for his own account on studies
from Nature until late into the
night. To copy Nature, this
was the great passion of Pigalle

(1) D'Argenville - Vies des fameux sculpteurs

to which he gave himself up
entirely during his two years of
solitude at Lyons. Nature
appealed to him more power-
fully than the Antique and
often, as we will see later, he
sacrificed beauty to rigorous
truth. -

In Lyons he finished
the model of his famous
"Mercury attachant ses
"talonnieres" But nature
soon demanded her rights;
his overstrained organism
gave way, he fell seriously ill

ill, and was only saved by the devotedness of a poor working-girl, his neighbour, who exhausted her own resources in this noble act of charity, for which Pigalle later royally repaid her (1)

As soon as he is well again, he starts for Paris (in 1741) The model of the Mercury which he had left in the hands of the working girl as a security, arrives four months after (Carbi says

(1) Suard Eloge de Pigalle

that a merchant to whom
she had showed it, telling him
the story, refunded the money
advanced by her, and forwarded
the Mercury immediately to
Pigalle (1)

As soon as the Statue
has arrived, Pigalle shows it
to his master Lemoyne, who
in great admiration said:
"My friend I would like
to have made it" and we
quite agree with him. -

This encouraged Pigalle

(1) Carli - Pigalle - p. 26

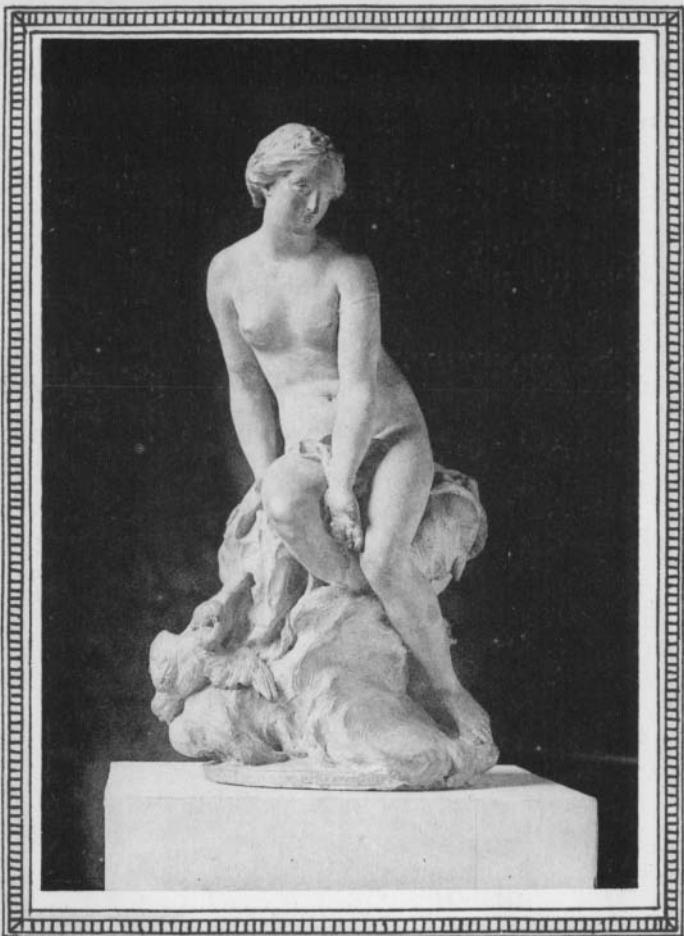
He submits the plaster to the Academy, who on the sight thereof names him "member agréé," and on execution in marble, a definite member (30th July 1744) This original marble is now at the Louvre.

Pigalle had now become renowned and much appreciated. From 1744 to 1747 he executes various pieces, among others the "Virgin of the Invalides" (now at Saint-Eustache) the plaster of which was at the Salon of 1745 (1)

(1) Salon de 1745 *l'inet* page 29.

He works also on the facade of the church of Saint-Louis du Louvre.

In 1748, the King having seen his "Mercury" gave an order for an enlarged copy in marble 7 feet high (the lead model of this increased size exists at the Louvre) The King paid 10000 livres tournois for this marble, ordering at the same time a statue of Venus as a companion.— The original terra cotta model of this Venus is also at the Louvre under the



Venus aux Colombes

Siffaury & C.

Musée du Louvre

New York

name of "Venus aux Colombes
or "Innocence" The King
presented this Mercury and
Venus to his ally King Fre-
derick of Prussia, after the
treaty of Aix la Chapelle,
who had them placed in the
garden of Potsdam - Castle
The Venus in question is now
in the Royal Museum Berlin.

