



LULLO | PAMPOULIDES



GAETANO MONTI
Milan, 1751 - 1827

ELEPHANT
c.1780s

Grey marble (probably *bardiglio*), mounted on a yellow Siena
and white marble base; tusks missing
55 cm high

PROVENANCE

Acquired by Étienne Denis (1889-1962) in the 1920s;
by descent to his son Alphonse Denis (1923-2016);
Private collection, Toulon;
Artcurial, Paris, 22 November 2023, lot 172 (as '*Ecole
probablement romaine vers 1800*');
where acquired.







GAETANO MONTI'S ELEPHANT: A MASTERPIECE OF NEOCLASSICAL NATURALISM

ANDREA BACCHI

The grey marble *Elephant*, here recognised as a masterpiece by the Milanese sculptor Gaetano Monti (1751-1827), is an exceptional and deeply compelling work. While pictorial or graphic representations of this exotic animal were not uncommon in Europe during the modern period—an animal that since antiquity had captured the Western imagination through its size and strength—sculptural representations were far rarer. In this case, moreover, we are clearly faced with what aspired to be a convincingly naturalistic representation of the animal. The elephant is not shown in action, precisely because the marble is conceived as an objective small-scale three-dimensional translation of the animal itself. For this reason alone, even at a first general stylistic examination, the work appears clearly as a product of a period later than the Baroque. A useful comparison is provided by the Carrara marble *Elephant* in the Gallerie di Capodimonte (fig.1), which bears an inscription dated 1742, connected to a particular elephant that became extremely famous and to which we will return. Yet even when compared with this 'portrait' of a specific elephant, the sculpture discussed here immediately distinguishes itself through a far greater attention to the scientifically accurate rendering of the animal. One need only compare the legs, or the differentiation of the skin between the feet and the hind legs, which in the grey marble sculpture is extraordinarily subtle, while in the Neapolitan sculpture it remains entirely generic.

The same observation applies even more strongly if one considers the gilded bronze *Elephant* in the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid, which bears the inscription "G. ZOFFOLI F." (fig.2). This would imply an attribution to Giacomo Zoffoli (1731-1785), although doubts have been raised about the authenticity of the signature, which appears to have been applied over the gilding of the piece. Moreover, the work itself does not appear in the catalogue of bronzes compiled by Zoffoli. Surprisingly closer to a naturalistic representation is the porcelain elephant produced in Meissen in 1731.¹

The attribution of this *Elephant* to Monti was first suggested through comparison with a plaster model preserved in the geological and palaeontological collections of the Museo Giovanni Capellini in Bologna, which bears on its base the inscription: «GAET. DI MILANO FECE DAL NATURALE». The correspondence between the two inventions, despite their different materials and dimensions, is undeniable. In the Bologna plaster one finds the same differentiation of the skin between the feet and the hind legs, and the animal's pose is identical: the forelegs placed together, while the hind legs appear in motion.

The Museo Giovanni Capellini, founded in 1860, inherited the scientific collections that the University of Bologna had begun assembling as early as the 16th century following the donation of Ulisse Aldrovandi. The presence of Monti's plaster within these collections confirms the primarily scientific character of the object. It may also be worth recalling that the origins of this museum were linked to the scientific activity of Giovanni Monti and his son Gaetano Lorenzo Monti (1712-1797), both professors of natural history associated with the Istituto di Scienze Naturali founded by Luigi Ferdinando Marsili.²

Although the connection between the two Montis from Bologna and our sculptor appears to be merely a coincidence, a distant family relationship cannot be entirely excluded. What is certain is that the Milanese sculptor Gaetano Monti, active mainly between his native city and Rome, was receiving a pension in Rome from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Bologna in 1807-1808.³ After all, at that time he was nearly sixty years old, and it is likely that this stipend was intended not to complete his training but to support work carried out on behalf of the Accademia. After all, all the documentary sources relating to Monti present him as a sculptor deeply engaged in research into artistic anatomy.

¹ Cohen 2021, p. 144.

² Cavazza 2012.

³ Samek Ludovici 1959, p. 610; Bacchi 2015, p. 23.





Fig.1 Unknown sculptor, *Elephant*, 1742
Marble, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples

It is well known that in 1788, from Rome, Monti petitioned the Regio Imperiale Consiglio di Governo of Milan for financial support to publish a volume entitled *Esposizione della Perfetta Struttura de' Corpi Umani, e di altri Animali*. Monti explained that over the years he had undertaken a «long and particular Study of anatomy, and of the mechanics both of Human movement and of that of the Horse, and of other principal animals, a Study of precise importance for Painting and Sculpture.»⁴ He added: «This Work shall be executed in writing, and figured in drawings with all exactness in two Volumes in large folio; in the first of which shall be treated the theory, and the practice of the human Body; and in the second that of the other Animals; it shall be furnished with all its respective Figures drawn in watercolour of chiaro=scuro at the size of an ancient foot, with certain other parts drawn separately larger to demonstrate with clarity the smallest parts of the Body, which shall all be recorded in its Plates».⁵

⁴ Samek Ludovici 1959, p. 610; Bacchi 2015, p. 23: «lungo, e particolare Studio dell'anatomia, e nella meccanica si dei moti Umani, come di quelli del Cavallo, e di altri principali animali, Studio che d'una importanza precisa per la Pittura, e Scoltura».

⁵ Samek Ludovici 1959, p. 610, nota 1; Bacchi 2015, pp. 22-23: «Quest'opera sarà eseguita in iscritto, e



Fig.2 Attributed to Giacomo Zoffoli, *Elephant*, 18th century
Gilded bronze, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

It is therefore not impossible that even at the beginning of the 19th century Monti continued these studies for which he was best known, providing anatomical models for artistic instruction to the Accademia di Bologna. Documents preserved at the Accademia di Brera, still unpublished and dating from the early 19th century, indicate that Monti also sold «plaster replicas [...] of a Lion's head taken from the living natural of Affrica, exactly measured at its equal size».⁶

Already in 2020, in his important study *Animali e "animaliers" nella scultura italiana tra Neoclassicismo e Novecento*, Alfonso Panzetta recognised Monti as playing a significant role in the emergence of this particular genre of sculpture, which would flourish fully during the

figurata in disegno con ogni esattezza in due volumi in foglio grande, nel primo de' quali si tratterà della teorica, e della pratica del corpo umano; e nel secondo di quello degli altri animali; sarà fornita di tutte le sue rispettive figure disegnate ad acquarello di chiaro=scuro alla grandezza di un piede antico, con alcune altre parti disegnate separatamente più in grande per dimostrare con chiarezza le più piccole parti del corpo, che saranno registrate tutte nelle sue tavole».

⁶ «repliche in gesso fino [...] di una testa di Leone tratta dal natural vivente d'Affrica esattamente misurato nella sua equal grandezza»

19th century.⁷ Based on the research conducted by the present author, and in light of the new evidence discussed here,⁸ Monti now emerges as the first true *animalier* sculptor—that is, the first artist to devote himself almost entirely to this genre. Only a few works of other kinds are known, including wax portraits, reliefs for the Arco della Pace in Milan, and two statues of saints for the Fabbrica del Duomo.

In many of the documents and sources that record the artist's activity in this field, it is emphasised that he worked “dal naturale”—from life—and in this sense the inscription on the Bologna Elephant represents a paradigmatic case. Matteo Zambolo therefore rightly sought to identify which specific elephant Monti might have studied directly. This investigation has brought to light the fascinating and surprisingly well-documented story of an elephant that travelled from India to France and then throughout Italy during the mid-1770s, and which should be the same animal that reached Naples in 1775, for which accommodation was prepared at the Palazzo Reale of Caserta according to a project by Carlo Vanvitelli.⁹ We know that an elephant was kept in the Serraglio Sanfelice in Naples until 1787, and that fodder for its sustenance was brought from Caserta.¹⁰ And, it may be noted in passing, the celebrated elephant skeleton still preserved today in the Museo di Zoologia in Naples—traditionally identified as that of the well-known specimen belonging to Charles III and said to have died in 1756¹¹—might in fact be that of the elephant whose Italian tour has been reconstructed here.

In 1774 the pachyderm was exhibited in Venice, and the event was immortalised in a celebrated composition by Pietro Longhi, known in several painted versions. Steven Ostrow has noted that the depiction of the elephant in these paintings is by no means faithful to nature, a fact that emerges strikingly when compared with Longhi's equally celebrated painting featuring the rhinoceros *Clara* of 1751 (also known in two versions: Venice, Ca' Rezzonico, and London, National Gallery).¹² In that same year, 1774, after its stay in Venice, the elephant, whose name remains unknown,¹³ arrived in Milan, where Monti most likely studied it, this time truly from life. Particularly relevant is the theory proposed here that the drawing of an elephant by Andrea Appiani, belonging to the group of the artist's sheets preserved at the Accademia di Brera, was executed on the same occasion. The two Milanese artists maintained an extremely close relationship during their formative years, and Monti himself recalled this in an unpublished *Memoriale* written in 1818, after Appiani's death: «We continued for 9 years with Appiani the study of Anatomy, and all the other studies of Art under the guidance of Nature. Appiani, in my opinion, never copied Pictures; but always studied with me from life». ¹⁴ In 1774 Monti, then twenty-three years old, was engaged precisely in those studies. It is therefore highly unlikely that he produced the marble sculpture presented here at that moment. It seems more plausible that the Milanese sculptor later translated drawings or models executed years earlier into an almost monumental work made in a valuable material. When Monti was working in Rome in the 1780s, the famous Sala degli Animali was being assembled in the Museo Pio Clementino in the Vatican, a fundamental episode in the development of *animalier* sculpture. It may well have been within this cultural context that the marble was conceived. The plaster reduction in Bologna would in turn be chronologically later.

