

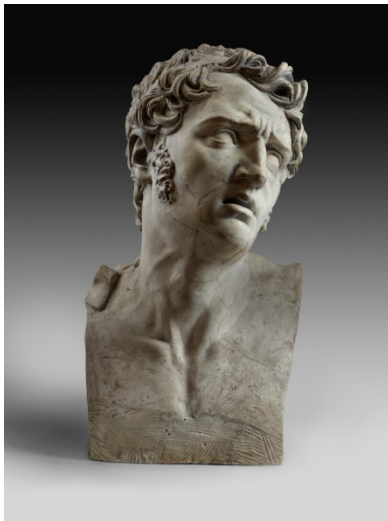


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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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***DAVID D'ANGERS:
MAKING THE MODERN MONUMENT***

**FIRST MAJOR U.S. EXHIBITION ON THE ARTIST
TO BE SHOWN EXCLUSIVELY AT THE FRICK COLLECTION**



Pierre-Jean David d'Angers, *La Douleur*, 1811, plaster, collection of Roberta J. M. Olson and Alexander B. V. Johnson

Lauded by Victor Hugo as the Michelangelo of Paris, Pierre-Jean David d'Angers (1788–1856) was one of the most important sculptors of the nineteenth century. An ardent Republican, experimental writer, respected teacher, and confidant to innumerable artists and intellectuals (from Balzac and Paganini to Goethe and Delacroix), he was both celebrated and controversial during his lifetime. Although today he is little known, David produced some of the most iconic portraits and ambitious public monuments of the Romantic era. The Frick's presentation—the first major exhibition devoted to the artist outside his native France—assembles forty-eight works on paper and in wax, terracotta, plaster, marble, and bronze, as well as rare nineteenth-century books of photographs and engravings; many of these have never before been exhibited. Together, they reveal the artist's quest to redefine the notion of a monument in a period marked by both intense

historicism and the ever-accelerating rhythms of modernity. The exhibition is organized by Emerson Bowyer, Guest Curator and former Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow, The Frick Collection. Support is generously provided by Antonio Weiss and Susannah Hunnewell, Margot and Jerry Bogert, Monika and Matthew McLennan, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Bowyer comments, "In many ways, the sculptural achievements of David d'Angers parallel those of Géricault and Delacroix in painting. His theoretical and aesthetic innovations greatly contributed to our modern obsessions



David d'Angers, *Head of a Woman in Profile*, c. 1830s, graphite on paper, The Cleveland Museum of Art

with memory and celebrity, and provide a timely reminder of the possibilities for politically-engaged artistic practice in the twenty-first century.”

ON THE BRINK OF ROMANTICISM

From an early age, David assisted in his father’s ornamental wood-carving workshop in Angers, a city located some two hundred miles southwest of Paris. In 1808, against the wishes of his father, he traveled to Paris to enroll in the *École des Beaux-Arts* as a student of the sculptor Philippe-Laurent Roland. There he attracted the attention of Jacques-Louis David, who invited him to study in his studio. In early 1811 David d’Angers won the *École’s* annual *tête d’expression* competition with *La Douleur*, an extraordinary bust representing pain (front page). It draws not only on antique precedents (the *Laocoön* and the *Dying Alexander*) but also on David’s close study of a posed model and dissected corpses. Rather than relying solely on facial features to convey emotion, the head, neck, and shoulders act in concert, each contributing meaningfully to the depiction of pain. The result is an innovative, hybrid figure that explores the relationship between classical idealism and the fleshy, pulsing reality of the living body. As such, it teeters on the brink of Romanticism.



David d’Angers, *Study after a Plaster Cast of the Apollo Belvedere*, ca. 1814, black chalk on laid paper, Collection Louise Grunwald

In September 1811 David took first place in the Prix de Rome competition, which enabled him to spend the next four years studying in Italy. There he frequented the studio of the great sculptor Antonio Canova, whose cool neoclassicism he admired but made little attempt to emulate. It was probably in Canova’s studio—filled to capacity with plasters of the master’s sculptures—that David first imagined a museum of his own work (in 1839 the Galerie David d’Angers would open within the museum of fine arts in his native city, the first permanent institutional exhibition space devoted to the oeuvre of a living artist. The study at left, possibly made during this period, depicts the head of the ancient full-length statue known as the *Apollo Belvedere*, revealing David’s idiosyncratic approach to canonical art of the past. By choosing to show only the god’s face, lying across the page like a fragmented artifact or death mask, David comments, perhaps, on the distance between the classical tradition and modern life.

