

VIRTUE TRIUMPHANT OVER VICE

MODELLED BY GASPERO BRUSCHI (1710-1780), AFTER THE WAX MODEL BY MASSIMILIANO SOLDANI-BENZI (1656-1740), AFTER THE MARBLE BY GIAMBOLOGNA (1529-1608)

THE DOCCIA PORCELAIN FACTORY OF THE MARQUIS CARLO GINORI,
FLORENCE, CIRCA 1750
H. 26 cm

Provenance: Tuscan private collection

Hard-paste porcelain group depicting a naked woman, Virtue (Florence) kneeling triumphantly on the back of a bound, bearded man, Vice (Pisa). Iron inclusions in the paste of the porcelain and typical firing cracks in the base, with contemporary repair in gesso done at the factory after the firing.

In 1706 Massimiliano Soldani-Benzi wrote to Prince Johann Adam von Liechtenstein in Vienna stating that he had completed a series of twelve bronzes mostly after the antique and famous statues of Florence. Among them was a small version of the allegorical marble group representing *Florence Triumphant over Pisa* by Giambologna which is now in the Bargello. The personification of Florence, or an allegory of Virtue, overcomes a man cowering on the ground, and represents either Vice or the city of Pisa, depending on the interpretation. The triumph is expressed by a gesture of physical dominance. Although Soldani remained faithful to Giambologna's model, the bronze was produced on a large scale in several slightly different models and is known by various titles: *Virtue Triumphant over Vice*, *Honour Overcoming Falsehood* and *Beauty Chaining Strength*.

The model is one of the subjects listed in the inventory taken by the Doccia porcelain factory, which purchased numerous moulds from Soldani's son and heir in 1744. As Charles Avery has suggested, several casts from this series are known, and Soldani's workshop must have produced a number of series of these bronzes notable for the way the composition spirals upward, hence the name of '*figura serpentinata*'. The wax model for this figure by Soldani is illustrated, no. 233, in the Inventory of models still kept in the Museo di Doccia, published by Klaus Lankheit. The entry, 72.8, describes it as *La Virtù che opprime il Vizio. L'originale è nel Salone di Palazzo Vecchio, con sue forme*. Two twentieth century porcelain versions are in the museum, one glazed and one unglazed. Another, later eighteenth-century version was offered on the art market in 2006¹. However, the closest version to this one is that in the Detroit Institute of Arts with a similar rectangular rocky base and contemporarily restored firing cracks². Detroit also has a version of the bronze by Soldani.

Carlo Ginori, as well as being a statesman, was an accomplished chemist and took an active, if not to say leading, role in the research and production of porcelain clays for his factory.

¹ Sotheby's, Milan, 18th April 2007, Lot 245. Described as restored.

² Alan P. Darr, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Detroit Institute of Arts*, Brepols, 2002. Vol II, Cat. No. 161.



Letters between him and his manager and representative in the factory, Jacopo Fanciullacci, indicate that he was personally responsible for much of the development of the pastes, *massi*, (between clays for body and slips for glazing there were over seven hundred different recipes) and would advise Fanciullacci in the practical aspects of their experiments. The main sources of clay were the *Terra di Venezia*, a greyish earth that was also used by the Venetian factories, *Terra di Lucca*, similar to that used by Du Paquier in Vienna and *Terra di Monte Carlo*, a village nearby in Tuscany. Ginori was well acquainted with the defects of these clays, particularly the *Terra di Lucca*, which he described as “*La Bianca di Lucca dove si vede delle venuzze di ferro*”. These traces of iron appear as small, dark inclusions in the earlier production, particularly in the sculptures. This clay was also difficult to work, leading to firing cracks whose highly visible restoration was deemed acceptable in much the same way as the Japanese technique of Kintsugi draws attention to itself by using lacquered gold. A method was developed using powdered marble and egg white and the repairs were made soon after firing, thereby remaining an intrinsic part of the piece.



Giambologna's marble was commissioned in 1565 by Francesco de' Medici to celebrate his marriage later that year to Giovanna d'Austria. It was intended to be displayed in the Palazzo Vecchio as a pendant to Michelangelo's *Victory*, presented to the Medici the year before by his nephew, just after his death. It seems that the time was too short to create such a monumental work and the grand stucco version, now on display in the Palazzo Vecchio, was shown in its place. Documents show that Giambologna was still working on the marble in 1572 and as late as 1574, the sculpture had not yet been installed. In a letter to Francesco in 1567, the sculptor refers to it as the *Fiorense* and other documents identify the bearded figure as a personification of the city of Pisa.

Bibliography:

Charles Avery, *Giambologna - The Complete Sculpture*, Oxford, 1987, no. 17, p. 25.

Alessandro Biancalana, *Porcellane e Maioliche a Doccia; la Fabbrica dei Marchesi Ginori, I primi cento anni*, Polistampa, Florence 2009.

Klaus Lankheit, *Die Modellsammlung der Porzellanmanufaktur Doccia*, Bruckmann, Munich, 1982.

Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, Dimitrios Zikos, *Giambologna – gli dei, gli eroi*, Giunti, Florence, 2006. Including an essay by Rita Balleri, *L'invenzione giambolognesca nelle porcellane settecentesche di Doccia*.