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from
THE FRICK COLLECTION

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MEDIA ALERT: THE FRICK COLLECTION ORGANIZING FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION ON EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROYAL GILDER GOUTHÈRE

**PIERRE GOUTHÈRE:
VIRTUOSO GILDER AT THE FRENCH COURT**

November 16, 2016, through February 19, 2017



Bronzes by Pierre Gouthière, designed by Jean-François-Thérèse Chalgrin and François-Joseph Bélanger, *Side Table* (detail), French, Paris, 1781, marble and gilt bronze, The Frick Collection, New York; photo: Michael Bodycomb

The Frick Collection is organizing the first exhibition to focus on Pierre Gouthière (1732–1813), the great French bronze chaser and gilder who worked for Louis XV and Louis XVI. The exhibition will shed new light on the artist's production, life, and workshop through the presentation of twenty-one objects from public and private collections. Attributed with certainty to Gouthière, these works include clocks, vases, firedogs, wall lights, and mounts for Chinese porcelain and hard-stone vases. The exhibition is organized by Charlotte Vignon, Curator of

Decorative Arts, The Frick Collection. Based on new art historical and technical research, the exhibition and catalogue promise to transform our understanding of one of the greatest artists of eighteenth-century France. It is supported by the Michel David-Weill Foundation; the Selz Foundation; and two anonymous donors, one in memory of Melvin R. Seiden; with additional contributions from Alfredo Reyes of Röbbig Munich and Edward Lee Cave.

Pierre Gouthière became a master *ciseleur-doreur* (chaser-gilder) in 1758 during the reign of Louis XV. Little is known of his early years, but by 1765 he was gilding a number of pieces in both bronze and silver for François-Thomas Germain, the *sculpteur-orfèvre du roi* (sculptor-



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goldsmith to the king). In 1767 Gouthière began to work for the *Menus-Plaisirs du Roi*, an institution responsible for providing the king's personal effects as well as organizing his entertainment, thus starting a long career at the service of the French court. His works were so admired by Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette that in addition to commissioning objects directly, they also acquired masterpieces at the auction organized in December 1782 after the death of the duc d'Aumont, an avid admirer of Gouthière's production. The exhibition will bring the finest works,



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which are now in private and public collections in Europe and the United States, to New York for the first time.

Besides Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, Gouthière's clientele included the comte d'Artois, the comtesse Du Barry, the duc de Duras, the duchesse de Mazarin, Princess Kinsky, the Marquis de Marigny, and the king of Poland. He collaborated with some of the period's most highly regarded sculptors, including Louis-Simon Boizot. Unfortunately, Gouthière's wasteful expenditures and a series of financial setbacks—including the huge uncollectable sum owed to him by Madame Du Barry and the death in the early 1780s

of two of his most important clients, the duc d'Aumont and duchesse de Mazarin—forced him to declare bankruptcy in 1787. A remarkable blue marble and gilt-bronze table commissioned for the latter—now a well-known highlight of the Frick's decorative arts holdings—inspired this exhibition and fresh study of Gouthière's oeuvre.

Soon after his death in 1813, Gouthière was lauded by collectors, critics, and art dealers as one of the most important eighteenth-century French artists, a fame that has not faded in subsequent centuries. One consequence of the artist's reputation among the most important French and British collectors was the appearance of copies and overly generous attributions to Gouthière. Indeed, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, French decorative arts pieces of great quality (and not only those featuring gilt-bronze) were falsely attributed to Gouthière, and many of these attributions remain today.

The exhibition of only those works that can be attributed to Gouthière with certainty will create a new corpus that will help establish further attributions. As part of the project, conservators undertook a technical study of Gouthière's bronze and gilding techniques. The data provides both the basis for a much-needed re-evaluation of the attribution and chronology of Gouthière's oeuvre and elucidates his workshop practices.



2 Bronzes by Pierre Gouthière, designed by Jean-François-Thérèse Chalgrin and François-Joseph Bélanger, *Side Table* (detail), French, Paris, 1781, marble and gilt bronze, The Frick Collection, New York; photo: Michael Bodycomb

In conjunction with the exhibition, a major publication will be published by The Frick Collection in association with D Giles, Ltd. This will be the first English-language monograph on Gouthière as well as the first comprehensive presentation of his work since 1986 (an essay on him by Christian Baulez, longtime Curator at Versailles and now Conservateur Général Honoraire du Patrimoine, was included in *Vergoldete Bronzen: Bronzearbeiten des Spätbarock und Klassizismus* by Hans Ottomeyer and Peter Pröschel). The text in the Frick catalogue is by exhibition curator Charlotte Vignon and also Christian Baulez with contributions by Anne Foray-Carlier (Musée des Arts Décoratifs), Joseph Godla (The Frick Collection), Helen Jacobsen (The Wallace Collection), Luisa Penalva (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon), Emmanuel Sarméo (Château de Versailles), and Anna Saratowicz (Royal Castle, Warsaw). Included are essays on Gouthière's life and work, a reevaluation of his style in the context of the development of Neo-classicism, and an exploration of his relationship with François-Joseph Bélanger, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, Louis-Simon Boizot, and other great architects and sculptors of the period. A section of the catalogue is also devoted to the results of the technical study. A French-language edition of the publication is also planned.

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: 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; Phone: 212.547.6866; E-mail: rosenau@frick.org