The iconic status of the *Discobolus* often makes us forget that, for the Ancients, Myron's

⁷ Panzetta 2020, pp. 29-30.

⁸ See the new elements introduced here by Matteo Zambolo, which will merit further investigation in the context of a future publication.

⁹ Furia 1992, p. 100.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Crispino 1992, p. 110.

¹² Ostrow 2016, pp. 90-91.

¹³ Of few other elephants that arrived in Europe in earlier centuries and became famous, we know the names; suffice it to recall the case of Hansken, who was portrayed from life by both Rembrandt and Stefano della Bella, cfr. Roscam Abbing 2021.

¹⁴ Bacchi 2015, p. 76: «Continuammo 9 anni coll'Appiani lo studio della Notomia, e tutti gli altri studj dell'Arte colla scorta della natura. L'Appiani, a mio avviso, non copiò mai Quadri; ma studiò sempre meco dal vero»



Fig.3 Roman, *Goat*, I-II century AD
Marble, Fondazione Torlonia, Rome

most celebrated work, praised in epigrams and ekphraseis, was the *Heifer* (*Giovenca*), whose appearance can no longer be reconstructed, even through Roman copies. Yet the skill of Greek and Roman sculptors in the field of *animalier* sculpture—*ante litteram*, of course—is attested by superb surviving examples, from the bronze *Ram* in the Museo Archeologico of Palermo (3rd century BC) to the Imperial marble *Goat* (fig.3) in the Torlonia collection (formerly Giustiniani).

The undertaking of the *Sala degli Animali*, therefore, celebrated in the full Neoclassical age yet another great achievement of the Ancients. It should also be recalled that at that time there was in Rome a sculptor, now almost forgotten, Carlo Moisé, to whom Antonio Canova referred as a “sculptor of animals”.¹⁵

Monti's *Elephant* is thus at once a masterpiece anticipating the new, emerging naturalism of the 19th century and a major example of Neoclassical sculpture, a declaration of intent by an artist who, in that same *Memoriale* of 1818, proudly wrote that by studying the models of the past—both pictorial and sculptural—while verifying them «then against nature», he had been able, together with Appiani, to depart from «the Baroque style that was in vogue at that time». ¹⁶

¹⁵ Panzetta 2020, p. 28.

¹⁶ Bacchi 2015, pp. 22 e 76: “Anche l'Appiani venne meco alla Bibliot.a Ambros.a ove continuamente a copiare le cose de' sommi artisti per lo più della uguale grandezza, e le riscontravamo poi con la natura, ridisegnando dal vero quegli stessi oggetti. In questo modo ci scostammo dallo stile *barocco* che era in voga a que' tempi”.

A REDISCOVERED MASTERPIECE BY GAETANO MONTI: THE ELEPHANT

The discovery of Gaetano Monti's marble sculpture of an elephant constitutes an exceptional event in the study of 18th century sculpture, not only because of the rarity and quality of the work itself, but because it restores to view two intertwined and long-neglected histories: that of a Milanese sculptor whose oeuvre has remained marginal despite its artistic and intellectual ambition, and that of a singular living animal whose extraordinary journey from Asia across Europe profoundly shaped Enlightenment conceptions of the elephant.

Sculptural representations of elephants within the European tradition are exceedingly rare, and rarer still when grounded in sustained study from life rather than mediated through antique models, printed sources, or second-hand descriptions. Monti's work stands apart precisely for this reason. It is not an emblematic evocation of the exotic, but the sculptural portrait of a specific Asian male elephant, observed directly and rendered with great anatomical accuracy, structural coherence, and even psychological acuity. The sculpture may be understood as a portrait in the full sense of the term, in which fidelity extends beyond physical structure to encompass character and perceptive intelligence.

This approach aligns closely with Enlightenment discourse on animal sensibility, most notably articulated by Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon. Buffon's first account of the elephant in the *Histoire naturelle*, first published in 1764, was necessarily indirect, based largely on Claude Perrault's anatomical study of the elephant of Louis XIV and on travellers' reports. His understanding evolved decisively, however, following direct encounters with the two living elephants exhibited at the fair of Saint-Germain in the early 1770s. The first of these animals - the same elephant later portrayed by Monti, as we will see - left a particularly strong impression, being the first elephant arriving in France since Louis XIV's (in Versailles between 1668 and 1681).¹⁷ In the appendix to the *Histoire naturelle* published in 1776, Buffon moved beyond anatomical description to attend to temperament, behaviour, and individual disposition.¹⁸ That the animal Buffon should correspond to the very elephant later rendered by Monti situates the sculpture at a rare point of convergence between scientific observation and artistic achievement. The fact that Monti's interests were already consciously oriented toward the most advanced Enlightenment currents emerging beyond the Alps is confirmed by an ambitious editorial project that he pursued throughout his life and career, albeit unsuccessfully. Conceived as a didactic publication devoted to the study of human and animal bodies *dal naturale*, the work was supposed to be titled *Esposizione della Perfetta Struttura de' Corpi Umani, e di altri Animali*, and was intended for painters and sculptors willing to ground artistic practice in empirical observation and precise anatomical understanding.¹⁹

While being truly modern, Monti's sculpture hails from a longer intellectual lineage extending back to antiquity. Pliny the Elder famously described the elephant as the animal closest to humankind in intellect and moral sensibility: "*Maximum animal est elephas proximumque humanis sensibus*". This concept was further articulated by Buffon in his writings on the elephant.

What allows the sculpture to be securely attributed to Monti is the discovery of a reduced-scale plaster model (27 cm in height) in the collections of the Museo Cappellini in Bologna, normally not on display but, by a fortunate coincidence, temporarily exhibited in the installation

¹⁷ Robbins 2002, pp. 1-3, 95-99. See this publication for a fuller discussion of the complex social, economic, and political dynamics shaping 18th-century French perceptions of elephants, as well as the emerging sensitivity toward the difficult conditions these animals endured within such exhibition contexts.

¹⁸ See Robbins 2002, and Mazzarello 2017, p. 120.

¹⁹ Bacchi 2015, p. 23: Monti's ambitious project, first proposed in 1788, appears to position itself within that tradition of comparative studies of human and animal anatomy that is at the forefront of a new European sensitivity, culminating in the planned *A Comparative Anatomical Exposition of the Structure of the Human Body with that of a Tiger and a Common Fowl*, of which the painter George Stubbs (1724-1806) succeeded in engraving and publishing only the first three fascicles between 1804 and 1806.

of the Museo di Palazzo Poggi in Bologna (figs.4a-b). As Andrea Bacchi notes here, despite the difference in scale and minor variations, the compositional and stylistic correspondences between the two objects are evident. The attention to the naturalistic detail, studied from life, is also coherent with other animal studies by the same artist.

This continuity between ancient natural history and Enlightenment is powerfully reinforced by the extremely valuable inscription on the plaster model. Alongside the artist's name, the base preserves a quotation from Pliny; which, although partial, can be read as "*Animal est elephas proximumque humanis (?) sensibus. Plin.*" ("The elephant is the animal closest to human intelligence and sensibility"). More importantly, the base of the plaster bears the inscription "*GAET. MONTI DI MILANO FECE DAL NATU/RALE*" a statement of rare documentary force that not only confirms Monti's authorship but unequivocally declares the work to have been derived from direct observation of the living animal.²⁰

The anatomical precision of the carving leaves little doubt that Monti worked *dal naturale*. Yet this immediately raises a crucial question: which elephant did he see, and under what circumstances did that encounter take place?

Since antiquity, the arrival of large pachyderms in Europe has been so rare an event as to leave a deep imprint on popular folklore and on the imagination of the artists who encountered these animals, often regarded as almost legendary. Andrea Bacchi has already referred here to some of the most striking examples, such as the famous elephant that, during its European tour, was portrayed by Rembrandt in Amsterdam and by Stefano della Bella in Florence. To these may be added, as a celebrated precedent, the elephant presented to Pope Leo X by Manuel I of Portugal in 1513, portrayed in a well-known drawing attributed to Giulio Romano after Raphael.

