## 4. FAILED RETURN. 15th to 16th Century

### Collectors of statues of Venus

As Jane C. Long has recently emphasized, *there was no need to revive Venus in the fifteenth century, for she had never died. Her status as a pagan goddess, her ties to erotic pleasure, even her ideal nude form survived throughout the Middle Ages. It is absolutely true that Venus, as a pagan goddess of sexuality, was frequently reviled in medieval literature and art. It is also true that she was sometimes enjoyed*.[1] Even the collection of ancient statues, which is considered to be a phenomenon specific to the Italian Renaissance, had its medieval precursors.[2] Ancient statues must have been systematically collected in Western European workshops since the 12th century. This is the only way to explain their numerous echoes in the work of the period.[3] Collections of the first sculptors of the Florentine Renaissance, Ghiberti and Donatello, included ancient statues as models for their own work, which was heavily inspired by antiquity.[4] In the 1480s, Lorenzo dei Medici installed a collection of statues in the garden of the San Marco Church in Florence, which became an informal center of artistic education for sculptors and painters working for the Medici clan.[5] Rome naturally offered the ideal conditions in which to become acquainted with ancient sculptures, and therefore both Ghiberti and Donatello set off for the city in search of ancient sculptures.[6]

The interest in ancient sculptures and their inaccessibility is colorfully described by Manuel Chrysolaras, a Byzantine scholar operating in Western Europe. During his stay in Rome in 1411-1412, he wrote a letter to his relative, Demetrios Chrysolaras: *Can you believe of me that I am wandering about this city of Rome, swivelling my eyes this way and that like some boorish gallant, clambering up palace walls, even up to their windows, on the chance of seeing something of the beauties inside? … I am doing all this in the hope of finding in these places beauty not in living bodies but in stones, marbles and images. These are the things that men take pleasure in. Many people would willingly have given many living and faultless horses to have one stone horse by Phidias or Praxiteles, even if this happened to be broken or mutilated. And the beauties of statues and paintings are not an unworthy thing to behold; rather they indicate a certain nobility in the intellect that admires them. It is looking at the beauties of women that is licentious and base.*[7] Admiration for a statue of a naked

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[1] Jane C Long, "The Survival and Reception of the Classical Nude. Venus in the Middle Ages," in *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, ed. Sherry Lindquist (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 47-64.

[2] Cf., for example, Kathleen Wren Christian, *Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

[3] Cf. Laurence Terrier Aliferis, *L'imitation de l'antiquité dans l'art médiéval (1180-1230)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

[4] For Donatello cf. Michael Greenhalgh, *Donatello and his Sources* (London: Duckworth, 1982). For Ghiberti cf. Marylin Aronberg Lavin, *Artists' Art in the Renaissance* (London: Pindar, 2009), 26-29.

[5] See Caroline Elam, "Lorenzo de'Medici Sculpture Garden," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 36, no. 1-2 (1992), 41-84.

[6] See Antonio Manetti, *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi*, ed. Carlachiara Perrone (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992), 63-68; Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori, Firenze 1568*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, vol. 1-9 (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-1885), vol. 2, 337-338.

[7] See Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca* 46 (Paris: Garnier,1866), 81-82 (column 57-60). Cf. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1971), 81-82.

woman is not a sin, but a virtue, as the depicted nakedness brings the joy of cognition, Chrysolaras claims while referring to Aristoteles.[8] Italian humanist Cencio de'Rustici expressed himself in a similar spirit in a letter from 1416. In it, he condemns the destruction of ancient statues and explicitly mentions statues of Venus amongst them, the study of which is in his words not contradictory to the Christian faith.[9] Both letters clearly show that the opinion claiming that admiration of ancient statues of the naked Venus was at odds with the Christian faith was still very strong.

In the elite Roman society of the time, however, everything was subordinated to the desire to increase the social prestige. Collections of ancient statues could be used to demonstrate the antiquity of one's lineage reaching back to ancient Rome. In this way, merchants and landowners could stylize themselves into the descendants of the ancient Romans and thus legitimize their present political ambitions. The hitherto ignored fragments of ancient statues, which often lacked heads or arms, now made their owners out to be the chosen restorers of Rome's lost magnificence.[10] This new custom may have been the subject of ridicule, as is seen in Poggio Bracciolini's frequently cited passage from "De nobilitate" (On Nobility), which he wrote in 1440. Nicolò Niccoli and Lorenzo de' Medici, brother of Cosimo il Vecchio, visited Poggio's garden past the walls of Rome in which he kept ancient statues. The guests found it inappropriate and Lorenzo commented on this derisively: *Our host has read about that ancient custom of adorning houses, villas, gardens, porticoes, and gymnasia with signa (images) and paintings and statues of ancestors to glorify their families, and since he has no images of his ancestors he has ennobled this place with these little broken bits of marble, so glory shall remain to his posterity through the nobility of these things*.[11] It is worth mentioning, however, that Lorenzo does not doubt the aesthetic perfection and value of the ancient statue fragments.

After the mid-15th century, a half a century after the return of the papal court to Rome, the city once again became a world-renown metropolis and established itself as the center of a new artistic culture inspired by classical antiquity.[12] The residences of prominent Roman families opened to everyone who wished to see ancient statues and reliefs. These works of art were exhibited in Roman residences as they were found – their ostentatiously random placement in the courtyard or garden of a palace demonstrated that they were authentic finds that had occurred recently on the site. The pope made the greatest claim to ancient heritage, as he stylized himself into the role of the direct successor to the ancient emperors. As proof of this uninterrupted continuity, ancient artistic objects were displayed throughout the whole Middle Ages in front of the pope's residence in the Lateran.[13] Pope Paul II (1464–1471) gathered a

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[8] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b.

[9] See Ludwig Bertalot, *Studien zum italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, 2, ed. Paul Oscar Kristeller (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1975), 147.

[10] See Kathleen Wren Christian, "Architecture and Antique Sculpture in Early Modern Rome," in *Renaissance and Baroque Architecture* (The Companions to the History of Architecture, Volume I), ed. Alina Payne (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 4-5.

[11] See Poggio Bracciolini, *Opera omnia, 1. Scripta in editione Basilensi anno 1538 collata* (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1964), 65. English translation: Elam, *Lorenzo de'Medici Sculpture Garden*, 65.

[12] Cf. Massimo Miglio, "Roma dopo Avignone: La rinascità politica dell'antico," *Memoria del antico nell'arte italiana, 1. L'uso dei classici.* ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), 74-111.

[13] Cf. Ingo Herklotz, "Der Campus lateranensis im Mittelalter," *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 22 (1985), 1-43.

massive collection of ancient art objects in his residence in the center of Rome in what would later be Palazzo Venezia, the palace itself was the first modern *all'antica* structure in Rome. Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) had ancient bronze statues from the papal residence in the Lateran exhibited in the Roman Capitolium as a gift to the Roman people. A truly groundbreaking moment in this context came during the time of Pope Julius II at the beginning of the 16th century. In 1505-1506, Bramante connected a courtyard, the "Cortile del Belvedere," to the papal villa on the highest point of the Vatican complex, called the Belvedere.[14] Visitors could enter this courtyard without having to walk through the papal residence, as Bramante built external stairways in order to make the statue collections accessible. To this day, visitors can still climb the stairs and reach the eastern corner of "Il cortile ottagono," as this part of the Vatican museums is called today.

It was known from Latin literature that the villa was a place especially suitable for spiritual development, which in turn was to be fostered by appropriately chosen statues. In his letters, Cicero wrote about where he planned to place Greek originals in his villa, pointing to the fact that they were in some way incorporated into the architecture.[15] Julius II intensified the effect of his ancient collection not only via the careful selection of the exhibited works, but also through ingenious staging. The "Cortile del Belvedere" was the first monumental architecture built especially for the public exhibition of ancient statues, which were organized within it in 1506-1511 according to a preconceived ideological concept. The spacious square-shaped courtyard included alcoves located in the corners and also in the middle of each of the four walls. The courtyard was annexed onto the back wall of the villa, and the most important façade was thus in the south, opposite the doors that led from the villa out into the courtyard. For this reason, the most prominent ancient statues from the papal collection were exhibited on this side of the courtyard.

The appearance of the courtyard was recorded in a drawing from 1532-1533 by Maarten Van Heemskerck, who also documented other prominent Roman collections of ancient statues in a similar manner.[16] A group statue of the Tiber and Nile stood at the center of the courtyard. In the middle of the southern façade was an alcove with a group sculpture depicting Laocoön and his sons, which referred to the destruction of Troy, as Roman history begins with the escape of the great Trojan Aeneas. In the alcove in the eastern corner of the southern façade was a statue of Apollo, a reminder of the Vatican's connection to the ancient Temple of Apollo, which was located on these premises. In the western corner of this façade was the alcove with a statue of the half-naked Venus Felix, which embodied the mother of Aeneas, the forefather of the Roman nation and imperial dynasty. Giuliano della Rovere, who as the Pope allegedly adopted the name Julius after Julius Caesar, presented himself to the public via the Cortile del Belvedere as the legitimate successor of the ancient emperors.

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[14] See Christian, *Empire without End*, 265-275.

[15] Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1.8; 1.9. We do not know what the words "xystus" and "gymnasium" meant to Renaissance readers.

[16] London, The British Museum 1946-7-13639. Cf. Arthur J. DiFuria, *Maarten van Heemskerck's Rome: Antiquity, Memory, and the Cult of Ruins* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).


45. Roman woman as Venus (Venus Felix), h. 214 cm, ancient Roman marble group sculpture, 180-200.

The sculptural group of the goddess with Amor known as the Venus Felix belongs to the aforementioned sculptural series of Roman women in the form of Venus (**45**). It was found in Rome at the end of the 15th century and exhibited in the Cortile del Belvedere in 1509.[17] Amor is reaching up towards an object that the goddess had originally held in her raised left hand. On the pedestal is the inscription "VENERI FELICI SACRUM", making it clear who the statue represented.[18] The fame of this group statue is evident in the fact that Pier Jacopo Alari de Bonacolsi (known as Antico)

[17] Phyllis Pray Bober and Ruth Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*, Second edition (Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2010), no. 16, p. 66-67.
[18] Aldrovandi interpreted it as the goddess coming out of her bath: Aldrovandi, *Delle statue*, 120: "uscita dal bagno."

created a statuette based on it before it was exhibited in the Cortile del Belvedere.[19] The artist worked for the Mantuan court, and his Venus was dedicated to Mantuan Bishop Ludovico Gonzaga. The goddess is depicted without Amor; Antico reversed the drapery, replaced the diadem with an Isis knot, and changed the expression of the face, replacing the melancholy of the original with concentration. While both figures are looking at the object that Venus is holding on the original group of sculptures and ignoring the viewers, Antico's Venus is not only looking directly at them, she is also reaching out to them with her left hand. Similarly to the ancient Roman period, "copies" were always a new interpretation of the original in early modern Europe. Antico created the model of the statuette around 1496, and the actual statuette was cast in 1510, making it the first ever miniaturized copy of an ancient statue of Venus. Antico's statuette of Venus stands on a wooden pedestal into which gold coins were embedded to increase its value, although this was evidently not necessary; a number of replicas of the statue originate in the early 16th century.[20]

Venus's special position in the papal collections is evidenced by the fact that the statue of Venus Felix was joined in 1536 by the statue known as the Standing Venus (**13**), which was placed in the middle of the western wall.[21] In 1539, a wood engraving of it appeared as the frontispiece for a poem by Eurialo d'Ascoli, which begins with the verse: *Venus, mother of all creation*.[22] The text was part of a three-poem collection celebrating the statue in the Cortile del Belvedere; the first was about the sculptural group of Laocoön, the second about the statue of Venus, and the third about the statue of Apollo. Sometime between 1538 and 1571, the statue in the alcove was drawn by Francisco da Holanda and included his inscription "Venus Exiting the Bath." [23] There was evidently great interest in the statue among artists, as it was also drawn by Girolamo da Carpi sometime between 1549 and 1553.[24]

During the period of Clement VII (1523–1534), the so-called Venus Victrix was found in Rome, Roman version of the Hellenistic original. [25] This was a version of the Cnidia that is characterized by the fact that Venus is holding an unfolded cloak behind her, creating a background for the bottom portion of her body. This marble statue missing both arms and a head was placed in the Vatican Belvedere. It was evidently not in the Cortile del Belvedere, but another section of the pope's villa. In any case, it was the third naked Venus in the papal villa next to the Standing Venus and Venus Felix, the model of which was Praxiteles's Cnidia. After the mid-16th century, the statue of Venus Victrix was incorporated into the Medici collection, where it was restored several times (**46**). After 1945, the statue was exhibited in Florence's Uffizi

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[19] H. 29,8 cm, Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 5726. For Antico cf. Eleonora Luciano, *Antico. The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2011).

[20] Napoli, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte 10645; London, Victoria and Albert Museum A.96-1910.

[21] Aldrovandi, *Delle statue*, 120: "In un'altra capella e Venere tutta ignuda."

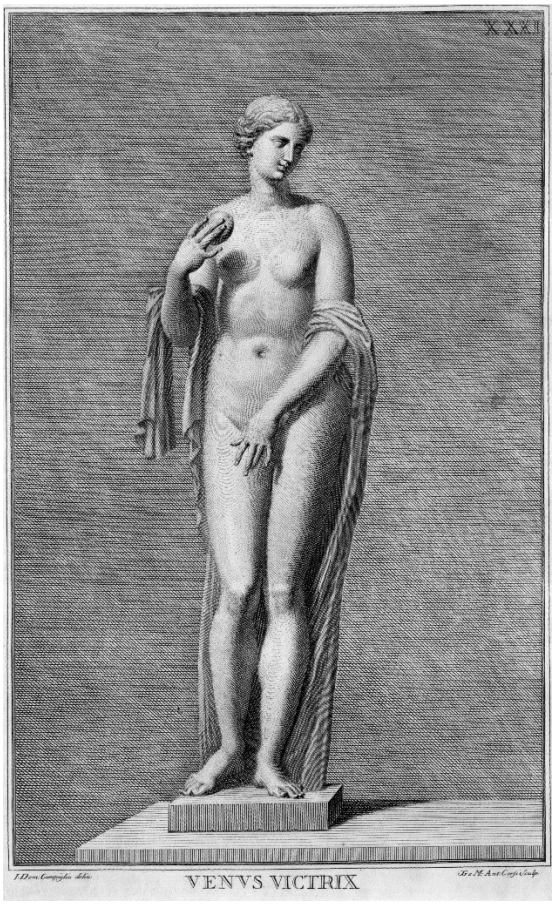
[22] Eurialo d'Ascoli, *Stanze d'Eurialo d'Ascoli sopra le statue di Laocoonte, di Venere, et d'Apollo* (Rome: Dorico, 1539), 51r.

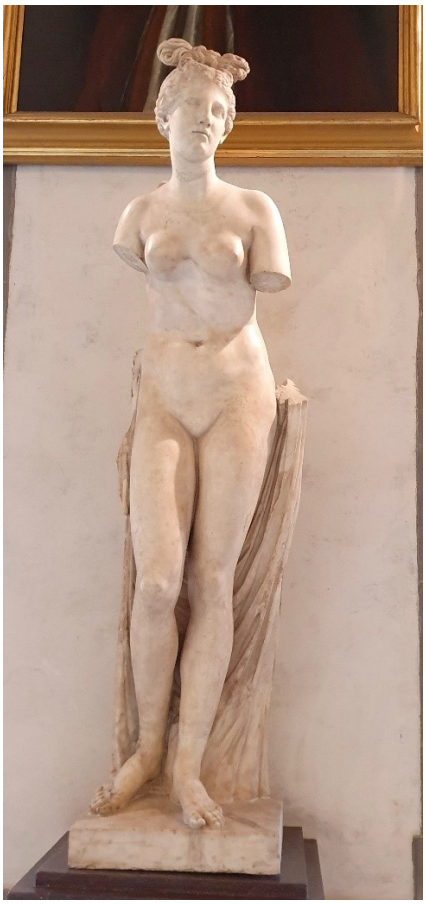
[23] Real Monasterio El Escorial 28-1-20 (Antigualhas), fol. 31r. See Sylvie Deswarte-Rosa, "Francisco de Holanda et le Cortile di Belvedere" in *Il Cortile delle statue. Der Statuenhof des Belvedere im Vatikan*, ed. Matthias Winner et al. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), 404-406.

[24] Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum & Library. Rosenbach Album R 67. Cf. Norman W. Canedy, *The Roman Sketchbook of Girolamo da Carpi* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1976).

[25] See Claudia Conforti et al., ed., *Vasari, gli Uffizi e il Duca* (Florence: Giunti, 2011), cat. 13,2.

without arms but with a head that was from the ancient period but taken from another statue (**47**).[26]



46 (left). Venus Victrix after the 17th century restoration, engraving 1734.
47 (right). Venus Victrix today, The Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

At the time, Venus Victrix was a very famous statue, which was according to Baccio Bandinelli *a very beautiful Venus esteemed like that of Phidias*.[27] The fame of this statue was spread by a whole score of drawings, engravings and copies. In 1530-1534, Bandinelli acquired a plaster cast of this statue to which he added a head but no arms; he then had the work cast in bronze in this only partially reconstructed state. Bandinelli dedicated the bronze statue sometime before 1536 to Emperor Charles V, who in turn gave it to his sister Mary of Hungary. In the Spanish Netherlands, the Habsburg regent placed the statue in her castle in Binche, south of Brussels, which was meant to compete with the residences of the French king, in which copies of ancient statues were an important element of his presentation as a sovereign.[28] The statue of Venus was later taken from Binche and exhibited at the end of the 16th century in the park of the Spanish king in Aranjuez, where it was also renamed to the biblical "Eve." The fragmentary state of the goddess without arms, which guaranteed the authenticity of

[26] Cf. Arnold Nesselrath, "The Venus Belvedere: An Episode in Restoration," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 205-214.
[27] See Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 1-9 (Einaudi, Torino 1971- 1979), vol. 6, 1374.
[28] Cf. Noelia Garcia Pérez, ed., *Mary of Hungary, Renaissance Patron and Collector: Gender, Art and Culture* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

the ancient work of art, had one additional advantage – it allowed the shapes of the female body to stand out to their full extent. This was evidently the reason they were added on in 1840 in order to give the statue a more chaste impression.[29]

For Christian Europe, the primary problem with ancient statues was their nakedness. This was, however, their primary attribute, which presented a seemingly unsolvable problem. The exhibiting of naked Venuses in the papal residence was therefore an unprecedented step, which evoked an immediate and massive response. Giovanni Evangelista Fausto Maddaleni, court poet of Julius II's successor Pope Leo X, composed a celebratory poem in which the poet admires the artistic mastership of the depiction of the naked female body in the Venus Felix.[30] On the occasion of Pope Leo X's inauguration in 1513, a festive parade was organized in Rome, which was an evocation of the ancient triumphal procession intended to celebrate the new pope from the Medici clan and the prosperity that his reign would bring.[31] Goldsmith Antonio di San Marco had a statue of Venus exhibited over his workshop and under it placed a Latin inscription: *Mars reigned, Pallas reigns, I, Venus, shall always be*.[32] The ancient statue of Venus was also incorporated into the decoration of one of the arches of triumph that were built for this occasion along the route of the procession.[33]

The Vatican Cortile del Belvedere was immediately imitated after its construction. A courtyard with ancient sculptures was built by Bishop Andrea della Valle probably in 1508 in the Palazzo della Valle di Mezzo on Via papale (today's Corso Vittorio Emmanuele).[34] Hermann Vischer recorded the appearance of the courtyard in 1515-1516.[35] There were two alcoves in the upper section of the courtyard's façade wall; on the left was Ganymedes and on the right was Venus with a dolphin, which we know from the drawing by Francisco da Hollanda.[36] At her feet, the dolphin bites into an octopus. This statue made its way to the Medici collection in 1584, and has been in the Pitti Palace in Florence since 1788.[37] Vischer's drawing records only a generally naked woman and a male figure, but the arrangement corresponds to Aldrovandi's description published in 1556.[38] Another "magnet" for admirers of ancient sculptures

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[29] Cf. Stefano Pierguidi, "Baccio Bandinelli, Carlo V e una nuova ipotesi sulla Venere bronzea del Prado," *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 30 (2012): 34-49, 138-148.

[30] Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Cart. 4. F. Vat 3351, fol. 108. Cf. Hubert Janitschek, "Ein Hofpoet Leo's X. über Künstler und Kunstwerke," *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 3 (1880): 56.

[31] Giovan Giacomo Penni, *Croniche delle magnifiche et honorate Pompe fatte in Roma per la creatione et incoronatione di Papa Leone X* (Roma: Magistro Marcello Silber 1513). See Guglielmo Roscoe, *Vita e pontifico di Leone X*, vol. V (Milan: Sonzogno, 1817), 192-231.

[32] Roscoe, *Vita e pontifico*, 212.

[33] Roscoe, *Vita e pontifico*, 223.

[34] Christian, *Empire without End*, 384-385

[35] Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des dessins 19051r. Cf. Astrid Lang, *Die frühneuzeitliche Architekturzeichnung als Medium intra- und interkultureller Kommunikation. Entwurfs- und Repräsentationskonventionen nördlich der Alpen und ihre Bedeutung für den Kulturtransfer um 1500 am Beispiel der Architekturzeichnungen von Hermann Vischer d.J.* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2012), 62-64, pl. VII.

[36] El Escorial, Biblioteca Reale 28-1-20 fol. 28v. Cf. Francesco di Hollanda, *Os desenhos das Antigualhas que vió Francisco d'Ollanda Pintor Portugués 1539-1540* (Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1940).

[37] H. 174 cm, Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Pitti OdA, 1911, no. 691. Cf. Gabriella Capecchi et al., eds., *Palazzo Pitti: La reggia rivelata* (Florence: Giunti, 2003), no. 172, p. 644-645.

[38] Ulisse Aldrovandi, "Delle statue antiche, che per tutta Roma, in diversi luoghi e case si veggono," in *Le antichità de la città di Roma*, ed. Lucio Mauro, (Venice: Giordano Ziletti, 1556), 214 (revised edition

was the courtyard of the Sassi Palace near Castel Sant'Angelo, the back wall of which had been dominated since at least 1531 by a Venus statue of the Louvre type (**10**). In 1546, the collection was purchased by Ottavio Farnese and today the statues, including the one of Venus, are located in the archeological museum in Naples and therefore the sculptural type to which it belongs is called Louvre-Naples.[39] The courtyard was drawn by Maarten van Heemskerck in 1532-1537; the alcove with Venus is on the left side of the back wall.[40] On the image of St. Lucas painting the Virgin Mary, which van Heemskerk painted around 1550, the painter used an almost exact copy of his drawing of the Sassi Palace with the Venus statue in an alcove for the painting's background. He evidently intended to place this scene into the house of Christ's era, to which a statue of Venus belonged according to concepts of the time.[41]

In 1550, Ulisse Aldrovandi saw an exemplar (which is now lost) of an ancient statue of Venus in the home of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi. He wrote that it was such a beautiful body that a person would have believed it to be the "Venus from Cnidus."[42] Praxiteles's statue of the naked Venus was the most famous work of ancient sculpture, and it was thus the ambition of each collector to have a piece in his collection that could be presented as a potential echo of Praxiteles's work. However, Renaissance artists knew nothing in detail about what Cnidia looked like, which paradoxically posed no threat to references to her in literary production of the time and, on the contrary, caused them to become more frequent.[43] Praxiteles's work was identified among ancient Roman versions based on comparison with ancient coins minted in Cnidus as late as the 18th century.[44]

The rich decoration of the villa and adjacent terraced gardens that Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este had constructed in 1560 in Tivoli included dozens of ancient sculptures, among which were also Venuses. The only Venus that has been preserved from the original furnishings of the villa was created in the 16th century and is a marble group statue of the goddess and Amor on a dolphin by Gugliemo della Porta from roughly 1572, which is located today in Vienna.[45] We know of the statues of Venus from the Villa d'Este from graphics and inventories from the villa, the first of which

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was published in 1562). For Aldrovandi cf. Katherine M. Bentz, "Ulisse Aldrovandi, Antiquities, and the Roman Inquisition," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 43 (2012), 963-983.

[39] Naples, Archaeological museum 5997. Cf. Carlo Gasparri, ed., *Le sculture Farnese, vol. 1: Le sculture ideali* (Milano: Electa, 2009), no. 25.

[40] Berlin, SMB-PK, Kupferstichkabinett KdZ 2783.

[41] Rennes, Musée des Beaux Arts 8016r. Cf. Rainald Grosshans, *Maerten van Heemskerck. Die Gemälde* (Berlin: Horst Boettcher, 1980), pl. VI, fig. 108.

[42] Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche*, 206.

[43] See Maurice Brock, "L'anecdote de Pline sur l'Aphrodite de Cnide dans quattre lettres de Bembo à Dolce," in *Le mythe de l'art antique,* ed. Emmanuelle Hénin and Valérie Naas (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 346-364; Lise Wajeman, "Fictions comiques ou théories sérieuses? Les réincarnations de l'Aphrodite de Cnide au XVIe siècle dans quelques récits et traités," in Hénin and Naas, *Le mythe de l'art antique*, 365-376.

