



**EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF THE DUKE OF
WELLINGTON BY THE COMTE D'ORSAY**

Dimensions: H: 31 in / 78 cm | W: 9.5 in / 24 cm | D: 27 in / 68 cm

10619



Equestrian Statue of the Duke of Wellington
By the Comte d'Orsay (1801-1852)

"[...] the only portrait by which he would wish to be known to posterity."
-Comte d'Orsay

A very fine cast of the celebrated model, executed in [patinated bronze](#), depicting Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, on [horseback](#), wearing a muted military uniform from the time of the Peninsular War, holding a telescope in his right hand, as his horse dips his head in obedience and is sculpted in a 'trotting' pose with one foot lifted symbolising power, speed and success. Signed 'Count d'Orsay Sculpt 1845.'

History of the Statuette

Among Count d'Orsay's most celebrated works is the present bronze equestrian statuette of the Duke of Wellington, depicting the Duke in military uniform. The Duke sat for D'Orsay on four occasions. These sittings Wellington had, D'Orsay noted with evident satisfaction, refused to the painter Landseer.

Wellington's response was unambiguous: writing to Henry Bulwer in March 1845, D'Orsay recorded that the Duke declared it 'the finest thing he has ever seen and the only portrait by which he would wish to be known to posterity' (Willard Connely, Count D'Orsay, *The Dandy of Dandies*, 1952, Ch. XXIII, pp. 409-11). D'Orsay further wrote to Madden that the work 'creates a revolution in the Duke of Wellington's own mind, and that of his family,' and speculated that 'every regiment in the service will have one.'

The Illustrated London News (1845, Vol. VII) offered an admiring account of its sculptural qualities: while just two feet in height, the statuette was said to carry 'a dignity pervading the entire composition' that caused the viewer to lose sight of its modest scale entirely, with the figure's bowed head ensuring that Wellington 'does not at once rivet the attention' from any angle; the great man always dominant over horse.

The statuette prompted a series of related commissions: a Parian bust published by Copeland and incised Comte d'Orsay sc. 1846, and an oil portrait of Wellington of which at least three versions exist, including one now held by the British Embassy in Paris. A portrait is also in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Literature:

The model is illustrated on p. 526 of P. Kjellberg, *Les Bronzes du XIXe Siècle* (Les Éditions de l'Amateur, Paris). It should not be confused with Cotterill's statuette of Wellington, published by Garrard in 1837.

Comte d'Orsay (1801-1852)

Alfred Guillaume Gabriel, Comte d'Orsay (1801-1852) studied sculpture in Florence and Paris before settling in London in 1823, where he established himself in aristocratic circles as both painter and sculptor. He exhibited at the Royal Academy throughout the 1840s and at the Paris Salon from 1845, later exhibiting his bronze equestrian statue of Napoleon there in 1849. In 1852 he was nominated Director of the Beaux-Arts by Louis-Napoleon.