In 1775 Pigalle went
to Berlin to be introduced to
the King, but on account of
a confusion of names (being
mentioned to the King as the

"Author of the "Mercury" and
a satiric pamphlet bearing
the name of "Mercury," the
King refused roughly to recei-
-ve him and Pigalle happened
to hear it - mortified he left
immediately Berlin, and
Frederick having noticed the
error sent him a special
messenger, the Abbot Pernetti
to express his excuses (1)

The prime minister

(1) *Ed. des oeuvres du Roi de Prusse* Berlin 1847
T III p. 35 - T VIII p. 166.
Funli. Dict. des artistes 1829 - lettre
de M^r Waagen 20 Nov. 1857. -

Comte d'Argenson, ordered
of Pigalle a statue of Louis XV
and Madame de Pompadour
having seen it, ordered another
in 1750 for her new Chateau
de Bellevue (1)

This statue seems to have
been destroyed in 1794 but a
reduction of same is still in
the Musée de Versailles (2)

In 1750 he modelled for
his protector the financier
Paris-Montmartel, his famous

(1) D'Argenville, Voy. Pittoresq. aux environs de Paris
Paris 1755 p. 30

(2) Marquet de Vasselot - Quelques Oeuvres inédites
de Pigalle - Gazette d. B^x Arts 1876 page 402

"Enfant à la Cage"

one of his most celebrated works
the original marble of which,
signed by him (he rarely
signed his work) now figures
in the Rooms of the 18th Cent.
furniture at the Louvre. -

In 1751 he exhibits the
bust of the King.

In 1753 he executes for
the Chateau de Bellevue the
full size portrait of the
Marquise de Pompadour, pro-
nounced by the contemporaries
to be of excellent likeness, and

which concords perfectly with the famous pastel of Maurice Quentin de La Tour (at the Loure) He was paid 10000 livres for this statue (for which he had asked 20000 "^{fr}) (Arch Nat O'1934 ^{2/15}) which, in 1900, was still in the Park of Bagatelle (Bos de Boulogne)

From 1753 to 1763 he executes many pieces of sculpture, especially his "Enfant Silence" and the famous group "L'Amour et l'Amitié" (now at the Loure) for Madame de Pompadour, which she paid 21000 livres Cournois -

The figure of "Amitié" (Friendship) was the portrait of Madame de Pompadour. Carbi says

That she had in her park a
bosquet called "Le Bosquet
de l'Amour" on account of
a Statue of Cupid which was
in it - At the time a coldness
had sprung up between her
and the King, commence-
-ment of her definite disgra-
-ce, and some one speaking
of this bosquet said "It was
formerly the bosquet of Love
but now only that of friend-
-ship" Madame de Pom-
padour having heard of
this ordered of the sculptor



L'Amour et l'Amitié

as a challenge to her rivals,
the group and had it erected
in the bosquet in the place
of the Statue of Love. On
the 10th October 1750 Pigalle
received an instalment of
2000 livres on this piece (1)
In 1758 he made a replica of
same, signed by him, in
terracotta, which was at Betz
(oise) in the garden of M^r Roblin (2)
At the death of the
Marquise, this group was

(1) Archives Nat. 1608-1759 and 0^r 1934-B/15

(2) Marquet-de Vasselot - Gay. d. 13^e Arts. 1876

bought back by Pigalle and
resold by him to the Prince
de Condé. He is now at the
Louvre. —

About that time he
commenced the Mausoleum
of the Maréchal de Saxe for
the Reformed church of Stras-
-bourg. This marvellous mo-
-nument, probably his master
piece, was a startling revela-
-tion of a new and unsuspected
side of his talent, that of
being able to create a grand
piece of Sculpture in the alle-

gorical style It cost 98684^{fr} (1)

This monument at once put him to the foremost rank It was exhibited in Paris for a considerable time before the artist would permit it to be removed to Strasbourg. He tried every possible pretext to detain it, and it was with deep regret that he at last saw himself compelled to obey the formal orders of the king as he had hoped to the last (and even had asked) that it would remain in

(1) Arch. Nation. O¹ 1934 B/15 et O¹ 1922-B

Paris. His renown became immense, the town of Reims entrusted him with an order for the Statue of Louis XV which he terminated in 1765. On the pedestal are several allegorical figures, one of them, a merchant reclining on open bags of money and bales of merchandise represents "The Security of Commerce" and is known as "Le Citoyen" (The citizen). It is a self portrait of Pigalle, made at the special request of the

City of Reims, which according to contemporaries was of striking resemblance.

