



LULLO | PAMPOULIDES

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ANTONIO SUSINI (THE CAST)
1558 - 1624

AND

GIAMBOLOGNA (THE MODEL)
1529 - 1608

CRISTO VIVO
1590 - ante 1609

Bronze
35.1 cm (head to toe)
36.5 cm (max height)
33 cm wide

PROVENANCE

Possibly in the collection of Grand Duke Ferdinando I or Cosimo II de' Medici before 1609;
Private collection Florence since at least the mid-1950s;
And by descent.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Edinburgh, London and Vienna, Royal Scottish Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum and Kunsthistorisches Museum, *Giambologna 1529-1698 Sculptor to the Medici*, 19 Aug. - 10 Sept. 1978, 5 Oct. - 16 Nov. 1978 and 2 Dec. 1978 - 28 Jan.1979, C.Avery and A.Radcliffe eds. R.Coppel Aréizaga, 'Giambologna y los Crucifijos enviados a España,' in *Goya. Revista de Arte*, vol.301-2, Jul.-Oct. 2004, pp.201-214

C.Avery, *Giambologna - The Complete Sculpture*, London, 1987, p. 202, no. 95, pl. 226.

Florence, Bargello Museum, *Giambologna - gli dei, gli eroi*, B.Paolozzi Strozzi and D.Zikos eds., 2 Mar. - 15 Jun. 2006

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, *Giambologna - Triumph des Körpers*, W. Seipel ed., 27 Jun. - 17 Sept. 2006

D.Gasparotto, 'I Crocifissi di Giambologna e la tradizione Fiorentina', in *QUADERNI DI STUDI E RESTAURI DEL MUSEO POLDI PEZZOLI*, vol.IX, 2011, pp.9-15

A.di Lorenzo, 'Il Crocifisso d'oro del Museo Poldi Pezzoli: una proposta per Gasparo Mola', in *QUADERNI DI STUDI E RESTAURI DEL MUSEO POLDI PEZZOLI*, vol.IX, 2011, p.23-36

P.Cannata, *Museo Nazionale del Palazzo Venezia. Sculture in Bronzo*, Rome, 2011

D.Zikos, 'Giovanni Bologna and Antonio Susini: an old problem in the light of new research,' in *Carvings, Casts & Collectors. The Art of Renaissance Sculpture*, P.Motture, E.Jones and D.Zikos (eds.), London, 2013, pp.194-209

Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, *Bella Figura. Europäische Bronzekunst in Suddendeutschland um 1600*, J.Burk ed, 6 Feb.- 25 May 2015

D.Lucidi, 'Giambologna e Torino. Tre crocifissi bronzei dal Real Castello di Racconigi: aperture su Adriaen de Vries, Pietro Tacca, Antonio Susini e Gasparo Mola,' in *NUOVI STUDI RIVISTA DI ARTE ANTICA E MODERNA*, 2020, vol.25, pp.51-52

D.Allen et al, *Italian Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, 2022







This exceptional bronze figure of *Christ* - or, more specifically, of the *Cristo Vivo* - is one of the finest bronzes made collaboratively by Antonio Susini and Giambologna to appear on the international market. Recently discovered in a private Florentine collection where it had resided for at least the last 70 years, and completely unknown to modern-day scholars, it sets a new standard for connoisseurial appreciation of small-scale statuettes made in Giambologna's busy workshop at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries.

Of the four other casts known of this rare composition depicting Christ looking heavenwards and pronouncing his last words, two are of markedly inferior quality and must therefore be regarded as workshop productions. Of the remaining two examples - both with historic Spanish provenance and largely less refined in handling - one is unquestionably a documented work designed by Giambologna, for which Antonio Susini received payment in 1603. This documented collaboration therefore strongly supports the attribution of the present bronze to the same authorship.

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These statuettes of Christ on the cross, in his different iconographies of the *Cristo Vivo* (*Living Christ*) and *Cristo Morto* (*Dead Christ*), were among the most revered and sought after compositions in Giambologna's *oeuvre*, as they were essential symbols of post-reformist theological reflections but also, often, highly prized princely and diplomatic gifts, as will be discussed later on.

Whether depicting Christ dead or alive, they were highly idealised: there is no suffering, there are no wounds, and the faces are serene; they are also devoid of any of the tension that would have been caused by the weight of the body pulling down on the arms, as Avery noted, these 'Christs almost seem to hover in front of their crosses'¹.

The high demand for them therefore necessitated an efficient creative process that allowed the master to conceive the initial model and his assistants to cast and finish individual statuettes from it. One such process - called indirect wax casting - was especially effective, as it allowed the master to create the prime model in wax, and for his assistants to subsequently cast further wax models from it, thereby allowing them to retain the same degree of quality on each cast, and to alter the composition (if desired) before beginning the time-consuming process of casting and finishing multiples in bronze or silver. This process gave Giambologna artistic control over every composition and allowed him to manage the large number of commissions coming from his formal employers, the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, but also those from noble families from other city states, as well as his international clientele.

Although the identities of many assistants remain unknown, ongoing archival discoveries have enabled scholars to identify some of the most accomplished ones, among them Antonio Susini, Adriaen de Vries and Pietro Tacca. Documentary evidence has, in certain cases, even made it possible to attribute their direct involvement in specific works.

Within this group, Antonio Susini - who worked with Giambologna between 1582 and 1601² - is widely regarded as the most refined in terms of technical finish, and was celebrated for the exceptionally precise, jewel-like surface quality of his bronzes.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that some of Giambologna's models - such as the present *Cristo*

¹ Avery, *op.cit.*, 1978, p.45.

