

1080 Chapel Street
P.O. Box 208280
New Haven, Connecticut
06520-8280

+1 203 432 2800
f +1 203 432 9628

ycba.info@yale.edu
britishart.yale.edu

Exhibition Offers a New Perspective on Eighteenth-Century Sculpture and Fame

FAME AND FRIENDSHIP: POPE, ROUBILIAC, AND THE PORTRAIT BUST IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

Yale Center for British Art: February 20–May 19, 2014
Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire: June 18–October 26, 2014

NEW HAVEN –Opening in February 2014, the Yale Center for British Art, in collaboration with Waddesdon Manor, will present an exhibition on the eighteenth-century literary figure and poet **Alexander Pope** (1688-1744), whose sculpted portraits exemplified his fame at a time when the portrait bust was enjoying new popularity. *Fame and Friendship: Pope, Roubiliac, and the Portrait Bust in Eighteenth-Century Britain* will bring together paintings, sculptures, and materials that convey Pope's celebrity status, highlighted by a series of eight busts by **Louis François Roubiliac** (1702-1762), the leading sculptor of the period, to explore questions of authorship, replication, and dissemination.



Frequently used in antiquity to represent and celebrate writers, the portrait bust became the most familiar way of lauding famous writers in the eighteenth century, as the concept of authorship was being newly conceived. The signed and documented versions of Roubiliac's busts of Pope, which span the years from 1738 to 1760, are among the most fascinating and iconic images of the poet. These early versions of Roubiliac's bust are likely to have been made for Pope's close friends, serving to articulate those friendships that were so important to him. Further, the comparisons of these related versions, together with copies from the period in marble, plaster, and ceramic, will provide a unique and unprecedented opportunity to understand the role of replication and repetition in eighteenth-century sculptural practice.



Complementing the sculptures of Pope will be busts of other sitters with whom Pope's image was associated, reflecting the poet's place in a developing literary canon, as well as a selection of painted portraits of the poet by artists such as **Jonathan Richardson the Elder**, **Jean-Baptiste van Loo**, and **Sir Godfrey Kneller**. Alongside these works will be a range of Pope's printed texts. With their subtle changes in typography and their carefully planned illustrations and ornamental features, these early editions were produced under



the watchful eye of Pope himself and were the outcome of the poet's direct engagement with the materiality of the book and print.

Also presented will be lesser-known material about the Yale literary critic **W. K. Wimsatt**, who in the 1960s not only helped to make Yale a major center for the study of eighteenth-century literature (and Pope in particular), but spent twenty-five years researching the poet's portraits, an achievement celebrated in this exhibition. As Wimsatt recognized, the relationship between Pope's private persona and public fame was complex and ambiguous. Pope proved adept at managing the two while gradually establishing himself as an independent author, no longer dependent upon the support of noble patrons. Throughout his career, he astutely managed the presentation of his own image and reputation through both his published works and his portraits, especially those by Roubiliac.



Among the busts by Roubiliac will be a terracotta model (ca. 1738) from the collection of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham, England, and four marble pieces that he carved between 1738 and 1741. These busts have been assembled from a number of locations: the Center's own collection; Temple Newsam House, Leeds Museums and Galleries; and the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead (formerly in the possession of the eighteenth-century actor David Garrick). Another, from a private collection, was made for Pope's close friend, the brilliant young lawyer William Murray, later first Earl of Mansfield, with whom the poet shared an enthusiasm for both the classics and the visual arts, particularly sculpture.



Also on view will be an earlier marble bust of Alexander Pope made in 1730 by the Anglo-Flemish sculptor **John Michael Rysbrack** (1694-1770), from the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

When this exhibition travels to Waddesdon Manor, the core group of busts of Pope by Roubiliac and some of the contextual material from the Yale Center for British Art will remain the same, but there will be an additional selection of painted portraits, a different range of printed texts lent by the British Library, and material that will illustrate the reception of Pope and his works in France in keeping with Waddesdon's superb French collections.



CREDITS

Fame and Friendship: Pope, Roubiliac, and the Portrait Bust in Eighteenth-Century Britain is co-organized by the Center and Waddesdon Manor (The Rothschild Collection), where it will travel in June 2014. It is curated by Malcolm Baker, Distinguished Professor of the History of Art at the University of California, Riverside, and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The organizing curator at the Yale Center for British Art is Martina Droth, Associate Director of Research and Education, and Curator of Sculpture; and, at Waddesdon Manor, Dr. Juliet Carey, Senior Curator of Paintings, Sculpture and Works on Paper.

PUBLICATIONS AND SCIENTIFIC STUDY

During the course of the exhibition, Yale University Press will be publishing *The Marble Index: Roubiliac and Sculptural Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Malcolm Baker's study of the bust and the statue as genres. Following the exhibition, a second book will appear as a volume in the series *Studies in British Art*, published by the Yale Center for British Art and the Paul Mellon Centre in collaboration with Yale University Press. The latter will include essays based on papers presented at the conferences at Yale and Waddesdon organized by the Center, the Paul Mellon Centre in London, and the Rothschild Foundation. It will also incorporate the results of a related research program of detailed digital scanning using the world-class facilities under development at the Yale Digital Collections Center at Yale's West Campus. By analyzing the busts both visually and technically, this study aims to discover similarities and differences in surfaces, dimensions, construction, and materials, thus shedding new light on the studio practices of eighteenth-century sculptors. These findings will be the focus of a workshop to which leading figures in the field of eighteenth-century sculpture will be invited.



YALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the University by Paul Mellon (Yale College Class of 1929), the collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, rare books, and manuscripts reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. Visit us online at britishart.yale.edu.

WADDESDON MANOR

Waddesdon Manor was built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild at the end of the nineteenth century (1874-91) to display his outstanding collection of art treasures and to entertain the fashionable world. It combines the highest quality eighteenth-century French decorative arts with magnificent English portraits and Dutch old master paintings with one of the finest Victorian gardens in Britain, famous for its parterre and ornate working Aviary. It was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1957 and is now managed by a family charitable trust under the chairmanship of Lord Rothschild. For more information, visit waddesdon.org.uk.

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PRESS CONTACTS

Julienne Richardson: +1 203 432 2853 | julienne.richardson@yale.edu

Aviva Luria: +1 203 432 9491 | aviva.luria@yale.edu

Studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Alexander Pope Profile, Crowned with Ivy* (detail), ca. 1721, oil on canvas, Yale Center for British Art, Gift of Margaret Wimsatt in memory of William Kurtz Wimsatt Jr.