



STUART LOCHHEAD
SCULPTURE

The Alchemist's Laboratory: Giambologna's Forge in Florence

Catalogue entries by Jeremy Warren
Honorary Curator of Sculpture, Ashmolean Museum,
Oxford and Sculpture Research Curator, The National Trust

Stuart Lochhead Sculpture
35 Bury Street, St. James's
London SW1Y 6AU
020 3950 2377

stuart@stuartlochhead.art
stuartlochhead.art

‘È anco Accademico, e molto in grazia de’ nostri Principi per le sue virtù, Giovan Bologna da Douay, scultore fiamingo, giovane veramente rarissimo’

‘Another Academician is Giovan Bologna from Douai, a Flemish sculptor, highly esteemed by our rulers for his skills, and a most rare youth’

(Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*, Florence, 1568)



Hendrick Goltzius, *Portrait of Giambologna*, c. 1590-1591, black, white and red chalk and brown washes on paper, Teylers Museum, Haarlem

The Alchemist's Laboratory: A Metaphor for Florence & Giambologna's Workshop

In 1569, the Grand Duke of Florence Francesco I de' Medici asked the court painter Giorgio Vasari to work on the decoration of his *studiolo* (Fig. 1) in the Palazzo Vecchio – the site of Florence's government and Medici power. Under Vasari's guidance and the supervision of the erudite priest Vincenzio Borghini, the city's most celebrated artists devised a complex cycle of paintings and sculptures, populating this intimate space with rare mythological and biblical subjects, as well as whimsical depictions of activities such as pearl fishing, the discovery of glassmaking, and bronze founding. Francesco himself features in the painting by the Flemish artist Johannes Stradanus, one of Vasari's close associates, which represents *The Alchemist's Laboratory* (Fig. 2).

The duke is depicted in the bottom right corner of the image, as he carefully mixes a substance over a small furnace. The head alchemist stands behind him while assistants carry, grind, pour and mechanically squeeze minerals, liquids, and botanicals. At the top left, a man in black overalls and a hat reads a book surrounded by shelves filled with jars and containers. Smoke billows at the back of the painting.



Fig. 1, Studiolo of Francesco I de' Medici, c. 1569-1572, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence



Fig. 2, Johannes Stradanus (Jan van der Straet), *The Alchemist's Laboratory*, c. 1570-1572, oil on slate, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.
© Luisa Ricciarini/Bridgeman Images.



Fig. 3, Façade of Giambologna's home and workshop in Borgo Pinti, Florence

Looking for a title of our exhibition, which tells the extraordinary story of Giambologna, the greatest Mannerist sculptor of Florence, and of his centuries-long legacy, we were struck by the poignancy of this image. Stradanus places the duke of Florence next to a furnace, surrounds him with glass retorts, alembics, smoke and fire, and with a range of individuals: erudite practitioners, scholars, skilled artisans and assistants. The image is a powerful visualisation of the unique environment of Florence in the late sixteenth century. At the time, the city was an open-air workshop for painters, architects, goldsmiths, and sculptors. It was also a site for exchange and experimentation, where artists conversed with patrons, poets, theologians, and natural philosophers. There, Giambologna blossomed into one of the most sought-after artists in Europe in the late Renaissance period.

Francesco's *studiolo* is a fitting place to start discussing his relationship with the city. The patron commissioned from the artist a statuette of the god Apollo for its decoration, and Giambologna knew and collaborated closely with fellow expat artist Stradanus. Moreover, across the square from the Palazzo Vecchio, two of the sculptor's most famous works are displayed in the Loggia dei Lanzi – the *Abduction of a Sabine Woman*, and *Hercules Fighting the Centaur*. At the same time, *The Alchemist's Laboratory* evocatively gestures towards another fundamental aspect of the sculptor's achievement, and a trope of late sixteenth century writing: the artist's ability, through their craft, to compete with nature itself.

Giambologna's forge did not seek to create the Philosopher's stone but instead changed the state of metals and infused artistic life into inert matter. Sculptors from all over Europe took part in this transformative process, learning from his skills, continuing to cast his models for over two centuries and thus testifying to the longevity of his creative strength. The artist's workshop in Borgo Pinti (Fig. 3) became a crucible for the study, production, and dissemination of his original designs across Europe. Statuettes produced in Florence were gifted by the Medici dukes to other princely families, from that of Henry, Prince of Wales, who received fifteen models by the artist in the hope that Cosimo's sister, Caterina, would marry him, to the

collection of the Prince of Saxony, in Dresden, to whom Giambologna personally gifted a bronze version of the *Striding Mars*.

The Alchemist's Laboratory thus functions as a double metaphor: on the one hand, it symbolises the unique cultural environment of Florence in the late sixteenth century. On the other, it pays tribute to the ground-breaking work of Giambologna and his unparalleled legacy, upheld by the five, wonderful bronzes that form the impressive collection that we celebrate with this catalogue.

Each of the bronzes included in this publication was designed by the master. And each was cast by a close collaborator or follower of the artist: from Fra Domenico Portigiani, who helped the sculptor cast his monumental *Neptune* for Bologna and the extremely rare *Striding Mars* we are presenting here, to Antonio Susini, his skilful heir, and the Baroque sculptor Giovan Battista Foggini, whose models testify to the long-standing influence of Giambologna well into the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

These objects are not just of outstanding art-historical importance; they are also, quite simply, beautiful.

The range of the bronzes' surface textures, from the smooth finish of the skin of each figure to the waxy raggedness of their draperies, and changes to the colour of the patina, from deep brown to golden tones, speak to the mastery of bronze that was kept and passed on in one Florentine workshop for over 150 years. The excellent catalogue entries by Jeremy Warren, Honorary Curator of Sculpture at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, explore this and other aspects of the sculptor's production and his unique legacy.