[44] See Géraud de La Chau, *Dissertation sur les attributs de Vénus* (Paris: de Prault, 1776), 70–71; Christian Gottlob Heyne, *Sammlung Antiquarische Aufsätze* 1 (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1778), 123. Cf. also Zimmer, *Im Zeichen der Schoͤnheit*, 17.

[45] Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum 7520. Cf. Manfred Leithe-Jasper, "Venus Este: Eine Marmorskulptur aus dem Umkreis des Guglielmo della Porta," *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 4-5 (2002-2003): 136-163.

was created after the death of the villa's architect in 1572.[46] Record of the fountain of Venus next to the water organ also comes from this same year.[47] However, the ancient statue exhibited here originally represented the Nymph of the Spring, proof of which is seen in the vessel that supported her.[48] The next ancient statue of the reclining Nymph was exhibited in the fountain of Venus in the villa's interior, which we also know from an engraving from the 17th century.[49] Only one statue of these reclining Nymphs considered to be Venus has been preserved in the Villa d'Este, and was since the very beginning located in the villa's courtyard in an important spot on the central line of the whole complex.[50] Deceased Roman women were depicted as Venuses on sarcophagi. The Nymphs differed from Venuses not only in the fact that they were leaning on a vessel, but also the fact that they were not reclining in a bed, but in a natural frame. These ancient statues of sleeping Nymphs were often painted by Renaissance artists.[51] They may have served as a model for Italian paintings of a similarly depicted Venus, a topic we will return to below.

Galleries of ancient statues were built outside Rome as well, the most famous of which was the "Salla delle Nicchie" built in Florence's Pitti Palace. This central *piano nobile* hall of the Medici residence was reconstructed by Bartolommeo Ammannati in 1561.[52] He had ten alcoves carved into the walls of the rectangular hall, six of which faced the window and were brightly lit. He had the alcoves lined with black marble in order for the white marble statues to stand out against the background. He placed 26 of the best ancient statues of the Medici collection, including several Venuses, in the alcoves, above the doors, and on the floor of the "Salla delle Nicchie." Since 1568, an additional copy of Praxiteles's Cnidia (which was also in the Medici collections) was exhibited here.[53]

Domenico Grimani, patriarch of Aquilea, created the collection of ancient statues during his stay in Rome. This collection also had to include a Venus, which was represented by a small sculptural group with the goddess and Amor standing on a dolphin.[54] After his death in 1523, his will stated that the collection be placed in the ownership of the Venetian Republic and was situated in the Doge's Palace there.[55]

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[46] See Serafina Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue antiche della villa d'Este a Tivoli. Storia d'une dispersione* (Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2019), no. 30 and 85.

[47] Giovanni Francesco Venturini, etching, 1653-1691. Le fontane del giardino Estense in Tivoli, no. 22. Cf. Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue*, no. 83.

[48] Cf. Emanuela Fabbricotti, "Ninfe dormienti. Tentativo di classificazione," *Studi Miscellanei. Seminario di archeologia e storia dell'arte greca e romana dell'Università di Roma* 22 (1976): 65-71; id., "Ninfe dormienti: Addendum," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di archeologia e storia antica. Università di Chieti* 1 (1980), 37-41.

[49] Giovanni Francesco Venturini, Le fontane del giardino Estense in Tivoli,no. 6: "Fontana di Venere in una delle camere ultime del palazzo."Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum BI-1893-A39-85. Cf. Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue*, no. 26.

[50] The statue was incorporated into the fountain, which was created after a design by Raffaello Sangallo in 1569, cf. Giannetti, *La collezione delle statue*, no. 87.

[51] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, no. 62.

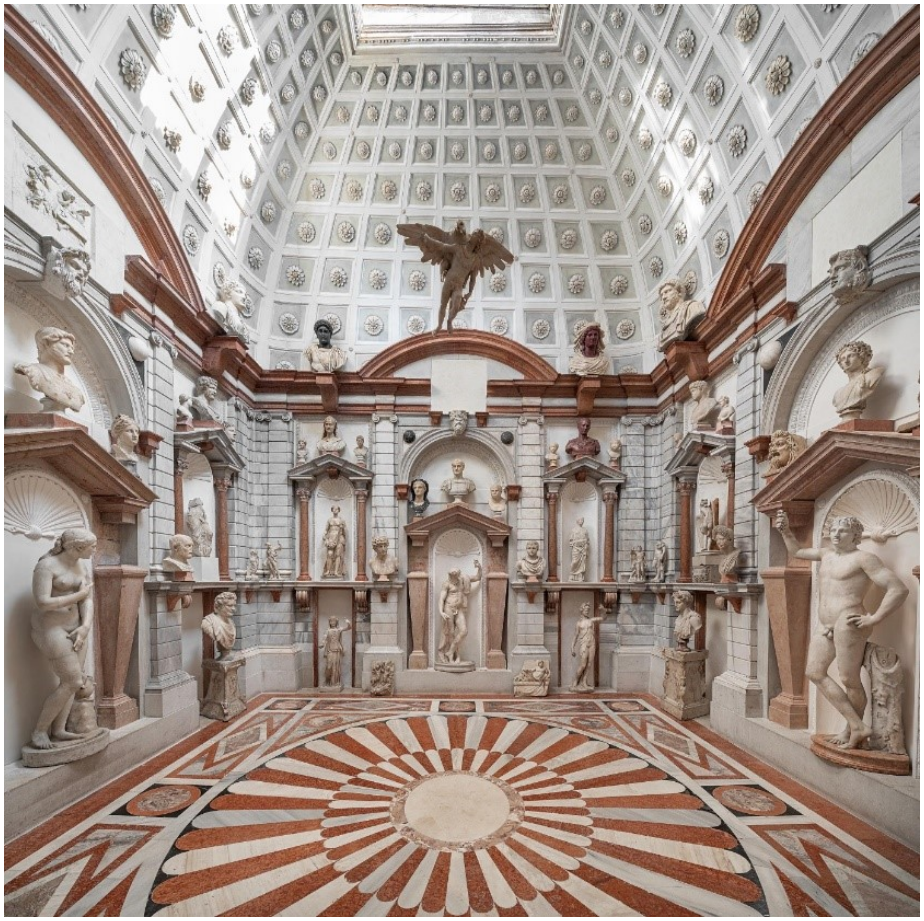
[52] See Capecchi, *Palazzo Pitti*, 111-137.

[53] Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria delle Statue, Inv. Pitti, OdA, 1911 no. 670, h. 199 cm.; Capecchi, *Palazzo Pitti*, p. 576 no. 124.

[54] Venezia, Museo archeologico nazionale 168. Cf. Irene Favaretto et al. (eds.): *Museo archeologico nazionale Venezia*. Mondadori Electa, Milano 2004, II no. 19.

[55] See Gustavo Traversali, *La statuaria ellenistica del Museo Archeologico di Venezia* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1986), no. 48.

Giovanni Grimani, who was also a patriarch of Aquilea, continued on in his uncle's activity. He created a massive collection of ancient statues in his Venetian palace and made it accessible to the public in a hall built for this very purpose, the Tribuna, drawing inspiration for its architecture from the Roman Pantheon. In his will, Giovanni Grimani left the collection to the Venetian Republic on the condition that it be made accessible to the public together with the statue collection dedicated to the republic by his uncle.[56] An exhibition was held in the Grimani Palace entitled "Domus Grimani, 1594-2019", during which the Tribuna was arranged in the same way that visitors saw it in the 1560s and 1570s when Giovanni Grimani was filling it with ancient statues (**48**).[57]



48. The Tribuna of the Palazzo Grimani in Venice, a reconstruction of the placement of ancient statues in the 1560s-70s.

During Giovanni Grimani's era, five statues dominated the Tribuna and formed the backbone of the narrative into which he placed the ancient statues. Upon entering the Tribuna, a visitor could see a statue of Venus in the center of the left wall. It was

[56] In the vestibule of Vincenzo Scamozzi's Marciana Library, the architect placed statues into an architectonic context inspired by the Salle della Tribuna in the Grimani Palace in which the statues are now displayed, cf. Favaretto, *Museo archeologico nazionale Venezia*, 11-19.

[57] Cf. Toto Bergamo Rossi and Daniele Ferrara, *Domus Grimani 1594-2019: The Collection of Classical Sculptures* (Venice: Marsilio, 2019).

not the above-mentioned exemplar, but the Capitoline-type sculpture of Venus.[58] Venus's counterpart was a statue of Bacchus in the center of the opposite wall. Directly opposite the entrance in the center of the southern wall was a statue of an old Silenus. In the middle of the hall was a statue of Amor pulling back his bow; above him hovered Zeus's eagle abducting Ganymedes. The ideological program of the Tribuna thus stemmed from the traditional link between Venus and Bacchus, which is illustrated by the above quoted Terence's verse: *When Ceres and when Liber fail, Venus is cold*.[59] The exhibited statues called upon viewers to enjoy the delights of life while there was still time to do so, and the statue of the old Silenus served as a reminder.

As was mentioned above, French King Francis I also had himself surrounded by ancient statues according to the pope's model and for similar reasons. In 1530, he acquired the aforementioned statue, which is now in the Louvre (and according to which the Louvre-Naples sculpture type is named), for his residence in Amboise.[60] Just as Roman origin was absolutely crucial to the statues in the Cortile del Belvedere, this Venus's alleged origin in Fréjus was equally important, as it was meant to heighten its political significance. In reality, the statue was found somewhere in the surrounding areas of Naples. However, the unfounded theory of the statue's French origin was written on the plaque of the statue's pedestal in the Louvre until the end of the 20th century despite the fact that Salomon Reinach had already refuted this claim in the beginning of the same century.[61] The statue of the Venus "of Fréjus" is significant in that it was the first exemplar in Francis I's collection of ancient statues, which were intended to link the sovereign with ancient Roman emperors (and France with the Roman Empire), legitimizing French political ambitions. Proof of the enormous significance the statue represented for the French is found in the unique literary response it evoked. A total of 29 glorifying epigrams on the statue have been preserved in French, Latin and even Greek.[62] These texts were inspired by ancient epigrams to Aphrodite of Cnidus, but some put the statue into the French geographical context or the context of French politics. In these poems, Francis I is Paris or even Venus's lover Mars. Venus prophesizes that Francis I will subjugate Italy and become the successor of the ancient Roman emperors. The apple in the goddess's hand has become a globe, the symbol of world rule, which the ancient goddess hands over to the king of France.[63]

Copies held great importance in the reception of ancient statues in Renaissance Europe, as they were able to replace originals that were difficult to acquire outside of Rome.[64] The first replica of an ancient statue of Venus at a scale of 1:1 was created in 1542 for the French king as a part of a larger collection of copies destined for the

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[58] H.173 cm, Venezia, Museo archeologico 93. Cf. Traversali, *La statuaria ellenistica*, no. 5; Favaretto, *Museo archeologico nazionale Venezia*, no. II, 16.

[59] Cf. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 2.23.60.

[60] Paris, Musée du Louvre Ma 525.

[61] See Salomon Reinach, "Quatre statues figurées sur la colonne Trajane," *Revue archéologique* 5, (1905), 400.

[62] Cf. Perrine Galand-Hallyn, "Autour de la Vénus Amboise (1530). Une refloraison du genre de l'ekphrasis," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 61, no. 2 (1999): 345-374.

[63] Throughout Francis I's life, the statue was situated in Amboise. In the 17th century, it was located in Tuilleries, Paris and then transferred to Versailles. It has been in the collections of the Louvre since 1802.

[64] Cf. Bertrand Jestaz, "Les premières copies d'antique," in *D'après l'antique,* ed. Jean Pierre Cuzin et al., eds., (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000), 45-52.

chateau in Fontainebleau.[65] The French king thus not only rose to the same level as the pope, but surpassed him with his collection, as bronze statues were considered to be more valuable than stone ones. During his two visits to the Vatican's Cortile del Belvedere in 1540 and 1545, Primatticcio made plaster casts of marble statues, among which was the so-called Standing Venus (**13**). These casts were used in Fontainebleau to create bronze statues. The Standing Venus and three other statues were exhibited in 1570 – 1646 in the alcoves of Cour de la Fontaine's façade.[66] The replicas are in their original size but do not adhere exactly to the originals. Primaticcio righted the errors of the restorers, and in the Standing Venus's case he made a better reconstruction of the nose and right leg. At the same time, he left out modern additions in order to heighten the statues' impression of authenticity. This was, however, a detriment to the logic of the depicted action, as he left out the drapery and vessel for aromatic materials, which are ancient elements that can be found in all Renaissance drawings of this statue. Primaticcio's Venus is only holding the end of the drapery, making the statue look as if she were holding a handkerchief in her outstretched hand.

**Drawings and Prints**

Preserved sketch books show that artists often attempted to draw all the ancient statues they saw in Rome. Their drawings were then copied, and these reproductions of their sketchbooks and individual drawings subsequently became basic accessories for artistic workshops in all the main cultural centers of Western Europe. Prints based on these drawings greatly facilitated the dissemination of knowledge of ancient statues and testified to their popularity. A systematic analysis of these drawings and prints is being carried out by the project entitled "Census of Antique Works of Art and Architecture Known in the Renaissance."[67] Thanks to this database, we can create a highly accurate image of the reception of ancient statues of Venus in the Italian Renaissance. It shows that the ancient statue of Venus become an integral part of the European cultural horizon in 16th century.

Artists had been drawing ancient statues since the beginning of the 15th century, but perceived them as a means of understanding the anatomy of the human body in movement. Only at the end of this century did drawings begin to faithfully record ancient works of art exactly as they had been preserved, i.e. as fragments. This signalizes that ancient statues as such were the focus of these drawings. The goal of this chapter is to show that a whole repertoire of sculptural types used in antiquity to embody Venus was amassed in Rome and Florence in the 15th and 16th centuries. In addition, Renaissance artists expanded this repertoire; they added types used to represent Nymphs in antiquity but were reinterpreted as Venus in the Renaissance. In drawings and engravings, depictions of ancient Venus statues are sometimes modified

[65] H. 192 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, MR3277 (Fontainebleau, Château). Cf. Nicole Bensoussan, "From the French Galerie to the Italian garden: Sixteenth-century Displays of Primaticcio's Bronzes at Fontainebleau," *Journal of the History of Collections* 27, no. 2 (2015): 175–198.

[66] After 1646, the statues were shifted to the queen's garden, today there are copies on the façade of the Cour de la Fontaine.

[67] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*; http://census.bbaw.de/.

in the spirit of the Renaissance concept, which has no basis in antiquity. This is a very important finding for our further investigation.

The ancient statues that Renaissance artists drew include those that we know to be echoes of Praxiteles's Cnidia. During his stay in Rome in 1431-1432, Pisanello was one of the first Renaissance artists to draw ancient statues, including several variations of Praxiteles's Cnidia.[68] A variation of this statue in reduced size with a dolphin in place of a vessel, which has been in Munich's Glyptothek since 1810, was located in the Roman collection of Cardinal Prospero Santacroce in the 16th century.[69] The oldest drawing after this fragment comes from the end of the 15th century. The inscription accompanying the drawing proves that it was not considered to be Venus; nonetheless, the author of the inscription appreciated the beauty of this depiction of the female body.[70] Sometime before 1503, the torso was drawn by an anonymous Umbrian artist.[71] While the torso has been partially completed in drawings from the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century, Pierre Jacques emphasizes the fragmentary nature in his drawing from the 1570s, which in the 16th century was a guarantee of authenticity.[72] Girolamo da Carpi drew another ancient variation of Praxiteles's Cnidia that has since been lost.[73]

In post-ancient Europe, the most widespread sculptural type depicted the naked goddess with her breasts covered by one hand and her loins with the other.[74] Perhaps the most famous ancient exemplar was the aforementioned Medici Venus, which was excavated in Rome around 1500 (**17**).[75] Painters Maarten de Vos and Pierre Jaques saw very a similar statue; however, the fact that they drew it without arms is problematic.[76] In his manuscript from 1559-1565, Pirro Ligorio writes about a statue with preserved arms, which were perhaps also found and connected to the statue sometime in the second half of the 16th century.[77] In the same period, Willem van

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[68] See Monica Centanni, *Fantasmi dell'antico: La tradizione classica nel Rinascimento* 2. (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2017), 19.

[69] München, Glyptothek Gl. 237. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, 65-66, no. 14.

[70] Holkham, Holkham Hall, MS. 701, fol. 34 v.

[71] Calenzano, Collection of L. Bertini. Umbrian Sketchbook fol. 8v, 9v. See Angerit Schmitt, "Römische Antikensammlungen im Spiegel eines Musterbuches der Renaissance," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 21 (1970): 122.

[72] Paris, BnF (CdE), Album de Pierre Jacques, F b, fol 14v. See Salomon Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques, sculpteur de Reims, dessiné à Rome de 1572 à 1577*, 1-2 (Paris: Leroux, 1902), pl. 14bis.

[73] See Norman W. Canedy, *The Roman Sketchbook of Girolamo da Carpi* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1976), T 47, T 73.

[74] A Renaissance statuette that reproduced this sculptural type was made around 1500 (Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 5693).

[75] The statue was purchased in 1575 from a collection by Gualtieri Ferdinando de' Medici, and was housed in the Villa Medici in Rome until 1677, when it was transferred to the Uffizi in Florence, cf. Dietrich Boschung, "Die Rezeption antiker Statuen als Diskurs: Das Beispiel der Venus Medici," in *Zentren und Wirkungsräume der Antikerezeption. Zur Bedeutung von Raum und Kommunikation für die neuzeitliche Transformation der griechisch-römischen Antike*, ed. Karhrin Schade et al. (Münster: Scriptorium, 2007), 165-176.

[76] Maarten de Vos, ca. 1560: Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet 1935, A 45 (De Vos Sketchbook) fol. 04 r. Pierre Jacques, 1572-1577: Paris, BnF, Album de Pierre Jacques fol. 40v, 41r, 41v.

[77] Pirro Ligorio, Napoli BNN Ms XII B3, fol. 170r-170v. Cf. Anna Schreurs, *Antikenbild und Kunstanschauungen des Pirro Ligorio (1513-1583)*. Atlas, 3. (Cologne: Kӧnig, 2000), 255-258.

Tetrode, a Flemish sculptor working in Rome created a smaller copy of the Medici Venus with both arms.[78] Their placement visibly corresponds to a reconstruction from the 16th century, which was transformed in the 18th century into the form of the statue that we know today.[79] In 1584, the Medici residence in Rome added another two ancient statues to its Medici Venus that were of the same type. They all share the fact that the goddess's hair is falling onto her shoulders. However, the first is differentiated by the fact that Amor, not a dolphin, is sitting by her feet, and her head, although ancient, comes from a different statue.[80] The next Venus statue of this type, which depicts a dolphin biting into an octopus and is also housed today in the Uffizi in Florence, was discussed above in connection with the della Valle collection.[81] There was a whole score of other statues of Venus of this type in Rome in the 16th century.[82]

As mentioned above, Domenico Grimani's collection contained a small sculptural group with Venus and Amor standing on a dolphin.[83] Venus' cloak created the background of the bottom section of her body, by her right leg, the goddess has wrapped the cloak around the vessel and thrown the other end over her left arm. The torso of a similar Venus, which has since been lost, was drawn in Rome by Pierre Jacques.[84] The similar type of Venus statue is characterized by the goddess covering the lower part of her body as the Venus Felix in the Cortile del Belvedere (**45**). This type includes the so-called Mazarin Venus discovered in Rome around 1510, which today is housed in the Getty Museum (**49**).[85] Today, the statue has been completely restored, but the head comes from another ancient statue.[86] The first record of the existence of the Mazarin Venus is the engraving by Giovanni Antonio da Brescia from the time shortly after it was excavated (**50**). As was customary in the 15th century, the author placed the statue into the landscape as if it was truly the goddess herself. This is also the reason why there is no dolphin at her feet. After the mid-16th century, a group sculpture of the Venus Felix type appeared in the Farnese collection in Rome.[87] In this group sculpture, Amor is not looking at Venus, but staring straight forward; he

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[78] H. 57 cm, 1559, Firenze, Ufizzi 1879no. 28. Cf. Conforti, *Vasari, gli Uffizi e il Duca*, 340-41, no. XII.14.

[79] Cf. Frits Scholten and Emile van Binnebeke, *Willem van Tetrode (c. 1525-1580). Guglielmo Fiammingo scultore* (Zwollw: Waanders, 2003).

[80] H. 180 cm, Firenze Uffizi 153. See Vasiliki Machaira, *Les groupes statuaires d'Aphrodite et d'Éros* (Athens: Université nationale et capodistriaque, Faculté de Philosophie, 1993), 67-68 no. 39. It was visible in the Villa Medici in Rome from 1584 to 1787. In 1596, Girolamo Franzini included it in his guide to ancient statues in Rome (Girolamo Franzini, *Icones Statuarum Antiquarum Urbis Romae* (Rome 1596), pl. F 14).

[81] Florencie, Palazzo Pitti, Pitti OdA, 1911,no. 691. When the statue was still in Rome, it was drawn by Amico Aspertini and later also by Francesco de Hollanda (London, The British Museum, Aspertini Sketchbook I 1898-11-23-3, fol. 03 r; Real Monasterio El Escorial, Francisco de Holanda Album 28-1-20, fol. 28v).

[82] For example Franzini, *Icones Statuarum Antiquarum,* pl. D 14 and F05.

[83] Venezia, Museo archeologico nazionale 168.

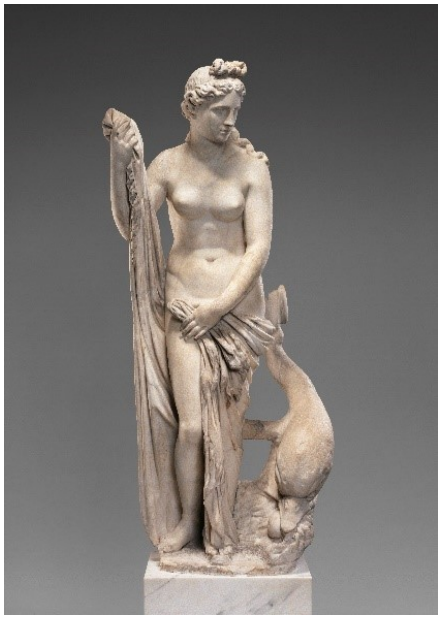
[84] Pierre Jacques, F b, 18 a, fol. 67v (detail). Cf. Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques*, pl. 67bis.

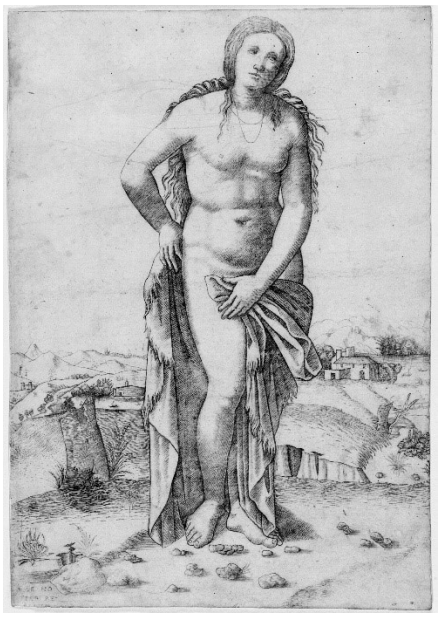
[85] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, 66, no. 15. The statue was named after the French cardinal who allegedly purchased it for his collection, a fact which is, however, improbable. The statue is reproduced with only slight changes in the statuette by Girolamo Campagna from the period around 1597 (London, Christies 5.7.2007).

[86] A Florentine drawing in Budapest documents the statue in the state in which it was found, i.e. without a head and right arm (Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum 2551).

[87] H. 124 cm, Naples, Museo nazionale 6300. Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche,* 158; Gasparri, *Le sculture Farnese*, 83-86, pl. 34,.

is depicted in a walking stance and holds a seashell before him with both hands. The statue was drawn in Rome in the 1570s by Pierre Jacques, who drew a similar half-naked Venus also without arms and a head from the garden of the Cesi family in Rome.[88]



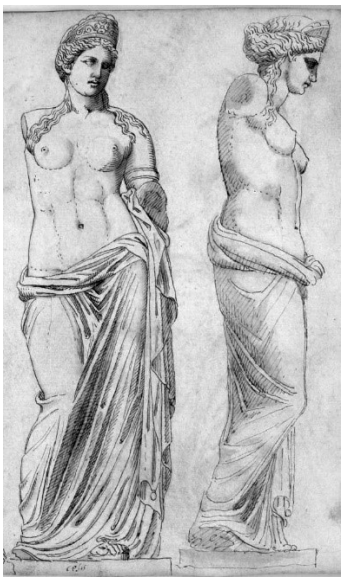


49 (left). Mazarin Venus, h. 184 cm, Roman marble version from the 2nd century AD of the Greek original from the 4th century BC.
50 (right). Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, engraving after the Mazarin Venus, ca. 1513.

