

# ALEXANDER PHIMISTER PROCTOR (1862-1950)

## Trumpeting Elephant

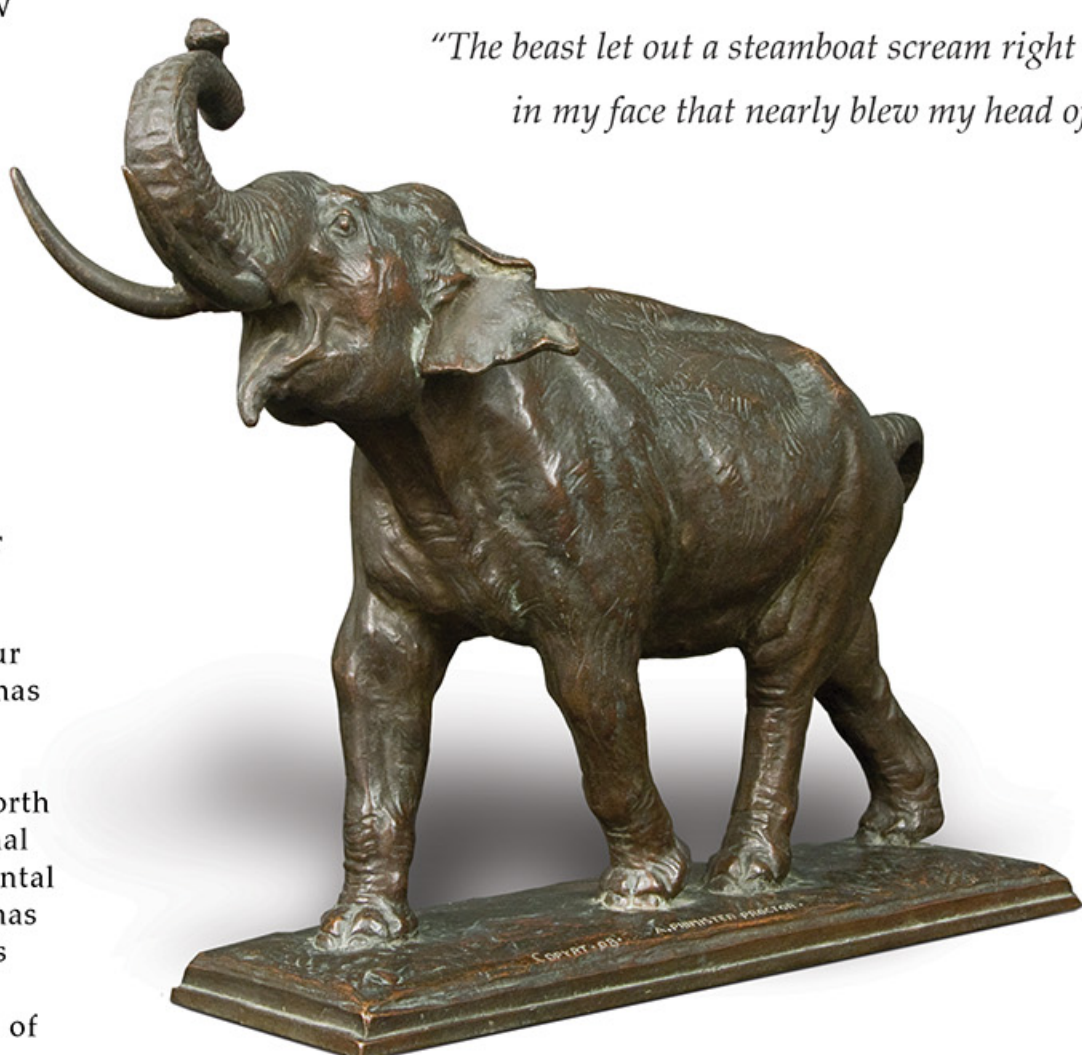
Bronze

14 3/4 L x 10 3/4 H x 3 3/4 W

Inscribed on base:

A. Phimister Proctor  
copyrt 08

*"The beast let out a steamboat scream right  
in my face that nearly blew my head off."*



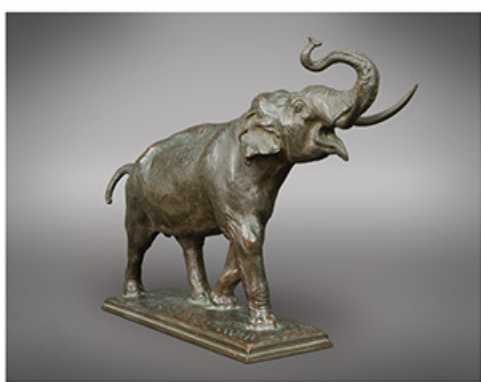
I would like to take a moment to draw your attention to a recent Alexander Phimister Proctor addition to our inventory at the Thomas Nygard Gallery. A. Phimister Proctor is regarded as one of North America's finest animal and western monumental sculptors. His work has been celebrated for its ability to capture the essence and character of his subjects.

