



LULLO | PAMPOULIDES

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DESIGN BY GIAN LORENZO BERNINI
1598-1686

CAST BY ERCOLE FERRATA AND WORKSHOP
1610-1686

CRISTO VIVO
After 1659

Gilded bronze
44 cm high; 34 cm wide

PROVENANCE
Private collection, Milan, before 1975;
From whom acquired by a private collection, Rome;
and by descent.

LITERATURE
U.Schlegel, 'I Crocifissi degli altari in San Pietro in Vaticano', in *Antichità viva* 1962-1981, Florence, 1981, pp.32-42, fig.11 (illustrated)

RELATED LITERATURE
R.Battaglia, "Crocifissi del Bernini in S.Pietro in Vaticano", in *Quaderni di Studi Romani*, XI, 1942, pp.7-28
R.Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, London, 2nd ed., 1966, p.229, figs.80 and 82
T.Montanari, "Bernini per Bernini: il secondo 'Crocifisso' monumentale. Con una digressione su Domenico Guidi", *Prospettiva*, 136, 2009, pp.2-25
A.Bacchi, "'Bernini Sculptures not by Bernini' I Crocifissi di Ercole Ferrata per San Pietro", in A.Bacchi, A.Nova and L.Simonato eds., *Gli allievi di Algardi: opere, geografia, temi della scultura in Italia nella seconda metà del Seicento*, Milan, 2019, pp.13-27

A formidable patron of artists and architects at the height of the Baroque period in Rome, between 1657 and 1661 pope Alexander VII Chigi (1599-1667) oversaw the commission of new liturgical furnishings for the Basilica of Saint Peter to designs by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), whose sumptuous Baldacchino had adorned the high altar of the same church since 1634.

The initial designs encompassed candlesticks, crosses, and gilt corpora depicting the dead Christ, his head cast down in the formula traditionally known as *Cristo Morto* (fig.1; 43.8 cm high according to Schlegel, 1981, p.41, footnote 3). As the project advanced, between the summer of 1658 and the spring of 1659 the pontiff personally intervened to request a new type of crucifix be cast, representing Christ exhaling his last breath, an iconography rich in pathos described as the *Cristo Vivo* (fig.2; 43.2 cm high according to Schlegel, 1981, p.41, footnote 3).

Bernini's interpretation of this theme for the side altars of Saint Peter's Basilica - which forms the basis for the present bronze - was modelled in wax by his trusted collaborator Ercole Ferrata (1610-1686), a gifted sculptor whose career combined the lessons of Alessandro Algardi's classicising Baroque with those of Bernini's exuberant expressionism. Skilfully cast and chased to the finest surface detail, the present *Cristo Vivo* bears witness to Bernini's creative legacy and to one of the most fertile collaborations in the history of Baroque sculpture.

Born in Lombardy in 1610, Ercole Ferrata first trained in Genoa under sculptor Tommaso Orsolino, in whose workshop he remained for seven years. In 1637 he moved to Naples, where his ornamental work, such as cherubs and festoons, and his marble statues, including *Saints Joseph and Joachim* for the church of Annunziata, show the influence of Cosimo Fanzago's naturalism. After a brief sojourn in L'Aquila in the mid-1640s, Ferrata arrived in Rome, where Virgilio Spada, a papal administrator and overseer of the Vatican *fabbrica*, introduced him to Bernini. Ferrata's first commission as part of the latter's workshop were relief decorations for the pilasters in the nave of Saint Peter's (1647). Collaboration between the two sculptors continued into the following decade, when in parallel Ferrata became a pupil of Bernini's rival





Alessandro Algardi, who chose him to assist in the carving of the funerary monument to pope Leo XI (Saint Peter's Basilica). By 1654, the year Algardi died, Ferrata had become a well-respected sculptor in his own right, and his name appears in the registers of the Academy of Saint Luke's, Rome's most prestigious artists' association, which he would be offered the directorship of in 1666, an honour he declined in favour of accepting a teaching role at Cosimo III de' Medici's newly-established Accademia Fiorentina.