ANIMATED HISTORY

Returning to Paris in 1816, David received his first major commission from the Restoration government. With the death of Roland earlier that same year, he inherited his teacher’s unexecuted contract for a colossal sculpture of Louis de Bourbon, the seventeenth-century French general known as the Grand Condé—an exceptional show of faith in a young and untested artist. David’s half-size plaster model for the statue made its debut at the Salon of 1817, although the thirteen-foot-tall marble (now destroyed) would not be completed for another decade. Breaking with the conventional repose and



David d’Angers, *The Grand Condé*, 1817, bronze, private collection

heroic nudity of neoclassicism, *The Grand Condé* presents dramatic action and a figure garbed in extravagant historical costume. The statue captures a pivotal episode from the life of the Condé, when the young general hurled his commander's baton at the enemy before leading his troops forward to reclaim it. David shows the instant immediately preceding the baton's release, when the Condé coils like a spring. With this powerful and complex stance, the sculptor enables us to imagine an almost cinematic unfolding of the action on a wider temporal continuum—both before and after the moment depicted. This is animated history. One contemporary viewer, David later recalled, likened the statue to a hurricane.

THE NOTION OF A MONUMENT: AN ANCHOR FOR THE PRESENT

The Grand Condé marks the entry of Romanticism into the history of sculpture. It also signals the beginning of David's lifelong investigation of the notion of a monument—those works of art erected in public places to preserve the memory of illustrious figures and important events. For David, monuments had the potential to reconcile the post-revolutionary disconnect between past and future and to firmly anchor the present. A deeply philosophical and socially engaged artist, David had little patience for the increasingly crowded harems of mythological nudes that jostled for attention each year at the Paris Salon. Sculptors, he repeatedly proclaimed, should be historians and archivists; and their works, documents whose testimony is offered up for the edification of future generations.

This was the age of pantheons. With the rise of secular individualism and the waning of royal power and prestige, monuments began to be erected to private citizens: *grands hommes* who had distinguished themselves in battle, politics, the arts, or the sciences. "I have the utmost fanaticism for all those who have done great things," David wrote in 1830, "even for men whose opinions differ from mine. I've always tried to pay them the tribute of my admiration with the means provided by my art." Throughout his career, the sculptor would enthusiastically—even obsessively—seek commissions for monuments to historical figures whom he admired while refusing to produce statues or portraits of those he considered unworthy.



David d'Angers, *Ann Buchan Robinson*, 1831, marble, Museum of the City of New York; Gift of J. Philip Benckard II, 1958

By the end of his life David had executed approximately thirty large-scale statues. They commemorate such diverse figures as Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press; dramatist Jean Racine; zoologist Georges Cuvier; and Thomas Jefferson. For the most part, they are located in the Parisian Père Lachaise cemetery and in provincial French cities but can also be found as far away as Missolonghi in Greece and Washington, D.C. Each was intended to educate and inspire. They drew upon nationalism and local pride and often became sites for civic ritual. David's busts and portrait medallions reached an even wider audience, with copies spreading across Europe, Britain, and America (at left is one of the first portrait busts by David to enter into an American collection). For the sculptor, the depiction of the human face was "the great career to which modern art is called." Although he was more

prolific than many other artists, his interest in portraiture was hardly exceptional. The early nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic rise in that genre, largely in response to the rise of the middle class. But unlike Ingres, for example, David never derided portraiture or claimed it was merely a means for financial enrichment. In fact, the majority of his busts—and all of his medallions—were not commissioned.

BELIEFS STEMMING FROM PHYSIOGNOMY AND PHRENOLOGY

David espoused the conventional notion that “it is on the face—reflector of the soul—that the passions are translated” but his understanding of the precise relationship between a person’s interior and exterior was heavily influenced by contemporary medical and scientific discourses. Especially important to him were the pseudosciences of physiognomy and phrenology, which posited that the human profile and cranial shape, respectively, provided visual clues for deciphering an individual’s character and mental capacities. David often exaggerated his sitters’ physical traits: for instance, in the portrait medallion of Alfred de Musset at right, the writer’s bulging forehead demonstrates his considerable intellectual abilities. Classical conceptions of ideal beauty have little



David d'Angers, *Alfred de Musset*, 1831, bronze, collection of Frances Beatty and Allen Adler

role in these portraits. “I prefer an ugly head that thinks profoundly,” David wrote in 1847, “to a head copied after the antique because [in the latter] the lines are so pure that it is petrified in its nullity.” At the same time, he was capable of producing exquisitely sensitive renderings of the human face. His *Portrait of a Woman in Profile* (front page) is a striking amalgam of classicism and closely observed nature. Delicate hatching indicates the contours of the face, with a subtle emphasis on the outline of the profile—particularly the bridge of the nose and the slightly parted lips. This contrasts with the more vigorous and boldly marked strokes of the sitter’s hair, with its upward serpentine swirl continued by the curve of the hair comb. David relished the depiction of hair, but while the coiffures of his female sitters often emphasize their architectural containment, those of his male subjects are more unruly and vital. Alfred de Musset’s hair seems to have a life of its own, surging forward like waves curling and crashing on a beach—a materialization of thought in motion.

