

TOMASSO BROTHERS

FINE ART

JOHN FRANCIS MOORE (d. 1809)

LONDON, last quarter of the 18th century

Bust of a Gentleman, possibly the Rt. Hon. Charles Wolfran Cornwall (1735-1789)

White marble

66 cm (26 in.) high

SIGNED

“I.F:Moore, Fect”

PROVENANCE

Private collection, United Kingdom

LITERATURE

I. Roscoe, E. Hardy and M. G. Sullivan, *A biographical dictionary of sculptors in Britain, 1660-1851*, New Haven and London, 2009, p. 849, no. 55, as “Unidentified man in middle age”

A versatile and gifted sculptor, John Francis Moore is principally known for his large-scale commemorative monuments, visible in churches across England, yet his oeuvre also encompasses several examples of architectural sculpture and reliefs, ornate chimneypieces, and – as in case of the present signed sculpture – portrait busts.

Moore was born in Hanover, Germany, but around 1760 he was in London, where in 1766 he exhibited as a member of the Free Society of Artists. The association – formally founded in 1762 – had arisen in the 1750s from proposals to establish an academy and annual exhibition of contemporary British art. In its exhibition catalogues, Moore’s address is given as Berners Street, in London’s West End. The works he presented vary from clay models for large-scale monuments to marble busts, and from reliefs to architectural designs.

Between 1763 and 1764, Moore executed several chimneypieces for Audley End in Essex, the grand seventeenth-century seat of the Howard family, which in the 1760s underwent a period of modernization under the direction of famous architect Robert Adam. At about the same time, Moore started working for the influential politician William Beckford (1709-1770), builder of Fonthill Splendens in Wiltshire, completed between 1755 and 1770 but demolished shortly afterwards in 1807. Moore supplied polychrome chimneypieces for the Banqueting Hall, the Music Room and the Saloon, all modelled with figures drawn from classical mythology. Moore also carved a marble statue of Beckford, dressed in the livery of the Lord Mayor of London, that he exhibited in 1767 at the Free Society of Artists' exhibition (today owned by the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers of the City of London). Rupert Gunnis later described it as a "dramatic essay in baroque which gives ample proof of the sculptor's talents" (R. Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660-1851*, Cambridge [Mass.], 1954, p. 263). Three years later, upon his patron's death, Moore was chosen to erect Beckford's monument at Guildhall, completed in 1772. The likeness is expertly rendered, with particular attention to the facial features and expression, which offer a sample of Moore's ability as a portraitist. In addition to the present bust, only two other portraits by Moore are known today, that of Sir John Rushout in Worcester Infirmary from 1769, and the one in Spencer House, London, believed to represent William, 2nd Earl of Bessborough, from 1775.

In London, Westminster Abbey hosts two monuments by Moore (to Jonas Hanway, d. 1768 and to Field-Marshal John Louis, 1st Earl Ligonier, d. 1770), and the Church of St Stephen Walbrook – considered a jewel of Christopher Wren's architecture – houses Moore's 1784 monument to Reverend Thomas Wilson and his wife. For Wilson, the rector of St Stephen Walbrook and a well-known figure at the time, Moore had also carved a statue of the Whig historian Catherine Macaulay (1731-1791) as a personification of *History*, which was initially installed in the church in 1777. However, Macaulay's republican views and the rather close relationship between her and the Reverend proved too much for the churchwardens and parishioners, who had the statue removed. Outside of London, funerary monuments by Moore can be admired, amongst other places, in Bristol Cathedral (Mary Mason, d. 1767), Worcester Cathedral (Margaret Rae, d. 1772), Ettington in Warwickshire (Robert, 2nd Earl Ferrers and his second wife Selina, 1775), in the parish of North Stoneham in Hampshire (Admiral Edward, 1st Baron Hawke, d. 1781), in the parish of Heythorpe in Oxfordshire (George, 14th Earl of Shrewsbury), and in the Hospital of St Cross in Winchester, where the tomb of the Rt. Hon. Charles Wolfran Cornwall (d. 1789) is located (fig. 1).

The latter, executed in the Neoclassical taste, does not feature a likeness of Cornwall, yet comparison between known portraits of him and the present marble suggest it is likely that Cornwall is the man, draped in a toga clasped with a unique brooch representing the owl of Athena, portrayed in this signed bust by Moore. Indeed, the portrait of Cornwall by Thomas Gainsborough, now in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne (figs. 2a-b), reveals a comparable shape of the face, similarly long, arched brows and deep expression lines along the cheeks and mouth, and the same thin, long lips and round, fleshy chin. Charles

Wolfran Cornwall had studied law at Oxford before starting his legal training in London in 1755. The following year he inherited a considerable estate from his uncle, which allowed him to embark in a political career. He first became Commissioner in the Treasury, then in 1768 he secured his first parliamentary seat, as a member of the Opposition. In 1774, finding himself in disagreement with his fellow opposition members on the subject of the response to the American colonies' call for independence, Cornwall crossed the floor and became the government's Lord Treasurer, a post he held until 1780. That year, he became Justice in Eyre north of the Trent (a magistrate position with origins in the Middle Ages), and Speaker of the House of Commons until his death in 1789.

The present bust, with its clear formal and compositional references to classical antiquity, is an important example of Moore's ability as a portraitist in this register. Cornwall is represented without a wig, with short hair combed forward in a manner reminiscent of Roman Republican portraits. The toga is draped around his naked torso – the even surface of the flesh contrasting the carefully rendered folds of the fabric – and clasped with a brooch featuring an owl sitting over an amphora. This image derives from Athenian tetradrachms of the type minted between 164 and 40 B.C., the owl being the symbol of the city's patron Athena and the amphora a reference to the Panathenaic Games, the religious festival with athletic competitions held in the city every four years, in which winners received an amphora with 10 gallons of precious olive oil made from trees sacred to the goddess. It is likely that such a reference to classical culture and, more specifically, to the goddess of wisdom, held particular significance for Cornwall, and it is possible he drew the design from an object in his collection.



Fig. 1 John Francis Moore, *Funerary Monument of The Rt. Hon. Charles Wolfran Cornwall*, 1789, Hospital of St Cross, Winchester



Fig. 2a Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of The Rt. Hon. Charles Wolfran Cornwall*, 1785-1786, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne



Fig. 2b Thomas Gainsborough, *Portrait of The Rt. Hon. Charles Wolfran Cornwall*, 1785-1786, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (detail)