The present collection of Giambologna's *Striding Mars*, *Birdcatcher*, *Cristo Morto*, *Hercules Slaying the Centaur* and *Lion Attacking a Horse* has been assembled over two decades by an important private American collector. Dealing with such a wealth of material – the stuff of princely collections, and icons of European art history – has been an exciting opportunity for us at the gallery. As you flick through the pages of this catalogue, we hope that you will enjoy stepping into *The Alchemist's Laboratory* and cherish the fruit of Giambologna's genius as much as we did.

Stuart, and the Team at Stuart Lochhead Sculpture





Striding Mars





Birdcatcher









Cristo Morto





*Hercules Slaying
the Centaur*



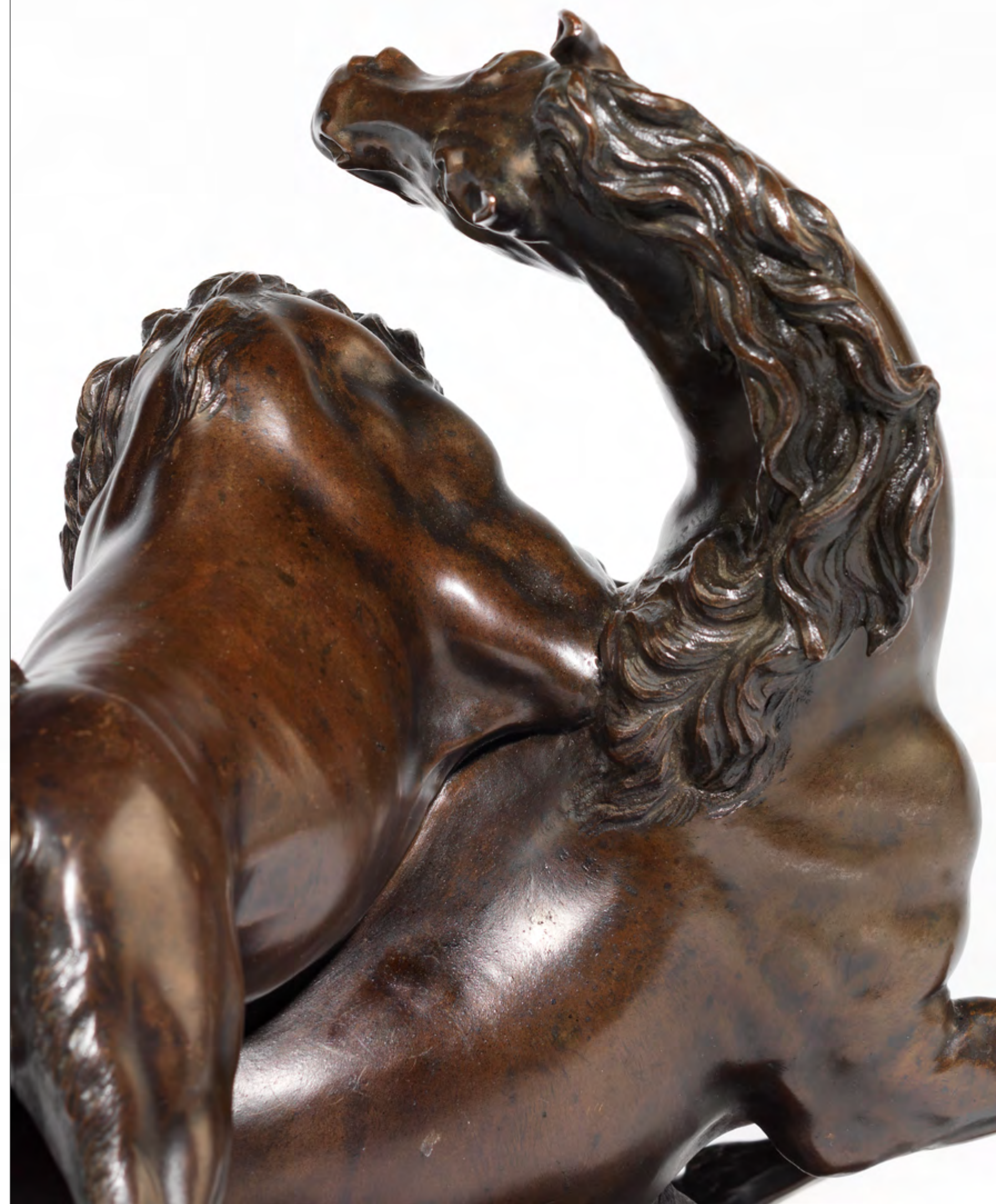




A Lion Attacking a Horse











Probably cast by
Fra Domenico Portigiani
(c. 1536-1602)

Model, Florence, c. 1565-70; cast c. 1580
Height 39.4 cms.

Provenance:
The Princes von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen,
Schloß Sigmaringen, Germany

Selected Literature:
Edinburgh 1978, pp. 93-100, nos. 42-49; Avery
1987, pp. 137, 261, no. 69; New York 2004,
pp. 120-33, no. 10; Dresden 2006, pp. 34-41;
Florence 2006, pp. 208-13, nos. 24-25; Vienna
2006, pp. 218-26, nos. 11-12; New York 2014,
pp. 164-69, no. 11.

Striding Mars

Giambologna (1529-1608)

Giambologna's *Mars* is one of the sculptor's most dynamic and impressive exercises in the male nude. The Roman god of war is depicted as a powerfully muscled mature figure striding purposefully forward, his body twisted as he turns to look to his left; heavily bearded, with thick brows and deep-set eyes, his hair formed from vigorous, writhing curls that rise above his forehead to form a sort of pyramid. The figure's only attribute is a sword in his right hand, the hilt of which now remains. One of the most extraordinary elements in the composition is the god's left hand, held slightly downward and with two fingers extended, the tension that is created rendering visible every vein in the surface of the hand. The figure marks a development from the pose of the large bronze figure of Neptune in Giambologna's *Fountain of Neptune* (Fig. 1) in Bologna, made between 1563 and 1567. In the *Mars*, the figure's limbs, spreading even more expansively outwards than in the *Neptune*, demonstrate the freedom afforded by bronze as a material, when compared to the constraints of sculpture in stone.

