

Long-Term Loan of the statue of
Thomas Jefferson (1833)
by Pierre-Jean David
from the City Council Chambers, City Hall
to the New-York Historical Society

PLASTER MODEL OF THOMAS JEFFERSON



Artist: Pierre-Jean David D'Angers

Date: 1833

Medium: Painted plaster with metal armature

Dimensions:

artwork: 85"H x 37"W x 35.5"D

wooden base: 4.5"H x 34.5" x 34.5"

pedestal: 56.75"H x 37.25" x 37.25"

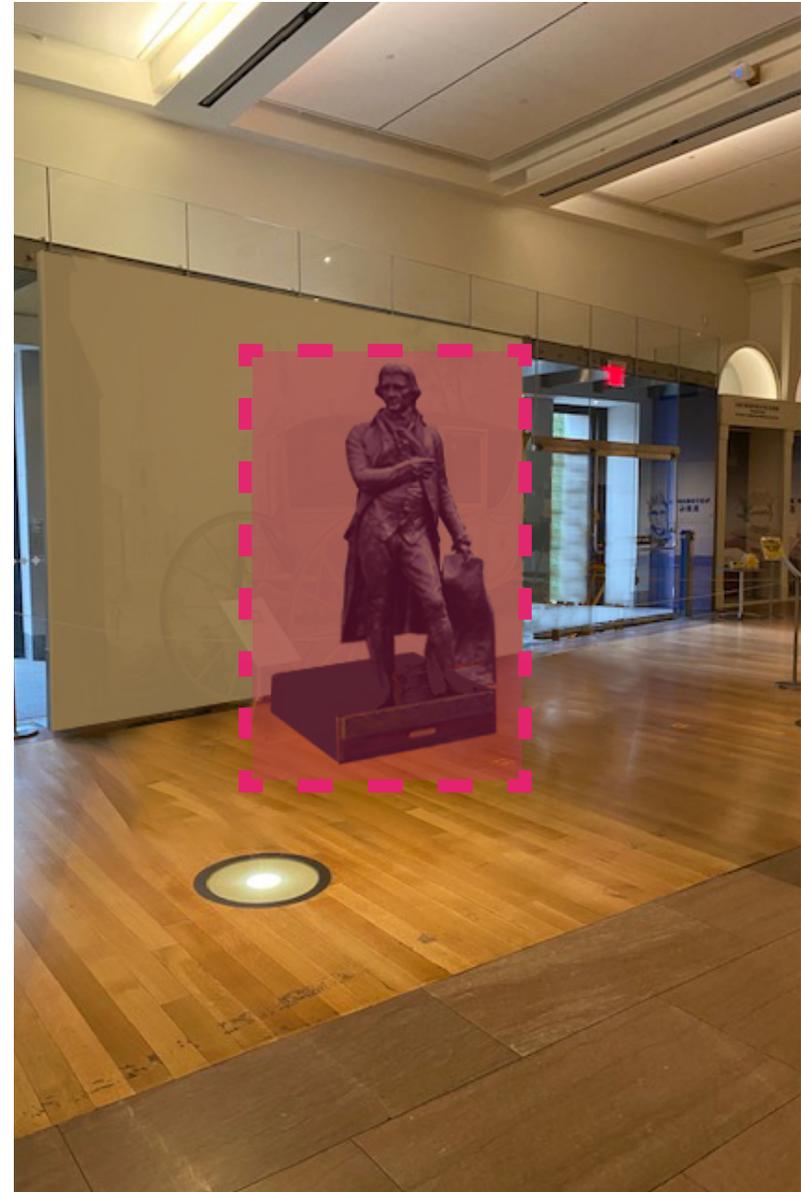
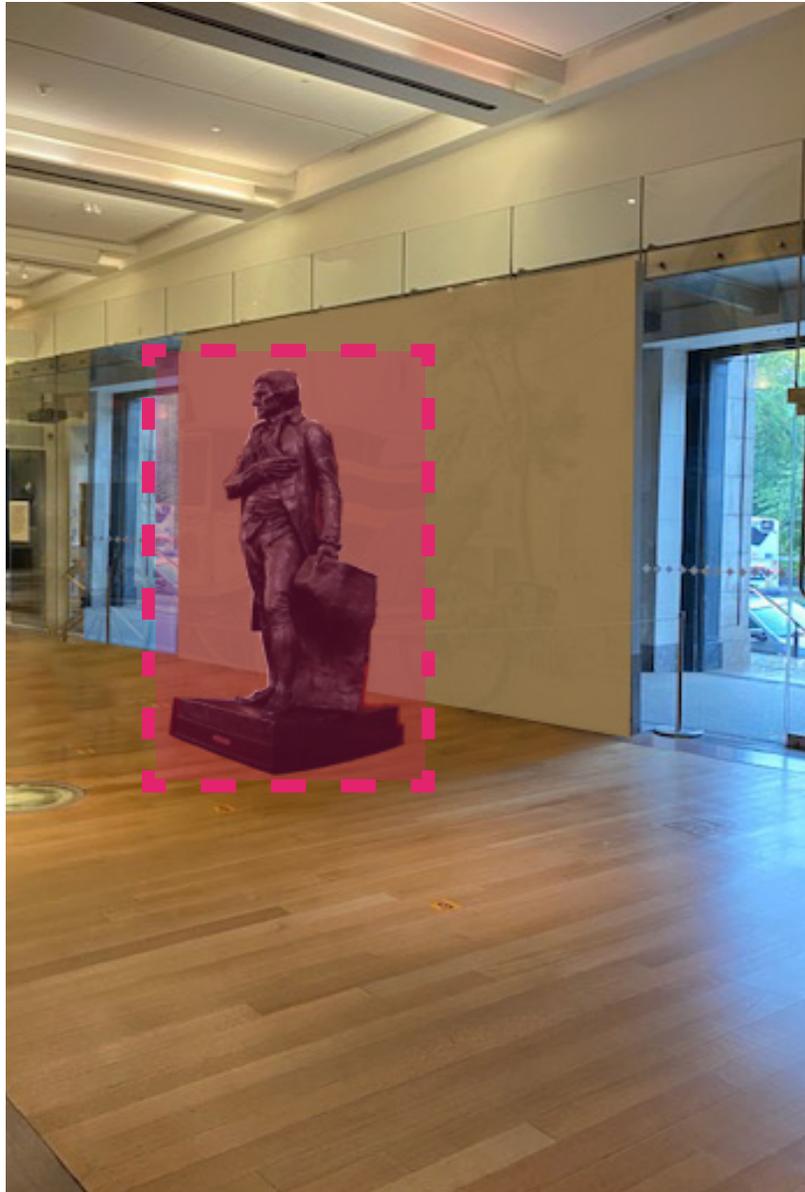
Condition: In 2010-2011, the artwork was conserved and found to be in stable condition; a new pedestal was built.

