

# António Soares dos Reis and Augustus Saint-Gaudens: an artistic friendship

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## Abstract

António Soares dos Reis and Augustus Saint-Gaudens enjoyed a close friendship in Paris (1868-70) and Rome (1871-72), about which little is known. There are no extant letters between the two sculptors and few references to their relationship in published or archival sources. Some conclusions may be posited through their training, shared experiences, and mutual friends. This paper traces the time that the two artists spent together through the lens of Saint-Gaudens, an artist of French-Irish parentage who would become the leading American sculptor of his day. It examines concurrent work on Soares dos Reis's *O Desterrado* (1872) and Saint-Gaudens's *Hiawatha* (1871-72; carved 1874).

## Keywords

Soares des Reis, Saint-Gaudens, art history, sculpture, marble

## Introduction

António Soares dos Reis (1847-1889) is celebrated now, as he was during his lifetime, as a leading Portuguese sculptor of the late nineteenth century. Yet there are aspects of his biography that are not well fleshed out, including his friendship with the American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848-1907). Very little is documented about their relationship, so assumptions about it must be inferred by assessing their choices in training and sculptural subjects, mutual friends, and shared life experiences. There are no extant letters between the two sculptors and few references to their friendship in published or archival sources. Most of the information that exists comes from Saint-Gaudens's *Reminiscences*, drafted beginning in 1906, edited by his son Homer, and published posthumously in 1913; these two volumes form the basis for the structure of this paper. They open up additional perspectives about Soares dos Reis and his years in Paris and Rome through the lens of his friendship with Saint-Gaudens.

## Origins and early training

Soares dos Reis and Saint-Gaudens were born less than five months apart, Soares dos Reis on October 14, 1847, in Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal, and Saint-Gaudens on March 1, 1848, in Dublin, Ireland. Both were born into humble, working-class circumstances, Soares dos Reis to a grocery store owner, and Saint-Gaudens to a French bootmaker and an Irish seamstress. When Saint-Gaudens was just six months old, his family immigrated to the United States, as did so many other Irish refugees escaping famine in their home country. He was raised in lower middle-class circumstances; a primary school education was the extent of his formal schooling. In 1861, at age thirteen, Saint-Gaudens was apprenticed to

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learn a trade, as was common for American boys at that time. Having expressed an interest in art, he worked for two French-born cameo cutters in succession, mastering the precise techniques of cutting and polishing fashionable jewelry in shell and stone. The posthumous portrait of John Tuffs (1812-1859) in shell is his first documented work (fig. 1). By 1864 Saint-Gaudens supplemented his training by attending night classes, first in drawing at the Cooper Union, and later in drawing after the antique and from life at the National Academy of Design. Soares dos Reis's biography plays out similarly: a primary school education, an early interest in modelling, and classes at the Academia Portuense de Belas Artes beginning in 1861 after convincing his father to allow him to enroll.



**Figure 1** – Augustus Saint-Gaudens. *John Tuffs*, ca. 1861. Shell, 4.5 x 3.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Sheila W. and Richard J. Schwartz Gift and Morris K. Jesup Fund, 1990 (1990.78.1a, b)

The origin stories of both Soares dos Reis and Saint-Gaudens point to the strong influences of their fathers in determining their artistic directions. Saint-Gaudens's father Bernard (1816-1893) grew up in the foothills of the Pyrenees of southwestern France and his French roots ran deep. In New York he operated a successful shoe and boot store located next to the National Academy of Design; he had well-connected clients who later patronized his son. While Bernard lacked their social pedigree, he was part of a lively French expatriate community. He connected Augustus with the French émigré cameo employers, arranged for his enrollment at the Cooper Union, and organized finances to send him to Paris in February 1867.

