

# PRESS RELEASE

from

## THE FRICK COLLECTION

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**FRICK IS THE EXCLUSIVE VENUE FOR  
FIRST MONOGRAPHIC RICCIO EXHIBITION**

### ***ANDREA RICCIO: RENAISSANCE MASTER OF BRONZE***

October 15, 2008, through January 18, 2009



Andrea Riccio (1470–1532), *The Shouting Horseman*, c. 1510–15, bronze, 33.0 cm high, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

This autumn, The Frick Collection presents the first monographic exhibition dedicated to Andrea Riccio (1470–1532), one of the greatest—and least-known—bronze masters of the Renaissance. Though the artist was celebrated in the sixteenth century as a “sovereign master of bronze” and is acknowledged today as one of the most sublimely creative sculptors of the Italian Renaissance, Riccio’s achievement is still not widely recognized or generally understood. His oeuvre remains the province of specialists, and the majority of his works are scattered across museum collections, where they are viewed in isolation. Even Riccio’s greatest and largest commission, the extraordinary *Paschal*

*Candelabrum*, stands alone, distantly shrouded in the shadowed choir of the

Basilica of Saint Anthony in Padua. The long-overdue exhibition and publication aim to introduce Riccio’s dramatically beautiful work to the general and scholarly public by presenting for fresh examination a significant portion of his known production. *Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze* includes all the objects attributed to him that reside in public and private collections in the United States and features important examples from institutions across Europe, such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Musée du Louvre, Paris; the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; and the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. The exhibition brings together thirty of the sculptor’s rare autograph bronzes, two of his fragmentary, life-size terracottas, and a selection of statuettes associated with his workshop. The sculptures span every phase of Riccio’s career and are representative of the genres in which he worked: figurative statuettes, functional bronzes, and narrative reliefs. The exhibition is presented exclusively at The Frick Collection, along with a range of educational programs and a richly illustrated and scholarly catalogue. The exhibition is organized by the Frick’s Curator and sculpture and

Renaissance specialist **Denise Allen**, with **Peta Motture**, Senior Curator of Sculpture and Project Chief Curator of the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Major funding has been provided by The Christian Humann Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Phipps Jr., and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. Additional support has been generously provided by Mr. and Mrs. Walter A. Eberstadt, Mr. and Mrs. J. Tomilson Hill, Peter P. Marino, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Hester Diamond, and The Peter Jay Sharp Foundation. The project is also supported, in part, by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published by The Frick Collection in association with Philip Wilson Publishers, London, and was made possible by the generous support of the Robert Lehman Foundation and the Thaw Charitable Trust.



Andrea Riccio (1470–1532), *Virgin and Child*, c. 1520–30, terracotta with traces of polychromy, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Comments lead curator Denise Allen, “Andrea Riccio is one of the last remaining great Renaissance artists whose oeuvre heretofore has awaited comprehensive modern study. It has been a rare privilege and something of an adventure to organize the first monographic exhibition dedicated to this magnificent sculptor. The generous international collaboration among museum institutions, curators, and scholars, that was intrinsic to the development of the exhibition and its catalogue, allows us to present a truly fresh view of Riccio as a dynamic contributor to Italian Renaissance culture—today more readily associated with the achievements of his contemporaries: Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. The exhibition catalogue is intended to provide an introduction to Riccio’s life and work and to function as a platform for future scholarship.”

## **RICCIO: SCHOLAR, POET, AND RHETORICIAN OF BRONZE**

Riccio was born Andrea Briosco but gained his nickname on account of his curly hair (*riccio* means curly in Italian). He worked in Padua at a time when the city was renowned throughout Europe; its Basilica of Saint Anthony was a site of pilgrimage, and its university was the most important center of Aristotelian studies on the Continent. In Padua, bronze sculptors enjoyed high status because they practiced an art that was considered equivalent to scholarly pursuits. Riccio thus became closely acquainted with Padua’s religious and intellectual leaders. He studied ancient and contemporary works of art in their private collections and probably learned much about antiquity in discussions with them. His scholarly patrons and friends, in turn, esteemed Riccio for his ability to realize their ideas about the classical past in bronze.

