



MEMORIES OF
TEFAF MAASTRICHT
2020



FRANCESCO RIGHETTI

1749 – 1819

Cardinal Despulg's Three Graces

Rome, late eighteenth century

Patinated and gilt bronze, red porphyry, rosso antico marble

48 x 33 cm

Francesco Righetti

We know of a 1794 list in French and addressed *Aux amateurs de l'Antiquité et des Beaux Arts*, drafted by Francesco Righetti, who introduces himself as a sculptor and bronze caster living in Rome, in Via della Purificazione at Capo le Case. Righetti explains in his list how he has increased the number of models that now includes groups and statues, busts, animals, precious objects of various types, including famous and classic sculptures from Rome, Florence and others capitals, faithfully copied and scaled down to the size of one palm and seven unciae. He also specifies that his prices are in Roman *zecchini*. One of the groups mentioned is the *Three Graces* of Villa Borghese, at a price of fifty *zecchini*.¹

To be exact, until the early nineteenth century Villa Borghese was home to two groups known as *The Three Graces*, which are both now in the Louvre. The first – number 14 – was in Room IV, and depicted three embracing nude girls with two draped vases; the second – number 6 – was in Room III, again consisting of three female figures with their arms raised around a column: the latter was known both as *The Three Graces* and *The Nymphs*. Both marble groups are shown in Ennio Quirino Visconti's *Sculture del Palazzo della Villa Borghese detta Pinciana* (Rome, 1796).²

I am unable to recall any bronze reduction of the first Villa Borghese group, that of the three embracing girls, which is very similar to the ancient marble in Siena's Libreria Piccolomini. I know of at least three eighteenth-century bronze versions of the second group, that of three figures with raised arms. The first is by Luigi Valadier, purchased for the King of Sweden by the sculptor Tobias Sergel in 1778 and today in the Royal Palace in Stockholm. That same year, Sergel wrote to the King's chamberlain, Evert Taube, from Rome, saying he had bought some Valadier bronzes and a porphyry bowl to complete *The Three Graces* group.³ Two other versions, unsigned but which I have good reason to believe by Francesco Righetti, are in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte in Naples, twenty years later than Valadier's.⁴ Another reduction, larger than those mentioned so far (82 cm in height) is in the Prado but it seems to be of poorer quality and perhaps datable to the mid-nineteenth century.⁵ None of these works are signed but we can be sure that the two Capodimonte *Graces* castings are by Righetti and they are identical to the bronze we are presenting here.

¹ The 1794 list has been known for many years and published several times: the first to make it known was Hugh Honour.

² E. Q. Visconti himself, in his *Dizionario...di universale erudizione archeologica*, Rome, 1867, on the entry *Grazie* (p. 82) wrote: "confused in the past with the Graces of the Year and of the Seasons, and also with Nymphs they are ornaments adequates of fountains and baths".

³ A. González-Palacios, *Luigi Valadier*, New York, The Frick Collection, 2018, p. 370; A. González-Palacios, *I Valadier*, Milan, 2019, fig. VIII. 3, p. 147.

⁴ One of the groups I illustrated in "Ristudiando i Righetti" in *Il Gusto dei Principi*, Milan, 1993, fig. 537. The second Naples group is set on a table. The figures of the Graces measure 33 cm in height. I am grateful to Linda Martino for this information.

⁵ R. Coppel Aréizaga, *Museo del Prado. Catálogo de la escultura de época moderna*, Madrid, 1998, cat. 51, p. 148. We should bear in mind that the bronze does not come from the Spanish royal collections but was gifted by Ramon Errazu in 1904.