Moving into the 18th century, the most celebrated case is the elephant presented by the Ottoman Sultan to Carlo di Borbone—later Charles III of Spain—which lived in the royal menagerie at Caserta between 1742 and 1756.²¹

In 1773, a female elephant arrived from India and was kept in the royal menagerie at Versailles; after her death, her remains followed a different history, eventually being transferred by Napoleon to the University of Pavia in the early 19th century. Later, in the summer of 1827, a twenty-seven-year-old Indian elephant known as Fritz arrived in Turin, presented by the Viceroy of Egypt to King Carlo Felice of Sardinia. It soon became one of the principal attractions of the royal menagerie at Stupinigi for the following twenty-five years.

None of these animals, for different reasons, can be identified with the elephant Monti observed from life and portrayed in this ambitious marble. The Neapolitan specimen died when Monti was still a child; the Napoleonic elephant was a female and reached Pavia only after being embalmed; and the Turin animal arrived only weeks before Monti's death in Milan, aged seventy-six.²²

Greater clarity has recently emerged regarding another elephant whose progress through Europe in the early 1770s rivalled that of the celebrated rhinoceros Clara, yet whose story has largely faded from historical memory. Its contemporary prominence can be traced through

²⁰ The only other known example of a small plaster elephant derived from Monti's model—although fragmentary and probably lacking an inscription, having been catalogued as anonymous—is preserved in the Gipsoteca of the Istituto Statale d'Arte di Porta Romana in Florence.

²¹ On the elephant in Caserta see Crispino 1992, pp. 107-113. On the depiction of rare animals, in particular elephants, by artists see Avery 2021.

²² Its typological and stylistic features are also incompatible with the sculptor's documented late production. Furthermore, the brief interval alone (the elephant arrive in Turin in June 1827, Monti died on July 4 in Milan), would have made it impossible to procure the materials and complete a sculpture of the present scale and ambition



Fig.4a-b Gaetano Monti, *Elephant*, c.1810-20
Painted plaster, Museo Giovanni Cappellini, Bologna

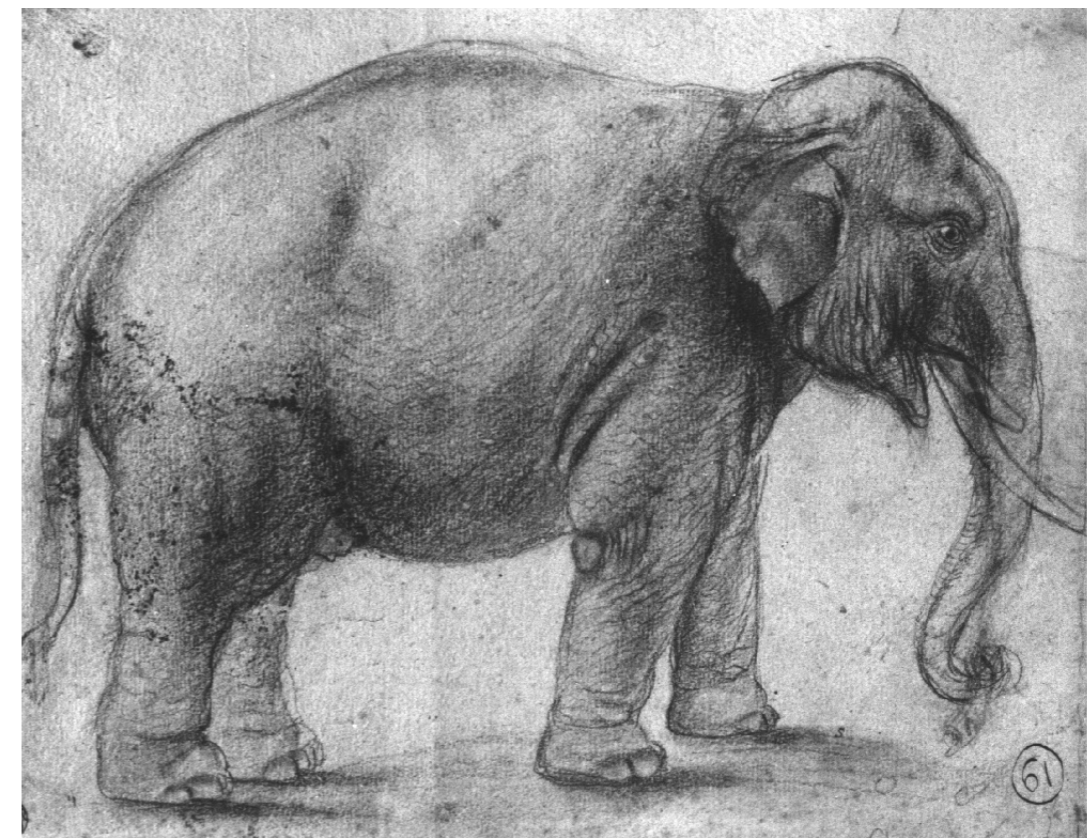


Fig.5 Andrea Appiani, *Elephant*, c.1774
Pencil on paper, 34.6 x 26 cm,
Accademia di Brera, Milan

paintings, engravings, and printed accounts. Privately owned and exhibited from city to city, the animal originated in India, travelled through France, Switzerland and Germany and entered northern Italy in January 1774, with Milan among its documented destinations.²³

It is therefore highly probable that this elephant was studied from life by Monti in 1774, most plausibly during its documented passage through northern Italy and its exhibition in Milan in May of that year. This hypothesis is reinforced by a drawing of an elephant by Monti's close friend and colleague Andrea Appiani (1754-1817), now preserved at the Pinacoteca di Brera, which likewise points to direct observation in that context (fig.5). Both the sculpture and the drawing seem to depict with great precision the same young male Asian elephant, consistent with contemporary descriptions of the travelling animal under discussion. According to the sources,²⁴ it was approximately five years old at the time of its arrival in France in December 1770, and therefore about eight or nine years old when it passed through northern Italy in 1774-75.

The description corresponds closely to the proportions and physiognomy rendered in both works, which share highly specific anatomical features, including the animal's stance, its clearly indicated male attributes, and the distinctive form of the ear, with its upper edge folded forward and downward. The proportions, both in the drawing and in the sculpture, are also consistent with those of a young specimen.

Gaetano Monti (Milan, 1751-1827) occupies a distinctive yet still insufficiently recognised position within late 18th and early 19th century Italian sculpture. The only monographic study devoted to the artist, and the fundamental point of departure for contextualising his life and oeuvre, remains that of Andrea Bacchi.²⁵ The publication remains fundamental for the wealth of documentary material it assembles and for having restored Monti to the scholarly record. Monti's Roman production - arguably the most ambitious phase of his activity - remains largely undefined, making the rediscovery of the present elephant an event of singular importance. It is, in all likelihood, the only sculpture that, on typological grounds, can be associated with the sculptor's Roman period.

As reconstructed by Bacchi, Monti's career was marked by an unusually sustained commitment to the study of the body *dal naturale*, human and animal alike, and by an intellectual conception of sculpture grounded in anatomy, movement and empirical observation.²⁶ Trained in Milan, where he formed an early and lasting friendship with Andrea Appiani, Monti developed within an environment that combined rigorous study of the antique with an analytical engagement with anatomy. In his later memorials he would recall these formative years as rooted in drawing and in the conviction that artistic authority derived from prolonged observation.

His critical reputation also suffered from confusion caused by the simultaneous presence in Milan, during the first decades of the 19th century, of several sculptors bearing the surname Monti. Among them were Gaetano Matteo Monti (1776-1847), the sculptor from Ravenna and pupil of Antonio Canova, fully aligned with the academic language of mature Neoclassicism, and his cousin Claudio Monti. The coexistence of these artists has at times obscured the distinct identity of the Milanese sculptor Gaetano Monti (1751-1827). The superimposition of these figures in documents has long blurred the profile of the Milanese master and contributed to the dispersal of his oeuvre.²⁷

Monti's relationship with Appiani remains central to understanding his formation. In his *Memoriale* of 1818 he recalls their shared apprenticeship in Milan within the orbit of Carlo

²³ For a detailed reconstruction of this elephant's itinerary, see the following paragraph.

²⁴ Robbins 2002.

²⁵ Bacchi 2015.

²⁶ On the emergence and development of animalier sculpture in the eighteenth century see Cohen 2021; for Italy see Panzetta 2020.

²⁷ Bacchi 2015, p. 10, footnote 4.

Giudici, years defined by study from the antique and from nature and by intense anatomical investigation.²⁸ If Appiani remained in Lombardy and rose to extraordinary prominence, eventually becoming painter to Napoleon,²⁹ Monti moved to Rome around 1780, where he sought recognition under far more precarious circumstances, navigating for nearly two decades. The refined materials also suggest a Roman origin for the present marble. The elephant is executed in grey marble, probably *bardiglio*, chosen for its capacity to render the dense opacity of living skin, while the base combines Siena and white marble in a chromatic articulation fully consonant with Roman taste of the later 18th century. Such polychrome solutions resonate with the sculptural culture surrounding the Museo Pio-Clementino, where coloured marbles framed modern production within an explicitly antiquarian horizon.