In 1504, when Riccio was beginning his career, the humanist Pomponius Gauricus published *De Sculptura*, a landmark Renaissance treatise that focuses primarily on bronze. Gauricus’s text, written while he was studying at

the University of Padua, presented sculpture from a scholar's perspective. In it, he discussed the proud tradition of bronze statuary from antiquity to his own day, described its classical subject matter, its process of design by means of modeling, and its complex casting techniques. He also proposed the radical idea that modeling demands as much of a person's inventive powers as did writing and singled out Riccio from contemporary Paduan artists, praising his gifts as a modeler and naming him as a friend. Gaucicus believed that he and Riccio shared similar goals, and to him, Riccio was a scholar, poet, and rhetorician—not of words, but of bronze. Gaucicus's *De Sculptura* reflects the attitude of Riccio's erudite patrons in the Veneto: their enthusiastic engagement with bronze sculpture, their sophisticated understanding of its techniques, and their willingness to equate their literary skills with the artistic ones of a sculptor.

## INSPIRATION FOR AN EXHIBITION

The work that inspired this exhibition is small, ornate, mysterious, and beautiful: it is the Frick's *Oil Lamp*, a masterpiece in a collection famous for its Renaissance bronzes. The *Oil Lamp* exemplifies the high standards of Henry Clay Frick, who demanded "first pick" of the small bronzes that dealer Joseph Duveen offered him from J. Pierpont Morgan's estate. Morgan's bronze collection—which included this lamp—had become famous after being on view at both the Victoria and Albert Museum and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and was commemorated in 1910 with a sumptuously illustrated catalogue by Wilhelm von Bode, an eminent scholar of Italian Renaissance sculpture. In the catalogue, Bode attributed the magnificent lamp to Andrea Riccio.



Andrea Riccio (1470–1532), *Oil Lamp*, c. 1516–24, bronze, The Frick Collection, New York

The *Oil Lamp* is one of only five such objects largely accepted as by Riccio, and it encapsulates Riccio's ability to fulfill his patrons' ideals regarding bronze sculpture. Although the original owner of the *Oil Lamp* is unknown, the work's provenance and its Aristotelian symbolism suggest that he was Paduan. Riccio modeled the lamp to stand independently, balancing its long, heavy body on a delicate base that is improbably poised on four tiny, upturned scrolls. The composition elegantly tests the limits of bronze's ability to support itself. When the lamp was lit, its flickering flame would have seemed to animate the long tendrils curling out around it. Each vine emerges from a relief of a winged harpy or male mask, fantastic hybrid creatures that were Renaissance emblems of imagination and creativity. The Frick *Oil Lamp* thus allies the notion of *ingenio* (creative genius) with Aristotle's concept of the *pneuma*, the animating spark that engenders life. As a work of art, it celebrates Riccio's inventive genius and mastery over bronze. The *Oil Lamp* was also a physical embodiment of the past. In material form and function it evoked Roman antiquity, thereby linking the Paduan scholar who commissioned it to the great Roman thinkers and orators of the Republic and Empire. Set on a desk in a private study, the *Oil Lamp* would have symbolized its owner's literary genius, illuminating and inspiring him as he read, pondered works of art, and wrote.

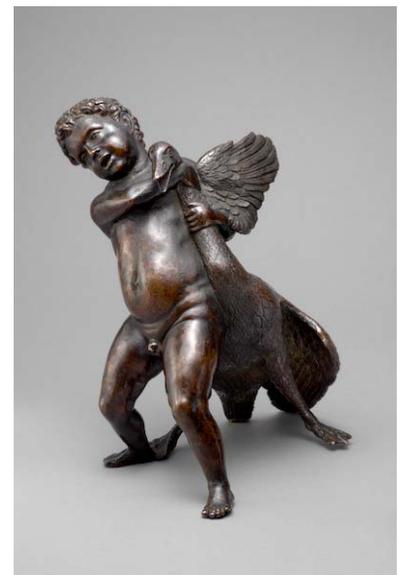
## A GIFT FOR PORTRAYING ACTION AND EMOTIONS



Andrea Riccio (1470–1532), *Shepherd with Syrinx*, date unknown, bronze, Musée du Louvre, Paris