² Susini left Giambologna's workshop in 1601 but continued to collaborate with his former master until 1608 when the latter died.

Vivo - are described as collaborations between two artists: the invention and design by Giambologna, and the casting and finishing by Antonio Susini. Far from diminishing authorship, such partnerships highlighted the exceptional technical and artistic standards achieved within Florentine sculptors' workshops, where the master's creative vision was realised through the refined skill of his most accomplished assistants. The quality of execution could, moreover, be calibrated according to the significance of a particular commission, resulting in casts of varying degrees of finish and refinement.

DIFFERENT HANDS AT WORK

Seemingly, the earliest attempts Giambologna made at addressing the subject of Christ on the Cross date from the 1570s - such as the silver cast generally accepted as the one he made for the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Giovanna d' Austria, and that she subsequently gifted to the Santa Casa of Loreto, in 1573 - as well as subsequent variants that evidently went on to influence many of the small scale - and life-size - crucifixes he and his workshop produced from the 1590s onwards.

The desirability of the smaller crucifixes, in particular, is amply demonstrated by the numerous commissions Giambologna received for them as exemplified by a famous letter of 9 April 1583 in which Simone Fortuna, writing to the Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria II della Rovere, explained how Giambologna had executed four crucifixes in silver, bronze, or copper (each roughly 44 cm in height) for the King of Spain, Pope Pius V, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess (the latter of which is accepted as being the same silver statuette today in the Palazzo Apostolico, Loreto).³

It is, therefore, with this in mind that we must consider the role played by the workshop to meet this demand, and the fundamental role Antonio Susini played in casting and finishing many of this master's compositions as well as, specifically, highly refined bronze crucifixes.

³ 9 April 1583. Letter from Simone Fortuna to the Duke of Urbino: "*Parlai poi lungamente à Gio. Bologna, il quale mi mostrò per le opere che ha alle mani, che non può almeno per un anno accettar' opera alcuna essendo necessitato di finir quelle che ha fra mano del Gran Duca, Gran Duchessa, Cardinale di Medici et una venere del naturale del Signor Gio Giorgio Cesarini per ordine de S. A. et altre che fà di nascosto, ma se fosse anche disoccupatissimo, dice alla libera che à lui non darebbe lo animo far di marmo opera sì piccola massimo d'un pezzo, nella quale gli andarebbe tempo lunghissimo. D'argento, di bronzo, o di rame egli ne ha ben fatti fin a quattro, uno per il Re di Spagna come scrissi, uno per Pio V, il terzo per il Gran Duca, il quarto per la Gran Duchessa, che andò à Loreto, de i quali o pur adesso veduto i modelli e sono poco meno grandi di due palmi ragionati un per l'altro, tenuti stupendi. Se di tal metalli ella ne volesse uno, egli non ostante le tante occupationi vederebbe di farlo secretamente et penserebbe di sodisfarla, mostrando gran desiderio di servirla et io lo credo, perché non si lascia uscir nessuna cosa di mano, se non e tirata et condotta con gradissima diligenza, aspirando alla gloria, et che le opere sue pareggino quelle di Michel Agnolo. Dice bene che accetterebbe di farne uno grande del naturale di marmo, come fù quello di Benvenuto che 'l Duca Cosimo mandò medesimamente al Re di Spagna, ogni volta che gli fosse comandato o se ne contentasse il Gran Duca. Questo è quanto in sostanza io ne ho ritratto. Però l'A. V. comandi, come sarà risoluta.*" Archivio di Stato di Firenze Carte d'Urbino, 237, fol. 201, published by G. Gronau, "Documenti concementi i rapporti del Duca Francesco M' d'Urbino con Giovanni Bandini e con Giovanni Bologna", in *Rivista d'Arte*, 1929, pp. 522-523. It is generally accepted that the silver statuette of the *Dead Christ* in Loreto is the only work of art mentioned in this letter to have been identified and that is known, with any certainty, to be by Giambologna. However, there can be little doubt that the gilt-bronze crucifix (of the same model as the Loreto version) above the choir lectern in the church of the monastery of El Escorial, which measures 42 cm, is the same work that Philip II donated to the monastery and that Fortuna mentioned as being an autograph Giambologna in the 1583 letter. This theory is supported by the fact that the statuette is in a very inaccessible location 4m above the ground - which is also why it has gone unnoticed till Coppel published it in her 2004 article (*op.cit.*, p.201)

And while Susini is necessarily the focus of the discussion as regards the present bronze, it is important to mention that he was not the only assistant to be identified as working on crucifixes: for example, it is known that in 1581 Adriaen de Vries - functioning as a goldsmith - cast two silver crucifixes from a model by the master to be sent to Spain⁴ and, likewise, Gasparo Mola has been identified as the only goldsmith to obtain permission from Grand Duke Ferdinando I and, later, between 1610 and 1611, from Cosimo II, to execute in gold translations of Giambologna's *Living Christ*.⁵

Fortunately, on the subject of the authorship of the present bronze, a sequence of documents dating from 1603 precisely identify Susini and Giambologna as having created a gilded bronze *Living Christ* of the same composition and of the near-identical dimensions as the Christ under discussion, that was given as a gift by Ferdinando I de' Medici to Doña Catalina de Sandoval y Rojas, Countess of Lemos.