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### **Paris influences and connections**

The timing of Saint-Gaudens's Paris sojourn was deliberately planned so that he could see the *Exposition Universelle*. At this world's fair, he viewed familiar works by American artists such as John Quincy Adams Ward (1830-1910), who he encountered while a student at the National Academy. Ward's *Indian Hunter* was a sculpture that Saint-Gaudens greatly admired when the plaster was exhibited in New York in 1865. The bronze cast (1866) shown in Paris was dedicated in New York's Central Park in 1869. Saint-Gaudens also had his first exposure to sculptures by such leading French artists as Paul Dubois (1823-1905), works that would both impress him and inform his aesthetic choices. Saint-Gaudens found Dubois's bronze *Saint Jean-Baptiste Enfant* (1861; Musée d'Orsay), one of four works that he exhibited at the fair, "extraordinary." He would later say that Dubois, the leading representative of the Neo-Florentine style, had a profound influence on him (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 2, pp. 183-84).

By then Paris was supplanting Italy as the destination for aspiring American sculptors as a cultural capital that served as a global training and proving ground. Saint-Gaudens had a great advantage over most of his fellow Americans since he spoke fluent French. As a result, he was more easily able to navigate the professional and social demands of student life. He had an outgoing, charismatic personality, but even still, acclimating to Paris and enduring uncomfortable living conditions, was challenging. While Saint-Gaudens waited out the process of formally applying to the *École des Beaux-Arts* through the American consulate, he enrolled at the *École Gratuite de Dessin*, better known as the *Petit École*. There he took classes in sculptural composition and drawing from plaster casts, live models, and nature. Saint-Gaudens distinguished himself at the *Petit École* by winning two first-prize medals (Greenthal, 1985, pp. 63, 169 n 26). He also found employment in order to support himself, carving cameos for an Italian jeweler named Lupi on Montmartre. He took classes in the mornings and evenings and cut cameos in the afternoons, including one of William Root Bliss (1825-1906), an American railroad executive (1869; Boston Athenaeum).

In November 1867, at the age of nineteen, he was admitted to the atelier of François Jouffroy (1806-1882), one of three sculpture professors at the prestigious state-run *École des Beaux-Arts*. Jouffroy became a professor at the *École* in 1865; his own work was academic, yet Saint-Gaudens admired it, speaking of *Jeune fille confiant son premier secret à Vénus* (1839; Musée du Louvre) as "one of the masterpieces of French sculpture" (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, p. 74). Jouffroy was a popular teacher whose atelier was, as Saint-Gaudens recalled "the triumphant one of the Beaux Arts, his class capturing, as a rule, most of the prizes" (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, p. 74). Those in the Jouffroy atelier around that time who received the coveted *Prix de Rome* for four years of study at the *Académie de France* in Rome were Louis-Ernest Barrias (1841-1905) in 1865 and Antonin Mercié (1845-1916) in 1868.

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Saint-Gaudens was one of the first American sculptors to study at the *École*, along with Olin Levi Warner (1844-1896) who entered the Jouffroy atelier in March 1870 (Warner was formally admitted to the *École* in October 1870; Philadelphian Howard Roberts [1843-1900] had joined the atelier of Augustin-Alexandre Dumont [1801-1884] in 1866.) It was probably in late 1867 or early 1868 that Saint-Gaudens first met Soares dos Reis. Then twenty years old, he had arrived in Paris in early November 1867 (Baldaque and Almeida, 1988, p. 15) after graduating from the Academia Portuense de Belas Artes with many distinguished awards. He won a competition for a scholarship to study in Paris, and when he arrived, he also joined Jouffroy's atelier. Later they would both gain formal admission to the *École*; Saint-Gaudens passed the rigorous *concours des places* and was admitted in March 1868 (Greenthal, 1985, pp. 64, 269 n 29) and Soares dos Reis in April 1869 (Baldaque and Almeida, 1988, p. 15).

### **Saint-Gaudens and friendship**

Throughout his life, Saint-Gaudens had a true gift for friendship, maintaining very strong bonds with fellow artists. In Paris, he had frequent contact with other American students, but he did not limit himself to their ranks, also developing lasting friendships with European artists. From his *Reminiscences*, drafted more than thirty-five years after he met Soares dos Reis, it is clear that Saint-Gaudens held him in great esteem, referring to him as "the kindest man in the world" and "an exquisite talent" (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, p. 79). In fact, they may have been drawn together by each other's innate talent in an atelier structure that favored French students and in which the newer students underwent frequent mocking and teasing. This "otherness" of being foreigners in an established system may have contributed to their mutual bond. Unlike French nationals, they were not eligible to compete for the prestigious Prix de Rome, but they otherwise underwent the same rigorous program of drawing and modeling, moving from the preliminary studies of newer students to the ambitious, polished compositions of advanced ones.