Monti's Roman years placed him in contact with the institutional core of late 18th century antiquarian culture. As reconstructed by Bacchi,³⁰ in Rome he entered the orbit of Giovanni Battista Visconti (1722-1784), Prefect of Antiquities and curator of the new papal collections forming under Clement XIV and Pius VI. Monti's later recollections identify Visconti as a potentially decisive patron, from whom he received commissions for marble bas-reliefs after two years in the city. These commissions unfolded within a context - exemplified by the *Sala degli Animali* and related Vatican collections - in which antique revival was continuously negotiated through modern creation, restoration, and recomposition.

Visconti's support, however, was cut short by his sudden illness and death in 1784, abruptly ending a relationship that might have secured Monti lasting institutional recognition. Deprived of this protection, Monti was exposed to the instability of the Roman artistic milieu, a vulnerability that contributed to the professional and personal difficulties.³¹

Francesco Antonio Franzoni's (Carrara, 1734-1818) Roman activity helps clarify the competitive climate of Monti's Roman years. Working within the context shaped by the Museo Pio-Clementino, Franzoni established himself through refined animal subjects in coloured marbles, a genre that demanded both archaeological authority and technical control (fig.6).³²

In this light, Monti's elephant - carved in Rome and aligned with contemporary Roman taste - may be understood as a deliberate demonstration of comparable, if not superior, competence. As a work that was likely executed in Rome, it may also help explain why Monti's presence could have been perceived as unsettling within a tightly guarded professional milieu. This context lends credibility to Monti's later account of having been targeted by unnamed colleagues, first through accusations of falsification and later through the charge of *giacobinismo*, as he recalled in his appeal to Napoleon.³³

While the marble elephant represents a pivotal document of Monti's Roman ambitions, the plaster reduction was most probably executed in Milan years later. This return to earlier animal subjects is consistent with Monti's working method. Documentary evidence shows that he repeatedly revisited models first studied from life during his formative years.

As early as January 1783, Agostino Gerli reported seeing in Monti's Roman studio "*varii leoni copiati dal vero*," indicating sustained engagement with animal studies from life.³⁴ This testimony gains further weight when considered alongside the plaster *African Lion*, dated 1819, bearing an inscription closely analogous to that of the Bologna elephant (fig.7).³⁵

²⁸ Bacchi 2015, p. 76.

²⁹ Leone 2016.

³⁰ Bacchi 2015, pp. 17-19.

³¹ Bacchi 2015, pp. 18, 70-73.

³² González-Palacios, 2012.

³³ Bacchi 2015, pp. 26, 70-73.

³⁴ Bacchi 2015, pp. 18-19.

³⁵ GAETANO MONTI DI MILANO FECE DA LEONE D'AFRICA DEL DESERTO DI SARRA ESTAMEN TE MISURATO RIDOTTO LA QUARTA PARTE GRAND[E] A 6 LUGLIO 1819.



Fig.6 Francesco Antonio Franzoni, *Jaguar*, 1790
Alabaster and marble, Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Sala degli Animali

Together, these works confirm that Monti's interest in animals was continuous rather than episodic, extending across several decades. Further evidence of his sustained commitment to studying animals *dal vero* is provided by records of works exhibited in the Sala degli Artisti at Brera dating to after his return to Milan. Alongside small wax portraits, a *Saint Andrew* and two busts, these lists mention a *Head of an Arabian Horse*, *A bull modelled from life*, a *Study of a Bull's Head from life*, and even a *dolphin* (now lost) and a *small elephant*.³⁶ The designation *small* most likely refers to one of the plaster reductions of our elephant.

A similar approach informs Monti's monumental *Head of a Bull*, signed and dated 1824, now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington (fig.8). Carved in white marble after more than thirty years of research into animal form, the sculpture demonstrates how antiquity functioned for Monti as a point of departure rather than a model to be replicated. Despite

³⁶ Scotti 1979, p. 95.



Fig.7 Gaetano Monti, *Lion*, 1819
Plaster, Museo Valtellinese di Storia ed Arte, Sondrio

its fully articulated neoclassical language, heightened by the choice of white Carrara marble instead of a coloured one, the head retains the qualities that define the elephant: close anatomical scrutiny from life, attention to individual character, and the translation of living presence into sculptural form. Furthermore, the sculpture reveals a clear engagement with the antiquities Monti had the opportunity to study during his Roman sojourn, such as the *Head of a Bull* in the Sala degli Animali (fig.9).

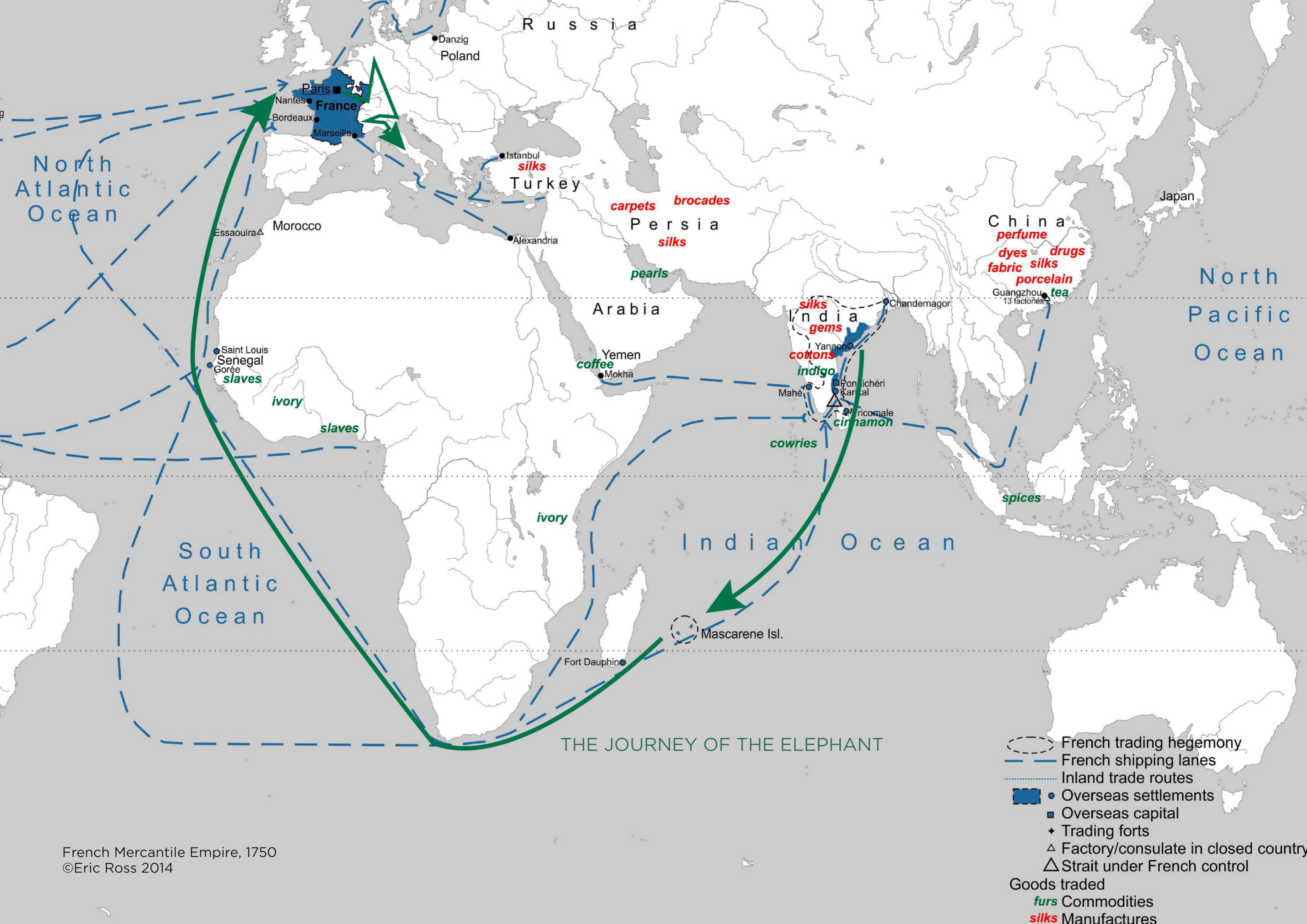
The rediscovery of Monti's elephant acts as a historiographic hinge. It brings renewed attention to a talented sculptor whose reputation was long obscured by circumstance, while at the same time restoring individuality to an animal previously scattered across texts and images, now recognisable as a single subject observed, described, and represented throughout Europe.