Throughout his career, Ferrata worked extensively to the designs of his contemporaries, including the aforementioned Bernini and Algardi, as well as Domenico Guidi and Pietro da Cortona, among others. For example, between 1654-55, Bernini entrusted Ferrata with the statues of *Cardinal Pimentel*, of *Faith* and of *Wisdom* for the cleric's tomb in Santa Maria sopra Minerva, followed by part of the stucco decoration in Santa Maria del Popolo (1655-58) and by statues and medallions in the Spada Chapel at San Girolamo della Carità (1654, 1656-59). For Pietro da Cortona and Cosimo Fancelli, Ferrata contributed to the stucco decorations of the tribune (1655-56), the pendentives of the dome (1659-60), and the nave's vault (1662-65) at Santa Maria in Vallicella, and in 1660 he began an altarpiece with the *Martyrdom of Saint Emerentiana* to designs by Algardi, in the church of Sant'Agnese in Agone.

In the decades that followed, Ferrata operated at the head of a large workshop, which allowed him to take on an increasing number of commissions and also saw him rely on the designs of his pupils, especially those of the young Melchiorre Cafà, who died tragically in an accident in Saint Peter's foundry in 1667. Significant works from this period include a statue of *Saint Catherine* for the Chigi Chapel in Siena Cathedral (1662); a portrait of pope *Alexander III* for the same church (1668) originally commissioned to Cafà; two statues for the façade of Sant'Andrea della Valle in Rome to instructions by architect Carlo Rainaldi (1664); a relief of the *Martyrdom of Saint Eustace* for Sant'Agnese in Agone in Rome, originally begun by Cafà and finished by Ferrata in 1669; the *Elephant* supporting the obelisk on Piazza della Minerva (1667) and the *Angel carrying the Cross* for Sant'Angelo Bridge in Rome (1668-69), both to Bernini's designs; and the funerary monument to pope Clement IX in Santa Maria Maggiore (1671), originally commissioned to Rainaldi. By the time of his death in 1686, Ferrata had participated in many of the most influential Baroque sculptural projects in Rome and – thanks to his role in Cosimo III de' Medici's Accademia – he had mentored artists such as Giovanni Battista Foggini, Carlo Andrea Marcellini, and Camillo Rusconi, who would go on to become central to the flourishing of Florentine sculpture in the early eighteenth century.

Ferrata's role in the realisation of the bronze liturgical furnishings for the side altars of Saint Peter's Basilica, executed to designs by Bernini and cast in bronze by Paolo Carnieri between 1658 and 1661, is exemplary of his *modus operandi* as a sculptor. To put it into context, we must first consider the scope of the original commission: twenty-five gilt bronze crucifixes – destined to as many side altars – accompanied by a total of 150 bronze candlesticks (six per altar). As mentioned above, the first design submitted by Bernini was for a *Cristo Morto* (fig.1), which exists in Saint Peter's in eighteen casts (an additional one is held in storage). One year later, the pope requested a design for a *Cristo Vivo* (fig.2), of which five casts survive in the basilica.¹ It has not been possible to establish whether the original designs were communicated by Bernini to Ferrata through drawings, maquettes, or simple instructions,² but in rendering Christ's agonised expression and the vibrant, twisting anatomy of his body, Ferrata certainly demonstrated how attuned he was to Bernini's vocabulary and sensibility. As scholars have noted,³ this appears particularly true of the *Cristo Vivo* model, whereas the *Cristo Morto* displays accents of classicising restraint and a softness in the anatomy influenced by Algardi. Specifically, Rudolf Wittkower echoed Roberto Battaglia in pointing out how "the 'living Christ' with His slender body writhing in a complicated S-curve is an invention entirely in Bernini's spirit recalling the preparatory studies made a few years before for the Daniel",⁴ referring to a statue of the Biblical figure executed by Bernini for Santa Maria del Popolo some years previously (figs.3-4).

