An 'Enfant malade' by Medardo Rosso from the collection of Louis Vauxcelles

by SHARON HECKER

30. *Enfant malade*, by Medardo Rosso. c.1893–95. Wax cast with plaster interior in original glass vitrine, sculpture: 17 by 15 by 25.5 cm.; glass case: 40.5 by 25.5 by 38.5 cm.; base: 45 by 30 by 8.5 cm. (Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; photographed in 2007 by Peter Freeman in the Vauxcelles family home, Paris).

VISITING THE ART INSTITUTE of Chicago in 2006, the great-granddaughters of the nineteenth-century French art critic Louis Vauxcelles (1870–1943) noticed an object in a vitrine that resembled something in their own home to which they had never paid attention but which had been in the family for as long as they could remember. The Institute's label led them to identify it as a sculpture by Medardo Rosso (1858–1928). After returning to Paris, they contacted the Art Institute for an authority who could verify their sculpture and were directed to the New York dealer Peter Freeman, who recognised it as a wax version of Rosso's *Enfant malade* (c.1893–95; Fig.30).[1] The work was recently acquired (2008) by the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid for its permanent collection.

The provenance of the Vauxcelles sculpture is unequivocal: it remained in the family of the original recipient untouched – and virtually unnoticed – until 2008. Its existence was known only through mention in the first posthumous monograph on Rosso of 1950 written by Mino Borghi with assistance from the artist's son, Francesco.[2] While the mystery of this rediscovered piece appears to be an open-and-shut case, close study of *Enfant malade* offers several points of discussion.

Cast from a mould, this is one of many *Enfants malades* that Rosso made over the course of thirty-five years; it is also a unique work of art. The artist distinguished it from the others by displaying unusual casting accidents and chance effects that occurred during its creation, thus overturning nineteenth-century

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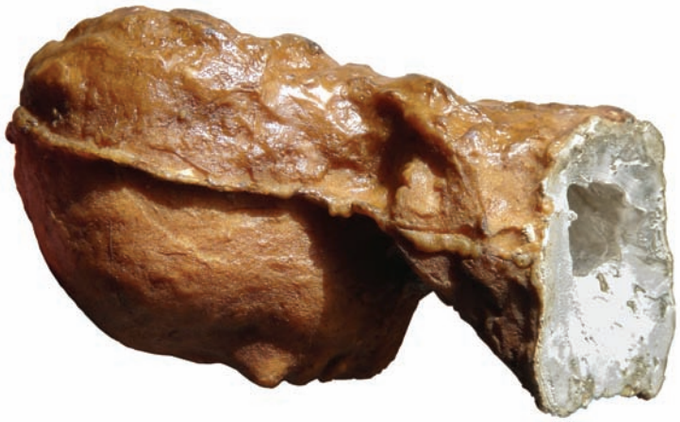
[1] Also known as *Enfant mourant*: C. de Sainte-Croix: 'La Sculpture Impressionniste', *Le Petit Journal* (5th October 1907), p.1; *Bambino malato*: A. Soffici: 'E'uscito di Ardengo Soffici "Il Caso Medardo Rosso"', *La Voce* 32 (22nd July 1909), cited in J.-F. Rodriguez: *La réception de l'impressionnisme à Florence en 1910*, Venice 1994, p.79; *Bimbo malato*: exh. cat. *Prima esposizione italiana dell'impressionismo francese e delle scolture di Medardo Rosso*, Florence (Lyceum Club) 1910, cited in Rodriguez, *op. cit.* p.180; and *Ragazzo malato*: letter from Rosso to Romolo Bazzoni, 19th December 1914; Venice, Archivio Storico delle Arti Contemporanee (hereafter cited as ASAC), CA 14, SN39, fasc. R.

[2] M. Borghi: *Medardo Rosso*, Milan 1950, pp.42–44. Although known to exist, the work was never exhibited nor was an image of it published. Interestingly, Rosso never borrowed this version for an exhibition during his lifetime.



31. Another view of Fig.30 showing 'halo' ridge and front and back.

32. Detail of the interior cavity in *Ecce puer*, by Medardo Rosso. 1906. Wax cast with plaster core, 49 by 28 by 33 cm. (Galleria d'Arte Moderna Ricci-Oddi, Piacenza; photograph courtesy of Henry Lie, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge MA).

33. Another view of Fig.30 showing interior cavity.

norms of casting. The work is also interesting as a 'multiple', for, although made as one of a series, it escapes classification according to traditional methods of nineteenth-century serial sculpture. Finally, this *Enfant malade* has a noteworthy provenance, commemorating the relationship between Rosso and Vauxcelles, and the artist's connection to French critics during his Parisian sojourn from 1889 to c.1914.

The Vauxcelles *Enfant malade* reveals and conceals information about Rosso's process. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Rosso never had a stable studio practice. He worked alone and did not maintain systematic records or receipts of production, gifts or sales.[3] He cast some works himself and sent others to outside foundries. On his own casts, Rosso sometimes conducted unusual experiments, while at other times he cast in a straightforward traditional manner, making his versions difficult to distinguish from those he had made by foundries, which also cast his works posthumously.

Rosso further obscured this situation by prohibiting foundries from stamping their names on his works. He never numbered his sculptures as parts of an edition and he signed and dated only some of them. Complicating matters further, he gave various dates and titles to the same work. He also provided different biographical accounts of his life and career, editing and omitting key details. Most of the information we have about Rosso has been gleaned from private correspondence, newspaper cuttings and exhibition catalogues of his time. Because of his sense of privacy, secondary sources such as journals, letters and personal recollections must be examined critically.

In analysing the Vauxcelles cast, I draw on the results of the technical study/exhibition of Rosso's sculptures organised by the Harvard University Art Museums in 2003, which established distinctions among Rosso casts in existence today, describing his working method and locating the idiosyncratic signs of process that reveal traces of the artist's hand left visible on a select few of his objects. Before examining these traces, it is worthwhile to review the general procedure by which Rosso created his works, according to the findings of Henry Lie, Director of the Straus Center of Conservation and Technical Studies at the Harvard University Art Museums, and Derek Pullen, Head of Sculpture Conservation at Tate.