THE LIVING CHRIST

Before addressing the details of this commission, it is necessary to first explain the different types of crucifixes depicting the *Living Christ*: in contrast to those depicting the *Dead Christ*, where the Redeemer is shown with his head lowered to the viewer's left, the alternate model shows Christ with his head looking heaven-wards, eyes wide open and mouth ajar as if uttering his last words. Broadly speaking, the latter statuettes are less common than the former, though a number of variant models are known that differ in terms of material, style, degrees of finish and size (23, 30 and 35 cm in height).

These bronzes can be further divided into four subgroups as defined by the models' posture:⁶ the first group is called the right-handed model (for an example see Christie's, London 7 December 2006, lot 23 (fig.1));⁷ the second, the left-handed model (for an example see Christie's, London, 12 December 2002, lot 140 (fig.2));⁸ the third the left-arching model, and relates to the present cast;⁹ the fourth is unnamed, and an example can be found in the Smith College of Art, Northampton Massachusetts (fig.3).¹⁰ While some very high-quality casts of each model are known, the left-arching model bronzes stand out for being the largest in size, but also the rarest and most consistently high quality.

To date, only five casts of this model have been identified: aside from the present one, a version is in the Convent of the Descalzas Reales, Madrid (fig.4); one formerly in the Hart collection, USA, and recently sold at Christie's, New York, 5 February 2026, lot 16 (fig.5); one in the Museo Nazionale del Palazzo Venezia, Rome, (fig.6); and one formerly in the collection of (respectively) Massimo Vezzosi and, later, John Winter and which was subsequently sold at Sotheby's, London, The Winter Collection, 10 December 2015, lot 28 (fig.7).

The bronze under discussion is a tour de force of modelling and post-casting afterwork. A thin golden layer rests above the immaculately polished bronze surface, upon which a translucent red lacquer and a medium bronze patination - now largely worn - were originally applied.

⁴ L.Larsson, *Adriaen de Vries*, Munich 1967, p.11, p.14, p.114.

⁵ Lucidi, *op.cit.*, p.53.

⁶ Claudio Pizzorusso studied - and defined - the various groups which have been cited in D.Lucidi, 'Giambologna e Torino. Tre crocifissi bronzei dal Real Castello di Racconigi: aperture su Adriaen de Vries, Pietro Tacca, Antonio Susini e Gasparo Mola,' in *NUOVI STUDI etc.*, 2020, vol.25, pp.51-52.

⁷ measuring approximately 29.5cm (head to toe) is based on a bronze commissioned by Sebastiano del Favilla for the church of Santissima Annunziata in Florence in around 1578

⁸ measuring approximately 24 cm (head to toe)

⁹ approximately 35.2 cm (head to toe)

¹⁰ measuring approximately 29 cm, was possibly cast after Giambologna's death

Their partial loss is the result of centuries of coveting and handling, a condition frequently encountered on small-scale bronzes intended for close viewing and private devotion, whose precious surfaces invited repeated tactile engagement. The hair and beard have been extensively worked in the wax model with voluminous, cascading locks containing individually rendered strands of hair. Every lock is defined and no area of the hair or beard has been left unworked. The eyes, teeth and (both) ears are precisely modelled. The torso is sensitively treated in the wax and the ribcage is richly accentuated post-casting. The jugular has been demarcated but no other veining has been added. The loincloth is sharply modelled, and the folds are densely packed and logically arranged. Its surface is polished but not engraved. The finger- and toenails are finely squared off. Two small holes at the back of the head suggest the figure was formerly presented with a halo and a Crown of Thorns. The outstretched arms are marginally higher than the top of the head.

The Madrid and ex-Hart bronzes both have a Spanish provenance and are comparable to each other in terms of composition and degree of working post-casting, though the former is a finer cast by far. Both are gilded (though the ex-Hart bronze may have been re-gilt) and display a great vibrancy in the modelling of the hair, moustaches and beards - though it should be noted that the hair to the back of each of their heads is almost entirely unworked. The hair to the (top) back of the head on the ex-Hart bronze is more finely modelled - and comparable to the corresponding area on the present cast - than on the Madrid bronze, which is more crudely rendered. Both bronzes are cast without a proper left ear. Both sets of eyes are cursorily delineated, and the ex-Hart bronze displays crudely incised eyebrows, which are absent on the Madrid bronze. Also absent from the latter - but present on the former - are the teeth, which are individually rendered. The Madrid bronze displays a great sensitivity in the modelling of the veins in the arms as well as that of the ribcage (which is closely comparable to that of the present bronze), but which is almost entirely absent from the ex-Hart Christ. The loincloths display minor differences in the precise arrangement of folds, though both have been engraved with identical repeating parallel lines. In contrast to the ex-Hart bronze, the feet of the Madrid bronze are sensitively rendered with veining and beautifully finished squared toes and knuckles. Both bronzes lack holes at the back of their heads for either a halo or a Crown of Thorns. The outstretched arms are at a more vertical angle than on the present bronze and therefore much higher than the head - hence the larger overall dimensions.

The Palazzo Venezia bronze was unknown before it entered the collection in 1919, and although it is attributed to Susini,¹¹ it has an altogether different feel when compared to the abovementioned casts: it has a thin dark brown patina and appears significantly more waxy in the modelling of the hair and beard and lacks the finely modelled details seen on the other bronzes. Unlike the above mentioned, the eyes are left blank. The locks of hair to the back of the head are greatly simplified and arranged into larger groups rather than individual locks. As with the ex-Hart bronze, the torso is very simply modelled and lacking the finer detailing of the ribcage. Like the Madrid and ex-Hart bronzes, this cast has after-working to the loincloth, though in this instance it is, unusually, punched as opposed to engraved. Two small holes at the back of the head suggest the figure was formerly presented with a halo and Crown of Thorns. As with the Madrid and ex-Hart figures, the outstretched arms are significantly higher than the head. This bronze was examined from life but not physically handled. On qualitative grounds it appears to have been cast either in Giambologna's workshop or in that of Antonio Susini - possibly under Susini's supervision - yet the available evidence is insufficient to attribute it confidently to Susini's own hand.

