

# SELECTED WORKS

*From 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY*

GALLERIA CARLO VIRGILIO & Co.





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ARTE ANTICA MODERNA E CONTEMPORANEA

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*Catalogue entries*

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Detail of cat. 2

# CATALOGUE



## 1. AGOSTINO CORNACCHINI

Pescia 1686–Rome 1754

### *Apollo in the Guise of a Swan Awakening Eros from Sleep*

1714–1727

Terracotta with slipware (“ingobbiatura”), 32 (h) × 68 (l) × 51 (p) cm

PROVENANCE: Pistoia, Palazzo Forteguerra; Rome, private collection

The terracotta model discussed here was interpreted by Stella Rudolph in 2007 (written communication of 20 October 2007) as a *Sleeping Eros* and attributed to the sculptor Pierre le Gros Le Jeune (Paris 1666 - Rome 1719). The scholar, remarking the singularity of the iconographic theme, suggested a link with Arcadian circles, conjecturing that it was commissioned by the Pistoian literary figure Niccolò Forteguerra. The latter was substantiated, in her view, by the provenance of the terracotta from Palazzo Forteguerra in Pistoia, where the sculpture, however, is documented only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (fig. 1).

In our opinion, however, a more appropriate attribution would be to the sculptor Agostino Cornacchini; the subject can also be more adequately explained as *Apollo in the Guise of a Swan Awakening Eros from Sleep*, or the primacy of Poetry over Eros.

The plastic composition, set on the original ebony-coloured soft-wood base, consists of two elements: the figure of the sleeping Cupid, lying gently on the ground on wings with soft plumped feathers, and the semicircular architectural background against which the swan is posed. The background presents a blend of natural (rocks and caper plants) and architectural elements combined to evoke the ancient world. On the left stands a fragment of a ruined column with Attic base, while in the centre some blocks of stone, also apparently broken and chipped, form the ideal scenario for the bird seeking with its beak to lift the drapery abandoned on the masonry. The quality of the clay, of an intense red, and the marble-coloured patina, make the two pieces cohere.

While Rudolph believed that the action of the unveiling by the swan (emblem of Venus, mother of Cupid), had to imply that sleeping Love can be awakened, an alternative reading of the sculptural group can be proposed. The hyperborean bird is sacred not only to Venus but also to Apollo, god of the Sun and of the arts consecrated on Mount Parnassus, where according to the ancients he resided together with the nine Muses. The swan could therefore symbolize Apollo, rather than Venus, and establish the primacy of Poetry which, through the power of words, succeeds in awakening dormant Eros, in a complex allegorical artifice dear to Arcadian circles in which the exercise of poetry served to evoke the idyllic and bucolic dream.

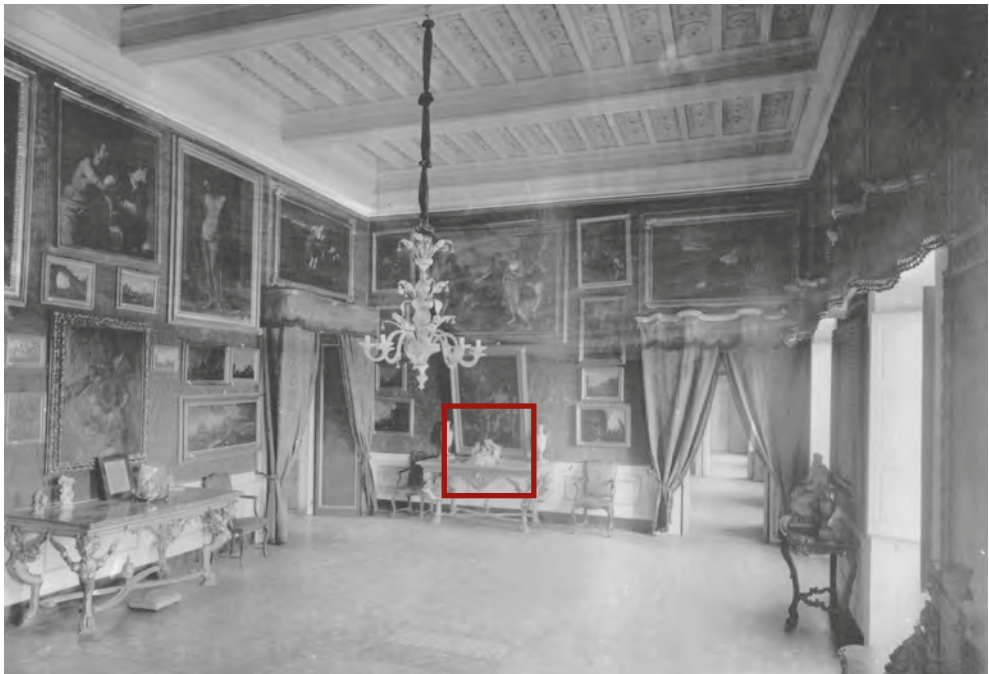
A native of Pescia, Agostino Cornacchini was a pupil of Giovanni Battista Foggini in Florence, the sculptor and court architect in the service of Cosimo III dei Medici (for an updated biographical note on Cornacchini, cf. J. Montagu in *Art in Rome* 2000, p. 251). During this period of apprenticeship in the grand-ducal capital, the young Agostino entered the graces of the Florentine scholar and collector Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri (1676-1742), of whom he became a protégé. It was Gabburri who took the artist to Rome in 1712 and introduced him into the entourage of his uncle, the powerful Pistoian cardinal, Carlo Agostino Fabroni (1651-1727).





Elevated to the purple by Clement XI Albani in 1706, Fabroni chose as his Roman residence the palace of the Marquis Francesco Maria Ruspoli all'Aracoeli, at the time available for rent, and lived there up to his death in 1727. Fabroni's residence soon became a prominent cultural salon in the Rome of Clement XI, regularly hosting antiquarians, scholars and artists (on the artistic commissions of Cardinal Fabroni, see Cola 2011). From 1714 to 1720 Agostino Cornacchini himself was guest in the Fabroni residence, and maintained affectionate and professional bonds with the cardinal even after leaving his home; indeed, it was to Cornacchini that the cardinal entrusted the execution of his funeral monument in Sant'Agostino (now lost). It was probably in Rome between 1714 and 1716 that the two marble groups were made, one depicting the *Nativity* and the other the *Deposition from the Cross*, that the cardinal bequeathed, along with books and manuscripts, to his home town, and are now held by the Biblioteca Fabroniana. The two sculptures, although made by Cornacchini at an early stage of his career, are fine expressions of a language that blends the teachings of his Tuscan master, Giovanni Battista Foggini, with milder and softer tones that, especially in the scene of the *Nativity*, achieve moments of formal exquisiteness, as can be seen in the gentle beauty of the Virgin's face (for the *Nativity* group, fig. 2, cf. R. Spinelli in *Il fato e la ragione* 2009, pp.106-107, cat. 22).

The Victoria and Albert Museum of London holds the terracotta model of the latter group which well demonstrates Cornacchini's skill in creating figures in the round (fig. 3), revealing a very characteristic treatment of surface through ample use of a toothed spatula to create streaks on the clothing simulating fabrics rippled and worn by continuous movement. The same technique is found in the group under discussion, especially to characterize the rocky surfaces in the intent of recreating



1. Palazzo Forteguerrri, Pistoia, interior with the sculpture by Cornacchini on the console of the back wall (vintage photo)



their unfixed and changing look; moreover, it should be noted that the delicate woven wicker basket that serves as a cradle for the Child bears a close resemblance to the wings of the sleeping Cupid, whose feathers are modelled with almost calligraphic skill.

In addition to the monumental sculptures for which he is perhaps best known, the sculptor's production regularly featured small-format groups, in exquisitely Arcadian taste, which gave an optimal rendering of those characteristics of grace and exactitude in execution so appreciated by contemporary patrons and in particular by Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri, who owned a bronze with the *Sleeping Endymion* and its terracotta model - identified as that of the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston (fig 4).

The delicate modelling of Endymion's head and flesh, the details of his cloak and of the foliage exemplify the freshness and immediacy of the sculptor's touch, as does the small dog at the shepherd's feet, the naturalistic rendering of which is found with the same descriptive intent also in the allegorical swan in the group under discussion. To this should be added the predilection for compositions that avoid perfect symmetry, in which the play of balance is judiciously disjointed so as to create fluid but harmonic compositions, as in the case of our terracotta and, for example, the model of *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, today in a private collection (D. Lauri, in *La fabbrica della bellezza* 2017, pp. 134-135, cat. 10). That work derives from the commission of Anna Maria Luisa dei Medici of twelve bronze groups of Biblical episodes, made by nine noted Florentine sculptors of the early eighteenth century. The terracotta with *Giuditta* and the subsequent bronze casting (Birmingham, Museum and Art Gallery)



2. AGOSTINO CORNACCHINI, *Nativity*, marble, Pistoia, Biblioteca Fabroniana

3. AGOSTINO CORNACCHINI, *Nativity*, terracotta, London, Victoria and Albert Museum



were done by Cornacchini in Rome in 1722 and the success of this composition is confirmed by a later porcelain version made by Gaspero Bruschi for the Manifattura Ginori between 1746 and 1750 (Los Angeles, County Museum of Art). The billows in the robe of Judith that stress the bending of the right knee with ample concentric undulations are clearly visible in the terracotta piece under discussion here, which in the drapery lifted by the swan presents an analogous and almost matching pattern. The graphic and linear cut of these folds can be considered a typical feature of Cornacchini's formal grammar as he invariably returned to it in such small-format works as those mentioned above but also in sculptures of a more monumental nature as in the figure of *Speranza* carved in white marble in 1724 for one of the niches of the Monte di Pietà chapel in Rome.

According to the data in our possession and the stylistic matches presented, one may conclude that this work must have been executed by Agostino Cornacchini in Rome in the period between his arrival in the city and about 1727, the year of the death of Cardinal Fabroni, a time in which the artist's ties with Tuscany were still very strong and could well explain the Pistoia provenance of the group in question. Since in his works the French sculptor Pierre Le Gros (1666-1719) maintained a strong compositional link with the high Baroque of Algardi, offering compositions in which the pictorialism and decorative aspects never overstep the plasticity and centrality of the figures, the previous conjectured attribution to him must be rejected.

Adriano Amendola  
Cristiano Giometti



4. AGOSTINO CORNACCHINI, *Endymion*, terracotta,  
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts

## 2-3. CARLO BONAVIA

Active in Naples between 1751 and 1788

### *View of Baiae with the Temple of Diana*

ca. 1760

Signed “Carlo Bonavia p.” at the bottom centre  
Oil on canvas, 80 × 159 cm

### *View of Baiae with the Aragonese Castle and the Temple of Venus*

ca. 1760

Signed “Carlo Bonavia p.” at the bottom right  
Oil on canvas, 80 × 159 cm  
PROVENANCE: Rome, private collection

A condensation of the interests stirred in travellers on the Grand Tour by the territory of the Kingdom of Naples—nature, archaeology, folklore—this enchanting pendant presents two views characteristic of the Bonavia repertoire. The consistent and stylistically compact production of the painter, circumscribed to the period—on the sole basis of his dated works in absence of personal data—between 1751 and 1788, and to be understood as the development of the local post-Rosian tradition embodied by such figures as Leonardo Coccorante or Michele Pagano (a development undoubtedly prompted by contact with foreign



1. CARLO BONAVIA, *View of Baiae with the Temple of Diana*, Marano di Castenaso, Molinari Pradelli collection

















genre painters), consists almost exclusively, in fact, of representations of the coast and the countryside around Naples, mostly combined with imaginary elements. In the first of the two canvases, the subject is a transfiguration in picturesque key—*i.e.*, according to an emotive conception of landscape in line with the contemporary models of Claude-Joseph Vernet (Bonavia's chief point of reference)—of one of the most famous monuments of the classical age and most representative of the Phlegraean area, the thermal baths rotunda mistakenly called the “temple of Diana” by the local antiquarian tradition (see Mazzella 1591, p. 97: “Not far from the temple [of Venus] one can see another of great magnificence, and it is almost half intact, which many believe was consecrated to Diana Lucifera because they read a few years ago on a marble cornice these words, Diana Lucifera. And more was conjectured from the many marbles that are around there, where are sculpted dogs, deer and mullets, all of which are animals sacred to the goddess [...]”).

A variant of the canvas in question, ‘cut’ to the temple alone, is in the Molinari Pradelli collection (Giuseppe Porzio, in *Le stanze delle muse* 2014, pp. 288–289, no. 99) (fig. 1); but the same building also recurs in another fortunate composition by Bonavia, which alternatively proposes a central view: mention should be made at least of the signed and dated 1757 version belonging to the National Trust, Basildon Park (inv. No. 266902), previously on the London antiques market (Constable 1959, pp. 22 [fig. 4], 26, no. 5, reported at Agnews by Spinosa 1987, p. 157, no. 276), and the other belonging again to the Galleria Carlo Virgilio (Nicola Spinosa, in *A Picture Gallery* 2012, pp. 68–71, no. 20) (cat. 4).

No less iconic is the second image of Baiae, centred on the looming bulk of the Aragonese castle (renovated, however, in the viceregal period) and on a second archaeological find, dubbed temple of Venus by sixteenth century scholars, following the discovery of an effigy of the goddess (Mazzella 1591, p. 196), but—like that of Diana—the remains of a thermal complex of the age of



2. CARLO BONAVIA, *View of Baiae with the Aragonese Castle and the Temple of Venus*, St Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum

Hadrian. Among the versions of this view notable is certainly the replica dated 1758, in similar format but with slight differences especially in the small figures that animate the marina, in the collections of the St Petersburg Hermitage (inv. no. GE-10119) (fig. 2).

The success of the two conceptions is also evinced by the faithful printed versions done by Antoine Cardon in plates XI and XII of the *Raccolta delle più interessanti vedute della città di Napoli e luoghi circonvicini* published in Naples around 1764–1766 (Negro Spina 1989, pp. 70–73); in the engravings, however, the two ruins are called “temple of Mercury” and “of Diana” respectively.

As for the chronology of the two works, the author’s serial practice makes precise dating difficult; however, the watercolour transparencies of light seem to me to bring them close to the period of the barely known *View of Santa Lucia with the Panatica* in the Museo della Badia di Cava de’ Tirreni, of 1762 (fig. 3), which enables re-attribution to Bonavia of the more famous version in the Museo di San Martino in Naples (inv. no. 5196), variously designated to Pietro Fabris and more recently even to Thomas Jones (Abbate 2009, p. 290).

Giuseppe Porzio



3. CARLO BONAVIA, *View of Santa Lucia with the Panatica*, Cava de’ Tirreni, Museo della Badia della Santissima Trinità

#### 4. CARLO BONAVIA

Active in Naples between 1751 and 1788

##### *Imaginary Landscape with the Temple of Diana at Baiae*

ca. 1770

Oil on canvas, 130 × 195 cm

PROVENANCE: France, private collection

BIBLIOGRAPHY: N. Spinosa, in *A Picture Gallery* 2012, pp. 68-71, no. 20.

This painting is an 'imaginary' depiction of a rocky landscape featuring a small waterfall and a pond, on the banks of which several young women are undressing before bathing. Presumably this is an intended reference to the mythological episode of Diana bathing, particularly given that the centre of this fantastical landscape is occupied by a depiction of the ruined Temple of Diana that still stands – within a group of other Roman era ruins including the Temple of Venus – on the coast at Baiae, near Pozzuoli.