Riccio's figurative bronzes are much simpler in form than his fantastic oil lamps, but they are no less rich in meaning. Riccio often based his compositions on classical literary themes. This practice underscores how Riccio responded to his erudite contemporaries' desire "to see what we read about," as one of them memorably stated. The *Shepherd with Syrinx* has no exact precedent in ancient marble sculpture or relief. The figure's idealized proportions and unselfconscious nudity capture the ethos of classical art without directly quoting it. The syrinx (panpipes) held in the lowered right hand suggests that the figure is a shepherd. Riccio's pensive nude recalls Virgil's pastoral poems in which shepherds tend their flocks and play their pipes in the mythic land of Arcadia. Their youthful beauty and innocence symbolized mankind's purity of body and mind before being corrupted by civilization. The *Shepherd with Syrinx* captures not only the subject, but also the hushed elegiac mood of Virgil's poetic world: he has set aside his pipes and looks up expectantly, as if listening for the sylvan music of Arcadia. It also demonstrates Riccio's gift for portraying a figure's actions and emotional state in orchestrated unity. An even more dramatic example of this talent is *The Shouting Horseman* (front page). Here, Riccio explores the classical theme of the partnership between rider and horse. The startled warrior turns and shouts, while his alert horse readies itself for the next command. Riccio's reversal of the normal relationship between horse and rider sets his work apart from large-scale equestrian statuary in which man is always portrayed in perfect control. The precedents for the theme of the *The Shouting Horseman* are found both in the art of Leonardo da Vinci and in classical literature. In the *Aeneid*, for example, Virgil vividly described the camaraderie between warriors and their horses. In his treatise on horsemanship, the Greek author Xenophon praised the ability of a horse to maintain its spirited self-possession and protect its rider during the furor of battle.

In the intimate confines of the scholar's study, small bronzes such as Riccio's *Shepherd with Syrinx* and *The Shouting Horseman* were handled and enjoyed over long, repeated viewings. Most were intended to evoke a variety of poetic, religious, and historical meanings for owners who were fully conversant with a broad range of ancient literature. Some statuettes, however, were designed to delight by recalling specific classical sources. One such masterpiece, the *Boy with a Goose*, is a bronze reduction of a large-scale ancient marble statue, probably known to Riccio through drawings. Though it is Riccio's only known work based on a surviving antique, it is no mere reproduction. Riccio imaginatively completed the famous antique sculpture by fashioning the boy's head, which was missing from the ancient marble. The boy happily clutches the goose, unaware that he grasps the squawking bird too tightly. Riccio's



Andrea Riccio (1470–1532), *Boy with a Goose*, c. 1515–20, bronze, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

perceptive portrayal of the mischievous child adds engaging emotional resonance to a composition that features the figures' dramatic pinwheeling movement in the round. Riccio may have turned to this subject because the *Boy with a Goose* was one of the few surviving ancient sculptures that his patrons would have known from reading classical texts such as Pliny's *Natural History*. Identifying a surviving ancient statue with its description in a classical text generated tremendous excitement during the Renaissance. Scholars and collectors were also curious about what the lost classical masterpieces discussed by Pliny may have looked like. Riccio satisfied this curiosity by creating the *Strigil Bearer*, a statuette of an athlete grooming himself with oil after exercise, also featured in the exhibition. In his hand he holds a strigil, a curved instrument used in ancient Rome and Greece to scrape the skin after bathing. The idealized male nude is Riccio's re-creation in miniature of a famous lost antique statue described by Pliny, which had been made by the foremost ancient master of bronze, Lysippus. Riccio was celebrated as a modern Lysippus for statuettes such as this, which expressed his imaginative ability to endow with sculpted form the fragmentary heritage of the classical past.

## MASTERY OF A RANGE OF CASTING TECHNIQUES INDICATED BY NEW RESEARCH FOR THIS EXHIBITION

Riccio was as interested in investigating bronze techniques as he was in exploring new subjects. Until recently, it was generally assumed that Riccio used the traditional direct-casting method, which produced only one bronze cast of his original wax model. However, technical research undertaken for the Frick exhibition suggests that Riccio experimented with diverse casting methods. Sometimes he directly cast his wax models to produce unique bronzes. At other times, he used an indirect casting method to create multiple bronze versions. The *Strigil Bearer*, for example, exists in another version known as the *Warrior*, a figure that originally held a shield in his upraised arm and a sword in his lowered hand. Although both bronzes derive from the same wax model, their different subjects and handling indicate that Riccio made each to accommodate the taste of an individual patron. The *Warrior's*

features and musculature are more broadly modeled than those of the *Strigil Bearer*, and the surface of the statuette is rougher. The differences between the two works are the result of Riccio's ability to model in wax on a diminutive scale and then preserve the nuances of the wax in bronze. The statuettes' modeling is consonant with their theme and mood. In the *Warrior*, Riccio depicts the aggressive power of the male nude engaged in combative action, while in the *Strigil Bearer* he emphasizes the graceful elegance of the nude's pose. Riccio's mastery of a range of casting techniques afforded him great freedom to model his wax compositions, for he knew that he could make molten bronze follow the path of his imagination. In his *Saint Martin and the Beggar*, the sculptor daringly exploits the tensile strength of bronze to execute a dramatic composition that could not have been realized so freely in marble or terracotta. In this relief,