Fig.8 Gaetano Monti, *Head of a Bull*, 1824
Marble, National Gallery of Art, Washington



Fig.9 *Head of a bull*, 1st century BCE
Marble, Musei Vaticani, Museo Pio Clementino, Sala degli Animali



THE JOURNEY OF THE ELEPHANT: CONTEXT FOR AN ENCOUNTER

While firm evidence regarding the commission and execution of this remarkable sculpture by Monti is still missing, the available evidence allows us to hypothesise the circumstances that made Monti's sculpture possible. These are inseparable from the extraordinary journey of an elephant whose passage across Europe between 1770 and 1775 is among the most extensively documented itineraries of a living exotic animal in the 18th century, despite being today largely forgotten. The elephant's journey began in Asia, most probably in India.³⁷

What is certain, however, is that the animal arrived in Paris on 27 December 1770 under the guidance of two conductors, Le Gagneur and Trevisany. The identities of Pierre-Toussaint Gagneur and Antoine (or Antonio?) Trevisani are securely documented through a record of their passage with the elephant through Turin in 1774, a document that removes any remaining doubt concerning the identification of the animal and confirms the extraordinary continuity of its documented itinerary.³⁸ Le Gagneur is most likely the performer portrayed in an unusual engraving identifying him as "Premier sauteur du Roi de France" (fig.10). It is therefore noteworthy that, despite the intense interest the elephant aroused among royal courts across Europe and its clear resonance with emerging Enlightenment sensibilities, the conditions of its display remained firmly those of public exhibition - closer in spirit to a circus performance than to a scientific or institutional setting.

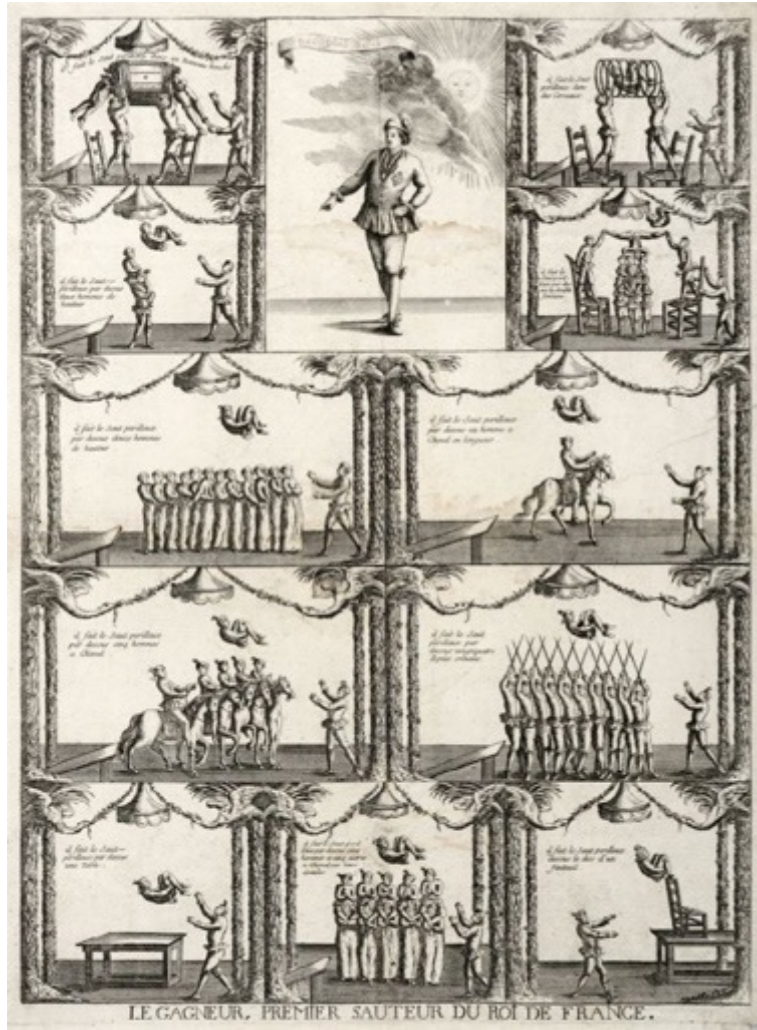


Fig.10 Anonymous XVIII century, *Le Gagneur, premier sauteur du roi de France*, engraving

³⁷ *Gazzetta di Parma* 1775, p. 360: it is referred to as 'Siamese'. One of the German broadsheets also suggested an African origin from Senegal, which is coherent with a stepover following the routes of the French East India Company from Asia to Europe.

³⁸ Rossotti 1998, p. 19.

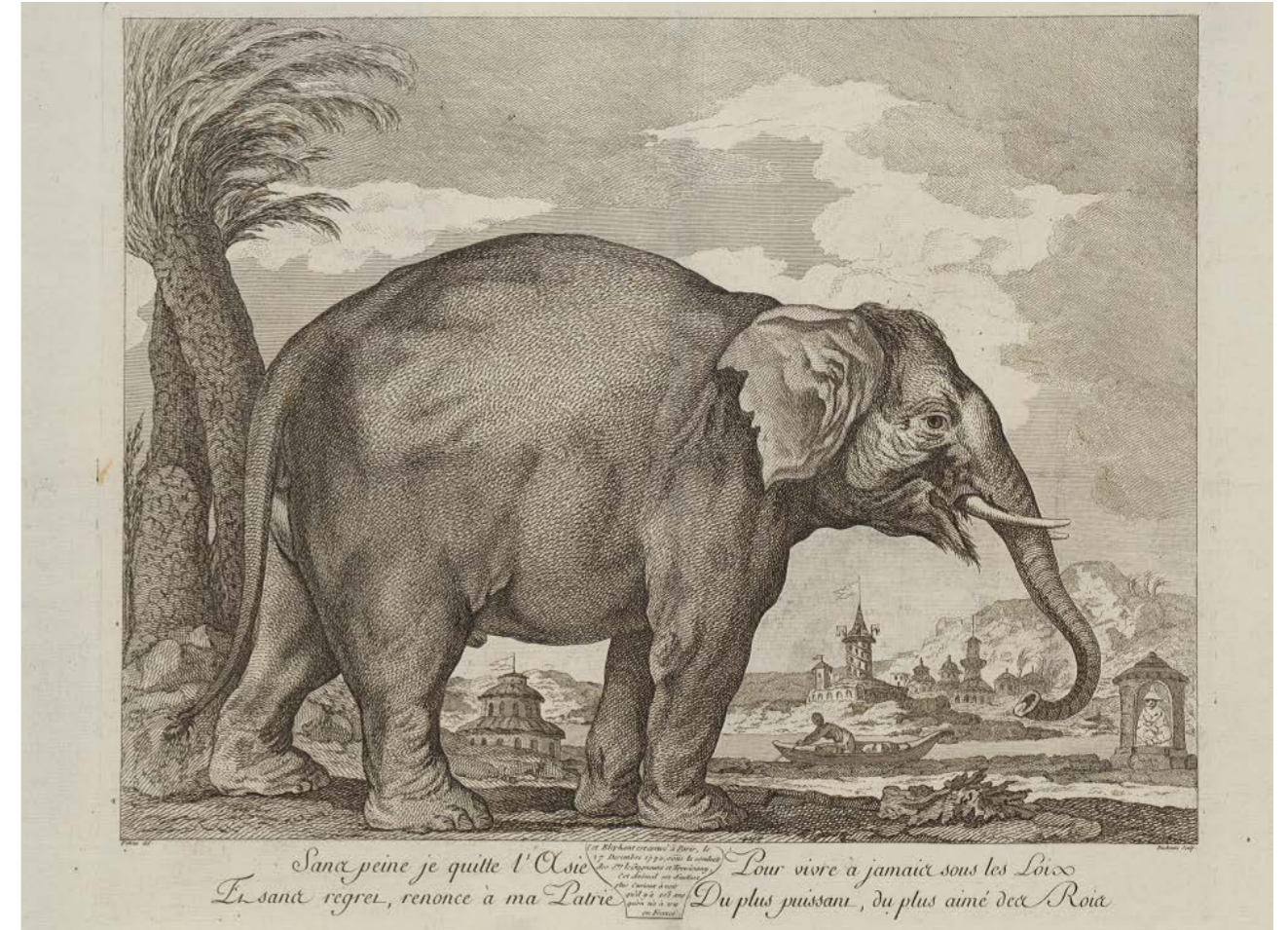


Fig.11 D.Duchesne, after A.Watteau, *Elephant*, c.1770, Etching

The Parisian arrival was marked by an engraved print, today preserved in several collections, which functions almost as a manifesto of the event (fig.11).

The inscription reads:

« Cet éléphant est arrivé à Paris le 27 décembre 1770, sous la conduite de Messieurs Le Gagneur et Trevisany. Cet animal est d'autant plus curieux à voir qu'il y a 103 ans qu'on n'en avait point vu en France. »

("This elephant arrived in Paris on 27 December 1770, under the guidance of Messrs. Le Gagneur and Trevisany. This animal is all the more curious to behold since it has been 103 years since one had last been seen in France.")

On either side of the image, a celebratory quatrain gives voice to the animal itself:

« Sans peine je quitte l'Asie
Pour vivre à jamais sous les lois
Et sans regret je perds ma patrie
Du plus puissant, du plus aimé des Rois. »

("Without sorrow I leave Asia
To live forever under the laws,
And without regret I abandon my homeland
For the most powerful, the most beloved of kings.")

