

# Marketing Art At the Paris Salons



A plaster cast of the full-length *Diana* was a sensation at the Salon of 1882; so was the marble version, pictured here, at the Salon of 1887 (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, France).

Visitors to the Paris Salons—public, state-sponsored, juried exhibitions of new art that took place almost annually from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century—could number 50,000 on a single day and half a million during the two month run of the exhibition. They came not just from France, but from all over Europe, Russia, and even America. The Salons were enormous, with thousands of pictures covering the walls from floor to ceiling; groups of sculpture were clustered on tables and stands throughout the rooms, which could number as many as thirty. Illustrated catalogues were published to guide spectators and critic's reviews appeared in the papers almost every day describing different works, and people returned to the Salon multiple times to see things they had missed.



ABOVE A sculptures display at the Exposition Universelle of 1878.

RIGHT Edouard Dantan, *Un coin du Salon en 1880* (Private collection).

FAR RIGHT Paintings crowded onto the walls at the Salon of 1861.



For an artist, inclusion in a Salon meant exposure to the public and the chance of private commissions. Over the course of the century, as middle-class patrons became interested in buying art to display in their homes, the Salon had become a marketplace displaying works and styles for sale. Artists' addresses were listed alongside their names in the catalogues to make it easy for prospective customers to find them. The public trusted painters who had been accepted into a Salon, and was particularly eager to buy from ones who had created a sensation.



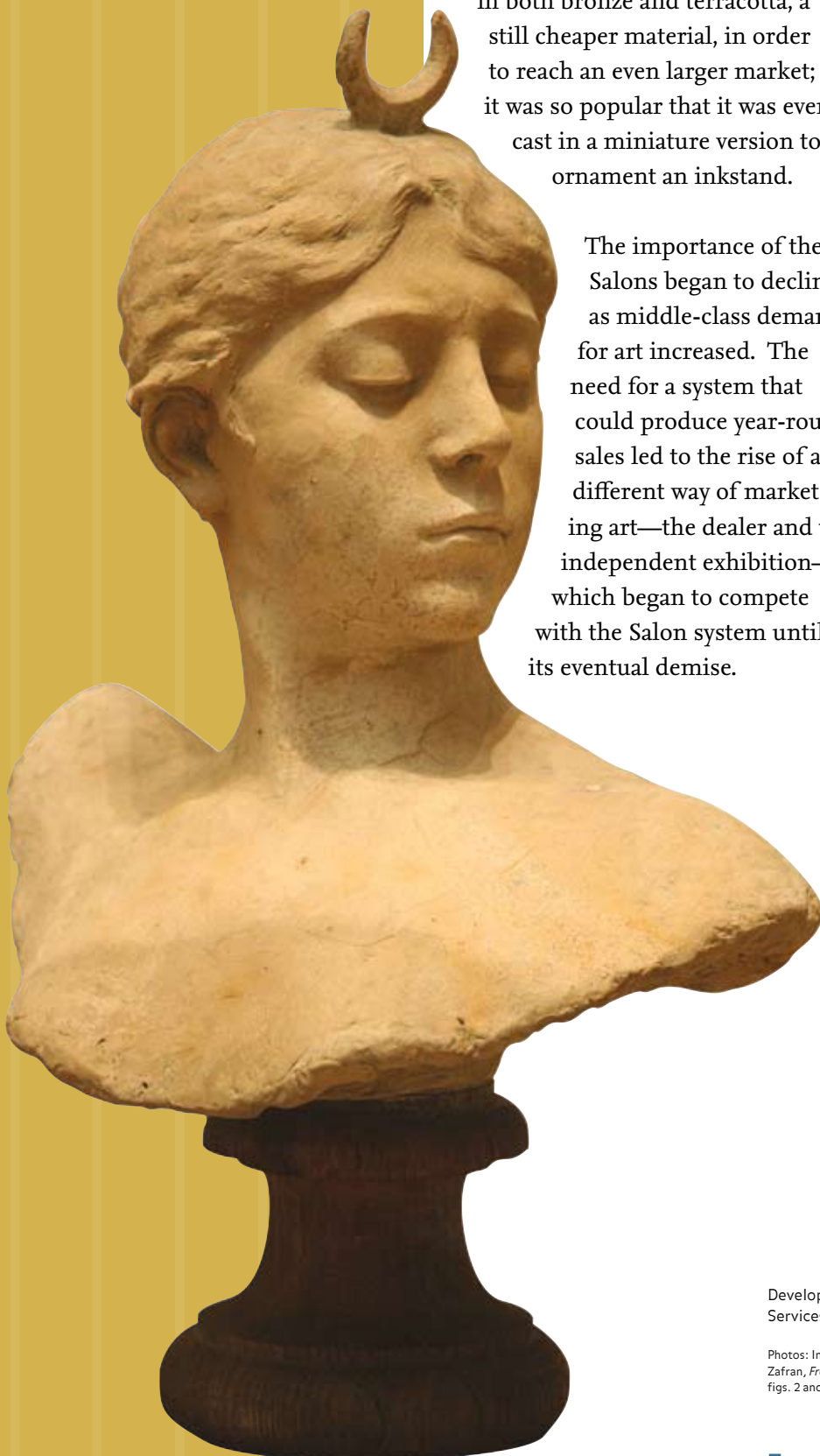
Falguière was an extremely popular artist and completely in tune with the official taste of the late nineteenth century; the first plaster cast of the full-length *Diana* was a sensation at the Salon of 1882, and a marble version of same sculpture was admitted into the Salon of 1887. *Diana* was one of a series of nudes created specifically to attract the attention of potential buyers at the Salons and generate orders for copies. To meet market demand for the sculpture, it was cast in bronze in a smaller size. The bust was also excerpted from the larger work and produced in both bronze and terracotta, a still cheaper material, in order to reach an even larger market; it was so popular that it was even cast in a miniature version to ornament an inkstand.

The importance of the Salons began to decline as middle-class demand for art increased. The need for a system that could produce year-round sales led to the rise of a different way of marketing art—the dealer and the independent exhibition—which began to compete with the Salon system until its eventual demise.



This bronze reduction of the full-length sculpture, made in 1892, is only 36 inches high (Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, Indiana, IUAM 94.73).

LEFT A terracotta version of the bust of *Diana* from about 1892 (The California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, California, C. Barry Randell Bequest Fund, 1979).



The miniature bronze bust of *Diana* on this late nineteenth-century inkstand was cast by the foundry Thiebaut Frères, which produced many of the bronze copies of *Diana* (Object sold at auction, 2008).

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Photos: Interior views of the Exposition Universelle of 1878 and the Salon of 1861 from Eric Zafran, *French Salon Paintings from Southern Collections* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1982), figs. 2 and 8.