Pigalle had made different sketches for the monument of Reims. The museum of Orleans owns the first and original sketch of the "Citizen" 25m high (N^o 624 of the Catalogue). This sketch made in 1758, and given by him in 1766 to M^r Desriches celebrated connoisseur and collectionneur of the time is very different from the definite

figure (cast in 1763) It is
however very interesting as it
shows how Pigalle, after
having conceived a figure too
realistic and too close to Na-
-ture modified it so as to
make one of the most remar-
-kable statues produced by
the french art in the course
of the 18th Century (1)

- (1) For full details on this piece, as well
as on the "Amour et Amitié" and the
"Voltaire" refer to the very interesting
and documented Study, published
by M^r Marquet de Vasselot "Quelques
oeuvres inédites de Pigalle" in the
Gazette des Beaux Arts, year 1876. P. 391 to 406



L'ENFANT À LA CAGE
N^o 125 - P. FIGALLE (174-183)
D^o N^o de M. CONSTANTIN.

L'Enfant à la Cage

Giffany & C^o

Musée du Louvre

New-York

The success was very great,
even Falconet who hated Pi-
galle complimented him on
it in a famous letter (1)

The King, after having
seen the monument offered
to Pigalle through the Dau-
phin, the collar of Saint
Michel, which he at first
refused saying that his was.

(1) " M^r Pigal je ne vous aime pas, et
je crois que vous me le rendez bien,
j'ai vu votre " Citoyen " on peut faire
aussi bien puisque vous l'avez fait; mais
je ne crois pas que l'art puisse aller une ligne
au delà. Cela n'empêche pas que nous
demeurons comme nous sommes (Lady
Dilke - French Arch. and Sculptors ...)

-ters V Bouehardon and Le-
-moigne who had not yet
been decorated with it, were
more qualified to receive this
distinction than himself.

Bouehardon having died
and Lemoine preferring a
small pension for his chil-
dren, Pigalle finally accep-
-ted the Order, thus setting
a fine example of modesty to
many artists of his time espe-
-cially to Falconet who continu-
-ed to attack him.

Bouehardon had been

entrusted by the City of Paris
with the Grand Equestrian
monument of Louis XV, to be
erected Place Louis XV (now
Place de la Concorde), but
being in poor health and fee-
-ling that he would leave
this great undertaking unfi-
-nished, he wrote on June 24
1762 his memorable letter de-
-signating Pigalle as the
man by whom he wished his
work finished.— After Bou-
-chardon's death, and notwith-
-standing the intrigues of De

Caylus (who was acting in the interest of his friend Vasse) Pigalle was called upon to take it in hand. (The statue (at least the Pedestal and figures) was cast by himself and under his superintendance⁽¹⁾) At this he was overjoyed, but with an extreme delicacy, worthy of his grand and noble heart, he relinquished certain preferences of his own, he even refused to listen to the

(1) See letter of Cochin, to M^r de Marigny 17th October 1766. Arch. Nationales 0^l. 1909.

good advices offered to him by
critics of authority to make
certain changes and modifi-
cations in the work, and had
the courage, rarely met with
in an artist of his tempera-
ment, to strictly adhere to
the execution of the models
as conceived by his regret-
ted master, so as not to alter
the character of the work and
to fulfil the last wish of
Boucardon to leave an im-
perishable souvenir to poste-
-rity. Alas! it was all

in vain, the Storm of the Revolution was approaching and of the celebrated statue smashed to pieces by the infuriated populace, there now remains nothing but a few fragments, and also a small bronze model (the model established after his own corrections and suggestions) which are kept at the Louvre (Salle Houdou) and also a delicate engraving by Cochin, of Gravelot's fine drawing (1)

(1) Chalcographie du Louvre n° 2498

For a considerable time
Pigalle had cherished the
idea of creating an impersonal
statue, simply intending to
give evidence of the strength
of his anatomical studies,
regardless of esthetics.

A group of literary men
in 1770 having ordered of
him a statue of Voltaire, he
decided to realise this idea,
i.e. the statue, entirely nude
of an old man of 76. - At
a famous dinner held at
Madame de Necker on the

17th of April 1770, where 17
of the most literary men of
the epoch were present, Pi-
galle presented the rough
sketch (25 cm high) which
is now in the Museum of
Orleans under N° 625 (1)

Deaf to the supplications of
his friends he absolutely
refused to drape it - This
master-piece of realism, which

(1) See Correspondance de Grimm
published with much comments by
M. Marquet de Vasselot. Op. cit.
page 28.-



Mausoleum of the Marshall of Saxony

Coffey & Co.

(Strasbourg)

New-York

Voltaire jokingly called his
"Skeleton" (1) is now in the
library of the "Institut de
France" Although one can-
not refrain from admiring the
marvellous dexterity and deep
knowledge of the Sculptor, yet
one cannot but regret this
aberration of taste, which even
the incontestable anatomical
beauty cannot retrieve.