Such an idealised view of the elephant's disposition, however, is far removed from the undoubtedly harsh - and at times dramatic - reality of its capture and the extraordinary journey that ensued. This awareness of the animal's intelligence and sensibility, as we have seen, was already well established within Enlightenment thought, emerging powerfully from the pages by Buffon.

The elephant was exhibited in Paris and admired by the court and the public alike. Contemporary journalistic accounts insist on the rarity of the spectacle, emphasizing that no living elephant had been seen in France since the death, in 1681, of the animal gifted to Louis XIV.³⁹ It is likely, though not explicitly stated in the sources, that the success of this privately owned elephant contributed to the renewed royal interest that led, a few years later, to the arrival of another elephant at Versailles. That later animal, donated to the King, was later famously associated with Napoleon and his body is today preserved in the University of Pavia.

The spectacular reception of the privately owned elephant exhibited in Paris in 1770-71 (and repeatedly advertised as a rarity unseen in France for more than a century) likely helped to reactivate, at least at the level of courtly taste and public curiosity, the idea of the elephant as a princely animal worth possessing.⁴⁰ This may have prompted the arrival of the second Asian elephant as royal gift. The chronology is suggestive: within roughly two years of the Paris sensation, a second Asian elephant - this time explicitly integrated into royal collecting and diplomacy - was dispatched toward France as a gift for Louis XV.

Paolo Mazzarello's book on the subject frames this later animal as a politically charged creature, a young female elephant whose voyage was meant to bring India closer to France, moving through the contested landscape of late 18th century colonial and local powers before beginning a combined sea-and-land journey from the Bengal region to Versailles.⁴¹ The second

³⁹ *Annonces* 1771, pp. 22-23: "One is always curious to see those foreign Animals, which, born under climates very different from ours, and almost in another world, are known to us only through the Accounts of Travellers, or through Paintings and Prints that represent them well or badly. The figure of the Elephant, an animal that appears to originate from Africa, and common in the warm Countries of Asia, is no doubt sufficiently familiar to us; but, with the exception of those who have travelled in India or Africa, who in this century has seen one alive in France? The one that the King of Portugal had presented to Louis XIV died in 1681, only seventeen years old, although the life of this Animal, which the mother carries two years in her womb, is proportionate to its size, and extends at least to one hundred and fifty years. It is therefore a spectacle as rare as it is interesting for Europeans, that of the Elephant which is currently seen in Paris, in the rue Dauphine. It is thought to be about five years old, and its height is not yet six feet. Before seeing it, one ought to have read the Natural History of the Animal, by M. de Buffon; that would be the means of observing it better, of not at least being put off by its exterior; for we have been told that it has offended the eyes of certain Delicate persons, for whom anything that is not an English or Norman Horse, a pedigreed Hound, or a stage Greyhound, is unworthy of their gaze. One would forgive women for finding nothing reasonable and beautiful except their lapdog or their Angola cat. The Elephant, to which Pliny seems to assign the first rank among terrestrial Animals, is indeed, both by its bulk and by its intelligence and qualities, the most admirable of Quadrupeds. Its trunk, which is nothing other than its nose, but which serves it equally as a hand, possesses a suppleness and a dexterity that are astonishing. The young Elephant of Paris amuses infinitely with his own, whose skill is inconceivable. Pliny, who must have seen more than one Elephant, since they were not rare in Rome, where they were even made into tightrope dancers, writes that this Animal has only four teeth. The learned Peiresc, so curious about all objects of Natural History, had found eight in the mouth of one of these Animals that was brought to him at his home in Aix in Provence; and according to M. Daubenton, the Elephant has twelve, counting the tusks from which ivory comes. When all the teeth shall have come to the little Elephant of Paris, one will be able to ascertain the fact. (*Aff. de Paris.*)".

⁴⁰ Robbins 2002, pp. 1-6.

⁴¹ Mazzarello 2017. In 1772 Jean-Baptiste Chevalier, governor of Chandannagar, presented the king with a young female elephant, likely as a diplomatic gesture intended to revive courtly interest in French commercial ambitions in India. On 12 February 1772 the animal, accompanied by her mahout Joumone, embarked on the *Gange*, a vessel of the Compagnie des Indes, and after a voyage of roughly ten months—probably with stopovers at Pondicherry, Île de Bourbon and Île de France—landed at Lorient on 14 December 1772. She remained there until the spring and then proceeded on foot, escorted by a small convoy, reaching Versailles on 19 August 1773 after a journey of about 500 kilometres. At the time



Fig.12 Depiction of an Elephant, Broadsheet, Esslingen, 1773

Städtische Museen Esslingen, Stadtmuseum im Gelben Haus, Esslingen am Neckar.

elephant left Asia in 1772 aboard a ship of the French East India Company, reached France after months at sea, and then proceeded overland to Versailles, where it became the jewel of the royal ménagerie. The latter elephant's afterlife explains why it became "Napoleon's elephant" in modern memory: after its death at Versailles and subsequent scientific handling in Paris, the skin was transferred, by Napoleon's decision, to the University of Pavia in 1804, and was ultimately mounted as a specimen in 1812.

of arrival the animal was two years old. While the precise itinerary of the elephant portrayed by Monti—known to have reached France three years earlier—has yet to be reconstructed in detail, the well-documented transfer of this second Asian elephant sent to Louis XV for the ménagerie at Versailles offers a plausible model for the routes and logistics such animals typically followed.

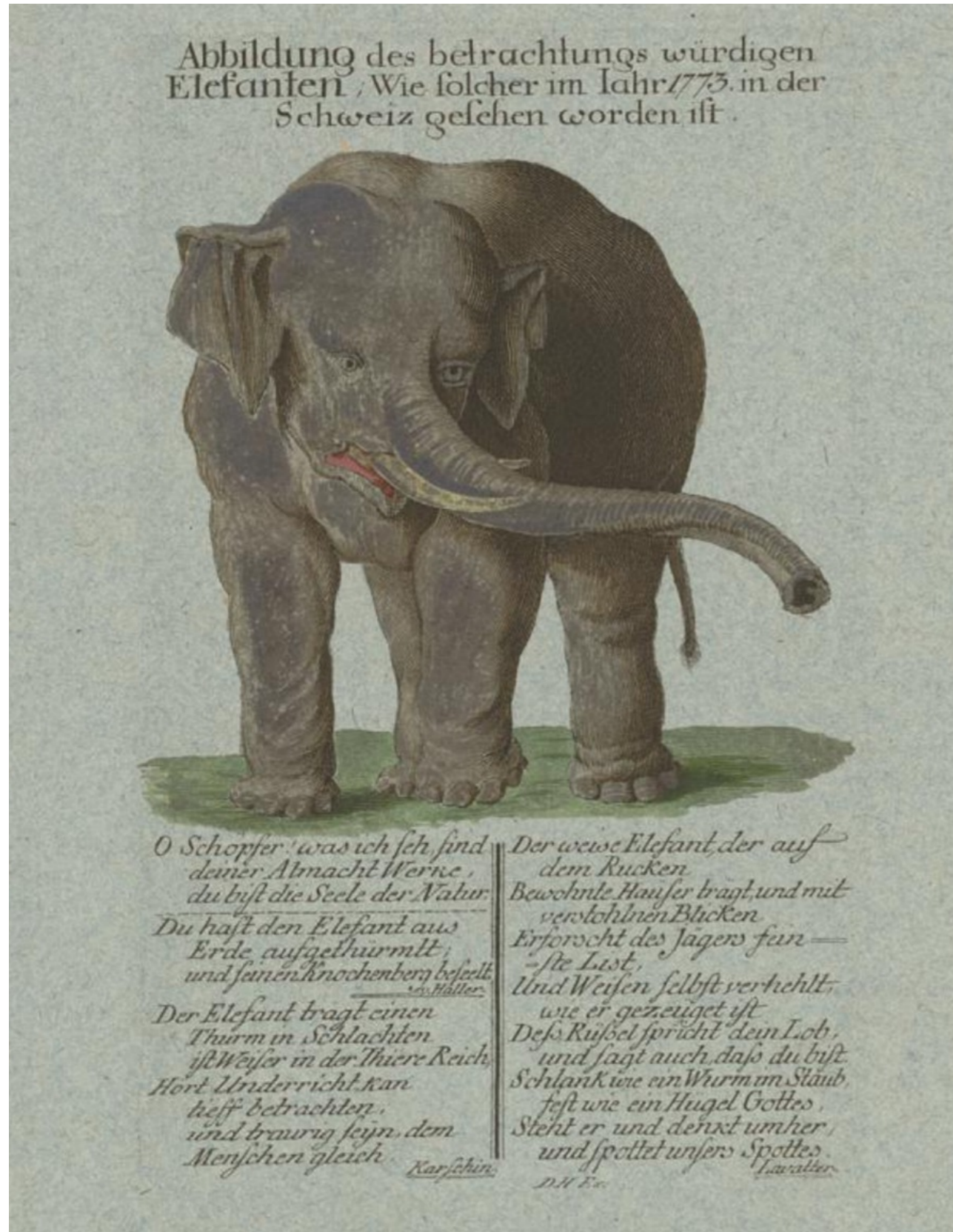


Fig.13 D. Herrliberger, *Depiction of the Elephant Worthy of Contemplation, as It Was Seen in Switzerland in the Year 1773*. [Zurich], 1773. Zentralbibliothek, Zürich