The ex-Vezzosi-Winter cast is compositionally close to the present cast but the softness of the detailing throughout, the lack of sharpness in the hair, beard, eyes, ribcage, loincloth and

¹¹ Canatta, *op.cit.*, no.99, pp.93-94, pl.99

feet, as well as the thin, flat, patination, suggests a later dating and possibly even a facture outside of the Giambologna/ Susini workshop - a thought that was evidently shared by Sotheby's when they catalogued the work in 2015 simply as 'Florentine, 17th century,' despite its publication history.¹²

In conclusion, the present bronze stands out for being the finest and most jewel-like cast by far, while the Madrid and, to a lesser extent, the ex-Hart bronzes, are more freely modelled though much less finely finished post-casting. The Palazzo Venezia bronze lacks the refinement of these three and the Vezzosi/Winter bronze cannot be part of this qualitative discussion.

DIPLOMATIC GIFTS BETWEEN FLORENCE AND SPAIN

To begin a discussion on the facture of these bronzes and their authorship it is important to first take into consideration a crucial, documented, gift from the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando I de' Medici, to the Countess of Lemos, Doña Catalina de Sandoval y Rojas, sister of the Duke of Lerma in 1603¹³ - an event that is extensively discussed in an important article on this subject by Rosario Coppel (*op.cit.*, pp.201-214).

The Countess of Lemos was the principal lady in waiting to the Spanish queen, and both she and her brother, the Duke of Lerma, were influential members of the Spanish court. As a result, to curry favour, the Grand Duke ordered a gilded crucifix and four figures of the evangelists¹⁴ designed by Giambologna to be cast and sent to the Countess, among other gifts, which Antonio Susini was paid for on 13 January 1603.¹⁵ Today, it is generally accepted that this very *Living Christ* is the one in the Convent of the Descalzas Reales, Madrid (fig.4), though a doubt emerged in 2004 with the discovery of the ex-Hart bronze,¹⁶ which also has a Spanish provenance and is of the same subject, composition, size as the Madrid bronze.¹⁷

¹² See Sotheby's, London, The Winter Collection, 10 December 2015, lot 28

¹³ The Countess of Lemos to whom the gifts were given was the sister of the Duke of Lerma, however, it is important to note that the gifts were not originally intended for her, but for the aunt and mother-in-law, with whom she shared the same first name and surname. Coppel noted that this Countess was the Queen's Chief Chambermaid and that the gifts were appropriate and sent only to establish a good relationship with the Grand Duke (*op.cit.*, p.203)

¹⁴ Two are missing but the other two are today in the Lázaro Galdiano Museum, Madrid.

¹⁵ On 10 April they were sent to Michelangelo Palai for gilding, with a cross and bases in granatiglio wood (a rare hardwood hailing from a Central American plant with a heavy texture and used in cabinetmaking) made by Master Marchionere. In a letter written by the Grand Duke to Cosimo Concini on 31 July, the Grand Duke further specified that the gifts to the Countess included a gilt-bronze corpus figure of the 'still living' Christ and four evangelists of the same material, designed by Giambologna and all on granatiglio bases. On 7 September, the Grand Duke received the news that the Countess 'highly praised the crucifix from Giambologna given to her by Your Highness.' *Ibid*, p.203-4

¹⁶ Sotheby's London 9 July 2004, lot 71

¹⁷ However, the idea that the Madrid bronze is the same statuette given to the Countess of Lemos is plausibly supported by the fact that the Convent of the Descalzas Reales had a longstanding connection with the House of Lemos: both the 6th Countess, Doña Catalina de Zúñiga y Sandoval, and her eldest son, Pedro Fernández Ruis de Castro, 7th Count of Lemos were temporarily buried there. Furthermore, an inventory of possessions belonging to the 6th Countess dating from 28 February 1628 (20 days after her death), mentions 'una cruz de hevano leonado con su peana y un christo grande de bronce dorado'. While the description of the Christ is vague, that of the cross is unusually specific and suggests an ebony (or hardwood) cross on a base with some sort of texture, possibly like the abovementioned granatiglio wood cross that supported Giambologna's *Living Christ*. One of Doña Catalina's heirs was her youngest son, Francisco, the 8th Count of Lemos and it is likely that he inherited this Christ on the cross and that he, in turn, bequeathed it to his daughter María de Castro y Gatinara who later became a nun in the Convent of the Descalzas Reales likely ceding it to the Convent upon her admission. Of course this is a hypothesis, but not implausible given the family connection, the high quality of the work and the importance of the original gift to the Countess.

Another documented event that adds further weight to these two gilded *Living Christs* being treasured works by Antonio Susini following Giambologna's model, is the 1612 gift of a crucifix from the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Maria Magdalena of Austria (wife of Cosimo II de' Medici), to her niece, Infanta Doña Ana (daughter of Philip III and Margaret of Austria), on the occasion of the Infanta's marriage to King Louis XIII of France. Coppel proposed¹⁸ that, although no direct reference to the artist is made in any of the documentation, only an important and high-quality crucifix by the Grand Duke's most trusted artist - Giambologna - could have been used as a gift to mark such an important occasion, especially given the enthusiastic reception of the other *Living Christ* that was gifted nine years earlier, in 1603.¹⁹

Taking these two events into consideration, there can be little doubt that the model for these compositions was created by Giambologna at some point in the 1590s and that Antonio Susini cast and finished at least one of these two bronzes in 1603, two facts that are also corroborated by stylistic comparison to other securely documented works by both artists. Given this, there can be no doubt that, likewise, Giambologna's model was used to cast the present bronze, and that on account of its superior quality it was cast by Susini either around the same time that the model was created or in the first decade of the 1600s, with the differences in quality between the latter and the two Spanish bronzes being put down to the artists operating at a higher level for their discerning Florentine clientele.