MEDALLIONS: A PANTHEON OF FIVE HUNDRED CONTEMPORARIES



David d'Angers, *Eugène Delacroix*, 1828, bronze, private collection

Today David’s portrait medallions are the best known and most readily collected of his works. Over a period of roughly forty years, the sculptor produced a portable pantheon of some five hundred contemporaries. This hoard of (mostly) illustrious men and women was mass-produced by Parisian foundries, pirated and hawked on the streets of many European cities, and coveted by consumers of celebrity. Hardly a new medium in the nineteenth century, medals drew much of their authority and prestige from a supposed connection to numismatic conventions dating back to antiquity. Essentially an invention of the Renaissance, they were widely considered the most reliable testaments of the past.

Unlike their Renaissance counterparts, however, David’s examples are generally quite large (usually between four and

eight inches in diameter), single sided, and possess considerable relief; for this reason they are usually called medallions rather than medals.

With notable exceptions, David's medallions present portraits in profile, a standard composition that stems from ancient coins. Like so many other artists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, David valued the profile view for its ability to quickly and accurately describe an individual. As he explained, "I have always been moved by the sight of a profile. The profile is in relation to other beings; it will shun you, it doesn't see you. The [full] face shows you more traits, and is more difficult to analyze. The profile is unity." Although profile views typically evoke stillness and linearity, the high relief and expressive surfaces of David's medallions produce complex and constantly shifting light effects—the bronze discs seem to tremble within one's grasp. This effect is only heightened in examples such as the *Alfred de Musset*, where the figure is caught in a three-quarter view, emerging fluidly from its concave background.



David d'Angers (1788–1856), *Alexandre Dumas*, 1829, bronze, private collection



David d'Angers, *Christening Cup*, model 1835, bronze, collection of Pierre Bergé

David's portrait medallions blur the line between public monument and private *objet d'art*. A medal, affirmed the nineteenth-century art critic Alphonse Esquiros, "has the advantage of being a monument in circulation, and puts an idea in everyone's hands." This opinion was entirely in keeping with David's expansive notion of the public sphere. For example, the four vignettes decorating his *Christening Cup*, which was modeled in 1835 to commemorate his son's baptism, depict not simply the intimate relationship of children and their families but the process of obtaining citizenship, of joining the *national* family. Moving from breast feeding to the assumption of literacy skills, the iconographic progression concludes with a child being offered a sword and book by the civic mother, PATRIA. For David d'Angers, the

preservation and representation of the past was a crucial task for modern artists. Living in an age that venerated the idea of exceptional individuals and increasingly feared oblivion, he adapted the form and content of sculpted monuments to meet not only the necessities of his present but also those of an imagined future. Assembled in the Frick's galleries this fall will be a pantheon of famous faces, preserving the traits of moral and intellectual exemplarity as well as the stylistic and technical achievements of a sculptor whose constant innovation produced some of the most memorable images of the Romantic era.

ACCOMPANYING CATALOGUE



David d'Angers: Making the Modern Monument is accompanied by a catalogue with an essay of the same title by Guest Curator Emerson Bowyer. It is followed by an essay titled "David d'Angers and the Necessity of Writing" by authority Jacques de Caso (Professor Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley). Also included is the first English-language translation of an untitled short story written by David d'Angers in 1849. The softcover book (\$19.95; member price, \$17.95) of 112 pages with approximately 95 illustrations is available in the Museum Shop of The Frick Collection and may also be ordered through the Frick's Web site (www.frick.org) and by phone at 212.547.6848.

RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Lectures

Lectures are free, and no reservations are necessary. Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. Selected lectures will be webcast live and made available on our Web site and The Frick Collection's channel on FORA.tv. Please visit our Web site for details.

Date Wednesday, September 18, 6:00 p.m.
Speaker Emerson Bowyer, Guest Curator, The Frick Collection
Title *Sculpting History: David d'Angers and the Romantic Monument*

In a celebrated passage from his *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, Jules Michelet asserts that the revolution left no lasting monuments, only empty space. Pierre-Jean David d'Angers, arguably the greatest sculptor of the early nineteenth century, made it his life's work to fill that void. This lecture will follow David's attempts to reinvigorate and adapt the notion of a historical monument to the new social and political landscape of modernity.

