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THE FRICK COLLECTION

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MEDIA ALERT

**FOLLOWING ACCLAIMED GOUTHIÈRE EXHIBITION,
FRICK ORGANIZES NEXT IN A SERIES WITH A
GROUND-BREAKING PROJECT ON ROMAN ARTIST**

LUIGI VALADIER: SPLENDOR IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

October 31, 2018, through January 20, 2019



Luigi Valadier, *Herma with Bacchus for the Palazzo Borghese*, alabaster and glazed bronze, traces of gilding, 1773, height: 68 7/8 inches (175 cm), Galleria Borghese, Rome; photo: Mauro Magliani

Of the many artists who flourished in Rome during the eighteenth century, the silversmith Luigi Valadier (1726–1785) was among those particularly admired by popes, royalty, and aristocrats. Luigi was born in Rome in 1726, about six years after his parents emigrated from France. His father, Andrea, established a silversmith workshop that quickly captured the attention of the wealthiest Roman aristocrats. Heir to his father’s business, Luigi had an unsurpassed technical expertise, which, combined with his avant-garde aesthetic, resulted in extraordinary works in silver and bronze. Well aware of the evolution of artistic taste throughout Europe, he had an impressive ability to reframe examples of ancient Roman art and



Luigi Valadier, *Herma with Bacchus for the Palazzo Borghese* (detail), alabaster and glazed bronze, traces of gilding, 1773, height: 68 7/8 inches (175 cm), Galleria Borghese, Rome; photo: Mauro Magliani

architecture within the context of contemporary Rome. Sculptures in private collections, cameos, architectural details, and ruins of ancient monuments

served as his inspiration for candelabra, tableware, altars, and centerpieces in both silver and bronze. Luigi's fame and influence spread beyond the borders of Italy, and he received commissions from patrons in France, England, and Spain. He was, however, burdened by debts for commissions undertaken but never paid for, and, in 1785, he committed suicide, drowning himself in the Tiber. Following this tragic event, his workshop passed to his son Giuseppe.

Illustrating the uncommon versatility of Luigi Valadier, who produced everything from large altar pieces to intricate works of jewelry, the Frick's fall 2018/winter 2019 exhibition will include more than sixty works carefully selected from the vast production of the Valadier workshop. Preparatory drawings of both sacred and profane subjects will be displayed alongside finished works. One of the highlights of the exhibition will be a full centerpiece, or *deser* (from the Italianization of the French word *dessert*), created around 1778 for the Bali de Breteuil, Ambassador of the Order of Malta to Rome. Atop a gilt-bronze base inlaid with precious stones, Valadier has re-created temples, triumphal arches, columns, and other miniature representations of ancient Roman monuments. The multiple elements of the Breteuil *deser* are today separated between two museums in Madrid (the Museo Arqueológico Nacional and the Palacio Real), but will be reunited for this special exhibition at the Frick. It will therefore be possible to admire this masterwork in its entirety, as nobles and cardinals did in 1778, when it was displayed for a few days in Valadier's workshop in a candle-lit room specially decorated for the occasion.

The exhibition will also feature finely worked silver plates, tureens, salt cellars, and other pieces of tableware. The juxtaposition of these individual works with the complete centerpiece will illustrate the evolution of the Valadier workshop. While the earliest pieces presented are distinctly in the Baroque style, Valadier's work becomes more refined in the Rococo style, before becoming neoclassical by the late-eighteenth century. The monochrome silver objects will be contrasted with polychrome works in gilt-bronze, marble, and precious stones, such as the Egyptian clock, a table from Villa Borghese, and extraordinary mounts for two antique cameos once in the Vatican collections and now at the Musée du Louvre.

One section of the exhibition will be devoted to reproductions in bronze of famous antique sculptures in Roman collections, such as the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Ares Ludovisi*.

Luigi Valadier: Splendor in Eighteenth-Century Rome is co-curated by Professor Alvar González-Palacios, considered the world's authority on Valadier, and Xavier F. Salomon, Peter Jay Sharp Chief

Curator of The Frick Collection. It is part of a series of monographic exhibitions that focus on remarkable decorative arts artists and follows the ground-breaking and critically acclaimed *Pierre Gouthière: Virtuoso Gilder at the French Court*, organized by the Frick, where it was on view in fall 2016 before traveling to the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris, in spring 2017.

Accompanying the exhibition will be the first complete monograph on Luigi Valadier. Written by González-Palacios, the book will shed new light on the provenance and dating of some works. It also identifies the exact roles performed inside the workshop by Andrea, Luigi, and Giuseppe Valadier, tracing the genesis of inventions and the authorship of models. The monograph also details the Valadier family's collaborations with other workshops and artists. Typically, works in various materials such as bronze, marble, and precious stones were realized not by one person but by many artisans working together. The decoration of both sacred and private buildings likewise involved outside artisans and architects. This will be the only comprehensive publication on Valadier in English and, lavishly illustrated, it will feature much-needed new photography.

Together, the monograph and exhibition at the Frick will reconstruct the artistic endeavors of one of the most important silversmith families, shedding new light on the cultural life of Rome and, more broadly, Europe, during the eighteenth century. Following the presentation of this show in New York, a related exhibition will be on view later in 2019 at the Galleria Borghese, Rome.

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INTERACT

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BASIC INFORMATION

General Information Phone: 212.288.0700

Web site: www.frick.org

Building project: www.frickfuture.org

E-mail: info@frick.org

App: frick.org/app

Museum entrance: 1 East 70th Street, near Fifth Avenue

Library entrance: 10 East 71st Street

Museum 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

Library Hours: www.frick.org/visit/library/hours

Museum Admission: \$22; senior citizens \$17; students \$12; "pay what you wish" on Wednesdays from 2 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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

Library: open to the public and free of charge

PLEASE NOTE TO YOUR READERS: Children under ten are not admitted to the Collection

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 published regularly and is available upon request.

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For further press information, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Associate Director of Media Relations & Marketing
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