Like all Rosso's wax sculptures, the Vauxcelles *Enfant malade* comprises an outer yellow beeswax layer and an inner plaster layer that gives structural support.[4] Although the waxy surface looks hand-modelled, an effect Rosso courted, the Harvard study confirmed that Rosso produced all his waxes by casting them.[5] He modelled his subjects in clay, then converted them into one or more plaster models, from which he cast waxes and bronzes in gelatine moulds, in use in the nineteenth century. The gelatine was held together by a rigid outer plaster piece-mould into which molten wax was either poured or brushed and then allowed to cool.[6]

The Vauxcelles version appears to have been cast in two halves, front and back (Fig.31). While foundries would try to make such casts look as seamless as possible, Vauxcelles's sculpture presents two distinct surface textures. The front is rough, pocked and pitted, and the dark wax has an opaque, matte quality, while the back is modulated more softly, the wax smoother and shinier. This could be due to Rosso's desire to

[3] Rosso had no known master, few known assistants and no pupils in his studios.

[4] While most of Rosso's waxes range from pale to dark yellow, several lifetime casts demonstrate his experimentation with colour pigments mixed into the liquid wax; see H. Lie: 'Surfaces, Color, and Restoration', in H. Cooper and S. Hecker: exh. cat. *Medardo Rosso: Second Impressions*, Cambridge MA (Harvard University Art Museums) 2003, pp.90–92.

[5] For a description of Rosso's casting process with gelatine moulds, see *ibid*.; and D. Pullen: 'Gelatin Moulds: Rosso's Open Secret', in *ibid*., pp.95–102.

[6] Lie in *ibid*., pp.69–94.

[7] Henry Lie in conversation with the author, June 2009. Lie also notes (Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp.76–77) that the *Bookmaker* (c.1894; private collection, Switzerland) demonstrates this same variation in front and back surface texture. For an interpretative discussion of Rosso's wax casting techniques harnessed to aesthetic purposes, see S. Hecker: 'Fleeting Revelations: The Demise of Duration in Medardo Rosso's Wax Sculpture', in R. Panzanelli, ed.: *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure*, Los Angeles 2008, pp.131–69.

[8] Harry Cooper noted this contradiction: '. . . insisting on the instantaneous impression, [Rosso] made objects our eyes have to crawl over. Insisting on frontality, he let his hands wander over the backs of his sculptures to produce densities and opacities of material that even Rodin never dreamt of. These backs are where Rosso's

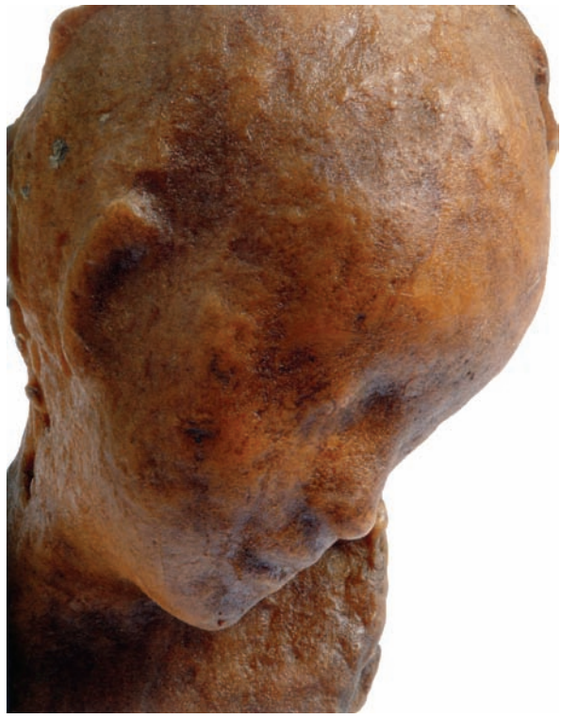
have two different textures for the front and back surfaces of a single work, or his subsequent reworking of the surface, or even attempts to clean or repair the cast. Since Rosso often left signs of casting intact, it is most likely that he intended the front and back to have distinct surfaces. Therefore the final effect depended on his manipulation of the process. He would have poured or brushed the two halves of the work sequentially, and the conditions, temperature, mixture and pour or brush rate would all vary, allowing for chance effects that occurred as he applied the wax.[7]

The emphasis on the difference between front and back continues through the distinction between inside and outside, for Rosso made his cast hollow. Inside the void he added a plaster core visible only when one turns the work upside down. Rosso insinuated its presence through a small area where it meets the wax at the front of the base. The plaster core has both a technical purpose and aesthetic implications: the hard plaster interior contrasts with the soft wax outer shell. The forceful, unrefined application of plaster 'hidden' inside the work plays against the fragile, delicate surfaces of the wax on the 'presented' outside. Plaster gives the object sturdiness and lends a kinetic sense of the unfinished because of the rough way it was applied, perhaps with a paintbrush.

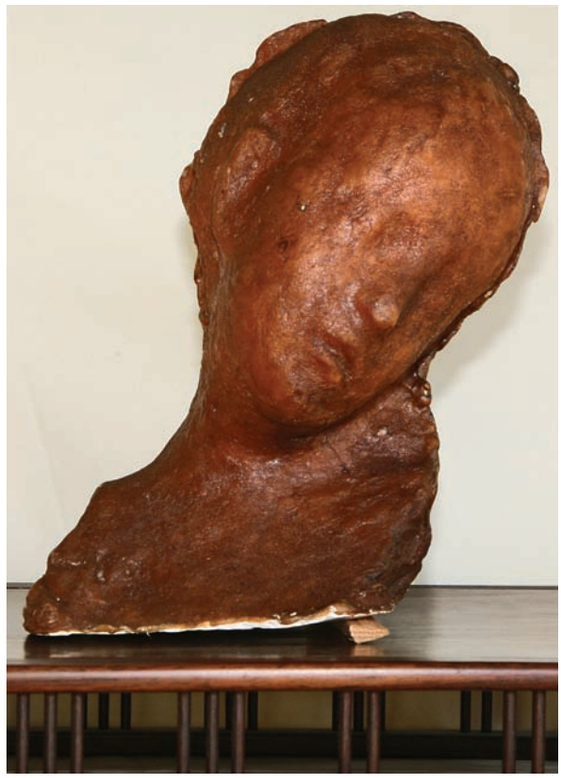
The plaster 'lip' at the base, hinting at something beyond the sculpture's face, contradicts Rosso's own words about the correct way to view three-dimensional objects. He discouraged the urge to view in the round, as if sculptures were two-dimensional paintings. Yet this detail attracts attention to what lies underneath the surface.[8] The roughly applied plaster interior also functions as Rosso's material signature on those works in which he chose to experiment. Casts from outside foundries display smoothly brushed plaster interiors with clean edges.[9] In these casts, when the sculpture is standing, the internal plaster cannot be detected, hiding distinctions between inner and outer (Figs.32 and 33).[10]