Proctor was born in Ontario, Canada in 1862 to second-generation pioneers. In 1871 Proctor moved with his family to Denver, Colorado, where he began to develop a strong appreciation for the wildlife of the Rocky Mountains through basic sketching. In 1885 the young artist travelled to New York City and enrolled at the National Academy of Design and the Art Student's League.

It was during Proctor's second year of studies in New York that he modeled his first elephant, while visiting the New York Menagerie and the American Museum of Natural History. Proctor was allowed by an elephant keeper, Bill Snyder, to enter the animals cage for further study, but was only allowed to do so when accompanied by Snyder himself. On one occasion Snyder had to briefly step out and Proctor found himself alone in the cage. Proctor recalls the experience that followed;

*"I continued to work. When I had finished, I decided that rather than backing out between the bars at the front of the cage and then walking around the building, I would go right through between two of the three elephants in the paddock. Carrying my model and stand, I was passing between the two monsters when one became angered about something. Whirling about, it rushed me, its trunk high in the air. Although scared stiff, I didn't let on but calmly waited for the elephant to make the next move. The beast let out a steamboat scream right in my face that nearly blew my head off. Though I was deafened, I spoke the animal's name, said a few gentle words, and marched on, expecting every minute to be flattened to the floor. I wasn't molested again, but later Bill told me that I was a damn fool to have moved at all, and I decided he was right. Several years later the model was cast in bronze and named Trumpeting Elephant."<sup>1</sup>*

In the year it was cast, 1908, the bronze was exhibited at the National Academy of Design and the Century Club.<sup>2</sup>



During its lengthy exhibition history, the elephant experienced considerable popularity everywhere it went. "Critics praised it as representative of Proctor's ability to render bulky mass and fleet lightness simultaneously, and to contrast in his work the ferocity of the mighty and the fragility of the meek,..."<sup>3</sup> Such was the case, when Vanity Fair reviewed the piece in 1914, saying that, "for him, each animal he models has a separate life and character". Just two years later, at the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, NY, a reviewer observed Proctor's ability to capture the "trumpeting anger and ferocity" of the elephant.<sup>4</sup>

One possible source for Proctor's artistic inspiration for Trumpeting Elephant may be the work of noted French animalier sculptor Antoine-Louis Barye. Proctor purchased a bronze elephant by Barye, *African Elephant*, while studying in Paris and proudly kept that bronze in his studio throughout his career.<sup>5</sup>

The Thomas Nygard gallery is proud to present this charming and important bronze. The gallery also has on hand an excellent Proctor bronze relief plaque, Pony Express. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments about our A. Phimister Proctor works or the other important bronzes in our inventory.

### Exhibition History (others):

- 1908: National Academy of Design, New York, NY - Winter exhibition
- 1908: Century Club, New York, NY
- 1908: Montross Gallery, New York, NY - A. Phimister Proctor
- 1909: Canadian Art Club, Toronto, Canada - Second Annual Exhibition
- 1910: Art Association of Montreal, Montreal, Canada - Canadian Art Club Exhibition
- 1911: Portland Art Association, Portland, OR - Sculptures by Olin Warner and A. Phimister Proctor
- 1913: The Gorham Company, New York, NY - Exhibition of Bronzes and Plaster Models by A. Phimister Proctor
- 1915: Panama-Pacific Exposition, San Francisco, CA
- 1916: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY - Contemporary American Sculpture
- 1916: Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL - Twenty-ninth Annual Exhibition of American Oil Paintings and Sculpture
- 1917: Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL - Small Bronzes by A. Phimister Proctor
- 1918: Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. - Works in Sculpture by A. Phimister Proctor

### Collections (others):

- Brookgreen Gardens, Pawleys Island, SC
- Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Phimister Proctor, Sculptor in Buckskin, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971, pg. 98

<sup>2</sup> Peter H. Hassrick, Wildlife and Western Heroes: Alexander Phimister Proctor, Sculptor, Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 2003, pg. 134

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Buffalo Commercial, August 3rd, 1916.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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