¹ Wittkower, 1966, p.229; Schlegel, 1981, p.38; Bacchi, 2019, p.14.

² Schlegel, 1981, p.38; new evidence on the subject has been published by Andrea Bacchi, who has attributed a terracotta *Cristo Vivo* formerly in the Chigi collection to Bernini, identifying it as the model for the *Cristo Vivo* modelled in wax by Ferrata and cast for the side altars of Saint Peter's Basilica, see Bacchi, 2019, pp.18-22, figs.3 and 5.

³ Wittkower, 1966, p.229; Schlegel, 1981, pp.38-39.

⁴ Wittkower, 1966, p.229.

While not involved in their *invenzione*, Ferrata retained moulds for the Bernini *Cristo Morto* and *Cristo Vivo*, as recorded in the posthumous inventory of his studio, which establishes a clear link between the commission of the Saint Peter's crucifixes and the casting of the present *Cristo Vivo*.⁵ The latter's derivation from a mould of the Basilica's 'living Christ' is evidenced by details such as their closely similar measurements⁶ and their matching anatomies, while the sole visible alteration – in the termination of Christ's perizonium on the right – may be explained as the result of damage to the mould. Notably, Ferrata and his workshop's use of the moulds of Bernini's crucifixes is documented today across museum collections, starting with gilt versions of the *Cristo Morto* in Saint Louis (fig.5) and Baltimore (fig.6). With regards to the *Cristo Vivo*, casts exist in Berlin's Bode Museum (figs.7a-b) and at Princeton (fig.8), the latter showing only traces of gilding. Considered alongside the present bronze, these casts display different styles of chasing, slight variations in the definition of features such as Christ's eyes and the locks of hair falling over his shoulders, and varying degrees of surface finish, which indicate that they were produced by different hands within Ferrata's workshop, likely for private patrons eager to possess a crucifix associated to the foremost church in the Catholic faith and to the name of Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

⁵ V.Golzio, "Storia dell'arte e ricerche archivistiche: Lo 'Studio' di Ercole Ferrata," Archivi d'Italia e rassegna internazionale degli archivi, ser.2, 1935, p74.