THE RARITY OF THE MODEL

As previously discussed, once we exclude the Palazzo Venezia and ex-Vezzosi-Winter casts from the discussion on authorship, we are left with three known casts that, given their quality and documentary evidence, must have been made by Antonio Susini after Giambologna's model.

Of the two works with Spanish provenances, the Madrid bronze is most likely the documented 1603 Susini cast, and the other, at the very least, was probably cast at around the same time, from the same mould and most likely by Susini despite some of its weaknesses, hence why the 2026 Christie's sale tentatively attributed the cast to Susini. Furthermore, on account of its extremely high quality and closeness (and superiority) to some of Susini's finest works (a point that was also confirmed by Dr Dimitrios Zikos) - the present cast must have also been cast by Susini.

A further document that attests to the rarity and high quality of (one version of) the *Living Christ* and that might indicate a possible dating for the present cast is a letter dated 27 July 1609 from Ferdinando I de' Medici's son, Cosimo II, to Vincenzo Gonzaga in which the former states:

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.207-8

¹⁹ It is known that, subsequently, the Infanta gave her bronze to the Duke of Lerma - who, importantly, was very familiar with the model since his sister, the Countess of Lemos, was the original recipient of Ferdinando's gift - and it is probably this same bronze that is mentioned in a 1676 inventory of possessions of Doña Felice Enríquez de Cabrera, Duchess of Lerma described as 'Mas una hechura de escultura de nuestro señor crucificado vivo en la cruz de algo mas de media vara de alto con una peana de nogal labrada de peñasco' (a sculpture of our Lord crucified alive on the cross, a little over half a vara high, with a walnut base carved from rock), cited in *ibid.*, p.209; a Spanish vara is a unit of length measuring approximately 83.6 cm. While the 'little over half a vara' reference equates to a little over 44cm, we must assume that this figure was an approximation not very far from the actual height of both the Madrid and ex-Hart bronzes of approximately 38.3 cm. Further references to this bronze cease thereafter, but given its extreme closeness to the Madrid cast, the dating of the gift and its original importance, it is very possible that this is the ex-Hart bronze.

'... and remembering the desire shown by Your Highness to have a crucifix of the kind made by Giovanni Bologna, which depicts our Saviour alive on the cross, I am sending you one made of silver.... I earnestly beg Your Highness, for the great appreciation and consideration that my father had for this model of crucifix, and which I also have, to use it for yourself and not to allow anyone to make a copy of it...' ²⁰

This passage tells us a number of things: of the four models of the *Living Christ*, two casts of one of them belonged to Ferdinando and Cosimo. It also tells us that both Grand Dukes held the model in such esteem that they controlled the number of casts that could be made of it. Therefore, given that multiple casts of models 1, 2 and 4 are known it is perfectly possible that Cosimo was referring to the third model.

Naturally, the absence of any specific detail means that we cannot know for sure which of the four models Cosimo was referring to but, on this point, Coppel published the varying opinions of Utz and Torriti,²¹ the former of whom identified a rare silver Christ of this subject following the Santissima Annunziata model (and also of the bronze in fig.1, both of which are the right-handed model type 1s) in a private collection in Siena as being the 1609 silver cast. However, the latter discarded this idea on account of its mediocre quality and on the grounds that it was too soon after Giambologna's death (in 1608) for the workshop to start producing variants of such a rare and prized model.

Instead, Coppel proposed an alternate theory (not knowing of the existence of the present bronze) that the silver statuette might have been based on same model as the Lemos bronze since the latter was so rare it was only known in two casts, as per Ferdinando's wishes. She surmised that the Grand Duke owned one version and commissioned another for the Countess of Lemos in 1603 and when, in 1612, the Grand Duchess gave a *Living Christ* as a wedding gift to the Infanta, she gave Ferdinando's own bronze which would also explain why no other cast of this model is known in the Medici collections. However, this cannot be accurate as Cosimo clearly stated in 1609 that he also owned a cast: *che lo tengo anch'io*.²²

Thus, while Coppel's proposal of the Grand Duchess gifting an already-existing bronze by Giambologna is likely, a more plausible alternative could be that Ferdinando owned one cast, arguably the finest of all - which could be the present bronze - and that he commissioned the Lemos bronze based on its model. At a later point - but before 1609 - Cosimo commissioned another cast for himself and, when Grand Duchess made her gift to the Infanta in 1612, she gifted either Ferdinando's or Cosimo's cast. This would explain why no reference to a commission from Giambologna for the extra cast is known even though the wedding gift to the Infanta was so precisely documented. If one is to follow this theory, an even stronger likelihood is that Ferdinando's cast and the one he commissioned for the Countess were made at more-or-less the same time, from the same mould and by Susini - hence the comparable