The Cesi collection was one of the most prominent Roman collections that intentionally pointed to the family's origin in ancient Rome.[89] In the 16th century, the Cesi collection housed a half naked Venus, which was also drawn by Pierre Jacques (**51**). Just like its more well-known variation, Venus of Arles, this statue is also located in the Louvre in Paris (**52**).[90] Another statue of this type was housed in Ippolito d'Este's collection in the third quarter of the 16th century in his villa in Rome's Quirinal and is located today in Florence's Pitti Palace.[91] Venus's head is from the 16th century and her arms have been restored. After these additions, it appeared for the first time in 1555-1559 in a collection of engravings after ancient statues in Rome with the inscription "Venus Cypria."[92] Yet another statue of this type was seen by Aldrovandi around the

[88] Paris, BnF (CdE) F b, 18 a, reserve (Album de Pierre Jacques) fol. 54 v. Cf. Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques*, p. 129 pl. 54bis. Paris, BnF (CdE), Album de Pierre Jacques, F b, 18 a, fol. 9v. Cf. Reinach, *L'album de Pierre Jacques*, pl. 9bis.
[89] Cf. Katherine M. Bentz, "The Afterlife of the Cesi Garden: Family Identity, Politics, and Memory in Early Modern Rome," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 72, No. 2 (June 2013): 134-165.
[90] Cf. Étienne Michon, "La réplique de la Vénus d'Arles du Musée du Louvre," *Revue Archéologique* 1 (1903), 39-43.
[91] H. 163 cm, Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Salla delle nicchie OdA, 1911no. 694. Capecchi, *Palazzo Pitti*, 648, no. 177.
[92] Giovanni Battista De'Cavalieri, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae,* 1-2 (Rome1585), fol. 35. Cf. Ashby 1920, 147.

mid-16th century in the studiolo of the Palazzo del Bufalo.[93] It is a small marble statue group, with Venus holding her clothing with her right hand while her left is lifted over Amor, who is riding on a dolphin and pouring water from an amphora.



51 (left). Pierre Jacques, drawing of the Cesi Venus, 1572-1577.
52 (right). Cesi Venus, h. 195 cm, Roman marble version of the Hellenistic original.

In the Renaissance, Venus was often depicted sitting comfortably. The ancient statue of a sitting, half-naked woman with clothing wrapped around the lower half of her body is housed today in the Vatican's collections (**53**).[94] The drawing by Marcantonio Raimondi from around 1516 shows that the statue was found without its head, a whole right arm, a left arm from the elbow down and the left foot.[95] Nothing pointed to the fact that this statue depicted Venus, and its girlish figure was closer to that of a nymph. Nonetheless, she was already interpreted as Venus in the period when the first echoes of the work appear in Rome. This is evidenced in the decoration of the bathroom (stufetta) of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican Palace.[96] Venus dominates its iconographic program and the Chiaramonti statue served as a model for the painting of Venus and Amor holding an arrow. The decoration was created in Raphael's workshop and, in addition to the wall painting, a drawing by Giulio Romano and graphics by Agostino Veneziano have also been preserved (**54**).

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[93] Roma, Musei Capitolini 1836, Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche*, 287. See Henning Wrede,. *Der Antikengarten der del Bufalo bei der Fontana Trevi*. Trierer Winckelmannsprogramme, 4 (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1982), 1982, 5, pl. 6,1.

[94] Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, no. 17. The statue was recorded in the 1550s in the Villa d'Este in the Quirinal, where it was exhibited in restored form and was captured in an engraving by Girolamo Porro (Giovanni Battista De'Cavalieri, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae, 1-2* (Rome 1585), fol. 51). Venus is holding a cluster of grapes in her right hand as she reaches towards Amor; she points to another Amor with her left.

[95] Wien, Albertina. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, p. 67, pl. 17a.

[96] Cf. Arnold Nesselrath, "L'antico vissuto: La stufetta del cardinal Bibbiena," in *Pietro Bembo e l'invenzione del Rinascimento* ed. Guido Beltramini et al. (Venice: Marsilio, 2013), 284-291.

53. Chiaramonti Venus, h.158 cm, ancient Roman marble statue after a Hellenistic model.
54. Agostino Veneziano, Venus and Amore, engraving after a wall painting in the bathroom of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican Palace, 1516.

The sculptural type of the crouching Venus was highly popular in ancient times and captivated a whole score of artists again in the 16th century with its complicated pose: the goddess's legs are differentiated, her arms crossed and her head turned behind her.[97] The motivation for this special position was known in the Renaissance from a relief depicting Venus crouching and Amor pouring water onto her back; the second Amor holds a mirror in front of her in the form of a seashell.[98] In 16th century, several exemplars of monumental statues of the crouching Venus could be seen in Rome. One statue was acquired in 1505 and housed in the Palazzo Madama. [99] In the garden loggia of the palace, Maarten van Heemskerck drew it from three different angles in 1532 – 1536.[100] Another version of this sculptural type, in which Amor is standing next to Venus, was located in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome in 1550-1562 (**55**).[101] According to Aldrovandi, the goddess was holding a bow. This reconstruction is documented in an engraving from 1594 (**56**). Aldrovandi's text was published in 1556, so the bow must have been added on sometime before this.[102] This modification, which has no basis in ancient tradition, proves that Renaissance restorers modified ancient

[97] Cf. Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 140-146; Mandy Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus. Ihr Nachleben zwischen Aktualisierung und Neumodellierung von 1500 bis 1570* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2016).

[98] London, The British Museum 1805,0703.182. Cf. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, cat.n. 19; Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 103-104.

[99] Napoli, Museo archeologico 6297. Cf. Gasparri, *Le sculture Farnese*, no. 30..

[100] Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Heemskerck Sketchbook I, 79 D 2, fol. 5 recto; 79 D 2, fol. 6 verso.

[101] Napoli, Museo archeologico 6293. Cf. Gasparri, *Le sculture Farnese*, no. 29. Amor standing next to the crouching Venus is recorded in Rome from the beginning of the 16th century (Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano, Palazzo Altemps 8564). Venus is sitting upright, and next to her is a dolphin and Amor with a towel. This statue group was drawn in 1549-1553 by Girolamo da Carpi (Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum & Library 1954.0807.099v).

[102] Aldrovandi, *Delle statue antiche*, 149.

statues to fit the moralizing interpretation of the time. In early modern Europe, Amor was considered the main originator of erotic desire. Venus often prevented him from doing so, confiscating his bow and arrows or physically punishing him, as we shall see in the next chapter on Renaissance statuettes of Venus.


55 (left). Crouching Venus in Naples, h. 122 cm, Roman marble version of the Hellenistic model.
56 (right). Giovanni Battista de'Cavalieri, copper engraving after the crouching Venus in Naples, 1594.

The statue of the crouching Venus which is now in Madrid has both her head and whole torso turned backwards and is kneeling on a turtle.[103] In the first half of the 16th century, the statue in the Roman Massimi collection was drawn in its original state before the head and arms were added; one drawing is in Venice and the other in Bayonne.[104] Plutarch's moralistic interpretation mentioned above was adopted by Andrea Alciato and Georg Pictorius in the first German book on ancient mythology.[105] In the first publication of Alciato's "Book of Emblems" from 1531, Venus as the patroness of marriage is depicted outside with her foot on a turtle; in the second edition, she is shut inside a house.[106] The goddess is naked with her hair down and holds an apple in her right hand while pointing to the turtle with the left hand. Two doves on the ground around the goddess are looking at the turtle. The meaning of Venus's turtle was discussed by Giraldi and Cartari in their mythological manuals written around the mid-16th century.[107] Venus with a turtle is significant in that it

[103] Madrid, Museo del Prado E000033. Cf. Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 93-97.
[104] Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia 1136r; Bayonne, Musée Bonnat, NI 1603r. See Ann H. Allison, "Antique Sources of Leonardo's Leda," *The Art Bulletin* 56, No. 3 (September 1974), fig. 8.
[105] See Georg Pictorius, *Theologia mythologica* (Antwerp: Michel Hillenius, 1532), 18v. Cf. Plutarchos, *Conjugalia Praecepta*, 32 (*Moralia* 142d, similarly 381E).
[106] Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum libellus* (Paris: Christianus Wechelus, 1534), 106 (Emblema C). Cf. Andrea Alciato, *Il Libro degli Emblemi secondo le edizioni del 1531 e del 1534*, introduzione, traduzione e commento di Mino Gabriele (Milan: Adelphi Edizioni, 2009), 511-514.
[107] Giglio Gregorio Giraldi, *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia* (Basel: Joannes Oporinus,1548), 543.

defines the naked goddess as the patroness of chaste women.[108] This was also the reason for the success of the later statue by Antoin Coysevox for French King Louis XIV, in which Venus's chastity is even more emphasized by her crotch being covered by drapery and her breast with a lock of her hair.[109]

Based on ancient depictions of the crouching Venus, Marcantonio Raimondi created around 1510 an engraving with the goddess in a landscape and added Amor with a quiver over his shoulder standing on a column, and therefore he knew this was Aphrodite.[110] Raimondi may have seen a whole score of exemplars of this sculptural type in Rome on which he based his own version, to which he added a non-ancient face with a solemn expression.[111] Part of the updating of the myth is the natural environment, which does not evoke the Mediterranean, but the landscapes of Albrecht Dürer from beyond the Alps. In his engravings, Raimondi not only imitated ancient models and contemporary patterns, he also commented on the scenes. The depicted action is not clear, but Amor is evidently reaching his right hand towards the lock of hair on Venus's back. Ancient depictions of bathing may have served as artistic inspiration here, i.e. Amor standing behind the crouching goddess and pouring water down her back. The template for Raimondi's engraving exists, and it depicts a bow resting on a column that the author eventually left out of the engraving.[112] We find an almost identical Amor in Raimondi's engraving from 1508 depicting a sitting Mars and Venus with a torch.[113] Raimondi's engraving was highly copied in Italy and ultramontane Europe. One of the first copies is the engraving of German artist Albrecht Altdorfer of 1521-1526, which emphasizes the connection to bathing, as the goddess's head is wrapped in a towel.[114] These works emphasize Venus's phallic gesture, i.e. the extended middle finger of her right hand, which is only hinted at in Raimondi's engraving. This gesture and sneering expression of Altdorfer's Venus clearly define her as the patroness of condemnable sexuality.[115]

Around the mid-16th century, the headless torso of a statue of a half-naked woman was found in Rome.[116] The statue of Venus, who is looking over her shoulder at her own behind, is known as Venus Callipyge (**24**). It immediately aroused great interest, as it was clear whom the statue depicted thanks to the ancient story of the origin of the Temple of Venus Callipyge mentioned at the beginning of the 16th century by Erasmus of Rotterdam.[117] Proof of the fact that Erasmus's mention of this type of

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[108] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Sonia Maffei (Turin: S. G. Einaudi, 2012), 495-496. Cf. William S. Heckscher, "Aphrodite as a Nun," *Phoenix* 7, no. 3 (Autumn 1953): 105-117.

[109] Paris, Louvre MR 1826. Coysevox presented the statue as Phidias's work by adding a Greek pseudo-signature of the famous Greek sculptor next to his own.

[110] E.g. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 49.97.110.

[111] Mina Gregory, ed., *In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece* (Athens: The Hellenic Culture Organization, 2003), no. XI/25.

[112] Paris, Louvre 10401r. Cf. Marzia Faietti, "A New Preparatory Drawing by Marcantonio Raimondi for his Kneeling Venus," *Print Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1989), 308-311.

[113] Cf. Gregory, *In the Light of Apollo*, no. VII,19.

[114] E.g. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 18.84.2.

[115] Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 164-193.

[116] Klaus Parlasca, "Aphrodite Kallipygos: Ihre kunstarchäologische Stellung und Aspekte ihrer Rezeption," in *Zentren und Wirkungsräume der Antikerezeption*, ed. Kathrin Schade et al. (Münster: Scriptorium, 2007), 223-236.

[117] Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Adagia,* 4.7.15 (3615).

Venus statue had not been lost can perhaps be found in the relief of a naked woman depicted from behind, with her head turned backwards and to one side, which was created around 1509 by Ludwig Krug after a design by Albrecht Dürer.[118] In 1556, Vincenzo Cartari wrote down the anecdote about the Temple of Venus Callipyge in his manual on ancient mythology as proof of the fact that *the ancient of those times were really addicted to lecherous pleasures*.[119] The immorality of the story was probably the reason it was ultimately left out of the Latin translation of Cartari's work.[120] The ancient statue that embodied Venus Callipyge in Renaissance Rome finally ended up in the Farnese collection, which is evidenced by its illustration in a collection of engravings of ancient statues in Rome published in 1594.[121] Two years later, Franzini incorporated it into his illustrated guide to the statues of Rome.[122] The interest that it aroused can be seen in statuettes, the highest-quality example of which is located in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum.[123] In the ancient original, Venus is looking to the side; on Renaissance statuettes however, she is looking at her behind, which strongly heightened the work's erotic character.[124] Another ancient sculptural type presented the female body in a similarly contorted position, evidently putting on or taking off her sandal. During this demanding action, one of her hands reaches upward and the other is free and pointing down to her lifted foot. The now lost exemplar was drawn in 1532-1536 by Maarten van Heemskerck.[125]

As Pietro Bembo wrote in 1525: *all day long artists from far and wide arrive in Rome, where beautiful antique figures in marble and bronze are scattered here and there in public and in private … capturing their form in the small spaces of their sheets of paper and wax tablets*.[126] This systematic activity required a great amount of work that was not rewarded. Finding private residences with collections of ancient statues, acquiring permission to visit them, drawing often unsuitably placed and poorly lit statues took much time, and preparation for such undertakings could take even longer, as the artist had to be trained in advance. Statues were usually preserved only in fragments that meant nothing to laymen, and artists had to learn how to interpret only partially preserved parts of the body and drapery, what to take notice of, and what angle was best for drawing a fragment of a statue. They had to know how individual statues differed and

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[118] Cf. Jörg Rasmussen, "Kleinplastik unter Dürers Namen: Das New Yorker Rückenakt-Relief," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983), 131–144; Ingrid S. Weber, "Venus Kallipygos: der Weibliche Rückenacht nach Dürer," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983), 145–150.

[119] Vincenzo Cartari, *Le Imagini con la spositione de i Dei de gli antichi* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1556), 93r. English translation John Mulryan.

[120] Vincenzo Cartari, *Imagines deorum, qui ab antiquis colebantur* (Lyon: Stephanus Michael, 1581.

[121] Giovanni Battista De'Cavalieri, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae*, 3-4 (Rome 1594), fol. 66.

[122] Franzini, *Icones Statuarum Antiquarum*, pl. D 3.

[123] Oxford, Ashmolean Museum WA 1960.39, cf. Renate Eikelmann, ed., *Bella figura: Europäische Bronzekunst in Süddeutschland um 1600* (Munich: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, 2015), no. 30, p. 236-238; Frankfurt am Main, Liebighaus 1318, cf. Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, ed., *Natur und Antike in der Renaissance* (Frankfurt: Liebighaus Museum, 1985), 559, no. 301.

[124] E.g. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum BK-16539 (Italian bronze statuette, 1550-1600).

[125] Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Heemskerck Sketchbook I, inv. no. 79 D 2, fol. 25 verso. Cf. Bober and Rubinstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture*, 69 no. 20.

[126] Pietro Bembo, *Prose e rime*, ed. Carlo Dionisotti (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice, 1960), 183. English translation K.W. Christian.

what was important for their proper reconstruction. What was all of this heading towards and what was the result of this extraordinary expenditure of energy and knowledge? As we shall see, thorough preparation culminated in a surprisingly small number of realizations, which usually do not correspond to the quality of the ancient models that were studied. At the same time, we also see fundamental transformations in the content of the depictions in statuettes and statues.

**Statuettes**

Small Italian Renaissance statuettes of Venus cover almost the whole repertoire of poses and depicted actions of the goddess that we know from ancient Rome. One of the oldest was created at the end of the 15th century and is characterized by the attempt to faithfully portray the ancient form and capture the character of the goddess. Adriano Fiorentino's Venus is erotically attractive thanks to her distinct free and supporting leg, even though her loins are smooth like ancient exemplars.[127] The goddess stands on a seashell and, judging by the gesture of her right hand, we can infer that Amor was standing next to her.[128] She is depicted as stepping out of the water with her hair loose and wet and lifting one lock for it to dry more quickly, which was a common motif in ancient art. In the first quarter of the 16th century, a whole score of similar statuettes was created, but they usually do not reach the height of Adriano Fiorentino's statuette, which is peculiar. We would expect rather the opposite tendency, or at least a continuation of such a grandly initiated trend.

Fiorentino's statuette shows the goddess wringing out her wet, loose hair in a way that all women must have done it. However, it was not a motif that had been observed from life, but rather from ancient depictions. In addition, there was also a literary inspiration, i.e. accounts of Apelles's painting mentioned above. It was known from Antipater of Sidon's epigram (also mentioned above) that Apelles' Venus was wringing out her hair. Poliziano used this motif in his poem from 1494, in which he writes about Venus emerging from the waves, wringing out her hair with her right hand and covering her breast with her left.[129] The enormous significance that was attributed in the Renaissance to the ancient motif of a woman wringing out her wet hair was due to knowledge of Pliny's claim that Apelles was the greatest ancient painter.[130] This was also the reason why Venus drying her hair is found on the wall painting of Baldassare Peruzzi on the ceiling of the Loggia di Galatea in Villa Farnesina from 1510-1511 and in Titian's painting from around 1520.[131]

The naked Venus is also wringing out her loose hair with both hands on the marble relief by Antonio Lombardo of 1510-1515.[132] Venus is characterized by the

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[127] Philadelphia, PA, Philadelphia Museum of Art 1930-1-17.

[128] Hans R. Weinrauch, *Europäische Bronzestatuetten 15.-18. Jahrhundert* (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1967), 89-90.

[129] *Greek Anthology*, 16.178. Polizano, *Stanze*, 1.102-103: "la dea premendo colla destra il crino, coll'altra il dolce pome ricoprissi."

[130] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35.79.

[131] Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scottland NG 2751.

[132] London, Victoria and Albert Museum A.19-1964. This is the first of similar small-scale reliefs that were highly popular in Padua and Venice in the 1530s, cf. Vincenzo Farinella, *Alfonso d'Este: Le immagini e il potere. Da Ercole de'Roberti a Michelangelo* (Milan: Officina Libraria, 2014), 614-615.

water below her feet; the goddess stands on an open seashell, and next to it is a closed seashell. In addition, a Latin inscription was added below the scene stating that the naked Venus is wringing out her wet hair. By combining the depiction of Venus at her toilette and the inscription, the relief was likened to the aforementioned painting by Apelles. The inscription on the relief by Antonio Lombardo is an ancient quote from Ovid's "The Art of Love," and the last pentameter from the distich mentions famous ancient statues.[133] The verse heightened the prestige of the marble relief by placing it on the same level as bronze statues by the famous ancient sculptor Myron and the famous unnamed ancient marble statue or gem depicting Venus wringing out her hair. The reference to Ovid's depiction both celebrates and interprets the scene, as educated members of the elite knew that the verses are a part of the passage about secretive means of beautification. The ancient poet forbids women to show themselves to men while they are decorating themselves, but makes an exception for combing hair, as their beauty is heightened by their loose locks flowing down their backs.[134] This is precisely what is depicted on the relief by Antonio Lombardo, which was inspired by this frequently adapted ancient sculptural type.

Italian bronze statuettes from the beginning of the 16th century reproduce the ancient sculptural type with the naked goddess with one hand over her breasts and the other over her loins. In addition to poses and anatomy, they also took the silver and gold plating from ancient models. The statuette of Venus with drapery around her hips comes from the period around 1500. In her left hand she holds a mirror to look at herself and covers her loins with her right hand.[135] This type was highly popular in northern Italy, and we also know of a similar version but without the drapery at her sides. The combination of these two actions is not probable, but has analogies in ancient art and can be found, for example, on a Roman mosaic.[136] One such statuette of Venus but with a preserved mirror in her hand was purchased as an ancient original by Basel lawyer Basilius Amerbach in the 1550s.[137] The statuette of this type was the model for a painting by Gossaert, which depicts Venus with the same curly locks of hair falling down to her chest in an identical pose and with the same attribute.[138] This connection between the statuette and painting gives proof of the prominent role of easily movable and relatively affordable statuettes in the reception of ancient statues of Venus in the visual arts of the 16th century.

Ancient statuettes of the naked Venus are often characterized by a walking posture, which may be a reference to her arrival into the world and her omnipresence, while erotic attraction is denoted by her thick and complexly styled hair. We find both

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[133] Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 3.219-222. Cf. Romana Sammern and Julia Saviello, eds., *Schönheit – der Körper als Kunstprodukt: Kommentierte Quellentexte von Cicero bis Goya* (Berlin: Reimer, 2019), 49-57.

[134] Ovid, *Ars amatoria*, 3.234.

[135] Francesco Francia, "Fortnum Venus", Oxford, Ashmolean Museum WA1899.CDEF.B411. Cf. Jeremy Warren, *Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum*, 1 (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Publications, 2014), 76 - 82 no. 20.

[136] Evamaria Schmidt, "Venus," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* VIII. 1. (Zürich: Artemis, 1997), no. 167.

[137] Basel, Historisches Museum 1909.243. Venetian or Paduan artist, ca. 1500, belt added by Christoph Kumberger (before 1553–1611).

[138] Oil on panel, h. 59 cm, ca. 1521. Rovigo, Pinacotheca dell'Accademia dei Concordi 79. Cf. Thomas Kren et al., eds., *The Renaissance Nude* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018), no. 40.

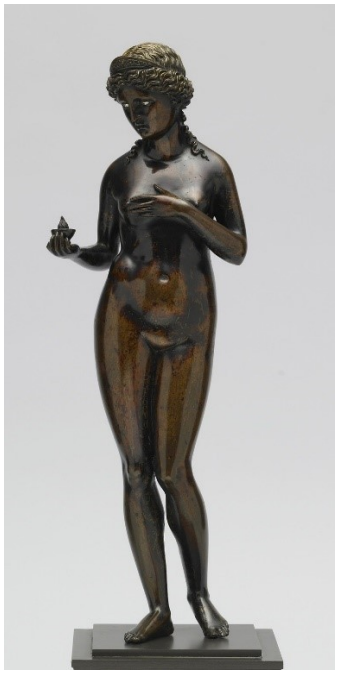
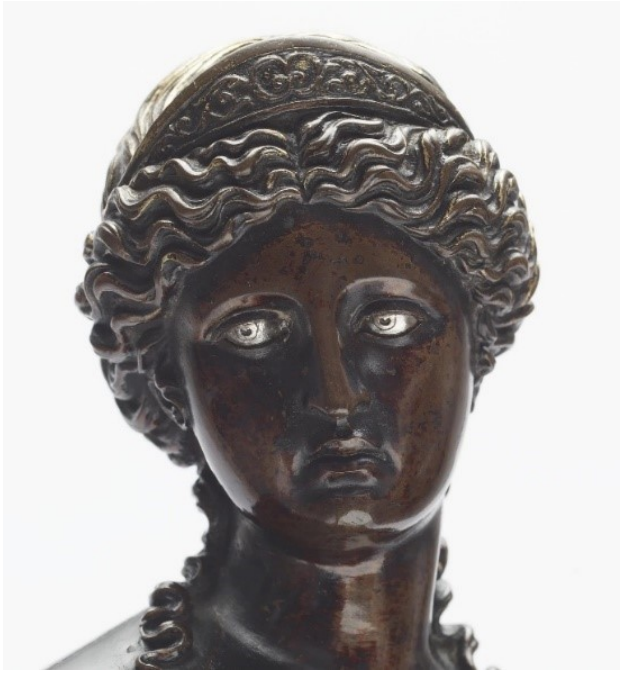
on a Renaissance silver-plated bronze statuette, the so-called Cardinal Granvelle Venus from around 1500.[139] The goddess's hair is tied around her temples in an "Isis knot." Efforts to create an ancient appearance motivated the author of the statuette to lump together various attributes – Venus is holding a seashell in one hand, which refers to her birth from the sea, and an apple in her left, indicating her victory in the Judgment of Paris. We find both attributes in ancient originals, but not at the same time; in addition, ancient goddesses do not hold seashells in their hands. The attribute that we never find in ancient statuettes is a small vessel with a lit fire held forwards by Venus, who wears a diadem (**57**). This attribute appears in the 16th century in a whole score of other statuettes of this goddess.

57. Northern Italian artist, Venus with a burning urn height 19.6 cm, gilded bronze statuette, from Venice?, ca. 1500-1520.

A fire, torch or burning lamp appears in the literature and visual arts of the 13th century as an attribute of Christian Caritas (Amor dei), who melded with the ancient Venus.[140] The fact that sexual love was not involved is attested by the solemn expression on Venus's face, her fixed gaze and the drooping corners of the mouth. The aforementioned Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi specialized in the creation of bronze statuettes based on ancient models in Italy and for this reason was given the nickname Antico. This sculptor was the first to perfect the ancient method of depicting Venus using faultless proportions with probable stances while capturing movement. He worked for the Mantua court, for which he also created in 1520-1523 a half-meter high bronze statuette of Venus with gilded hair and silver-inlayed eyes (**58-59**).[141] In this example, a burning lamp of love, the attribute of life, is combined with an eloquent

[139] H. 26,2 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer 7343.
[140] Ebert-Schifferer, *Natur und Antike*, 373, 420-1; Guy de Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane: Dictionnaire d'un langage perdu,1450-1600* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 223, 441.
[141] Cf. Ebert-Schifferer, *Natur und Antike*, no. 116.

gesture; Venus is holding her breast as if she were trying to press milk from it. She is thus characterized as Venus Genetrix (i.e. the Mother) in her attribute and gesture. This statuette is exceptionally taller than the aforementioned statuette by Adriano Fiorentino, but the monumentalization is accompanied here by the clear incorporation of the work into the Christian context.

