

# DAVID & CONSTANCE YATES

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EUROPEAN SCULPTURE, OIL SKETCHES AND DRAWINGS

**PIERRE-JEAN DAVID D'ANGERS**

**(Angers 1788 - 1856 Paris)**

***Les Quatre Sergents de La Rochelle (obverse)***

***La Liberté Déposant Quatre Couronnes de Laurier sur un Billot (reverse)***

Cast bronze in original wooden frames

Diameter: 3 5/8 inches (9.3 cm)

Signed, dated and inscribed

1822

David's medal *Les Quatre Sergents de La Rochelle* memorializes common soldiers, condemned to death by guillotine in the place de Grève, for conspiring against the Restoration government of Louis XVIII and accused of being members of the secret *Charbonnerie* society, dedicated to a more liberal form of government. David had initially planned to execute a monument in their memory but was forced to abandon his politically risky plans for lack of financial support. The obverse of this medal depicts the four sergeants in profile flanking the fasces, or emblem of state authority since Roman times, which has been crowned by the symbolic *bonnet de la liberté*. On the reverse, *La Liberté* herself places four laurel wreaths on the executioner's block. For David, it was *une dette sacré* to commemorate these martyrs to the cause of liberty.

Normally this cast medal incorporates an obverse and reverse; however, our examples are uniface, each mounted in its original wood frame. They were perhaps presentation medallions given to a special person in David's life. The portraits of these young men were drawn by David while the soldiers, none older than 27 years old, were imprisoned.

Pierre-Jean David D'Angers was arguably the most important sculptor France produced at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among other achievements, he is renowned for the *Galerie des Contemporains*, his personal pantheon of great men and women in medallion form that he produced during his lifetime. David's *galerie* would eventually number over five hundred portraits including politicians, writers, artists, musicians, composers and actors, inspired—in part—by David's ardent republican sympathies.

In the last decades before Louis-Jacques Daguerre's (1787-1851) invention of photography, David's *Galerie des Contemporains* created a virtual pantheon of the international Romantic Movement in cast bronze.

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