COLNAGHI

Filippo Parodi

Bacchus, c. *1670*

FILIPPO PARODI
(Genoa 1630 – 1702)

BACCHUS, c. 1670

Marble
156 x 55 x 40 cm.; 61 2/5 x 21 2/3 x 15 3/4 in.

Provenance
(Probably) commissioned by either Cardinal Leonardo Raggi (1615 - 1687) or his uncle Tommaso Raggi (1595 - 1679), or by another member of the Raggi family, and recorded in Palazzo Raggi, by the mid-eighteenth century until at least the mid-nineteenth century;
Anonymous Sale, Palais Galliera, 22 November 1972, lot 102 (as 'Guillaume Coustou');
With Wildenstein, New York;
Private collection.

Literature

(Probably) C.G. Ratti, *Storia de pittori scultori et architetti ligurie de forestieri che in Genova operarono, secondo il manoscritto del 1762*, M. Migliorini, ed., Genoa 1997, p. 63.
(Probably) C.G. Ratti, *Instruzione di quanto può vedersi di più bello in Genova in pittura, scultura, ed architettura ecc*., Genoa 1780, p. 235.
(Probably) F. Alizeri, *Guida artistica per la città di Genova*, vol. II, Genoa 1847, p. 254.
(Probably) P. Rotondi Briasco, *Filippo Parodi*, Genoa, 1962, p. 104.

This masterful statue of Bacchus appeared in 1972 at an auction in Paris, where it was attributed by the auction house to the French sculptor Guillaume Coustou (1677 – 1746). Later, when displayed at the Wildenstein gallery in New York, it was presented as a work by Domenico Parodi (1672 - 1742). The attribution to the Genoese painter-sculptor was likely inspired by similarities to a cycle of seven mythological statues (Apollo, Bacchus, Diana, Venus, Ariadne, Adonis, Bacchante) commissioned from Domenico Parodi (with the collaboration of Francesco Biggi, to whom the majority, if not all, of the physical execution of the sculptures can be attributed) for Prince Eugene of Savoy during the second to third decade of the eighteenth century. These works are still held in the Marmorgalerie of the Lower Belvedere in Vienna. However, this hypothesis, drawn from the undeniable, strong affiliations between the statues' sculptural volumes and the Genoese Baroque tradition, does not completely convince. It may be necessary to consider that the Bacchus in question exhibits significant Bernini-esque elements, features that are considerably less pronounced in the Viennese statues, which possess a more whimsical spirit and are firmly embedded in the eighteenth-century aesthetic.

The sculptor of this Bacchus seems to reinterpret, in a more restrained and softened manner, the compositional and stylistic solutions characteristic of the mature and late Bernini. This is evident both in the pose, reminiscent of the *Angel with the Scroll* (fig.1) on the Ponte Sant'Angelo (1669), in the ecstatic facial expression, and in the dynamic movement of the draperies. To contextualise this Bacchus, a comparison - particularly for the almost neo-Correggesque expression of the face - can be found in a wooden sculpture at the Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe, which is part of the cycle of *The Four Seasons*. This cycle includes *Winter* at the Cleveland Art Museum, *Autumn* (fig.5), acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of New York in 2018, and *Summer*, in a private collection, attributed by scholars to the circle of Domenico's father, Filippo Parodi, the preeminent Genoese sculptor of the late seventeenth century.[3] Although the drapery of the Bacchus does not immediately recall the exceptionally soft textures and delicate crinkled folds characteristic of the mature and late Parodi, it is feasible to draw significant comparisons with various of his wooden works and his early marble creations, which date back to the early 1670s.

Despite sparse documentation regarding the early years of Filippo Parodi's career, Carlo Giuseppe Ratti recounts two significant periods Parodi spent in Rome: the first around 1660-67, during which Bernini 'kindly accepted him as a disciple', and a second in 1672, a year in which Filippo is recorded in the parish of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. However, pinpointing the exact duration of this latter Roman sojourn proves challenging, particularly considering that in December of the same year, records show a payment to Parodi in Genoa for work commissioned by the Raggi family. During these formative years, while transitioning from a woodcarver to a full-fledged

sculptor, Parodi was chiefly sponsored by the Genoese patron Sauli, who endeavoured to mould him into the local equivalent of Bernini.

According to Ratti, Parodi's second Roman stay was entirely financed by Francesco Maria Sauli, for whom Parodi would later complete the *Saint John the Baptist* for the basilica of Santa Maria Assunta in Carignano in 1677. The drapery of this statue, with its flowing lines nevertheless rendered in a ‘grand manner’, vigorous and still distant from the almost rocaille refinements of Parodi's later sculptures, shares significant similarities with that of Bacchus. The Saint John the Baptist emerges as a direct response to earlier statues by Pierre Puget, particularly the *Saint Sebastian* (1664) (fig. 3) and the *Blessed Alessandro Sauli* (1664-68). These works collectively draw inspiration from the four colossal Bernini statues beneath the Michelangelo-designed dome of Saint Peter's. Moreover, the Bacchus discussed here owes a debt to the late 1660s works of Puget, especially evident in the manner in which the drapery encircles the god's sides, echoing Puget's *Immaculate Conception* (1666-70) (fig.2), sculpted for the church of the Albergo dei Poveri.