This striking model is described in early documents both as a figure of Mars but also as a gladiator, for example in a list of the sculptors' models drawn up in 1611. Giambologna was famously uninterested in the subjects of his sculptures, so would not have minded about this; what would have been important for him would have been the challenge, working within the ostensibly simple formula of a single male nude figure, of producing a range of effects and expressions. The torsion of the upper body and the swinging arms make the sculpture viewable from all angles, a quality that Giambologna sought after in so many of his figures. In addition, here we find a powerful sense of movement, lithe muscularity, and a brooding intensity in the figure's scowling face. The overall effect creates

a dynamic image of power, with more than a hint of implacable menace.

When the sculpture is studied, it quickly becomes clear that Giambologna's *Mars* is also an unnaturally tall figure. This is not just artistic licence on the part of the sculptor, since there is some evidence that the composition may be based on a real individual. Bartolommeo di Lionardo Ginori (1533-1594) was a Florentine soldier of fortune and a giant of a man, around seven feet six inches (c. 2.3 metres) in height. Giambologna's biographer Francesco Baldinucci recounted how, having come across him in a church, the sculptor asked Ginori to model for the figure of the younger man in his celebrated three-figure group of the *Abduction of a Sabine Woman*, subsequently making various 'studies and models' of the giant man. It has recently been convincingly suggested that one of these models might have served for the figure of Mars.¹

It was Grand Duke Cosimo I de' Medici's (1519-1574) particular veneration for Mars that doubtless prompted the creation in sixteenth-century Florence of a series of figures of the god striding naked into combat, a type commonly called the *Mars Gradivus*, the name for the god invoked by Roman soldiers about to go into battle. An over life-size bronze statue of *Mars Gradivus*, now in the Gallerie degli Uffizi in Florence, was made in 1559-60 by Bartolomeo Ammanati (1511-1592).² Giambologna probably conceived his statue of Mars not long afterwards during the 1560s, perhaps around the same time that the Dutch sculptor Willem Danielsz van Tetrode (c. 1525-1580), who lived in Italy between 1551-67, made his own interpretation of the *Mars Gradivus*.³ A mirror image of Ammanati's figure, the concept of Tetrode's statuette is less original than that of Giambologna's, despite measuring around the same size. The first casts of Giambologna's model were probably already

made in the late 1560s, since it was copied by the sculptor Pietro da Barga for Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, in a 1575 inventory of whose Roman property Pietro's version appears, described as a 'gladiator'.

To judge from the number of casts made in subsequent years, the *Mars* was a successful model, although other than the 1611 list of bronzes in the collection of Markus Zäch in Augsburg, it is strangely absent from early lists of the sculptor's works. A group of high-quality casts was made around 1580, cast in the Florentine foundry of Fra Domenico Portigiani. These include the present bronze and two other examples of exceptional quality, one in the Quentin collection⁴ and a second, in a private collection, which is signed 'I.B.' on the underside of the foot and has received a later gilding.⁵ As well as the high quality of their casting and chasing, certain features, although also present in a few later casts, especially distinguish these superb early versions. These include the raised left heel, a small touch that nevertheless dramatically increases the sense of movement within the sculpture, the casting of the feet fully in the round and the presence of cast-in fixing tangs on the undersides of the figure's feet.

From around 1580 Giambologna began to use Antonio Susini to produce highly finished casts of his models. Susini was responsible for the earliest documented cast of the *Mars* to be made in Giambologna's workshop, first recorded in the Dresden Kunstkammer in 1587, as a personal gift of the sculptor to Elector Christian I of Saxony. This example left the Dresden collections after the First World War and was re-acquired only in 2018. Other early casts that can be attributed to Antonio Susini include examples in the Staatliche Museen Berlin and the Hill collection. The *Mars* continued to be reproduced in the Florentine workshops of Giambologna's successors throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth.



Fig. 1, Giambologna, *Fountain of Neptune*, 1563-1567, bronze, Bologna.

A version in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, made in the workshop of Massimiliano Soldani Benzi (1656-1740),⁶ turns Mars into the executioner with, in his outstretched left hand, the severed head of Saint John the Baptist, an appropriate adaptation given that John the Baptist is the patron saint of Florence. Casts of the *Mars* were certainly also made elsewhere, for example in late eighteenth-century Rome, where the model appears in the catalogue of bronze reductions offered for sale by Francesco Righetti (1749-1819).

This sculpture, wonderfully freshly-modelled and pulsating with dynamic energy, takes us to the heart of Giambologna's achievement as a sculptor of the human form.

1 Avery 2018, esp. pp. 915-17.
2 Florence 2011, no. 12.
3 New York 2014, no. 22.
4 New York 2004, no. 10.
5 Edinburgh 1978, no. 42; Avery 1987, no. 69, Pl. II.
6 Edinburgh 1978, no. 49.



Cast by
Antonio Susini
(1558-1624)

Model, Florence, c. 1580
Cast, Florence, c. 1580-1600
Height 31 cms.

Provenance:
Ballyfin House, County Laois, Ireland
Tomasso Brothers Fine Art, 2008

Selected Literature:
Edinburgh 1978, pp. 160–63, nos. 130–34; Larsson
1985, no. 24; Avery 1987, pp. 46, 266, no. 112;
Detroit 2002, no. 109; Radcliffe/Penny 2004,
pp. 156–63, no. 25; Florence 2006, pp. 239–40,
no. 42; Tomasso 2008, no. 12 (the present
bronze).

Birdcatcher

Giambologna (1529-1608)

This statuette depicts a peasant hunting for small birds at night. Dressed in breeches and surcoat of tough canvas or leather for protection as he pushes his way through hedges and thickets, the man holds in his raised left hand a tapering box with a wide-opened mouth, that would originally have contained a small lamp. The stick he holds in his right hand may be a replacement; the man would probably have originally been equipped with a form of stringed racquet, as survives on a version formerly in the French royal collections, now in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.¹ Hanging from his belt is a bag with a beautiful ring opening of circular form, to hold his booty, whilst the body of another bird is stuffed into the man's belt.