The composition is almost identical to the 80 x 122 cm picture that, along with its pair, *Coastal Landscape with the Villa delle Cannonate at Posillipo*, went up for sale in London some time back. Both works were correctly attributed to Bonavia by W. G. Constable (1960, pp. 371-374, fig. 4, written in collaboration with T. McCormick and with a reproduction of the *Coastal Landscape*). The pair was also published by N. Spinosa (1987, no. 277, p. 157, and 1989, second edition 1993, no. 65, p. 192, figs. 61-62). Given the remarkable quality of the paintwork, the version we have here was in all likelihood painted around 1770. It is also in excellent condition and within a fine period frame. The London version differs both in its reduced size and, most importantly, by the inclusion to the left-hand side of several male figures together with peasant women instead of the female bathers. To the bottom right-hand side of the picture there is also a young man and woman seated on a rock, with a dog next to them, engrossed in amiable conversation.

Although the precise location and date of his birth are unknown (either Rome or Naples, probably the latter), Carlo Bonavia's existence is amply documented by his prolific output of landscapes. Largely imaginary 'views', these works do however feature an arbitrary and effective inclusion of existing natural features. This combination of imaginary and real elements derives from a long-standing tradition in Neapolitan art circles, with important examples already in the early 17th century in the works of Domenico Gargiulo, known as Micco Spadaro. Most of these existing natural features are sections of the coastline around Naples or in the immediate countryside inland, with Roman ruins such as the Temple of Diana at Baiae or the Temple of Venus, or more recent – and still existing – constructions such as Castel dell'Ovo in Naples, Castelnuovo, the Villa delle Cannonate or the Aragonese Castle of Ischia. Other works feature buildings that were demolished towards the end of the 18th and into the 19th century, such as the Lanterna in the port of Naples. There are also a number of depictions of unremarkable houses in the countryside or by the sea, most of which have since vanished.

In purely stylistic terms, experts have already established a close connection (particularly Constable in 1960 and Spinosa in 1987, also on pp. 21-22) between Bonavia and the French artist Claude-Joseph Vernet. During his sojourn in Rome, Vernet travelled to Naples in 1737 and 1746, where he completed a number of drawings from life and several conventional views of the city that stand out for their theatrical and visual modernity. These include Naples seen from the Marinella with the Torrione del Carmine, or from





the beach at Mergellina with the city spread out as if in a great, open-air theatre (Paris, Musée du Louvre; United Kingdom, collection of the Duke of Nothumberland). He also completed some finely detailed depictions of life at the Court of Charles de Bourbon (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte). At times, the solutions adopted by Bonavia in his works were so similar to Vernet's in dramatic and pictorial terms, particularly his use of light and lavish chromaticism, that until recently the two artists were sometimes confused. In relation to Vernet's production from his time in Rome and Naples, Bonavia's 'imaginary' landscapes stand out for his masterful inclusion of Roman ruins, as well as for his refined accomplishment in depicting human figures of varied extraction, from peasants to travellers, fishermen, gentlemen and ladies. A case in point is the canvas we have here, where the figures captured in normal, everyday poses enliven the landscape by lending it greater credibility and informality. Interestingly, Bonavia also completed a number of noteworthy night scenes of the Vesuvius erupting (Naples, Museo di San Martino, Alisio collection), some of which predate the vaster production in this genre of another French artist working in Naples at the time –Jean-Jacques Volaire. The Temple of Diana and the nearby Temple of Venus were frequently painted, both from life and in imaginary compositions, from as early as the 17th century and throughout the 18th century during the protracted period known as the Grand Tour d'Italie, by Italian and international painters. The great apse featured in our painting still stands today and is all that remains of a Roman era building believed to be a temple dedicated to Diana, the goddess of the hunt, on account of a series of marble bas-reliefs with animals and various references to hunting that were unearthed in its vicinity. Subsequent research has revealed that the structure is in fact probably all that is left of a circular plan palazzo erected by order of Emperor Alexander Severus (222-235 AD) as a commemorative sanctuary for the imperial family.

*Nicola Spinosa*



## 5. JOHANN HEINRICH WILHELM TISCHBEIN

Haina 1751–Eutin 1829

### *The Condemnation of Julius Sabinus and his Consort Epponina*

ca. 1783

Oil on canvas, 107 × 145 cm

PROVENANCE: Naples, private collection; Rome, private collection

I have seen this painting in the original and judge it to have been executed at the beginning of J.H.W. Tischbein's second Roman sojourn, around 1783. An infrared reflectograph clearly reveals the preparatory drawing on the canvas whose handling confirms the attribution to Tischbein. The work is complete in large portions, incomplete in others. Instructive is a comparison of the composition and subject matter with other paintings Tischbein produced in 1783 and 1784.

The chosen subject is rare, although not unknown in French art, and shows the scene described in Tacitus and Plutarch in which Julius Sabinus and his consort Epponina are condemned to death by command of Emperor Vespasian. Julius Sabinus, an aristocrat of the Lingone tribe in Gaul, claimed descent through his great grandmother from Julius Caesar. He was one of the leaders of the uprising against Rome in 70 AD in which the combined forces of the Gaulish and Germanic tribes attempted to create an independent Gaulish-Germanic kingdom. The uprising was suppressed and Sabinus hid in the basement of his ruined dwelling where he was succoured by Epponina who clandestinely bore him two children. Nine years elapsed before Sabinus was discovered and condemned to death by Vespasian in Rome. Epponina continued to oppose Roman authority and was condemned to the same fate.

Tacitus and Livius detail the events while Plutarch offers an embellished version in which Epponina is seen as an exemplar of the highest love: upon learning that Vespasian will not pardon Sabinus, Epponina elects to follow him to death. Indignant, Vespasian condemned her to an equal fate. Tischbein's literary source is not Plutarch's detailed account but rather another, as Carlo Virgilio Jr. has recently and convincingly demonstrated (I extend Carlo Virgilio Jr. my especial thanks). This source is namely Henri Richer (1685–1748), a well-known French dramaturge of his time, who added other characters to the recount in his tragedy *Sabinus and Epponina* (1734): Elise, a Gaulish lady and Epponina's confidant, Sinorix and Alberic, slaves enfranchised by Sabinus, as well as followers and further female intimates.

Our painting shows Julius Sabinus, draped in a distinguishing purple, and Epponina in the dramatic moments in the dungeon following their condemnation to death. To the right, flanked by armed minions, is the official who has just read the death sentence from a scroll. One of the armed men prepares to lead Sabinus away by pulling an iron chain shackled to the heroic prisoner's right hand. Sabinus' posture evokes the antique *Horse Tamers* although here it is Sabinus whom is led. A further armed man is depicted in the background doorway, intent on assisting at the event. Sabinus' shackled prison companion is depicted in the pose of the suffering Laocoön. Equally condemned, Epponina presses herself against her beloved, whilst their two small sons, Epponina's female confidant and Sabinus' liberated followers take their painful leave of the pair with expressive gestures.





The composition and subject of this unfinished work is close to Tischbein's early masterpiece *Conradin von Schwaben and Friedrich von Österreich receive their condemnation to death whilst playing chess* (1783/84; Stiftung Schloß Friedenstein, Gotha). Similarly to our painting, the death sentence is read out by a man from a scroll; the two condemned princes react with noble composure in contrast to the wide variety of reactions of the other individuals present. Both paintings display the influence of Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) and Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698-1783) with whom Tischbein stayed in Zurich before his move to Rome in 1783.

The composition is given an internal tension through the physiognomies which display a range of expressions in reaction to the dreadful event. Lavater's theories are translated into visually various compositions of many figures: the face of every witness conveys the character of the individual and the feeling contained in his or her soul. Both style and contemporaneity suggest *Julius Sabinus* and *Conradin* were conceived in parallel: similar events with similarly characterized physiognomies and a variety of reactions are seen in antique and then medieval costume. In contrast, however, are the completion of *Conradin* and the incompleteness of the Gaulish-Roman *Julius Sabinus*.

Tischbein's intensive study of historical and literary themes, a specialized and rarefied field even then, was promoted in Lavater's circle through the mentoring of the learned Johann Jakob Bodmer. A trained theologian, Bodmer was professor of Helvetic history and politics at the Zurich Gymnasium as well as a pioneer in the rediscovery of Middle High German poetry and the translator of Homer and John Milton. Bodmer encouraged a greater appreciation of medieval themes and an enlarged vision away from a concentration on pure Greek and Roman antiquity. Bodmer's influence is seen not only in Tischbein's innovative *Conradin* but almost certainly in *Sabinus*, an historical theme with contemporary relevance given the then burgeoning nationalism in France and Germany (for Tischbein's development as a history painter from the spirit of his Zurich style, cf.: Büttner 1984, pp. 100-119; Mildenerberger 1989, pp. 75-94; Reindl 1991 pp. 55-67; Mildenerberger 1994, pp. 280-307; Mildenerberger 2003, pp. 19-52; Mildenerberger 2007, pp. 165-181, colour plates pp. 62-63.). Earlier still, Tischbein's uncle and formative teacher, Johann Heinrich Tischbein der Ältere (1722-89), had engaged with similar themes in his painting of the Germanic fighter against Roman dominion, *Hermann the Cheruscan* (1758) - a subject that Tischbein himself was later to represent. In iconographic terms, Sabinus could be situated in either France or Germany given the waxing nationalist sentiment in both countries.

Similarly novel approaches developed in France, seen in the painting by Nicolas Bernard Lépicié (1735-1784), *The Landing of William the Conqueror in England*, displayed at the Salon of 1765 to much praise. In analogous fashion to Tischbein's *Sabinus*, Lépicié's painting was likely also inspired by a theatrical piece given that a patriotic tragedy against England, *The Siege of Calais* by Du Belloy (1727-75), was triumphantly performed in the same year, 1765.

Residing in Zurich when he received Duke Ernst von Sachsen-Gotha's bursary for a return study trip to Italy, Tischbein was clearly aware of the new tendencies in France since he asked for permission (refused) to visit Paris first. Tischbein had earlier planned to travel to Paris towards the end of his first Roman sojourn in 1781 but had been prevented by a lack of funds (Beck 1854, p. 267, letter to Goethe, 13.04.1782). On 29 July 1782 Tischbein wrote to Goethe in Gotha in the hope of support for his plan (Ibid., pp. 272 ff.); he then turned to the Duke, "... I believe that



it is not so necessary to return to Italy immediately ... in France there are a number of things which I would like to study” (Ibid., p.275.). Tischbein renewed his case without success to the easily irritated Duke, “... and I must now make haste and not waste my best years. I want to see again if I can paint a picture – and this I want to do in France where the most freely executed paintings are made. By this I do not mean those extravagant paintings which issue from the most recent French painters’ sense of native intelligence without being bound to a subject of which your highness would approve ...” (Ibid., pp. 278-79).

The impression given is that Tischbein was thinking mainly of these ‘great’ innovative paintings of unusual themes when he requested yet again unsuccessfully to travel to Paris. When he later arrived in Rome, Tischbein gravitated towards the city’s Académie de France, befriending French artists: in the theatricality and colour of *Julius Sabinus* we see reflected contemporary French classicism.

*Hermann Mildenerberger*



## 6. CARLO ALBACINI

Fabriano 1734<sup>2</sup>–Rome 1813

### *Bust of Virgil*

ca. 1790

Marble, h 58 cm

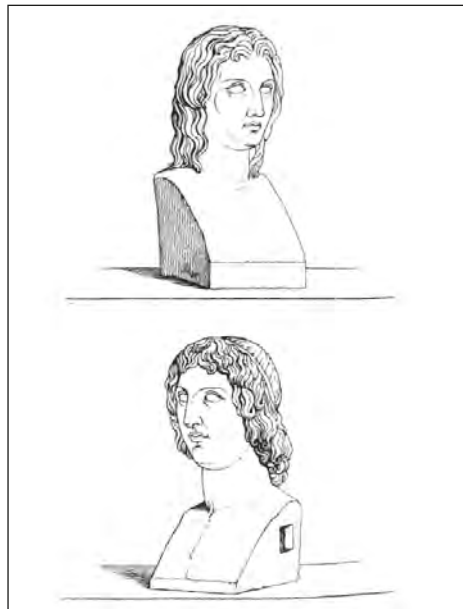
Inscribed on the front of the base: "VIRGILIUS"

PROVENANCE: Lombardy, private collection

This sculpture is a copy of the celebrated Roman *Bust of Virgil* displayed in the Sala dei Filosofi ('The Philosophers' Room) in the Capitoline Museum in Rome (fig. 1). The Capitoline bust dates to the second century AD and in turn derives from a lost Greek original of the fourth century BC. Scholars in the eighteenth century attempted to identify Virgil's true features and the antique bust in the Campidoglio was among the objects of their inquiry. Gian Girolamo Carli (1719-86) cited the Capitoline bust in his *Dissertazione* in the belief it bore the poet's true likeness, noting that it had been installed under Pope Clement XII in the 'great' Capitoline Museum and that 'all the antiquaries of Rome were of accord that it was Virgil' (Carli 1797, pp.23-27). In *Iconografia Romana*, in contrast, Ennio Quirino Visconti (1751-1818) believed that the then supposed portraits of the celebrated poet, including those incised on gems and in editions of his works, as well as marble, were all apocryphal except for a portrait miniature contained in a codex in the Vatican Library. Visconti contended that 'long hair was not customary among Romans. These heads represent mythological figures.' (Visconti 1818, pp. 375-76)



1. *Bust of Virgil*, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, marble; Capitoline Museums, Rome



2. *Il Museo Capitolino illustrato da M. Bottari e N. Foggini*, vol.I, pl. 2, 1819