(1) "Recevez les très humbles remer-
-ciments du squelette de
-Femey que Pigalle a su rendre
-vivant -" (Lettre de Voltaire au
Duc de Richelieu 25 Juin 1770 -
(Voltaire Œ^{re} Générale VIII p. 440. Aubrée)

It is about this time that he terminated the Mausoleum of the Marechal de Saxe mentioned before and which he had left aside for the monument of Bouchardeau. -

His last works, especially the Monument of the Marechal d'Harcourt (in Notre Dame) a reminiscence of the one of Saxe, & "Enfant à l'Oiseau" (1784) made as a counterpart to the "Enfant à la Cage" were not inferior to the works of his youth.

Professeur de Sculpture
at the Academy, Chancel-
-lier and Rector of Saime
Since the 8th January 1785,
he had married on Thursday
17th January 1771, in the church
of Notre Dame de Lorette, his
-niece Marie, Marguerite
Victoire, daughter of Pierre
Pigalle his brother, a young
orphan whom he had brought
up with her sisters, and who
was his faithful and affecti-
-onate companion, until he
died in her arms on the 21st

of August 1785, at the age
of 71. (1)

The work of Pigalle
and his influence on sculp-
-ture of his time was con-
-siderable. He appeared at
the right hour to raise the
level of Sculpture, and lead
it back to sincerity. His
ardent study of Nature, his
simple and chaste design,
never emphatic, was the cause
of the return of the French.

(1) Mopinot, Eloge de Pigalle P. 12
London 1786

Sculptors to the "Natural" and
"True" which they had for-
-gotten over, to the "empha-
-tic prettiness" in favor with
the court and the public.

Nobody was in closer com-
-munion with Nature than
Pigalle and he would have
been unsurpassed and equal
to the Antique Masters,
had he possessed a little
more of their emotional
and ideal qualities. —

J. P.
1907

L'avoit pour l'us Eglise, qui en la paroisse
du Roy, et de même parus décidés à vous le
demandes. comme d'un ouvrage en petit qui
m'a demandé beaucoup de soin, je crois ne devoit
pas vous desimuler que je serois fûtis fier de
le voir placé dans un lieu où il pût être vu,
n'ayant pas d'ouvrage en marbre à Paris;
et je joins en conséquence mes prières aux
leurs

Je profite, Mondieur, avec empressement
de cette occasion pour vous renouveler mes
remerciements de toutes les marques de Bonté
et de protection que vous m'avez toujours
accordées, et notamment de celles que vous
m'avez de me donner en dernier lieu, aussi
personne n'est-il avec plus de reconnoissance
et de respect que je le suis.

Mondieur

Paris 19. Juin 1769. /
Votre très humble et
très obéissant serviteur
Pigalle

ie Prist belonging to the Dolphin

Nationales)

n. 4^e.

Appendix



containing some extracts

of

Family paper.

of

Ligalle



Acte de naissance
de Ligalle


Archives de l'Etat Civil de
la Paroisse de Saint Nicolas
des Champs. Année 1714
Hotel de Ville de Paris

28 Janvier 1714 - Le dit
jour a été baptisé par nous
sous-Vicaire soussigné Jean
Baptiste, né d'avant hier,
fils de Jean Pigalle, maître
menuisier, et de Geneviève
Ledreux, sa femme, demeurant

Rue Neuve Saint Martin. Le
parrain Jean Ledreux, mar-
-chaud fabricant demeurant
Rue Neuve Saint Martin. La
maraine Catherine Ledreux
fille du parrain et femme de
Robert Pigalle, maître menui-
-sier, demeurant Rue d'Ar-
-gentueil paroisse Saint Roch
laquelle a déclaré ne savoir
signer, de ce interpellée.

Signé

Ledreux, Rossignol
Soureau, Jean Pigalle



Acte de décès
de Pigalle

Registres de l'Eglise
Saint Pierre de Montmartre

Herbuisson - Actes de l'Etat
Civil des Artistes Français.

Le Sunday Vingt deux
Aoit 1785, M^r Jean B^{te}
Pigalle, Ecuyer, Sculpteur du
Roy, Chevalier de l'ordre de

Saint Michel, Chancelier de
son Academie Royale de
Peinture et Sculpture, l'un
de ses quatre recteurs, membre
de l'Academie Royale des
Sciences et belles lettres de
Rouen, Citoyen de la Ville
de Strasbourg, age de 71 ans
environ, decede hier Rue
Saint Lazare de cette paroisse
a ete inhumé dans le cimetiere
avec l'assistance de grand choeur
en presence de Jean Pierre
Pigalle sculpteur, demeurant
à la Petite Pologne, de Louis
Philippe Mouchy Sculpteur
du Roy, demeurant Galerie
du Roy, passe St G^e l'Anvers.
-rois, de Pierre Noel Lachenait

marchand orfèvre, et plusieurs
autres sousigné's. —

