

On 7th November 2015 Auction Team Breker of Cologne, Germany, will be offering an example of Gustave Vichy's rare smoking automaton "Lune Fin de Siècle" - one of the most iconic and surreal musical toys of the 19th century. "Lune Fin de Siècle" was described by Léo Claretie in his account of the French toy industry Les Jouets, Histoire-Fabrication, written in around 1894, as "a young man whose head is a full moon, bright and shining, balancing in clouds of smoke".



Figure 6: "Lune Fin de Siècle" by Vichy, circa 1891.
Estimate: 38,000 – 45,000 Euro / US\$ 42,000 – 50,000.

Vichy's German retailer Gustave Uhlig of Halle presented the piece in his 1894 catalogue as a romantic image, "a man in love", yet the automaton's title and the artfully crumbling pillar seem intended to imply a weariness with decadence and dandyism as the century wound to a close.