Saint-Gaudens's milieu of friends at the *École* also included French artists: sculptor Antonin Mercié; painter and enameller Alfred Jean Garnier (1848-1908); sculptor and ceramist Albert-Louis Dammouse (1848-1926); and sculptor Paul Bion (1845-1897). Bion was a particularly important presence in Saint-Gaudens's life, and they maintained an active correspondence until Bion's death in 1897. His many letters to Saint-Gaudens offer great detail about the Parisian art scene and provide forthright critical analysis of artworks displayed in the annual Salons. (Saint-Gaudens's letters to Bion do not survive.) It is perhaps surprising that Bion only once mentioned Soares dos Reis—in a December 4, 1876, letter that cautions Saint-Gaudens against nostalgia for their fellow students. However, it makes clear that Bion admired Soares dos Reis: "When you write to Soares with the golden heart, slip a little word at the end of your letter to let him know I haven't forgotten him. It's true. I've always held that boy in great esteem and I'd like him to be happy" (Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 22, folder 1; English translation, Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park). This

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letter, and those by others, confirm that Saint-Gaudens and Soares dos Reis shared a close, overlapping network of friends and that from their student days there was ongoing concern for Soares dos Reis's well-being.

### **Relocation to Rome**

The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War on July 19, 1870, put an end to the routine of student life. While Soares dos Reis returned to Portugal in August (Baldaque and Almeida, 1988, p. 16), Saint-Gaudens waited to leave Paris until early September when Prussian troops were advancing on the city. He gave serious thought to enlisting, yet thought better of it when he received an eight-page letter from his mother imploring him not to get mixed up in politics (Saint-Gaudens to Garnier, September 21, 1870, Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 92, folder 14). Instead, he traveled south to Limoges where his younger brother Andrew (1851-1891) worked in a porcelain factory; Augustus cut cameos during his time there.

In November 1870, Saint-Gaudens continued on to Rome through Lyon and Marseille, arriving before the end of the year. He had considered returning to New York, but a letter from a fellow École student named Publio de Felici attested to the good conditions in Rome, so he ventured forth to the Eternal City (Saint-Gaudens to Garnier, March 21, 1871, Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 92, folder 14; English translation). Saint-Gaudens immediately found work cutting cameos, for a time on the Via Margutta with a jeweler named Rossi. As in Paris, he spent his afternoons pursuing this well-paid craft. Saint-Gaudens reported to Alfred Garnier that he was "earning a lot of money.... They pay much more for cameos here than in Paris. They are much less hard to please. Living is less expensive" (Saint-Gaudens to Garnier, March 21, 1871, Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 92, folder 14; English translation).

Within his first few months in Rome, Saint-Gaudens began to "do business with rich Americans and doing cameos for them is extremely well-paid" (Saint-Gaudens to Garnier, March 21, 1871, Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 92, folder 14; English translation). He cultivated a network of patrons, specifically travelers eager for souvenirs of their time abroad. Among those he met through bustling American expatriate circles was Hannah Rohr Tuffs (1829-1905) who visited Rome in 1872. She sat for a shell cameo portrait (1872; The Metropolitan Museum of Art), a companion to the posthumous one of her husband John that Saint-Gaudens completed while an apprentice in New York. She also gave Saint-Gaudens his first bust commission, a portrait of her younger sister Eva (1845-1916) in the guise of the village maid Marguerite from Charles Gounod's opera *Faust* (fig. 2).