Returning to the elephant under discussion, while its documented journey in northern Europe remains to this day largely unresearched, a few contemporary broadsheets issued to advertise its exhibition allow us to trace some significant stops in Switzerland and Germany, including Basel, Zurich, Frankfurt am Main, and Esslingen (figs.12-13).⁴²

By contrast, the Italian phase of the journey is now far more securely documented. We know that the elephant entered the peninsula at the beginning of 1774, reaching Venice from Verona, Vicenza and Padua in January.⁴³ Its presence during the Carnival of 1774 was immortalized by Pietro Longhi in more than one occasion for local nobility. On this subject, reference should be made to the detailed contribution by Steven F. Ostrow, who—while not identifying the animal with the one in Paris in 1771—carefully examines the context of the commission of the paintings.⁴⁴ Longhi's depictions *Il Rinoceronte* had earlier fixed the famous rhinoceros 'Miss Clara' in the Venetian imagination (fig.14), and he turned to the elephant as a similarly emblematic figure of wonder.⁴⁵

The painting commonly titled *L'Elefante* ('*The Display of the Elephant*'), in the Gallerie d'Italia, Vicenza, shows the animal surrounded by spectators, framed as both spectacle and social event (fig.15). The paintings that Pietro Longhi devoted to the elephant appear noticeably unfaithful to the animal's natural appearance, to the point that Steven F. Ostrow has questioned the reliability of the inscriptions describing them as 'true portraits'.⁴⁶ Contemporary chronicles indicate that the elephant's arrival in Venice in 1774 had a notable impact on the local population. According to Pietro Gradenigo's *Annali* for that year,⁴⁷ its appearance even prompted the translation and publication of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*, confirming that in European cities the animal was received not only as a spectacle but also by a small community of scholars already engaged in the study of natural history. There is no reason to doubt that Longhi personally witnessed the animal's exhibition. The contrast between Longhi's imaginative interpretation of the beast and the more faithful and sensitive rendering achieved by Monti only underscores the modernity of the sculptor's approach. From his earliest years of study in Milan, Monti was determined to confront artistic tradition with direct observation of nature, thereby freeing his art from the romanticising Baroque tendencies that were still prevalent at the time.⁴⁸

It is also possible that a drawing attributed to Gian Domenico Tiepolo, also associated with the Venetian Carnival, may be depicting the same event, and confirms the impression made by the animal on Venetian artists (fig.16).

From Venice, the elephant proceeded to Milan. We know that it was exhibited there before the court of the Archdukes⁴⁹. A hand-written note, on a copy of the previously mentioned Duchesne engraving (fig.11), today in the Museo di Storia Naturale di Milano, records that the animal was shown in the "*bruolo di Santo Stefano*" in May 1774—that is, the courtyard of the church of Santo Stefano in Milan.⁵⁰

⁴² For further literature and references on the Swiss and German journey see <https://www.e-rara.ch/zuz/doi/10.3931/e-rara-39412>.

⁴³ *Gazzetta Universale* 1774, no. 1, p. 4: Venice, 15 January 1774: "The aforementioned elephant has arrived here, measuring seven and a half feet in height; many people are gathering to see this animal, which performs various tricks with its trunk".

⁴⁴ Ostrow 2016, pp. 81-99.

⁴⁵ The similarities between the present elephant and the rhinoceros Clara are numerous, ranging from their Asian origin to their prolonged itineraries across northern Europe and the Italian peninsula. Although both animals generated considerable sensation wherever they appeared, it is striking that the elephant's fame has largely eluded the subsequent literature on the subject.

⁴⁶ Ostrow 2016, pp. 91-93.

⁴⁷ Marchesi, *Crevatin* 2006, pp. 32-35, 60 and 82-83.

⁴⁸ Bacchi 2015, pp. 22 and 76.

⁴⁹ *Diario Ordinario* 1775, n. 50, pp. 19-21; and *Gazzetta di Parma* 1775, p. 360.

⁵⁰ The engraving is preserved in a copy of Ulisse Aldrovandi's *De quadrupedibus solipedibus*: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/in-giro-per-l%E2%80%99europa/HQG61YuM0Tt9Zg?hl=it>. The note



Fig.14 Pietro Longhi, *Exhibition of a Rhinoceros at Venice (Clara)*, 1751
Oil on canvas, Cà Rezzonico, Venice



Fig.15 Pietro Longhi, *Exhibition of an Elephant in Venice*, 1774
Oil on canvas, Gallerie d'Italia, Vicenza

After Milan, the journey headed West to Turin, where an engraved image records its exhibition before the Savoyard court and local population (fig.17). Of particular significance is the document that identifies by name the animal's attendants during its stop in Turin, Pierre-Toussaint Gagneur and Antoine Trevisani, as it allows the elephant to be securely identified with the individual that arrived in France in December 1770.⁵¹

reads: "Questo giovine animale si vede attualmente qui in Milano sul bruolo di S. Stefano in questi primi giorni di Maggio 1774" (This young animal is currently on view here in Milan on the bruolo of S. Stefano on these first days of May).

⁵¹Rossotti 1998., p. 19.



Fig.16 Gian Domenico Tiepolo, *Punchinellos with an Elephant*, 1774 (?)
The Morgan Library & Museum, New York

The journey continued through Emilia, with documented stops in Parma,⁵² Reggio, Modena,⁵³ and Bologna, before moving into Tuscany in early 1775.⁵⁴ In Florence, the elephant was observed by the Grand Duke and his family, who reportedly took particular interest in its structure and behaviour. Tuscan sources emphasize the animal's youth, its still-growing proportions, and the dexterity of its trunk, described as both powerful and astonishingly delicate.⁵⁵

⁵² *Gazzetta di Parma* 1775, p. 360. Parma, 8 November 1774: "Within a few days, two travellers with a Siamese elephant will depart from this capital for Reggio, Modena, Bologna, and further beyond. They had the honour of presenting the animal, as early as 1771, at the Court of Versailles, subsequently to various Electors and Princes, to the reigning House of Savoy, and to the Royal Archdukes of Milan, as well as on the 27th of last month to our August Sovereigns, the Lord Infante and the Lady Infanta Archduchess at Colorno, and on the 29th here in the Riding School of His Royal Highness to their Princess daughter, who, through attentive observation in close contact with so extraordinary a quadruped, and through lively questions concerning its structure and qualities, displayed talents and courage beyond her years. In the following days there has been a large attendance of citizens and foreigners alike, eager to take advantage of the opportunity to see so remarkable a curiosity, one that may require centuries to be witnessed again. This elephant is well nourished and well proportioned: it measures eight royal feet in height and seventeen in circumference. Nevertheless, it is not yet far advanced in adolescence, and it shows such docility at the signals of its director that one might hardly doubt the ancient opinions concerning its intelligence."

⁵³ *Gazzetta Universale* 1774, p. 798. Modena, 8 December 1774: "The famous elephant, which had been in Paris since 1771 and has since been led in succession to various courts of Germany, and now to those of Italy, has also been brought to this capital. All flock to see it, and the obedience with which it allows itself to be directed by its handler is astonishing. Several naturalists have not failed to make careful observations upon the animal, in order to derive from it some new knowledge."

⁵⁴ Targioni Torzetti 1775.

⁵⁵ *Gazzetta di Toscana* 1775, n. 7. Florence, 18 February: "Since last Sunday there has been in this city



Fig.17 I.Scolapis di Borgostura, *Passaggio della cittadella con l'elefante venuto in Torino l'anno 1774, 1780*
Engraving

In Siena, the elephant became the protagonist of a memorable anecdote. Taken at night to the Fonteblanda fountain, the animal delighted in the water, splashing with its trunk and resisting removal. The following morning, it broke free from its chain in an apparent attempt to return to the fountain, an episode interpreted by local observers as evidence of the water's effect on the temperament of the creature. For the rest of the day, the elephant refused to perform its usual exercises, an act read as stubbornness or displeasure.⁵⁶

an elephant, the most remarkable of quadrupeds, brought here by a company of foreigners who have exhibited it in various cities of Europe. This animal, which is not yet nine years old, stands at about four braccia in height and, as naturalists affirm that elephants continue to grow until the age of thirty, will in time attain far greater proportions. Its small eyes, disproportionate to its vast bulk, its large and mobile ears, and its trunk—which it extends to nearly three braccia and moves with indescribable dexterity for gathering, grasping, embracing, and conveying food and liquids to its ample mouth, through which it breathes and draws up drink—perform many actions worthy of consideration. Its rounded and muscular legs, with clearly visible joints, and the hoof of its feet, shaped and strengthened so as to support its great mass, are likewise notable; yet above all admirable is the docility and obedience of this animal, which, as it were, anticipates and responds to the will of its keeper, executing promptly and neatly whatever is commanded of it, to the delight of those who come to observe it."