The unusual relationship between wax and plaster at the base of the Vauxcelles cast continues on the sculpture's face. In contrast to nineteenth-century foundry techniques, in this work Rosso left unrepaired pocks and holes in the wax, consistent with his practice of preserving casting imperfections. Their soft edges suggest that they are pouring flaws accepted into the work, air pockets or pinholes formed in a molten state rather than the result of subsequent damage or loss.[11] They function like peepholes, exposing and highlighting casting accidents, allowing the viewer to glimpse the underlying plaster support through the wax surface, playing with the contrast between façade and interior (Fig.34).[12]

Another casting accident on the Vauxcelles piece, left intact by the artist and used as an aesthetic device, is the area where the front and back of the head meet. At the juncture between the two parts of the gelatine mould, a gap allowed the wax to spill



34. Another view of Fig.30 showing pock and hole casting imperfections.



35. Another view of Fig.30 showing base with wooden wedge.

absorptive desires and the self-figural impulses of his medium issued'; H. Cooper: 'Ecce Rosso!', in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.21; see also R. Krauss: *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge MA 1996, pp.22–23.

9 Throughout his career, Rosso often had foundries cast his work, but sometimes he cast his own work in foundries, and, from the mid-1890s to the time he left Paris, he worked in his own studio/foundry. It is unclear where he cast his works after returning to Italy. Because of the homogeneous look of works cast by founders, one cannot determine which foundry casts were made during the artist's lifetime and which posthumously. The only objects that we can be certain were cast by Rosso himself display the artist's idiosyncratic preservation of casting errors, which a traditional foundry would have corrected. However, Rosso further complicated matters by casting sculptures without intervening during the process.

10 For a technical discussion of Rosso's multifaceted use of plaster, see Lie in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), pp.69–94.

11 Henry Lie in conversation with the author, June 2009.

12 The aesthetic potential of plaster is developed in S. Hecker: 'Shattering the Mould: Medardo Rosso and the Poetics of Plaster', in R. Frederiksen and E. Marchand, eds.: *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present*, Berlin 2010.

36. Medardo Rosso (left) in his Milan studio, by Medardo Rosso? 1883. Photograph. (Copy of print in Museo Medardo Rosso, Barzio).

37. Medardo Rosso installation at Salon d'Automne, Paris, by an unknown photographer. 1904. Photograph. (Museo Medardo Rosso, Barzio).

out; this Rosso did not remove. The excess wax forms a pronounced ridge that makes visible the normally hidden seam between front and back, functioning like a poetic 'halo' around the boy's head, continuing down the sides of the shoulders (Fig.31).[13] Jutting out into its surrounding space, the boundary marking the transition between front and back became, for Rosso, a site of experiment.

The Vauxcelles version seems deliberately cast so that it cannot stand flat on its own. The lack of a solid base destabilises the sculpture, leaving it precariously off-balance; it would tip over if unsupported. Rosso experimented with the duality of stability and instability of a sculpture as it encounters its surrounding space, acknowledging and resisting the level plane that must hold it up from below.[14]

Because the Vauxcelles cast cannot stand alone, a wooden wedge inserted on the right side under the base functions as counterbalance, giving the object a fragile stability (Fig.35). The wooden chip could be new, although Rosso probably had a removable external support to enable the work to stand.[15] He writes of his concern with the connotations of certain materials when used as bases and suggests how they would interact with his sculptures. In a 1903 letter to the Viennese collector Gottfried Eissler, to whom he had just sold a bronze version, he suggested it was 'more lively resting on [a piece of] wood'.[16] Writing to the administrator of the 1914 Venice Biennale, Romolo Bazzoni, Rosso insisted twice that the Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna in Milan *not* detach two wooden bases he had screwed into a bronze *Enfant malade* which he had sold to the Gallery.[17]

From the start, Rosso tried various supports for his sculpture. A photograph taken in 1883 of his Milan studio (Fig.36) shows works balanced unsteadily with respect to their bases, often supported by unusual objects used in spontaneous, haphazard ways generating a sense of precariousness. He tried various methods to prop his sculptures at a desired angle: adding a plaster wedge to the base, suspending works from wires and inserting iron struts and metal fasteners into the wet plaster. He improvised some supports during the creation of the work, while adding others later, often in successive stages.[18] This type of experiment was unheard of in his time, although it would become commonplace in twentieth-century art.

Perhaps the most astonishing aspect of the Vauxcelles cast is the survival of its original vitrine, inviting scrutiny of Rosso's methods of presentation. The vitrines contradict the artist's claims about how his art should interact with its surroundings. Rosso criticised 'limits' and 'barriers', 'the finite', the closed and the bordered, claiming to search for ways to 'dematerialise' his objects and fuse them with light, surrounding space and atmosphere.[19] His use of vitrines (not to mention his photographing and framing of his own works) suggests another productive contradiction in his art with respect to his assertions about it. His use of vitrines also allows us to consider the period in which Rosso began to use them. Early photographs of installations in his studios and in exhibitions show no vitrines.[20] But a studio-shot of the late 1890s has an *Enfant malade*

[13] H. Lie: 'Artifacts of the Moulding Process', in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.77.

[14] All posthumous casts of this work can stand autonomously and have flattened bases.

[15] Describing his studio visit to Rosso in 1902, Julius Meier-Graefe said Rosso was obliged to hold a sculpture in his hand as it did not have a base and could not stand; J. Meier-Graefe: *Modern Art, Being a Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics*, London 1908, p.21; originally published as *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst*, Stuttgart 1904.

[16] '*Pour un petit pieduzzo en marbre, suis de l'avis la mettre appuyé à un bois, et sans cela je vous l'aurais autrement envoyé. Tout marbrié à* [*sic*] *cela. Seulement c'est plus vivant l'appuiant à un bois*'; Rosso to Gottfried Eissler, September 1903; ASAC, CA 14, fasc., also published in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.147, note 32. Rosso's idiosyncratic French has been left intact; transcriptions of this and other letters in this archive are by Alessandro de Stefani.

[17] '*Caro Sig. Bazzoni, Eccole il bronzo 'Ragazzo malato'. La prego dare ordine imballatorio perché non si sviti il bronzo dai due zoccoli legno*. [. . .] *Ripeto spedire il tutto così, senza svitare il bronzo dai 2 zoccoli*'; letter cited at note 1 above.

