

A bronze bust with green-brown patina representing Marie-Louise Archiduchess of Austria and Empress of France (Marie Louise, Maria Luigia d'Asburgo-Lorena, Duchessa di Parma, Piacenza e Guastalla, Vienna 1791–1847 Parma), second wife of Napoleon. Wearing a diadem decorated with the imperial emblem, an eagle in a laurel wreath from which emerge some curls, her braided hair raised in a bun, she is dressed in a simple antique tunic held by a small fibula on her right shoulder. With the inscription: MARIE-LOUISE IMPERATRICE. It rests on the original rectangular base in *rouge griotte* marble. This cast bronze portrait exhibits a high quality of casting reminiscent of work by Pierre-Philippe Thomire (1751-1843).



France, Circa 1810

Height: 16,33 in. (41.5 cm)

Width: 7,67 in. (19.5 cm)

Depth: 6,69 in. (17 cm)

This bronze portrait of Empress Marie Louise, Napoleon's second wife, exhibits a high quality of casting. The present model is conceptually close to the portrait bust by François-Joseph Bosio (1768–1845) at Compiègne (inv. No. C38.1061). The sculptor François-Joseph Bosio exhibited a bust of the Empress Marie-Louise at the Paris Salon of 1810. This bust was a great success and became the official portrait to decorate the salons of high court dignitaries under Napoleon's regime. The effigy was then taken up by Italian sculptors working in France, including Giacomo Spalla (1755–1834) and Lorenzo Bartolini (1777–1850).

The official portrait of Marie-Louise was commissioned in the weeks following her arrival in France on 27 March 1810. The daughter of Francis I of Austria, she was nineteen when she was betrothed to Napoleon. The marriage was celebrated in the Great Gallery of the Château de Saint-Cloud on 1 April 1810, only a few months after Napoleon divorced Josephine. Only the sculptors Antonio Canova (1757–1822) and François-Joseph Bosio (1768–1845) were granted sittings with the new Empress. In November of the same year, Bosio showed his bust at the Salon (no.906) among portraits of the Bonaparte family, including the Emperor (no.905), as well as his brother Jérôme and his wife Elisabeth, King and Queen of Westphalia (nos. 907 and 908).

This bust established the prototype for portrayals of Marie-Louise, both in marble and biscuit. A plaster copy was sent to Elisa Baciocchi (1777–1820), the Emperor's elder sister. The sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini (1777–1850) was one of her favourite artists and in October 1807 she made him director of the Accademia di Belle Arti di Carrara. A protégé of the Emperor himself, Bartolini was a fervent Bonapartist. Alongside his teaching responsibilities, Bartolini was also charged with quality control for portraits executed by the sculpture workshops funded by the Banca

Elisiana. While busts of Napoleon I were widely disseminated across Europe, busts of members of the Imperial family were reserved for the residences of the Empire's most senior dignitaries.