58-59. Antico, bronze statuette of Venus, h. 45,6 cm, 1520-1523.

The creation of Venus statuettes was carried out by prominent Italian artists such as Baccio Bandinelli, who created variations of ancient sculptural types.[142] Venus is characterized by her hairstyle and Isis knot; she may be standing on a seashell or wave, and may be holding either a dove or flower. In addition to her hands covering her breasts or loins, Venus may be characterized by a dolphin, Amor, or both. Around the mid-16th century, artists from France and the Netherlands who had been trained in Italy also began work in the production of bronze Venus statuettes. Dutch sculptor Willem Tetrode (Guglielmo Fiammingo) worked in Florence and Rome. His series of statuettes based on ancient originals has already been mentioned above, and included a statuette after the Medici Venus type. Benvenuto Cellini's short stay in the French court of Francis I in 1540-1545 made evidently a strong impression on French sculptors. An example of the Italian influence is a French statuette of Venus of c. 1550 in an extravagant pose with a raised hand, which styles a lock of hair on her head.[143]

Artists in ultramontane Europe held a more reserved attitude towards Venus than in Italy, and either condemned the goddess as a pagan demon or presented her as something sensational. Both approaches manifested themselves in the possible ultramontane contribution to Venus's iconography, which gave the goddess "African" traits, i.e. curly hair, a flat nose and pronounced lips. This was not just a one-time

[142] Florence, Bargello 388. Cf. Detlef Heikamp et al., eds. *Baccio Bandinelli: Scultore e maestro,1493-1560* (Florence: Giunti, 2014), no. 28.
[143] Kansas City, MO, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art 64-13.

improvisation – this sculptural type is known in at least thirteen variations on the theme. The model was probably created by Dutch sculptor Johann Gregor von der Schardt.[144] Scholars assume this to be Venus judging by the pose, nakedness, mirror and ball of cloth. However, we cannot rule out the fact that the audience of the time merely saw a black woman at her toilette who was compared to Venus in the way she was depicted.

Christian and pagan symbolism is combined in one of the oldest Italian statuettes of Venus created around 1500. This was an ambitious work with silver-inlayed eyes, the left hand covering the loins and the right hand raised in the gesture of a blessing.[145] In the last third of the 16th century, Italian depictions of Venus show the goddess distancing herself from her own body, a fact which is wholly contradictory to the way the goddess was depicted in ancient times. Girolamo Campagna's Venus is characterized by her nakedness and a dolphin, but her head is bowed and her right hand covers her breast – this gesture did not indicate the veiling of nakedness, but fertility, as her nipple is visible between her fingers as if she were pressing out milk. She is not covering her loins with her left hand, but holding the tail of the dolphin with it. Her foot rests on the dolphin's head, indicating that she holds control over the animal.[146] On another statuette by the same artist, the goddess is covering her loins with her left hand, while her right hand is outstretched in a dismissive gesture; her head is bowed as she looks away from her hand, and her foot is also placed on the dolphin's head.[147] The goddess depicted on the statuette by Tiziano Aspetti from the last quarter of the 16th century has a similar pose, and is also stepping on a dolphin while bowing her head down towards it.[148]

The meaning of Renaissance statuettes is illuminated by those that depict Venus with Amor, especially the ones that were inspired by Ovid's tale of Venus injuring herself on Amor's arrow while kissing him, which was already known by Dante and Boccaccio.[149] This banal accident aroused in the goddess a love for Adonis, who paid for his passion for hunting with his life as he was killed by a boar. The story in the Italian Renaissance was interpreted in medieval tradition as a warning against bodily caresses, which could turn against those who made these advances. Even the seemingly innocent love between a son and mother could lead to tragic ends. In this sense, Ovid's story is interpreted by Berchorius around 1340, as he states that kissing amongst relatives arouses lust and eventually leads to incest.[150] As was mentioned above, Ovid's text inspired Raphael to create the wall painting in the bathroom of Cardinal Bibbiena in the Vatican, which became general knowledge thanks to Agostino Veneziano's engraving mentioned above. The story was illustrated in a drawing by Michelangelo Buonarroti from 1532–1533, after which Jacopo Pontormo

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[144] Cf. Maraike Bückling, *Die Negervenus* (Frankfurt: Liebieghaus, 1991).

[145] Baltimore, Walters Art Museum 54.244.

[146] New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 40.14.7.

[147] Berlin, Skulpturensammlung 7279.

[148] H. 24,1 cm, Universitry of Michigan Museum of Art 1958/2.52.

[149] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10.525-528; Dante, *Divine Comedy: Purgatorio,* 28.65-66 (cf. Christophoro Landino, *Comedia di Danthe Alighieri poeta divino: col'espositione di Christopho Landino* (Venice 1529), 103v); Giovanni Boccaccio, *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (Milan: Ugo Mursia,1987), 54.

[150] Petrus Berchorius, *Ovidius Moralizatus*, ed. Joseph Engels (Utrecht: Instituut voor Laat latijn der Rijksuniversiteit, 1962), 152.

and Agnolo Bronzino created paintings.[151] A statuette on this theme was created by a sculptor from the circle of Jacopo Sansovino in the mid-16th century. With a solemn face, the goddess is turning to Amor, who holds the now-missing arrow which has injured his mother in his raised hand (**60**). Amor is sitting on a dolphin swimming above the surface of the water; his head looks like a globe, a symbolic reference to Amor's world rule. The statuette stands out in its size; it is almost one meter high.

60. Circle of Jacopo Sansovino, Venus and Amore on a Dolphin, h. 88.9 cm, bronze statuette, ca. 1550.

In the 1560s, Giambologna created a model for a sculptural group of Amor and the naked Venus standing next to him. She is characterized by a diadem and has placed her bent leg on a stool in order to pull a thorn from her foot.[152] A similar statuette was created in 1560-1570 by the most famous French Renaissance sculptor Jacquiot Ponce, whose goddess has taken the pose of the ancient kneeling/bathing Venuses.[153] Venus pulling a thorn from her foot was linked to the death of Adonis in Italy. Statuettes depicting Venus tending to her wound thus do not depict a banal accident, but emphasize the fact that love is always linked to blood, pain and the threat of death. This is also indicated by the statuette by Carlo di Cesari del Palagio from 1590-93 that depicts Venus holding a burning heart in her outstretched right hand; the crying Amor

[151] William Keach, "Cupid Disarmed, or Venus Wounded? An Ovidian Source for Michelangelo and Bronzino," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 327-331; Cf. Rebekah Compton, "Omnia Vincit Amor. The Sovereignty of Love in Tuscan Poetry and Michelangelo's Venus and Cupid," *Mediaevalia* 33 (2012): 229-260.

[152] New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 32.100.183.

[153] London, Victoria and Albert A.13-1964. The ceramic model of the bronze statuette, which was used to create the molds for the bronze copies, has also been preserved (Paris, Louvre R.F. 3455).

with a quiver over his shoulder reaches out for it in vain.[154] With her other hand, Venus is pressing on her breast, which characterizes her as the goddess of fertility protecting life against the threat posed by the irresponsible Amor. The burning heart, the embodiment of the power of love, has appeared since the beginning of the 16th century as an attribute of Venus as a planetary deity, but also as the visualization of how she affects a person.[155] This attribute is the equivalent of Amor's weapons, which his mother refuses to yield to him, and we encounter it on statuettes from the beginning of the 16th century. We find the burning heart as Venus's attribute on a statuette from around 1600, which on rare occasion shows the goddess clothed, emphasizing the necessity to control one's bodily passions.[156] The openings in the breasts on this statuette point to the link between Venus and Caritas, i.e. Christian virtue, which was discussed above.

Love is a powerful weapon, which can also have woeful consequences, and therefore Amor must know when and how to use this weapon. This is the message of the exceptional French statuette from the same period, which depicts Venus teaching Amor how to shoot his bow and spread love in the correct manner.[157] The engraving from the 16th century shows Venus armed with a large arrow as she shows Amor where to fire.[158] Renaissance statuettes usually depict the exact opposite action, i.e. Venus is taking away Amor's bow or breaking it. The problems which the goddess had with her mischievous son are described in Apuleius's novel, in which Venus becomes angry with Amor due to his love for Psyche and threatens him: *Indeed, in order to make you feel the insult all the more I will adopt one of my young slaves and make over to him those wings of yours and torches, your bow and arrows, and the rest of my equipment, which I did not give you to use in that way*.[159] In Lucian's text, Aphrodite admits to having to punish her son for firing arrows of love at her: *So I have threatened him time and again, if he does not stop it, I'll smash his archery set and strip off his wings. Last time I even took my sandal to his behind*.[160] Proof of the reception of this theme in Renaissance literature is found in a poem from 1496 that celebrates the now-lost work of sculptor Pirgotel. The author asks why the goddess on the group of statues is raising her whip at her own son. He speculates that it was due to her son that she was caught by her husband being unfaithful with Mars, or because Amor on the contrary has neglected his duties. The author of the poem concludes: *Whatever the answer I fear the anger of the Sybarite goddess, and love still burns me even though he suffers these cuts*.[161]

The dispute between Venus and Amor was already a popular topic in ancient art. But the goddess reprimanding or punishing her mischievous son carries a new

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[154] H. 74 cm, The Quentin and Mara Kopp Foundation, San Francisco. Cf. Dorothea Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard und Carlo di Cesare del Palagio. Spätplastiker der Renaissance,* 1-2 (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2004), vo. 2, cat. C8; Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, no. 28 p. 222. Carlo di Cesari del Palagio was Giambologna's aid and member of Florence's Accademia; he also worked in Germany, where he created the statuette of Venus with the burning heart.

[155] Cf. Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles*, 131-132.

[156] Dresden, Skulpturensammlung ZV 3524.

[157] San Marino, California, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens 17.21.

[158] Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-OB-6248.

[159] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 5.29-30. English translation J. A. Hanson.

[160] Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods*, 19.232. English translation M. D. Macleod.

[161] Battista Guarini, *Poema divo Herculi Ferrariensium duci dicatum* (Modena: Rocociola, 1496). English translation A. Debenedetti and C. Elam.

meaning in Italian Renaissance art. It was no longer a "juicy detail" from the world of the gods that was meant to bring the goddess closer to the people as a caring mother. In post-ancient Europe, Venus is presented as a deity refusing bodily passions by punishing Amor, who is on the contrary the instigator of sexual passion. Around 1500, Pier Maria Serbaldi da Pescia created a statuette of the naked Venus with Amor, which was meant to look ancient thanks to the material used, i.e. porphyry imported in ancient times from Egypt.[162] The statuette was evidently destined for the Medici court. Venus is leaning toward Amor, who stands next to her, and holds him firmly by the arm to prevent him from shooting an arrow from his bow. Amor was originally gripping a metal bow and arrow in his hands, which are now lost; behind him on the ground is a quiver with arrows. Venus is clutching the wings of a bird standing on a column with her left hand, most likely a dove, which was sacred to her. Her cloak has been thrown over the column, on the side of which is the inscription "Made by Pier Maria" written in Greek lettering, which was intended to emphasize further the ancient character of the scene. The statuette is interesting in that Venus is not only preventing Amor from acting, she is also controlling the dove, which is noted for its sexual intensity.

The image type of Venus disarming Amor is not known in ancient art, and we encounter it for the first time in the 14th century on a fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti from 1321, in which a sculptural group of this type adorns the architecture in the Basilica of San Francesco in Siena in a scene depicting the martyrdom of Franciscans in Thane.[163] One of the oldest depictions of Venus punishing Amor is a statuette of the goddess kneeling on one knee in the model of the ancient statues that show her bathing. With one hand, the goddess is holding Amor on the ground as he lies on his back, and raises the other to strike him.[164] It was created in Padua, which was one of the centers of statuette production in the 16th century. This "thrashing" is also depicted in a relief bronze plaquette by Riccio created before 1532. The naked Venus's mouth is open and is reprimanding Amor. The action is unambiguous – Venus is raising her right hand to strike while holding the hair of the crying Amor, whose legs are buckling, in her left.[165] Venus dressed as a sutler and holding the crying Amor by the arm as he tries to escape her grasp is found on a drawing by Albrecht Altdorfer from 1508.[166] At the end of the 16th century, Paolo Savin created a statuette of the naked Venus with a diadem who is raising her hand with a now-lost object and preparing to strike Amor with it.[167] The small god is in a semiprone position and covers the back portion of his body, which was likely struck by the first blow.

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[162] Firenze, Palazzo Pitti 1067. Cf. Maria Sframeli, *The Myth of Venus* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale 2003), no. 3.

[163] See Suzanne Maureen Burke, "The Martyrdom of the Franciscans by Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 65 (2002): 484-485.

[164] Klosterneuburg, Stiftsmuseum I.N. KG 3. Cf. Manfred Leithe-Jasper and Francesca De Gramatica, eds., *Bagliori d 'Antico: Bronzetti al Castello del Buonconsiglio* (Trento: Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e collezioni provinciali, 2013), 126-130.

[165] Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1957.14.257.

[166] Berlin Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett KdZ 4184. Cf. Ursula Mielke et al., *The New Hollstein German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts, 1400-1700, 2. Albrecht and Erhard Altdorfer* (Rotterdam: Sound & Vision Interactive, 1997), e-43.

[167] Los Angeles, Getty Museum 85.SB.66.

In 1639, Giambologna's pupil created a bronze statuette of Venus whipping Amor on the behind with a bundle of roses (**61**). The counterpart to this work was Venus breaking Amor's arrows.[168] In the 4th century, Ausonius described a wall painting showing Venus whipping Amor with a bundle of roses; the poem captivated Vincenzo Cartari to such a degree that he paraphrased a passage and incorporated it into his book on depictions of ancient gods from 1556.[169] We find a reception of the motif in a poem by Giambattista Marino from 1623, which may have been an inspiration for the aforementioned statuette.[170] Statuettes of Venus were designated exclusively for private use, and it is therefore surprising that they show the goddess distancing herself from her nakedness and punishing Amor, who is presented as the exclusive originator of destructive bodily passion.

61. Giovanni Francesco Susini, Venus Whipping Amor, bronze, h. 57.2 cm, ca. 1638.

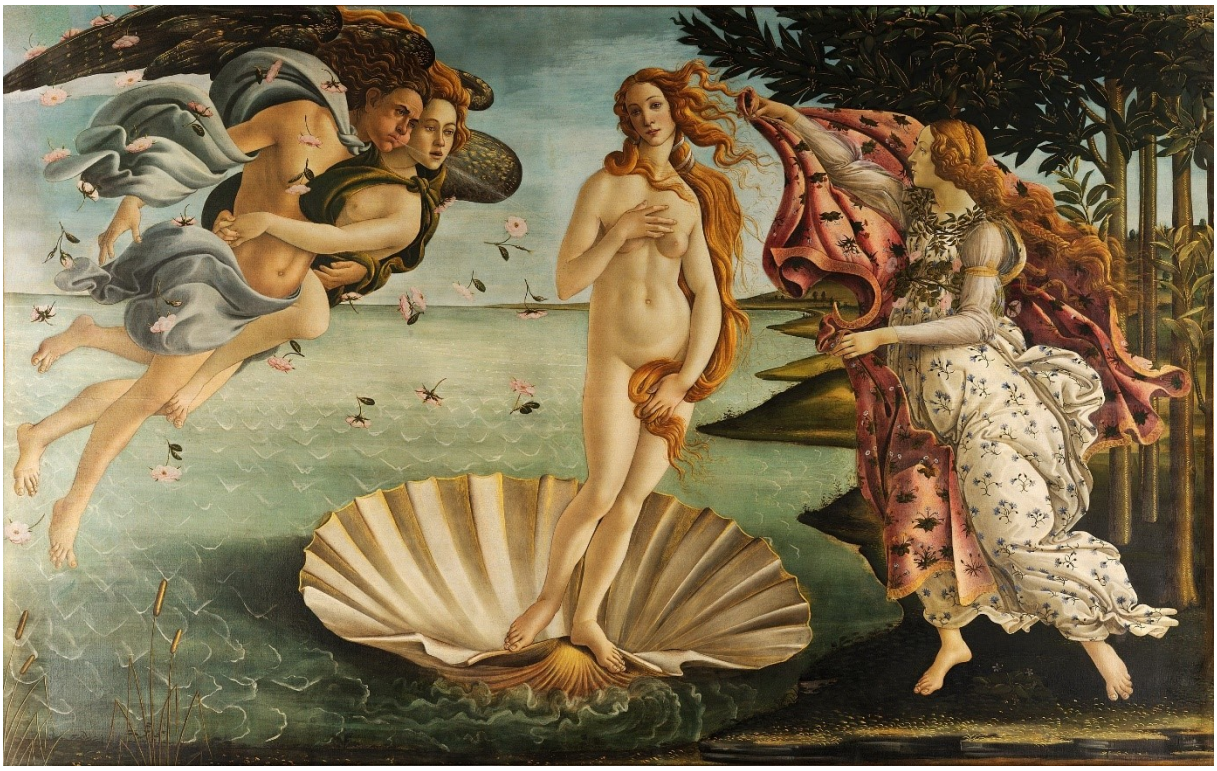
**Statues**

In 16th century Italy, we find statues of Venus primarily on the paintings destined to be hung on walls, which served to decorate private residences. The physical handling of these works was much easier than with statues; they could be moved operatively, and their accessibility was completely under the control of their owners. Thanks to this fact, the commissioning party could provide artists with greater maneuvering space

[168] Paris, Louvre OA 8276 a OA 8277.
[169] Cartari, *Le Imagini*, CVIIv-CXv.
[170] See Giambattista Marino, *L'Adone* (Turin: Compagnia della Concordia, 1623), 6 (1, 17).

when it came to depicting nakedness and erotica, which were evidently highly sought-after and also highly controlled commodities in Renaissance Italy.[171]

The first to make full use of hanging pictures as new bearers of artistic mastery was Sandro Botticelli. But we have no information on who commissioned his famous paintings of ca. 1484 depicting Venus in life-size and inspired by ancient statues of the goddess (**62**).[172] Giorgio Vasari, who in his pioneering work "Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects" always emphasized the importance of those commissioning artworks in the development of the visual arts, states only that he saw the works at some point in the second quarter of the 16th century in the Cosimo de'Medici villa in Castello. He writes about them in the first publication of "Lives of…" published in 1550: *one depicts the Birth of Venus, and those breezes and winds which blew her and her Cupids to land; and the second is another Venus, the symbol of Spring, being adorned with flowers by the Graces*.[173] Both paintings are located today in the Uffizi in Florence. On the first, Venus is dressed and lifting her right hand in a gesture of blessing, and her identity is verified by Amor with a bow, who flies over her head. On the next, the goddess stands naked on a seashell floating on the sea. The two-winged personifications of the wind have ferried the goddess to the shore, where she is awaited by Hora, who will veil her in a cloak.



62. Sandro Botticelli, Birth of Venus, 172.5 × 278.9 cm, tempera on canvas, c. 1484.

[171] See Sara F. Matthews-Grieco, ed., *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy* (London Taylor & Francis, 2010), 231.

[172] Florence, Uffizi Gallery 878. Cf. Centanni, *Fantasmi dell'antico*, 251-302; Rebekah Compton, *Venus and the Arts of Love in Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 54-91.

[173] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori, 1568*, ed. Gaetani Milanesi, vol. 1-9 (Florence: Sansoni, 1878-1885), vol. 3, 1878, 312. English translation J. C. and P. Bondanella.

The birth of Venus on Botticelli's painting radically deviates from illustrations of medieval texts stemming from Fulgentius's manual "Mythologiae" from around the year 500, from which post-ancient Europe drew knowledge on the depictions of ancient deities and their meanings. In this work, Venus is interpreted in a clearly negative manner, i.e. as the embodiment of physical pleasure and caprice and was proof of the depravity of ancient Rome. On the contrary, Botticelli attempted to reconstruct a work that the ancient Greeks and Romans had admired – Apelles's image of Aphrodite Anadyomene that has been mentioned several times above. The painter drew inspiration from ancient tradition in his depiction of the goddess covering her breast with one hand and her loins with the other, an element he took from the ancient type best known from the Medici Venus. In Botticelli's time, this type is considered to be an echo of Praxiteles's Cnidia, the most famous statue of the goddess of all time. Botticelli adopted both Venus in the seashell and the figure of the woman with the cloak waiting for her on the shore from ancient visual tradition. These figures appear in depictions of the goddess's birth from the 5th century BC. Botticelli also drew from ancient literary tradition, specifically from Homer's hymn to Aphrodite, which was mediated to him through Angelo Poliziano.[174] This poem speaks about how the goddess arrived in Cyprus: *where the wet-blowing westerly's force brought her accross the swell of the noisy main, in soft foam; and the Horai with headbands of gold received her gladly, and clothed her with divine clothing*.[175]

The compositional scheme simultaneously evokes the depiction of Christ's baptism, the primary attribute of which is the nakedness of the protagonist standing in water as he is welcomed to a new life by a figure standing on the shore. Botticelli's Venus is completely calm and introspective, not noticing the outside world. However, her flowing hair reveals what she will become once she awakens. This is also denoted by the dynamically depicted figures that surround her. These figures, with their cloaks billowing in the wind and expressive positioning of their arms, were inspired by ancient models. According to Aby Warburg, the reception of these "emotive formulae" (or Pathosformeln) in a radically transformed world show that they were evidently in accord with the fears and dread that are a part of the collective subconscious even in modern times.[176] The birth of Venus is a dramatic event which fundamentally changed the world, in which nothing would be as it was before.

Warburg's finding that the medieval concept of Venus lived on in the Italian Renaissance and therefore her depiction continued to contain the potential threat of destruction is crucial to the theme of this book on statues of this goddess.[177] However, Botticelli viewed Venus's nakedness as positive and as a visualization of God's

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[174] See Angelo Poliziano, *Stanze per la giostra di Giuliano de' Medici* (Florence: Bartolomeo de'Libri, Firenze 1494), 99-101.

[175] *Homeric hymn* 6.3-6. English translation M. L. West.

[176] See Michael Podro, *The Critical Historians of Art*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 152-177.

[177] See Aby Warburg, *Sandro Botticellis Geburt der Venus und Frühling* (Hamburg: L. Voss, 1893), 48-49. Cf. Claudia Wedepohl, "Why Botticelli? Aby Warburg's Search for a New Approach to Quattrocento Italian Art," in *Botticelli Past and Present*, eds. Ana Debenedetti and Caroline Elam (London: UCL Press, 2019), 183-202.

immense love.[178] Proof of this is found in the fact that the painting The Calumny of Apelles from around 1492 contains a similarly conceived figure representing Truth.[179] She is also depicted naked and facing forwards, but her right hand is raised as she looks upwards. Inspiration also came from Apelles's painting, which was known from a description by Lucian, who, however, only described Truth looking upwards.[180] In Alberti's version, which he included in his tractate from 1436, Botticelli may have read that this was a shy and chaste girl (*una fanciulletta vergognosa e pudica)*, which was probably the first use of the new term *Venus Pudica*.[181] In his Birth of Venus painting, Botticelli boldly distances himself from the erotic by depicting the goddess covering her loins not only with her hand, but also with a lock of her hair, of which we have no proof in ancient art.[182]

The fact that the work had its admirers is evidenced by workshop copies. The painting in Berlin only depicts the figure of Venus on a black background standing on a stone pedestal; both the background and pedestal emphasize the fact that the painting was to be perceived as a statue.[183] It is certain that Botticelli's Birth of Venus was destined for a private residence, and thus the vast majority of the inhabitants of Florence, where the work was created, had not even the slightest knowledge of its existence. Thanks to this, the image exists, because it could otherwise have ended up on the "bonfire of vanities" (falò delle vanità), during which immoral books, paintings and objects of luxury were burned en masse. [184] The largest fire was lit on January 7, 1497 by Girolamo Savonarola, whom Botticelli himself came to support fervently. If his "Birth of Venus" had still been in his studio, he may have perhaps thrown it personally upon the fire.[185] However, Savonarola failed in putting a stop to culture inspired by antiquity, as he was ultimately declared a heretic and executed in 1498. On the contrary, the naked Venus that Botticelli introduced to Renaissance painting made an energetic entrance in the 16th century and became one of the primary themes of paintings used by members of the elite to give their new lifestyle a lasting appearance.

Paintings of the naked Venus inspired by ancient models may have also had a practical function inspired by antiquity, a fact which scholars began to consider only at the end of the 20th century. It cannot be ruled out that Botticelli's naked Venus placed in a married couple's bedroom was meant to show the bride how to present herself to

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[178] Cf Julia Branna Perlman, "Looking at Venus and Ganymede Anew: Problems and Paradoxes in the Relations Among Neoplatonic Writing and Renaissance Art," in *Antiquity and its Interpreters,* ed. Alina Payne et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 110–125.

[179] Firenze, Uffizi 1890, no. 1496. Cf. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus: Nudité, rêve, cruauté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 18-19.

[180] Lucian, *Calumniae non temere credendum*, 4.

[181] See Leon Battista Alberti, *Über die Malkunst – Della pittura*, ed. Oskar Bätschmann und Sandra Gianfreda (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftiche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), 152. See also Angela Dressen, "From Dante to Landino: Botticelli's Calumny of Apelles and Its Sources," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 59, no. 3 (2017): 328.