[18] For example, Lie noted that in a *Bambino ebreo* (1892–93) in the Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna, Rome, 'a large plaster wedge added to the wax cast changes the angle of the head'. Lie also commented that in a bronze *Madame Noblet* (1897–98) in the Civica galleria d'arte moderna, Milan, 'a cementlike fill supports the bronze and helps determine its angle'. In an *Enfant au sein* (1889) in the Galleria civica d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Turin, Lie found that 'a wooden bookstand raises the back edge of the cast to make it appear sliding towards the viewer'; Lie in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.86, esp. figs.62–65.

[19] See M. Rosso: 'Concepimento-Limite-Infinito', *L'Ambrosiana* (12th January 1926).

38. Medardo Rosso's studio in boulevard des Batignolles, Paris, showing *Enfant malade* in vitrine (centre); *Impression de boulevard: Paris la nuit* (back; composed of two figures) and *Madame Noblet* (front left), by Medardo Rosso. Mid- to late 1890s. Photograph. (Museo Medardo Rosso, Barzio).

within a vitrine, suggesting that this practice had occurred, at least in his studio, by that date (Fig.38).[21]

Documentation of Rosso's use of vitrines appears in 1904. An entry in the diary of his friend Jehan Rictus indicates that Rosso showed some works in vitrines to clients, something that, perhaps because of its novelty, impressed Rictus enough to note it down.[22] References to vitrines continue after that date as Rosso wrote to Rictus in 1907 about preparing works for exhibition in 'crystal cages'[23] and in 1909 about obtaining vitrines while installing a show in Brussels.[24] Without a complete set of exhibition photographs from the artist's career, one can only hypothesise that Rosso first photographed his works in vitrines in a public setting at the 1904 Salon d'Automne in Paris (Fig.37).

In Rosso's case, 'crystal cages' suggest a growing need to establish the elements against which he had expressed strictures: limits, borders and end-points. The *Enfant malade* cast, the pronounced ridge of which divides and unites front and back in the same work, suggests his wish to mark and reconcile where one side ends and another begins. The vitrine further exemplifies Rosso's emerging desire to care for his precariously balanced works, by protecting, containing and isolating them from the environment. Moreover, this impulse marks a new interest in his works' future; indeed, the excellent preservation of the Vauxcelles piece over time must be attributed to its vitrine.

The sum of the technical features described above – the deliberate, idiosyncratic preservation of casting imperfections on the wax surface, the unusually rough application of the plaster core, the odd exposure of the plaster at unexpected points in the wax cast, the unstable base and its improvised external support, as well as the original vitrine – all indicate that Rosso himself made the Vauxcelles cast and attended to the particularities of its presentation. Paradoxically, Rosso created it not by erasing signs of serial reproduction but instead by exposing and giving meaning to the mundane mechanism by which he cast this version, pointing to its status as a unique work within a series.

In nineteenth-century serial sculpture, distinctions among casts are made by classificatory means such as dating and numbering, or vis-à-vis small visual differences that are traced by establishing casting sequences. In the *Enfant malade*, however, Rosso confirms the work's seriality by avoiding and confusing these terms. Even the precise date of the subject's conception remains unresolved: it seems to belong to the first five years of the artist's Paris sojourn that began in 1889. Despite the title's association with sickness, Rosso probably did not make it while recovering from an illness in the Lariboisière hospital in Paris in 1889, as might be expected. He never mentioned it in his letters from that period to his Milanese friend, the journalist Felice Cameroni, and a deliberate omission on Rosso's part would have been unusual.[25] Rosso was in fact eager to prove to Cameroni that he was making objects to sell in order to repay his debt to the journalist, and conscientiously mentioned to him all the works he created and had cast in this difficult financial period. It is also unlikely that *Enfant malade* was exhibited at the Galerie La Bodinière group show of 1894 under the ambiguous title *Etude à Lariboisière*.[26] The work by that title was perhaps the *Bambina che ride* (1889) (*Malato all'ospedale*, 1889, described in detail in the press, was exhibited as *Après la visite*).[27]

Stylistic similarities, such as the sharply tilted angle of the head in *Enfant malade*, with works from the five-year period following Rosso's 1889 hospitalisation, date it to that time but the year of conception is uncertain. The same slant appears in the diagonal

[20] See Hecker in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.57, fig.39.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Jehan Rictus noted in his diary (7th December 1904) that in Rosso's studio '*les "ouvrages", comme il dit, sont disposés sur des selles: les uns sous vitrine les autres sans*'; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits, 'Papiers de Jehan Rictus', NaF 16131, Journal 35, 68v.

[23] '. . . *les cages crystal*'; see Rosso to Rictus, 26th August 1907; *ibid.*

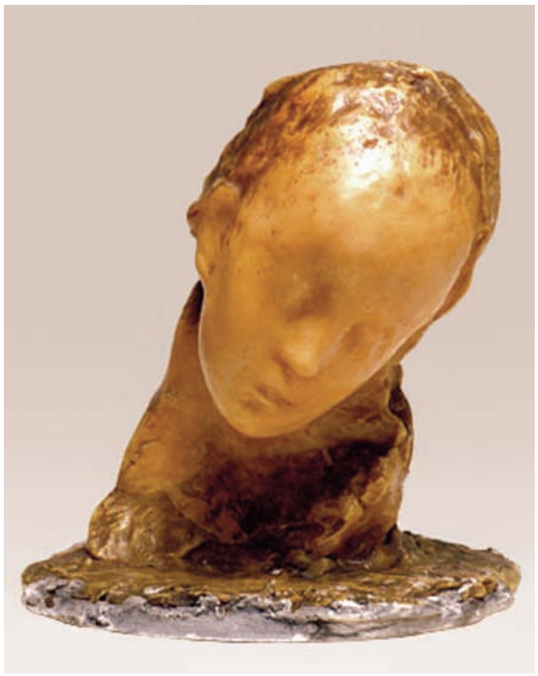
[24] '*Faut* [*sic*] *que j'aie* [*sic*] *maintenant pour* [*sic*] *quelques vitrines*', letter of 1909; *ibid.*, 453r. Rosso's idiosyncratic French is left intact.

