



# ARCHIVED PRESS RELEASE

from

## THE FRICK COLLECTION

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### **DIRECTOR ANNE L. POULET ANNOUNCES A STUNNING ACQUISITION BY THE FRICK COLLECTION – FIRST MAJOR PURCHASE IN NEARLY TEN YEARS**

Director Anne L. Poulet announces that following a recent vote by the Board of Trustees, The Frick Collection has made the first major acquisition by purchase in almost a decade: Joseph Chinard's *Portrait of Étienne Vincent-Marniola*—a terracotta bust executed around 1809. Comments Poulet, "It is with great excitement that we bring this breathtaking—and previously unpublished—portrait into the Collection and before the public gaze. The work joins a group of distinguished busts in marble and terracotta by Houdon, Pajou, and Boizot, and represents a striking complement to our holdings. We hope that this important event, along with our recent and ongoing attention to special exhibitions of sculpture, will inspire fresh appreciation for the medium." Although the institution is widely known for



**Joseph Chinard** (1756–1813), *Portrait of Étienne Vincent-Marniola* (1781–1809), c. 1809, terracotta, The Frick Collection.

its presentation of the collection developed in the early part of the last century by industrialist Henry Clay Frick (1849–1919), the museum can and does acquire, through gift or purchase, additional works of fine and decorative art. Adds Poulet, "The institution is very much alive in that way, which, I hope excites our general public as well as the international scholarly community."

Adds Colin B. Bailey, Chief Curator, "It is a daunting task to add to The Frick Collection, and thus all the more satisfying when one comes across a documented work by a major artist at the height of his career that has hitherto escaped attention. Chinard's portrait bust stands at the cross-road of various styles: the sitter's calm and idealized physiognomy, his eyes modeled without irises, falls within an established, neo-classical tradition. Yet in the sculpting of his coiffure, the locks and curls assume an energy that is almost romantic. Above all, one marvels at the realism of the costume, which is a tour de force: the rope and tassels that keep the cloak from falling from the sitter's shoulders are examples of an extraordinary inventiveness and virtuosity."

## ABOUT THE PORTRAIT

The subject of this bust, Étienne Vincent-Marniola, was the scion of a wealthy *parlementaire* family who rose to one of the highest positions in Napoleon's government by the age of twenty-eight. Although the work is not dated and has never previously been published, it was exhibited at the Salon of 1810. It was likely to have been commissioned to commemorate the young man's appointment to the office of Conseiller d'État, the Empire's supreme legislative body, in February 1809. In this position—the responsibilities of which included the drafting and implementation of the five Napoleonic codes—he was destined for a ministerial or senatorial career, one that was cut short by his untimely death on October 13, 1809 (the precise cause of which remains to be discovered).

The bust remained in his family and was never exhibited. When the contents of the family's chateau de Launay, in Burgundy, were sold in the autumn of 1997, the bust reappeared among memorabilia and ancestor portraits, but with a bronze patina that had been applied at some point in the late nineteenth century. Interestingly, a group portrait of Vincent-Marniola's widow and children, painted in 1821 by the obscure artist Michel Philibert Genod, includes the deceased prefect: Chinard's bust, without its bronze patination, can be seen on the right-hand side of Genod's interior, placed on a sconce and looking down benignly on the family. The bronze patination was removed in 2003, thus restoring the bust's original appearance. Although we know nothing of the relationship between sculptor and patron, Chinard's bust—which, had the sitter not died, probably would have been followed by a final version in marble—conveys with extraordinary force the fine qualities for which Vincent-Marniola had long been admired in life.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joseph Chinard was one of the greatest portraitists of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France. He was born in Lyon to a silk merchant in 1756, and by the age of sixteen had received his first commission to sculpt ornamental devices on the façade of the Hotel de Ville. The support of a well-placed official in the municipal Bureau des Finances enabled Chinard to study in Rome between 1784 and 1787, where he gained exposure to the most advanced artists of the day, among them David and Canova. In June 1786, Chinard's *Perseus Delivering Andromeda* won first prize in the Accademia di S Luca's annual competition, the first French sculpture to do so in more than fifteen years. So surprised were the Roman authorities—Chinard, after all, was not studying at the French Academy in Rome—that he was obliged to improvise two classical compositions in public to confirm his capabilities. Returning to Lyon in late 1787 with copies he had made in marble of several famed antiquities,

Chinard executed a life-size marble of his prize-winning *Perseus Delivering Andromeda* as well as a statue of the Virgin for Belley Cathedral.