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**Figure 2** – Augustus Saint-Gaudens. *Eva Rohr*, 1872. Marble, 47.3 x 23.5 x 16.5 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Allan H. Smith, 1990 (1990.317)

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**Studio mates: Saint-Gaudens and Soares dos Reis**

Later Saint-Gaudens would write that arriving in Italy “was if a door had been thrown wide open to the eternal beauty of the classical” (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, p. 104). In addition to the inspiration of antiquities on streets as well as in churches and museums, Saint-Gaudens found camaraderie with other *École* students who also left Paris to escape the war including de Felici and the Portuguese sculptor José Simões de Almeida (tio, 1844-1926), also a former Jouffroy pupil. For his part, Soares dos Reis arrived in Rome several weeks after Saint-Gaudens, on January 17, 1871 (Baldaque and Almeida, 1988, p. 16), with additional support to complete his scholarship. Saint-Gaudens recalled in his *Reminiscences* of “one day” encountering Soares dos Reis in Rome, referring to him as “a Fine Arts pensioner of the Portuguese Government” (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, p. 109).

In a March 21, 1871, letter to Alfred Garnier (Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 92, folder 14; English translation), Saint-Gaudens noted that he was renting a studio in common with de Felici and Simões de Almeida. It is unclear whether this is the same studio that we know he shared with Soares dos Reis; Saint-Gaudens’s *Reminiscences* were drafted more than three decades later and thus were subject to inaccuracy and conflation of dates. In the *Reminiscences* he recalled Soares and he “took a studio together, and in it I set up a figure [*Hiawatha*] that should open people’s eyes” (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, p. 109). (Regardless, Simões de Almeida returned to Portugal in 1872 and de Felici would establish a successful gem and cameo business on the Piazza di Spagna that he operated for decades to come.) The studio that Saint-Gaudens and Soares shared was located at 4 Via San Nicolò da Tolentino; Saint-Gaudens called it a “lovely spot” and noted that “a big sheet hung across the studio, separating us” (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, pp. 109, 112). It was in the shadows of the Palazzo Barberini, a masterpiece of Baroque architecture completed in 1633, and the focal point of a neighborhood popular for sculptors whose studios lined the nearby streets.

Sculptors’ studios were fashionable destinations for Grand Tourists. Little is known of Saint-Gaudens’s impressions of William Wetmore Story (1819-1895) or Randolph Rogers (1825-1892), two titans of the Anglo-American expatriate sculptural community who lived and worked nearby. In fact, Story lived in grand style in a twenty-room apartment on the piano nobile of the Palazzo Barberini, and his studio address was 2 Via San Nicolò da Tolentino (Hare, 1872, p. 4), thus very close to Saint-Gaudens and Soares. Saint-Gaudens shared a closer bond with older expatriate artist William Henry Rinehart (1825-1874), who like Story and Rogers, developed an international reputation for his idealizing works drawn from mythology, literature, religious subjects, and ancient history. His death in 1874 was represented the loss of a trusted mentor to the younger Saint-Gaudens.

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**Italian sojourns and studio life**

Saint-Gaudens's *Reminiscences* describe an active social life—jovial studio gatherings, cups of black coffee at the famous Caffè Greco, and private parties among the Anglo-American expatriates. A highlight of his Italian tenure was the frequent walking trips, male bonding excursions that were full of fun and high jinx. The exact dates and participants of these trips are difficult to track with precision. Saint-Gaudens described these long walks as “wonderful...we spend very little and we amuse ourselves a lot” (Saint-Gaudens to Garnier, March 21, 1871, Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 92, folder 14; English translation). In October 1871, Saint-Gaudens, Soares dos Reis, Simões de Almeida, and the French landscape painter George Dubois traveled to Ostia, the site of the harbor city of ancient Rome. Later in the year, Saint-Gaudens toured Naples with Dubois and Ernest Mayor, a Swiss architect, as a photograph (fig. 3) of the dapper trio laden with knapsacks and walking sticks attests; Saint-Gaudens is seated in the middle. That trip was followed by another to Naples in late April or early May 1872 with Soares dos Reis, Simões de Almeida, and Publio de Felici. It may be firmly attributed to that date because they were there during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Saint-Gaudens took a train with “a hilarious band of comrades...to see the stupendous spectacle.” He described the ride: “As we went South, the day grew grayer and we grew happier and happier, Soares, in his delight, devouring large quantities of Gruyere cheese, forgetting that the mere sight of it had hitherto always made him sick.” As Saint-Gaudens recalled, they were “light-hearted, empty-headed years” (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, pp. 110-11), yet lifelong friendships were solidified.

