

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Jacopo Ligozzi

(Verona 1547 - 1627 Florence)

Ecce Homo (front) /

Christ bearing the Cross (reverse)

1588

signed: *IACOPO LIGOZZI* on the front
in the lower part on Christ's mantle;
dated on the reverse *1588* on the base
of the cross

miniature painted in tempera on
parchment in a rock crystal and gold
filigree frame decorated with the
fleurs-de-lys and the balls of the Medici
coat-of-arms at each side and in the
lower part. The gold suspension ring at
the top also bears the balls of the
Medici emblem

6.9 x 4.9 cm; 2 3/4 x 1 7/8 in

(framed: 10 x 8.3 cm; 4 x 3 1/4 in)

Literature

Authentication by Lucilla Conigliello, 20 February 2013;

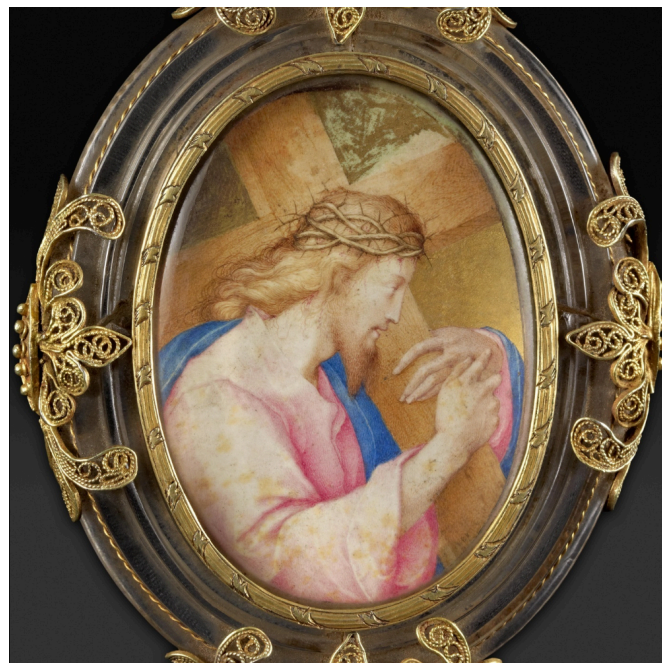
A. Cecchi, L. Conigliello, & M. Faietti, *Jacopo Ligozzi. "Pittore universalissimo"*, exh. cat., Livorno 2014, pp. 158 - 159, no. 56.

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Front



Reverse

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This important and exquisitely painted work was produced by Jacopo Ligozzi and craftsmen from the Grand Ducal Workshops between 25 March 1588 and 24 March 1589 in modern dating, or 1588 according to Florentine dating (which counted from the year *ab Incarnatione*), which is the date present on the reverse. The Florentine style is evident in the slender, gold filigree *fleurs-de-lys* of the Medici coat-of-arms that extend inwards from the Medici palle in the centre, the latter motif also present on the suspension ring at the top.

During this period, Ligozzi was one of the most esteemed artists at the Florentine court. An extremely versatile figure who devoted himself to an exceptionally wide range of artistic genres, Ligozzi arrived in Florence in 1577 where he first worked on the extensive series of illustrations of plants and animals directly commissioned by the Grand Duke Francesco I de' Medici (The Uffizi, Florence, Department of Prints and Drawings). For the same client, Ligozzi also worked on the decoration of the Villa Medicea in Pratolino and, most importantly, on the Tribuna of the Uffizi. For the latter space, around 1587 he painted various small-format works including *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (The Uffizi, Florence) and *Saint Jerome* (Casa Vasari, Arrezzo). Ligozzi's art was particularly suited to small formats and miniatures: he generally described himself, and sometimes signed his works, as a "MINIADOR". He even used this name on large-scale works, including the two huge slate panels for the Salone dei Cinquecento in the Palazzo Vecchio (Florence) depicting *The Coronation of Cosimo I de' Medici* and *The Diplomatic Mission of Boniface VIII* of 1591 and 1592 respectively.

The present medallion can be related to a document in the Grand Ducal archive dated 12 November 1588 which refers to a payment in gold to Ligozzi for "illuminating more works for the Grand Duke" Ferdinand I (State Archive of Florence, Armario Mediceo, 124, c. 138s; same note line 149, c.153v). The artist was again paid an amount in gold for miniatures a few days later, on 25 and 26 November (A.S.F., A.M. 183, c. 30; A.M. 124 c. 138s; and A.M. 149,ca.162v).

Thin gold leaf, applied with a brush, is present in both miniatures, particularly in the background of *Christ bearing the Cross* and on details of the *Ecce Homo*, such as the studs

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on the helmet and body plates of the figure in armour and on Pilate's elegant robe and headwear. It can thus be deduced that this medallion was a direct commission from the Grand Duke Ferdinand, either for private devotional purposes or as a very costly gift.

The creation of this exceptionally valuable item involved both the participation of Ligozzi and of expert goldsmiths and craftsmen from the Grand Ducal workshops for the creation of the extremely fine frame. The use of rock crystal, skilfully carved as a single piece, emphasises the value of this object, which almost acquires the nature of a reliquary.

The two subjects, *Christ carrying the Cross* and the *Ecce Homo*, are taken from the Passion of Christ, and are here given a powerfully devotional nature and a dramatic significance which encourages both reflection and prayer.

Ligozzi masterfully conveys concentration and restraint in his depiction of the suffering expression of Christ's face, which thus becomes an element intended to inspire reflection, as are the expressions of the two torturers which seem to convey compassion.

Jacopo Ligozzi trained in Trento with his father Giovanni Ermanno (1525 – 1605) in the period just after the Council of Trent, and was profoundly influenced by Counter-Reformation spirituality as both a painter and a man. An artist of profound and coherent religious beliefs, Ligozzi read and meditated on the theme of Christ's life and Passion under the spiritual guidance of his son Gabriel, who was a Dominican monk.

The present work is of exceptionally high quality, particularly the depiction of *Christ bearing the Cross*, which has a delicate and exquisitely vibrant draughtsmanship that recalls the depictions by the artist of *The Allegory of Lust* and *The Allegory of Sloth* of 1590 (Musée du Louvre, inv. nos. 5032 and 5037). The *Ecce Homo* is slightly more archaic in style due to the iconographic rigidity of the subject and the figures flanking Christ crowned with thorns, revealing Ligozzi's interest in the description of clothing and the exotic notes which would continue to be characteristic of the artist.

Stylistically, this analytical and virtuoso miniaturist style is very comparable to the series of tempera paintings on Turkish subjects and to the extensive series of illustrations of plants

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and animals which the artist produced from 1588 onwards. Ligozzi was particularly interested in depicting episodes from Christ's Passion, a subject which recurs throughout his career, both in small-format works (such as the Oberlin altarpiece with *The Agony in the Garden* of 1608) and in larger ones such as the four large paintings of half-length figures of a Caravaggesque type painted in 1622 for the villa of Poggio Imperiale, as a commission from the Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine.

A particularly close comparison with the present work is the *Ecce Homo* painted by Ligozzi for the Veronese Count Agostino Giusti and known from the celebrated engraving by Raphael Sadeler of 1598.

Another relevant comparison is an oval miniature on parchment of a similar format depicting the *Ecce Homo*, signed by Ligozzi and dated 1590. This is also inset as a medallion but lacks its original frame (Sotheby's London, 28 March 1968, lot 32).

Lucilla Conigliello