

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Camillo Borghese

François Gérard (French, 1770–1837)

Date ca. 1810

Medium Oil on canvas

Dimensions 83 7/8 × 54 11/16 in. (213 × 138.9 cm)

Credit Line Purchased by The Frick Collection, 2017

Accession Number 2017.1.02

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 15, Oval Room

Commentary François-Pascal-Simon Gérard (1770–1837) was one of the most significant French artists of the first half of the nineteenth century. He studied with the painter Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), becoming one of his most talented pupils. With the advent of Napoleon, the artist found enormous favor with the emperor and his immediate family. Made a Baron of the Empire in 1809, Gérard exhibited a vast number of portraits at the various Paris Salon exhibitions almost every year during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Even after the fall of Napoleon, in 1815, Gérard's stellar career continued under the Bourbon Restoration in France. Gérard's role as portraitist to the Bonaparte family was the apex of his career. From the early 1800s until the fall of the empire in 1815, he portrayed most members of the imperial family, works that are today highlights of major collections internationally. These include Napoleon in coronation robes (Château de Versailles), his mother, Letizia Ramolino (Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh), and the Empress Josephine (Hermitage, Saint Petersburg). Napoleon's brothers Joseph and Louis, brother-in-law Joachim Murat, sisters Elisa and Caroline, and sister-in-law Hortense de Beauharnais also sat at different times for him. Camillo Borghese was born to one of the most important families of the Roman aristocracy. A patron of the arts, Prince Borghese is most famously remembered for commissioning from Antonio Canova a full-length sculpture of his wife in the nude, as Victorious Venus. The family was known for its Napoleonic sympathies, and Camillo moved to Paris in 1796. In 1803 he married Napoleon's favorite sister, Paolina Bonaparte (1780–1825). It was a tempestuous marriage. At first, the couple lived in gilded splendor between Paris and Rome, where they refurbished the apartments of Camillo's parents in the Palazzo Borghese; however, they soon became estranged and each took lovers. Paolina was still officially at her husband's side when, in February 1808, Napoleon effectively put him in charge of Piedmont, Liguria, Parma, and Piacenza. Camillo and Paolina moved from Paris to Turin in April of that year and lived between the Piedmontese capital, Paris, and Rome until April 1814. In 1808, when Camillo and Paolina moved to Turin, they shipped most of the paintings, sculptures, silver, and porcelain from the Palazzo Borghese in Rome to their new residence. In 1814, they returned to Rome, and an inventory drafted on April 25, 1814–lists a portrait of the prince, likely this one, which has become the official image of him, and is understood from the iconography in the work to have been painted around

1810 in Paris. Exhibition/Exhibition Catalogue History: - Mostra del ritratto italiano. Dalla fine del sec. XVI all'anno 1861, Palazzo Vecchio Florence, March-July 1911 - I principi, le arti, la città dal Settecento all'Ottocento, Villa Poniatowski, Rome, 5 December 2003-21 March 2004

Collection History Paolina Bonaparte Princess Borghese (1780-1825) [cfr. As stated in the will of Paolina Bonaparte, Rome, Napoleonic Museum Inventory 1243: 'Lascio e lego al P(ri)n(ci)pe D. Franc[esc]o Aldobrandini mio cognato il bel Quadro del P(ri)n(ci)pe Borghese fatto da Gerard']; Prince Francesco Borghese (1776-1839); Prince Marcantonio Borghese (1814-1886); Prince Paolo Borghese (1845-1920); Prince Scipione Borghese(1871-1927); Prince Santa Borghese (1897-1997); Count Adriano Hercolani (1929-2005). Art dealer, London, purchased from the family in 2017. Purchased by The Frick Collection, 2017.