⁶ Vatican *Cristo Vivo*: 43.2 cm high; the present cast: 44 cm high

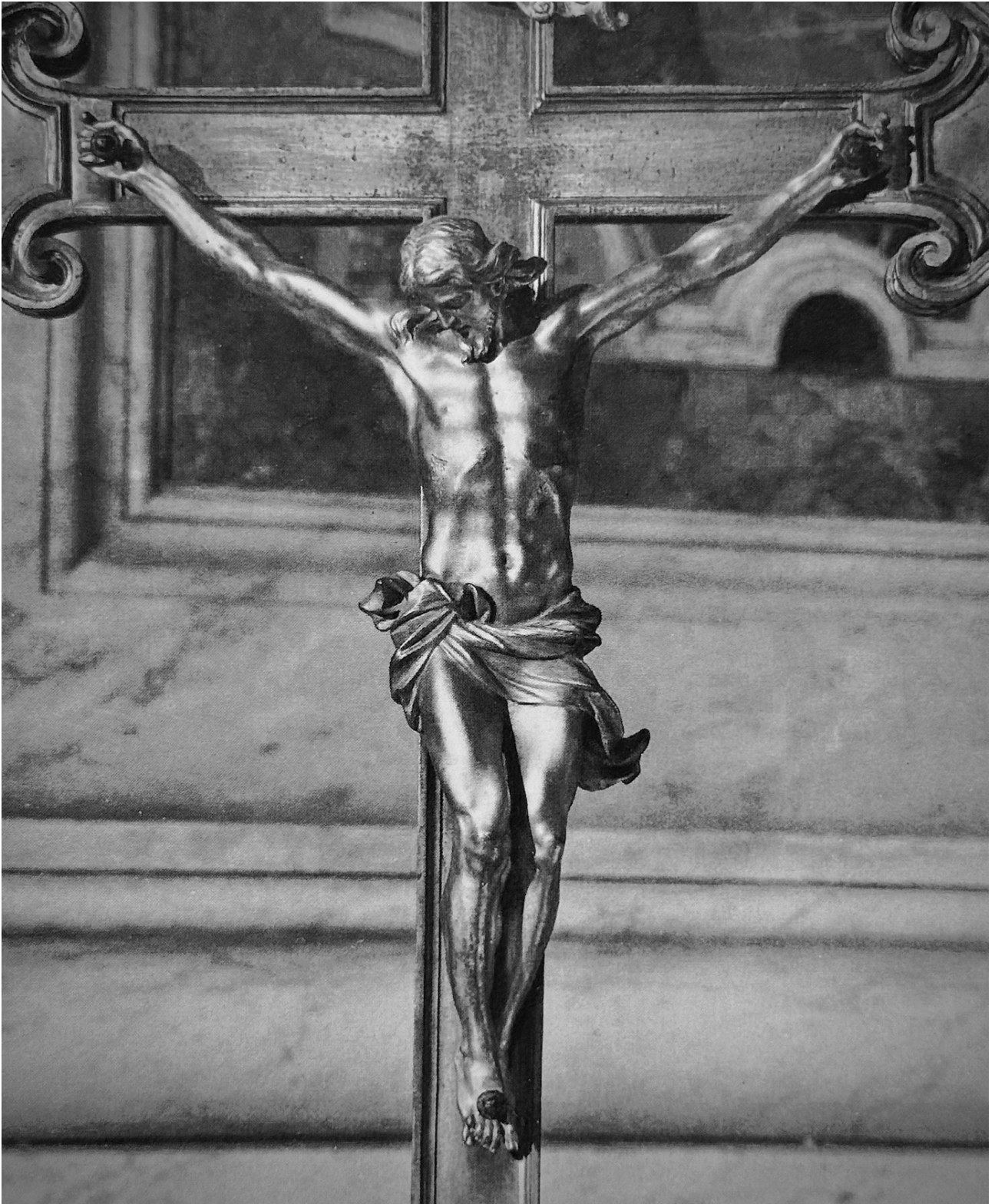


Fig.1 Design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, modelled in wax by Ercole Ferrata, cast by Paolo Carnieri, *Cristo Morto*, bronze, 1658-1661
Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican

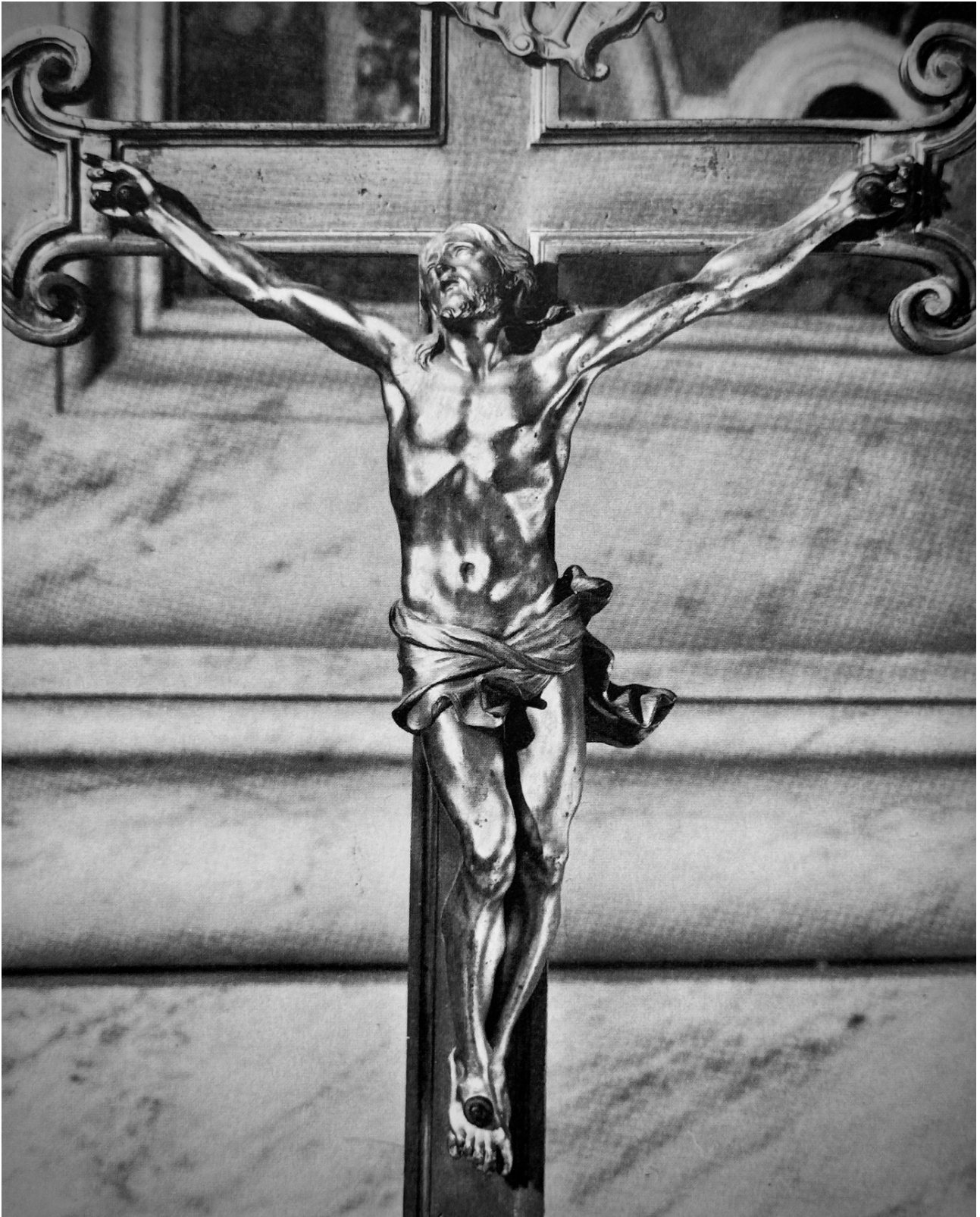


Fig.2 Design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, modelled in wax by Ercole Ferrata, cast by Paolo Carnieri, *Cristo Vivo*, bronze, 1659-1661
Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican



Figs.3-4

(Left) Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Studies for Daniel*, c.1655
Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig

(Right) Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Daniel in the Lion's den*, 1655-1661
Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome

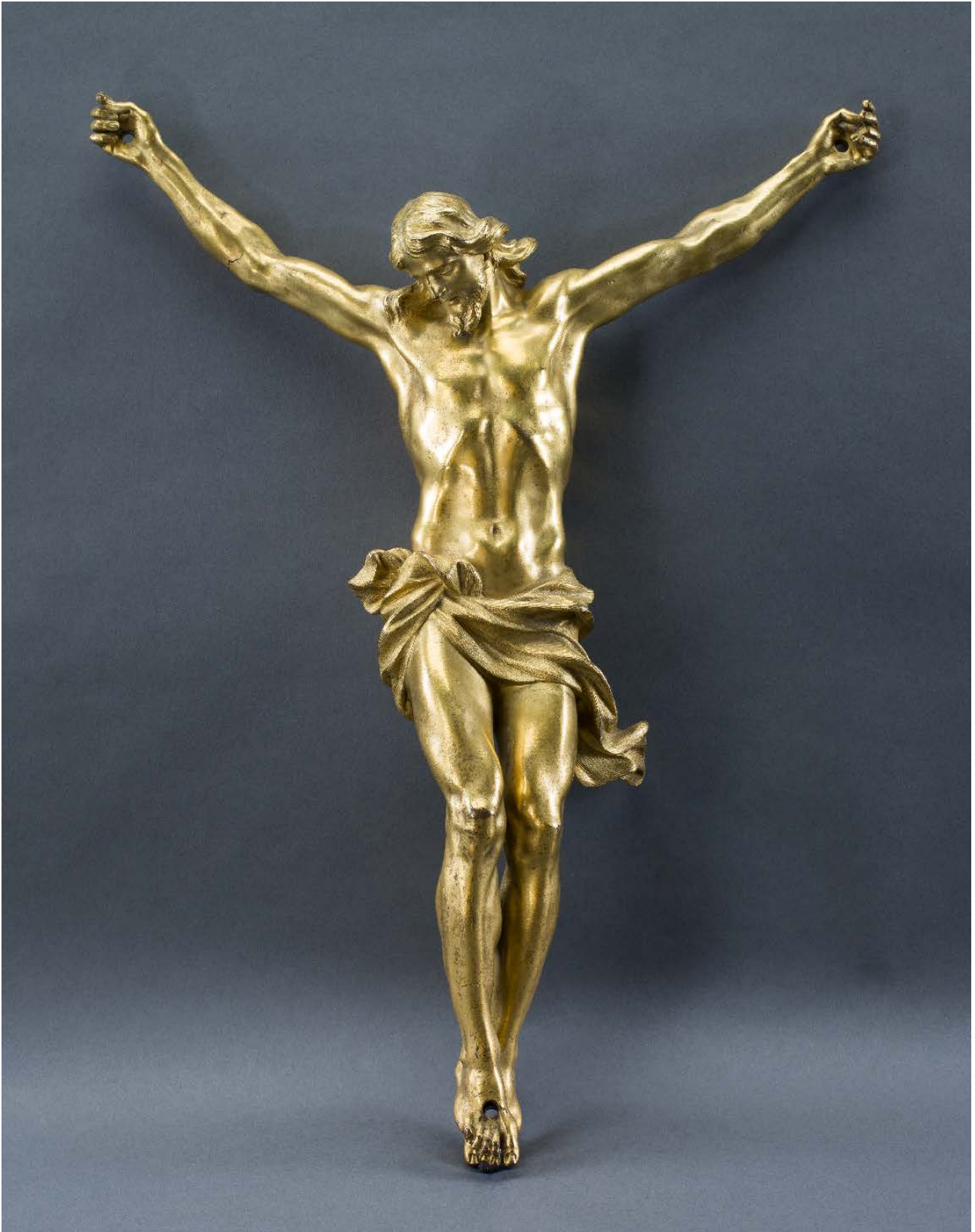


Fig.5 Desing by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, modelled in wax by Ercole Ferrata, *Cristo Morto*, after 1657-61
Gilt bronze, 44.8 cm high (corpus), Saint Louis Art Museum



Fig.6 Designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and the cast by Ercole Ferrata, *Cristo Morto*, designed 1657
Gilt bronze, 43.5 cm high (corpus), The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