²⁰ 'et essendomi in questo punto ricordato del desiderio che mi mostrò già vostra altezza di havere un crocifisso di quei che da mano del già Giovanni Bologna ci rappresentano in croce il nostro Salvatore semivivo gnene mando uno d'argento et spero che, per la pietosa devotione dell'immagine et per essere fabbricato da mano così rara, ella habbia ad haverlo caro che fuori di queste considerazioni il dono è troppo piccolo, ma servirà vostra altezza per una caparra del mio dispostissimo animo di corrisponderle abbondantissimamente nell'amore et nel desiderio... Prego strettissimamente vostra altezza per il gran pregio et riguardo che teneva mio padre questo modello di crocifisso et in che lo tengo anch'io a volersene servire persé et a non lasciare anche cavare copia da nessuno che me ne farà piacere accettissimo et sarà anche conforme all'amorevole intentione ch'ella me ne dette...'. Mantua State Archives, AG, b. 1093, II, f. 275, published, among others by A.Luzio, *La Galleria dei Gonzaga venduta all'Inghilterra*, Milan, 1913, p.267; R.Piccinelli, *Le Collezioni Gonzaga. Il carteggio tra Firenze e Mantova (1554-1626)*, Milan, 2000, pp.245-246, no.563.

²¹ cited in Coppel, *op.cit.*, p.208

²² See footnote 20.

composition and quality - and that these were the two bronzes that travelled to Spain. Then, at some point between 1603-1609 Cosimo commissioned a further cast to his specification - which could be the present version - and this might explain why it is of a different quality and feel to the other two. How it may have left the Medici collections is open to question, though such an occurrence was not without precedent.

COMPARISONS TO SUSINI'S COMPOSITIONS

That this bronze is, therefore, an autograph work by Antonio Susini has been amply demonstrated by its compositional closeness - and superior quality - to the Madrid and ex-Hart bronzes. However, such comparisons can also be drawn from other works cast by him (based on Giambologna's models) that are either signed or documented or, accepted as being by him on the basis of their high quality.

Of the securely documented works, perhaps the most relevant is the bronze *Risen Christ*, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which was conceived to adorn a tabernacle on the high altar of the Church of San Lorenzo, Galluzzo (fig.8).²³ The church account books specify that payments were made between the months of April and July 1596 to both Giambologna and Susini for the completion of this bronze, along with four evangelists and six angels that accompanied it. As can be seen from fig.8a, the face of the present bronze closely follows the facial type, hair, beard and expression of the former. While the different nature of the two objects - one conceived to be viewed from a distance on an altar, the other intended to be handled for private devotion - necessarily implies differences in execution and finish, the two faces appear remarkably close in both typology and degree of refinement.

Similar points can be drawn from the facial type of the female attendant figure from the *Farnese Bull* in the Galleria Colonna, Rome (fig.9), which is also documented as having been invented by Susini at Giambologna's suggestion in 1588 and which is one of five documented casts, three of which are signed 'ANT.II SUSINI FLOR.I OPUS A.D.MDCXVI'. Two other bronzes in the same collection are also documented as being by Susini and are mentioned in a 1609 inventory as 'di mano del Susini',²⁴ one, in particular, a *Nessus and Deianira* (fig.10), offers some important points of comparison. Consider, for example, the similar treatment of Nessus' eyes and the rich curling locks of his hair and beard; likewise, the modelling and finishing of the back of Deianira's hair and the symmetrical way it parts at the crown of the head and descends into rich luxuriant curls are all details that are equally visible on the present bronze.

Important comparisons can also be made with works that are undocumented and unsigned but, nevertheless, accepted as being autograph Susinis, to name a few: the relief of *Christ on the Road to Calvary* (1600-1608) in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (fig.10); the spectacular gilt-bronze *Cristo Morto* in the Hill collection, New York (fig.12) which displays the same fastidious rendering of the locks and individual stands of hair as well as the lenticularly modelled beard; and two recently discovered bronzes with French Royal provenances dating back to 1689 of the *Rape of the Sabines* and *Fortuna* that were offered for sale at Sotheby's, Paris (11 December 2019, lots 14 and 15, respectively; figs.13-14) and where, again, the facial types, beards, moustaches, hair and feet are all qualitatively comparable. That these two bronzes were tentatively catalogued by Sotheby's as *attributed to Susini* reflects an understandably cautious approach to attribution. However, their immediately evident quality, as well as the high sale prices they achieved,²⁵ confirm the direct involvement of Susini in their creation.

²³ See New York, *op.cit.*, p.368, no.134

²⁴ Zikos, *op.cit.*, p.204

²⁵ 4,493,200 Euros and 1,812,500 Euros

CONCLUSION

In a famous letter from 1605 Giambologna described the work of Antonio Susini as 'the most beautiful things one can have from my hands.'²⁶ while these words simultaneously elevated Susini they also reminded their recipient that Giambologna invented many of the models that Susini ultimately remodelled, cast and finished to such perfection. But far from diminishing the value of his authorship, this partnership highlighted the exceptional technical and artistic standards achieved in Giambologna's workshop, where the master's creative vision was realised through the refined skill of his most accomplished assistant.

Giambologna was arguably the most celebrated Mannerist sculptor in Europe, and his works were avidly sought by the most discerning collectors from across the continent. His workshop, accordingly, attracted a generation of ambitious young sculptors eager to learn from the master. From them, Antonio Susini distinguished himself as Giambologna's most trusted collaborator and the most accomplished bronze caster and finisher of the Florentine tradition. His extraordinary technical virtuosity in the creation of small bronzes elevated these objects to an unprecedented level of refinement, transforming them into highly prized works of art in their own right. Within this context, the rediscovered *Living Christ* may be understood as one of the qualitative highpoints of the collaboration between Giambologna and Susini, a work that exemplifies the remarkable artistic and technical synergy achieved within the master's workshop.