The hunting of birds was a very common rural occupation in Giambologna's lifetime, when small birds were standard items for the table. As can be seen in the engravings of hunting scenes after designs by Giambologna's contemporary and friend Johannes Stradanus (Jan van der Straet, 1523-1605), innumerable methods were employed to entice and snare them. The particular hunting method illustrated in the statuette involved the birdcatcher going out at night time, using his lantern to surprise and dazzle sleeping birds, which he would then dispatch with his racquet.

Stradanus's series of hunting engravings (Fig. 1), published in 1578 with a dedication to Cosimo I de' Medici, may have stimulated the making of figures such as this, although having grown up in Flanders, Giambologna would have been well aware of the long tradition within Flemish and Dutch art for the depiction of peasants and other such subjects. During his career he made several garden sculptures, as well as small bronze statuettes depicting peasants. As well as the birdcatcher, the best-known are a seated bagpiper and standing peasant resting on his staff. The model for the birdcatcher may date from the late 1570s, when Grand Duke Francesco

I de' Medici (1541-1587) was creating for his mistress Bianca Capello the villa and gardens at Pratolino, for which Giambologna made his colossal sculpture of the *Appennine*.

A number of early versions survive, of which this example, cast and finished by Antonio Susini, is one of the finest, with a wonderfully crisp and well-articulated modelling. It is close in form and quality to the version in the Louvre from the French royal collections, which retains its small oil-lamp inside the lantern as well as the racquet. Other outstanding examples of the model include the one in the Robert H. Smith collection, which has been attributed to Giambologna himself, and versions in the National Museum, Stockholm, recorded in the collection of Queen Christina in 1652, and in the Detroit Institute of Arts. A related model of a birdcatcher seems to have been conceived to form a pair with the prime figure; it is not clear whether this originated in Giambologna's workshop or elsewhere, but none of the surviving casts approach the quality of the best examples of the present bronze.

The model of the *Birdcatcher* appears in several of the early lists of Giambologna's works, for example that of Markus Zäch in Augsburg in 1611. A version was among the bronze figures after models by Giambologna that were presented to the heir to the thrones of England and Scotland, Henry, Prince of Wales (1594-1612), early in 1612. Prince Henry was especially intrigued by the bronze of the birdcatcher, since he was evidently not familiar with this Italian hunting method. One example of the model in silver even seems to have been adapted to serve as a utensil, recorded in 1628 in the Treasury of the Archduke Leopold in Innsbruck as 'a silver peasant by Giambologna made for use as a nightlight and a clock'.

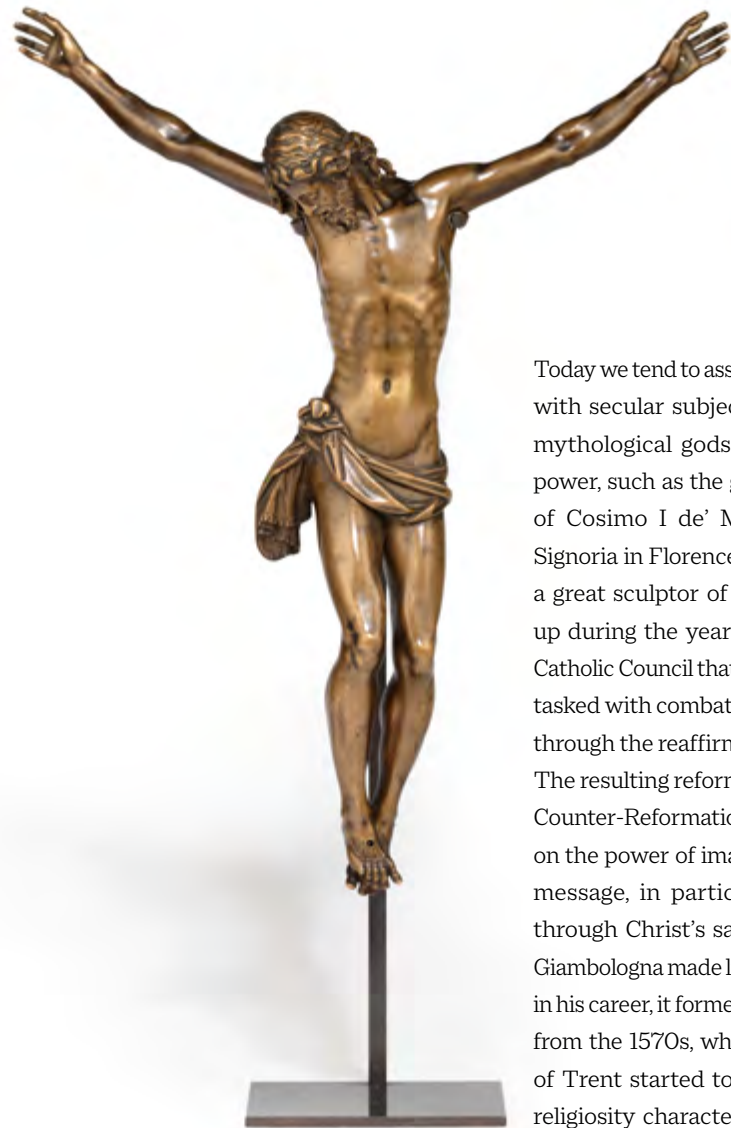
1 Edinburgh 1978, no. 131.



Fig. 1, Johannes Stradanus (designer) and Johannes Collaert (engraver), *The Bird Hunt* (from the *Venationes ferarum*), c. 1578, engraving.

Cristo Morto

Giambologna (1529-1608)



Cast by
Antonio Susini
(1558-1624)

Florence, c. 1590-1600
Height 31.5 cms., width 26.5 cms.

