



# PRESS RELEASE

from

## THE FRICK COLLECTION

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### FRICK ACQUIRES RARE VASE BY LUIGI VALADIER, EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROMAN SILVERSMITH

### PURCHASE INSPIRED BY MAJOR FALL 2018 EXHIBITION, NEXT SHOW IN A SERIES ON DECORATIVE ARTISTS



Luigi Valadier (1726–1785), *Vase*, ca. 1770s, *Rosso Appennino* marble and gilt silver, 8 3/4 x 5 13/16 x 3 13/16 inches, The Frick Collection; photo: Michael Bodycomb

Luigi Valadier was the preeminent silversmith in Rome during the second half of the eighteenth century. His work was admired by popes, royalty, and aristocrats throughout Europe. His oeuvre will be the subject of an upcoming monographic exhibition and publication at The Frick Collection, *Luigi Valadier: Splendor in Eighteenth-Century Rome* (October 31, 2018, through January 20, 2019). Inspired by this project—the second in a series of much-needed exhibitions to focus on decorative artists who deserve fresh scholarship—the museum has purchased a unique vase by the artist. The vase, believed to be a special commission, is the only known marble example attributed to Valadier that was executed with gilt-silver mounts, rather than his more typical gilt bronze. The marble used for the vase is also unusual, a rarely used blood-red variety identified as *Rosso Appennino*. The vase is currently on view in the museum’s Library gallery.

The design of the vase—an ovoid body on a square base, with lanceolate leaves at the bottom and two lion heads with rings in their jaws at the neck—appears in a number of Valadier drawings: two sheets in the Museo Napoleonico, Rome, and one in the Museo di Roma. They all illustrate marble or alabaster vases to be used for flowers or as candlesticks, with lion heads on their sides. Four vases in alabaster following this design were given by the Roman senator Abbondio Rezzonico to Cardinal Giuseppe Doria Pamphilj and are still preserved in the family palace in Rome. One of the drawings in the Museo Napoleonico shows measurements in Genoese *palmi*, suggesting that this specific



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design was made for the work done about 1779, at Palazzo Spinola in Genoa, by the French architect Charles de Wailly, who was collaborating with Valadier at the time.

Professor Alvar González-Palacios, the world's expert on Valadier and the curator of the Frick's upcoming exhibition, believes that the marble vase may have been carved by Francesco Antonio Franzoni (1734–1818), a sculptor known for producing precious objects, often in bizarre and uncommon materials. The precious materials used for this vase—*Rosso Appennino* marble and gilt silver—and the quality of the chasing of the metal suggest that it was a private commission for an important aristocrat. The top, unlike the lids of other vases of similar design by Valadier, is not detachable, indicating that the vase was ornamental rather than utilitarian. The finial also differs from the other vases depicted in the drawings by Valadier; whereas the other finials are pine cones, the finial of the Frick vase is an acorn. Professor González-Palacios suggests that this may have heraldic significance and allude to one of Rome's most prominent aristocratic families, the Chigi, whose coat of arms included oak branches and acorns. Prince Sigismondo Chigi (1736–1793) was one of Valadier's most important patrons in the 1770s and early 1780s.

Sometime after 1716, Valadier's father, André, moved from Avignon, in the south of France, to Rome, where he established a silversmith workshop that became one of the best known in the city. Luigi inherited his father's business in 1759, and his unsurpassed technical expertise combined with his aesthetic taste led to a successful career marked by the production of extraordinary objects in gold, silver, and bronze. Antique sculptures, cameos, architectural details, and ruins of Roman monuments served as the inspiration for his imaginative candelabra, tableware, church altars, and centerpieces. The financial state of the Valadier workshop, however, was often precarious, and it seems the artist suffered as a result of commissions that were never paid. He committed suicide in 1785, drowning himself in the Tiber, presumably because of the debts he had accumulated.

Comments Xavier F. Salomon, Peter Jay Sharp Chief Curator, "An exceptional object by Valadier, this vase is an excellent example of the silversmith's art and a superb object to represent him at The Frick Collection. We are thrilled to add it to our holdings, as it perfectly complements our works by Pierre Gouthière, Valadier's contemporary in France. It provides a wonderful introduction to New Yorkers as a part of the forthcoming exhibition."

## **BASIC INFORMATION**

**General Information Phone:** 212.288.0700

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

**Building project:** [www.frickfuture.org](http://www.frickfuture.org)

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

**App:** [frick.org/app](http://frick.org/app)

**Museum address:** 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:** \$22; senior citizens \$17; students \$12; Pay-what-you-wish hours on Wednesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. **PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS:** Children under ten are not admitted to the museum

**First Fridays:** Museum admission and gallery programs are free from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on the first Friday evening of the month (except January and September)

**Subway:** #6 local to 68th Street station; #Q to 72nd 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 museum admission is an Acoustiguide Audio Tour of the permanent collection. The tour is offered in six languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

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

**Group Museum Visits:** Please call 212.288.0700 for details and to make reservations.

**Public Programs:** A calendar of events is available online

**Library address:** 10 East 71st Street, near Fifth Avenue

**Hours:** [www.frick.org/visit/library/hours](http://www.frick.org/visit/library/hours)

**Admission:** Open to the public free of charge

**# 327, May 10, 2018**

For further press information, please contact Media Relations & Marketing; Phone: 212.547.0710; E-mail: [mediarelations@frick.org](mailto:mediarelations@frick.org)