[25] He writes of '*la figura del malato*', known today as *Malato all'ospedale* (1889), and '*ritratto della ragazzina*', which is *Bambina che ride* (1889), the latter made as a gift for the treasurer of the hospital: '. . . *la figura del malato che ho mandato fondere a Torino la dò a quello che ha già due miei bronzi nella sua galleria. Una delle prime di Parigi*'; Rosso to Cameroni, Paris, 3rd January 1890. Further letters to Cameroni discuss '*la figuretta del malato*' (26th January 1890), '*ragazzina dell'Economo*' (undated ?December 1889) that is the *Bambina che ride*, which is mentioned again in a letter of 26th January 1890 as '*ritratto della ragazzina*'; see Milan, Castello Sforzesco, Civica Biblioteca d'arte di Milano, Corrispondenza Felice Cameroni–Medardo Rosso, F 360.

[26] K. Eremite (pseudonym of Alphonse Germain): 'Chroniques, IV. Les Arts', *L'Ermitage* IV/12 (December 1893), pp.372–73.

[27] L. Caramel: exh. cat. *Mostra di Medardo Rosso (1858–1928)*, Milan (Palazzo della Permanente) 1979, pp.50 and 133–34. P. Mola, ed.: exh. cat. *Rosso, La forma instabile*, Venice (Guggenheim Museum) 2007, p.76, argues that the Galerie La Bodinière work was the *Bambina che ride*.

39. *Enfant malade*, by Medardo Rosso. c.1893–95. Wax cast with plaster interior, 28 by 25 by 15 cm. (Staatliche Kustsammlungen, Skulpturensammlung, Dresden).



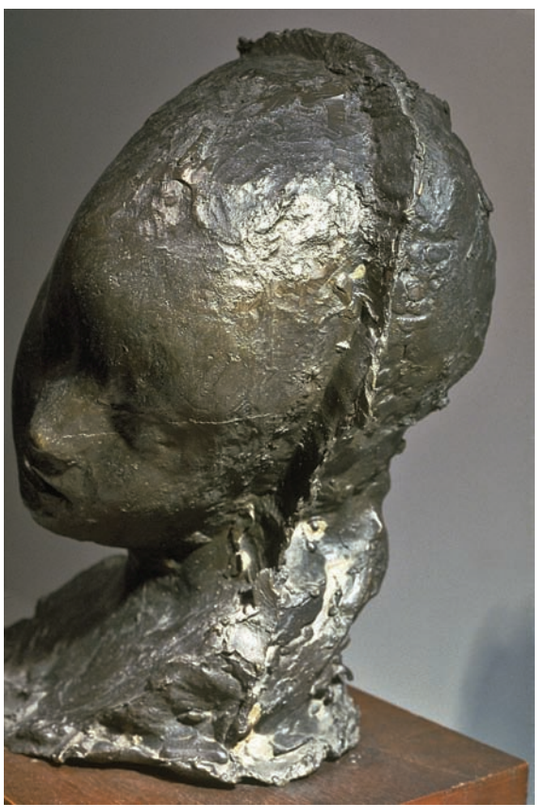
40. *Enfant malade*, by Medardo Rosso. c.1893–95. Wax cast with plaster interior and base, 27 by 18.4 by 25.4 cm. (Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas).

chair of *Malato all'ospedale* and was developed throughout the mid-1890s in Rosso's sculptures and drawings. His studio photographs of *Enfant malade* together with *Impression de boulevard: Paris la nuit*, made between 1895 and 1900, confirms that *Enfant malade* had already been made by then.

Newspaper articles and exhibition catalogues differ on the year of the subject's creation. The critic Charles Morice first mentioned it in 1895, establishing its latest possible date of conception.[28] Another critic, Camille de Sainte-Croix, described it in his March 1896 article on Rosso,[29] dating the work 1887, which seems unfeasibly early. It does not fit the artist's style, iconography or artistic concerns of the 1880s before his move to Paris.

Two different dates within the five-year span emerge in exhibition catalogues from Rosso's lifetime. 1895, the year in which Morice first mentioned the work, is also the date given in the 1910 exhibition catalogue of the *Prima esposizione italiana dell'impressionismo francese e delle scolture di Medardo Rosso*, in Florence. And yet the 1914 Venice Biennale catalogue dates the work to 1893.[30] This earlier date cannot be excluded since correspondence indicates that Rosso participated in the preparations for both the 1910 and 1914 shows and probably gave inconsistent dates for the sculptures he exhibited.[31]

If one were to accept the earlier 1893 date listed in 1914, then one might conclude that Rosso made the work two years before the date he gave to it in the 1910 catalogue but chose not to exhibit it at the Galerie La Bodinière in 1894 or show it



41. *Enfant malade*, by Medardo Rosso. c.1893–95. Bronze, 25.5 by 14.5 by 16.5 cm. (Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna, Milan; photograph courtesy of Henry Lie, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge MA).

[28] C. Morice: 'Les passants. Medardo Rosso', *Le Soir* (25th September 1895).

[29] C. de Sainte-Croix: 'Medardo Rosso', *Mercure de France* 17 (March 1896), p.386: '*L'Enfant malade, langueur angélique d'une mignonne tête inclinée, lasse et douleureuse de petit condamné que mine la consomption. Les paupières se ferment comme pour un sommeil sans réveil; et les lèvres faibles tremblent*[?] *l'exhalaison lente d'une plainte douce et mourante*'.

[30] In the 1931 National Exhibition in Rome, the work is dated even earlier, to 1892; see exh. cat. *Prima Quadriennale d'Arte nazionale*, Rome (Palazzo delle Esposizioni) 1931, p.150.

[31] For an account of the preparation of the 1910 exhibition, including correspondence between Rosso and its organisers, see Rodriguez, *op. cit.* (note 1). For the 1914 exhibition, see correspondence with Bazzoni cited at note 1 above.

[32] On Rosso's cunning, see V. Krahn: 'Pastiche or fake?', *Apollo* 169 (June 2009), pp.40–47, note 56.

to critics such as Morice until 1895. This would invite a more complex view of Rosso's character and legacy. Described as childishly spontaneous, impulsive and rash, his attitude here appears to be the opposite: secretive, cautious, even cunning, consistent with his guarded attitude toward the shaping of his legacy.[32] Perhaps the fact that more than one date exists alludes to Rosso's crafty practice of shifting the dates of his works at different moments in his career. This reinforces the notion that the single work could have a number of dates and titles within a limited range, since its various iterations would belong to the same series and derive from the same original source. Dates and titles thus took on a measure of conceptual arbitrariness with respect to the subject. Rosso seemed to view the series as a single work, and each version within it as a creative conjugation that remained tied to its root subject via its basic form.