Provenance:
Hall and Knight, New York, 2001
Private Collection, UK

Selected Literature:
Edinburgh 1978, pp. 143-46, nos. 105-11; Avery
1987, pp. 199-200, 264, no. 96; Charles Avery in
Hall & Knight 2001, pp. 94-101, no. 6 (the present
example); Di Lorenzo 2011; New York 2014,
pp. 158-63, no. 10

Today we tend to associate the art of Giambologna with secular subjects, sophisticated figures of mythological gods or affirmations of Medici power, such as the great equestrian monument of Cosimo I de' Medici in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. But Giambologna was also a great sculptor of religious subjects. He grew up during the years of the Council of Trent, a Catholic Council that met between 1545 and 1563, tasked with combating the rise of Protestantism through the reaffirmation of Catholic principles. The resulting reforms, known collectively as the Counter-Reformation, placed renewed emphasis on the power of images to convey the Christian message, in particular belief in redemption through Christ's sacrifice of his life. Although Giambologna made little religious sculpture earlier in his career, it formed a larger element in his work from the 1570s, when the edicts of the Council of Trent started to take effect and an intense religiosity characterised much Italian painting and sculpture.

Giambologna's images of Christ on the cross succeed brilliantly in conveying the Counter-Reformation message of redemption through Christ's suffering. His bronze sculptures of the crucified Christ ranged from small crucifixes to life-size models, such as the one made between 1594-98 for the sculptor's own funerary chapel, in the church of Santissima Annunziata (Fig. 1). They

were highly esteemed by his contemporaries. Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici described another life-size *Crucifix*, made in 1595 for the church of Saint Michael in Munich, as 'a work of most piteous devotion, that is also notable for the beauty of its workmanship and its mastery'. Whilst the larger models date from the 1590s, Giambologna was making smaller ones already in the 1570s. There are numerous variations between different versions, but all conform to two basic types, the first showing Christ already dead (*Cristo morto*), his head hanging down and his eyes closed, the second with the Saviour still alive (*Cristo vivo*), raising his head as he prepares to utter his final cry. A large number of crucifixes made from Giambologna's models are recorded in documents from his lifetime, in gold, silver, bronze and marble. When the giant Bartolommeo di Lionardo Ginori modelled for Giambologna the tall male figure seen in the *Abduction of the Sabine Woman* and probably the *Mars*, Giambologna rewarded him with the gift of 'a beautiful bronze Crucifix'.

The present image uses the same model as a version now in the museum in Giambologna's home town of Douai, that may have been owned by his close friend and faithful patron, Bernardo Vecchietti (1514-1590), whilst other examples of this type are in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto and the Hill collection, New York. The

Saviour is depicted with his head hanging down towards his right, his eyes closed. The accentuated patterns of the ribcage, the twitching fingers of the hands and a throbbing vein in the right foot remind us of the tension contained within this cruelly suspended body, pictured at just the moment when life is passing from it. The composition is carefully designed to draw the viewer's attention towards contemplation of the most significant part, Christ's face, framed within a graceful line formed by the two slightly descending arms. Another sightline descends from the right arm and along the edge of the gently indented torso, ending with the large knot of the loin cloth as it sweeps outwards from the right hip. The slight angle of Christ's legs also leads our gaze towards Christ's face. He seems asleep, but his features are suffused with a poignant sadness, which evoke deep empathy within the viewer.

The precise and refined workmanship of this wonderful example of the *Cristo morto* are hallmarks of the style of Antonio Susini, to whom from around 1580 Giambologna entrusted the production of his finest bronzes. With its attention to detail, for example the piercing of the hair at right and left, its subtle treatment of the modulations of the surface of Christ's body and sensitive attention to the face, it is one of the finest and most moving examples of Giambologna's genius and achievement as a religious sculptor.

