

GALERIE LAMY
CHABOLLE



A Meiji-Era Articulated Figure of a Crab

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Bronze

Japan

Late 19th century

9 x 8 x 18 cm (3.5 x 3.15 x 7.1 in.)



This articulated crab is made of bronze with a warm, reddish patina. Though it bears no signature, its numerous points of articulation — notably the claws, legs and eyes — make it a great example of the Japanese art of *okimono* (置物, or “ornamental figure”) of the *jizai* (自在) type, meaning “free of movement” or “freely articulated.”

Sculptors who mastered the art of *jizai* since the late Edo period onward learned much of their technique from Japanese armorers, who were highly skilled in making complex, partially articulated metal pieces. Their expertise was in less demand during the modernization of Japan under Emperor Meiji and the *bunmei-kaika* (文明開化) — the “Civilization and Enlightenment” movement marked by the country’s wide opening toward the West.

LITERATURE

See Iwao Seiichi, Iyanaga Teizo, et al., *Dictionnaire historique du Japon*, Tokyo, 1987 ; Harada Kazutoshi, *Articulated iron figures of animals. Jizai Okimono*, Kyoto, 2010 ; Gérard Siary, *Histoire du Japon. Des origines à nos jours*, Paris, 2020.

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