Date Wednesday, October 9, 6:00 p.m.
Speaker Dorothy Johnson, Roy J. Carver Professor of Art History, The University of Iowa
Title *Vital Signs: The Art of David d'Angers*

Art historian Dorothy Johnson will explore the significance of David d'Angers's public and private works, from medallions and busts to statuettes of famous figures. In particular, she will consider the ways in which David read and interpreted the world and the individuals who helped shape it as visible signs of a hidden language of nature and culture.

Salon Evenings

*Salon Evenings are inspired by the special exhibition **David d'Angers: Making the Modern Monument**. Following the program, speakers will be joined in conversation by Emerson Bowyer, guest curator of the exhibition. Salon Evenings are free but advance online reservations are required; please visit our Web site to register.*

Date Wednesday, October 2, 6:00 p.m.
Speaker Dana Gooley, Associate Professor of Music, Brown University
Title *Music, Virtuosity, and the Stage of Romanticism*

The modern, Romantic virtuoso borrowed postures and gestures from sculpture, painting, and dramatic acting and raised the profile of performers in the public eye. This presentation will consider the ways in which performers such as Liszt, Chopin, and Paganini transformed the image of the virtuoso. Playing examples on the piano, Professor Gooley will show how virtuosos paid musical homage to, and created a pantheon of, composer-heroes.

Date Thursday, November 14, 6:00 p.m.
Speaker Barry Bergdoll, Meyer Schapiro Professor of Art History and Archaeology, Columbia University
Title *David d'Angers and the Architectural Stakes of Romantic History*

This lecture will examine David d'Angers's monumental commissions of the 1820s and 1830s in relation to the Bourbon Restoration, the July Monarchy, and the politics of public memory. It also will consider the sculptor's relationship to the period's architects and their collaborative work on the transformation of urban space in Paris.

Seminar

Frick seminars provide unparalleled access to works of art and encourage thought-provoking discussion with experts in their fields. Sessions are held when the galleries are closed to the public and are limited to twenty participants. Advance registration is required; register online or by calling 212.547.0704. \$100 (\$90 for Members)

Date Tuesday, October 29, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Speakers Emerson Bowyer, Guest Curator, The Frick Collection, and Jonathan Kagan, collector
Title *The Romantic Medallion: Collecting David d'Angers's Portraits*

David d'Angers is often credited with the nineteenth-century revival of cast bronze portrait medallions. By the end of his life, the sculptor had created an immensely popular portable pantheon of some five hundred medallions depicting the celebrities of his day, from Géricault and Goethe to George Sand and Paganini. This seminar will introduce these objects and discuss their creation, reproduction, and distribution. It will also offer the rare opportunity to examine a group of medallions from a New York private collection and to consider issues related to connoisseurship and collecting.

Course: The Frick Connection

For college students and recent graduates under age 39. Courses are free with a \$25 student membership or an individual membership for recent graduates. Advance online registration is required; please visit our Web site.

Dates Three-part course: Wednesdays, October 30, November 6, and November 13, 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.
Speaker Emerson Bowyer, Guest Curator, The Frick Collection
Title *David d'Angers and the Cult of Fame*

In this three-part course, students will be introduced to the ambitious yet understudied French sculptor Pierre-Jean David d'Angers, the subject of the Frick's special exhibition. David produced hundreds of portraits of the *grands hommes* of his day, and his medals, portrait busts, bas-reliefs, and statuary of noteworthy individuals will be studied from the perspectives of history and representation, with particular emphasis on the cult of fame.

BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: 212.288.0700

Web site: www.frick.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

Where: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

Hours: open six days a week: 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Tuesdays through Saturdays; 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on Lincoln's Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day

Admission: \$20; senior citizens \$15; students \$10; "pay what you wish" on Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection.
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Subway: #6 local (on Lexington Avenue) to 68th Street station; **Bus:** M1, M2, M3, and M4 southbound on Fifth Avenue to 72nd Street and northbound on Madison Avenue to 70th Street

Tour Information: included in the price of admission is an Acoustiguide Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

Museum Shop: the shop is open the same days as the Museum, closing fifteen minutes before the institution.

Group Admission for the Permanent Collection: Please call 212.288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

Public Programs: A calendar of events is published regularly and all content is available online.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Head of Media Relations & Marketing or Alexis Light, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing

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