Rosso's material legacy confirms his unusual consideration of the multiple. A man of his epoch, he cast *Enfant malade* serially in plaster, many times in wax and, more rarely, in bronze, over the next thirty-five years of his life, and scholars have categorised these casts according to their visual differences. In 1979 Luciano Caramel described two types of *Enfant malade* 'editions', one 'in the round' and one with a 'background halo' around the head.[33] Fabio Vittucci recently refined Caramel's types, noting that the halo looks different in various casts. For example, in a wax cast at the State Museum in Dresden, he describes a unique rising crest-like halo that seems bent over (Fig.39),[34] presumably meaning that the thin wax could have melted slightly after casting, causing it to bend. The Vauxcelles work validates this distinction, for the halo is less pronounced, as though trimmed, but consonant with halos on other casts.

Vittucci also notes a second type, based on the presence or absence of a thick flange protruding from the right shoulder, distinct from the halo, which he termed a 'raised area' ('*rialzo*') (Figs.39, 40 and 41).[35] What this extra piece might be is uncertain. It is present not only in waxes and bronzes, but also in a plaster model in the Museo Medardo Rosso in Barzio and in a patinated plaster in a private collection. An addition to Caramel's and Vittucci's categories is the different types of bases. Some, like the Vauxcelles cast, lack a base, while other lifetime casts incorporate the whole plaster mother mould, or part thereof, to serve as a base (Fig.40).[36]

The various material versions in wax, plaster and bronze, as well as the partial to full presence or absence of halo, flange and base have further tempted scholars to establish a temporal casting sequence. Since Rosso also reproduced *Enfant malade* in private photographs, Vittucci deduced, based on the late 1890s/early 1900s studio-shot of an *Enfant malade* with a halo but no flange, that this was the very first cast he made, and that a second *Enfant malade* was another wax, which Rosso made around 1897 with a slightly different halo and then sold to the Dresden Museum in 1901.[37] From the same photograph, Vittucci further divided all *Enfant malade* casts into two distinct chronological phases: an early 'halo' period and a later '*rialzo*' period after 1906.

42. Etha Fles in her Rome apartment with *Enfant malade* on piano, by Medardo Rosso. 1908–13. Photograph. (Courtesy of Margaret Scolari Barr).

Vittucci places within this early type a haloed *Enfant malade* in bronze that Rosso sold in 1914 to Milan's Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna after the end of the 'halo' period (Fig.41).[38] This assertion is questionable, for it leaves unanswered whether or why Rosso would have made and withheld an early cast for over a decade before selling it. Since there are other versions known to be in private collections, which have not yet resurfaced, it is clear that by 1914 Rosso had already cast several more waxes and bronzes, in no specific order. For example, the bronze *Enfant malade* with wood base sold by Rosso to Eissler in 1903 has not been located.[39] We therefore do not have a complete set of plaster, wax or bronze casts from which to reconstruct a temporal series. Whether the Dresden wax came before the Milan bronze is also not certain, for the haloes on these casts are different but not necessarily sequential.

Turning to casts with the pronounced shoulder '*rialzo*', Vittucci argues that this was the second type, and must date after 1906. He cites one such version, which has a '*rialzo*' but no halo, in a photograph of Rosso's works in the Rome apartment of his patron Etha Fles, dated between 1908 and 1913 (Fig.42).[40] However, it is possible that Rosso continued to cast both types simultaneously with no particular progression in mind.

Vittucci's visual classification allows us to place the Vauxcelles wax, with the halo but without the '*rialzo*', within the group of works that include the haloed Dresden wax and the Milan bronze. But locating the Vauxcelles cast within a sequential order of production remains difficult since all three works have unique, chance-related casting errors that determine their look, and there were other casts. Thus, although categorisable by type, it is impossible to create a complete series

[33] Caramel, *op. cit.* (note 27), p.134.

[34] F. Vittucci: 'Catalogo delle sculture', in Mola, *op. cit.* (note 27), pp.137–38.

[35] *Ibid.*, p.138.

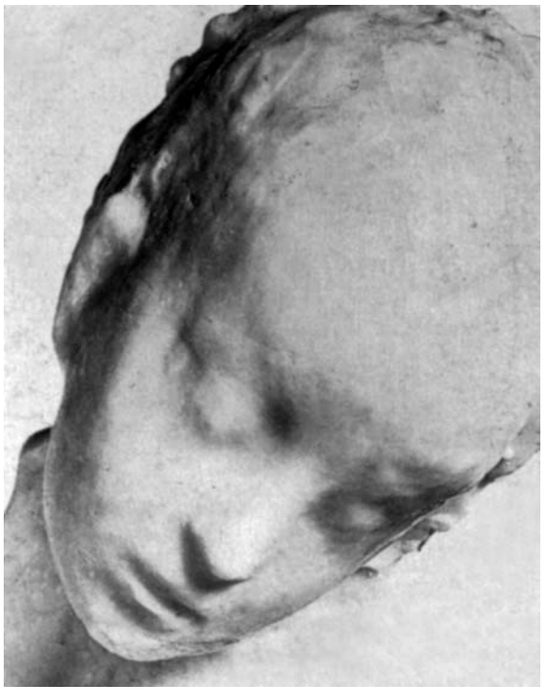
[36] For other examples and an explanation of mother moulds used as bases, see Lie in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.81.

[37] Vittucci gives a partial exhibition list of this work, to which should be added Vienna (1905), Brussels (1909) and Florence (1910); see D. Gordon: *Modern Art Exhibitions 1900–1916*, Munich 1974.

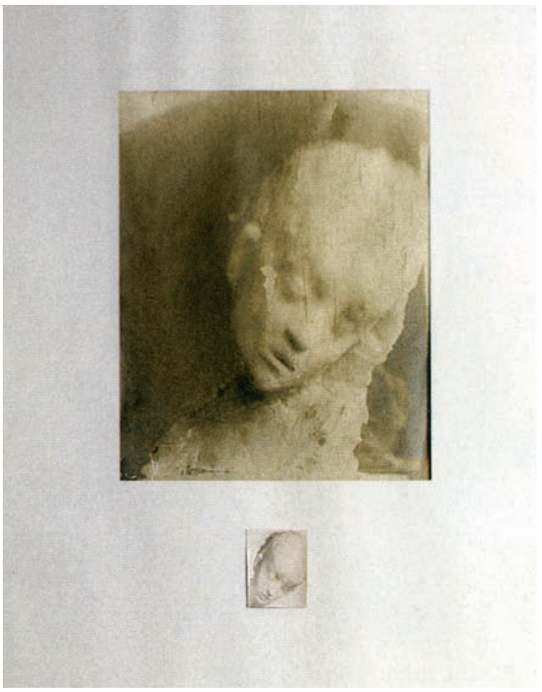
[38] This bronze was exhibited at the Venice Biennale of 1914.