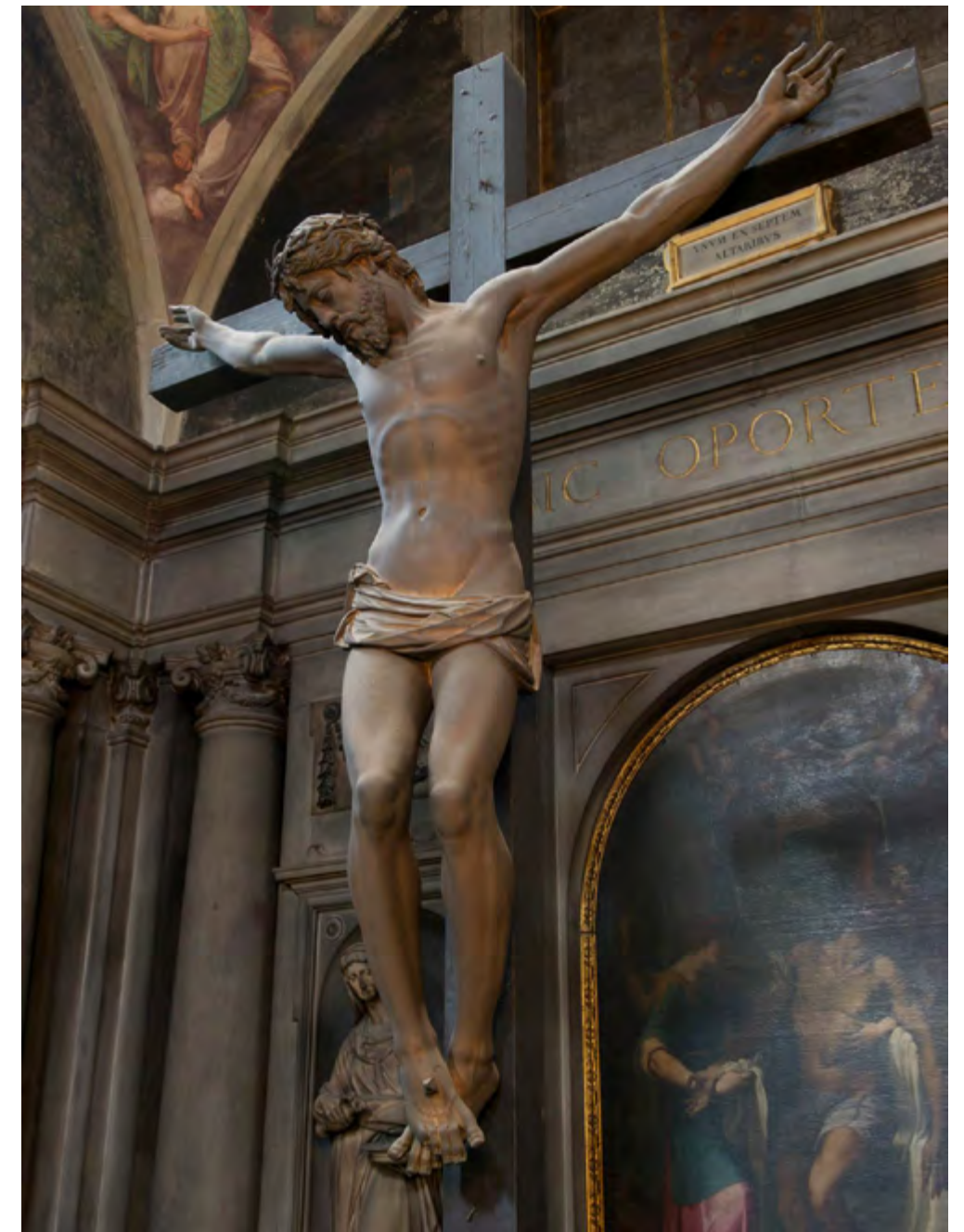


Fig. 1, Giambologna, *Cristo Morto*, c. 1594-1598, bronze, Soccorso Chapel, Church of Santissima Annunziata, Florence

Hercules Slaying the Centaur

Giambologna (1529-1608)



Attributed to the workshop of
Giovan Battista Foggini
(1652-1725)

Model, Florence, c. 1600
Cast, Florence c. 1700-20
Height 42.5 cms., length 26.5 cms., width 27 cms.

Provenance:
Christie's, London, 9 May 1978
Sotheby's, Monaco, May 1980
Private Collection, England, 2015

Selected Literature:
Edinburgh 1978, pp. 128-30, nos. 81-82; Avery
1987, pp. 117-19, 262, nos. 74-75; New York 2004,
pp. 166-75, no. 15; Florence 2006, pp. 178-79,
nos. 10-11; Vienna 2006, pp. 230-33, no. 15; New
York 2014, pp. 138-47, no. 82; Warren 2016,
nos. 115, 117.

This dramatic scene shows the classical hero Hercules standing astride a centaur, a creature with the upper body of a human joined to that of a horse. He is about to strike his opponent with the club in his raised right hand whilst, with his left hand, he forces down the centaur's head and trunk, twisting back the head of his opponent. The centaur, screaming in pain, struggles with his hands to free himself and thrust Hercules away from him. Hercules' weapons, his bow, a quiver full of arrows and a small round shield are scattered on the rocky ground. The skin of the Nemean Lion, killed by Hercules in the first of his Twelve Labours and normally worn by the Greek hero, lies on the centaur's back.

The subject of the bronze is Hercules' overcoming of the centaur Eurytion, his rival for the hand of the beautiful Deianira, daughter of king Oeneus. Various versions of the story exist in Greek mythology, but all end with Hercules bursting in on Deianira and Eurytion's wedding feast and killing his rival. Deianira would later become the innocent agent of Hercules's death, after she was abducted by another centaur, Nessus, a scene also depicted in bronze by Giambologna.

This remarkable composition combines Giambologna's interest in animal subjects with

one of his main preoccupations as an artist, the interaction of human bodies in some form of combat or struggle. The equine body of the centaur is closely related to the horse in the *Lion Attacking a Horse* group. The interplay of limbs as the two opponents grapple is especially effective whilst there is a chilling, psychological contrast between Hercules' emotionless expression and the palpable terror written across Eurytion's face. The centaur's distress is further emphasised by the bulging veins in his torso, front legs, and hindquarters.

Hercules Slaying the Centaur was originally conceived as one of a series of twelve small groups of Hercules subjects, commissioned from Giambologna in the 1570s by Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici, for casting in silver. The first model to be cast, *Hercules Slaying the Centaur*, was completed by July 1577 and subsequently recorded in 1589 on display in the Tribuna of the Uffizi together with other Hercules sculptures in silver by Giambologna. These are all long lost, but many bronze versions of *Hercules Slaying the Centaur* survive, evidence that it was one of the artist's most successful compositions. In 1594, Grand Duke Ferdinando commissioned a monumental version in marble, completed in 1599 and today displayed on the Loggia dei Lanzi,

overlooking the Piazza della Signoria in Florence (Fig. 1). All the extant bronze versions are in fact based on this marble, since they incorporate the rocky base on which the marble is set as well as a band around the centaur's body, which bears Giambologna's signature in the monumental version.

Bronze versions appear in many of the early documentary references, including the inventory of the Salviati collection made in 1609 and the 1612 Royal Gift of bronzes to Henry, Prince of Wales (1594-1612). Casts of this popular model were made over a considerable period. The present version follows Giambologna's model closely, with Eurytion's horse's body slightly higher from the ground than in some other examples. Its facture, and particularly the treatment of the rocky base, would suggest that it was made in a Florentine workshop in the first decades of the eighteenth century. The sculpture has been attributed to Giuseppe Piamontini (1663-1744), but arguably lacks the very detailed, almost obsessive chasing of the surfaces usually associated with his bronzes. The more pictorial treatment might alternatively suggest that it was made in the busy and successful workshop of his slightly older contemporary, Giovan Battista Foggini.



