

CAST IN
BRONZE



FRENCH SCULPTURE
FROM RENAISSANCE TO REVOLUTION

DATE: April 28, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEARLY 30 YEARS OF COLLABORATIVE SCHOLARSHIP CULMINATE IN THE
FIRST COMPREHENSIVE EXHIBITION OF FRENCH BRONZE SCULPTURE



Francois Girardon, *Louis XIV Equestrian Cast from the Small Model for the Colossal Statue*, bronze, about 1710, The Royal Collection Trust

*Cast in Bronze: French Sculpture
from Renaissance to Revolution*

Brings together 120 sculptures spanning the 16th–18th centuries by Prieur, Anguier, Girardon, Bertrand, and Houdon, among others

Co-Organized by the Getty Museum, the Louvre, and
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

At the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
June 30 – September 27, 2009

LOS ANGELES—Bronze sculpture played a crucial role in the history of early modern French art and society—from the Renaissance court of François I at Fontainebleau until the reign of Louis XV—serving as a medium of self-representation for the French monarchy, and ultimately becoming a model imitated throughout Europe.

Co-organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Musée du Louvre, Paris, *Cast in Bronze: French Sculpture from Renaissance to Revolution* is the first comprehensive exhibition to examine the art of the French bronze sculpture from the Renaissance until the end of the ancien régime, and the result of more than three decades of collaborative scholarship by the French Bronze Study Group. After debuting in Paris and traveling to New York, the exhibition will be on view June 30 through September 27, 2009 at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center, the final, and only West Coast, venue.

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"*Cast in Bronze* exemplifies the Museum's commitment to exhibitions that are of tremendous scholarly importance, allow for collaboration with our sister institutions around the world, and relates to areas of strength in our own collection—in this case 16th- through 18th-century French bronzes," says Michael Brand, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "In addition to the importance of the exhibition itself, the comprehensive catalogue that accompanies it will be the most current reference work on the subject matter, and promises to be a tremendous resource for future scholarship and research."

Given the immense importance of this exhibition, exceptional loans of more than 120 sculptures were granted from renowned international collections, including the Musée du Louvre, the Château de Versailles, and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, France; the Royal Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum, England; the Dresden State Art Collections, Germany; and in the United States The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington; the Legion of Honor in San Francisco; Museum of Fine Arts, Philadelphia; the Huntington Art Collections, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

During the 16th century, François I imported numerous Italian artists in an effort to promote an artistic renaissance in France. One of the most prominent and influential was Benevenuto Cellini (1500–71). The Florentine sculptor had studied antique sculpture and began designing large-scale sculptural projects, which reached their most ambitious heights during Cellini's residence at the royal palace of Fontainebleau in France. There, he influenced an entire generation of French artists, and bronze sculpture began to play a crucial role in the history of early modern French art and society, continuing through the reign of Louis XV and beyond.

The first section of the exhibition will highlight important 16th-century monuments, including Barthélemy Prieur's female allegorical figure of *Abundance* (about 1571; Louvre) for the Monument to Anne de Montmorency. The original monument consisted of a raised marble base with the bronze allegorical statues arranged around it, but was dismantled during the French Revolution (1789–95).

In 1594, Henry IV was crowned king of France, and order was restored to the country following the Wars of Religion. Henry's coronation, subsequent marriage to Marie de' Medici in 1600, and the birth of an heir the following year assured the future of the Bourbon line. This new stability allowed for the reprisal of many great building projects of the Renaissance and thus led to a significant number of commissions of both small-scale mythological themes and portrait busts. Outstanding examples are the statuettes of *Henry IV as Jupiter* and *Marie de' Medici as*

Juno (after 1601; Louvre). The statuette and its pendant represent the royal couple as Roman deities, portraying Henry as Jupiter with his emblem, the eagle, and Marie as Juno.

In addition to large-scale monuments and small-scale busts of important figures, small-scale sculpture representing antique and modern genre subjects also predominated during the 16th century. Prieur and his workshop frequently drew upon rural life to produce small bronze figures of seated or standing girls combing their hair, washing their feet, or trimming their nails. These bronzes are often characterized by oval faces, elongated torsos, and a spirit of innocence, as exemplified by Prieur's *Young Woman Carrying a Basket* (about 1600; Huntington Art Collections).

Louis XIV acceded to the throne in 1643 but didn't assume actual power until 1661 when the ruling prime minister died. During his reign, he increased the power and influence of France with successes in three major wars—the Franco-Dutch War, the War of the League of Augsburg, and the War of the Spanish Succession—as well as cultural dominance. He became known as Louis the Great, and Parliament decreed that this epithet must accompany all public inscriptions and statues of the king.