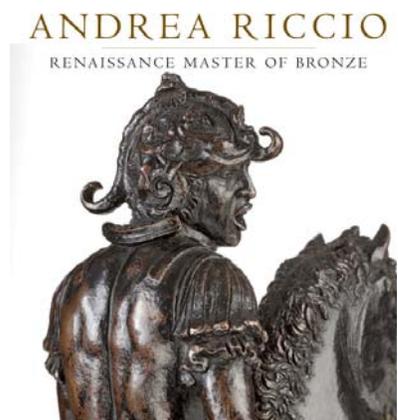
Andrea Riccio (1470–1532), *Saint Martin and the Beggar*, 1513–20, bronze, Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro, Venice

created as the principal image for an altar in the Church of Santa Maria dei Servi, Venice, Riccio depicts Martin performing his first saintly act of cutting his cloak to clothe a beggar. Riccio renders the figures in extraordinarily high relief to generate a dynamic composition in three dimensions. Martin sharply twists to meet the beggar's upturned gaze. He extends his cloak straight out over his sword, past the limits of the relief's frame. This startling spacial transgression would have added emotional drama to devotional contemplation of Martin's pious act. Every detail is crisply captured in this tour de force of bronze casting, from the extravagant pagan decoration on Martin's saddle and scabbard to the nuanced expressions on the men's faces. This, perhaps the most beautiful of Riccio's reliefs, reminds us that the sculptor and his patrons' celebration of the classical past embraced their own Christian heritage. Riccio depicts Martin with historical accuracy as the Roman imperial officer that he was before his conversion, endowing him with a refined, classical beauty to reflect the spiritual grace that impelled him to sainthood. The ability to grant the classical past vivid relevance was one of Riccio's greatest contributions to Renaissance bronze sculpture. For a few short months, the range of Riccio's achievement will be on view at The Frick Collection for visitors to study, appreciate, and enjoy.

## **MUCH-NEEDED CATALOGUE: AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION FEATURING NEW PHOTOGRAPHY**

*Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze* is accompanied by a scholarly catalogue in English published by The Frick Collection in association with Philip Wilson Publishers, London. The last full-scale monograph on the artist was published in 1927, and, therefore, an updated and color-illustrated resource is very much needed. The Frick's catalogue includes essays on Riccio's life and career and on the small bronze as an art form. It also features an unprecedented technical study of Riccio's casting technique. The book is authored by the exhibition's curator, Denise Allen, along with Peta Motture, as well as other leading scholars in the fields of

Renaissance sculpture and bronze technique: Richard Stone, Senior Museum Conservator, Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Volker Krahn, Chief Curator, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; and Davide Banzato, Director, Musei Civici di Padova. The catalogue features detailed scholarly entries for each sculpture by most of the essayists listed above in addition to several other specialists, including Claudia Kryza-Gersch, Curator of Renaissance Sculpture, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; Eike D. Schmidt, Associate Curator of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Jeremy Warren, Assistant Director and Head of Collections, The Wallace Collection, London; C. D. Dickerson, Associate Curator of European Art, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth; Philippe Malgouyres, Curator, Département des objets d'art, Musée du Louvre; Franca Pellegrini, Curator at the Museo d'Arte Medievale e Moderna di Padova; and Dimitrios Zikos of the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.



Of particular importance is the fact that nearly all of the works featured in the exhibition and book have been rephotographed in color for this project. As such, this volume offers an expansive visual resource on the artist, the likes of which has never existed. The catalogue (345 pages, 240 color illustrations, softcover: \$49.95 and hardcover \$80) is available this fall in the Museum Shop, on the institution's Web site ([www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org)), and by phone (212) 288-0700.