The carefree behavior of the walking trips extended to life in the studio as well. Saint-Gaudens's *Reminiscences* speak of the easy rapport that he shared with Soares dos Reis; he observed that “no breath of quarrel ever came between us, and that is saying a good deal, considering my ever-readiness for one” (Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, p. 109). They shared a large boisterous Italian greyhound that Antonin Mercié had given to Saint-Gaudens when he relocated from Rome to Naples. By Saint-Gaudens's admission, the dog sorely tried Soares dos Reis's patience. And there was the noise: Saint-Gaudens was well-known for his love of music, particularly opera, and for his loud singing voice, both in the Jouffroy atelier where he earned renown singing the Marseillaise in English, and also in the Rome studio. Saint-Gaudens gave much credit to Soares dos Reis and his “noble nature” for enduring the racket: “His utmost protest was an occasional ‘Ouf’ which he uttered, when following the habit of my masters in New York and my own renown in Paris, I began bawling the moment I entered the studio, never to stop until I left it at one o'clock to go to my bread-winning cameos” (Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, p. 109). It seems likely that a drawing by Soares dos Reis from 1875 of a head with wide-open mouth may be a caricature of Saint-Gaudens's singing. Although the face itself does not resemble Saint-Gaudens in the least, the termination of the neck is signed “S.G.<sup>ens</sup>.” That it was a joke of sorts seems the most plausible explanation for this bold, energetic work.



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**Figure 3** – Photograph of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, George Dubois, and Ernest Mayor on a walking trip to Naples, 1871. Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, USA. Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.

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***O Desterrado and Hiawatha***

Work of course was the principal reason that Soares dos Reis and Saint-Gaudens were in Rome. After the interruption of their course of studies in Paris, each challenged himself to a progressively more ambitious task—a life-size single figure in the round. Here they clearly were adopting an assignment that second-year Prix de Rome students were expected to carry out. Advanced students intended their sculptures to announce a mastery of the human figure and to attract prospective patrons. Each artist chose a familiar literary subject from his native country, in Soares dos Reis's case, *O Desterrado* depicts the exiled hero in the poem "The Sorrows of Exile (As Tristezas do Desterro)" by Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877). Saint-Gaudens would later describe *O Desterrado* as "a beautiful work: "this figure with its melancholy was in complete accord with Soares' own nature" (Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, p. 109).

In selecting his own theme of nostalgic decline, Saint-Gaudens looked to one considered quintessentially American: a Native figure who reinforced the false and damaging stereotype of a noble, but doomed race. The sculptor chose to represent Hiawatha, a fictional Ojibwe chief and protagonist of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem "The Song of Hiawatha," first published in 1855. The poem was a runaway success and served as inspiration for many artists, including fellow Rome-based Edmonia Lewis, an artist of Indigenous and Black descent who in the late 1860s completed several sculptures based on Longfellow's poem. Her studio was near Saint-Gaudens and Soares, at 8 Via San Nicolò da Tolentino (Hare, 1872, p. 4); Saint-Gaudens must have known of Lewis, but no confirming documentation exists. Additionally, Longfellow (1807-1882) himself had just been in Rome, a possible catalyst for Saint-Gaudens's choice (Greenthal, 1985, p. 65).

For *Hiawatha* (fig. 4), Saint-Gaudens conveyed romanticizing sentiment in a waning neo-classical style that played to conservative American taste. The contemplative semi-nude figure is seated on a rock, leaning against a tree stump. His hand rests thoughtfully on his chin, "pondering musing in the forest on the welfare of his people," as the inscription from Longfellow's poem on the base asserts. Yet he is passive and deactivated—an arrow (now missing) resting in his hand, and his bow, quiver, and arrows at his side. Like Longfellow, Saint-Gaudens was less concerned with accuracy than reinforcing established Euro-American Indigenous stereotypes. He would later cavalierly quip that this effort "accorded with the profound state of my mind, pondering, musing on my own ponderous thoughts and ponderous efforts" (Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, p. 109).