Description: This is an original plaster cast from which the bronze statue, now in the collection of the U.S. Capitol, was created. Uriah Phillips Levy (1792-1862) donated the plaster cast to "the people of New York" in 1834. Jefferson is portrayed pen-in-hand placed over his heart and holding in his other hand a scroll upon which is imprinted the words of the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson wears contemporary clothing rather than a conventional classic robe.



The Thomas Jefferson statue, at left, in its current location in the City Council Chamber, City Hall

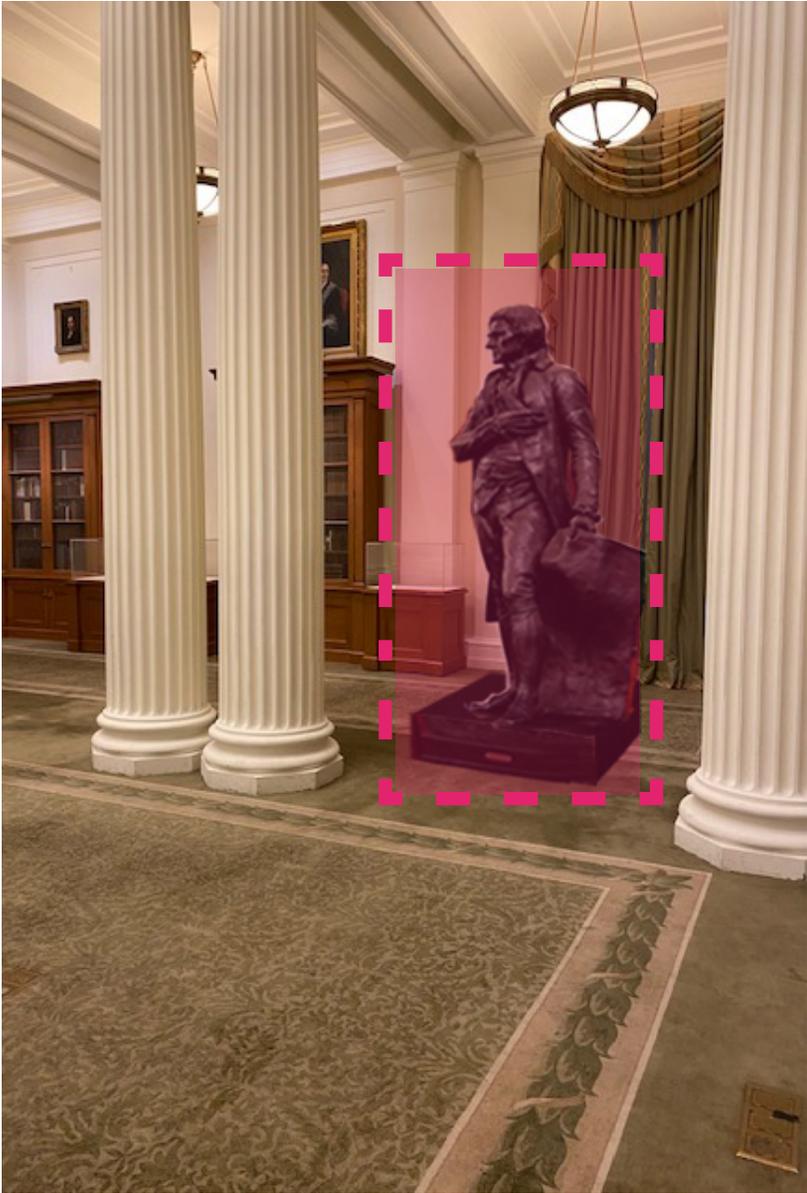
Proposed Location at the New-York Historical Society: The Smith Gallery Lobby
The statue would be displayed in the first floor lobby for approximately six months.



The statue would then be moved to the New-York Historical Society's Patricia D. Klingenstein Library Reading Room for the remainder of the loan.



The Patricia D. Klingenstein Library Reading Room
Rendering of the statue in situ



The New-York Historical Society

The New-York Historical Society was established in 1804 as New York's first museum.

The Society's mission is to foster research and public discourse, and showcase meaningful art that reveals the dynamism and influence of history on the world of today.

The New-York Historical Society

Serves more than 200,000 students each year, with an extensive range of school programs in American history that engage students from early elementary school through high school.

Offers teen programs, led by museum educators, to introduce young historians to research skills through primary sources and digital media projects, so that students can develop independent views of history.

The New-York Historical Society

Offers professional development programs and curriculum resources for teachers to foster lifelong learning and invite exciting opportunities for classrooms to explore history in new ways.

Has free admission every Friday evening and free or nominal cost admission to New York City public school students and their teachers each year.

Appendix

Timeline

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1833: Uriah Phillips Levy commissions French sculptor David d'Angers to create a full-length sculpture of Thomas Jefferson. Levy presented the bronze statue of Jefferson to Congress for installation in the U. S. Capitol and gave the plaster model from which it was made to the City of New York.

