

## INTERIM REPORT BY DR. DAVIDE GAMBINO

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In the three years (from April 2017 to March 2020) I have been working with a fellowship from the Friends of the Bargello Inc. (FoB) generously granted by Mr. J. Tomilson Hill my aim has been twofold. On the one hand I have identified and partially transcribed all those inventories dating from the 15th to the 19th centuries and preserved in Florentine archives (mainly the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, the State Archive) that contain descriptions of works that eventually ended up in the collections of the Museo Nazionale del Bargello which was founded in 1865. On the other I have assisted chiefly Dr. Dimitrios Zikos, and all other members of the cataloguing project jointly financed by the Italian Ministry of Education, University, and Research (MIUR) and the FoB in ascertaining the history of those objects they have been assigned to catalogue in these inventories by establishing a chain of references going back to the oldest mention of every object. I limit myself here for the sake of brevity to the research undertaken for the bronzes' catalogue but the same pattern has been applied for all other works once owned by the Medicis and that are part of the new Bargello printed and digital catalogue project.

The oldest inventory of the Bargello dates from 1879 and contain references to the preceding inventory of the Uffizi (1825). The latter contains references to an older inventory so that it is possible to trace most bronzes through the inventories of 1784, 1769, 1753 back to that of 1704. Before 1704 documentation becomes more fragmentary. It is mostly contained in a large group of about 150 ledgers that were used by the Guardaroba, or Wardrobe, of the Medici Grand Dukes of Tuscany, the office responsible for the administration of the unparalleled Medici art collection, which also builds the core of the works preserved in the Bargello. Through internal references in these documents it is possible to go back to the late 15th-early 16th century and establish the history of most bronzes but also to identify a large number of those lost as, for instance, those bronzes that were transferred from the Villa Medici in Rome to the Palazzo Pitti only two months before the French occupation of Florence in 1799 (among which were the Giambologna Venus and a Satyr and the Giambologna Kneeling Venus commissioned by Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici in the 16th century) but were looted by the French revolutionary troops and thus lost for ever to the Florentine collections. The certainty thus acquired that the Kneeling Venus commissioned by Cardinal Ferdinando is lost, made it - on the contrary - possible to ascertain the history of the signed Kneeling Venus in the Bargello (Inv. Bronzes 62) which can now identified without doubt with the bronze first mentioned in the Tribuna in 1589.

The merits of this systematic reconstruction of archival references become immediately obvious as I could establish that as a general rule a nucleus of bronzes belonging to a certain member of the Medici family followed the same itinerary within the Florentine collections: an observation that made it possible to identify generically described works thanks to their proximity (in the archival records) to others that are unmistakably identifiable. Such a nucleus of bronzes is the one with a provenance from Urbino. Made for Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, these bronzes entered the Medici collections in 1631 when they were brought to Florence after Vittoria della Rovere, last heir to that family, had married the young Grandduke Ferdinando II. Among these bronzes was the wonderful Hercules with the Club by Giambologna (Inv. Bronzes 362) - until now considered a work commissioned by the Medici.

Many more similar cases could be mentioned but I would like to limit myself to Giambologna and point at another type of discovery made during the research I have undertaken: The discovery that many bronzes postdate their assumed date of entry into the Medici collections. This is for instance the case with the two small Giambologna bronzes of the the Apollo and the Venus (Inv. Bronzes 61 & 71) which first appear as the property of the Heir Apparent to the throne of Tuscany, the Grand Prince Ferdinando di Cosimo III (1663-1713), one of the most discriminating collectors of the Medici Family.

To mention a last example relating to the domain of bronze statuary, I was partially able to ascertain that a group of small-scale copies after the Antique (Inv. Bronzes 351, 403, 538) long associated with Massimiliano Soldani are indeed works of a lesser-known pupil of his, Giovan Battista Vannetti and were commissioned especially by Grand Duke Peter Leopold II.

My research was not limited only to the Guardaroba documentation; where necessary we had recourse to many archival resources. One particular case of interest, also for its social and historical aspects, is that of Giambologna's Bacchus, commissioned between 1559 and 1561 by the ambitious *homo novus* Lattanzio Cortesi di San Gimignano. The colossal statue, which for almost 150 years stood upon a fountain near the Ponte Vecchio, has been housed in the Museo del Bargello since 2006. Its fascinating history, already partially known, has been expanded by further investigation. By studying notarised documents, property records and his family documents in Cosimo I's archives we have been able to discover more about the fate of this unfortunate businessman. After he had invested nearly all his capital in an advantageous monopoly in the production of iron in Tuscany, he lost it all in the space of two years when the Grand Duke demanded exclusive rights in the venture. It is therefore possible that the commission for the Bacchus was given at a moment between the

height of the Cortese's financial success (1559) and their subsequent crash (1561), which further reduces the time span previously ascribed to the work on stylistic grounds.

After completion of the majority of the works of Medici origin within the first two years of this assignment, I have dedicated this third year to works which entered the museum by other routes; whether by the extinction of religious orders or by state acquisition.

A particularly successful example of this second phase of research has been that of the so-called Madonna Panciatichi, a low relief attributed to Desiderio da Settignano, which the Museum received permanently in 1920. Following a lead given by Francesco Bocchi in *Le Bellezze della città di Firenze* (1591) on the existence of a work similar to the Bacchus in the Baccio Valori collection (a family from whom the last owners of the work descended) it was possible to confirm its presence in Palazzo Valori by studying the family inventories. However, the most interesting discovery was finding amongst Baccio Valori's papers a receipt for the purchase of a number of marble reliefs from the Gaetani family. Originally from Pisa, the Gaetani obtained Florentine citizenship thanks to their military prowess and in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century they lived in a sumptuous palazzo on the Lungarno, near the Ponte di Santa Trinita, where Desiderio da Settignano had had his workshop until 1461. This discovery has given strength to the suggestion of attribution with the addition of a historical clue. In this case too my research extended to property registers, lands registry, notary documents and family archives.

During the course of these three years I have physically consulted approximately 2800 ledgers in the Florentine State archives and provided archival assistance for approximately 500 entries to the 15 members of the cataloguing project.