Louis XIV was a lover of the arts and provided generous funding to the royal court for large-scale bronze monuments to promote and heroicize his image throughout the great cities of France. He preferred equestrian monuments showing him atop a pacing, rearing, or standing horse and commissioned many of his court sculptors to produce such monuments—among them, François Girardon (1685–92), Etienne Le Hongre (1686–91), Antoine Coyzevox (1686–93), and Martin Desjardins (1688–91). The majority were destroyed during the French Revolution, but are known today by the artists' sketches, engravings, statuettes, or images on the reverses of medals, and are represented in the exhibition accordingly. For example, Girardon's monument to Louis XIV—a colossal bronze equestrian statue commissioned by the king for display in the heart of Paris—is represented in this exhibition by a cast from the small model for the statue (about 1710, pictured on page 1) made under Girardon's personal direction and a fragment—Louis XIV's left foot—from the original monument (1692).

An entire gallery is dedicated to Girardon, one of King Louis's most important court sculptors, and will include works that he sculpted, as well as engraved renderings of his own work, and works he owned in his private collection—which became his great passion later in life and included nearly 800 sculptures, paintings, drawings, and prints. Among the sculptures will be Girardon's extraordinary *Apollo* (about 1670, Philadelphia Museum) and *St. John the Baptist* (1699, Louvre).

Large-scale mythological and allegorical figures also predominated in France during the mid- to late 17th century, particularly among contemporary sculptors who had studied in Italy and absorbed the lessons of Bernini and Algardi, as well as the antiquities which could be seen there. Following his return to Paris from Rome in 1651, Michel Anguier created a group of seven statues of the gods and goddesses, commonly known as the Montarsis bronzes, for the family of jewelers that owned (and likely commissioned) the original set. This exhibition brings together *Pluto* (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden), *Amphitrite* and *Juno* (Louvre), *Mars* (Le Musée des Beaux-Arts de Valenciennes), *Neptune* and *Ceres* (the National Gallery, London), and *Jupiter* (Getty Museum). Together, they present a remarkable range of psychological and physical characters. With their dramatic gestures, intense focus, and powerful bodies they beautifully exemplify the Italianate Baroque style that Anguier advanced in 17th-century France.

One of the greatest triumphs of Italian Baroque art was the production of sculptural ensembles. These multi-figured sculptural groups flourished in late 17th- and early 18th-century France. Philippe Bertrand's small-scale bronzes were models of control, elegance, and expression, and were highly sought after by contemporary collectors. His work in this genre is illustrated in the exhibition by *Mercury and Psyche* (c. 1700, Royal Collection), *Summer (Ceres and Triptolomus)* (c. 1710, Royal Collection), *Winter (Venus and Vulcan)* (c.1710, Royal Collection) and *Prometheus* (c. 1703, Royal Collection).

In the early 18th century, as Louis XIV's life and reign approached its end, a French aristocrat named Maximilien Titon (1631–1711) began planning an extraordinary monument to be prominently displayed in Paris or at Versailles as homage to the king. In 1708, he commissioned a large, elaborate bronze model from sculptor Louis Garnier (1639–1728), who depicted the king in the guise of Apollo, seated atop Mount Parnassus, and surrounded by the three graces, personified by French poets. Effigies to other writers, musicians, and artists from the reign of Louis XIV form a pyramidal composition around a statuette portraying the king, who sits near the apex. Titon was added later by Augustin Pajou (1730–1809). Upon completion in 1766, Titon's nephew presented the model to Louis XV as a gift. This highly classical ensemble is a tour-de-force of sculptural form and bronze casting—with figures shown standing, seated, or in relief, etc.—and is one of the undoubted highlights of the exhibition.

Cast in Bronze: French Sculpture from Renaissance to Revolution has been co-organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Musée du Louvre, Paris. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council

on the Arts and the Humanities. *Cast in Bronze* is curated by Antonia Boström and Anne-Lise Desmas at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Ian Wardropper and James David Draper at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Geneviève Bresc-Bautier and Guilhem Scherf at the Musée du Louvre. The exhibition will be accompanied by a 536-page catalogue co-published by the Musée du Louvre Editions and Somogy. The Getty Museum is the final venue for this extraordinary exhibition, following presentations at the Musée du Louvre, Paris (October 20, 2008 – January 12, 2009) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (February 24 – May 24, 2009).

About the French Bronze Study Group

This exhibition is the culmination of decades of individual research and nearly a decade of collaborative scholarship by the French Bronze Study Group. An international group of specialists initiated in 2000 by German and British colleagues—and greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm of Jonathan Marsden of the Royal Collection and Robert Wenley (then curator of the Wallace Collection)—the group has combed the museums of the world to examine bronze sculptures created in France from the 16th to 18th centuries. They pooled their experience, shared their findings, offered analogies, ventured attributions, and initiated laboratory analyses and X-rays to learn more about methods of fabrication.

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