1834: The plaster model arrives in New York City and is stored in sculptor John Frazee's studio reportedly for Frazee to repair damages which occurred en route.

February 6, 1834: Levy's gift of the plaster model is formally accepted by the City of New York.

September 1887: A Studio Magazine article states that the statue is in the "shabby apartment in City Hall called the Governor's Room. . .It is impossible to see it to any advantage, since it is pushed up close in a corner, with its back to the window, in front of which it stands."

1898: The Art Commission (now the Public Design Commission) is established by the City Charter.

Circa 1905: A photograph noted as "pre-Bernstein Renovation" appears to show the statue in the west chamber of the Governor's Room.

1905-1907: The Governor's Room is renovated by the architectural firm Bernstein and Bernstein.

December 10, 1907: A letter from Margaret Olivia Sage to Mayor George B. McClellan, Manhattan Borough President John F. Ahearn, and Art Commission President Robert W. DeForest offers to pay for the "complete and satisfactory" restoration of the Governor's Room, noting the recent changes were not satisfactory to the city authorities, provided the restoration be "carried out pursuant to contracts and plans to be approved by the Art Commission." The offer was accepted, and the Art Commission appointed a committee to take charge of the work. (The Governor's Room in the City Hall, publication by the Art Commission, 1909)

1907: The Governor's Room is restored by Grosvenor Atterbury with the aim to "carry out the ideas of the original designer, and to make the room accurately expressive of his personal taste and representative of the style of his period." (The Governor's Room in the City Hall, publication by the Art Commission, 1909) A list of sculptures in this publication does not mention the statue.

Timeline Cont.

1909: The Catalogue of Works of Art Belonging to the City of New York, published by the Art Commission, notes that the statue is “a copy in plaster of a life-sized bronze statue in the Capitol at Washington” and it is in the Rotunda of City Hall and includes the following inscription: “Presented to the Corporation of the City of New York by Commodore Uriah P. Levy, of the United States Navy / February 6th 1834.”

November 16, 1915: The Art Commission approves the temporary removal of the statue from the second floor of the Rotunda to the basement room in the northwest corner of City Hall. (Exhibit 793 C)

March 1, 1919: A letter from the Manhattan Borough President to the Art Commission states that the statue is temporarily in the rooms of the Board of Child Welfare, Room #2, City Hall, which is “not consistent with the prominence of the personality of the statue.”

April 4, 1919: The Art Commission approves the relocation of the statue in the anteroom of the Women’s Court of the Jefferson Court House. (Certificate 2275, Exhibit 793 D)

July 1, 1919: The Board of Alderman passes a resolution, in response to a letter from Jefferson M. Levy (nephew of Uriah Phillips Levy), requesting that the Art Commission remove the statue from the basement of City Hall to the Governor’s Room. The resolution notes that the statue had remained in the Governor’s Room for “some seventy years or over” and this was its “original location.”

August 5, 1919: The Board of Aldermen presents to the Art Commission the resolution requesting the Art Commission to restore the plaster cast of the statue of Thomas Jefferson to the Governor’s Room. Art Commission action on the matter is postponed. (Exhibit 793 D)

October 17, 1919: A letter from the Manhattan Borough President to the Art Commission notes that the statue has been moved from the basement to the Aldermanic Chamber (now the City Council Chamber) and has long-standing damage.

November 24, 1919: The Art Commission “rescinds its action of March 28th, 1919, in relation to the relocation of the plaster cast of Thomas Jefferson” and “approves the permanent location of the plaster cast of the statue of Thomas Jefferson in the Aldermanic Chamber, City Hall, in the position in which it has been temporarily placed by the President of the Borough of Manhattan.” (Certificate 2341, Exhibit 793 D)

2010-2011: As part of the City Hall rehabilitation project, the statue is restored and a taller pedestal is created to raise the statue to mitigate reoccurring damage caused by heavy use of the room.