The onset of the French Revolution initially provided the opportunity to compose allegorical groups of edifying symbolism. Chinard competed for the monument to Louis XVI as “Restaurateur de la liberté française” that was to be erected in Lyon’s place des Terreaux, but his lack of success prompted him to return to Rome, where he worked on several commissions for his Lyonnais patrons. In the autumn of 1792, the allegorical ornaments on a pair of candelabra for the merchant van Risembourg ran afoul of the papal authorities, and Chinard was imprisoned for two months. The deputies of the Assemblée nationale in Paris—David among them—rose to his defense, but it was the Cardinal de Bernis, an aging prelate and erstwhile companion to Madame de Pompadour, who discreetly obtained the sculptor’s release.

With the establishment of the Republic, Chinard’s political convictions came under scrutiny again, this time by the radical Jacobins, who imprisoned him between October 1793 and February 1794 for being a moderate. With the overthrow of Robespierre and the institution of the Directory, Chinard encountered a society much more to his liking: he visited Paris for the first time in 1795, where he became part of the circle of the Lyonnais banker Jacques Recamier, whose beautiful and much younger wife, Juliette, would be the sitter for several of his most exquisite portrait busts.

It was during the Consulate and Empire that Chinard’s career took off. The military campaigns of the Empire offered history painters and sculptors a new heroic iconography, and the Emperor and his family, along with the Préfets—the agents of Bonaparte’s administrative reforms—provided patronage for both monuments and portraits in Paris, the provinces, and the newly incorporated territories of the Empire. Through Charles Delacroix, successively Préfet of Marseilles (1802) and Bordeaux (1804), Chinard received commissions for a series of public sculptures for both cities. Delacroix (father of the painter, Eugène) and his sister Hortense de Verninac also sat to him for their portraits. Chinard was chosen by the municipality of Clermont-Ferrand to decorate the fountain monument to the war hero General Desaix, who had perished at the Battle of Marengo (the commission dragged on over a period of thirteen years). In Lyon, he executed a magnificent bust of Bonaparte as First Consul and participated in the competition to erect a monument symbolizing “Victory, Peace, Arts, and Commerce” in the newly named place Bonaparte (a terracotta model for this unrealized project is at Malmaison, outside Paris).

Between 1804 and 1807 Chinard resided in Carrara, where he enjoyed the patronage of Napoleon’s sister Elisa Bonaparte. His studio produced marble portrait busts of members of the Imperial court, including the Empress

Josephine; Prince Eugène de Beauharnais, Viceroy of Italy; Joseph Bonaparte, king of Spain; and General Leclerc. In 1806, he was one of the fourteen sculptors commissioned by Vivant Denon, director of the Musée Napoléon, to decorate the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel across from the Louvre. His contribution, a marble statue of a Grenadier, finally arrived from Carrara in the spring of 1809, well past the deadline, and was the last work to be installed.

During the last five years of his life, Chinard moved between Lyon and Paris and exhibited numerous works at the Salons of 1808, 1810 (which functioned as a sort of mini-retrospective of his career), and 1812. In these Salons, his mastery as a portraitist was fully in evidence; with the decline in Napoleonic patronage, portrait busts in marble and terracotta (as well as portrait medallions) now comprised a major part of his output. Indeed, it is this remarkable gallery of portraits that, according to one modern historian, has earned Chinard “a place among the masters of French sculpture.”

## 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; 1pm to 6pm on Sundays. Closed Mondays, New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. Limited hours (1 to 6pm) on Lincoln’s Birthday, Election Day, and Veterans Day.

**Admission:** \$12; senior citizens \$8; students \$5

**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 INFORM® 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 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 on The Frick Collection, please contact Heidi Rosenau, Manager of Media Relations & Marketing

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