It is tempting to imagine Soares dos Reis and Saint-Gaudens discussing the selection of their subjects and moving back and forth between the sheet that divided their studio space to assess progress and offer critiques. There are striking compositional parallels between *Hiawatha* and *O Desterrado*: both figures are seated with similar positioning of the legs and with closed, pensive demeanors. Both include an over-abundance of narrative detail,

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**Figure 4** – Augustus Saint-Gaudens. *Hiawatha*, 1871-72; carved 1874. Marble, 152.4 x 87.6 x 94.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Diane, Daniel, and Mathew Wolf, in memory of Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, 2001 (2001.641)

in *Hiawatha's* case, ranging from a quiver with bow and arrows to a curious gutted animal to the ivy-entwined tree stump.

During the time that Saint-Gaudens modeled *Hiawatha*, he made the transition from student to professional artist; in fact, without the armature of art school, necessity dictated it. He searched for funding to have the sculpture cast in plaster and he made a conscious decision to work in marble rather than in bronze. Not only was marble more accessible and skilled labor inexpensive, it represented less effort for Saint-Gaudens who noted that “to have it in bronze the clay has to be excessively finished, which would take a great deal more time” (Saint-Gaudens to Gibbs, May 1872 (copy), Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 8, folder 26; also quoted in Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, p. 122). At that time, marble was also a surer and safer choice from a patronage standpoint.

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### **Patronage networks**

As it turned out, Soares dos Reis played a significant role in bringing Saint-Gaudens his most important early patron. Alone at the studio early in 1872, Soares dos Reis received the New York lawyer Montgomery Gibbs and showed him *Hiawatha*. He then conveyed to Saint-Gaudens the good news that Gibbs proposed paying for casting it in plaster, a critical intermediary step toward the final result in marble. Saint-Gaudens recalled Soares dos Reis rushing out into the bright afternoon to share the news as “one of the happiest moments of my life, for I had been certain that, if I could ever get my wonderful production before the American public, I would amaze the world and settle my future” (Saint-Gaudens 1913, vol. 1, p. 113). Such boastful self-confidence was typical of Saint-Gaudens and certainly was a counterpoint to Soares dos Reis’s more reserved personality.

The connection to Gibbs represented the first significant lucky break in Saint-Gaudens’s career for the lawyer was particularly committed to supporting the young artist. Gibbs clearly recognized his great talent, writing him on April 2, 1872: “I am sure that the last thing of which I stand in need is a marble statue, particularly on the dimensions of your ‘Hiawatha.’ But for the fact I sympathize very strongly with you in your struggles to maintain yourself here until your genius and labors shall have met with the reward to which I feel they are entitled” (Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 8, folder 26). Gibbs paid for *Hiawatha*’s translation from clay to plaster, and in return Saint-Gaudens completed sentimentalizing marble portrait busts of his daughters Belle (1872; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston) and Florence (1872; Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Furthermore, Gibbs financed Saint-Gaudens’s studio rent and assistants, as well as his temporary return to New York in September 1872. The sculptor, then ill with malaria (Roman fever), completed *Hiawatha* in clay in July (Saint-Gaudens to Gibbs, July 19, 1872, Saint-Gaudens Papers, box 8, folder 26), just as Soares dos Reis moved out of their shared studio. Soares dos Reis departed Rome on July 27 and took an extended trip through Paris, London, and Madrid before arriving in Portugal in early September (Macedo, 1945, p. 32).

Saint-Gaudens returned to Rome later in 1873, and alone occupied the studio he had shared with Soares dos Reis at 4 Via San Nicolò da Tolentino. Late in the year, through Montgomery Gibbs’s introduction, Saint-Gaudens met Edwin D. Morgan (1811-1883), a former governor of New York who bought shoes at the shop of the sculptor’s father. Morgan paid eight hundred dollars for *Hiawatha* to be carved in marble, a project that was completed in 1874. In late 1875 or early 1876, *Hiawatha* arrived in New York and went on view with its accompanying granite base in Morgan’s Fifth Avenue house. Saint-Gaudens thought well enough of his finished sculpture to write Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and invite him to view it if he were in New York (Nickerson, 1984, p. 65). He had hoped that *Hiawatha* would be publicly displayed, perhaps in the new Metropolitan Museum of Art (Saint-Gaudens to Gibbs, May 1872 (copy), Saint-Gaudens Papers, Box 8, folder 26; also quoted in Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, pp. 122-23). He was disappointed that fewer people saw it in Morgan’s home with

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its extensive art collection, however, after attending a reception, Saint-Gaudens conceded that *Hiawatha* "looks very well there" (Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, p. 180). Furthermore, in that location it announced Saint-Gaudens's talent to a distinguished circle of New York patrons. These men would be instrumental in bringing him the coveted commission for a monument to Admiral David Glasgow Farragut (1801-1870), Saint-Gaudens's first major public work (fig. 5).