[39] Rosso to Eissler, dated 1905; ASAC, CA 14, fasc. 'Medardo Rosso', L22, which is a receipt for '*3 mille* [francs] *de l'enfant malade*' in bronze; see also note 49 below for other versions.

[40] The version in Fig.42 is not in a vitrine, although three other works by Rosso are displayed in glass cases, again indicating the inconsistency in his process.



43. Photograph of *Enfant malade*, by Medardo Rosso. 1906–09. Aristotype on gloss paper; enlarged from a photograph blocked out with tempera, 7.9 by 6.3 cm. (Museo Medardo Rosso, Barzio).



44. Undated ensemble of two photographs of *Enfant malade*, by Medardo Rosso. Above (without '*rialzo*'): 1895–1902. Mixed media print, 39.9 by 30 cm. Below (with '*rialzo*'): see Fig.43. (Museo Medardo Rosso, Barzio).

or chronological order for the *Enfant malade*. Nor is the relationship between dates of making and selling clear in Rosso's art, as the case of the Milan bronze illustrates. The fact that the Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna in Milan purchased it in 1914 might indicate that Rosso had conserved an early bronze cast for over a decade from the period immediately following the subject's creation, as Vittucci says, or that Rosso returned at a much later date to cast a bronze from an early plaster model. One cannot exclude that he worked from two types of plaster models (with and without the '*rialzo*'). Since bases, flanges and haloes can be cut off or smoothed in any cast, thus erasing the feature in subsequent derivations, one cannot be certain that these features plot a sequence.

Finally, Rosso's photographs of his works are not easy to date precisely, nor perhaps were they intended for classification purposes. Nonetheless, they are illuminating for considering the multiplicity of ways in which he viewed a single work. In some, he photographed the *Enfant malade* among other works in his studio (Fig.38). In others, he isolated it through close-ups, strong exposures and hazy focus so that it appears ethereal and dematerialised (Fig.43). In one shot, Rosso created an ensemble using a larger and smaller print of two different casts (with and without flange) (Fig.44). In another close-up, he added text, scrawling the word '*bene*' underneath. As with his often-arbitrary casting methods, through strategic photography he further confused the temporal and spatial concept of the unique work of art and the multiple.

Louis Vauxcelles was a prominent figure in *fin-de-siècle* Paris, and from 1904 onwards was the critic for *Gil Blas* with his column 'Notes d'art'. He coined the label 'Fauves' for the group of painters that included Henri Matisse and André Derain, and is best known for inventing the term 'Cubism' to

[41] Less successfully, he created the derisory label 'Tubism' in 1911 for the works of Fernand Léger. Francis Picabia made a portrait of Vauxcelles in 1917; see M.C. Dennison: 'Automobile Parts and Accessories in Picabia's Machinist Works of 1915–17', THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE 143 (2001), pp.276–83.

[42] For example, the archive houses his manuscript on François Rude and an article on Eugène Guillaume; see Paris, INHA, Collections Jacques Doucet, fonds patrimoniaux archives 80, Louis Vauxcelles, cartons 155, 156 and 157–60.

[43] L. Vauxcelles: 'Le Salon d'Automne, Medardo Rosso et la sculpture impressionniste', *Excelsior* (3rd November 1929), p.4, in which the critic wrote that he had met Rosso about two decades earlier.

[44] '*. . . démentir les lois, les principes fondamentaux et traditionnels de l'art du statuaire*'; *ibid*., p.4.

[45] S. Hecker: 'Suspended Subjectivities: The Role of the Eye-Witness in Medardo Rosso's Casting Performances', talk given for panel entitled *The Eye Witness: Writing the Life of the Nineteenth Century Artist*, annual College Art Association Conference, New York, February 2003.

[46] Hecker in Cooper and Hecker, *op. cit.* (note 4), p.23.

[47] '*Il n'a jamais permis à un fondeur de toucher à ses plâtres. Rosso est son propre fondeur; il fond ses ouvrages en des alliages de métaux dont il a trouvé le secret, et il obtient ainsi, grâce aux oxidations, des tonalitiés d'antiques, des merveilleuses patines. L'atelier de Rosso est une vaste grange, où sont des fours, des amoncellements, des bois, des établis. Cet artiste est un ouvrier. Et quel rude ouvrier! Haut et large d'épaules, une encolure d'athlète, des mouvements agiles et souples de fauve, une musculature terrible, et une tête énergique, opiniâtre et douce, que couronne une toison frisée, en boucles rousses qui grisonnent. Si vous le voyiez, ce bon géant, devant un brasier de quinze cents degrés, coulant le bronze, illuminé des reflets mauves, pourpres, verts et blancs de la flamme, le front ruisselant, le torse nu, tenant cent kilos à bout de bras; vous ne songeriez pas, je vous le promets, à M. Puech ou à je ne sais quel Saint-Marceaux, mais à ces héros inconnus, qui créerent les monuments du cycle macédonien, les dieux de l'Egypte – ou, plutôt, vous évoqueriez Benvenuto Cellini pétrissant le Persée!*'; L. Vauxcelles: 'Notes d'art: au Salon d'automne: Le sculpteur Medardo Rosso', *Gil Blas* (31st October 1904), p.1. Translation given by A. Soliman in B. Kames: exh. cat. *Medardo Rosso*, New York (Peter Freeman, Inc.) 2009, pp.48–52. This part of Vauxcelles's

describe works by Georges Braque in 1908.[41] The Louis Vauxcelles Archive in Paris demonstrates that his wide-ranging interests included sculpture.[42]

During Vauxcelles's brief but intense involvement with Rosso, the critic was enchanted by Rosso's sculptures exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in 1904, where he first met the artist.[43] Vauxcelles subsequently dedicated his column to Rosso, whose art he enthusiastically reviewed. He understood the complexity and subversion of Rosso's overall sculptural project, writing that the artist aimed to 'deny the fundamental and traditional principles of sculpture'.[44]