The Three Graces Group

The group observed here rests on a slab with three concave sides and six legs shaped as winged monopod heads in gilt bronze; on the base there are four web-footed figures in the same material. The patinated bronze group is raised on a base with beaded and tortile registers repeated at the top to accommodate a tazza of 4 cm in height, made in imperial red porphyry. The supports below are a homage to a Valadier model found on a clock in coloured marble and gilt bronze whose present location is unknown.⁶ In reality the entire composition is inspired by the group that Luigi Valadier had composed in 1778 for Gustav III of Sweden and a porphyry tazza of a similar shape to the Valadier is seen in the work we are observing. The most evident difference in the two works is the solution for the base: Valadier used plain Assuan granite that enhances the verticality of the composition, while here Righetti expands the base and enriches it with substantial applications consisting of three geese, vaguely inspired by two bronzes in the Palazzo dei Conservatori's Sala delle Oche. This peculiar bird appears in other works signed by Francesco and Luigi Righetti, dated 1803–4, now in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte. I refer to the two groups that I have studied elsewhere, featuring figures from antiquity in patinated bronze on marble bases, each with two geese.⁷

Francesco Righetti was a pupil of Luigi Valadier and was very successful in bronze casting. He achieved great fame above all for his collaboration with Antonio Canova, casting the figure of *Napoleon* now on display in Brera, as well as the royal equestrian monuments installed in Largo di Palazzo in Naples. As noted at the beginning of this essay, in 1794 Francesco Righetti had a remarkable repertoire of reductions of famous sculptures, especially of antiquity. Unlike Valadier, he almost always signed and dated his ornate works, first alone, afterwards with his son Luigi (born in 1780, who joined his father as a caster for the Camera Apostolica in 1805). At least since 1803, father and son both signed the marble and bronze groups now in Capodimonte, as mentioned above.

Cardinal Despuig

Antoni Despuig i Dameto, was born in Palma de Mallorca on 31 March 1745: his father was the third Count of Montenegro and Montoro, while his mother was a member of the family of the Marquises of Bellpuig. His career in the ecclesiastical hierarchy was in parallel with that of the arts and had it not been for the difficult political circumstances of his times, especially towards the end of the century, it would have been totally triumphal. In 1782 he became a member of Madrid's Real Academia de San Fernando, and from 1783 to 1785 he was rector of the University of Mallorca. Also in 1785 he was *Auditore di Rota* for Spain at the time of Caterina Tomás' beatification. The following year he was elected member of the Accademia di San Luca, in Rome and he later became Director of the Accademia de Sevilla. From 1789 to 1791 he is

⁶ A. González-Palacios, *Luigi Valadier*, cit. p. 243; A. González-Palacios, *I Valadier*, cit. p. 311.

⁷ A. González-Palacios, *Il Tempio del Gusto*, Milan, 1984, fig. 271–4.

documented as having initiated excavations near the town of Ariccia (near Rome), where he found important Roman sculptures that he displayed in his Rome residence of Palazzo Nuñez (today Torlonia), in Via Bocca di Leone.

He must have returned to his homeland in 1791 when he was appointed Bishop of Orihuela. In 1794 he became Archbishop of Valencia where he found a very complex situation which indirectly caused his rapid move to the Archbishopric of Seville. Around 1796–7 he returned to Rome and not long afterwards he was given the *Toison d'or* and at the same time the King of Spain Charles III gave him the Order of Holy Sacred Conception of the Virgin. In 1799 he was appointed Patriarch of Antioch *in partibus*. With the French invasion, the situation in Rome became critical and culminated in the exile of Pius VI. Despuig, whose family was very wealthy, financially supported the Pope and in 1799 paid for his funeral in Valence, in France. He attended the Conclave of Venice as Ambassador of Spain, and in 1803, Pius VII gave him a cardinalship and the titular church of San Callisto.

Later he became Archpriest of Santa Maria Maggiore and held other important appointments including that of Vicar of Rome. From 1804 to 1807 he was in Mallorca, supervising the installation of his collections in the museum with the help of Italian artisans. Returning to Rome, he remained in captivity with the Pope in the Quirinal Palace and was then deported with the Pontiff to Paris, where he isolated himself from the imperial court. Thanks to the intervention of Cardinal Fesch he was able to return to Italy to take the waters at Bagni di Lucca, where he died on 2 May 1813.⁸

A recent volume dedicated to the Despuig collections included a lengthy document in Italian, *Inventario general delli effetti che esistono in Mayorca appartenenti all'Eccellentissimo Mons Despuig Patriarca di Antiochia* [General inventory of the personal effects in Majorca of the most Excellent Mons. Despuig, Patriarch of Antioch] (ARM, Arxiu Marqués de la Torre, Cardenal Despuig VI/II), undated but possibly 1802. It is a list of miscellaneous boxed items from crystal to porcelain, paintings, sculptures, furniture, said to come from different places (Madrid, Alicante or Venice but none from Rome). Here we should remember that at the end of the eighteenth century, Monsignor Despuig, not yet a cardinal, was authorized to remove his collection of ancient marbles from Rome but we do not know exactly how and when his furnishings went to Spain.

