

T O M A S S O



Pierre Jean David, known as David d'Angers (1788 - 1856)

Bust of Antoine-Jean, Baron Gros (1771 - 1835), 1821

Terracotta
33 cm (13 in.) high
25 cm (9 ¾ in.) wide

Signed 'David D'Angers 1821'

Pierre-Jean David – known as David d'Angers, after the name of his hometown in the Loire region south-west of Paris – was one most prominent sculptors of his age. The son of a sculptor, he worked in the paternal workshop and under the local painter Jean-Jacques Delusse until the latter, having noticed David's talent, encouraged him to move to Paris in 1808. There, as becoming of any young sculptor, he spent hours in the Louvre, attended anatomy classes and frequented the studio of the famous master Jacques-Louis David (1748 - 1825). In 1810 he won the second prize for sculpture at the Académie, followed a year later by the prestigious Prix de Rome. From the papal city he wrote in 1812 to his former mentor in Paris, the sculptor Philippe-Laurent Roland: "I draw after the antique. I know that you have always told me antiquity helps to see the beauty that is in nature" (S. Lami, *Dictionnaire des Sculpteurs de l'école française au dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris, 1916, II, p. 54).

He returned to France - having visited Florence, Bologna, Venice, Naples and Paestum - in 1816, and immediately set out to England, eager to see the Parthenon Frieze at the British Museum. In London, he was offered to participate in the construction of a monument to celebrate the Battle of Waterloo. Understandably piqued, he returned to Paris soon afterwards, where he was entrusted with completing a statue for the Pont de la Concorde originally begun by Roland, who had died the same year. D'Angers' model was highly praised at the Salon of 1817, the start of a most successful career. A prolific artist, he concentrated mainly on portraiture and commemorative monuments, alongside mythological

and historical compositions. Particularly famous are d'Angers' medallions, a "gallery" of portraits of his contemporaries, begun in the early 1830s with the expressed aim of preserving the likenesses of "great men" for posterity. These include politicians, scientists and artists alike, such as Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant, Lamartine, Alexandre Dumas, Géricault and Victor Hugo.

The present terracotta bust, dated 1821, is a portrait of the painter Antoine-Jean Gros, whom d'Angers may have met as early as 1809-11, at the atelier of Jacques-Louis David, Gros' master. Principally known for his representations of Napoleon's military campaigns and circle, Gros succeeded in maintaining his position as a highly fashionable painter even after the restoration of the Bourbon monarchs, who bestowed upon him the title of Baron. Notably, in 1832 D'Angers would return to this sitter for a medallion, now preserved in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

Gros is represented looking into the distance, his gaze self-assured and his lips proudly parted. His hair appears swept over his forehead by an invisible wind and his cloak is draped dramatically over his left shoulder. The collar of a loosely buttoned shirt can be seen framing his neck on his right. The quintessential image of the Romantic artist, this image of Gros proved highly successful. It was rendered in marble in 1836 by the sculptor Jean-Baptiste Joseph Debay (1779-1863) (now Louvre Museum, Paris, inv. no. LP1195) and in stone on Gros' funerary monument at Père-Lachaise cemetery.

Provenance:

Seligman Rey & Co., 1944

Literature:

Related Literature:

H.W. Janson and P. Fusco, *The Romantics to Rodin: French 19th Century Sculpture*, Los Angeles, 1980, cat. no. 95