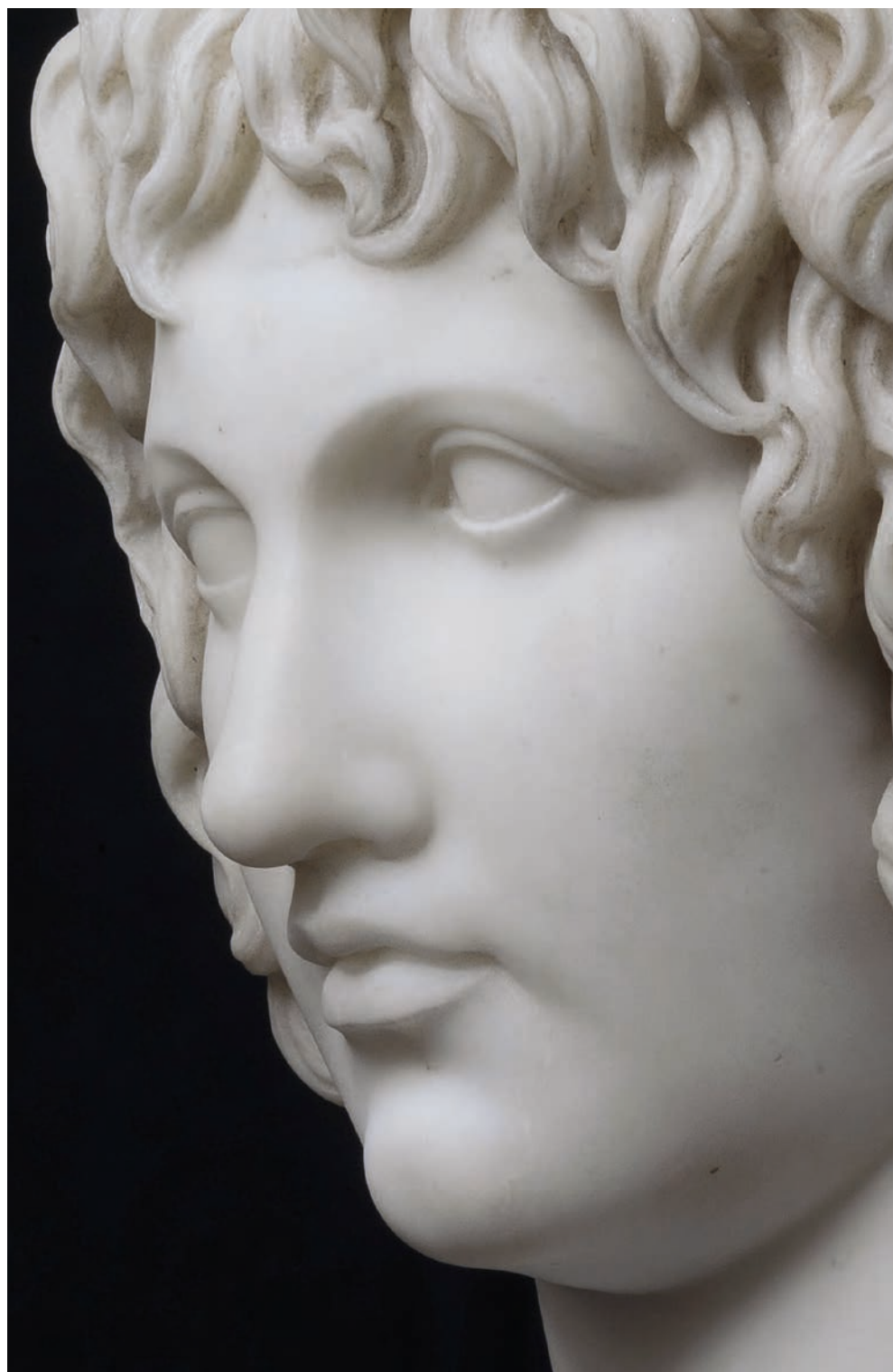


Giovanni Gaetano Bottari (1689-1775) drew attention to Virgil's head and torso in *Il Museo Capitolino* in which it was illustrated as the second plate of the first volume (fig. 2). Bottari also cited portraits on gems and coins and in statuary identified by Visconti and other scholars concerned with Virgil's true physiognomy and concluded that "This Capitoline bust represents him [Virgil] in most material lineaments but with a reserved air". Bottari emphasized the difficulty in identifying Virgil's true features, caused by Emperor Caligola's "move to abolish" Virgil's then many portraits, but confirmed their presence in libraries (Bottari 1819, pp. 26-30). The reclamation of antiquity, begun in the eighteenth-century, and continued in the nineteenth, resulted in the production and circulation of copies and like-sized replicas of works of the past: Carlo Albacini's bust modelled on that in the Capitoline Museum is an example of the rediscovered taste for the antique. Albacini was one of the most prolific artists engaged in the making of marble copies of the celebrated works of antiquity which travellers and collectors could see in Rome's museums and private collections. Knowledge of Albani's career is not without lacunae but it is likely that he was born in Fabriano around 1734 and began his training in the studio of the sculptor Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (c.1716-99). For the greatest collectors of the day, as well as the major royal houses of Italy and abroad, Albacini produced sculptures after the antique as well as original works and ornamental pieces such as clocks, fireplaces and *surtout de table* (centrepieces for dining tables). Albacini's workshop became one of the largest in Rome, an enterprise involving dozens of collaborators and other celebrated artists such as Luigi Valadier (1726-85) and his son Giuseppe (1762-1839), Giacomo Raffaelli (1753-1836) and Vincenzo Pacetti (1746-1820) (Rotili 2018, pp. 245-72).

Replicas in marble were in great demand from patrons and were a distinctive part of Albacini's output. The sculptor's work as a restorer of antique statuary in such collections as the Borghese and Vatican gave him the opportunity to take the casts from originals necessary for the making of exact copies. Albacini remained in close contact with Cavaceppi until the latter's death in 1799, coming into possession of more senior sculptor's casts of works in the Capitoline Museum. That Albacini employed Cavaceppi's casts is demonstrated by a number of securely attributed copies such as the *Amazon*, *Cupid and Psyche*, and *Flora* now in the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid (Howard 1991, pp. 200-17).

The present bust is a notable example of Albacini's artistic production, sculpted from a beautiful piece of unveined statuary marble, tending in places to a warm honey colour. It differs from the Capitoline bust in the lower part of the chest which is here curved to facilitate its collocation on a pedestal of very similar design to those customarily made in Rome in the second half of the eighteenth century. Between the chest and pedestal is a simple tablet, cusped at each end, on which is carved the name VIRGILIUS. Similar supports are seen for heads securely attributed to Albacini such as the bust of the *Emperor Lucius Verus* recently sold at Sotheby's New York (31 January 2019, lot 242).

Such a pedestal supports Albacini's copy of the *Bust of Alexander the Great* in the Capitoline Museum, commissioned as part of a series by Henry Blundell (1724-1810) in the 1770s, and now in Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery (Vaughan 1991, pp. 183-97). The *Alexander* and *Virgil* are both highly idealized and each head has an identical *taenia* or twisted headband, a princely attribute (fig. 3). Bottari records *Virgil's* headdress as well as the crown of laurels typically employed in his representation, a combination likely intended to convey his status as the prince of poets.

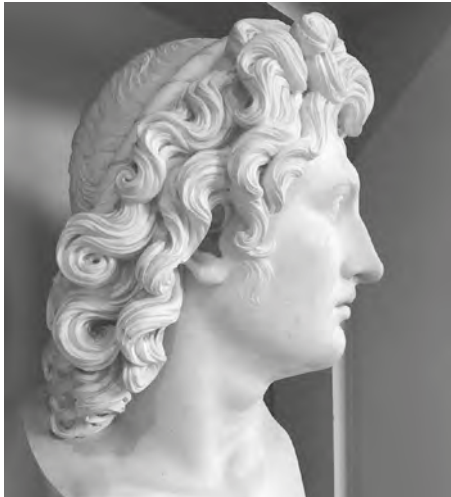


Close examination reveals such details as small dots on the bottom of the right neck, traces of the pointing employed to accurately translate the measurements of the (probably cast) model to the marble. This technique was common in eighteenth-century Roman workshops and its command by Albacini is demonstrated by the marks seen on many of his celebrated works. Albacini drilled deep and precise holes to create the wide furrows of the abundant locks of hair, recalling other sculptures by the artist: Virgil's full oval face, round jaw, mouth and fold of the eyes are similar to those, for example, of Flora's head in Albacini's half-sized replica of the *Capitoline Flora* at the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields (fig.4).

Albacini's *Virgil* belonged to the Villa Rosales in Casnate con Bernate in Como. The villa was restructured by the architect Simone Cantoni (1739-1818) from 1786 and this may provide a date for the sculpture since artworks were probably commissioned to complete the redecoration (a commonplace of patronal patronage) (Passinetti, Spiriti 1999, pp. 62 ff). Another link may be Giuseppe Franchi (1731-1806), a close friend whom Albacini knew from Rome and who in 1776 was appointed professor of sculpture at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan: both Cantoni and Franchi frequented the circles of the architect Giuseppe Piermarini (1734-1808), a possible point of contact (Donati 2014, p. 214).

The Capitoline *Virgil* was a rare subject for representation but one, nevertheless, much appreciated by cognoscenti. The present replica accords with the style and technique of Albacini's sculptures, a response to the antiquarian tastes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries.

Valeria Rotili



3. CARLO ALBACINI, *Bust of Alexander the Great* (detail), 1770s, marble, h. 69 cm; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool



4. CARLO ALBACINI, *Capitoline Flora* (detail), marble, 1770s, h. 103 cm; Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields





## 7. GIOVANNI DOMENICO CHERUBINI

Rome 1754–1815

### *Portrait of the Nobleman Daniele Ippolito degli Oddi*

1793

Oil on canvas, 73 × 61,5 cm

PROVENANCE: Padua, Daniele Ippolito degli Oddi; Padua, Arrigoni degli Oddi; Florence, Ruffo di Calabria

This painting is unsigned and without inscriptions, and over time the identification of both the sitter and artist had been lost. It is possible, nevertheless, to identify the gentleman portrayed by iconographic comparison and by tracing the provenance from the most recent to the possibly original owner - as well as make a convincing attribution to the artist based on archival and published sources. The rediscovered identification of both the sitter and artist offers insights into the artistic milieu of Antonio Canova and the reappraisal of a portraitist of not inconsiderable talent in late eighteenth-century Rome. The portrait comes from the Villa del Monte, between Certaldo and San Gimignano, property of the Ruffo di Calabria family. In Florence in 1930 Prince Ruffo di Calabria came into the possession of artworks from the Paduan branch of the patrician degli Oddi family. Among the newly acquired works were a series of plaster casts made from marble sculptures by Antonio Canova (1757–1822) which Canova had donated to the Venetian ambassador in Rome, Girolamo

Zulian. Canova's gift to Zulian was in thanks for the latter's support during the sculptor's early years in Rome, when welcomed by the circle of artists and connoisseurs of fine arts who met by him in Palazzo Venezia and gratified by the gift of a marble from which to derive a demonstrative work conceived to rival the antique, the *Theseus and the Minotaur* (1782; Victoria and Albert Museum, London), that was to inaugurate a new era in sculpture. Upon returning to Italy in 1788, Zulian created a Canova gallery in his Paduan residence, employing the Venetian architect Giannantonio Selva (1751–1819) in its design. The new gallery was decorated with Canova's plaster casts and intended to receive the second marble version of *Psyche* (1793–94; Kunsthalle, Bremen) - to be recompensed with the striking of a gold medal in honour of the artist. Zulian died in 1795 and his Canova casts descended to cousins, five brothers of the Priuli family, while the marble returned to his author, who ceded it to Giuseppe Mangili, a rich Venetian collector. A number of reliefs



1. ANTONIO D'ESTE, *Busto di Daniele Ippolito degli Oddi*, vintage photo, Padua, Biblioteca dell'Orto Botanico, Iconoteca dei botanici





by Canova belonging to the Priuli are now in the Museo Correr in Venice; Zulian's other Canova casts which had passed to the Priuli were acquired by a cultured member of the Paduan aristocracy, Daniele Ippolito degli Oddi (1771-1854). The Paduan had earlier sojourned in Rome 1792-93 with the intent of a Grand Tourist to gain instruction in the arts of design and architecture and where he met Canova (Pavanello 1993; Honour 2007). In Rome degli Oddi commissioned a portrait bust from Antonio D'Este (1755-1837), soon to be appointed director of Canova's studio (Sforza 2001, n. 4, p. 275). D'Este's bust of degli Oddi is known from an old photograph (Biblioteca dell'Orto Botanico, Padua; fig. 1) and clearly represents the same subject as our portrait. The similarity of age as well as iconography of degli Oddi in the two works suggests that they were both executed in Rome in 1793. Degli Oddi's life is recorded in an obituary by Andrea Cittadella Vigodarzere (Sorgato 1856, p. 26): degli Oddi returned to his native Padua where he practised as an architect, working as a Deputy to public building works, and constructing for himself the Villa Arrigoni degli Oddi a Monselice. Degli Oddi continued to collect art and frequent artistic circles, corresponding with Canova whom he hosted during the latter's journey to Venice in 1795 to install the *Monument to Admiral Angelo Emo* (1793) in the Arsenal. Degli Oddi also regularly corresponded with D'Este in Rome as well as Canova's housekeeper and dilettante painter, Luigia Giuli (c.1746-1811), by whom Degli Oddi owned a portrait of Canova (auctioned at Pandolfini in Florence on 27 October 2008). Papers published by degli Oddi's descendent, Ettore Arrigoni degli Oddi (Arrigoni degli Oddi 1921-22a; 1921-22b; 1922-23), record that degli Oddi collected such objects as cameos by Giovanni



2. GIOVANNI DOMENICO CHERUBINI, *Portrait of Marquis Luigi Amat di Corso*, Sarroch, Cagliari, Villa d'Orri

Pikler (1734-91), micromosaics, and prints by Giovanni Volpato (1740-1803) and Raphael Morghen (1758-1833). The papers contain much of interest in relation to Canova's artistic circles such as recounts by the British architect Charles Heathcote Tatham (1772-1842) whom degli Oddi met through D'Este. D'Este reminded degli Oddi of the latter's painted portrait executed in Rome, writing to him on 19 October 1794, 'Forgive me if I take the liberty of commending to you someone notable for his probity and merit in art: the painter Corradini, who had the honour of painting your portrait, is thinking of coming to visit the *maestri* of our *Scuola* (may they never die)' (Arrigoni degli Oddi 1822-23, pp. 429-30). An artist called Corradini is not documented in Rome at that time: it is likely that the name of the artist was improperly transcribed for publication. A similar name is that of

Giovanni Domenico Cherubini whose style accords with that of our portrait which demonstrates the influence - albeit in a more modern and limpid key - of the long-lived Austria painter in Rome, Anton von Maron (1733-1808). Indeed, Cherubini was von Maron's pupil, adopted son and then heir, living for forty years as the artist's 'youth' in their lodgings behind S. Maria in Via in Rome (Michel 1996, pp. 402-404). Cherubini remained in his master's shadow and is known by few paintings, although of superb quality, such as the portrait of the painter of miniatures, *Sofia Clerk Giordano* (1778-1829) (1801; Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome; fig. 3), a portrait described as 'felicitously influenced by the more delicate von Maron of the late years' (Susinno 1974, p. 270). Another of Cherubini's few known works is a portrait of Marquis *Luigi Amat di Sorso* (Villa d'Orri, Sarroch; fig. 2) which shows the same elevated pictorial qualities as our *Daniele Ippolito degli Oddi*. Cherubini adopted von Maron's name upon his master's death, signing as Antonio two portraits exhibited at the celebrated survey of Italian portraiture, *Mostra del ritratto italiano*, held in Florence in 1911 (Anna Capalti born Serafini and Rosalia Tarnowska born countess Czacka). Cherubini's portrait depicts a clear light falling over the sitter's noble physiognomy and elegant morning suit, achieved in a loose pictorial technique giving a natural effect without the labouring of minute details. The solidity of degli Oddi's pose, combined with the depth of his gaze, the naturalness of his countenance and nobility, convey an introspection underlined in the characterisation of the sitter by Cittadella Vigodarzere, 'His nature and manners were all his own, or, as one says, original: he possessed an imperturbable equanimity, was always of good spirit without ever breaking into laughter, and was of resolute opinion, conveyed with singular impassibleness; he could appear cold when struggling for the others. He did not vaunt his wealth but neither did he affect unawareness of his status.'