²⁶ Cited in S.Lookman, *Scale, Fix, Finish: Antonio Susini and the Art of Technique in Giambologna's Florence*, https://www.biblhertz.it/3724716/lookman_sharifa



Fig.1 Giambologna (the model) and workshop, *Cristo Vivo* (right-handed model), c.1578
Gilt-bronze, 29.5 cm high, private collection



Fig.2 Workshop of Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Cristo Vivo* (left-handed model), c.1600 Gilt-bronze, 24 cm high (head to toe), private collection (sold Christie's, London, 12 December 2002, lot 140)

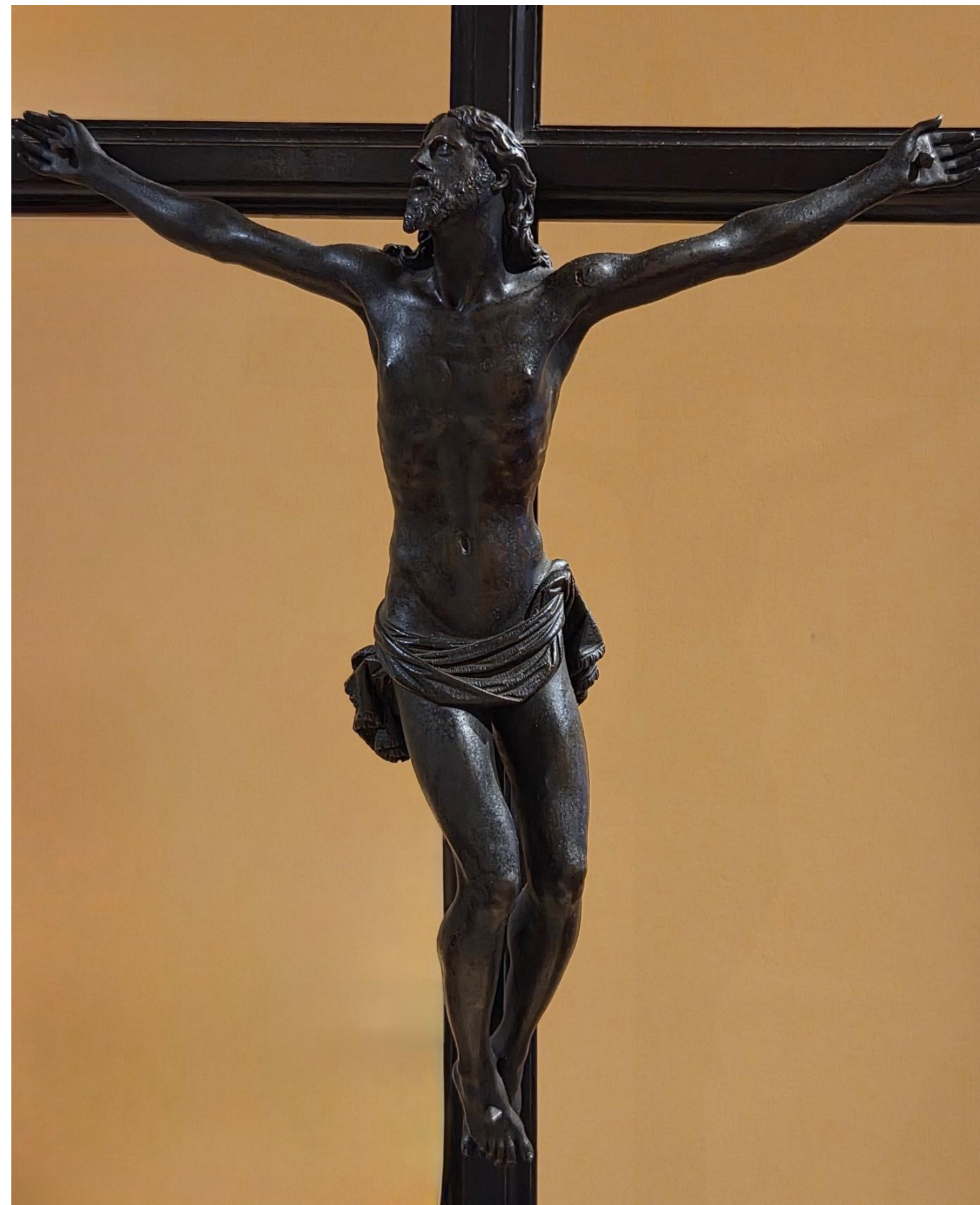


Fig.3 Attributed to Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Cristo Vivo*, after 1608 Bronze, 28.2 cm, the Smith College of Art, Northampton Massachusetts



Fig.4 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Cristo Vivo* (left-arching model), c.1603
Gilt bronze, 35.2 cm (head to toe), Convento of the Descalzas Reales, Madrid



Fig.5 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Cristo Vivo* (left-arching model), c.1603
Gilt bronze, 35.2 cm (head to toe), formerly in the Hart collection, Nashville



Fig.6 Workshop of Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Cristo Vivo* (left-arching model), late 16th or early 17th century
Bronze, 35.2 cm approx. (head to toe), Palazzo Venezia, Rome



Fig.7 After Antonio Susini and Giambologna, *Cristo Vivo* (left-arching model), 17th century (?)
Bronze, 35.2 cm (head to toe), formerly Massimo Vezzosi and John Winter collections



Fig.8 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Risen Christ*, 1596
Bronze, 29.8 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