[182] But see *Greek Anthology*, 16.180.

[183] Oil on canvas, h. 158 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie 1124.

[184] Cf. Lauro Martines, *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[185] Cf. Rab Hatfield, "Botticelli's Mystic Nativity, Savonarola and the Millennium," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 58 (1995): 88–114.

her groom on their wedding night.[186] Venuses sitting, sleeping or sitting while they groom themselves may have also been linked to a wedding. The Italian Renaissance revived the ancient literary genre of giving congratulations to newlyweds, which were sung by their friends outside the bedroom on their wedding night. In these literary compositions, Venus and Amor appear as patrons of the wedding night. It is probable, that the depiction of Venus in paintings hung in the married couple's bedroom were not only an illustration of the content of these songs, but were also meant to insure the conception of healthy and beautiful offspring. According to ancient concepts of conception that were also widespread in Renaissance Italy, the appearance of one's offspring was influenced by what the couple were looking at during conception.

The powerful representation of the goddess in the paintings of the most prominent artists contrasts with the small role that Venus played in Renaissance monumental sculpture. In the previous chapter, we selected only the best examples representing the main iconographic types of Venus from the vast number of statuettes produced in the Renaissance era. This chapter documents all preserved exemplars including works created by artisans or amateurs. The only exception is the Venuses of Giambologna, to which a separate chapter will be devoted. This chapter will also list all reports that someone has made or planned to make a statue of this ancient goddess. After sculptor Jacopo Sansovino became famous in his native Florence and in Rome, he settled in Venice in 1527. He began his Venetian career with work on a bronze statue of Venus for the Mantuan ruler Federico Gonzaga, which according to Pietro Aretino's testimony was: *so faithful and animated that it evokes sinful thoughts in everyone who sees it*.[187] However, the project was abandoned, perhaps due to rumours about it. Not only did the promised statue never make it to Mantua, no other similar statue by Sansovino has survived despite the fact that he had founded a prosperous workshop in Venice, where he worked until his death in 1570.[188]

In Rome, artists in the services of the pope were allowed to set up workshops directly next to the Vatican's Cortile del Belvedere, which significantly fostered the reception of ancient statues exhibited here in the visual arts of the time. We would expect a whole score of Renaissance variations of Venus statues to have been created in the papal Belvedere. However, the situation was in reality much more complex. Although artists had an enormous interest in the topic of Venus, no monumental statue of her was created here, even despite the fact that sculptor Baccio Bandinelli established an academy "del disegno" directly in the Belvedere around 1531. Proof of this is seen in an engraving with the inscription: *Accademia di Bacchio Brandin, in luogo detto Belvedere* (**63**)**.**[189] The graphic is one of the first records of an artistic academy and the first depiction of an artist drawing an ancient work.

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[186] See, for example, Lilian Zipolo, "Botticelli's Primavera: A lesson for the Bride," *Woman's Art Journal* 12, No. 2 (Autumn, 1991 - Winter, 1992), 24-28; Andreas Prater, *Venus at her Mirror: Velázquez and the Art of Nude Painting* (Munich: Prestel, 2002), 29-30.

[187] See Bruce Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino,* 1-2 (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1991), vol. 1, 184-185, vol. 2, 375-376.

[188] Lost Venuses: Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*, vol 2, 363.

[189] Cf. Ben Thomas, "The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli," *Print Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (March 2005): 3-14; Adriano Aymonino and Anne Varick Lauder, eds., *Drawn from the Antique: Artists and the Classical Ideal* (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 2015), 80-84, no. 1.

63 (left). Academy of Baccio Bandinelli, engraving, 1531.
64 (right). Academy of Baccio Bandinelli, engraving, 1548.

Members of the academy are engaged in drawing presumably ancient statuettes located in the center of the engraving just next to a candle with a bright flame, a symbol of spiritual enlightenment, which strengthens the significance of the statuettes and elevates them to symbols of the academy. Bandinelli sits at a table next to his pupils, but is characterized by different clothing; he wears a beret and is cloaked in a coat with a fur collar. The head of the academy thus stands out from the collective of artists and is heightened to the role of one transferring the message of ancient depictions of Venus to his pupils. Bandinelli is lecturing on the statuette of Venus that he holds in his hand; another similar statuette is placed on the ledge over the table. The second model on the table itself is a statuette of a naked man in a standing position. The pose of the statuette in the master sculptor's hands corresponds to the Venus Victrix from the statue in the Cortile del Belvedere, while the pose of the naked man corresponds to Apollo from the same collection. This naked woman and naked man duo simultaneously alludes to Adam and Eve.

Bandellini's academy is the theme of another two engravings, one of which is from 1545-1550 and is a variation on the aforementioned engraving; in it a statue of a naked woman also holds a prominent place.[190] The young man standing at the fireplace has sketched the image of a naked woman evidently after some ancient statue, but there is no model of it in the room and therefore he had to work from memory. In addition to the statuettes on the ledge, there are only two ancient statues in the room, which are evidently casts. One depicts a reclining naked woman, perhaps Venus or a Nymph, and the other a standing naked young man. Both presumably ancient statues are in the foreground, which is dominated by skeletons, emphasizing the necessity of the study of anatomy.

[190] Enea Vico after After Baccio Bandinelli, The Academy of Baccio Bandinelli, engraving ca. 1545/50. Cf. Aymonino and Varick Lauder, *Drawn from the Antique*, 85-88, no. 2.

The engraving from 1548 after Bandinelli's self-portrait is an artist surrounded by ancient statues.[191] Bandinelli's left hand rests on a statue of Hercules and his right points to a statuette of this mythical hero at his feet; however, the largest ancient statues are naked Venuses on a column to the right of the sitting artist.[192] The statues are ancient fragments of two variations of Praxiteles's Cnidia; one is depicted from the back and the other from the front. In this, the sculptor presented himself as an expert, as the ancient topos was discovered in the Renaissance claiming that a naked woman seen from behind was the most stimulating.[193] There are three more statuettes under Heracles, two of which depict naked women. In the center is the widespread type of the goddess tying (or untying) her sandal. On engravings via which Bandinelli glorified his art and knowledge of ancient statues, Venus is dominant or at least plays a similarly important role as other ancient models. We also know from Vasari that Bandinelli created bronze statuettes in the Belvedere that represented Venus and other Olympian gods, which he then handed out to those who might potentially commission his works of sculpture.[194]

In "Memoriale," which is dated to 1552, Bandinelli presents himself as an artist of European renown because he builds upon the ancient tradition. In a compendium of his most famous works, he emphasizes the fact that these works depict ancient themes, including Venus, which he allegedly dedicated to Emperor Charles V.[195] We know today, however, that he only gave the emperor an aforementioned copy of the ancient statue of Venus. In Bandinelli's extensive sculptural work, we find no trace of the creation of a monumental statue of Venus nor any sketches pointing to his work on such a project. [196] There is also no other reference outside "Memoriale" of Bandinelli's statue of Venus. The only explanation for this contradiction is that the sculptor fabricated the statue because he knew that Venus belonged to the "curriculum vitae" of famous ancient sculptors. It is also unknown whether the non-existent statue was fabricated by Bandinelli or his grandson, who demonstrably modified the text of "Memoriale" at the beginning of the 17th century in order to glorify his grandfather.[197] In two cases, the ancient depictions of Venus that Baccio Bandinelli carefully studied appeared in his monumental work, but these sculptures represented Eve. The most similar to the Cnidia is the Eve paired with Adam from 1551, which is now located in Florence's Bargello. The second Adam and Eve pair that he worked on between 1548 and 1558 was a failure, and the statue ended up as Ceres in the Buontalenti grotto in Florence's Giardino Boboli.

This striking disproportion is not limited to Bandinelli and is typical of the Italian art of the 16th century. In the 1530s, Bernardino Licinio created a painting that

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[191] E.g. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1983.1194. Cf. Aymonino and Varick Lauder, *Drawn from the Antique*, 89-93, no. 3.

[192] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 309-312.

[193] Cf. Jörg Rasmussen, "Kleinplastik unter Dürers Namen: Das New Yorker Rückenakt-Relief," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 9 (1983): 131–144.

[194] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 6, p. 153. Cf. Masinelli 1991, 43-49.

[195] Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte*, vol. 6, 1370-1371: "Quanto alle mie opere di scoltura e disegno … la Venere donata a Carlo Quinto."

[196] Barkan, *Unearthing the Past*, 299.

[197] See Louis A. Waldman, *Baccio Bandinelli and Art at the Medici Court:. A Corpus of Early Modern Sources* (Philadelphia PA: American Philosophical Society, 2004), x-xi.

summarizes the system of art education of the time, which was based on mastering the ancient artistic language.[198] The master sculptor is depicted in the center holding a plaster statuette created after an ancient model of the crouching Venus, which accentuates the twisting of her body. The complex pose in ancient style was the reason it was selected as an educational aid. To the left is an apprentice, who is showing others a drawing of the statuette held by the master sculptor, and the painting is accompanied by an inscription: *Look and see if the drawing is good*. The drawing depicts a statuette in the master sculptor's hand exactly from the angle in which it is seen by the viewer, to whom the inscription is addressed.[199] The painting is of rather large proportions (83x 128 cm) and is perfectly designed, which probably means it was created as a type of advertisement for the artist's workshop and served to attract new apprentices of the painting arts from higher social circles. This was nothing new – a statuette of the naked Venus is also found at the center of the art academy in a drawing by Jan van der Straet from 1573, based upon which a number of engravings were created.[200] A reference to the ancient statue of Venus in the artist's self-representation emphasized his place among the artistic avant-garde of the time, which was characterized by the admiration of the ancient visual arts. This gives even more relevance to the fact that we know of no monumental depictions in the 16th century of the ancient type of the crouching Venus, which artists and art aficionados of the time admired and knew so well. The monumental statue discussed above was created by Antoine Coysevox long afterwards, in 1686.

There is no doubt that the statues of Venus managed to engage their audience's imaginations. Proof of this is found in the many graphics on which Venus appears as a three-dimensional architectonic element. The method of displaying ancient statues in arched niches first appeared in the Cortile del Belvedere in 1506-1511; museum façades with copies or variations of ancient statues began to spread quickly in Italy and were promoted by a series of engravings that appeared in the second decade of the 16th century. According to Raphael's drawings, Marcantonio Raimondi created in 1510-1527 a series of engravings with statues in alcoves that depict the virtues and the Olympian gods, including Venus (**65**). In 1526, Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio published a similar series of twenty graphics of the Olympian gods, the bases of which were drawn by Rosso Fiorentino (**66**). Series of these "paper galleries" were evidently in high demand, and therefore Etienne Delaune etched a similar series after his son's design that showed two Venuses in alcoves on one of its pages.[201] A series of engravings from 1610 depicting ancient statues in Rome shows all of them in alcoves regardless of their specific placement. This collection includes four Venuses, among which is the

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[198] Alnwick Castle, Collection of the Duke of Northumberland 383. See Richter, *Die Renaissance der Kauernden Venus*, 121-124.

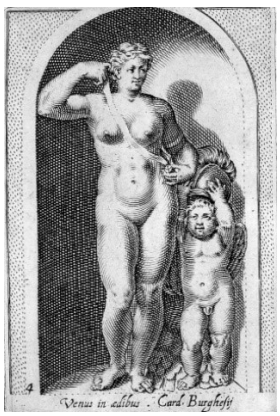
[199] On the right is another pupil holding a statuette of Mercury and carefully studying it. With his right hand, he draws on a piece of paper on the table, which is also accompanied by an inscription: *This art is difficult*.

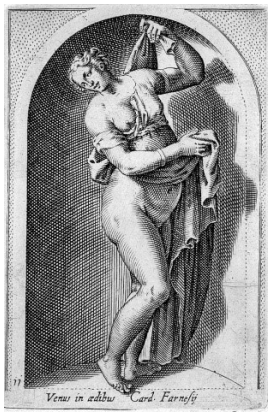
[200] London, The British Museum SL,5214.2. See James Grantham Turner, *Eros Visible: Art, Sexuality, and Antiquity in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 144.

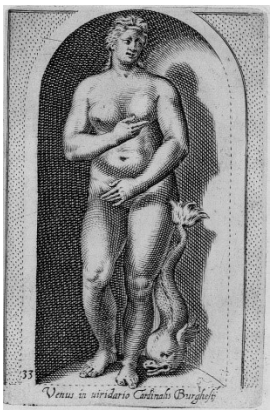
[201] London, Victoria and Albert Museum 28911F. See Christophe Pollet, *Les Gravures d'Etienne Delaune, 1518-1583* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2001), vol. 2, 693-4.

aforementioned statue from the Villa Giulia, which was handed over to the property of the Borghese in 1607 (**67**).[202]


65 (left). Marcantonio Raimondi after Raffaello, Venus with Cupid, engraving, 1510-1527.
66 (right). Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, after Rosso Fiorentino, Venus and Cupid, engraving, 1526.








67. Philippe Thomassin, Armed Venus and Cupid, now in the Louvre (MA 370), engraving, 1610.
68. Philippe Thomassin, Venus Kallipygos, which is now in the Archaeological Museum of Naples (6020), engraving, 1610.
69. Philippe Thomassin, Venus with a small dolphin (lost), engraving, 1610.
70. Philippe Thomassin, Venus with a large dolphin (lost), engraving, 1610.

These graphics could perhaps have led to the erroneous assumption that an alcove with an ancient statue of Venus was a common part of the decoration of Italian residences in the 16th century. The exact opposite was in fact true – they appear only rarely, always inside the residence and not visible from the street. The first evidence of this is from 1524, when Alvise Cornaro built an architectural complex in Padua for the performance of ancient theatrical pieces. On the "Loggia Cornaro" floor, three recesses with statues of ancient deities facing the closed courtyard still exist today.[203]

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[202] Philippe Thomassin, *Antiquarum statuarum urbis Romae liber primus* (Rome, 1610), pl. 11, 27 and 33. See Volker Heenes, *Antike in Bildern. Illustrationen in antiquarischen Werken des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Stendal: Winckelmann-Gesellschaft, 2003), 109.
[203] Cf. Giovanni Mariacher, "Scultura e decorazione plastica esterna della Loggia e dell'Odeo Cornaro," in *Alvise Cornaro e il suo tempo*, ed. Lionello Puppi (Padua: Comune di Padova, 1980), 80-85.

On the sides were Diana and Apollo, while Venus and Amor are located on the central line of the structure. Venus with a dolphin at her feet is loosely inspired by ancient statues, but is interpreted in a Christian manner. She holds the flame of love in her raised hand and holds the tail of the dolphin in the other, signifying her control over love.

Venus appears on a façade in Rome around the mid-16th century, but only exceptionally. There is record of such statues in several places, but only one is preserved in Rome's Palazzo Spada, which stands out with its uncommonly rich sculptural collection incorporated into the ambitious architecture. The courtyard of the palace included niches with statues of Olympian deities by Giulio Mazzoni of 1549-1550, among which was also the naked Venus. This was a variation on the ancient Mazarin Venus, from which this statue differs in its more pretentiously chaste nature with the goddess's right hand covering her breasts.[204] While the Olympian gods are characterized by their nakedness on the façades of the Palazzo Spada's courtyard, the street façade shows distinguished warriors and men in togas. According to Simeoni's guide to Rome published in 1558, ancient statues were placed in the niches on both the longer sides of the Villa Giulia's first courtyard. These included a sculptural group of Mars being embraced by Venus, and a sculptural group with an armed Venus and Amor.[205] In comparison to the drawings based on ancient statues of Venus and the small statuettes that reproduced or modified them, it is surprising at first glance how few monumental statues of this goddess were produced in this era. An exception to this rule is the Villa Barbaro.

The Villa Barbaro in northern Italy was designed in classical style by Andrea Palladio, and the wall paintings inspired by ancient mythology were created by Veronese. However, the sculptural decoration of the villa was designed and implemented by the builder himself, Marcantonio Barbaro, an amateur sculptor who created three large statues of Venus in 1558-1559. The stucco statue of the goddess is a part of the decoration of the nymphaeum behind the villa, and stands with Helios on an important spot next around the entrance to the grotto. The goddess is holding an arrow in her raised hand as Amor reaches for it, and is thus characterized by her restraint of her son and thus sexuality in general. However, the inscription accompanying Venus shows that she is also vulnerable when it comes to the spark of love. Venus addresses the visitor: *I am the daughter of the sea and mother of fire, but even an ocean could not extinguish love*.[206] The inscription accompanying Helios emphasizes that, as the god of the sun, he sees everything. Educated guests thus clearly knew that this duo evoked Venus's infidelity, which the all-knowing Helios revealed to the goddess's husband, Vulcan.[207]

In the Villa di Maser, there are two more statues of Venus; one is in slightly larger-than-life size and can be found in the last niche in the left wing of the façade; the second Venus is standing freely in life size and placed on a pedestal before the

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[204] Cf. Lionello Neppi, *Palazzo Spada* (Rome: Editalia, 1975), fig. 20.

[205] Paris, Louvre MA 370. See Gabriele Simeoni, *Illustratione de gli epitaffi et medaglie antiche* (Lyon: J. de Tournes, 1558), 58. A head that did not belong to it was added to the statue in 16th century, cf. Anna Coliva et al., eds., *I Borghese e l'Antico* (Milan: Skira, 2011), 306, no. 32.

[206] See Carolyn Kolb, ed. Melissa Beck, "The Sculptures on the Nymphaeum Hemicycle of the Villa Barbaro at Maser," *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no.35 (1997): 25.

[207] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.169.

façade. The counterpart to this Venus is the statue of Vulcan, who is hard at work. The goddess calls the visitor's attention to him with a pointed finger. This married couple is the counterpart of the other married couple depicting Juno and Jupiter standing directly before the villa's façade. In light of the fact that Vulcan is placed before his mother Juno and Venus before her father Jupiter, this couple can be interpreted as the representatives of the next generation and all four statues as a family. In accordance with the moralist ideological program of the villa's sculptural decoration, all three statues of Venus have their loins carefully covered. The exceptional concentration of Venus statues in the Villa Barbaro was probably linked to the role of Venus in Venetian state ideology, as this "city on the sea" identified with the goddess, who was also born from the sea.[208] This explains the popularity of paintings of Venus in the city's lagoons, where we find Venus in public space, but in the form of reliefs. On the Loggetta in St. Mark's Square in Venice, there are three marble reliefs on the attic by Danese Cataneo from 1540 celebrating Venice and its domains. Cyprus is represented by the semi-prone Venus emerging from the waves with Amor flying towards her. A part of the rich sculptural decoration of the Loggetta is also a marble relief of Venus drying her hair from the workshop of Jacopo Sansovino.[209]

In the second half of the 16th century, we find the statue of Venus as a part of the fountain decorations in the gardens of palaces and villas, but only exceptionally.[210] In the 1560s in the garden of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in Rome's Quirinal, a pergola or pavilion stood at the center of the "Fontana del bosco" grove, and in it was a rock garden. At the peak of the rocks sat a shepherd with a statue of Venus with two putti. It was a restored ancient original of the Chiaramonti Venus discussed above.[211] Venus is also in the fountain that was created around 1580 by Giovanni Bandini, a pupil of Bandinelli's, for the garden of the Palazzo Budini Gattai in Florence. The naked Venus is characterized by a diadem and Amor on a dolphin at her feet. This is a variation of an ancient original after which Baccio Bandinelli created the aforementioned bronze statue in 1530-1534. [212] Contrary to the ancient statue and its version made by Bandinelli, Bandini's Venus is covering her loins not only with her hand, but also with the richly flowing cloak.

We know the fountain of Venus in the Florentine garden of Giovanni Battista Ricasoli from around 1565 only from literature, but this contemporary account is exceedingly valuable.[213] The garden had a philosophical program that is explained by its author, Cosimo Bartoli, a colleague and friend of Giorgio Vasari. The sculptural decoration intended to emphasize the contrast between the male and female principle embodied by Neptune and Venus. These gods, who were understood as the

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[208] See Centanni, *Fantasmi dell'antico*, 337-366.

[209] Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*, vol. 2, no. 27.

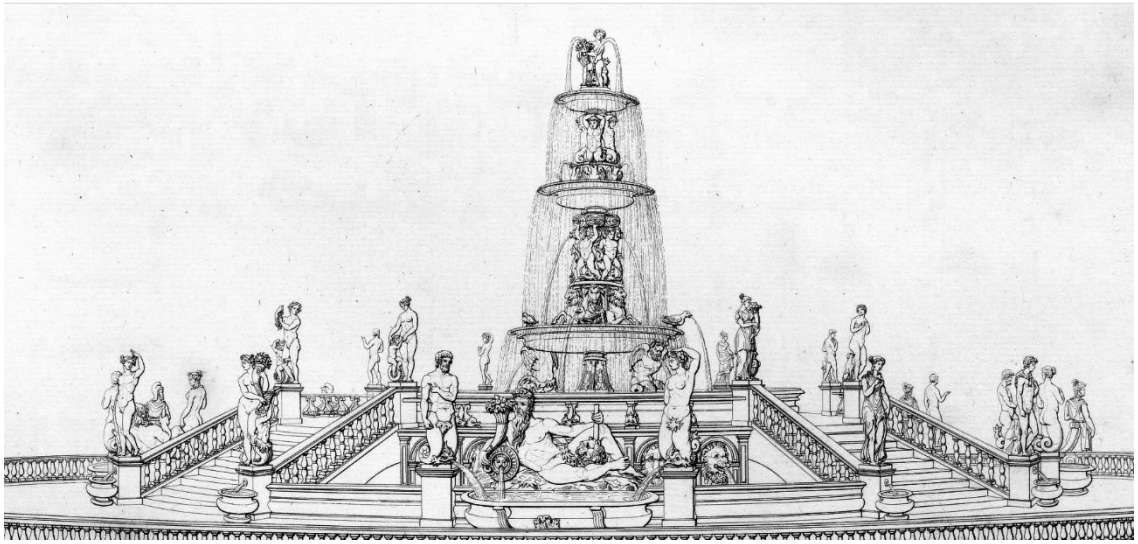
[210] Cf. Stefan Morét, *Der italienische Figurenbrunnen des Cinquecento* (Oberhausen: Athena, 2003).

[211] See Elisabeth B. MacDougall, *Fountains, Statues, and Flowers. Studies in Italian Gardens of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), 30-31.

[212] See Stefano Pierguidi, "Baccio Bandinelli, Carlo V e una nuova ipotesi sulla Venere bronzea del Prado," *Boletín del Museo del Prado* 30 (2012): 44.

[213] See Cosimo Bartoli, *Ragionamenti accademici sopra alcuni luoghi difficili di Dante* (Venice: Francesco de Franceschi Senese, 1567), 18r-21r. Cf. Fabia Jonietz, "The Semantics of Recycling: Cosimo Bartoli's Invenzioni for Giovan Battista Ricasoli," in *Cosimo Bartoli, 1503-1572*, ed. Francesco Paolo Fiore e Daniela Lamberini (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2011), 304-305.

visualization of abstract principles, also represented the contrast between dampness and heat, the basic prerequisite for birth and growth. Neptune and Venus formed central figures at two fountains by the back wall of the garden lined with herms, which together represented the four seasons. The herms of spring and autumn were placed next to Venus, and the goddess was accompanied by Amors and sea creatures with seashells. It is not clear from the description whether the statue of Venus was an ancient original or was created solely for this garden.



71. Fontana Pretoria in Palermo from the south-east, on the staircase on the left is the Venus Verticoria (right) and Vertumnus (left), drawing, 1835.

Statues of Venus were a part of one of the largest fountains of all time, the Fontana Pretoria in Palermo (**71**).[214] This is the "exception that proves the rule" that exhibiting the naked Venus in public was not tolerated in the 16th century. An explanation for this anomaly can be found in the unique circumstances around which the fountain was created. The client commissioning the work was Don Louis de Toledo, brother of Eleonora, the first wife of Cosimo I de'Medici, who lived in Italy, where he was known as Don Luigi. During his stay in the Medici court in Florence, he built a monumental garden. It was dominated by a gigantic fountain with a diameter of 40 meters, for which Florentine sculptor Francesco Camilliani, pupil of Baccio Bandinelli, created statues from 1554 to 1567. When Vasari issued the second edition of his "Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects," the fountain was just nearing completion. Vasari writes of it as the most exquisite fountain in all of Italy.[215] Don Luigi was an educated commissioner of statues with sophisticated tastes. The exceptional status of Venus in the program of his fountain may have been linked to the private life of the Spanish contractor, whose promising career in the hierarchy

[214] Cf. Maria Pia Demma and Giuseppina Favara, eds., *La Fontana Pretoria in Palermo: hic fons, cui similis nullus in orbe patet* (Palermo: Assessorato regionale dei beni culturali e ambientali e della pubblica istruzione, 2006); Anatole Tchikine, *Francesco Camiliani and the Florentine Garden of Don Luigi de Toledo: A Study of Fountain Production and Consumption in the Third Quarter of the 16th Century*, 1-2 (Dublin: Trinity College, 2002); Jonietz, *The Semantics of Recycling*, 308-330.