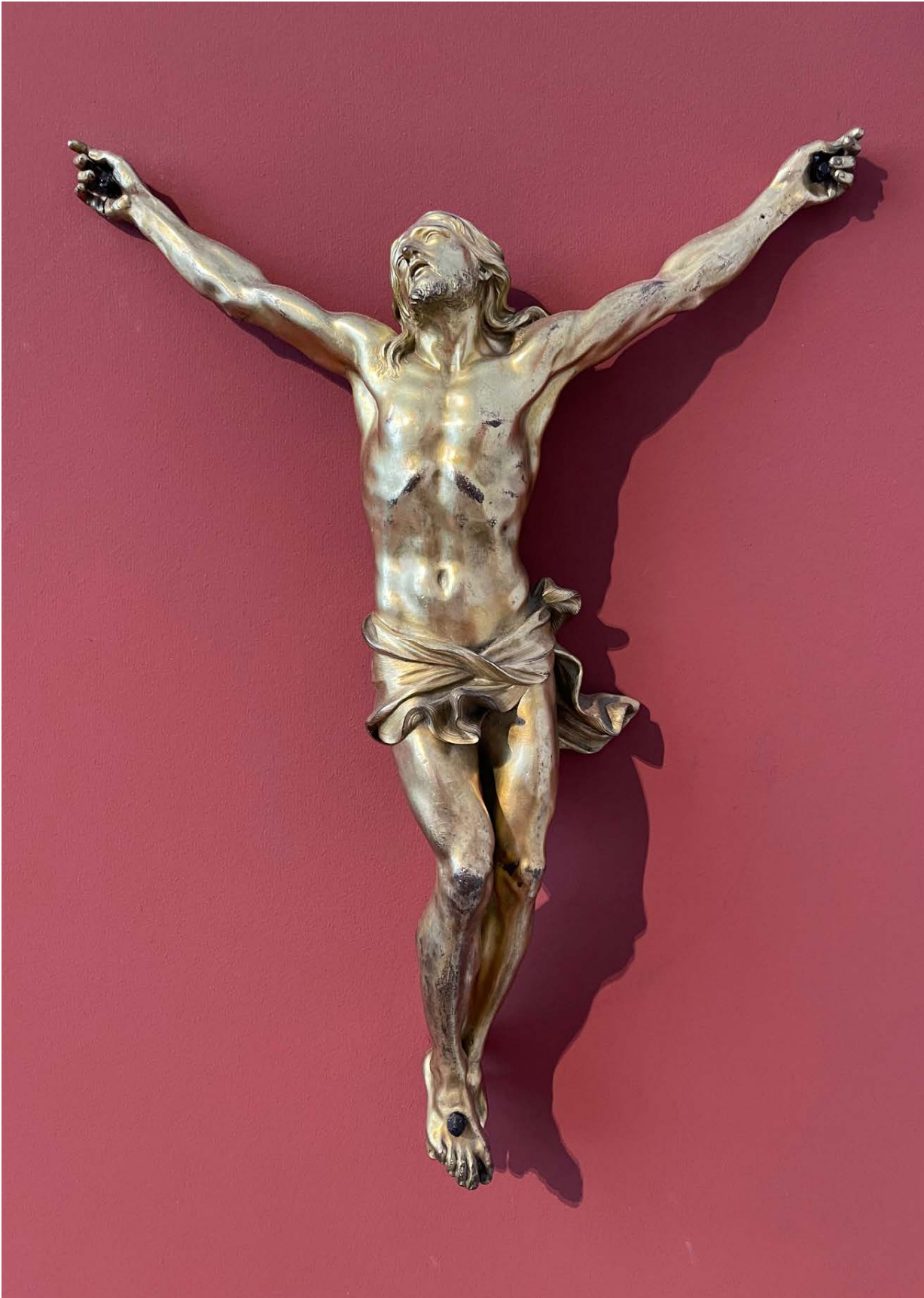


Fig.5a Design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the cast by Ercole Ferrata and workshop, *Cristo Vivo*, after 1659
Gilt bronze, Bode Museum, Berlin