The contents of the boxes described in the inventory are confusing as sometimes they are grouped together for reasons of safety and stability. This was the case with the work we are observing, *The Three Graces*. The final part of the document under the general title of *Nota del contenuto delle appresso dieci casse da Alicante* [Contents of the ten cases following from Alicante] indicated box number 9 as containing

⁸ G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica...*, vol. XIX, Venice, 1843, pp. 258–59; A. Pasqualini, “Interessi eruditi e collezionismo epigrafico del Cardinal Antonio Despuig y Dameto” in *Iluminismo e Ilustración. Le antichità e i loro protagonisti in Spagna e in Italia nel XVIII secolo*, Rome, 2003, pp. 295–309; M. Moltesen, “Cardinal Despuig’s excavations at Vallericcia”, *ivi*, pp. 243–54.

various objects including “the pedestal of a red porphyry bowl supported by three Venuses⁹ called the ‘beautiful buttocks’; a tazza with a porphyry pedestal decorated with metal and three geese also in metal”. In box number 10, amidst other objects, there is “a red porphyry tazza that must fit over the pedestal of the Three Venuses”. It is not too difficult to conclude that this is our group even if the list writer was hardly a genius of archaeological terminology: the *Three Graces* are called the “Venuses of the beautiful buttocks” in reference to the famous Farnese prototype *Venus of the beautiful buttocks* or in more erudite terms the *Callipygian Venus*, a marble piece transported to Naples at the end of the eighteenth century, with all the Farnese antiquities, at the request of the owner, Ferdinand IV, which is still in Naples Archaeological Museum.

The list of objects that arrived from Alicante includes other items, illustrating works that belonged to Despuig, some of which we can presume to be by Francesco Righetti, although this is not specified in the document. We refer to the figure of “a bronze gladiator with an inlaid marble pedestal, and green porphyry bases with metal surround” (in box number 3), and the “bronze statuette called Hercules, with a pedestal in various types of stone with metal decoration”. Both works reappeared in an auction of the assets of one of the Cardinal’s heirs: the Hercules Farnese is signed *F. Righetti F. Romae 1789* and has a marble and gilt copper base in the same fashion as that supporting the unsigned Borghese Gladiator, auctioned at the same time.¹⁰

Alvar González-Palacios

⁹ M. Carbonell i Buades, *El cardenal Despuig: col·leccionisme, grand tour i cultura il·lustrada*, Consell de Mallorca, 2013, 239, doc. 6, pp. 167–71, and specifically 9–10 on p. 171. The volume is of interest both for the figure of the Cardinal and the importance of his collections, now scattered around a number of leading museums, like the Ny Carlsberg in Copenhagen. The many documents collected by the author and the many images are also of particular interest.

¹⁰ *Predio Morell. La Nobleza y la Aristocracia en Mallorca. Colección de J.M. Truyols Rovira*, Pierre Bergé & Associés, Mallorca 3–4 July 2016. The Farnese Hercules was lot 26, the bronze itself measures 37 cm in height, the base 62.5 cm high. The actual bronze of the Borghese Gladiator (lot 57) measures 28 cm in height; the base measures 19 x 26.5 x 16.5 cm.