*Stefano Grandesso*



3. GIOVANNI DOMENICO CHERUBINI, *Portrait of Sofia Clerk Giordano*, 1801, Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca

## 8. GIUSEPPE ERRANTE

Trapani 1760–Rome 1821

### *Self-portrait*

ca. 1790

Oil on canvas, 93 x 69 cm

On the typewritten cartouche glued on the back of the canvas: “AUTORITRATTO ERRANTE GIUSEPPE / da Trapani, nato nel 1760, morto nel 1821 a Roma / amico del Bossi a Milano ove dimorò. / Dipinse a fresco a Civitavecchia la cupola del- / la chiesa della morte: a Roma collocò nel 1784 / nella Chiesa di S. Vincenzo e Anastasio un suo / quadro fatto all’età di 24 anni. Nella pinacoteca / Fardelliana a Trapani vi sono suoi dipinti. Fu / seppellito a Roma in S. Salvatore in onda, ma il / suo monumento è a Trapani, eretto dalla moglie. / Dei molti suoi quadri scrisse l’Abate Cancellieri. / Egli lasciò due opuscoli sui colori e valse pur / come Maestro di scherma (Dal Dizionario dei Pittori Italiani compilato da Antonietta Maria Bessone Aurely. Stima L. 6.000. Flli. Porta 1926.”.

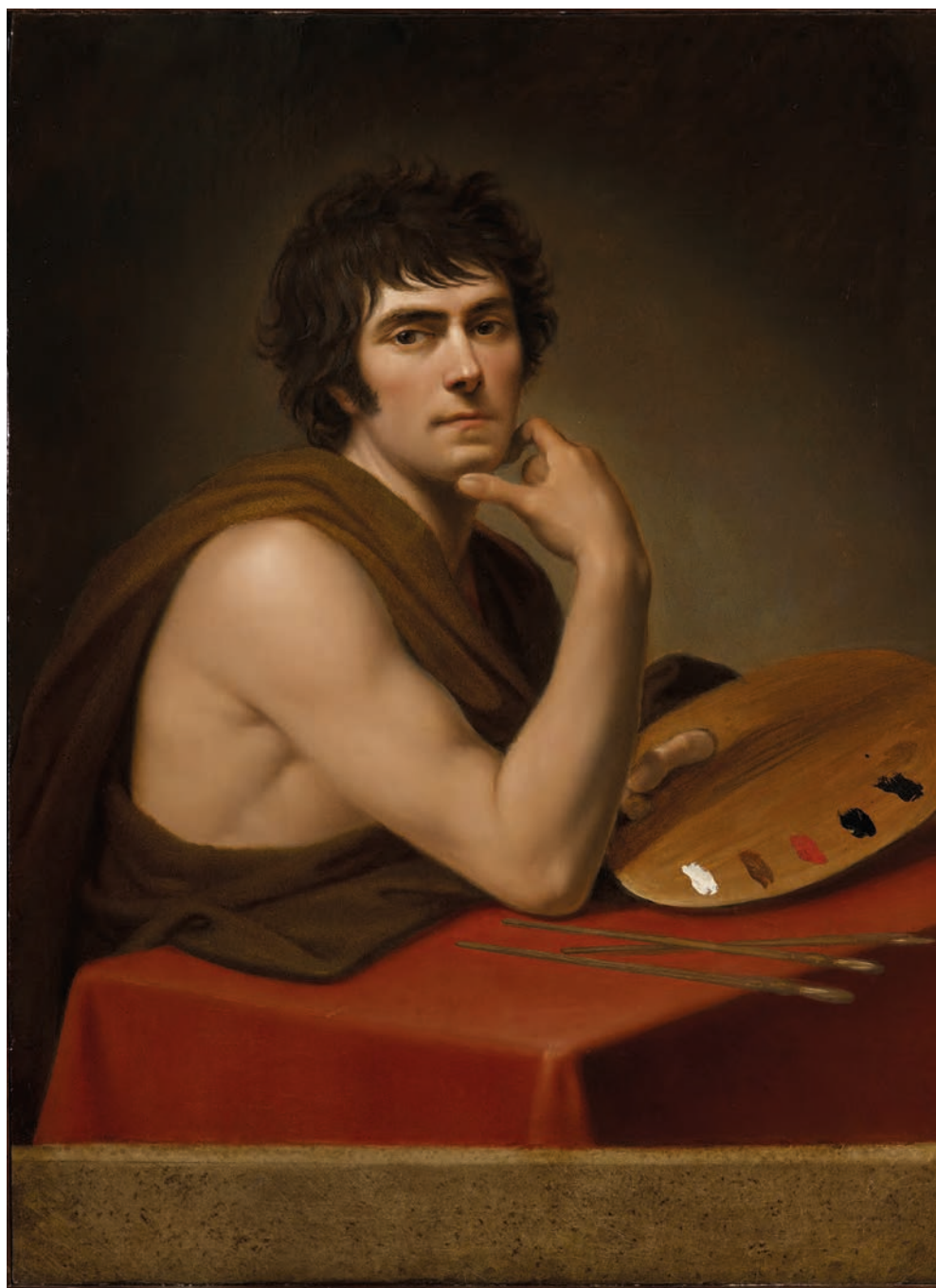
PROVENANCE: Milan, private collection

The work of Giuseppe Errante, a Sicilian painter who was a leading figure in Neoclassicism in Rome, Milan and Naples, has been mostly lost, above all the most significant works mentioned by the sources and described with particular amplitude in what remains as the most important for the reconstruction of his biography and production, the *Memorie raccolte da Francesco Cancellieri intorno alla vita ed alle opere del Pittore Cavaliere Giuseppe Errante di Trapani defunto in Roma a’ XVI di febbraio nell’ anno MDCCCXXI*, Roma, presso Francesco Bourliè, 1824. But also see the obituary published in 1821 in “Effemeridi letterarie di Roma” and the recent monograph by S. Valenti, *Giuseppe Errante pittore trapanese*, Trapani 2011 (which lists the nucleus of works held by the Museo Pepoli of Trapani). While the entry, to which the cartouche refers, appears in the *Dizionario dei pittori italiani* published in Citta di Castello by Antonietta Maria Bessone Aurelj in 1915, of which there were later editions, in 1926 and 1928.

After his brilliant debut in Rome, where he frescoed the ceiling of the Sala Pompeiana in Palazzo Altieri with *The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche*, and his frecoes of the *Souls in Purgatory* in the church of Santa Maria della Morte in Civitavecchia, and his work for Ferdinando IV of Naples, for whom he made the painting *Leda with Jupiter Disguised as a Swan*, Errante moved to Milan, fleeing from Caserta where he had been accused of plotting against the king.

The period in Milan was the most brilliant of his career, not least because of the special relationship with Giuseppe Bossi and the importance of the works produced, such as the large painting (lost) inspired by the Greek legend *The Beauty Contest* done for Giovanni Battista Sommariva, the greatest collector of the period, or the paintings on mythological and allegorical subjects presented at the *Esposizione* organized in Brera in 1805 for the crowning of Napoleon as King of Italy. The most admired was *Count Ugolino and his Sons in the Tower*, now of unknown whereabouts but known through an engraving, which anticipated the Romantic taste proposing the famous Dantean theme. Worth remembering among the allegorical paintings celebrating Napoleon is that done for Sommariva in 1801, *Napoleon as*





*Hercules Pacifere* (Allegory of the Cisalpina Republic, now in the Musée National des Châteaux de Malmaison et Bois-Préau (*Napoleone e la Repubblica italiana*, 2002, pp. 112, 169-170).

With his move in 1810 to Naples, where Gioacchino Murat had called him to direct the Accademia di Belle Arti and where he remained for ten years, his activity as painter waned.

As for his portraits, many of them documented by Cancellieri, who praised their “most expressive likeness”, they, too, are lost, a fact that makes significant the finding of this very fine *Selfportrait*, all the rarer since we know again from Cancellieri that he was a very reserved man, uneasy with praise and self-celebration, to the point of declaring “I always felt repugnance at doing my Portrait”. His capacities as a portrait painter are confirmed by such a masterpiece in the genre, within the ambit of Italian Neoclassicism, as the extraordinary *Portrait of the Noble Francesca Ghirardi Lechi with her daughter Carolina* of 1800-1801 (Modena, Antonia Tonci Rizzi collection), which immortalizes one of the beauties of the period, a woman admired by the young Stendhal and depicted also by Appiani (*Napoleone e la Repubblica italiana*, 2002, pp. 135, 185). That painting is characterized by a soft grace and sensuality suggestive of Correggio, who was a model for Errante, and by the same warm golden light that we find in the *Selfportrait*.

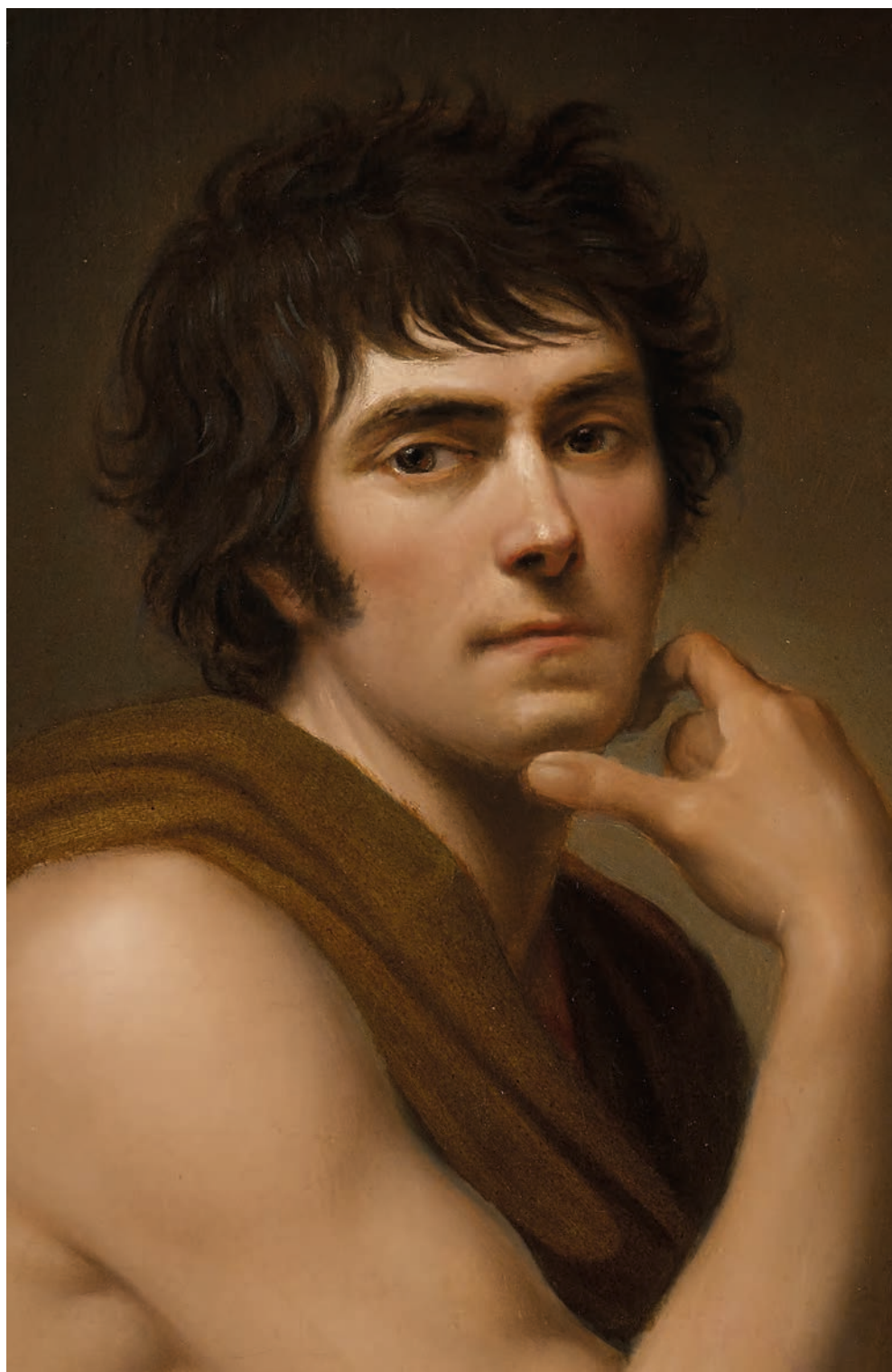
Given the youthfulness that the painter shows this painting must date to the end of the 1780s, thus close on his early successes in Rome and Naples. The set of the image, determined not least by the choice of depicting himself in classical garb and not contemporary clothing, has something heroic about it. The artist seems proud of his looks and his youth, while showing a body shaped also by the practice of fencing at which we know he was a master.



The features recall those, certainly idealised, with which Errante appears in the bust inserted into the Monument, commissioned by his widow from the Sicilian sculptor Leonardo Pennino, realized in 1831 for the church, now cathedral, of San Lorenzo in Trapani, where it is still to be found (fig. 1). He is shown there, in a solution that recalls Canova's celebrated steles, under the mantle of a female figure in classical garb, *Gratitude*, who gazes at his bust in tears and with her right hand crowns him with the laurels of glory.