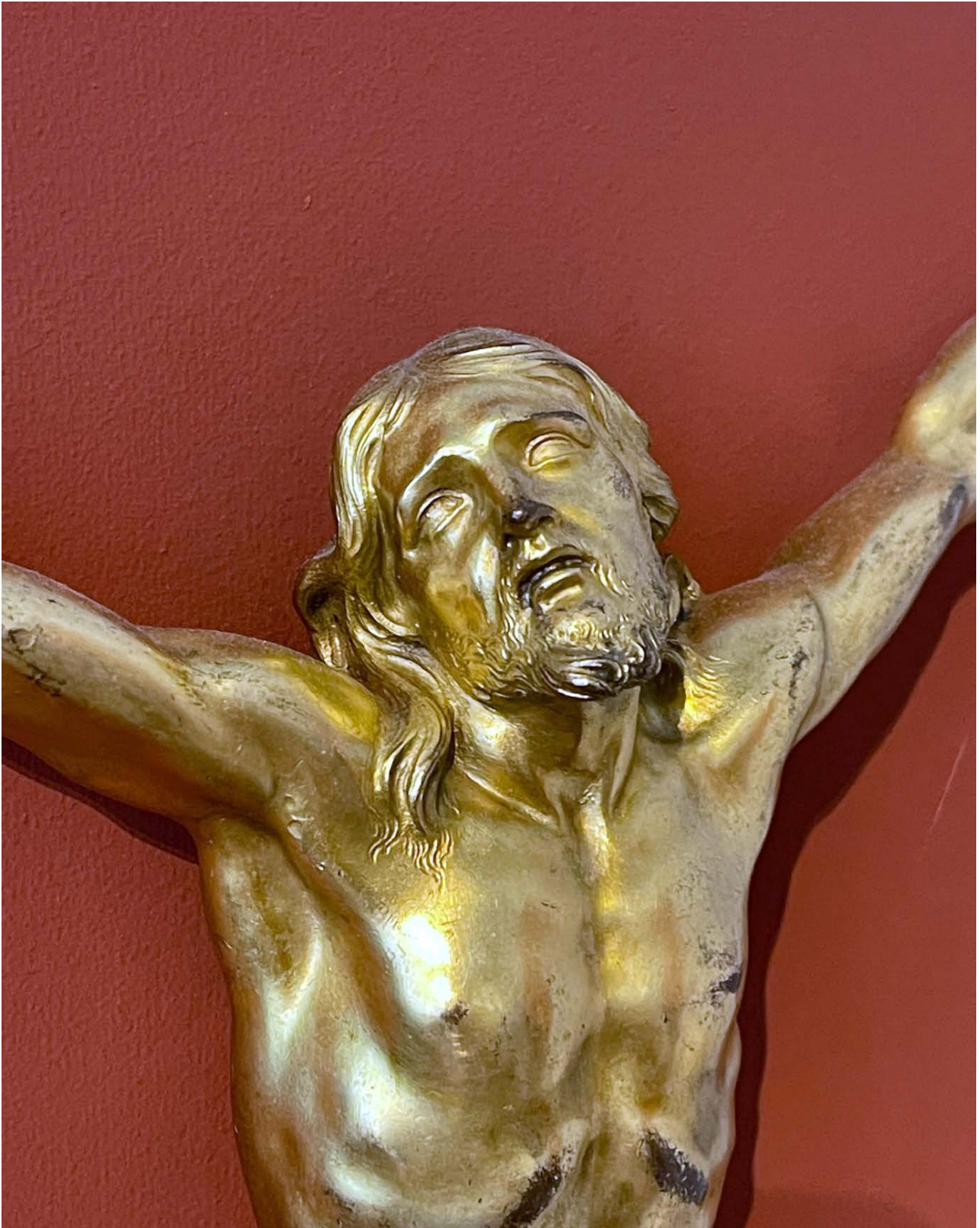


Fig.5b Ercole Ferrata and workshop, after a design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Cristo Vivo*, after 1659 (detail)
Gilt bronze, Bode Museum, Berlin



Fig.6 Ercole Ferrata and workshop, after a design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Cristo Vivo*, after 1659
Bronze with traces of gilding, 40 cm high (corpus), Princeton University Art Museum