Prior to the realisation of *Saint John the Baptist* (fig.4), Parodi had already experimented with marble: between the end of 1673 and the summer of 1674, he completed his first public commission in this medium, *the Madonna of the Rosary*. This piece bears stylistic similarities to the *Bacchus*. Although commissioned by Agostino Franzone, the Madonna did not achieve immediate acclaim, which led to its subsequent relocation to the rural setting of the church of Santa Caterina in Rossiglione. In a significant 1988 essay titled 'A Contradictory Experience: The First Sculptural Production of Parodi’, Lauro Magnani underscored the experimental yet tentative nature of Parodi's early forays into marble, marking a complex transition from wood to this more demanding material.

By 1677, the magnificent *Virgin of Carmel* in San Carlo, Genoa, is documented. Her robes, rendered in a more elegantly fluid manner, still echo the language of Parodi's earlier marble works. Comparisons with Parodi's great masterpieces in wood from earlier years might be more significant for our *Bacchus*. Iconographically and stylistically, this statue aligns closely with Parodi's most celebrated wood carvings, specifically the 'Durazzo furnishings’, described by Ratti as ‘the beautiful mirror fashioned like a fountain where Narcissus gazes at himself", and the four statues representing the Seasons, crafted circa 1667-70 and now housed in Villa Durazzo Faraggiana at Albissola Marina'. The poses and the flow of the draperies in these works show remarkable similarities, as does the meticulous depiction of vine leaves in both the marble and the wooden *Bacchus* / *Autumn of Albissola*. In terms of pose, our *Bacchus*, while timidly reinterpreting Bernini and Puget, closely mirrors the wooden figure in Albissola.

Conversely, the highly expressive and anatomically precise Bacchus currently at the Metropolitan Museum suggests a more mature phase of Parodi's artistic evolution. As observed, the stylistic features of this marble suggest an attribution to the young Parodi. Support for this hypothesis is bolstered by an examination of historical sources. Among the works attributed to Parodi, as catalogued by Carlo Giuseppe Ratti and not yet located, is a *Bacchus* that in the mid-eighteenth century was in Palazzo Raggi in Genoa. This piece may have been commissioned either directly or indirectly by one of two prominent patrons of the arts within the Raggi family: Cardinal Leonardo Raggi (1615 - 1687) or his uncle Tommaso (1595 - 1679). Notably, Tommaso commissioned Gian Lorenzo Bernini to sculpt the funerary monument of Sister Maria Raggi in Santa Maria sopra Minerva. Given the context, the *Bacchus* under examination could potentially be identified with the aforementioned statue, thus representing one of the earliest known marble works by Parodi to have survived.

In the manuscript version of the sculptor's life (1762), Ratti mentioned at the end ‘in the Raggi house the figure of a Bacchus’; in the printed edition (1769), the author praised that statue: 'In the Raggi house one sees the statue of a Bacchus worthy of observation’. In the detailed *Instruzione diquanto può vedersi di più bello in Genova in pittura, scultura, ed architettura,* the same Ratti dedicated seven pages to the description of the palace of 'the Most Excellent Giulio Raggi', where in the 'Salon to the right of the hall', after paintings by, among others, Bassano, Van Dyck, and Castiglione, he last mentioned 'the Bacchus, a marble figure, is the work of Filippo Parodi’[18]. The description of the palace concluded: 'The terrace is full of statues, among which some are preserved of Greek chisel’. The placement indoors, next to the celebrated paintings of the gallery, undoubtedly attested to the esteem in which Parodi's Bacchus was held, whereas the ancient statues, some even considered 'of Greek chisel’ were on the terrace.

It appears less likely, however, that it could be identified with another version of *Bacchus* by Parodi mentioned by Ratti in his 1762 manuscript: 'Within the courtyard of the Torri palace at Vico Gelsomino, there is a quite charming little statue of a Bacchus’. This other *Bacchus* was not recalled in the printed version of the Vite, and it does not seem probable that a figure almost life-sized (the marble in discussion measures 156 cm.) would be referred to as 'a little statue' in Ratti's Instruzione. Therefore, our *Bacchus* could have been executed shortly after 1670, commissioned by the cardinal, the uncle, or perhaps, even at their suggestion or recommendation, by a member of their family residing in Genoa.

Fig. 1. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Angel with the Scroll*, 1667-69, marble, Ponte Sant'Angelo, Rome

Fig. 2. Pierre Puget, *Immaculate Conception*, 1666-70, Marble, Albergo dei Poveri, Genoa.

Fig. 3 Pierre Puget, *Saint Sebastian*, 1668, Marble, Church of Santa Maria Assunta di Carignano, Genoa.

Fig. 4. Filippo Parodi, *Saint John the Baptist*, 1677, Marble, Church of Santa Maria Assunta di Carignano, Genoa.

Fig. 5. Filippo Parodi, *Autumn (from The Four Seasons)*, ca.1667-70, wood, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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