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**This fall, the Frick's Curatorial and Education Departments jointly offer a series of revamped and expanded programs, an unprecedented number of which accompany this exhibition. For a full listing of the institution's offerings, visit [www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org).**

## LECTURES

**Date:** Wednesday, October 15, 2008, 6:00 p.m.  
**Speaker:** Peta Motture, Senior Curator of Sculpture, Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
**Title:** *Riccio's Statuettes: Making and Meaning*

Andrea Riccio designed vibrant bronze statuettes intended to be handled and admired up close. Unlike his pieces made for religious settings, virtually nothing is known of the circumstances surrounding the statuettes' creation or for whom they were made. This talk, presented by the co-curator of *Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze*, will explore how Riccio's extraordinary understanding of his materials and techniques played a key role in his design process, speculating on the impact of the prevailing intellectual climate in the creation of these magnificent works of art. Presentation of this lecture is made possible by the Italian Cultural Institute of New York. Free with admission; seating is limited and unreserved.

**Date:** Wednesday, November 12, 2008, 6:00 p.m.  
**Speaker:** Alexander Nagel, Professor of Renaissance Art History, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts  
**Title:** *Avatars of the Golden Calf in the Work of Andrea Riccio*

Two of Riccio's bronzes, created for Padua's most sacred sites, pose questions of religious succession by improbably combining pagan, Jewish, and Christian imagery. One—a statue of Moses, whose figure is melded with the imagery of the Greco-Egyptian God Zeus Ammon—is part of the Frick's current special exhibition. The other—a relief showing an idol-like statue of Christ receiving the ritual sacrifice of a lamb—remains in the Basilica of Saint Anthony in Padua. This lecture proposes that the unresolvable nature of these works registers unresolved ambivalence about the significance of bronze sculpture—its history, meanings, and role in religion. Presentation of this lecture is made possible by the Italian Cultural Institute of New York. Free with admission; seating is limited and unreserved.

**Date:** Wednesday, December 10, 2008, 6:00 p.m.  
**Speaker:** Denise Allen, Curator, The Frick Collection  
**Title:** *Andrea Riccio: A Sculptor and an Exhibition*

Although specialists have long admired Andrea Riccio as one of the greatest High Renaissance masters of bronze, the first monographic exhibition dedicated to the sculptor has presented particular challenges. The attribution of many of his works was still debated, his symbolic language was considered impenetrable, his casting technique had

not been studied, and the last full-scale treatment of his art dated to 1927. The Frick's current special exhibition has changed all this in surprising ways. Denise Allen, co-curator of the exhibition, will present a behind-the-scenes look at how researching and planning the Riccio show led to a new understanding of this brilliant sculptor. Free with admission; seating is limited and unreserved.

## **SEMINAR: *THE SCULPTURE OF RICCIO***

**Course of four consecutive Thursdays: October 16, 23, 30, and November 6; 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Fee: \$400; Reservations are required and may be made by emailing [seminars@frick.org](mailto:seminars@frick.org)**

Over the course of four Thursdays, Curator Denise Allen explores issues of connoisseurship in the galleries and in the conservation studio, and discusses the technical achievements, unusual symbolism, and moving depiction of human form in bronze and terracotta, as seen in masterworks by Riccio. The seminar sessions will be offered, in part, in the special exhibition galleries, allowing participants to view the objects as they are being discussed.

## **GALLERY TALKS IN SPECIAL EXHIBITION GALLERIES**

Introductory talks on the sculpture of Andrea Riccio are offered by Curator Denise Allen on four Saturdays during the run of the exhibiton: November 1 and 15, December 13, and January 10. Programs start at 11:00 a.m. and take place in the special exhibition galleries.

Free with museum admission; reservations are required and may be made by emailing [gallerytalks@frick.org](mailto:gallerytalks@frick.org)

## **BASIC INFORMATION**

**General Information Phone:** (212) 288-0700

**Website:** [www.frick.org](http://www.frick.org)

**E-mail:** [info@frick.org](mailto:info@frick.org)

**Where:** 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue.

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

**Admission:** \$15; senior citizens \$10; students \$5; "pay as you wish" on Sundays from 11am to 1pm

**PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection, and those under sixteen must be accompanied by an adult.**

**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, provided by Acoustiguide. 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 Visits:** Please call (212) 288-0700 for details and to make reservations.

**Public Programs:** A calendar of events is published regularly and is available upon request.

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

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