Fig. 1, Giambologna, *Hercules Slaying the Centaur*, 1594-1599, marble, Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence

A Lion Attacking a Horse

Giambologna (1529-1608)



Cast by
Giovan Battista Foggini
(1652-1725)

Model, Florence, c. 1580-1590
Cast, Florence, c. 1700
Height 24.5 cms., length 30 cms., width 23.5 cms.

Provenance:
Private Collection, England
Alain Moatti, Paris

Selected Literature:
Edinburgh 1978, pp. 186-89, nos. 170 and 172;
Avery 1987, pp. 59-60, 269, no. 139; Detroit 2002,
pp. 234-35, no. 110; Radcliffe/Penny 2004, pp.
184-87, no. 30; Vienna 2006, pp. 284-87, no. 39;
Florence 2019, pp. 150-53, nos. 6-7.

The group depicts a lion that has pulled down a stallion and now sinks its teeth and claws into the side of the stricken animal, which throws up its head, uttering a scream of pain. It is one of only a few models by Giambologna that are clearly based on antique marble sculptures. The model was a Greek work dating from c. 325-300 B.C. in the Capitoline Museums in Rome (Fig. 1).¹ Recorded on the Capitoline Hill as early as 1347, it was famously much admired by Michelangelo Buonarroti. The ancient sculpture was in a fragmentary state until its radical restoration in 1594, which included the addition of all the horse's legs and its entire head and neck.

Giambologna's spirited interpretation is very probably based on the group before it was restored. In the restored group, the stallion appears to have only just become aware of the lion's attack, turning his head towards his assailant, whereas here we see the victim violently twisting its head upwards as the lion's claws and teeth rip into the flesh, whilst the tail thrashes wildly. The effect is to heighten greatly the drama within the composition but, at the same time, the beauty of the group. For example, the horse's body describes a remarkably graceful curve that runs from the neck along the animal's torso.

The first casts of this model were made by Antonio Susini, who signed two examples, in

the Galleria Corsini of the Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, Rome and the Detroit Institute of Arts. Both are paired with companion groups, also signed, depicting a lion attacking a bull. The particular form of the signature, in which Susini describes the bronzes as his work, has led to debate as to whether both subjects might have been designed by him rather than by his master. Indeed, Giambologna's early biographer Filippo Baldinucci wrote of how in the 1580s Giambologna journeyed to Rome in the company of Susini, who was charged by his master with copying 'the most marvellous statues to be seen in that city'. It seems more probable that it was Giambologna who was responsible for this energetic and sophisticated composition, rather than Antonio Susini, whose independent creations are generally more stolid. Susini might on the other hand have modelled a variant bronze, which follows much more closely the antique group in Rome as it was restored in 1594. An example is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, from the collection of the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612).²

One of the most remarkable aspects of Giambologna's achievement is the longevity of his legacy. There have been few, if any, other sculptors, casts of whose works were still being produced in the same workshop more than a century after

their death. After 1608, Giambologna's workshop and the all-important collection of models and moulds came into the charge successively of his chief assistant Pietro Tacca (1577-1640), his son Ferdinando Tacca (1619-1686) and then Giovan Battista Foggini. Foggini created very fine bronze sculptures of his own invention, as well as making an enormous contribution to the final flowering of the Florentine tradition of luxury furniture and works of art in the Grand-Ducal workshops, incorporating hardstones and metalwork. But, as with Pietro and Ferdinando Tacca before him, a large part of Foggini's business comprised the production of bronze casts of Giambologna's most successful models, among them the *Lion Attacking a Horse*. This must have been a highly profitable sideline, since every wealthy Grand Tourist visiting Florence would have hoped to have taken a Giambologna bronze back home.

The expert casting and refined and distinctive working of the surfaces, especially the striated treatment of the rocks onto which the stallion has fallen, allow this beautiful cast to be attributed to Giovan Battista Foggini, perhaps the last heir to Giambologna's genius.



Fig. 1, Greek, *A Lion Attacking a Horse*, c. 325-300 B.C. (restored in 1594), marble, Musei Capitolini, Rome © Stefano Baldini/Bridgeman Images.

1 Haskell/Penny 1981, pp. 250-51, no. 54.
2 Vienna 2006, no. 39.

Bibliography

Avery 1987	Charles Avery, <i>Giambologna: The Complete Sculpture</i> , Oxford 1987	
Avery 2018	Charles Avery, “‘The big Italian’: Giambologna and his model Bartolommeo di Lionardo Ginori”, <i>The Burlington Magazine</i> , 160 (November 2018), pp. 912–19	Catalogue entries written by Jeremy Warren, Honorary Curator of Sculpture, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and Sculpture Research Curator, The National Trust
Detroit 2002	Alan P. Darr, Peter Barnet and Antonia Boström (eds.), <i>Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Detroit Institute of Arts</i> , 2 vols., London 2002	
Di Lorenzo 2011	Andrea Di Lorenzo (ed.), <i>Il Crocifisso d'oro del Museo Poldi Pezzoli. Giambologna e Gasparo Mola</i> , Milan 2011	
Dresden 2006	Dirk Syndram, Moritz Woelk and Martina Minning (eds.), <i>Giambologna in Dresden. Die Geschenke der Medici</i> , exh. cat., Grünes Gewölbe, Dresden 2006	
Edinburgh 1978	Charles Avery and Anthony Radcliffe (eds.), <i>Giambologna 1529–1608: Sculptor to the Medici</i> , exh. cat., Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh/Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1978	
Florence 2006	Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos (eds.), <i>Giambologna, gli dei, gli eroi. Genesi e fortuna di uno stile europeo nella scultura</i> , exh. cat., Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence 2006	
Florence 2011	Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos (eds.), <i>L'acqua, la pietra, il fuoco. Bartolomeo Ammanati scultore</i> , exh. cat., Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence 2011	
Florence 2019	Eike D. Schmidt, Sandro Bellesi and Riccardo Gennaioli (eds.), <i>Plasmato dal fuoco. La scultura in bronzo nella Firenze degli ultimi Medici</i> , exh. cat., Palazzo Pitti, Florence 2019	
Hall & Knight 2001	<i>Hall & Knight Ltd. MMI</i> , London/New York 2001	
Haskell/Penny 1981	Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, <i>Taste and the Antique. The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500-1900</i> , New Haven/London 1981	
Keutner 1999	Herbert Keutner, <i>Firenze 1592. Un nuovo Crocifisso in argento del Giambologna</i> , Turin 1999	
Larsson 1992	Lars Olof Larsson, <i>European Bronzes 1450–1700</i> , Stockholm 1992	
New York 2004	Manfred Leithe-Jasper and Patricia Wengraf (eds.), <i>European Bronzes from the Quentin Collection</i> , exh. cat., Frick Collection, New York 2004	
New York 2014	Patricia Wengraf (ed.), <i>Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes from the Hill Collection</i> , exh. cat., Frick Collection, New York 2014	
Radcliffe/Penny 2004	Anthony Radcliffe and Nicholas Penny, <i>The Robert H. Smith Collection. Art of the Renaissance Bronze: 1500–1650</i> , London 2004	
Tomasso 2008	<i>Scultura. Tomasso Brothers Fine Art</i> , Leeds 2008	
Vienna 2006	Wilfried Seipel (ed.), <i>Giambologna. Triumph des Körpers</i> , exh. cat., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna 2006	
Warren 2016	Jeremy Warren, <i>The Wallace Collection. Catalogue of Italian Sculpture</i> , 2 vols., London 2016	