*Fernando Mazzocca*

1. LEONARDO PENNINO, *Monument of Giuseppe Errante*, Trapani, San Lorenzo



## 9. LORENZO BARTOLINI

Savignano di Prato 1777–Florence 1850

*George Gordon, Lord Byron*

1822

Dried raw clay (*terracruda*), h 50 cm

PROVENANCE: Milan, private collection

## 10. LORENZO BARTOLINI, atelier

Savignano di Prato 1777–Florence 1850

*George Gordon, Lord Byron*

ca. 1822

Marble, h 40 cm

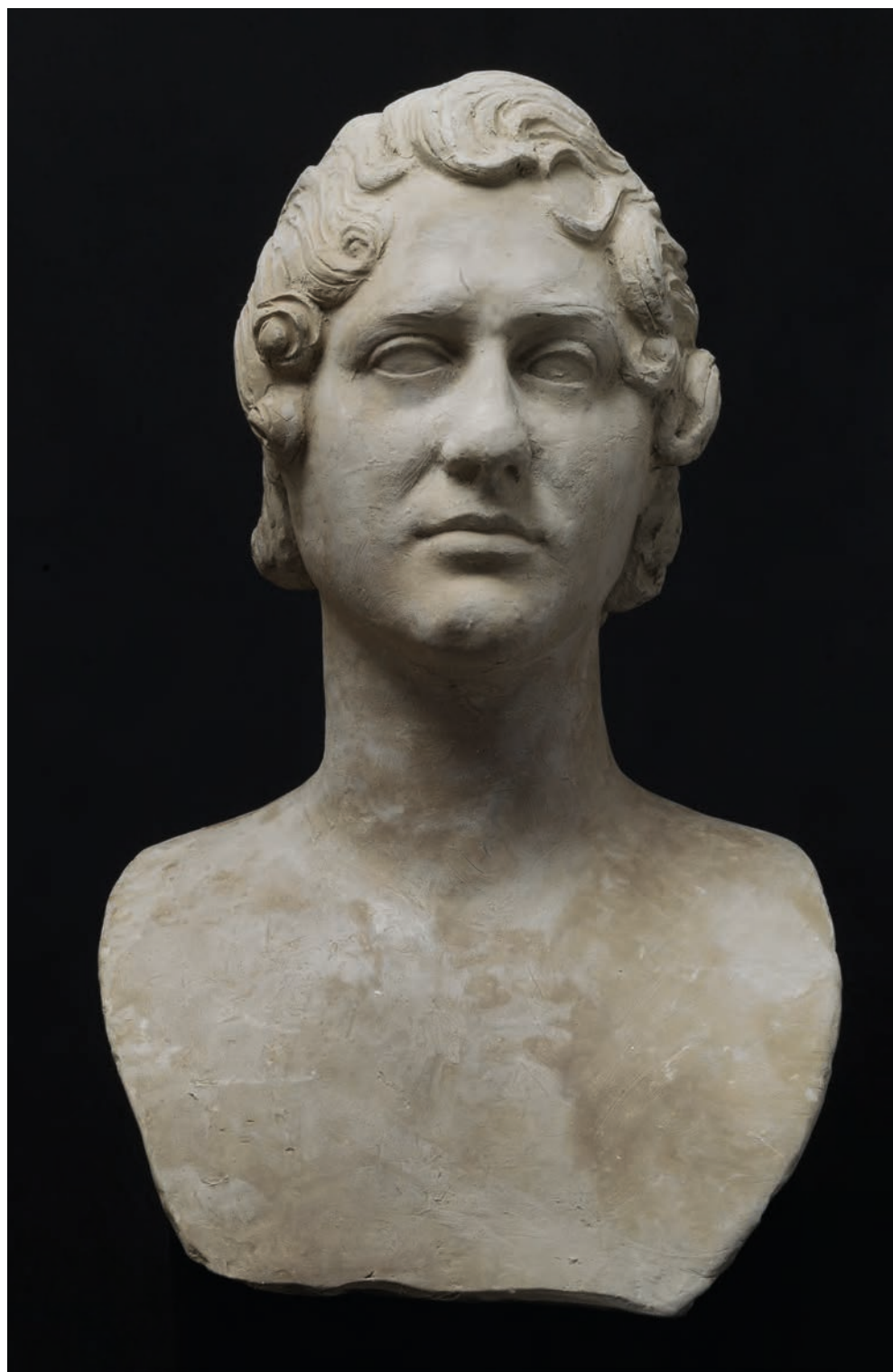
PROVENANCE: Rome, private collection

From the sources we know that on January 3, 1822 Byron, then in Pisa, posed for Bartolini who had expressed a wish to do his portrait. The poet had accepted the request but on condition that the sculptor also did one of his beloved Teresa Gamba Guiccioli, who had accompanied him during his stay in Pisa. The work on the two busts proceeded very quickly, as it appears that the two marbles were already completed by the following October, but they remained in Bartolini's studio for a long time because we know that some years later, certainly after the poet's death in Greece in 1824, they were seen by Countess Gamba Guiccioli during a visit to the sculptor's studio; subsequently, in ways still unknown, they were in the possession of Byron's banker in Genoa, Charles Barry, and after his death, at the behest of the heirs, both were shipped to South Africa and then placed in the South African Library of Cape Town (for this information and related documents see the present writer's entry in *Lorenzo Bartolini* 1978, pp. 74–75). From the two very fine plaster moulds, both held by the Gipsoteca Bartolini of the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence, many versions and replicas have been derived, for which see, most recently, the entries by Maddalena De Luca Savelli and Silvestra Bietoletti, respectively for the marble busts of Byron and of Guiccioli Gamba (in *Lorenzo Bartolini* 2011, pp. 226–230).

This raw clay (*terracruda*) bust, entirely unknown to scholarship and coming from a private Milanese collection, is a precious testimony (as well as rare because in the process of moulding the plaster the clay model was destroyed or in any case discarded) of a passage in the making of the portrait of the poet that, according to the known sources, was concluded in a few months, contrary to the habits of the sculptor who was notoriously slow in fulfilling the commissions received.

The work appears to be cited by a direct source, Thomas Medwin who, in his *Conversations of Lord Byron* set down during his stay in Pisa, recorded comparing the physiognomy of the poet to his own portrait in words the very likeness of Bartolini's bust in clay, having been present in person at the posing during the modelling sessions. "Being with him, day after day, sometime afterwards, whilst he was sitting to





Bertolini [sic], the Florentine sculptor for his bust, I had an opportunity of analysing his feature more critically, but found nothing to alter in my portrait. Bertolini's is an admirable likeness, at least was so in the clay model. I have not seen it since it was copied in marble, nor have I got a cast; he promised Bertolini should send me one. Lord Byron prided himself on his neck; and it must be confessed that his head was worthy of being placed on it. Bertolini destroyed his *ébauches* more than once before he could please himself. Lord Byron said, "It is the last time I sit to sculptor or painter." This was on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1822" (Medwin 1824, p.5).

It is interesting to note that it corresponds in dimensions to the plaster model of the Galleria dell'Accademia, 65 cm high with the pedestal, 48 without, measurements analogous to that of the known marble versions, but not to those of some derivations of smaller size, all studio replicas, which are about 38-39 cm tall, as in the small marble being presented also on this occasion. However, the clay model differs from the plaster model in the details of the modelling. It must be inferred that Bartolini, after having quickly moulded this bust in clay, probably in Pisa in January 1822 as described by the source cited, and, given the impossibility of shaping it in plaster far from Florence, leaving it intentionally to dry out in, used it as exemplar for the making in the studio of a second clay model - with a different finish suited to

the final version - which was then used by him to shape the plaster for mapping across points for the working of the marble.

Comparison of the clay bust with the Accademia model reveals some significant differences in the upper part of the hair, which here appears more simplified than what we see in the plaster and in the known marble versions, which in this particular are all substantially similar. This simplification is evident above all in the lateral view of the bust, which reveals skilful treatment of the hair, rapid and sweeping. Similar treatment also characterizes the cut of the eyes and lips that appear more "natural" in the plaster than the slight abstraction felt in the clay model. The expressive motif of the slight frown in the eyebrows is rendered here not in protuberant relief as in the plaster, but through the drawing of the furrow incised by the stick. Moreover, the face is more rounded than in the Accademia model, and the dimple in the poet's chin is less pronounced compared with the plaster and marble versions.

Except for these slight differences, the formal treatment of the poet's features



1. LORENZO BARTOLINI, *Bust of George Gordon VI Duke of Byron*, Florence, Galleria d'arte moderna di Palazzo Pitti



is quite similar to that of the many male portraits done by Bartolini, both before and after that of Byron. For example, constant elements of his portraiture, evident above all in the plaster models, are the deep-set cut of the eyes and the very firm cut of the lips; and again the treatment of the hair, always more summary in the models compared to the respective versions in marble (see, among the many possible examples of male portraits, those in plaster of Francesco Benedetti, Giovan Battista Niccolini, Rossini, Pius IX in the catalogue *Lorenzo Bartolini* 1978, respectively on pp. 70, 81, 85, 90).

For the reasons given, therefore, the work is important testimony of the start of the process of making one of the most significant portraits done by Bartolini, and at the same time is truly rare in its material characteristics, making it a *unicum* among the sculptor's works.

*Ettore Spalletti*



1. LORENZO BARTOLINI, *Bust of Gioacchino Rossini*, plaster, Prato, Museo Civico





## 11. RAIMONDO TRENTANOVE

Faenza 1792–Roma 1832

### *Busts of Maria Cristina and Maria Amalia of Naples and Sicily*

1827

Carrara marble, respectively h 70,5 and h 70 cm; original marble and mahogany bases  
h 93 x 33 x 33 cm

Signed and dated on the back in italics: “R. TRENTANOVE; FECE ROMA 1827”<sup>1</sup>

PROVENANCE: Cascais, Villa Italia, Umberto II of Italy collection

In virtue of their elegance and refined execution, the two female busts presented here may perhaps qualify, among those known today, as the most successful works of the sculptor Raimondo Trentanove of Faenza<sup>2</sup>, who in the cosmopolitan Rome of the early nineteenth century played a leading role distinguishing himself in the genre of the portrait, so much so as to be considered, especially by magnates from across the Channel and the Atlantic, as “the best bust-sculptor in Rome”<sup>3</sup>. In the short course of his career, which unfolded over a period of about fifteen years and ended with his untimely death in 1832 at the age of only forty, his vast production, of portraits in particular, included more than one hundred and sixty, according to his principal biographer<sup>4</sup>, and then copies from ancient sculptures and from Canova, funerary monuments and statues of profane subject matter<sup>5</sup>.

Born in Faenza in 1792, Raimondo was initiated into the art by his father Antonio



1. FRANÇOIS JOSEPH BOSIO, *Maria Amalia of Naples and Sicily, Queen of France*, 1841, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

2. LOUIS HERSENT, *Maria Amalia Teresa of Naples and Sicily, Queen of France*, 1831, Chantilly, Musée Condé



(Rimini 1739/1740- Carrara 1812), a renowned plastic artist active for a long time in Faenza in collaboration with Felice Giani<sup>6</sup>. When his father accepted the role of custodian of plaster casts and formatore (plaster cast moulder) at the Accademia di Belle Arti of Carrara, the young Raimondo moved to Tuscany. There he was among the students of the Accademia from 1809, training under Lorenzo Bartolini (1777-1850) and Jean-Baptiste-Frédéric Desmarais (1756-1813), who from 1807 respectively held the

professorships in sculpture and in painting. In 1815 he arrived in Rome, and immediately attended the studio of Canova, who at once commissioned from him the two herms of *Perugino* (1815) and *Columbus* (1817) for the series of illustrious Italians destined for the Pantheon, today in the Protomoteca Capitolina<sup>7</sup>.

In the same years the success of Raimondo at the international level was sealed by his participation alongside the great Venetian master in the making of a work of great importance in the artistic panorama of the time: from 1817 to 1821, in fact, he worked with Canova on the marble monument of George Washington commissioned by the state of North Carolina for the Capitol of Raleigh, that arrived at its destination in 1821, but was destroyed a decade later by a fire. The monumental statue in-the-round of the first American president created by Canova stood on a plinth on which his deeds were carved in bas-relief by Trentanove<sup>8</sup>. The exceptional success of the monument and in particular of Raimondo's accomplishment is documented by an unpublished letter written in 1824 by Thomas Appleton, American consul in Livorno, to Thomas Jefferson, in which, recalling the great success of the Raleigh sculpture, Appleton suggests entrusting Raimondo with the commission for the work that the citizens of Richmond in Virginia had in mind to erect in honour of the great general of the American

Revolution<sup>9</sup>: "there is no artist so capable of the undertaking, as Sigr Trentanove of Rome,... he is certainly, at least on a level, with the great Canova, and the day is not far distant when he will approach the sublime artists of Greece. Canova, once speaking to me of him, said "this youth is more advanc'd in his art than I myself was when 10 years older; & the period is near, when he will rival the whole world ""<sup>10</sup>. The letter goes on to speak of the other works done



3. GIOVANNI ALBERTONI, *Monument of Maria Cristina of Naples and Sicily, Queen of Sardinia*, Savoy, Hautecombe Abbey





by Trentanove for American clients, such as for Major General and US Senator Robert Goodloe Harper, with whom Raimondo established a close relationship, testified by the correspondence maintained<sup>11</sup>, from the time of the general's stay in Rome in 1819 when the sculptor did a marble portrait of him held, together with the plaster model, by the Maryland Historical Society of Baltimore<sup>12</sup>.

The fame achieved in America is confirmed not only by the many works – such as the portrait of Benjamin Franklin (1826)<sup>13</sup> and the numerous busts of *George Washington*, some of which have appeared on the antiques market, others owned by American museums – but also by Trentanove's election in 1824 as honorary member of the American Academy of Fine Arts founded in 1802 in New York<sup>14</sup>.

The sculptor was equally appreciated by British noble families who commissioned not only portrait busts<sup>15</sup> but also works of larger size and compositional complexity such as statues, funerary monuments and copies of Canova originals: for example, for the Duke of Devonshire he carved a *Pensive Love* (1822-1823), still at Chatsworth<sup>16</sup>; for Lady Elizabeth Berkeley the *Monument to the Margrave of Aspach* in the church of Speen (about 1824)<sup>17</sup>; for Richard Grenville, first Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, who commissioned his portrait (1829, Stowe House) and that of his younger brother *Lord George Nugent* (1830, Ro Ferrarese, Cavallini Sgarbi collection), Trentanove also made a copy of Canova's *Paolina Borghese*<sup>18</sup>; for the politician and foreign minister Lord Castlereagh, and for Robert Stewart, the Marquis of Londonderry, Raimondo

made “various full figures from mythology [...] which are the admiration of Rome”<sup>19</sup>. But what testifies especially to the prominent role he played in the Rome artistic milieu of the time, are the various marble effigies of the members of the Bonaparte family, which, done over almost a decade, from 1818 until in 1827, attest to the esteem and favour that Raimondo enjoyed with one of the most prominent families of the time.

As early as 1822, Zenaide (1801-1854), the eldest daughter of Julie Clary and Giuseppe Bonaparte, King of Naples and Sicily, could say in a letter to her sister Charlotte: “Je fais faire mon buste pour papa par Trentanove, artiste très distingué, qui a fait les bustes de presque toute la famille”<sup>20</sup>. In addition to *Zenaide* (1823, Rome, private collection) and her husband *Carlo Luciano Bonaparte* prince of Canino (Rome, Museo Napoleonico, inv. MN538)<sup>21</sup>, Trentanove in fact carved the likeness of Napoleon’s mother, *Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte*, in two different portraits dated both to 1818, one held by the Galleria Nazionale of Parma (inv. 2099)<sup>22</sup> and the other in the Fesch palace in Ajaccio (MNA 839. 1.23). The busts of *Luciano* and *Alexandrine* Bonaparte which emerged a decade ago on the antique market<sup>23</sup>, also date to 1818, to which has recently been added a replica of the bust of *Luciano Bonaparte* (Milan, Brun Fine Art)<sup>24</sup>. Again, in Ajaccio there is a portrait of *Charlotte Napoleone Bonaparte* (MNA 839.1.22). Trentanove made several portraits of Napoleon: a herm is held by the Museo del Risorgimento dell’età contemporanea of Faenza, two others, auctioned by Sotheby’s, were respectively done in 1818<sup>25</sup> and 1821<sup>26</sup>. Finally, in 1823, for Girolamo Bonaparte, Napoleon’s brother, he did the statue of *Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte* (Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze), a copy of the Canova’s creation at Chatsworth, Devonshire collection<sup>27</sup>.