**Figure 5** – Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Admiral David Glasgow Farragut Monument, 1877-80. Bronze on granite replacement base; figure, 2,74 m H. Madison Square Park, New York (photograph © 2008 by Francis Dzikowski/Esto)

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### **After Rome**

It is impossible to determine how much contact Saint-Gaudens and Soares dos Reis had after they parted ways in Rome in 1872. Saint-Gaudens was an unreliable, inconsistent correspondent, and many personal letters were burned in a devastating studio fire at his Cornish, New Hampshire, studio in 1904. It is also unknown whether these studio mates ever saw each other again, though perhaps they did in Paris in 1878. Soares exhibited two plasters, *Artist in Childhood* (1873; private collection) and a portrait of Domingos de Almeida Ribeiro (1876; Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis), at the Exposition Universelle, earning an honorable mention. Saint-Gaudens lived there for three years between 1877 and 1880, while working on the Farragut Monument.

Saint-Gaudens was aware of Soares dos Reis's death by suicide in February 1889; the event would have affected him greatly as he was a loyal friend and a highly sensitive personality. How he found out is not known, but he mentioned the event in his *Reminiscences*. Written with the hindsight of decades of life experience, Saint-Gaudens described Soares dos Reis as "long, dark, and thin, of an effeminate nature, inclined to melancholy, the kindest man in the world. He committed suicide in Portugal...through marital troubles" (Saint-Gaudens, 1913, vol. 1, p. 79). By then Saint-Gaudens was terminally ill with cancer and must have recognized in his old friend Soares dos Reis a kindred spirit: both were gifted monumental sculptors and devoted teachers, both were pronounced by critics "genius," and both endured their share of marital strife and debilitating depression.

### **Conclusion**

An unresolved question remains: why is *O Desterrado* today considered a masterpiece of Portuguese romantic realist sculpture while in contrast *Hiawatha* is seen as a short-lived, youthful experiment? The answer may lie in part in Soares dos Reis's all-too-brief career, isolationist persona, and death by his own hand. *O Desterrado* was also exhibited frequently during his lifetime and for the most part was critically acclaimed. It became Soares dos Reis's signature sculpture, whereas *Hiawatha* was not on public view and instead the *Farragut* quickly became Saint-Gaudens's most famous early work. At the time of the sculptor's death in 1907, *Hiawatha* was for a time unlocated to those planning his memorial exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art the following year. From 1886 until sometime after 1916, it was installed outdoors at the estate of Henry Hilton in Saratoga Springs, New York, where exposure to the elements caused permanent damage to the marble surface. It is perhaps ironic, after a circuitous course of ownership, that *Hiawatha* now is prominently on view in the Metropolitan Museum where Saint-Gaudens had once aspired it to be.

The respective states of sculpture in Portugal and the United States and the type of work that was produced during the late nineteenth century are also telling. With the demand for monuments commemorating the heroes and martyrs of the Civil War, American sculpture

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progressed quickly and almost by necessity from a stale Neoclassical idealism in marble to a vital Beaux-Arts naturalism in bronze. The high-water marks of Saint-Gaudens's career mark his own personal progression to a different aesthetic in the memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment (1884-97; Boston Common) and William Tecumseh Sherman monument (1892-1903; Grand Army Plaza, New York). *Hiawatha* by contrast was a necessary first step to advance Saint-Gaudens to the status of professional sculptor, the greatest American sculptor of his day. That distinguished chapter was far removed not only from *Hiawatha*, but also from the friendship he shared with Soares dos Reis in Paris and Rome.

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