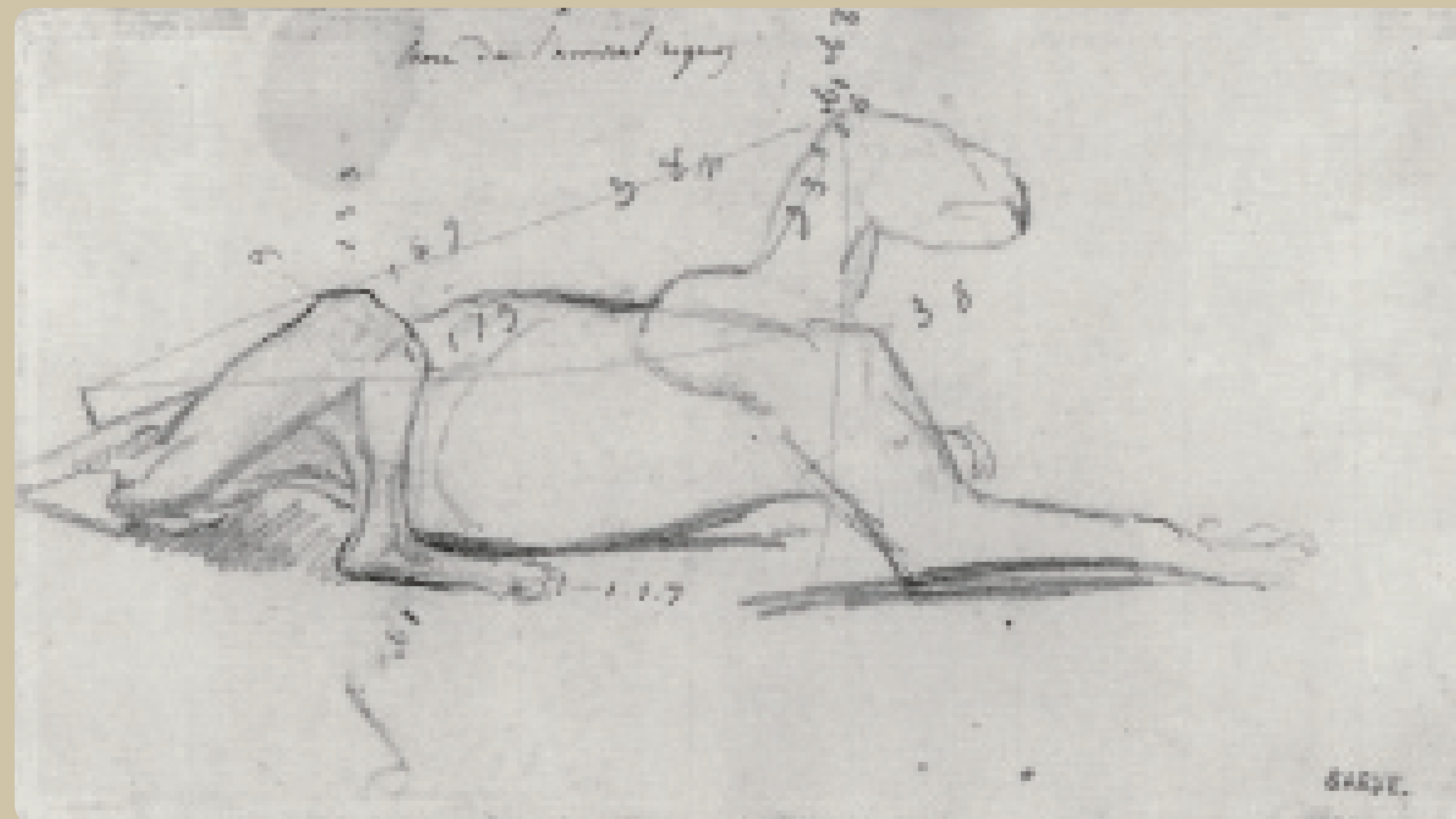


A Masterpiece in Context

The very existence of the Louvre, with its collection of accepted masterpieces, created enormous pressure for all French artists to measure up and attain their share of fame and fortune. Antoine-Louis Barye had attempted to win the Grand Prix de Rome but succeeded only in placing second. For his submission to the Salon



Antoine-Louis Barye, "The Lion of Admiral Rigny" as a sphinx, with measurements, 1829, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris

Photo: Courtesy Musée du Louvre

in Paris in 1833, he sculpted a life-sized plaster version of his bronze *Lion and Serpent*. The work's impressive scale, ferocious expression, and astonishing realism—the result of careful study—created an immediate sensation.

The French government commissioned the bronze version on view in this gallery, which was exhibited at the Salon in 1836 and subsequently installed in the Tuileries Gardens to great acclaim. Thus, Barye's *Lion and Serpent* was heralded as a masterpiece from the beginning and has never fallen from the public's consciousness—unlike many of the other works in this exhibition, which were recognized as masterpieces only after being rediscovered or reevaluated by art experts.