The two marbles here presented are also the result of a commission from a person of rank: the provenance of the two sculptures from Cascias, a place where Umberto II (Racconigi, 15 September 1904-Geneva, 18 March 1983), the last king of Italy, spent a good part of his days after his 1946 exile, suggests that the busts may once have belonged to the Savoy family’s art collection and therefore plausibly commissioned from the beginning by some members of the illustrious dynasty. It is no coincidence that in various letters from the Grand Chamberlain of the Savoy court, bearing the date 1827, the year of the making of our marbles, considerable expenditure in Rome on artworks is documented, but in extremely generic fashion. On 7 April he wrote to the Steward General of the Royal House, ordering the payment for the transport of crates containing “art objects bought in Rome” and “intended for service” of the “Royal Apartments”, i.e. of the Savoy residences. The following June 28, in response to a letter from the painter Francesco Mensi, the Grand Chamberlain told him that “the huge expenditure already paid out by His Majesty for Fine Art objects, have led to his decision to lay out no more this year; that is why your request cannot be dealt with in the meantime”<sup>28</sup>. The king, referred to in this document, is Carlo Felice of Savoy, (Turin, 6 April 1765 - Turin, 27 April 1831), who ascended the throne of the Kingdom of Sardinia in 1821, following the abdication of his elder brother Vittorio Emanuele I, and reigned until his death in 1831. Carlo Felice was the last heir of the main branch of the Savoy: being without a direct heir, on his death the kingdom passed to the Savoy-Carignano branch, to which belonged, as known, Carlo Alberto (1798-1849), firstborn of the Princes of Carignano and last king of Sardinia. In 1807, in Palermo, Carlo Felice of Savoy married Maria Cristina of Bourbon (Royal Palace of Caserta 1779 - Aix-les-Bains 1849), daughter of Ferdinando I of the Two Sicilies and Maria Carolina of Austria. The couple were known for their intense patronage

of the arts: they made significant changes to their usual residence, the Castello di Agliè in Piedmont, to adapt it to royal needs and became sponsors of the Tuscolo archaeological excavations, where they were fond of staying in the villa *La Rufinella*, near Frascati. On the death of Carlo Felice in 1831, Maria Cristina went back to Naples, then returned to Piedmont, moving from there for short stays in Agliè, Frascati, Naples and Hautescombe, where she sponsored and followed the work, already started by her husband, of restoration of the Abbey, in which his remains rest together with those of Carlo Felice. A cultured patron, a regular promoter of the arts and well informed on the artistic dynamics of Rome<sup>29</sup>, it is likely that it was Maria Cristina who, passing through Rome, made the hugely costly acquisitions of Fine Art objects of which the Grand Chamberlain gives account: the appearance of the queen, although a little softened and idealized especially in the chin which appears more prognathous in other portraits, does not seem contrary to that of the woman who in our bust wears a light dress tied at the shoulders. The evident affinities in the features of the two women portrayed in our marbles also suggest that they might be sisters, similarities accentuated by the same refined hairstyle, in vogue in those years, with long soft ringlets falling on the forehead and framing the face, while gathered at the back in an elegant ascending knot, fixed in the case of maturer woman by a comb. In the latter woman, we find another indication to back what has been conjectured so far: one cannot fail to notice the fine Francophile motif, composed of lilies, bordering her mantle, the arrangement of which looks taken from classical statuary. The features of the face portrayed - the deep-set eyes, the slight curvature of the nose, the narrow compressed lips - recall those of Maria Cristina's sister, Maria Amelia Teresa of Bourbon (Caserta 1782-Esher 1866), accurately depicted for example in the painting by Louis Hersent of 1828-29, hence almost contemporary with the bust under discussion, held by the Condé museum in Chantilly<sup>30</sup>, or in the marble sculpted by François Joseph Bosio signed and dated 1841, on display in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York<sup>31</sup>. Maria Amelia was also born in the Royal Palace of Caserta, in 1782; Princess of Naples and Sicily, during the French Revolution she took refuge with the royal family in the Kingdom of Sicily. There she met her future consort, also in exile, Louis Philippe d'Orléans, eldest son of Louis Philippe II, Duke of Orléans, known as Philippe Égalité for his support of the Revolution. Like her sister Maria Amalia was married in Palermo, but from two years later, 1809. Maria Amalia and Luigi Filippo d'Orléans resided in Palermo in the Palazzo d'Orléans until 1814 when, with the abdication of Napoleon, they returned to Paris, to the Palais-Royal, and shortly thereafter were crowned as rulers of France. In fact, after the July Revolution, Maria Amelia was Queen of the French from 1830 to 1848 as the wife of the "bourgeois king" Louis Philippe d'Orléans.

And a self-satisfied bourgeois aura also informs our busts which, through their moderate verism, prove to be an expression of a different mode of feeling that, moving away from Canova peculiar way of accepting the sense data and - without denying them - going beyond to the sublimity of idealization, expresses an explicit adherence to the most updated language of Lorenzo Bartolini. And this is consciously reified in the train of an extraordinary sculpting technique, which imposes itself in the sensitive rendering of surface obtained through luminous and plastic vibrations, which the purity of the simply perfect marble accompanies.

*Silvia Massari*

- <sup>1</sup> I had the opportunity to study this two busts since 2014 and I then presented these works at the conference *Mecenati romagnoli per uno scultore faentino: novità su Raimondo Trentanove (1792 - 1832)* at the international study conference *Committenza e collezionismo in Romagna (XVI-XIX sec.)*, organized by Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna, Ravenna Dipartimento di Beni Culturali, 16-18 marzo 2016. On these busts cf. Massari 2016, p. 501; Randolfi 2017, pp. 203-204; Massari 2019.
- <sup>2</sup> On the artist cf.: Vicario 1990, pp. 627-628; Randolfi 2002; Panzetta 2003, II, p. 911 and figs. 1869-1870; Massari 2016; Randolfi 2017; Massari 2019.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Private Diary of Richard, Duke of Buckingham and Chandos*, London 1862, III, p. 22 in S. Massari, *Le stanze segrete* 2016, p. 274.
- <sup>4</sup> Vaccolini 1834, p. 110.
- <sup>5</sup> For a more exhaustive treatment of the life and works of the artist cf. Randolfi 2017, Massari 2019.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf, Tumidei 2016.
- <sup>7</sup> For the two herms depicting Perugino e Colombo, respectively 65 e 68 cm high, cf. Martinelli – Pietrangeli 1954, nos. 21, 57 pp. 65, 77; S. Pasquali 2016, pp. 287-288 cat. 53.
- <sup>8</sup> For the statue of George Washington: Fehl 1968; Pavanello 1976, p. 128, cat. 301; C.M.S. Johns 2002; Mazzocca 2004, speciatim pp. 5-10.
- <sup>9</sup> The commission took a long time: the monument crowned by the bronze equestrian statue was done, in fact, only decades later (1850-1869) by Thomas Crawford and completed by Randolph Rogers.
- <sup>10</sup> To Thomas Jefferson from Thomas Appleton, 8 October 1824,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, version of January 18, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-4604>. The letter is given full commentary in S. Massari, “A favourite pupil of Canova and the best singer in Rome”: *Raimondo Trentanove e l’America*, in preparation.
- <sup>11</sup> Massari 2016, p. 501.
- <sup>12</sup> Rutledge 1946, p. 297.
- <sup>13</sup> The bust was auctioned on 19 May 1989 by Sloan’s, Nort Bethesda, lot n. 2717
- <sup>14</sup> Tolles, 2000, p. 137.
- <sup>15</sup> Massari 2016; Massari in *Le stanze segrete* 2016, pp. 274-277.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. Yarrington 2013.
- <sup>17</sup> Massari 2016.
- <sup>18</sup> The same collection also holds Trentanove’s *Portrait of Cardinal Giovan Battista Zauli* (1818), the *Portrait of a Young Man* (1823); the *Portrait of Joseph Lézzani* (1829), cf. The entries in Massari in *Le stanze private* 2016.
- <sup>19</sup> The quotation comes from the letter of Thomas Appleton to Thomas Jefferson cf. note 10.
- <sup>20</sup> Cr. The entry on the work by A.A. Zucconi and T. Zambrotta in *Leopardi a Roma* 1998, p. 358 cat. 40.
- <sup>21</sup> A. A. Zucconi and T. Zambrotta in *Leopardi a Roma* 1998, pp. 359-360 cat. 41; *Charlotte Bonaparte* 2010, p. 115.
- <sup>22</sup> *Galleria Nazionale di Parma* 2001, p. 11, cat. 852
- <sup>23</sup> Mazzocca 2004. Also see the related entries by Andrea Zanella in the catalogue of the exhibition held in Palazzo Fesch in Ajaccio from 26 June to 27 September 2010: 1775-1840. *Lucien Bonaparte, un homme libre*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano), pp. 176-177, cat. 72-73.
- <sup>24</sup> A. Bacchi, in *A Taste for Sculpture V* 2018, cat. 17 pp. 112-117, 223-225.
- <sup>25</sup> *Sotheby’s, London. European Sculpture & Works of Art*, sale L13231, 4/12/2013, lot. 130.
- <sup>26</sup> *Sotheby’s, Paris. Important Furniture, Sculpture and Works of Art*, sale PF8002, 9/04/ 2008, lot. 221.
- <sup>27</sup> Chimirri, Bandinelli, Fommei 2001; further confirmation of who commissioned the work is in Appleton’s letter to Jefferson (note 10).
- <sup>28</sup> Turin, Archivio di Stato, Casa di Sua Maestà, *Ministero della Real Casa, Azienda generale della Real Casa*, inv. n. 1062, ff. 51, 84.
- <sup>29</sup> On Maria Cristina of Bourbon intense activity as patron and sponsor of the arts, cf. Gabrielli in *Maestà di Roma* 2003, pp. 398- 406
- <sup>30</sup> Oil on canvas, cm 92 x73, inv. n. PE 429.
- <sup>31</sup> The bust, inv. n. 1990.60, measures 82.9 x 58.1 x 32.1 cm, cf. Ian Wardropper,, 2011, no. 79, pp. 229-231





## 12. VINCENZO CAMUCCINI

Rome 1771–1844

### *Study of the Christ Torso and left Arm for the Conversion of Saint Paul* 1830–1835

Oil on canvas, 120 × 136,5 cm

PROVENANCE: Cantalupo in Sabina, Palazzo Camuccini, baron Vincenzo Camuccini collection

This sketch belongs to the preparatory phases of one of the last large canvases made by Vincenzo Camuccini for public display, the *Conversion of Saint Paul*, painted for the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, as part of the reconstruction following the terrible fire of 15 July 1823.

After heated debate among the scholars and architects of the time on whether to rebuild the basilica in its ancient form or rather build a church according to a completely new design (Pallottino 1995, pp. 31–59), on September 18, 1825 a papal chirograph from Leo XII dictated the principles to be followed by the reconstruction, which was to faithfully recreate what had been lost. It is therefore plausible that after that date thought was also given to the pictorial decoration of the interior of the new building, once reconstruction has been completed. It was in that context that the decision was made to commission from Vincenzo Camuccini a painting depicting the *Conversion of Saint Paul*, to be set above the altar of the left transept of the church, a painting to which the study presented here relates. The vast canvas, which was initially meant to be even larger than the present one (about 3 x 6 m, fig. 1), was assigned to Camuccini by the pope himself, along with another painting for the reconstructed basilica, the *Assumption of Mary*, a task which the artist declined, not least because of the hostility towards him shown by the artistic milieu of Rome, and which was thus entrusted to the younger Filippo Agricola (Falconieri, p.199).

The canvas was undoubtedly under way in October 1833 when it was viewed in the painter's studio by the Pope Gregory XVI himself (*Collezione degli articoli* 1843, p. 66), and was completed in December 1835, when the Commission responsible for the rebuilding of the basilica, paid the artist 300 gold louis, the balance of the 600 agreed (Falconieri, 1875, pp. 211–12). The painting was thus nearly ten-year in gestation, as witnessed by numerous drawings, sketches and preparatory studies, both in pencil and oil, including this study of the torso of Christ, from a very late phase in the creative process. In addition to the oil sketch and the drawings published by Gianna Piantoni in 1978 (Piantoni 1978, pp. 84–88), there is also another more finished preparatory oil for the *Conversion of Saint Paul* (*Maestà di Roma* 2003, p. 457; Verdone 2005, p. 119), a study of the head of Saint Paul, exhibited by Carlo Virgilio in 2009 (*Quadreria* 2009, pp. 66–67) and other studies, always in oil, of heads and anatomical elements, very similar to this one (*Quadreria* 2015, pp. 34–37). The analysis of this preparatory material, abundant although certainly not complete, enables us to follow the phases in the creative process characteristic of Camuccini; after preliminary studies on paper to fix the *idea*, he went on to a first, summary sketch of the work, which gradually took on definition, through further drawings. Once the composition was established,



which was not to be further modified except in minute details, he proceeded to detailed studies, both in pencil and oil, of the different characters, who were broken down - as the sketch presented here shows - to single anatomical elements. In these latter cases, the point of the studies was not to check on already established poses and expressions, but to assess the effects of colour and light. On a white preparation the artist would make a pencil sketch, then apply paint until he reached the degree of finish that enable him to evaluate the effect, without continuing on to the polished completeness of a finished work. The background was then painted in using a neutral colour, in this case grey. The brushstrokes that reveal the pictorial *ductus*, the *imprimatura* showing through the paint, the rapid and summary drafting contribute to the freshness typical of the sketches, here visible in particular in the detail of the left arm of Christ, an obvious borrowing from Michelangelo. That works of this kind are preparatory studies is confirmed by the nonchalance with which the pencilling of previous sketches, such as the upright male nude that can be seen underneath the arm of Christ - it is a sketch for the preparatory drawing of a new version of *The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche in Olympus* originally painted for Palazzo Torlonia in Rome -, shows through the summary grey coating. Their extempore nature did not prevent sketches from acquiring their own aesthetic autonomy, potentiated by the evocative power of the fragment: isolated from its context, therefore free of the constraint of meaning, of its function in a narrative, the piece of anatomy becomes pure form and colour, in this revealing an unexpected modernity. At the time of painting the large work, therefore, everything was exactly and meticulously anticipated, although it is probable that detailed studies such as this they were made by the Camuccini during the execution of the canvas. The end result is an erudite work, which, as has often been observed in Camuccini, constrains the freshness of the studies in the tight grip of forms and drawing, to assume, in conformity with the canons of history painting, the tone deemed appropriate to its official destination.

Finally placed in the transept of the basilica in 1840, the *Conversion of Saint Paul* was coldly received by the artistic milieu of Rome, where *Purismo* and the first Romantic ferments were relegating to the past the bombastic classicism of the elderly Camuccini. The over-nice distribution of the figures; the artificial use of diagonals to create excitement and movement; the accentuated expressivity of the characters, each of whom displays with fitting emphasis feelings of amazement and fright; the borrowing from the great masters - Michelangelo's Christ as well as Raphael's young groom - are all elements that belonged to a rhetorical and intellectual way of conceiving a work of art, the opposite, as Camuccini himself knew, of the essentiality of form and expression sought after in those years by the currents most *à la page*, *Purismo* and Nazarenes.

Federica Giacomini





1. VINCENZO CAMUCCINI, *Conversion of Saint Paul*, Rome, Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls

### 13. CARLO DE PARIS

Barcelona 1800–Rome 1861

#### *View of the Valley of Mexico*

ca. 1836

Oil on canvas, 148,5 x 221,5 cm

PROVENANCE: Rome; private collection

After long oblivion, due to the loss of many of the works recorded by the sources of the time, there has been a gradual rediscovery of the figure of Carlo de Paris down to the recent scrutiny of him in the exhibition *Roma en México México en Roman*, devoted to the fruitful relations between the Rome Accademia di San Luca and the Mexican Academy of San Carlos during the nineteenth century (Camboni 2018). The artistic exchanges between the two institutes went in the 1840s as far as the purchase of works of art done in Rome as exemplary figurative models for Mexican academic teaching purposes and the recruitment in Italy of teachers who travelled to Mexico to graft the renewal of the local figurative culture onto solid classicist and purist bases. The most promising students of the Academy were then sent to Rome to finish off their artistic studies, so that they could then be employed in public projects of embellishment (Sartor 1997, *Roma en México* 2018). De Paris was a precursor of these relationships and when he reached Mexico in 1828 he was among the first students of the Accademia di San Luca to experience the Americas, after the fundamental venture of Giuseppe Ceracchi, portraitist of the founding fathers of the United States, and in advance of the famous fresco decoration of the Capitol in Washington by Costantino Brumidi.