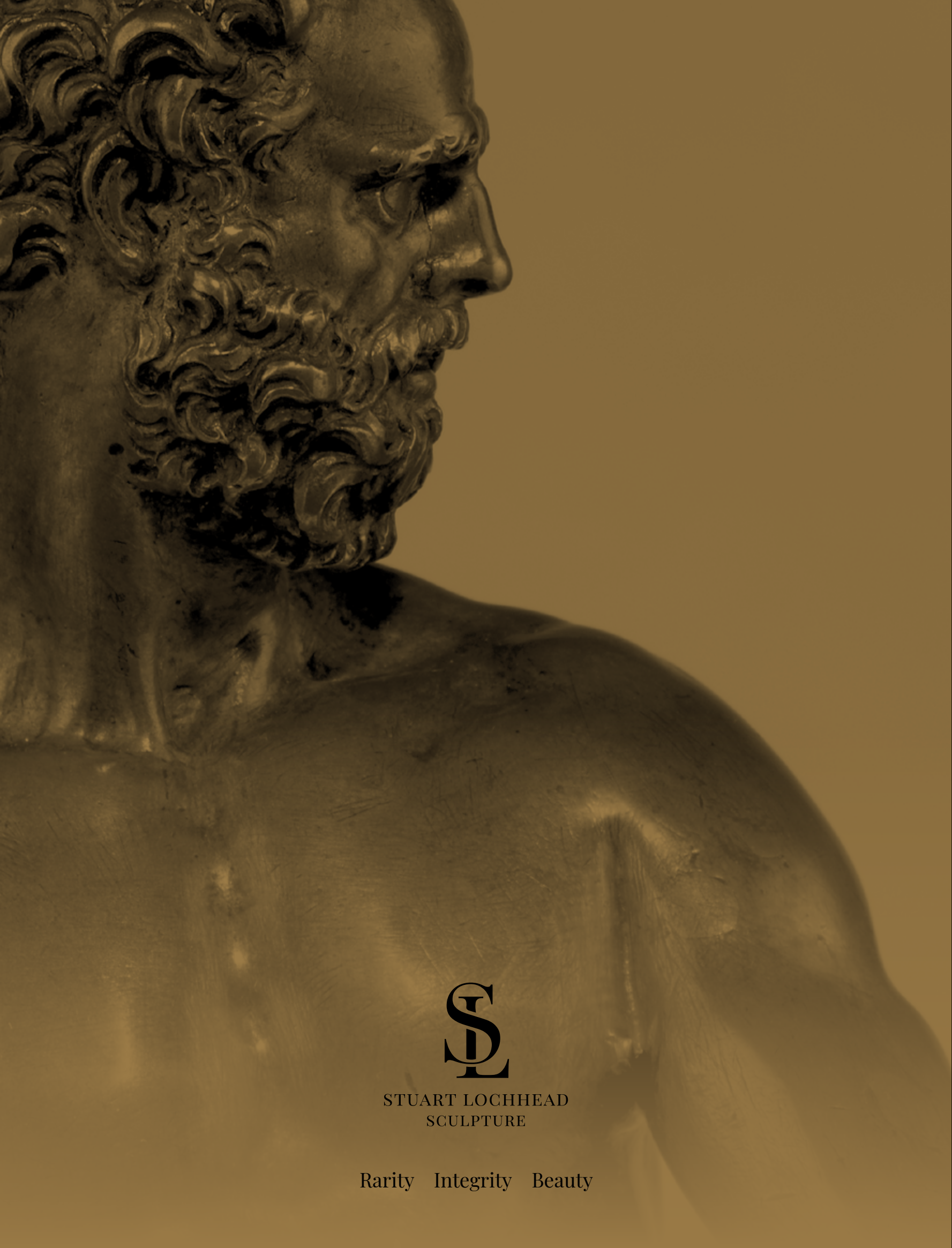
Published in the UK by
Stuart Lochhead Sculpture
35 Bury Street, St. James's,
London SW1Y 6AU
www.stuartlochhead.art
© Stuart Lochhead Sculpture

ISBN: 978-1-8384716-1-3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of both the copyright owner and the publisher of the book.

A CIP record of this book is available from the British Library.

Catalogue design by Struktur Design
Photography by Tony Fisher
Printed and bound by PurePrint



STUART LOCHHEAD
SCULPTURE

Rarity Integrity Beauty