⁵⁶ *Gazzetta Universale* 1775, p. 311. Siena, 12 May 1775: "A perennial spring known as Fonteblanda lies near this city. It has long been customary to jest about the properties of this water, reputed to be capable of stirring eccentric behaviour (...). The following incident has greatly excited both enthusiasm and misconception. For some days past the Elephant has been here for exhibition to the public. Late last Sunday night its owners led it to the said fountain, where the good animal, following its natural instinct, delighted in splashing about in the water with its trunk, so that it proved quite difficult to bring it back to its enclosure. The following morning the Elephant was suddenly seen to grow agitated; exerting force, it freed its foot from the chain, went out, and set off along the road leading to Fonteblanda. It was nevertheless recaptured by its experienced handler, though it appeared greatly angered and that morning refused both to perform its usual tricks and to allow itself to be ridden. It was therefore immediately concluded that the water of Fonteblanda had produced in it a peculiarity of behaviour such as the animal had never shown elsewhere."

The Roman stage of the journey is recorded in detail in the *Diario Ordinario*, later known as *Diario di Roma*. The elephant arrived on 15 June 1775, transported in a large covered cart drawn by eight horses, and was exhibited in the Strada della Croce. The chronicle emphasizes the animal's immense weight, its obedience to its handler, and the belief that no such creature had been seen in Rome for more than three centuries. Roman observers frame the elephant not only as a curiosity but as a moral and philosophical problem: a creature of overwhelming force rendered gentle by human command. This testimony is especially valuable for the wealth of detail it provides and for the care with which it reconstructs the journey up to that moment.⁵⁷

The final chapter of the journey brings the elephant to the Kingdom of Naples.⁵⁸ A document recently rediscovered in the Archivio di Caserta confirms that the animal was eventually purchased by the King, and that provisions were made for its permanent housing. In 1775, Ferdinando IV authorized architectural modifications to accommodate the elephant, commissioning Carlo Vanvitelli to adapt structures associated with the royal menagerie (fig.18). The animal's stay in the Kingdom of Naples—very likely the final phase of its life—undoubtedly deserves further investigation. Should the reference to the death, in 1787, of an elephant kept in the Serraglio Sanfelice in Naples,⁵⁹ already noted here by Andrea Bacchi, indeed refer to the same animal, it would open additional avenues for research and further study.

Seen against this extraordinary trajectory, Gaetano Monti's marble elephant acquires a precise historical depth. It is not a generic evocation of exotic fauna, but the sculptural residue of a lived encounter between artist and animal, made possible by one of the most remarkable journeys undertaken by a living creature in 18th century Europe.

MATTEO ZAMBOLO

⁵⁷ *Diario Ordinario* 1775, n. 50, pp. 19-21. Rome, 15 June 1775: "The celebrated Elephant has arrived in this Metropolis, having already been exhibited at the Royal Court of Versailles in the year 1771, at those of various Electors and Princes of Germany, in Venice—where it met with great favour among the nobility—at the court of the Most Serene Royal Archdukes of Milan, and thereafter at Moncalieri before Their Majesties the King and Queen of Sardinia and the Royal Family; subsequently, in November 1774, at Colorno to the full satisfaction of numerous members of the nobility, and thereafter in Florence on 13 February of the present year 1775. His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Tuscany, accompanied by the Archduchess his Consort, took pleasure in making observations upon the said Elephant, holding it in high esteem and showing great satisfaction at having seen and examined it (as reported in the printed gazettes that reached us in the said month of February); and on the 16th of the same month the two Royal Princes and the two Royal Princesses of Tuscany likewise graciously expressed their pleasure and approval upon viewing it. This rare animal arrived in Rome on 15 June at the ninth hour, transported in a large covered carriage drawn by eight powerful horses, and is exhibited in the Strada della Croce at the inn of Benedetto Armani, where two enclosures have been arranged—one for the nobility and the other for the general public—at a moderate price. It may be seen in the morning from the thirteenth hour until midday, and again in the afternoon from the twenty-first hour until the third hour of the night. Worthy of attentive consideration is the manner in which so large and powerful an animal, weighing eleven thousand Roman pounds, lives subject and obedient to the man who governs it, and by natural instinct appears friendly toward him; indeed, it is held that no such animal has been seen in Rome for more than three centuries."

⁵⁸ *Napoli Nobilissima* 2005, p. 150: "In 1775 an elephant also arrived there, coming from Rome. A document dated 25 October records that the king had instructed the architect Carlo Vanvitelli to carry out adaptations to the arsenal of the Royal Fishery."

⁵⁹ Furia 1992, p. 100.

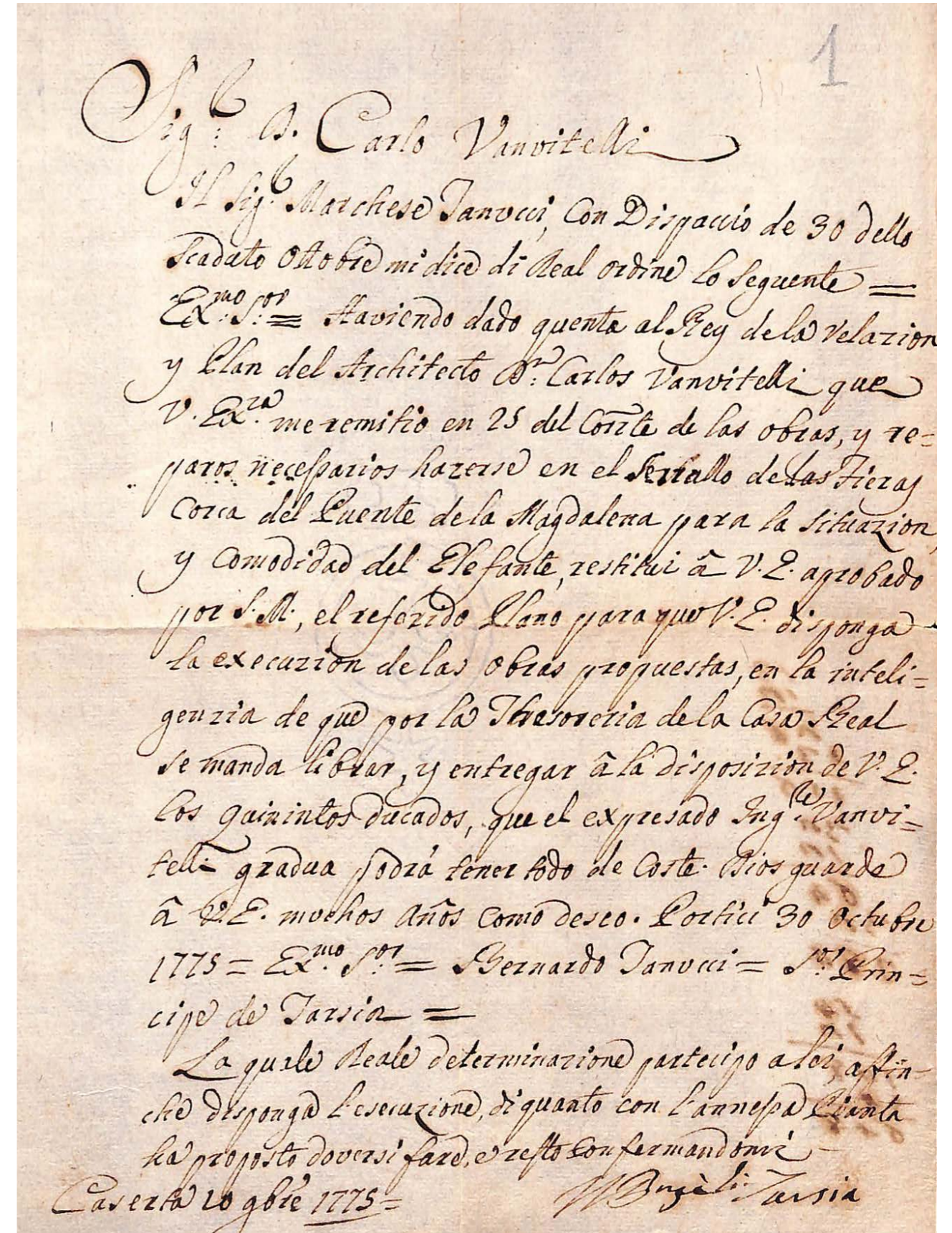


Fig.18 Ferdinand IV of Naples commissions to Carlo Vanvitelli to adapt the Serraglio delle fiere in Caserta to house an elephant, 1775

Archivio di Stato di Caserta, ASCe, Misure e Lavori, b. 3217, f. 1.

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