Mexico could then be considered an entirely novel destination for a painter. De Paris went there accompanied by his brother Gaetano, a theatre and opera impresario, who formed a company of singers signed up from Italy under the direction of Filippo Galli (Galí Boadella 2002, pp. 301–302), an esteemed interpreter of Rossini, staging performances in the Coliseo de México that the painter himself was to help decorate.

Carlo de Paris was born in Barcelona of an Aragonese father and a Roman mother, and after the death of his parents was directed by his tutor Giovan Francesco Masdeu to an apprenticeship in art, first under the Spanish painter Josè Aparicio, then with Luigi Agricola. At the Accademia di San Luca he was taught by Gaspare Landi, finishing second in the Canova competition with the *Continence of Scipio* (Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca) and specializing in the genre of history painting, both classic and romantic, even during a stay in Milan.

Upon his arrival in Mexico City, de Paris was subjected to an on-the-spot test of painting from life by the members of the Academia de San Carlos wanting evidence that he was the creator of the portfolio he had brought from Europe. He passed with a painting on a Roman subject, *The Pontifical Chapel in the Palace of the Quirinal with a papal service*, which was followed by a commission from the Philippine Fathers of a large apse tempera of *Calvary*. In the odd and lively autobiographical sketch, published posthumously by Francesco Gasparoni in 1863, de Paris describes successive commissions of portraits and history paintings, in which he consciously







attempted to adapt to the taste of the country. The great painting of modern history depicting the *Surrender of the Spanish division commanded by General Barradas in the province of Tampico* (Mexico City, Museo Nacional de Historia “Castillo de Chapultepec”) was checked for iconographic accuracy as he painted by the aides of General Antonio López de Santa Anna, of whom he made a portrait (Mexico City, Museo de Historia de la Ciudad), and was intended for the General Congress chamber. He was then commissioned to make portraits of all the presidents of the republic, Victoria, Guerrero, Pedrasa, Vice-President Gomez Farias and Agostino Iturbide, who had the honour of being hung in the Municipal Hall (Mazio 1845, 163). Recalling the style adopted in his portraits, de Paris set down to his memoir a piece of information that throws light on the formal methods of a great deal of Spanish-American art of the period: he confesses to painting them “almost without shadows, because some clients complained, saying *they have not tinted faces*” (de Paris 1863, p.336).

In those years de Paris made many journeys across the vast country “drawing the various different garments of the natives and painting many views of those regions most interesting for landscape paintings, always varying the nature of the places and vegetation, depending on the height above sea level” (de Paris 1863, p. 336). The result of those wanderings, apart from a museum of natural history and archaeology, was an album of 100 drawings of figures and landscape and others with the usages and traditions of Mexico that he brought back to Rome in 1836, proposing to publish them as lithographics. This graphic material was the basis of the Mexican paintings done in the following years, the “historical landscapes”, a genre in which his friend Massimo D’Azeglio excelled, the grandiose views described in the newspaper *Il Saggiatore* in which he set the events of the Spanish conquest



(Mazio 1844). With these works de Paris alternated views of Rome, romantic historical subject matter and that of contemporary history, from the series devoted to the revolutionary events in Rome in 1848-49, to the celebratory paintings of the pontificate of Pius IX, like the *Return of Pius IX to Rome on 12 April 1850* (Vatican City, Museo Storico, Palazzo Lateranense) and the *Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* (Rome, Fondazione Roma).

Among the rare Mexican views painted by de Paris that have so far re-emerged, one can include the *View of the Plaza Major of Mexico City* (1853, Mexico City, Franz Mayer Museum, *Mexico* 1994, pp. 40, 116-17), that of the *Pico de Orizaba*, and *Citlaltépetl* (1853, Mexico City, private collection on deposit at the Fomento Cultural del Banco Nacional de México, cf. S. Grandesso, in *A Picture Gallery* 2012, pp. 84-87; S. Grandesso, in *Roma en México* 2018, pp. 255-257) and the *View of the Valley of Mexico* held by the Pantheon (Rome, Pontificia Insigne Accademia di Belle Arti e Lettere dei Virtuosi al Pantheon, cf. M. Gianfranceschi, in *Tiberia* 2016, pp. 184-187).

It is known that the work, dated 1835, was done on the spot by the artist who for this purpose spent several months in a building dominating the valley (cf. the minutes of the *Virtuosi al Pantheon* for 1862, cited in M. Gianfranceschi, in *Tiberia* 2016, page 185). In his memoir de Paris speaks of the painting as follows: “I did a picture about 10 handspans by 7, where I did the view of the valley of Mexico taken from the heights or hills that lie to the west of said valley. When I had finished, there was no lack of offers of sums of some consideration if I wanted to be rid of it, but since I was soon to leave for Europe, I did not want to get rid of such a work, especially since I had painted it with the idea of taking it to Rome, and keeping it in memory of a country where I had been so well received by its excellent inhabitants” (de Paris 1863, pp. 401-402). Matched against that prototype, bequeathed to the Accademia dei Virtuosi al Pantheon, to which he had belonged, the unpublished version presented here must have been painted by de Paris shortly after his return to Rome, probably at the request of a client.

The view is a rare and perhaps unique testimony to the appearance then of the Mexican capital, still in the 1830s surrounded by water. But even within the landscape tradition of Mexican painting, it has the importance of an incunabulum, well in advance of the famous views by the Piedmontese Eugenio Landesio, who arrived there from Rome in 1855 to teach at the Academy, and his pupil José Maria Velasco.

“The Valley of Mexico is portrayed by him at that time of day since, it having poured down as usual in the summer there, in the afternoon hours the sky clears, taking on a red tint, as we see an Aurora Boreal barely coloured”, as a contemporary commentator explained (Checchetelli 1839, p. 174). The grandiose vision lit by strong colours, ample enough to take in the capital seen from afar and the imposing volcanic cordillera surrounding it, enriched by the show of the native growths and the appearance and customs of the local populations, demonstrates the artist’s interests in the sublime of the American landscape and in the ethnographic documentation of its inhabitants. As the contemporary critic Paolo Mazio recorded, “an overwhelming passion ruled de Paris, that of studying nature and the customs of Mexico on the spot. Nature is huge here as in all other parts of American soil: immense plains, savannahs as the Spaniards say or boundless prairies, lakes, when

open when surrounded by forests, which look like oceans [...]; add immense rivers [...], forests in which the vegetation reaches the peak of its strength, and then volcanoes, cliffs, mountains from which open large and magnificent stretches of land and sea". And he concluded by recalling this view: "The last work he made in America was the general view of the Valley of México with various figures showing some of the country manners of that province" (Mazio 1845, pp. 164-165).

The literary description of the Valley of Mexico set down by the painter himself in his autobiography also seems a comment on the painting: "The Valley of Mexico, or, as the old people say, of Anahuac, is the most beautiful and most picturesque of all those deserving attention in the whole realm. Surrounded by mountains, the majority of porphyry, it opens for about 34 miles at its largest diameter, 18 at the smaller, and just over one hundred in the periphery, forming an elliptical basin on the great plateau of Anahuac, 8,227 feet above sea level. It is irrigated by various springs of mineral water that flow from the innards of the many adjacent volcanoes, which, although long since extinct or at least dormant, also show inside copious and obvious traces of ancient repeated eruptions" (de Paris 1863, p. 263). He then described the different lakes, Tzopango, Xaltouan, Tetzeoco and the lagoon of Chalco, and the tradition of cultivating floating gardens, which daily supplied fresh vegetables to the capital. The hill surmounted by a building in the centre of the painting was then mentioned as follows: "In the western part of the said valley, and entirely isolated from the other mountains, the little Chapultepec rises about a couple of miles from the city. A magnificent wood of splendid trees (called by the Spanish *sabinos*, and by the naturalists *Cupressus sempervirens*) covers the plain inside the mount. Here the Mexican emperors had their sport, and especially their hunting reserve. There on the flat atop the mountain a palace built by the Conte di Galves viceroy of Spain is now very broken down". On the left stands the noble City of Mexico, surrounded by lakes now drained, while the presence on the right of the snow-covered jagged peak of Iztaccíhuatl and the majestic cone of Popocatepetl, enabled the artist to recall in his memoir the adventurous nocturnal ascent to the crater of the second volcano, forbidden to men according to the ancient beliefs of the natives (de Paris 1863, pp. 319-321).

To give the scale of the vastness of the view, in the foreground of the painting de Paris set a sample of Mexican flora, the monumental cypress of Montezuma, or *taxodium mucronatum*, the yucca tree and the agave *salmiana*. A native Mexican is busy collecting the sap, through a perforated bullhorn, for the fermentation in the bladder next to the tortillas the famous pulque, which his wife is offering to a pair of Creoles. Behind them, as documentation of a local custom, various local inhabitants, rendered with the curiosity of the ethnographer with a taste for the exotically picturesque in physiognomy and clothing, are intent on following and inciting a cockfight.

Stefano Grandesso

#### 14. *NINE MASKS OF NATIVE MEXICANS CASTED BY A SCIENTIFIC ITALIAN-MEXICAN EXPEDITION*

1933

Painted plaster, from h 8 x 15 x 22 to h 17 x 20 x 21 cm

Backside, engraved name (7), age (6), sex (7), population (6)

PROVENANCE: Padua; private collection

When the *Conquistadores* disembarked in what they believed to be India, they met the descendant of the people that had first arrived in the Americas some 15/20.000 years before, according to indigenous genetic studies. Spreading throughout the continent, the first settlers had given birth to specific different populations and ethnic groups that thanks to isolation, granted by complex orography and vast forests, and to strong cultures, are partly still present in modern day Americas.

If Mexico shares the overall history with the rest of the continent, it has also some specific traits, particularly a widespread racial intermingling which gave birth to the so called *mestizos*, people who do not belong to any specific race or culture, but, rather, are 'Mexican'. On the other hand, modern day Mexico is one of the American state where the percentage of native population in respect of the total of inhabitants is higher. Currently the indigenous groups account in Mexico to 62, each one with its specific language, and in some Mexican states the indigenous people represent the majority of the population. The same was even more evident a century ago.

Given this, it does not surprise that back in 1933 the "Comitato italiano per lo studio dei problemi della popolazione", held by Corrado Gini, elected Mexico as the location of its most important scientific expedition which were to study the indigenous populations from the anthropological, biological, sanitary and demographic point of view. Organized together with mexican scholars and the support of the Mexican government, the expedition focused first on the state of Hidalgo, inhabited by the Otomi people, in particular of pure descendant in the inner areas; then, splitted in different groups, went on, among the others, to Jalisco, to study the Aztecs of Tuxpan; to Sonora to study the Seris of the Isle of Tiburon; to the Isle of Janitzio to study the Tarascans; to Nayarit and Jalisco to study the Huichols; to Guerrero to study the Tlapanecs, Huehuetepecs and Zambos; to Oaxaca to study the Zapotecs, the Cuicatecos and the Mixes (cf. Genna 1935, pp. 4-5). Of these populations were studied both the pure descendants and the *mestizos*, for a comparison of the data.

In a time where the scientific approach to the human races issue was directly and indirectly affected by the implied concept of the superiority of the white race and by the political drift towards the idea of race purity that characterized the european nationalisms of the 1930s and the United States; and where Mexico, after its long and bloody revolution, needed to find a 'racial' identity for his population, which was to be found in the *mestizos*, Gini and his Mexican colleagues, in particular professor Manuel Gamio, shared the idea that endogamy and isolation cause senescence and the decadence of a population. In fact, the research pointed out how the concept of race purity contrasted with the healthy grown of a population, exactly in the same way that it is possible to observe in vegetables and animals (cf. Venturoli, 2018, pp. 77-101). In this respect, particular attention was given to the very isolated





populations, as, among the others, the Seris of Tiburon - and to this population belong 4 of the 9 masks here on display: nn. 1, 6, 7, 9 (numeration of masks in the picture goes from left to right, from upper to lower) -. Gini himself participated to this part of the scientific expedition and wrote an extensive report that stated that the Seris were affected by degenerative defects attributable to isolation and feeding (cf. Gini 1934).

We do not know what happened with all the data collected during the expedition. Gini and his theory on the mixed race was soon to be relegated to a secondary role in the Fascist Italy. However, we have here the nine masks taken from living models during the above mentioned scientific expedition. Realized with the same technique used in sculpture for making casts, the nine plaster masks exhibit the features of some of the ancient populations of Mexico. Even if they were created as scientific objects, they nonetheless bear a strong evocative power which makes them closer to works of art. In fact, the sheer traits of these ancient man and women, so vivid and alive, in spite of their eyelids necessarily closed, communicate a way of being human, undoubtedly rooted in the past, but characterized by self-confidence and conscience. And they become even more moving when one discovers that on the backside some of those are engraved with the name and the age of the sitter: Ramin Corral (n. 1) was a Seri male of 25 living in the Tiburon island, as Ramona Blanco (n. 7) of 31, with a tribal sign on her face that Gini considered only as a simply esthetic embellishment (Gini 1934, p. 167); Martin Villebroy (n. 9); Jovan Molina (n. 6) of 40; Esperanza Candelora (n. 2) was a nice Tarascan girl of 12 from the isle of Janitzio; Gregory Romero (n. 4) was a 19 years old Aztec of Tuxpan.

*Eugenio Maria Costantini*



## 15. NICOLA CONSONI

Ceprano 1814–Rome 1884

### *The Pierides: Polymnia Recounts Minerva the Metamorphosis of Pierus' Daughters into Magpies*

1842

Brush and watercolour with wash and white heightening over black chalk on paper, 565 x 775 mm. Signed and dated in black ink to bottom right: « Nicola Consoni 1842 ».

PROVENANCE: Rome, private collection

BIBLIOGRAPHY : S. Rolfi, in *Quadreria* 1999, pp.52-53; Eadem, in *Figure Humaine* 2017, pp. 46-47.

Nicola Consoni studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Perugia under the directorship of Giovanni Sanguinetti (1789-1867) before arriving in Rome in 1834 where he became a leading practitioner of monumental painting during the long pontificate of Pope Pius IX (Cuicchi 2006). A formative influence was Tommaso Minardi (1787-1871) with whom Consoni established an enduring artistic collaboration: Minardi encouraged Consoni to assimilate Raphael's *aureo stile* ('golden style') and become 'the most faithful follower of the painter from Urbino'. Such was the mature Consoni's fame as the 'nineteenth-century Raphael' that he was assigned the restoration of the *Trinity and Saints* by Raphael and Perugino in the Cappella di San Severo in Perugia in 1871 (Barroero 1983; Consoni 1997).

Consoni's *stile aulico* chimed perfectly with the artistic and literary models required for the decoration of the Palazzo Torlonia in Rome from 1839 to 51. It was Consoni's knowledge of Raphael's Vatican Stanze that allowed the artist to both transcribe Raphael's motifs and create original historical allegories. Such skills gained Consoni favour in Pius IX's campaign to restore papal monuments and the task of painting the third Vatican Loggia in collaboration with Mantovani and Galli in 1866 (Mazzarelli 2008). The intelligence Consoni brought to Raphael seen at first hand in the Stanze and Logge resulted in 'gracious and purified' compositions of crystalline colour, bringing international fame and the commission from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to decorate the ballroom of Buckingham Palace in 1856 (Capitelli 2011).

Consoni's Raphael's style is seen to good effect in the present drawing whose subject derives from the myth of the Muses narrated in both Hesiod's *Theogony* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The subject was a commission from Marquis Giuseppe Sigismondo Ala Ponzoni in 1842, represented afresh in Prince Tommaso Corsini's library as *Minerva and the Nine Muses* in 1849 (Gozzoli and Mazzocca 1983). The present watercolour is to be placed in the context of the important collection of then contemporary art assembled by Marquis Ala Ponzoni and which came to form the nucleus of the Museo di Cremona's holdings.