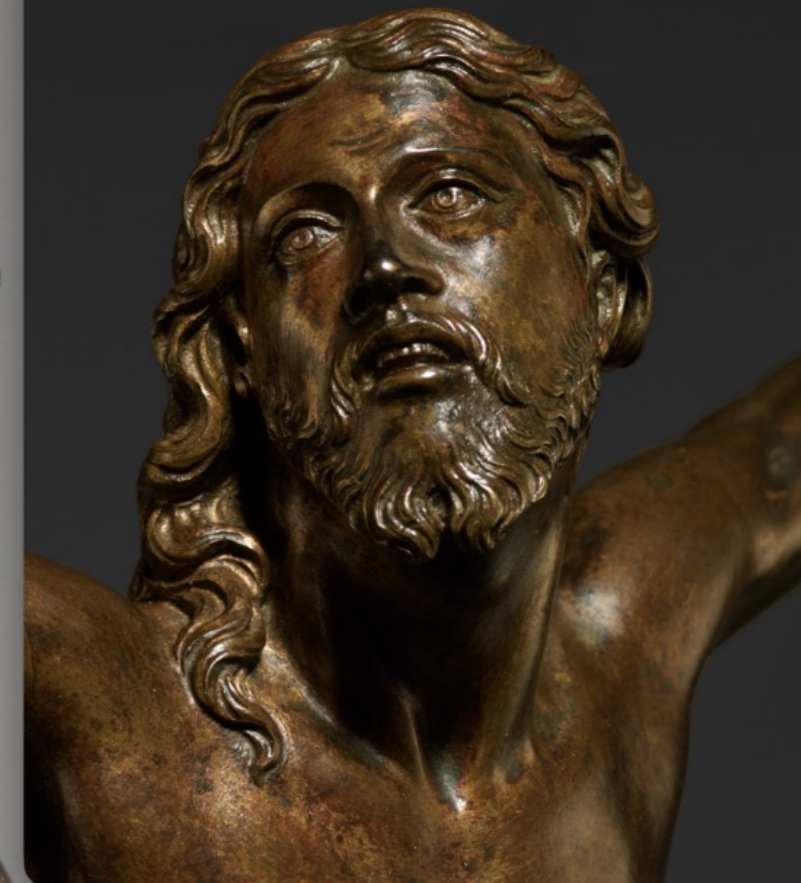


Fig.8a detailed comparison

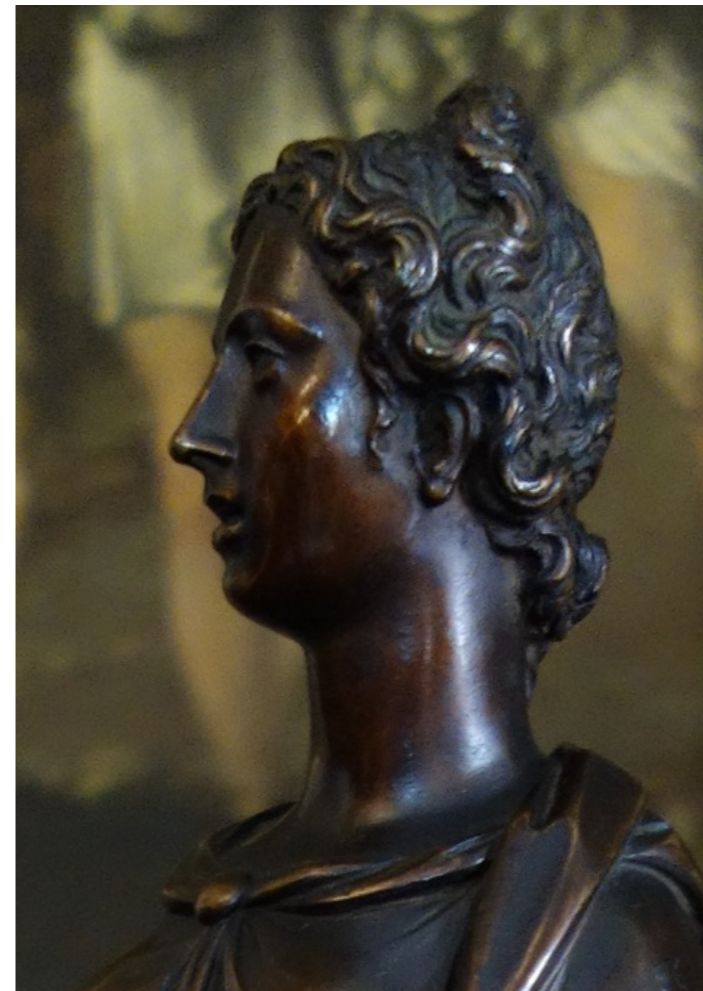


Fig.9 Antonio Susini, *Farnese Bull*, 1616 (detail)
Bronze, 47.5 cm high Galleria Colonna, Rome,



Fig.11 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Christ on the Road to Calvary*, 1600-1608
Bronze, 72.5 x 49.5 cm, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich



Fig.10 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Nessus and Deianira*, c.1600 (detail)
Bronze, 40.8 cm high Galleria Colonna, Rome



Fig.12 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Dead Christ*, 1590-1615
Gilt-bronze, 27 cm. (head to toe), J.Tomilson Hill collection, New York



Fig.13 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Rape of the Sabines*, c.1600 (detail)
Bronze, 59.5 cm., sold Sotheby's Paris, The Ribes Collection, 11 December 2019, lot 14



Fig.14 Antonio Susini (the cast), Giambologna (the model), *Fortuna*, c.1600 (detail)
Bronze, 47.3 cm., sold Sotheby's Paris, The Ribes Collection, 11 December 2019, lot 14



Fig.13a (as above)

