

DAVID & CONSTANCE YATES

EUROPEAN SCULPTURE, OIL SKETCHES AND DRAWINGS

FÉLIX-ALFRED DESRUELLES

(Valenciennes 7 June 1865 - 2 March 1943 La Flèche)

Mask of Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863)

Patinated plaster, wood, metal, twine
16 inches (40.6 cm) high, excluding base
21 ¾ inches (55.2 cm) high, including base
Signed, proper right, under collar: *F. Desruelles*
1894

A native of Valenciennes, Félix-Alfred Desruelles studied sculpture in Paris with René Fache (1816-1891) and Jean Alexandre Joseph Falguière (1831-1900). He began exhibiting at the Paris Salon in 1883 and was a runner up for the Prix de Rome in 1891 and 1893. In 1897 he exhibited a plaster relief titled *Pastorale* and a statue of Job, for which he won the Prix National and, in 1900, Desruelles was awarded the gold medal at the Exposition Universelle. He was presented the medal of honor at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in 1925 and was named an officer of the Légion d'Honneur. There is a small square named after the sculptor near the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris.

Desruelles is best known for his many memorials in northern France commemorating World War I, such as the *Monument aux Morts* (1931) on the Place Foch in Arras, the *Monument des Fusiliers Marins* (1929) in Dunkirk, and the *Statue Britannia* (1933) in Boulogne-sur-Mer, destroyed by the Germans in 1940. Other large scale, public works by Desruelles include the gilded bronze statue *Les Fruits* (1937), located on the esplanade of the palais de Chaillot on the Trocadéro, Paris, and the monument to his fellow Valenciennois, the sculptor Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875), Valenciennes.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the French State commissioned a series of marble busts for the Château de Versailles celebrating significant historical figures of this period. Desruelles was charged with sculpting the bust of the great Romantic painter Eugène Delacroix (1894; fig. 1). Our original patinated plaster mask of Eugène Delacroix was the model for Desruelles' marble bust of Delacroix. Based on a photograph taken by Victor Laisné (1852; fig. 2), our mask has an immediacy that does not translate to the marble. The mask was constructed over an armature of wood, metal and wire and also incorporated bits of rope and woven hemp. The details of the face and hair are refined by the use of sculptor's tools, utilized while the plaster was still damp. It appears that sand was incorporated into the plaster to thicken it. The eyes look directly at the viewer, albeit through hooded eyelids, and the tightly closed mouth is emphasized by the small mustache above the lip and goatee below.

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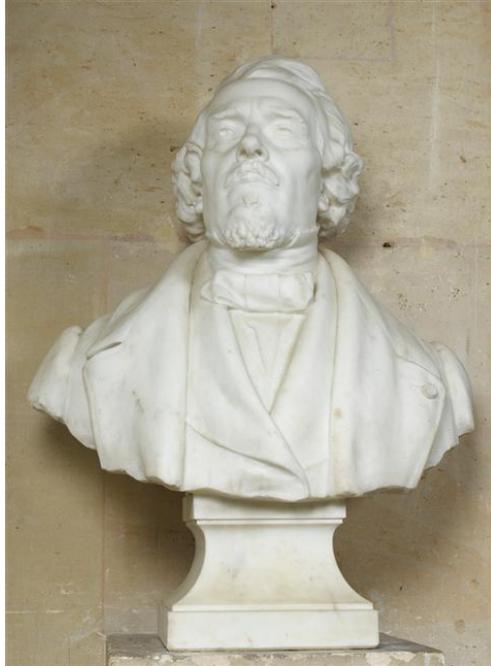


Fig. 1. Félix-Alfred Desruelles, *Eugène Delacroix*,
Château de Versailles, 1894.

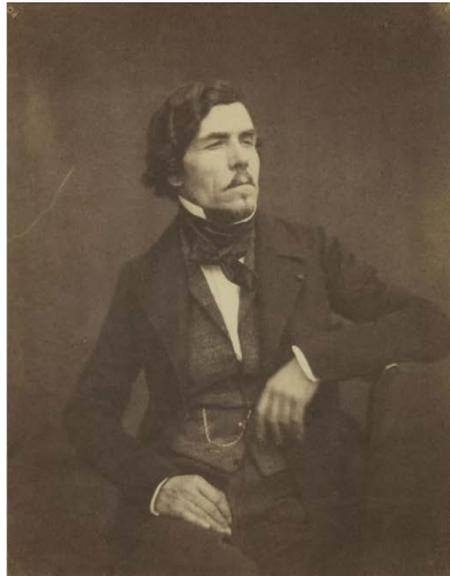


Fig. 2. Victor Laisné, *Eugène Delacroix*, c. 1852.

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