[215] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 7, 1881, 628: "Fonte stupendissima … che non ha pari in Fiorenza, né forse in Italia."

of the clergy ended when he decided to marry Violante Moscoso. Her origin also damaged him socially, as she was the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of Altamira; nonetheless, he refused to withdraw from his plan despite strong resistance from his family. The fact that Venus's fountain also decorated Don Luigi's garden in Naples, to where he later moved, indicates Don Luigi's special relationship with Venus.[216]

72. Francesco Camilliani, Venus with a Dolphin, h. 1.87 cm, marble statue on the south staircase of Palermo's Fontana Pretoria, 1554-1567.

Don Luigi moved to Naples after the death of his sister in 1562, and dealt with his dismal financial situation by selling the Florentine fountain, which was purchased by Palermo's municipal council in order to place it in the center of the city in front of the town hall building (Palazzo Pretoria). After the statues were moved from Florence, the sculptural decoration of the fountain was built again in 1574-1580 and definitively completed in 1584. On the new site, the statues were given a new arrangement and the collection was also expanded to include new statues. The rich sculptural decoration consists of statues of ancient deities and personifications arranged in two concentrated ovals divided by four stairwells leading to a heightened terrace with a fountain. Statues of deities and personifications stand on the small pillars of the balustrade at the bottom and top of the stairway. Venus is presented here twice, once at the foot of the southern stairway facing the port, and once at the top of the western stairway. The western Venus by Francesco Camilliani of 1554-1567 is a variation on the Louvre-Naples Venus type with one breast unveiled, which was known in Rome since the beginning of the 16th century (**72**). The goddess stands on the water, which is indicated by waves, and holds the tail of a dolphin in her right hand and covers her left breast with her left hand. The statue thus represented the goddess controlling sexuality embodied by the dolphin, and promoting fertility indicated by the hand on the breast. The southern Venus, to whom Amor reaches, by Palermo sculptor of 1573-1580 was inspired by an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi that has already been mentioned

[216] See Giuseppe Ceci, "Pizzofalcone, II," *Napoli nobilissima* 1 (1891): 88-89.

several times above. This statue was destroyed over the course of the first half of the 20th century, and therefore we know it only from old, poor-quality photographs.[217]

The placement of Fontana Pretoria in public space was a highly unique event. Palermo's municipal council decided to use of predicament that the fountain's owner had found himself in to their own advantage. The massive collection of statues was designed in the highest quality and came directly from the cultural center of the time, but was practically impossible to sell. It was too expansive for a private garden, and it was also not suitable for public space, as it was dominated by depictions of naked female bodies. In addition to the two Venuses, a score of other naked women were depicted among the other statues. Comprehensive defenses of the iconographic program are proof of the problematic nature of this project, which was possible only in provincial Sicily. The Palermo fountain initially had a philosophical program similar to the aforementioned fountain of Giovanni Battista Ricasoli in Florence. This fountain, however, was located in a private garden, while the Palermo fountain was on the main square of the city. The ideological program of the fountain's sculptural decoration had to be radically revised in order to correspond to the stance of the highest representatives of the church at the time.

The poet Antonio Veneziano commented on the Palermo fountain during its construction. Veneziano, dubbed the "Sicilian Petrarch," wrote of it in a letter to the mayor of Palermo, Nicolo Antonio Spatafora. It was evidently meant to be published, as the author incorporated epigrams into the text that allowed the individual statues to "speak" to viewers.[218] In Veneziano's description, Venus holds a central position in the fountain's decoration. Adonis is the counterpart of Venus, who is placed on the southern stairwell.[219] The water of the fountain are the tears which the goddess cried for her murdered lover, and they moisten the anemones into which Adonis has transformed after his death. The poet assumes that the visitor to the fountain knows the myth of Adonis, who returns from the underworld in the spring and brings with him a renewal of nature, which is announced each year by the anemones.

Veneziano then interprets the other statue pairs at the feet of the stairwells in a similar manner. The series of statue pairs at the top of the stairways begins with Triptolemus and Ceres as the divine patrons of the fertility of Sicilian soil. Venus follows them on the western stairwell, which in Veneziano's words represents Venus Verticordia (the Changer of Hearts), who: *transforms indecent love to chaste love.*[220] Veneziano also wrote an extensive description of the fountain, in which he elaborated upon the significance of the individual statues. In the context of Venus and the dolphin, he emphasizes that the goddess is the progenitress and giver of life. By doing

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[217] Tchikine, *Francesco Camiliani*, 41, note 131.

[218] *Lettera di Antonio Vinitiani circa la dispositione delle statue della fontana inanzi la casa della Città.* The letter is not dated, but was probably created in 1579-1580 when all the statues arrived from Florence to Palermo. The letter was published for the first time in 1630 and reprinted in 1646, see Francesco Baronio Manfredi, *De Maiestate Panormitana libri IV*, 1 (Palermo: A. de Isola, 1630), 126-131, and idem, *Antonii Vinitiani Siculi ... Epigrammata quasi omnia, inscriptiones, fontiumquè descriptiones, et triumphales arcus* (Palermo: A. de Isola, 1646), 54-61. Cf. Giuseppe La Monica, ed., *Pantheon ambiguo: La Fontana Pretoria di Palermo nell 'analisi formale e nel commento di Antonio Veneziano e Francesco Baronio Manfredi* (Palermo: S.F. Flaccovio, 1987).

[219] Manfredi, *Antonii Vinitiani*, 54.

[220] Manfredi, *Antonii Vinitiani*, 58.

so, Veneziano explains why this Venus's breast is unveiled and covered by her hand, as if she intended to feed the whole world, without mentioning it explicitly.

In 1709, the priest Biagio di Benedetto wrote (but did not publish) a detailed description and interpretation of the statues in the fountain.[221] In another detailed description of the fountain, Leonardo Maria Lo Presti made use of texts both by Veneziano and Di Benedetta.[222] The latter compares the Venus embodying bodily love at the southern stairway and the Venus embodying virgin, divine love on the higher floor of the multi-level fountain at the top of the western stairway. Nonetheless, literary defenses did not manage to influence public opinion in Palermo and the square on which the fountain stands was given the nickname "Piazza della Vergogna" (the Square of Shame) for its depiction of female nakedness.

The monumental statue of Venus in public space can be found on Italian soil also outside the cultural and political centers of the time in Sabbioneta, a miniature Lombardian town founded by Vespasiano I Gonzaga at the end of the 16th century. From 1588 to 1590, Bernardino de'Quadri created plaster statues of the Olympian gods in life size for the interior of a theater there. Among them, Venus is depicted naked with one hand covering her loins and the other over her breasts. The theater in Sabbioneta is the first independently standing theater building and its architecture is not a part of the ducal residence as was the custom of the time.[223] Nonetheless, the theater building was topographically linked to the residences of the founder and ruler of the town, imperial general Vespasiano Gonzaga. The building stood half way between his Palazzo Ducale on the main square and his Palazzo del Giardino, which was located by the city walls. In the theater, the statues of the Olympian gods stand over the platform from which the duke and his court watched the theatrical performances. The statues are workmanlike and lack greater artistic ambitions, but their monumental dimensions and placement in public space characterized the unique status of the ruler of the town and his link to the ancient Roman empire.

Transalpine Europe followed developments in Italy concerning Venus and her function, and even here, statues of this goddess appear only in private residences as a rule.[224] In 1560, Germain Pilon created a wooden statue of Venus accompanied by Juno, Mars and Mercury for the garden of Mary, Queen of Scots in Fontainebleau, which is now lost.[225] Pilon, who was the most famous French sculptor of the second half of the 16th century, also created a monumental sculptural group of Venus and Amor.[226] This Venus is naked; she dries her chest with her left hand while picking up an arrow with her right that is being handed to her by an obedient Amor, who stands on a dolphin. The sculptural group thus had a moralizing message, i.e. the goddess is taking away

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[221] See Biagio Di Benedetto, "Fontaneo ovvero descrizione della fontana del pretore" published by Marcella La Monica, *La fontana pretoria di Palermo: Analisi stilistica e nuovo commento* (Palermo: Pitti Ed., 2006), 163-164, 212-215.

[222] Leonardo M. Lo Presti, *Nuova, ed esatta descrizione del celeberrimo fonte esistente nella piazza del Palazzo senatorio* (Palermo: Antonio Epiro, 1737).

[223] See Stefano Mazzoni and Ovidio Guaita, *Il teatro di Sabbioneta* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1985, 70-72.

[224] See Jeffrey Chipps Smith, *German Sculpture of the Later Renaissance c. 1520–1580: Art in an Age of Uncertainty* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 198–244.

[225] See Léon Laborde, *Les comptes des Bâtiments du roi (1528-1571), suivis de documents inédits sur les châteaux royaux et les beaux-arts au 16e siècle*, 2 (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1880), 50.

[226] H. 210 cm. Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, 1964.

the arrow that arouses passion. The group is standing on a closed seashell and was originally in the center of the fountain, which can be seen in the opening in the dolphin's mouth, which spouted water. The statue differs from all Italian statues in its larger-than-life dimensions.

In 1576, Danish king Frederick II commissioned Georg Labenwolf to create a gigantic fountain for the main courtyard of the palace in Kronborg.[227] The fountain had a total of 36 figures, and at the center was a column six meters high on which Neptune stood. On a column was a statue of Minerva, Juno and the naked Venus with an arrow in one hand and a burning heart in the other. After the Swedish capture of Kronborg, the statues were taken to Drottningholm; today only three statues of the goddesses remain from this collection.[228] Labenwolf created a fountain in Nuremberg, where he also publicly tested it in 1582. A drawing was made for the occasion, which became the basis for a later engraving.[229] Thanks to this drawing, we can create a relatively accurate image of the fountain's appearance. Venus was on a column at the center, Minerva was on the left, and Juno was on the right, and water flowed from all the goddesses' breasts. Venus is naked, but her loins are covered with fabric. Judging by the engraving, she had an arrow in her right hand and a burning heart in her left, which were attributes that pointed to a Christian interpretation. The goddess awakens love for God, but tames sexuality and has therefore taken the arrow away from Amor.

The problematic status of Venus statues in late Renaissance Europe is evidenced by the fate of the sculptures that the aforementioned Willem Danielszoon van Tetrode created to celebrate the ancient goddess. None of the works have been preserved and the sculptures are likely to have been intentionally destroyed. Their author was one of the greatest experts on ancient art of his time, and was surely much more familiar with it than any other of his compatriots. He was from Delft in the Netherlands, but was educated in Italy. In the second half of the 1540s, he worked in the workshop of Benvenuto Cellini in Florence and then in Rome in the workshop of Gugliemo della Porta in the 1550s. In Florence and Rome, Tetrode restored ancient statues and also created smaller-scale copies of them. In 1567, the sculptor returned to Delft and the works that he had created for the local Oude Kerk were highly praised by his contemporaries but were destroyed in the Dutch iconoclasm (Beeldenstorm) of 1573.[230]

The sculptural group of Venus, Jupiter and Mercury was created for the home of rich merchant Peter ter Layn in Cologne, but we know it only from an engraving published by Adriaan de Weerdt in 1574 (**73**).[231] The goddess was leaning at a distinct angle on a tree with her raised left arm with one leg over the other. This sculptural type was created by Greek sculptor Alcamenes at the end of the 5th century. Tetrode combined it with the sculptural type of the naked Venus, whose cloak is behind her, creating a background for the bottom section of her body. Amor stands at Venus's feet with his wings spread, looking up to her and reaching out his hands, which was an ancient image type renewed by Raphael. Tetrode's next sculptural group with Venus

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[227] Cf. Kristoffer J. Neville, "Frederik II's Gothic Neptune for Kronborg," in *Sculpture and the Nordic Region,* eds. Sara Ayres and Elettra Carbone (London: Routledge, 2017), 12-23.

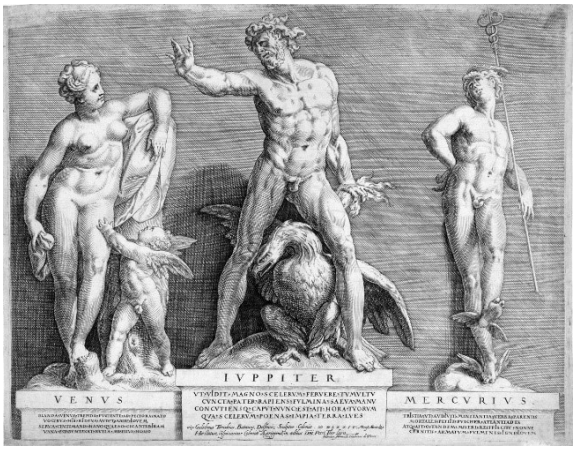
[228] Stockholm, National Museum NMSk 1104.

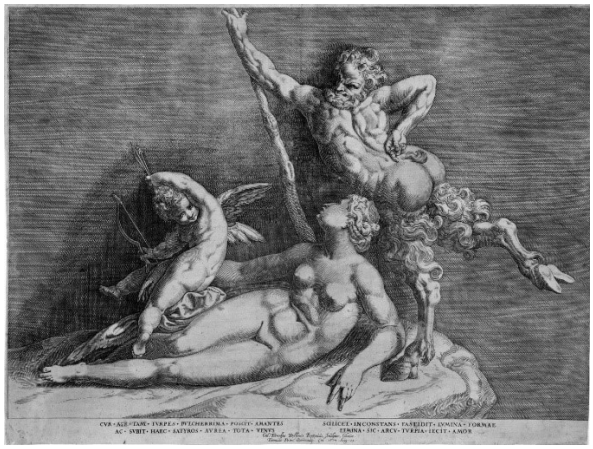
[229] See Johann Gabriel Doppelmayr, *Historische Nachricht von den Nürnbergischen Mathematicis und Künstlern* (Nuremberg: P.C. Monath, 1730), tab 11. Cf. Smith, *German Sculpture*, 243.

[230] See Scholten and van Binnebeke, *Willem van Tetrode*, 8.

[231] Cf. Frits Scholten, *Willem van Tetrode: Sculptor* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2003), no. 40.

was a variation on Giambologna's composition of Venus or Faun gazing at a Nymph (**74**). Faun is leaning over Venus with his legs wide apart and arms at angles; one is lifted upward and the other reaches behind him, following his gaze. This pose was inspired by Laocoön in the famous sculptural group in the Vatican Belvedere, which, however, pictures him in a sitting position. Venus and Amor are depicted in a similarly dramatic pose, which is not explained in any way in the displayed action. In addition, the postures of the depicted figures defy the laws gravity – they would not be able to stay in these positions for more than a second, and all three would otherwise fall to the ground. Sculptors and those who commissioned them were evidently not interested in what the sculptural group represented, but how their complicated postures might capture the viewer's attention. Despite this fact, this group of statues did not escape the iconoclasts and thus we know it also only from an engraving published by Petrus Overraat in 1574.[232]



73 (left). Venus with Cupid, Jupiter and Mercury, engraving after the lost sculpture by van Tetrode, 1574.
74 (right). Venus, Faun and Amor, engraving after the lost sculpture by van Tetrode, 1574.

James Grantham Turner has recently published his book about the "erotic revolution" in Italian art in the first half of the 16th century.[233] Thanks to the systematic study of ancient sculptural works, artists of the time had mastered artistic language so perfectly that they were able to meet the demand for strong designs, which could provoke the senses and evoke physical reactions. However, monumental statues of Venus were surprisingly absent among these works. A period commentary on an engraving representing a statue of the naked Venus holding a seashell in her left hand and a burning heart in her right sheds light on this absence.[234] The fact that the statue of naked Venus also needed to be defended on the engraving explains why we only see it rarely on real façades.

In this engraving of around 1590, Amor represented next to Venus is pointing with his arrow to the inscription under the niche with the group sculpture. The inscription informs us that the engraving depicts a marble statue created by Florence native Ridolfo Sirigatti according to nature (*duce natura*). We know of this statue also

[232] Cf. Scholten, *Willem van Tetrode*, no. 49.
[233] Turner, *Eros Visible*.
[234] Hieronymus Wierix after a drawing by Johannes Stradanus: London, The British Museum 1861,0518.204. Cf. Ch. Davis http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/artdok/volltexte/2011/1354/ (2011).

from another source, as it is mentioned by Raffaello Borghini: (Sirigatti) *now has in hand, having completed all the limbs, a larger-than-life marble Venus with a Cupid at her feet. Very great grace is already seen in this. The wax model, studied from life, promises that she will have to be a figure of all beauty and perfection*.[235] Borghini was a friend of Florentine collector and amateur artist Sirigatti, and thus the statue surely existed; however, with the exception of a mention of it in a book from 1584 and a graphic from around 1590, we have no further information on it. Borghini's comment that the sculptor created it according to a real model corresponds to what is written on the graphic and the fact that, judging by the engraving, it did not adhere to any ancient model. It is also important to note that the sides of the niche bear inscriptions that interpret Venus in a Christian context, i.e. as the patroness of sexual restraint. Thus, the inscriptions defend both the creation of the statue and the engraving that was created after it.[236]

We may draw several general conclusions from the evidence collected above. Monumental statues of Venus that began to appear in Europe in the second half of the 16th century were usually only variations on ancient models and were only rarely original works created by prominent artists. Another shared characteristic was that they were destined for private residences and were placed in public spaces only in exceptional circumstances. As the example of the sculptural group created by Tetrode shows, even a statue in a private residence could not necessarily save it from iconoclasts. Ancient statues of Venus and statues and paintings inspired by them, which could be destroyed as immoral works endangering the morality of society, became an attribute of the special status of the social elite, who were not required to follow the conventions of the time.

A typical commissioner of a Venus statue was Kryštof Popel of Lobkowicz, the High Steward, which was the most prominent office in the Kingdom of Bohemia after the Burgrave of Prague. It is probably no coincidence that Popel of Lobkowicz ordered a bronze group of statues of Venus with Amor in Nuremberg for the garden of his residence in Prague in the very same year that he gained his prestigious title in 1599 (**75**).[237] The statue stood on the site of today's Šternberský Palace in Prague's Hradčany in close proximity to Rudolph II's imperial residence. Nuremberg builder Wolfgang Jakob Stromer incorporated a drawing of the fountain from the end of the 16th century into his manuscripts, which is proof of the fact that the statue was known beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Bohemia.[238] Another drawing can be found in the graphic collection of Prague's National Gallery.[239] The drawings emphasize the fact that Amor is urinating and water is gushing from Venus's breasts, which was primarily meant to

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[235] See Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo, in cui della pittura, e della scultura si favella, de' più illustri pittori, e scultori, e delle più famose opere loro si fa mentione* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1584), 22. English translation Lloyd H. Ellis Jr.

[236] See Ottavio Mirandola, *Illustrium poetarum flores* (Antwerp: Jan van der Loe, 1549), 2r; Tomaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni* (Venice: Somascho, 1585), 717.

[237] Original: Prague, National Gallery P 4606, copy: Prague, Wallenstein Garden. Cf. Jaromír Neumann, (Prague: Academia, 1966), cat. no. 77.

[238] Nuremberg, private collection. See Karel Chytil, *Pražská Venušina fontána od B. Wurzelbauera* (Prague, 1902), pl. 1.

[239] Chytil, *Pražská Venušina fontána*, 16.

capture the attention of viewers of the time and entertain them.[240] The attached inscription lists the full title of the work's commissioner and that the fountain was cast in Nuremberg by Benedikt Wurzelbauer, Labenwolf's protégé. We also know the sculptural group from a later report claiming that Wurzelbauer placed *a new fountain in Prague, which he created with great fame in the year 1600*.[241]

75. Benedikt Wurzelbauer, Nicolaus Pfaff, Venus and Cupid, bronze, h. 123 cm, 1599 (copy in the Waldstein Garden in Prague).

In 1623, Kryštof Popel of Lobkowicz's widow sold the Hradčany residence with the Venus fountain, which was purchased by the high-ranking dignitary Albrecht von Wallenstein, commander-in-chief of the imperial army and admiral of the northern flotilla. He placed the statue in the garden of his magnificent residence in Malá Strana and it remained in his property until 1630, which is evidenced by the bronze plates on the pedestal on which Venus and Amor stand. The Wallenstein coat-of-arms, the name of the owner and his most prominent titles adorn all four of the statue's sides: Duke of Mecklenburg, Prince of Pomerania and Sagan (today's Żagań). In this manner, Albrecht von Wallenstein identified with Venus in a clearly intentional manner – throughout the whole Wallenstein Palace, this inscription and the coats-of-arms are the only reference to the builder. The statues of Venus enjoyed great prestige in early modern Europe despite (or better to say thanks) that they, aside from few exceptions, had to be hidden away in private gardens.

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[240] Cf. Morét, *Italienische Figurenbrunnen*, 36; James W P. Campbell and Amy Boyington, "The Problems of Meaning and Use of the Puer Mingens Motif in Fountain Design 1400–1700," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 38 (2018), 247-267.

[241] Doppelmayr, *Historische Nachricht*, 296: "zur einem neuen Brunnen in Prag, und richtete selbige A. 1600 ebenfals mit vielen Ruhm allda auf."

**Why Giambologna?**

Jean Boulogne, known as Giambologna, was born in 1529 in Douai, which at the time belonged to the Netherlands. He came to Rome in 1550, where he thoroughly acquainted himself with ancient sculpture. In 1553, however, he settled in Florence, where he headed a large and extraordinarily prosperous workshop which carried out commissioned work for the Medici court. It is only in the monumental statues of Giambologna where we find Venuses that can rival ancient models in their aesthetic qualities. However, these statues are no different from the bathing women, an essential innovation of Giambologna, who approached all ancient mythological motifs in the same way.[242] Giambologna built upon how Michelangelo and primarily Benvenuto Cellini had depicted the naked body in that he was not interested in spiritual content and the story as such.[243] He replaced the narrative about ancient gods with a narrative of the human body, a prerequisite of which was to replace ancient schemes with the study of live models. Radical limitation of attributes and decorative elements was linked to this, and thus his statues differ from other production of its time thanks to its minimalist concept.

Interest in what the human body looks like and attempts to create a faithful depiction of it appears relatively late in post-ancient art and shows distinct gender differentiation. Men were considered to be physiologically and intellectually superior to women, and therefore Cennino Cennini wrote the following about depicting the human body in his manual on art from around 1400: *I will make you acquainted with the proportions of a man; I omit those of a woman, because there is not one of them perfectly proportioned.*[244] The first attempts at depicting the anatomy of the naked male body according to a live model appear in Italian art around 1470, the first study based on living women appeared as late as the second decade of the 16th century.[245] However, women continue to be overshadowed by the male body. A practical problem was also at play here – artists were by vast majority men, and female models were practically unavailable if one's sister, lover or wife did not agree to pose. In order to master the anatomy of the female body, artists therefore used ancient statues of Venus not only as a supplement, but also as an alternative to a living model.

Giambologna's first marble statue, which he unveiled in Florence, happened to be a Venus; however, it has yet to be identified.[246] Giambologna later created the Fiorenza, the personification of Florence modelled on ancient statues of Venus. The statue was destined for the fountain in the Medici Villa Il Castello, where Botticelli's famous paintings celebrating Venus, the Birth of Venus and Primavera were hung at the time.[247] As early as 1543, Martelli claims that there were plans to place it in the

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[242] Tommaso Mozzati, "Il tempio di Cnido: Il nudo e il suo linguaggio nell'età di Giambologna," in *Giambologna: Gli dei, gli ero*, eds. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos (Florence: Giunti, 2006), 67-87.

[243] See Michael W.Cole, "Giambologna and the Sculpture with No Name," *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 3 (2008): 338.

[244] Cennino Cenini, *The Book of the Art of*, chapter.70. Translated by Ch. J. Herringham.

[245] Cf. Kren, *The Renaissance Nude*, 86-88, 193-197.

[246] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 7, 1881, 629; Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 586.

[247] Firenze, Villa La Petraia 74. Cf. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi and Dimitrios Zikos, *Giambologna: Gli dei, gli eroi*, eds., Dimitrios (Florence: Giunti, 2006), 2006, 158-160, no. 2; Doris H.: Lehmann, "Tribolos Erbe:

fountain at the center of the labyrinth at the end of the garden in the Il Castello villa.[248] The Medici villas were not only private residences, but also a part of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany's state representation. The personification of the city conceived as a variation on Venus was meant to emphasize the Roman origin of Florence, which its rulers understood as a second Rome. By making reference to Venus as the embodiment of fertility and the element of water, Fiorenza at the same time emphasized that Florence was founded on the confluence of the Arno and Mugnone rivers and water is the source of the prosperity of both the city and the whole state.[249] The ancient sculptural type that formed the model for Fiorenza depicts Venus stepping out of the sea with both hands raised upwards and lifting a lock of her hair for it to dry more quickly. Fiorenza builds upon the abovementined image type of Lombardo's Venus holding a lock of her hair with both hands, thus depicting her wringing out her hair. This motif was emphasized by a pipe hidden in the lock of her wrung hair from which water flowed, a symbol of the vitality of the Medici state.