ATTRIBUTED TO FRANCESCO ANTONIO FRANZONI
Carrara 1734 – Roma 1818

An extremely rare *giallo tigrato* group
“Giallo tigrato” marble
19.5 x 27.5 x 8 cm

The group examined here depicts a panther suckling one cub while another licks her muzzle. It is made in one of the rarest types of coloured marbles used in Rome, known as *giallo tigrato*. The sculpture is not large (19.5 x 26.5 x 5.8 cm) but vaunts significant technical skill and includes a base slab in the same material. *Giallo tigrato* is a limestone with various intrusions that must be carved with care. The extreme rarity of the material and the challenges posed when working with it explain the intense interest aroused by its unusual presence on the art market. It is found so infrequently in European and American collections that not even the *Sala degli Animali* in the Vatican has any work in this stone. Only the nearby *Galleria dei Candelabri* has a *giallo tigrato* tazza, donated by Pius IX, but even this is made in the paler, less exciting type of this marble. The great expert and connoisseur Raniero Gnoli writes that blocks in this material are always in small dimensions.

A few years ago I edited the official *Sala degli Animali* animals catalogue.¹¹ It was Pius VI (Braschi, 1775–99) who decided to dedicate a section of the Vatican Museums to ancient sculptures of beasts, following an idea of his predecessor, Clement XIV, the first pope to purchase ancient marbles depicting animals, starting a unique tradition in the history of collecting and taste in Europe. An outright trend took hold and this particular zoological passion was admirably expressed in the Vatican Rooms, which displayed the works of young Orpheus, an artist able to conjure up and convey the soul of ancient quarry sculptures. I am talking about Francesco Antonio Franzoni (1734–1818), perhaps the greatest animalier ever, the most expert at breathing life into the choices of the last pope of the eighteenth century.

Franzoni lived a long life and continued to produce his sculptures with the same imagination. The fashion for sculptures and paintings representing all kinds of animals continued into the start of the new century. Wenzel Peter (1745–1829) was Franzoni's counterpart with a paintbrush and both lived several years of the nineteenth century when they continued their production. Under the new popes, the passion for coloured marble reached its peak and the discovery of some hitherto unknown types enriched collections.

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The first records concerning *giallo tigrato* dates back to 1824, when Francesco Capranesi, owner of an estate in Sabina, near Montecalvo, started an excavation that brought to light several marble fragments in that extremely rare stone. Raniero Gnoli describes “a white background with a faint yellowish tinge, showing distinct spots of a slightly more intense yellow contoured in black and arranged in a way reminiscent of a leopard's pelt”.¹² Here we are informed that this marble was called *giallo tigrato* by Roman stonemasons because of its “bright shades, the evenness of the marking and the possibility of obtaining the type of polishing required”. Gnoli considers the stone with that curious name quite beautiful and in this case its beauty is surpassed by its rarity. Indeed, two great nineteenth-century scholars, Faustino Corsi

¹¹ A. González-Palacios, *Il Serraglio di Pietra. La Sala degli Animali in Vaticano*, Edizione Musei Vaticani, 2013, with a foreword by A. Paolucci.

¹² R. Gnoli, *Marmora romana*, 3rd ed., Milan, 2018, pp. 106, 248–9, fig. 260, 295.

and Francesco Belli¹³ confirm what is no secret: Roman churches have recycled marble fragments of all kinds from excavations, but there are only four small slabs of *giallo tigrato* – two in Sant’Andrea della Valle (Rucellai Chapel) – and a few other inserts in the tomb of Cardinal Toledo in Santa Maria Maggiore. The first of these two authors wrote that *giallo tigrato* was the same as so-called *Corinth stone* but that is now considered incorrect.

In the two centuries since the discovery of the stone, it has not been possible to indicate the quarry of origin or objects whose workmanship precedes the nineteenth century. In 1842 Francesco Belli mentioned that Capranesi, Sibilio and Raffaelli had beautiful objects made with this stone.

As already mentioned, items in *giallo tigrato* date from the second quarter of the nineteenth century and include the tazza given to Pius IX, today in the Galleria dei Candelabri.¹⁴ It is worth mentioning the few pieces that appear in the inventories of Giacomo Raffaelli and Francesco Sibilio, the two craftsmans and entrepreneurs mentioned by Francesco Belli. The goods listed at the time of Giacomo Raffaelli’s death in 1836 include: “a square and round *giallo tigrato* tazza, with swans, for a diameter of ten and a half unciae, and a similar base of the same”.¹⁵ The prototype was that of the *rosso antico* tazza in the Gabinetto delle Maschere, of the Pio Clementino Museum, restored by Francesco Franzoni in 1787.¹⁶ The tazza is square with a round cavity that fits the apparently strange Raffaelli’s inventory description.¹⁷