The representation of the muses and their attributes accords with their iconographic tradition established from the sixteenth century onwards, although it is here of interest to note Euterpe seated to the left with her attribute of a lute, derived from Raphael's representation of Sappho in *Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura. The





visual structure deriving from Raphael is seen in the harmonious groupings of the muses in twos and threes, combined with their expressive gestures, Raphaelesque countenances and quotations from the antique. The grace and elevated style of Consoni's composition is of Neoplatonic foundation and characteristic of other large watercolours by the artist such as *Aesop recounts his fables to shepherds*, c. 1840 (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome) - and is in contrast to the pure outline favoured by the German Nazarenes in Rome.

*Serenella Rolfi Ožvald*



## 16. VINCENZO ABBATI

Naples 1803–1866

### *Study of a Restoration Armchair, Possibly Belonging to the Furnishings of the Apartment of Queen Maria Isabella of Bourbon on the Second Floor of the Palace of Capodimonte in Naples*

ca. 1836

Oil on canvas, 17,5 x 21,3 cm

PROVENANCE: Naples, private collection

This curious anonymous painting, which represents a restoration Neapolitan armchair, or a perspective study of a piece of furniture likely to be set in a painting of an interior, can be effectively linked to the pictorial production of the Neapolitan Vincenzo Abbati.

A pupil of the architect Giovanni Battista Niccolini, from whom he took his interest in perspective, Abbati specialized in paintings of interiors, working for the Bourbon royal family, for Francesco I and in particular for Maria Carolina, Duchess of Berry, whom he was to follow into exile in Venice after 1844 along with her small court. His interiors, ecclesiastical and monastic, were sometimes enriched by the depictions of historical episodes, while others were instead populated by figures of the time. The interiors of the Bourbon apartments, however, meticulously described the details of restoration furniture, or Biedermeier, as display of the latest and most fashionable taste.

In the painting *The Queen Maria Isabella of Naples in his apartments in Capodimonte* (1836, Rome, Museo Praz, fig. 1), where the widow of Francis I and mother of the reigning Ferdinando II is sitting in the room surrounded by furnishings that Mario Praz, owner of the painting, also knew how to describe as minutely as the painter, through the tools of his incomparable taste and learning, taking pleasure in their richness. This portrait, noted Praz in the *Filosofia dell'arredamento*, was totally different from the tradition of the dynastic portrait: "In contrast to sixteenth-century portraits, where the background was a generic scene, vaguely hinting at palatial solemnity, here the surround is very more important than the person, who is nothing more than a lay-figure, a dummy generically indicating the destination of the place to human habitation" (Praz 1964, pp. 214–215, cf. *Le stanze della memoria* 1987, n.11, P. Rosazza Ferraris, in *Civiltà dell'Ottocento* 1997, cat. 17.58, pp. 475). This study of an armchair, quickly taken from life and fixed on the canvas as if it were a portrait, is precisely what this painting seems to refer to. The piece of furniture appears in fact the re-evocation of a similar armchair of the same period, although different in details and colour, set in a similar position at the centre of the work, unless it is even to be identified with the armchair set at the back, in the bedroom beyond the door, in front of the toilet table and the psyche, seemingly black lacquered and apparently also adorned by a sphinx with golden wings.

Stefano Grandesso





1. VINCENZO ABBATI, *The Queen Maria Isabella of Naples in her apartments at Capodimonte*, Rome, Museo Praz



## 17. CAREL MAX GERLACH ANTON QUAEDVlieg

Valkenburg aan de Geul 1823–Rome 1874

### *Pack of Hounds at Rest in a Courtyard in the Roman Countryside*

1871

Oil on board, 13 × 20 cm

Signed lower right: "Ch. Quaedvlieg 1871"

PROVENANCE: Rome, private collection

The English foxhound is a dog with a particularly developed nose, bred for fox-hunting. Its arrival in Rome dates to the mid-1830s, when Lord George Stanhope, 6th Earl of Chesterfield, moved to the city with his own pairs of hounds, determined not to renounce his favourite sport. Before his return home, he left the dogs to Prince Livio Odescalchi, who took over the organization of hunting trips, founding and then presiding over the Roman fox-hunting Society.

The small painting by Carel Quaedvlieg presented here, done in 1871, should thus be seen in the framework of upper middle-class and aristocratic cultural contamination. It dates from the year the Savoyes settled in Rome and of their renewed patronage of the sport, also seen as an important event in the social register.

The pack of hounds is caught by the Dutch painter in a moment of rest, before or after the chase, in an enclosed space suitable for hosting the animals; the variety of types and the range of poses or glimpses is a fundamental part of the work of depiction. The countryside surrounding the property is not recognizable, but is alluded to by the stretch of sky and the foliage of tall trees beyond the pen. As in other paintings of similar size produced by the artist, the rendering of shapes and colours is analytical and brilliant, almost miniaturist in effect.

The genre scene, with ample portrayal of animal subjects, is one of the staples of Quaedvlieg's production, which is also distinguished by scenes inside and outside the city that soften the romanticism of Luis Léopold Robert in the direction of a more sober realism. With works of both kinds, between the 1850s and 1870s, the painter won the favour both of the intellectual Capitoline community (at exhibitions of the Società degli Amatori e Cultori delle Belle Arti), and of an international clientele, welcomed in his studio first in Via Margutta (1858-1870) and then in Piazza Barberini (1870-1874).

As a refined landscape painter of the Roman Campagna, Quaedvlieg has recently gained notice, emerging from an oblivion which, throughout the twentieth century, did him no justice.

*Ilaria Sgarbozza*



## 18. IPPOLITO CAFFI

Belluno 1809–Lissa 1866

### *View of Costantinople*

1864

Tempera on canvas, 197 × 283 cm

PROVENANCE: Venice, private collection; Veneto, private collection

“...when I crossed over to Constantinople, Pera, Galata and the Bosphorus, I thought I had been transported to Paradise. Ah the sights! The majesty! Asia on one side of the Bosphorus and Europe on the other...the thousands and thousands of mosques, hills and infinite spires that cut the sky into thousands of pieces...”: so wrote Ippolito Caffi to his friend Antonio Tessari on 3 November 1843.

Three months had passed since 5 September when the French steamship slipped its moorings in Naples to carry the artist to the long dreamed of destinations: Greece, Turkey, Egypt and Syria, to see spaces, places, monuments and people, *tranches de vie*, that he would recount with unparalleled liveliness and understanding.

Athens was the first destination, after a brief stop in Malta. It was the beginning of one of the most fertile periods of his whole artistic journey, a time of continuous and exhilarating emotions, leading him to exclaim “...here you have to see what we are and what human beings were!” But of all the wondrous things experienced during this trip, of all the monuments, glimpsed views and immense, grandiose panoramas, it is palpable in the works he carried out during the journey, and later copied, that it was the fascination of Constantinople that overwhelmingly entered his soul: from the pointed spires that seemed to touch the sky, to the translucent movement of the minarets reflected in the water, to the dusty account of the city seen through a thin layer of face powder.

And there follow the “memories” of the experience: *Santa Sophia*, *The Hippodrome*, *View of the Armenian Field*, *View of the Fresh Water of Europe*. Here the artist transports himself, and us with him, into a world of dreams, which leaves him amazed and moved, but which at the same time he manages to render with a perspectival and urbanistic clarity of topographic lucidity.

The large painting here described is part of a fascinating decorative group, made by the artist in the last decade of his life, a cycle that until a few years ago was thought to be lost or at least not identifiable. It is made up of four large canvases portraying *Caravan in the Desert* (fig. 2), a *Roman Forum*, a *View of Naples* (fig. 1) and the *View of Constantinople* (Scarpa Mazzocca 2018, pp. 302–303, n.38). The discovery of these large *teleri*, which was only known through epistolary news, adds a piece of fundamental importance to the catalog of Ippolito Caffi, in years, those of his last five years of life, which saw the birth of some absolute masterpieces, fill with chromatic and content delicacy. Paintings like this “*Constantinople*” become the *summa* of the adventurous narrative of a life and almost to them, it seems, the artist entrusts all his memories).

From letters written by Ippolito himself we can hypothesize that this cycle was made at the beginning of 1864, before our peripatetic artist set off again for Milan,









Turin and Genoa. There is an indubitable and significant stylistic similarity with the three large frescoes that the artist, at the end of the fifties, painted on the walls of his Venetian house in Calle del Selvadego, now transferred onto canvas and owned by Assicurazioni Generali: three great *vedute*, of dimensions quite similar to this, portraying two Oriental and one Roman panorama. They are the years in which; after various vicissitudes, he felt himself to be free, unhappy about the political and social situations of his beloved Venice, but free. More and more he made large scale works, like the great canvases for “Signor Giacomelli of Udine” which can still be seen in the villa of that name in Pradamano, or the three *vedute* carried out in the same technique for an anonymous Venetian buyer, or indeed the seven frescoes that he made, again in Venice, “for a rich merchant,” all works that have not been identified as yet. The chronology of the cycle is confirmed in the canvas with the *View of Naples*, where the tricolor is flying (at the centre, slightly to the right), confirming a date of execution after 1861.

Studying Caffi’s creative methodology, it is fundamental to remember with what care and constancy he jotted down every stimulus and perceived suggestion: wherever he travelled, Ippolito was never far from his notebooks; in them he entered, with almost obsessive precision, every piece of information that he thought might be helpful to his future works. The use of such drawings - sometimes sketches, sometimes finished pieces - can be seen in an obvious manner in, for example, the banana tree that appears in the *View of Naples*, which is a precise, pondered elaboration of one of the entries found in a notebook from his trip to the Orient and conserved at Museo Correr.

A similar thing occurs in the *View of Constantinople*. He notes down masses

of large and small ideas that might have served in the short term for pictorial “models” - cards – made in situ, or in any case would serve as a “data bank” for the production of future versions. Close analysis of the costumes – which he also donned himself to hide his western origin and avoid being robbed, as he was at the beginning of his stay – and as a consequence the customs of an unknown world in those days rarely explored in its daily life: all this fills Ippolito’s notebooks and becomes material for “Oriental” tales for which, from his return to Italy onwards, he receives more and more requests.

Sometimes he would be so taken with an idea, for example the gathering of figures in a particular place – as the above example indicates – that he would play with the translation, for example the Egyptian Bedouins, in an *ante litteram* “selfie”, are immortalized on the shore of the Isthmus of Suez, become a living element in a frozen, hieratic landscape, the dimensional parameter in the grandeur of the setting. The *veduta* opens out into an immense panorama, as if the artist had used a modern 22mm wide-angle lens: it embraces the entire gulf, and Ippolito’s chromatic palette reflects its delicacy and charm with tender nostalgia: *I thought I had been transported to Paradise...*

The painting will be in the Catalogue Raisonné “*Ippolito Caffi. Dipinti, disegni, lettere e documenti*” by Annalisa Scarpa, that will be published by 2020

*Annalisa Scarpa*



1. IPPOLITO CAFFI, *View of Naples after the annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to the Kingdom of Sardinia with the Plebiscite of 1860*, 1864, Rome, private collection
2. IPPOLITO CAFFI, *A Caravan in the Egyptian Desert*, 1864, Rome, Galleria Carlo Virgilio & Co.

## 19. GIUSEPPE PICCONE

Albisola Superiore 1912–Albissola Marittima 1960

### *Boxeur*

ca. 1930–1935

Wood, black paint, h. 120 x 82 x 39.5 cm

PROVENANCE: Lombardy, private collection

Of the *Boxeur* by the Ligurian Giuseppe Piccone are known two versions, different for dimensions and pose of the figure. This specimen, the bigger in size, sculpted in solid and patined wood with a black tint in imitation of bronze, is to be considered the final work. To this follows the smaller version with the right foot differently flexed (cf. *La ceramica futurista* 1982, p. 153; *La scultura a Genova* 1989, vol. III, pp. 138, 283; Beringheli 1991, p. 244; *La ceramica del Novecento* 1997, p. 124; *Liguria Futurista* 1997, p. 127, n. 87; Panzetta 2005, p. 117) in which was identified the model for a ceramic sculpture created by the “Manifattura Giuseppe Mazzotti”, active in Albissola Marina from 1903.

The work is datable to within the first half of the 1930s, a period in which Piccone – about whom the biographical information is still scarce and confusing – joined the Futurist cause. Coming from a family of potters tied to tradition, owners of a factory active in Albissola from 1856, Giuseppe Piccone worked closely with the futurist Tullio Mazzotti, better known as “Tullio d’Albisola”, a soubriquet given to him by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. In the *Manifesto futurista della Ceramica e Aereoceramica*, published in the “*Gazzetta del Popolo*” on September 7, 1938, Piccone is in fact cited – together with such prominent figures as, among others, Fillia and Lucio Fontana – in the list of collaborators of Tullio d’Albisola in the “Futurist workshop on the Sansobbia [...] founded and directed by the great potter Giuseppe Mazzotti dean of Italian potters and glorious craftsman” (d’Albisola, Marinetti 1938). In 1934, the artist had already taken part in the exhibition *Les Aeropeintres futuristes italiens*, inaugurated on May 30th at the Hotel Negresco in Nice.

The *Boxeur* demonstrates how Piccone thoroughly embraced the concepts of the Futurist vanguard and in particular, those expressed in the manifesto of ceramics, in which he declared his desire to achieve “ceramic simultaneities of contrasting or harmonizing states of mind [...] using lines-force, tones lacking in realism, forms and colours that are not narrative or descriptive but suggestive» (d’Albisola, Marinetti 1938). The image of the boxer is in fact given through a vigorous geometrization of the forms, devoid of descriptive and decorative elements, the monumentality of which is enhanced by the black of the patina. On the compositional level, Piccone seems to have been inspired both by the contemporary sculptures of the futurist Mino Rosso, and those, of twenty years before, by Umberto Boccioni (note that in the manifesto of ceramics both artists are given a leading role in the genesis of the theories enunciated). The forward motion of the *Boxeur* brings to mind Boccioni’s masterpiece *Unique forms of Continuity in Space* (1913), reinterpreted in the light of subsequent Futurist experience, from Depero to Thayaht.

Even the subject is fully in line with the Italian sculptural production of the





‘Thirties, both of the avant-garde and of adherents of the rediscovery of classicism: the exaltation of sports and physical education, in a period in which the fascist government committed many resources to the reform of youth education, deeply influenced the artists (for an in-depth inquiry see Panzetta 2005), inspiring them to the creation of numerous portraits of athletes immortalized during activity or at rest, among which should be remembered those of the “Foro Mussolini” (today “Foro Italico”) inaugurated in Rome in 1932. In the same period, Piccone himself created such other works on a sports theme as the *Rameur* (Rower), exhibited in Nice in 1934, or again the *Boxeurs* presented at the exhibition of the GUF Savonese in 1935 (the work was displayed with another sculpture, *Mother and son*. It cannot be excluded, however, that the *Boxeurs* is in fact the *Boxeur* here discussed, though in reviewing the exhibition, the critics, seem to be describing works inspired by a new realism, cf. *La ceramica del Novecento* 1997, p. 124).

*Manuel Carrera*





Detail of cat. 5



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