In his 1904 article, Vauxcelles emphasised Rosso's process, describing as an eye-witness the 'casting parties' Rosso held in his atelier/foundry.[45] In the early 1900s, Rosso invited guests to watch him cast late at night, a dramatic and unusual way of asserting his dual identity as sculptor and founder, artist and craftsman, as well as the uniqueness and multiplicity of his sculptural creations:[46]

> He never allowed a founder to touch his plasters. Rosso is the founder of his own works: he casts his works in metal alloys whose secret he discovered and he thus obtains, thanks to oxidations, tonalities of antique works, marvellous patinas. Rosso's workshop is a huge barn, where you can find furnaces, piles and windfalls of wood. This artist is a workman. And what a rough workman! He is tall with large shoulders, has the neck of an athlete, the agile and subtle movements of a wildcat, an impressive set of muscles, and an energetic, obstinate and gentle head, crowned by a curly fleece, with auburn graying curls. If you saw this nice giant in front of a blazing inferno of one thousand five hundred degrees, casting bronze, illuminated by mauve, purple, green, and white reflections from the flame, his forehead dripping with sweat, his torso naked, holding a hundred kilos in his hand, you would not think, I guarantee, of Mr. Puech or of any Saint-Marceaux, but of those unknown heroes who created the monuments of the Macedonian cycle, the Egyptian gods, or it would rather remind you of Benvenuto Cellini sculpting *Perseus*![47]

Vauxcelles's comparison of Rosso with Cellini is not unmerited, for Cellini too became famous for his casting, and Rosso's performance suggests a similar aspiration to be associated with the ancient technical art of the *faber*. But as we have seen, Rosso complicated this role by focusing on the accidents and imperfections of casting rather than the well-cast object. Simultaneously, in contrast to Cellini's *Perseus*, Rosso's casting performances identify as protagonist the artist's body, along with the ambience, form, materials and tools – all but the final product, which Vauxcelles never saw, named or described.

Nevertheless, the exchange of a single object – this version of the *Enfant malade* – marked the Rosso–Vauxcelles relationship. In his 1904 article, Vauxcelles showed special interest in *Enfant malade*, it being the first work he mentioned.[48] This is odd, since the Salon d'Automne catalogue does not list the work but '*Enfant* (*cire*)' listed (as item 'c') in the catalogue may be *Enfant malade*. If so, then Rosso might have changed the title for the 1904 Salon d'Automne show, but Vauxcelles probably already knew the work by its other title. It is also possible that it was not exhibited and that Vauxcelles had seen it in an earlier exhibition, such as the wax in the 1900 Exposition Universelle, or in Rosso's atelier during a private visit.[49]

Rosso might have given Vauxcelles *Enfant malade* as a gift, perhaps influenced by Vauxcelles's interest in this subject before or after his 1904 article appeared. Rosso gave works to critics (and to major artists like Rodin), perhaps also hoping that influential people would see them displayed in their homes. For example, in 1889 Emile Zola accepted Rosso's request to have a work exhibited as if he were its owner. It is also possible, if less likely, that Vauxcelles bought the work from Rosso. This would be unusual, insofar as Rosso normally sold his sculptures to wealthy collectors but gave them as gifts to friends and critics. The probable year in which *Enfant malade* passed from Rosso to Vauxcelles, 1904, seems consistent with the artist's practice of showing his works in vitrines in that period. Vauxcelles's vitrine confirms that Rosso began providing vitrines with his works when he sold or made gifts of them.[50]

In conclusion, through its unusual technical features and idiosyncratic approach to seriality, the Vauxcelles *Enfant malade* bore the marks of Rosso's creative hand and inventive mind. Moreover, the work stood as the repository of the personal connection between its maker and owner, although it lost this special value upon the deaths of artist and critic. From that moment, it became just another object in the Vauxcelles home. However, unlike many of Rosso's sculptures that were known to exist in France in his time but have since disappeared along with their histories, this one was preserved intact, through two World Wars and several heirs, ready to be reanimated a century later.

article was cut out when the Cremetti Gallery in London reprinted the article in its Rosso exhibition catalogue published in 1906.

[48] Vauxcelles described it as '*la douloureuse langueur chlorotique d'un adolescent*'; Vauxcelles, *op. cit.* (note 47), p.1.

[49] Thereafter, Rosso exhibited various casts of the work. The 1905 Vienna exhibition, for example, lists three owners: a wax in the collection of Jean Faure; the Dresden wax; and one owned by Mme Gutherz in Vienna, indicating that Rosso had already cast and sold *Enfant malade* frequently between 1900 and 1905. Foundries also cast *Enfant malade* posthumously, perhaps using Rosso's original plaster moulds, but without the distinct casting techniques evident in the lifetime casts.

[50] Although it is unknown whether Vauxcelles had contact with Rosso after 1904, he seems to have followed Rosso's career sporadically in the three years following his article, for the Fond Vauxcelles contains Rosso catalogues from Vienna (1905) and London (1906; which reprinted part of his 1904 article), as well as press cuttings on the Rosso/Rodin dispute in British newspapers from 1907. However, neither the Rosso nor the Vauxcelles archive contains additional writing by Vauxcelles on Rosso during the artist's lifetime. Giovanni Lista deems this silence deliberate, claiming that a mutual friend of Rosso's and Vauxcelles's, the writer André Ibels, later criticised Vauxcelles for standing, along with Morice and Adolphe Tabarant, with Auguste Rodin against Rosso for questions of financial gain. Lista's unsubstantiated assertion contradicts Ibels's obituary of Rosso, in which he praised Vauxcelles's solidarity with Rosso with respect to his rivalry with Rodin; G. Lista: *Medardo Rosso: Scultura e fotografia*, Milan 2003, p.145. A. Ibels: 'Mort de Medardo Rosso', *La Rumeur* (6th April 1928), p.4, says that Vauxcelles was among those critics who protested against Rodin's unacknowledged use of Rosso's ideas. A year after Rosso's death, in 1929, Vauxcelles wrote the introduction to the catalogue of the Salon d'Automne retrospective mounted by Rosso's son. An unpublished, undated manuscript on Rosso in the Fond Vauxcelles seems to have been a preparatory draft of this introduction (see Paris, INHA, Collections Jacques Doucet, fonds patrimoniaux, archives 80, Louis Vauxcelles, cartons 23/24). Vauxcelles also wrote a page-long article on Rosso in *Excelsior* (see note 43 above). As in 1904, in both the 1929 catalogue and article, Vauxcelles mentioned and praised *Enfant malade*.