The assessment of Francesco Sibilio’s estate was entrusted to the Roman stonemason Giuseppe Leonardi, in 1859, who mentions “a small Corinth marble tiger on a green base”. As we say above, at that time Faustino Corsi erroneously believed that *giallo tigrato* and Corinth marble were one and the same.¹⁸

Before continuing, on the subject of tigers and panthers, it is worth mentioning that the fad for these felines began with the famous piece sculpted by Franzoni for the Vatican collections, starting from a fragment of ancient alabaster that the artist not only completed but covered with dots inlaid in another marble, a work of prodigious expertise that achieves almost incredible effects.¹⁹ The discovery of *giallo*

¹³ F. Corsi, *Delle pietre antiche*, Roma, 3rd ed., Rome, 1845, p. 105; F. Belli, *Catalogo della collezione di pietre usate dagli antichi per costruire ed adornare le loro fabbriche ora posseduta dal Conte Stefano Karolyi*, Rome, 1842, p. 39.

¹⁴ G. Spinola, *Il Museo Pio Clementino*, III, Vatican City, 2004, n°. 70, pp. 165–6, specifies some facts about the place and the stone: “*giallo tigrato* cup with square brim made from pillar fragments found in 1824 by Guattani during excavations at Villa dei Bruttii Praesentes, in Monte Calvo, on the estate of Francesco Capranesi at Osteria dell’Osa, along the Sabine section of the Via Salaria (km 55). The yellow streaked breccia was recently identified as a particular limestone with ferrous, manganese and microfauna intrusions ... One of these *giallo tigrato* blocks was then carved ... and the vase made from it was given to Pius IX.” In this case, the streaking is very pale and this is also seen in two other similar cups auctioned in London by Phillip’s of 101 New Bond Street, on 4 December 1989. These items prove Francesco Belli’s theory, specified on p. 39 of his *Catalogo*, stating that *giallo tigrato* can be of light or dark type.

¹⁵ R. Valeriani, “L’inventario del 1836 di Giacomo Raffaelli”, in *Antologia di Belle Arti*, 43–7, 1993, p. 80, no. 204.

¹⁶ A. González-Palacios, “Pio VI, Franzoni e il colore delle pietre”, in *Splendor Marmoris, I colori del marmo tra Roma e l’Europa da Paolo III a Napoleone III*, ed. G. Extermann and A. Varela Braga, Rome, 2016, pp. 146–8.

¹⁷ See the two tazzas mentioned in footnote 4.

¹⁸ S. Ciranna, “Francesco Sibilio, un pietraio dell’Ottocento” in *Antologia di Belle Arti*, 67–70, 2004, p. 161.

¹⁹ González-Palacios, *Il Serraglio...* op. cit. (p. 89, cat. 117).

tigrato later made it possible to imitate feline pelts without having to resort to inlay. The whimsical colour feature of the stone successfully evokes the spotted appearance of those animals.

It is now clear that the figures of wild animals made in this particular marble were all made after 1824, and are:

- 1 A seated leopard figure sold on 16 May 2017 in Paris by Christie's (€722,500).
- 2 A similar leopard figure sold at Sotheby's Paris on 6 July 2017 (€991,500).
- 3 A panther, female in this case, with her right leg raised. Formerly in Eguiguren, Buenos Aires.
- 4 A standing panther feeding two cubs, in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan.

None of these sculptures are signed and only the fourth, donated to the Ambrosiana by Count G. E. De Pecis in 1827, is mentioned in an 1830 manuscript as a work by Antonio Moglia. Little is known of this minor sculptor.²⁰ According to Thieme-Becker (1931), Moglia, born on 25 August 1765 in Rome, was awarded a prize by the Accademia di San Luca, in Rome. S. Grandesso tells me that Moglia has been mentioned as one of Bertel Thorvaldsen's collaborators in Rome from 1811.