Creation of the statue of Fiorenza was originally entrusted to Nicollò Tribollo, but he did not manage to realize it by his death in 1550 and the fountain's statue was thus made by Giambologna. Vasari's description of Tribollo's model of the statue tells us that Giambologna adhered closely to it.[250] We can form an idea of the appearance of this model from the version in Aranjuez created by an unknown Florentine sculptor around 1571.[251] Giambologna deviated from Tribollo's model by making the figure much more dynamic. Its left leg is bent as it rests on a vessel on the ground; its right hand is outstretched and the body is depicted in a distinct twisting motion. The result is a more intense impression of the presence of a living woman who at the same time gives off a less erotic impression, as her loins and breasts are more hidden and the dynamic pose takes attention away from them. The same effect is made by the only slightly wavy hair falling tightly around its head, as one of the primary sources of erotic attraction in the 16th century was curly, voluminous hair.[252] Giambologna's concept of hair was in contradiction not only to the fashion of the time, but also with the way Venus was depicted in antiquity. On the contrary, the statue in Aranjuez adheres to ancient patterns, as its hair is richly curled in a complex hairstyle including a Florentine lily. Nonetheless, Giambologna clearly held his version of Fiorenza in high esteem, as his portrait from the end of the 16th century shows a cast of Venus/Fiorenza in his studio.[253] The fact that the statue's relationship to Venus was generally understood at the time the statue was created is seen in the statue by Giambologna's successor, who added Amor to the statue and replaced the vase with a dolphin (**76**).[254] This bronze statue of 1575-1580 is not a cast of Giambologna's statue; it has slimmer

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Giambolognas Fiorenza Anadyomene," in *Leibhafte Kunst. Statuen und kulturelle Identität*, in Dietrich Boschung und Christiane Vorster, eds., (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 179-200.

[248] See Nicollò Martelli, *Primo libro di lettere* (Florence, 1546), 30v.

[249] Cf. Compton, *Venus and the Arts of Love*, 203-241.

[250] Vasari, *Le vite*, vol. 6, 1881, 79.

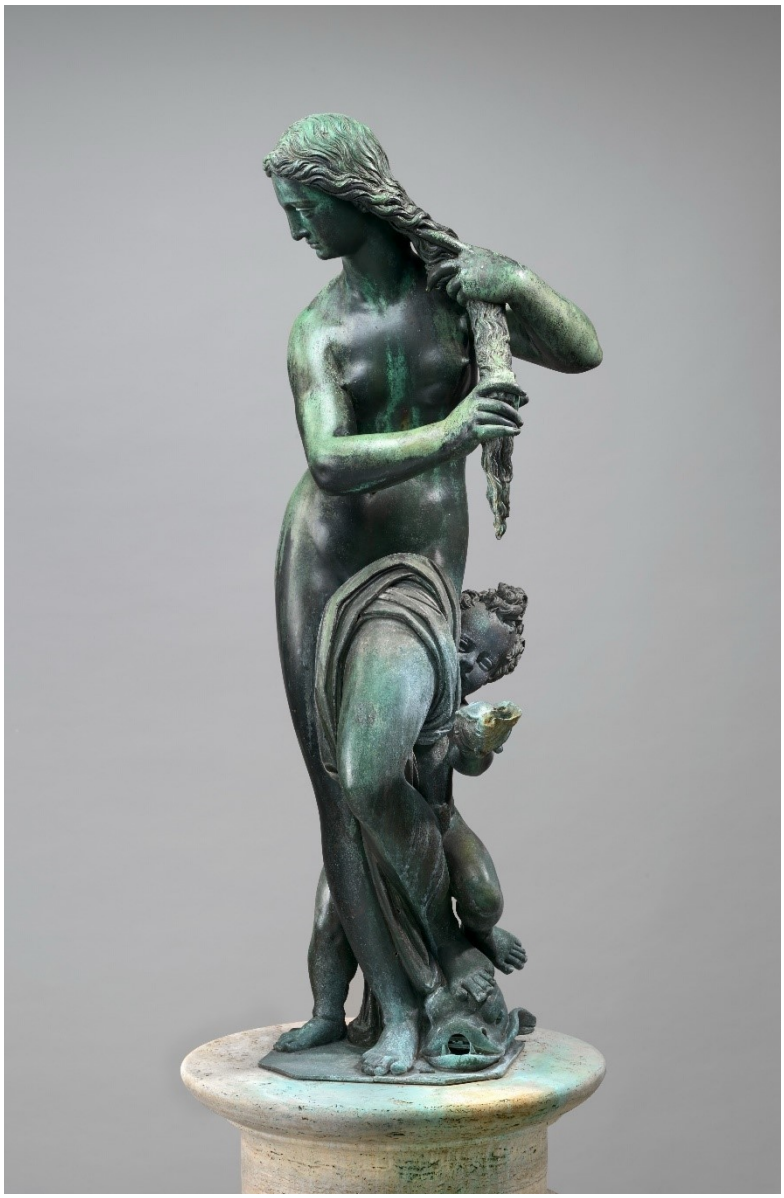
[251] Madrid, Palacio Real de Aranjuez, Jardines de la Isla. Cf. Margarita M. Estella, "La fuente de la Venus de Aranjuez, obra de Francisco Moschino," *Archivo Español de Arte* 58 (2007), 89-93.

[252] See Elena Lazzarini, *Nudo, arte e decoro: Oscillazioni estetiche negli scritti d'arte del Cinquecento* (Pisa: Pacini, 2010), 47-51.

[253] National Gallery of Scottland, Edinburg. See Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna,* 138, fig. 17.

[254] Washington, NG 1991.242.1. Cf. Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol. 1, 414-416.

proportions, the facial expression is different, and its general concept also differs. We find in it an anecdotal motif – Amor is catching the water flowing from Venus's hair into a seashell.

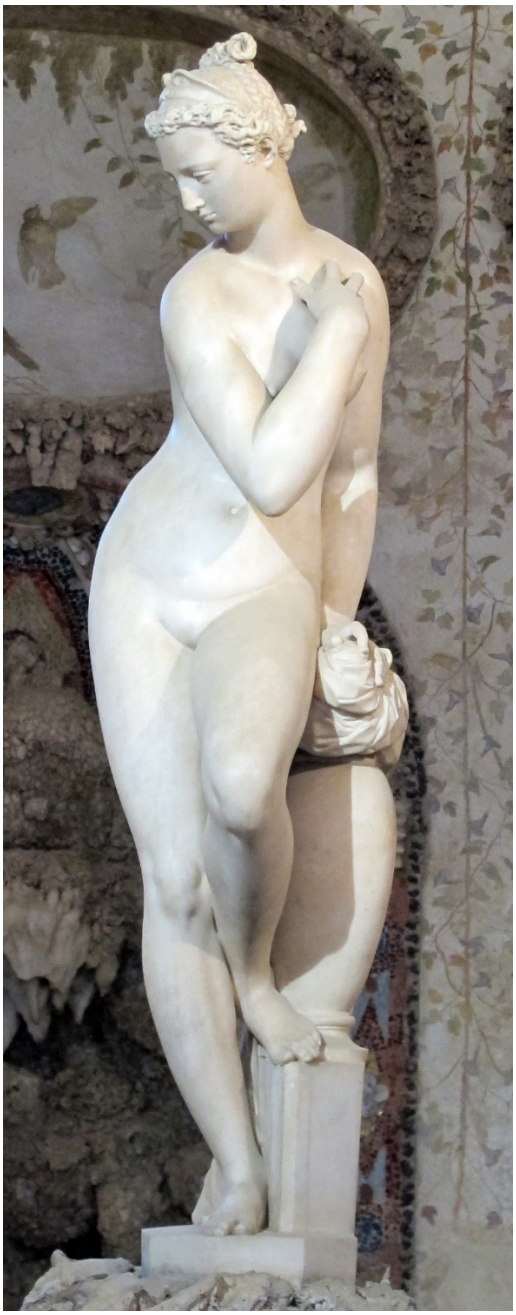


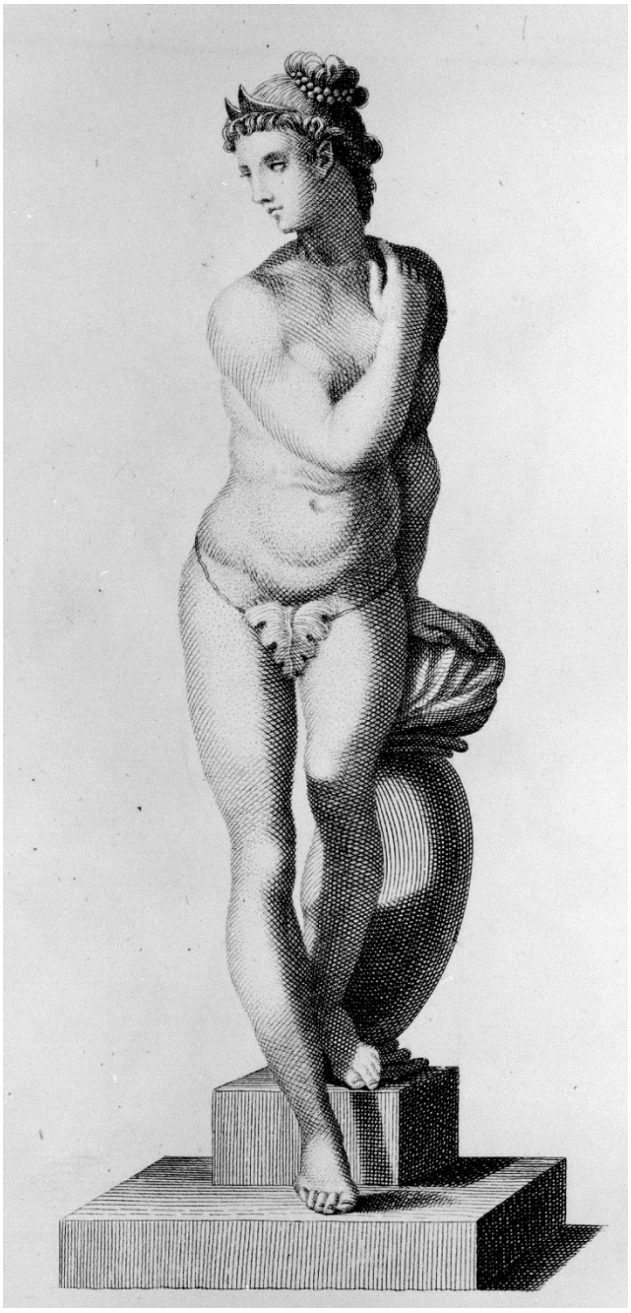
76. Successor to Giambologna, Venus and Cupid, h. 124.5 cm, bronze sculpture, 1575-1580.

Giambologna's most significant work is the statue known as the Groticella Venus (**77**). In 1548, the statue was located in the bedroom of Tuscan Grand Duke Francesco de'Medici.[255] The statue is now placed in the back grotto of Buontalenti's Grotto Grande in the Boboli Gardens by the Pitti Palace in Florence. The statue was not necessarily conceived as Venus, although the goddess is implied by the Isis knot, diadem and traditional attributes, e.g. nakedness, or a vase with a cloak thrown over it that she holds with one hand while the other is lifted to her chest. However, she is not covering her breasts with her raised hand or handling the cloak with her free hand, which simply rests upon the cloth. In Giambologna's Venuses, the ancient goddess

[255] See Charles Avery, *Giambologna* (Florence: Cantini, 1987), 107.

and her medieval reinterpretation have disappeared almost without a trace from the perspective of both content and form, as Giambologna's models were not ancient statues of Venus, but living women.





77. Giambologna, Venus di Groticella, height 131 cm, marble statue, ca. 1570.
78. Venus di Groticella with undergarments, engraving, 1789.

The Groticella Venus is also characterized by the fact that the sculptor was much more interested in the technical skill and brilliance than in the depicted theme. The goddess is depicted in an almost complete twisting motion with her head turning behind her. The precariousness of her stance is caused by the fact that she is seemingly ascending, standing with her right leg on the polygonal base and stepping with the other onto the cylindrical pillar that takes up the whole surface of the base, not allowing her to stand in any other way. She uses her left hand to lean on the high vase

resting on the pillar. The statue's stability is ensured by the cloak thrown over the vase and flowing down it; however, if it had been made from real cloth and not marble, the goddess would have tumbled to the ground. The gesture of her right hand is also unjustified, as its outstretched fingers are resting on the chest of the left shoulder. Giambologna's statues may have nakedness and attributes in common with ancient sculptural types, but they primarily evoke bathing women. Fiorenza was the personification of the city, and thus could chastely display her nakedness; the Venus from the Boboli Gardens differs from her in that she is even more chaste, as she is covering her breasts with her left hand. This, however, was of no use, as she was still met with criticism on the part of the prudish public. Venus was therefore forced to put on undergarments, which were only removed as late as the 19th century (**78**).[256]

Giambologna's efforts to reform the ancient sculptural type depicting Venus culminated in a work from 1584 for Giangiorgo Cesarini, which today is the pride of the American Embassy in Rome.[257] The goddess is indicated in the marble Cesarini Venus only by her nakedness, her hair in the Isis knot, and the insinuation of bathing. The ancient attributes of Venus are wholly overshadowed here by an action observed from a living model, as Venus dries the skin under her breast. Ancient Greek and Roman statues depict the goddess taking off her clothing or sandals, or wringing out her hair, but she is never drying herself. Giambologna's statue, however, does not depict a genre scene. The statue does not evoke the intimacy of a bathroom, and the sculptor has shifted the concrete action to an abstract level in the same way as with the Groticella Venus, who stands in a similar and inconceivable position but still looks natural despite this fact. The goddess is depicted in a twisting motion, with one foot on a pillar. With her right hand, she holds her cloak, the bottom end of which lies on the pillar while its top end is thrown over her thigh. The waves of cloth are imitated so brilliantly in the marble that the viewer does not mind that the action does not make sense, aside from the fact that it generally evokes bathing. It is characteristic that this monumental statue was created by making a life-size copy of Giambologna's small bronze statuette, which he created twenty years earlier, i.e. around 1565, as a part of a Medici gift to Emperor Maximilian II.[258] This model was used later by Giambologna's workshop to create numerous bronze statuettes, which promoted this new concept of depicting Venus throughout Europe.

Giambologna's workshop also created a whole series of statuettes of women drying themselves, which can be interpreted as Venuses or Nymphs.[259] He was highly successful with them, which is evidenced by the fact that they were immediately imitated, and a number of these copies continues on until the beginning of the 18th century. The closest to the statue of the Cesarini Venus type is the bronze statuette in Ufizzi of a woman with her foot on a vessel as she leans down to dry her foot with the cloth that is draped over her raised thigh.[260] Her left hand, which holds the cloth, is lifted upwards, which Giambologna adopted from the ancient sculpture type of the

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[256] See Francesco Maria Soldini, *Il reale giardino di Boboli nella sua pianta e nelle sue statue* (Florence 1789), pl. VIII.

[257] Roma, Palazzo Margherita, h. 154 cm. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, no. 17.

[258] Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum 5874. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna,* 203, no. 21. 203.

[259] Manfred Leithe-Jasper, "Venere dopo il bagno, prima e dopo la Venere Cesarini," in Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 189-191.

[260] Firenze, Museo nazionale del Bargello 71B. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 202, no. 20.

goddess taking off her sandal which was renewed at the beginning of the 16th century. In this model, the highly raised elbow was justified, as the goddess was using it to lean on something. Giambologna, however, left out the support, leaving the gesture with just one function – to catch the viewer's attention via its lack of function and draw attention away from the goddess's nakedness.

On the statuette that was created after the Cesarini Venus around 1565, the naked woman is also drying the skin under her breast, but is crouching with one knee on the cloth.[261] We know this statuette from many later variations.[262] The piece of cloth that the goddess uses to dry herself is an unraveled part of a turban that she holds with her right hand, which is raised behind her. The viewers are not bothered by the impossible action, as they are wholly preoccupied with the shapes of the female body, which the sculptor has shown them in complete nakedness. The ancient sculptural type of the crouching Venus which Giambologna saw in Rome or knew from graphics or drawings also gave inspiration to another statuette, which was created around 1560. The crouching woman is pressing the drapery to her chest, but at the same time she is turning upwards and lifting her hand, a gesture that can be interpreted as the expression of surprise or fear.[263]

The composition of these statuettes gave rise to a marble statue just slightly smaller than life-size, which depicts a naked woman sitting on a pillar and drying her lifted foot off with cloth (**79**). The ancient model for this may have been the sitting Nymphs putting their sandals on. On Giambologna's statue, the woman is holding a vessel in her raised hand, which was a gesture typical for depictions of Psyche. In the popular image type, a gesture is a semantic element – Psyche is holding the vessel that she has just received from Persephone in the underworld in order to take it to the earth's surface and pass it on to Aphrodite. Giambologna's statue certainly does not depict Psyche, as she was not likely to be drying her foot during her dramatic journey from the underworld. Francesco de'Medici sent the statue as a diplomatic present to his brother-in-law, Bavarian Duke Albert V.[264] The statue was located in Munich until 1630, when it was taken away by the Swedish army in their spoils of war. The statue entered Protestant Sweden as Bathsheba, evidently to excuse its nakedness. The definitive version of this composition is represented by the recently discovered bronze statue of the bathing Venus, which likely belonged to a collection of statues given by Ferdinand I de'Medici to French King Henry IV to decorate the garden of the royal palace in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.[265] The bronze statue differs from the marble version in that Venus's hand is partially covering her face, which the viewer can see only when he walks around the statue. The intentional incompletion of various parts of the statue is another characteristic that serves to give the impression that the depicted figure is escaping the viewer. The hair tied back into plaits is created in detail in order to evoke

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[261] Firenze, Museo nazionale Bargello 62. Cf. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 199-200, no. 18.
[262] E.g. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 24.212.15.
[263] H. 9.7 cm. Firenze, Museo nazionale Bargello 69B. Cf. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 201, no. 19.
[264] Borghini, *Il Riposo*, 587.
[265] Private collection. Cf. Alexander Rudigier, "Les bronzes envoyés de Florence à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, la Vénus de 1597 et les dernières oeuvres de Jean Bologne," *Bulletin Monumental* 174 (2016): 287-356; Alexander Rudigier and Blanca Truyols, *Giambologna. Court Sculptor to Ferdinando I*. Paul Holberton Publishing, London 2019.

the impression of the goddess's presence, while other parts are only hinted at and thus look as if they were blurred.

79. Giambologna, Venus / bathing woman, height 115 cm, marble statue, 1571–1573.

The series of statues in Dresden points to the ancient myth, but here Giambologna created only a sleeping female figure loosely inspired by ancient sleeping nymphs. Someone else, probably his protégé Adriaen de Vries, added on the Satyr.[266] When the series of statues was recorded in the inventory of Dresden's Kunstkammer in 1587, the figures were marked down as Satyr and a woman.[267] The

[266] Dresden, Skulturensammlung IX34. Cf. Strozzi and Zikos, *Giambologna*, 207, no. 23; Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, "Giambolognas Venus und Satyr in Dresden: Ein durchdachtes Geschenk für einen Florenz-Bewunderer," in *Docta Manus. Studien zur italienischen Skulptur für Joachim Poeschke,* ed. Johannes Myssok and Jürgen Wiener (Münster: Rhema, 2007), 301-312.
[267] Dresden, Kunstkammerinventar, 1587, fol. 66r.

unclear identity of Giambologna's Venuses was nothing uncommon in Italy in the 16th century. Such a figure, which could have been a woman, a nymph, or Venus herself even had its own name – "Venerina", literally "little Venus". On his engraving of 1592, Annibale Carracci replaced the Nymph with a reclining Venus and emphasized the scene by adding Amor to accompany her.[268] Satyr is even more prying as he removes the blanket in order to take pleasure in the sight of the goddess's loins. One seemingly secondary detail here is also worth mentioning – the loins on Carracci's engraving are not smooth as was the rule in antiquity and Italian art of the 16th century, but depicted realistically as was common in the Middle Ages.

Flemish sculptor Hans Mont, Giambologna's pupil with whom he cooperated in Florence, worked in the Prague court of Emperor Rudolph II. Three group sculptures depicting Venus with her lover are attributed to Hans Mont. In his work, the mythical motif intertwines with the depiction of two lovers who are linked only loosely to the mythical tale. It is not clear who the naked man and woman depict on the group sculpture from around 1580, which was taken from Prague Castle to Sweden as a spoil of war.[269] They are sitting next to one another, embracing firmly, but have distanced themselves for a moment to look into each other's eyes. The naked woman may be Venus, as Amor stands at her side with a bow in his free right hand and a quiver hanging over his shoulder. However, the small deity takes no notice of the embracing couple located behind him and is turned to the viewer, whom he greets or blesses with his raised hand. On the Stockholm group sculpture, Venus's partner tends to be labelled as Adonis, but the small dog at his feet on the other side of the statue group is not a hunting breed, but a house pet, probably a symbol of fidelity in marriage. The identity of the lover was evidently unimportant to the sculptor, as he did not equip him with any attributes, and therefore he cannot be considered to be Mars, which is the only alternative to Adonis.

The small group sculpture in the Getty Museum of embracing, naked lovers created by Hans Mont in 1580 is without a doubt Venus and Mars, as the man is wearing a helmet.[270] Venus is sitting in her lover's lap in a conspicuous and unnatural acrobatic position, the purpose of which is to expose her loins to plain sight, as they are the counterpart to Mars's attribute of war (a part of Venus's left hand and Mars's left hand are later additions). Hans Mont's alabaster statuette from around 1580 is one of the few works from Rudolph's art collection that have remained in Prague.[271] Mars is characterized by a helmet and the armor on which the two sit. The lovers face one another, but the goddess is pulling herself away from Mars as if wishing to depart; her body is bent and her loins dominate the group sculpture similarly to the group sculpture in the Getty Museum. A German private collection contains a bronze cast that was created after a model of the alabaster statuette and shows the appearance of the work before the lost hands were added on.[272]

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[268] E.g. Washington, National Gallery of Art 2008.104.11. See Diane DeGrazia, *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 17.

[269] H. 117 cm, ca. 1580. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum NMDrhSk 141. See Jürgen Schultze, ed., *Prag um 1600 - Kunst und Kultur am Hofe Rudolfs II.* (Freren: Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen, 1988), cat. 72.

[270] Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 85.SB.75. See Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, 214-216, no. 22..

[271] H. 37 cm. Prague, National gallery P5820.

[272] See Eliška Fučíková et al. (eds.) *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and the City* (London: Thames and Hudson), 1997, no. I.117.

Sculptor of Dutch origin Hubert Gerhard, who was the court sculptor for William V, Duke of Bavaria from 1584 to 1598, took an approach to Venus that was similar to Hans Mont. Before his arrival to Germany, the sculptor perfectly mastered Giambologna's style during his stay in Florence. From 1582, Gerhard worked in southern Germany and Tyrol and his first patron was Hans Fugger, an educated humanist member of a prominent merchant dynasty. Gerhard created the terracotta figural decoration of the marble fireplace of Fugger's chateau in 1587. Vulcan is hammering out a chain on an anvil at the top, and under him are the semi-reclining figures of Mars and Venus, who are caught up in an animated conversation, which is indicated by the gestures of their hands and their heads turned towards one another. Mars is characterized by his helmet, and Venus by her complex hairstyle and the bracelet on her arm; the gods are otherwise naked, but Venus's loins are covered with drapery. Hubert Gerhard differs from Giambologna and Hans Mont in the moralizing message of his statues. While the lovers over the door in Kirchheim are chatting carelessly, the deceived husband is vigorously wielding his hammer to finish the shackles which he will use to punish his wife and her lover.[273]

Hubert Gerhard created a gigantic fountain of Mars and Venus for the courtyard of the castle of Hans Fugger, which was completed and exhibited on the site in 1595.[274] The whole fountain was originally around 7 or 8 meters high, and the sitting Mars and Venus is 210 cm high; the naked figures are thus depicted in distinct larger-than-life size. The couple sit closely next to one another and Mars's leg is placed over Venus's. This motif of crossed legs was used frequently from the 16th century as a symbol of love, sexuality and birth.[275] Mars is fully occupied by Venus; he looks into her eyes, tightly embracing and pulling her close with his left hand while his right hand is placed on her breast. Colossal figures at the centers of fountains have appeared in Italy since the mid-16th century.[276] Hans Fugger evidently wished for something similar for the center of his residence, despite the fact that no colossal statues of Venus had been created in Italy. The intimate group of lovers is suitable exclusively for a small sculpture, but gives an awkward impression when enlarged to a monumental scale. Such a visible offence to good taste was unlikely for such an ambitious client as Hans Fugger was. He most likely understood the group more as an allegory than as lovers.

Venus, who is characterized by a diadem, is pulling Mars towards her with her right hand, embracing him around the shoulders; however, she is not looking at him, but at an apple, a symbol of victory, which she holds in her raised left hand. The figure of the child under the couple is interpreted as Amor, but he has neither wings nor a bow, quiver or arrows. Instead of Amor's common attributes, he holds a bunch of grapes, which would point more to a deity linked to Bacchus and fertility. The boy is turning around to look up to Venus and reaching for the apple with his left hand. The group on the fountain evidently depicts Mars as the personification of war, and Venus as the one preventing its outbreak through her love. She has evidently been successful:

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[273] Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol.2, 26 (B7), 216.

[274] Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum R 6986. Cf. Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol. 1, 206- 219, II, cat. G7 p. 146-147; Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, no. 65 p. 352-358

[275] Cf. Lep Steineberg, *The Metaphors of Love and Birth in Michelangelo's Pietàs* (London: Basic Books, 1970).

[276] Cf. Virginia Busch, *The Colossal Sculpture of the Cinquecento* (New York: Garland, 1976).

in the next moment the child, i.e. Peace, will take the victorious trophy, i.e. the apple, in order to instate prosperity, which is symbolized by the bunch of grapes.