From another source we know that the sculptor Giuseppe Pacetti (1782–1839), son of the more famous Vincenzo, set up a company in Via Sistina 57 (1830) with Capranesi to make *giallo tigrato* animals. This is indicated by a document in the Rome State Archive (Camerlengato).²¹

Alvar González-Palacios

²⁰ A. Falchetti, *La Pinacoteca Ambrosiana*, Vicenza, 1969, p. 198.

²¹ Ciranna, *op. cit.*, p. 157, note 64.



Antonio Moglia (1765-post 1783), *Tigre che allatta i cuccioli*, marble, 55 x 55.5 x 18 cm, inv. 339.
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PABLO GARGALLO

Maella, Zaragoza, 1881 – Reus, Tarragona, 1934

Petit Arlequin à la flûte

1931

Copper plate, green-grey patina

Unique piece

34 x 13.5 x 14.5 cm

Provenance : private collection, Barcelona.

Exhibitions:

1934 *Pablo Gargallo*, New York, Brummer Gallery, num. 27.

Gargallo. Exposició d'Escultures, Barcelona, Sala Parés, num. 27.

1966 *Gargallo*, Duisburg, Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Museum, num. 65.

1980 *Pablo Gargallo 1881-1934*, Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, num. 102.

1981 *Gargallo 1881-1981. Exposició del Centenari*, Barcelona, Palau de la Virreina, num. 129.

Pablo Gargallo, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, num. 97.

Gargallo 1881-1981. Exposición del Centenario, Madrid, Palacio de Cristal, num. 171.

1991 *Gargallo. La nueva edad de los metales*, Madrid, Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, num. 71.

1994 *Gargallo y los metales*, Museo Pablo Gargallo, Zaragoza.

Pierrette Gargallo-Anguera, *Pablo Gargallo*, Catalogue raisonné, Les éditions de l'Amateur, Paris, 1996, p. 194, nº 188.

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Pablo Gargallo is considered one of the most important early 20th century Spanish sculptors along with Julio González. Born in Maella, Aragon, he moved with his family to Barcelona in 1888, where he met with artists in the famous Quatre Gats, a cultural circle frequented by Pablo Picasso and Isidre Nonell, among others. He was the disciple of the sculptor Eusebi Arnau. In 1903 he was in Paris for six months after winning a scholarship and returned to Paris in 1911 where he became friends with Modigliani and Juan Gris. It was in Paris that his work matured into a style of sculpture based on the creation of three-dimensional pieces using flat metal plate. Building upon the Spanish traditions of fine metal craft, he began to compose masks from thin sheets of iron and copper, hammered, twisted, cut and fitted together, evolving a new mode of plastic expression which had considerable and growing influence in expanding the sculptural idiom of later decades. He was one of the first to practice the transposition of convex into concave surface and he was also, in his later work, one of the first to give positive significance to enclosed space in a sculptural work. His work is characterised by the combination between classicism and experimentation, integrating the innovations of cubism and playing with volume and void.

Pablo Gargallo learned to work with iron in the Escuela de la Lonja (Lonja School) in Barcelona and developed most of his work in copper, iron and lead. He also must have learned from contact with ironworking artisans during his collaboration in large projects such as the construction of the Palau de la Música Catalana or the Hospital de Sant Pau.

The artist recurred repeatedly to the image of the harlequin, as much so in sculptures (three silver broaches, three heads, nine masks, two harlequins with flutes and a harlequin with a mandolin), as in

drawings and engravings. This sculpture of a small harlequin was surely a model to scale up for his *Grand Arlequin à la flûte*, also realized in 1931 and today conserved in the Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou in Paris. The model for *Petit Arlequin à la flûte*, conserved in the Pablo Gargallo Museum of Zaragoza, is composed of 16 pieces of cut out cardboard. The artist usually worked from these cardboard templates, or sometimes paper or even zinc, of each one of the pieces making up the sculpture, used as a model to trace the contours of the pieces in metal plates, then cut out and soldered together.



Arlequin à la flûte, 1931, 98 x 42.5 x 41 cm.
Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne.



Cardboard découpé of the *Petit Arlequin à la flûte*, 1931. Zaragoza, Museo Pablo Gargallo.

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