The group of statues created for Kirchheim is closely linked to the small bronze sculptural group by Hubert Gerhard from the 1580s, which Rudolf II held in his Prague collection.[277] However, it is not clear whom the work was created for. The composition is similar, i.e. the naked Mars sits next to the naked Venus with covered loins, and he pulls her close to him with both hands. He is not looking at her but at the burning heart held by the goddess in her outstretched right hand so Mars cannot reach it. Venus here has turned her back to Mars and looks at him imploringly; with her left hand, she tries lightly to pull away his hand, which grips her shoulder. In this sculptural group as well, Venus is wholly occupying Mars, and thus peace rules the earth. Amor is making use of this favorable situation, as he hides from the couple and lies down on a chest, which may symbolize the wealth that peace brings.

A typical example of a statue in Giambologna's style is the bronze statue created in 15580-1590 by Francesco Brambilla the Younger. The figure uses her left hand to dry her right side with cloth while looking in the opposite direction.[278] She is holding a seashell under her breast, an action that collides with the movement of her left hand. These Venuses from the end of the 16th century are made in life size and were intended exclusively for private residences. It is likely that Brambilla's statue was originally destined for the garden of the Lainate villa near Milan. As stressed above, Giambologna's reform of the Venus statue fundamentally influenced the production of statuettes. The Venus by Tiziano Aspetti of ca. 1600 is turning and stepping over a sleeping Amor and a dolphin as water pours from its mouth; the cloak is thrown over her back with one end wrapped around her lowered right hand and the other end held in her raised left hand.[279] The only explanation of the act with the cloak is that she is drying her back. In any case, she is not attempting to hide her nakedness, but on the contrary is calling attention to it. By doing so, she expresses her relationship with the statue representing Mars placed next to her.

For Giambologna and his successors, the primary means used to emphasize the fact Venus is not a common woman are her awkward poses, which are not justified by any specific activity. These differentiate the depiction of the goddess from common bathing women– the Venuses usually stand in an exaggerated contrapposto and their bodies are often turned so that their legs face in the opposite direction of the head. It is therefore no surprise that Giambologna's workshop produced Renaissance variations of Venus Callipyge, for which such an acrobatic position is characteristic.[280] Nonetheless, Italian statues of Venus from the last third of the 16th century usually distance themselves from their antique originals, and the shapes of their bodies are fuller and rounder. The relationship with the myth of Venus is limited only to connections with dolphins and Amor. The most commonly depicted act is Venus drying her body with bundled cloth, and thus the series of depictions of the goddess gradually shifted to depictions of a mortal woman in the privacy of her bathroom or

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[277] Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer no. 5848. Cf. Diemer, *Hubert Gerhard*, vol.2, 158-159 (G 16); Eikelmann, *Bella figura*, no. 23 p. 218-220.
[278] Washington, National Gallery 1937.1.132.
[279] New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 66.111
[280] E.g. Antonio Susini, 1600-1624. London, Victoria and Albert Museum A.141-1910.

bedroom. These depictions are only linked to Venus in that the goddess was also depicted naked. It is also important to note that these statues of Venus may have aroused erotic thoughts, but the depicted goddess was in no way prompting the viewer to have them. She is wholly ignoring the surrounding world and the men or women who are watching her, and is wholly focused on herself and care for her body.

**Return of the Demon**

As stated above, Renaissance sculptors could not fully revive the ancient models of naked Venus. Mainly because of them, collectors had to be very cautious in the way they staged their collections to avoid being accused of idolatry. Julius II was aware of what a revolutionary act he was committing when he founded the public gallery in the Belvedere, which included the naked goddess. He, therefore, placed the inscription PROCUL ESTE, PROPHANI (*uninitiated, be gone*) over the entrance.[281] Nonetheless, ancient sculptures were exhibited here in alcoves and on pedestals, likening them to statues on Christian altars located in the apses of cathedrals, which was noted by Cesare Trivulzio during the opening of the Belvedere.[282] Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola mentioned "fake gods" exhibited on "altars" in Cortille del Belvedere in 1512. He published his poem "The Expulsion of Venus and Cupid" together with a letter that the author wrote to his friend Lilius Gyraldus. The author views the court as proof of the moral depravity of his time: *The poem was occasioned by the ancient statue of Venus and Cupid ... Truly in this statue it was possible to perceive at the same time the gifts of the maker and to reflect about the way in which the darkness of the false superstition had been put to flight by the true religion that not even the images of these gods could be seen except in broken fragments and almost withered away*.[283] In Giovanni Francesco's words, Venus is an evil demon, which has fortunately been chastened by the Christian faith, and therefore only the fragments of statues that prove its defeat remain. Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that the greater the mastery of the sculptors, the greater the danger of the statues.

An inscription which defended the exhibition of naked ancient statues had been a part of the Roman collection of the rich banker and merchant Jacopo Galli since the end of the 15th century. In a conspicuous place among his exhibits was the pseudo-ancient Latin inscription: *Virtue excludes no one, it is open to all, to it noble house or wealth do not matter, but instead it contents itself with the naked individual*.[284] This was an abridged quote of Seneca, in which nakedness is understood figuratively as the

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[281] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6, 258. Cf. Francesco Albertini, *Opusculum de mirabilibus novae et veteris urbis Romae* (Rome: Jacobus Mazochius, 1510), fol. Qr-v.

[282] See Hans Henrik Brummer, *The Statue Court in the Vatican Belvedere* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1970), 75.

[283] Pico della Mirandola, *De Venere et Cupidine expellendis* (Rome: Iacobus Mazochius, 1513). English translation E. Gombrich. See Katherine M. Bentz, "Ancient Idols, Lascivious Statues, and Sixteenth-Century Viewers in Roman Gardens," in *Receptions of Antiquity, Constructions of Gender in European Art, 1300-1600,* eds. Marice Rose and Alison C. Poe (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 420-422.

[284] Pietro Sabino and Fra Giocondo: Sara Magister, "Censimento delle collezioni di antichità a Roma. 1471-1503," *Xenia antiqua* 8 (1999): 166; idem, "Censimento delle collezioni di antichità a Roma. 1471-1503. Addenda," *Xenia antiqua* 10 (2001): 125.

opposite of deception and disguise.[285] In the work that the quote comes from, Seneca also applies this figurative interpretation to statues, specifically to three unveiled Graces: *it is fitting that there should be nothing to bind or restrict them, and so the maidens wear flowing robes, and these, too, are transparent because benefits desire to be seen*.[286] According to Lyon antiquarian Guillaume du Choul, nakedness was an attribute of truth and virtue in ancient art. He wrote on this topic in his French treatise on Roman religion based on ancient coins from 1556. The work was subsequently translated into Italian and was one of the sources of Ripa's bestselling work "Iconologia".[287]

Du Choul defends his thesis on nakedness as an attribute of virtue with the argument that Roman coins depicted the naked Hercules with the inscription VIRTUTI AUGUSTI / TO THE VIRTUE OF THE EMPEROR .[288] According to Du Choul, we must interpret Hercules's nakedness symbolically, just as we do his club and lion's skin. It is obvious that he did not walk the world naked: *The club and lion skin are the most powerful things in the world and virtue is always depicted naked, as someone who does not strive towards riches, but immortality, glory and honor, as we read on the ancient marble, which bears the inscription VIRTUS NUDO HOMINE CONTENTA EST*.[289] Du Choul presents Seneca's quote as an ancient inscription that he read on marble, and therefore he may have known it from Mazzochi's catalogue of ancient inscriptions in Rome, which included the epigram from the Galli residence.[290] Seneca's quote was evidently popular between Roman collectors, as we find it on a pseudo-ancient Latin inscription in the Carafa collection.[291] The architectural framework in Tobias Fendt's catalogue may be an addition made by an engraver, but may also have been inspired by the way the inscription was displayed in the villa of Cardinal Oliviero Carafa.[292] The inscription is placed over a half-circular reservoir of water, the side of which is decorated with scenes showing naked figures.

The most popular strategy selected by Roman collectors to defend their collections of ancient statues was presenting them as publicly beneficial institutions that served to perfect the visual arts and the audience's tastes. Cardinal Cesarini placed a telling inscription over the entrance to his garden with ancient statues, among which was the naked Venus: *Giuliano Cesarini, Cardinal Deacon of Sant'Angelo, dedicated this dieta of statues to his own studies and to the decorous pleasure (honestae voluptae) of his countrymen on his 34th birthday, the 1th Kalends of June, in the year 1500, the 8th year of Pope Alexander VI's reign, and the 2233rd year from the founding of Rome*.[293] The owner of the collection used this inscription to endorse the tradition begun by Pope Sixtus IV, who devoted statues from the papal collection to the Campidoglio so all could enjoy them. By dating the inscription to the year "from the founding of Rome," Cesarini was

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[285] Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 3.18.2.
[286] Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, 1.4.
[287] Guillaume du Choul, *Discours de la religion des anciens Romains* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1556); idem, *Discorso della religione antica de Romani* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouille, 1559); Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, ed. Sonia Maffei (Turin: S. G. Einaudi, 2012), 595-597, note 1 on p. 842.
[288] Du Choul, *Discours*, 34; idem, *Discorso*, 33.
[289] Du Choul, *Discorso*, 148. Cf. idem, *Discours*, 174-175.
[290] See Jacopo Mazzochi, ed., *Epigrammata antiquae Urbis* (Rome: Jacopo Mazochi, 1521), 97v.
[291] Christian, *Empire without End*, 292-293.
[292] See Tobias Fendt, *Monumenta sepulcrorum cum epigraphis ingenio et doctrina exellentium virorum* (Wrocław: Kryspin Scharffenberg, 1574), 111.
[293] Christian, *Empire without End*, 197.

also emphasizing the fact that the collection was a part of ancestral cultural heritage, which had to be cared for.

Clear proof of the fact that the ownership of ancient statues in Renaissance Italy was not a common phenomenon can be found in the caution with which Andrea della Valle approached his massive collection. He was promoted to cardinal in 1517, and in 1526 he began to build a new palace (Palazzo Della Valle-Del Bufalo) north of his native home. In 1527, catastrophe struck Rome when the imperial army ransacked and pillaged the city. Catholic Rome was brutally exposed to imperial Protestant mercenaries, for whom ancient statues were deplorable pagan idols, proof of the moral depravity of papal Rome. The della Valle Family maintained good relations with the imperial side, and was thus not only spared from the pillaging but was able to make use of the situation to enlarge its collection. In order to display the ancient exhibits, Lorenzo Lotti (Lorenzetto) modified the walls of the palace courtyard in a unified manner. Statues were placed in rectangular alcoves and niches, portrait busts in circular alcoves, and reliefs in an ornamental rectangular framework.[294] An important part of the decoration also included eight inscriptions, which the cardinal had placed on the western and eastern side of the courtyard. The inscriptions run next to one another above the ancient sculptural works, and function as a sort of heading that instructs the visitor on how to understand the artworks.

The inscriptions, which were evidently formulated by the builder himself, emphasize Andrea della Valle's relationship with ancient Rome. Through these inscriptions, the cardinal emphasized that these rare works of art would have been destroyed without his intervention; nonetheless, he protests against any accusation of excessive self-glorification. The statues are thus mere decoration, adding pleasantness to life. The inscriptions urge the visitor to view the courtyard and its statues as a garden meant to inspire artists. At the same time, the owner of the gallery was also defending himself from any rebukes that the collection was mere profligacy; by exhibiting these expensive items, the cardinal is suggesting others to surround themselves with luxury as well. The inscriptions accentuating those whom the works of art are intended for are also important. They are exhibited for the pleasure of the cardinal, who has allowed guests from the city and abroad to access them; however, this access is controlled. It is implicitly emphasized in the inscriptions that these works do not serve as instruction or education; they have been exhibited exclusively for their beauty and aesthetic pleasure. The inclusion of the statues into a pre-planned architectural framework that they must conform to also pointed to this fact. The works of art not only lost their uniqueness in this new context, but were also made less accessible. Visitors saw the ancient works of art from afar and could not walk around them.

The critical approach to statues of ancient gods gained significant intensity after the end of the Council of Trent, which began to take up arms against the "errors" and "falsities" of artists. In 1566, imperial envoy Niccolò Cusano reported that Pope Pius V (1566-1572) had announced it was inappropriate for the successor of Saint Peter to have ancient statues in his residence. For this reason, he had a score of statues

[294] See Christian, *Empire without End*, 383-388.

transferred from the Vatican collection to the Campidoglio or sold.[295] Prestigious works of art once again became dangerous pagan idols and the Cortile del Belvedere was closed to the public. Ancient statues were hidden behind the doors of closed alcoves, but artists were still allowed to draw them.[296] It is characteristic that statues of naked Venuses from the Vatican collections disappeared from guides to ancient statues in Rome in the second half of the 16th century.

Even those who admired ancient statues realized that papal Rome was losing its prestige because of them in Protestant ultramontane Europe, where they could be accused of idolatry. Classical scholar Antonio Augustín wrote the following in 1566 to antiquarian Fulvio Orsini: *I doubt that it is necessary to bury all the nude statues, since no new information has come out about them, but certainly … the garden of pope Julius III with so many Venuses and other lascivities that, although they are beneficial to young scholars and artists, the Northerners are bestially scandalized and the evil rumors gain strength. So, our City, the Gracious Queen of the Provinces, goes on losing territories*.[297] Bologna bishop Gabriele Paleotti took a harsh stance against ownership and exhibition of ancient statues in his famous book "Discourses on Sacred and Profane Images."[298] In his words, depictions of ancient deities are the seat of demons, and this applied primarily to Venus. According to Paleotti, both the production and ownership of depictions of ancient gods was a sin. Only such works that contribute to moral enhancement and enlightenment can appear in public space. This can certainly not be said of statues of Venus, as they depicted not only an ancient goddess, but also an erotically attractive naked woman, which was inexcusable and, in Paleotti's words, needed to be prevented at all costs.

The main reason why there was no full rehabilitation of the ancient statue of Venus in the Italian Renaissance is apparent. In her famous essay, Joan Kelly asked whether women in the Renaissance experienced the same things as men, and then gave a negative answer to the question.[299] The Renaissance did not bring about anything positive for women. After an era of the relative liberation of women's position in the European Middle Ages, Kelly claims that, on the contrary, a renewal of the traditional patriarchal model took place, in which the primary virtues of women once again became obedience, chastity and fertility. Today's historical consensus is more cautious, but scholars agree on the fact that the position of women did not change in any fundamental way during the Renaissance. The patriarchal character of society did not change in any radical manner, men continued to hold strong superiority, and all power remained in their hands. Moreover, a major change must have taken place at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century. Women began to be presented as an

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[295] Ludwig von Pastor, *A History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages,* ed. R. F. Kerr (St. Louis MO: Herder, 1891-1929), vol. 17, 112 no. 1.

[296] This was utilized in the first half of 1591 by Hendrick Goltzius, cf. his drawing of the Venus Felix, 1591, Haarlem, Teyler's Stichting, Portfolio N, 23 r (no. 211). Cf. Aurelia Brandt, "Goltzius and the Antique," *Print Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2001): 158-149.

[297] Antonio Augustín, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 7 (Lucca: Rocchius, 1772), 247-8. English translation Katherine M. Bentz.

[298] Gabriele Paleotti, *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre et profane diuiso in cinque libri* (Bologna: Alessandro Benacci, 1582). Cf. Vincenzo Caputo, "Gli 'abusi' dei pittori e la 'norma' dei trattatisti: Giovanni Andrea Gilio e Gabriele Paleotti," *Studi rinascimentali* 6 (2008): 99-110.

[299] Joan Kelly-Gabol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 174-201.

omnipotent dark power that could overturn all of society if steps against this were not definitively taken. This trend culminated in the second half of the 16th and first half of the 17th century in a series of fabricated trials during which tens of thousands of alleged witches were burned at the stake in southern Germany. And this trend had a fatal impact on the reception of ancient Venus statues.

The updating of the medieval concept of Venus as the arch-demon is attested by a series of German graphics from around 1500. In the most popular book of the European reformation, "Ship of Fools" by Sebastian Brant, which was published first in 1494, an independent chapter is devoted to Venus. By doing so, Brant reacted to the growing interest in the goddess in Catholic Europe, a fact which he sharply condemned. In this book, the winged goddess is not depicted as she was in antiquity; she is dressed according to contemporary fashion, but has a deep neckline, long flowing hair and a coquettish expression.[300] She is accompanied by animals that are linked to foolishness and deceit, i.e. a cuckoo, donkey and monkey. The blind Amor walks in front of her, firing his bow. Venus has three figures bound with a rope and wearing fool's caps as they worship her. The cap has fallen off the man's head on the left, revealing a priest's tonsure, which was a criticism of the Catholic Church for tolerating the renewed interest in pagan deities. Venus has tied the rope binding her captives around her waist and grips it in her hand, holding the rope before her loins, a parody of the typical pose of ancient statues of Venus. She has lifted the other hand in a gesture of blessing her followers. This gesture is repeated to a certain degree by a skeleton, which seems to be coming out of her loins. The skeleton comments on the first known epidemic of syphilis, which broke out in Naples in 1494 or 1495, forming a generally comprehensible argument against Venus.[301]

On a German engraving from around 1500, Venus is depicted as the Europe of the time knew her from ancient statues, i.e. the goddess is naked and positioned in a distinct contrapposto with her head turned to the side (**80**).[302] She is accompanied by the winged Amor with arrows under his belt and his bow resting on a tree, and thus there is no doubt about her identity. She is not, however, the ancient goddess, but a contemporary woman, proof of which is seen in her headdress in the latest Nuremberg fashion of the time. At the same time, however, she is an evil medieval demon, which is seen in the sinister expression, malicious grin and wings of an owl, a bird associated with the night and sin. The demons that fly around her are are also laughing, evidently at the future victims of their ruler. Venus is equipped with a necklace with a love knot, and the many rings on her fingers are trophies of the men that she has seduced and killed. On her right hand, she wears a ring reminiscent of medieval stories about the Venus statue, which we will return to below. Her demonic power is indicated by a thistle that she holds in her hand, and on it is an owl. She is a witch whose goal is to destroy men, which is seen in the skull that she rests her left foot upon victoriously. The audience of the time knew that this was Adam's skull, a reminder of the first man who was seduced by a woman and thus destroyed. Amor aids in alluring men, as he hypnotizes them by singing and playing the lute, which the goddess is tuning with her

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[300] Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff* (Basel: Johann Bergmann von Olpe) 1494, 17v.

[301] Cf. Margaret Healy, "Bronzino's London Allegory and the Art of Syphilis," *The Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 1 (1997): 3-11.

[302] Cf. Scribner III 1976.

right hand. The devil is hiding behind the goddess, who holds a tell-tale object in his hands. It is a bird-call, and once the bird sits on the wood, the bird catcher would press the pieces of wood together, catching the animal in the trap.

80. Daniel Hopfer, Venus and Cupid, engraving, c. 1512.

Ancient statues of Venus are clearly indicated in the moralizing engraving by Albrecht Dürer from 1498 (**81**).[303] The engraving depicts a lazy man surrounded by pillows as he sleeps in the warmth of a wood stove. His laziness is the source of iniquity – the devil stands behind him, blowing sinful thoughts into his mind with a bellows. These ideas are visualized by Venus, who points to the hot stove, as heat evokes erotic desire. Venus's identity is guaranteed by Amor, who is trying in vain to walk on stilts, likely a reference to the futility of the lazy man's erotic dreams. In the visual arts of the 16th century, Venus is presented as a sorceress with power over the elements. In this context, the statue of this goddess appears on the painting "The Fountain of Youth" by Lucas Cranach from 1546.[304] The naked goddess is accompanied by Amor with a honeycomb, which was a common motif of Cranach's paintings.[305] In this context, honey was a symbol of bodily pleasures, which, however, always have a dark side, which is represented by the bee's stinger. Cranach's painting shows both Venus and Amor at the top of a fountain of youth. This theme appears in the court culture of the 12th century in connection with the celebration of ideal love. Later, at the

[303] Cf. Kren, *The Renaissance Nude*, 163.
[304] Berlin, Gemäldegalerie 593.
[305] See Pablo Pérez d'Ors, "A Lutheran Idyll: Lucas Cranach the Elder's Cupid Complaining to Venus," *Renaissance Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 85-98.

end of the 15th century, the theme became the subject of engravings, on which its meaning was transformed. By using crude humor, these depictions criticized not only the idea of a magic fountain of youth, but sexuality in general. On the graphic by Erhard Schön from 1525, a clown stands on the column of the fountain, and "magic" water flows forth from his genitals and buttocks.[306]

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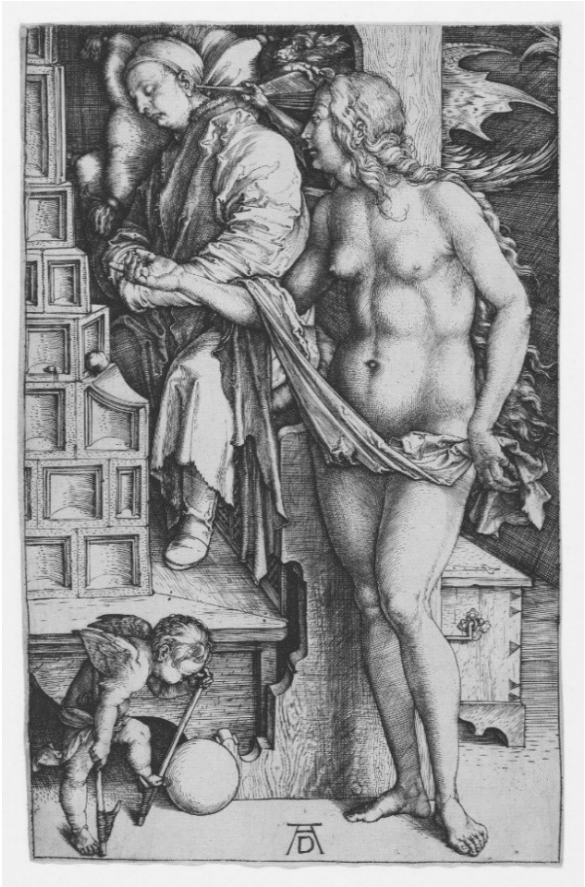

81. Albrecht Dürer, The Dream of the Doctor, engraving, 1498.

Maarten van Heemskerck, who enthusiastically studied ancient statues in Rome, drew an allegorical scene depicting Venus and Amor as bloodthirsty demons. Bacchus has intoxicated a man, torn his heart from his chest, and hands it to Venus and Amor in order to ensure his doom (**82**). The engraving after the drawing by Christoph Schwartz from the end of the 16th century shows a sculptural group of

[306] Cf. Jan-David Mentzel, "Taufe im Sündenbad: Sebald Behams 'Jungbrunnen' von 1531," in *Konvention und Subversion in der Druckgrafik der Beham-Brüder,* ed. Jürgen Müller and Thomas Schauerte (Emsdetten: Imorde, 2011), 98-114.
[307] Cf. Kren, *The Renaissance Nude*, 163.

Venus and Amor standing in the middle of a fountain reservoir at the top left. The goddess is squeezing her breast, from which water spurts, filling the fountain with depravity (**83**). The water spills down the fountain and into a pool below the feet of a woman sitting at a small table with food and drink as she plays the lute. The woman is characterized in the accompanying text as an adulteress calling on her lover. A dog urinates into the pool and under it is a text urging us not to be seduced by harlots, but to drink clean water from a clear source. To the right of the dog, a young man bends down over the pool, drawing water into his hand to drink. Under him, once again, is a cautionary text: *He who lusts after Venus is like the one who wets his lips with the first thing he finds*.


82. Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert, after Maarten van Heemskerck, allegory of drunkenness and sexual exuberance with Venus, engraving, 1551.

83. Christoph Schwartz, engraving by Jan Sadeler I, critique of sexuality with Venus statue, 1588/1595.

On the graphic by Christopher Murer from the beginning of the 17th century, the human soul (*anima*) is being tested in the world (*mundus*), which is depicted as a melting pot (**84**). The counterpart to the good angel (*bonus angelus*), who is cooling the soul with holy water (*spiritus sanctus*), is a naked woman. Venus, who is depicted in the pose of ancient statues, represents the human flesh (*caro*). Venus is adding burning coals to the fire (*cupiditates*), and her hand is on Amor's head. At her feet, there is a bag with gold and a full cup behind her on the table. Behind Venus is the devil, who fans the flames of depravity with temptation (*vanitas, tentationes*).


84. Christoph Murer, *Fidei exploratio* / Test of Faith, etching, 1600-1614.

An explicit reference to the statue of Venus as a source of demonic power is found on a unique painting of naked women dancing around a statue of Venus from the 1570s (**85**). The dancing women are evidently in a trance, raising their hands and legs and bowing their heads down while two dancers have their hands over their breasts. Although they are mostly young women, there are several older women among them, and so the theme of the painting is not motherhood, but women in general. All the women are evidently from higher social classes, which is indicated by their hairstyles and jewelry. The scene takes place in a monumental central building, the architecture of which is reminiscent of Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel in Aachen with its pointed arcades on the ground floor and triple arcades on the upper floor, i.e. of an ancient and holy place. The women are not mythical beings, but contemporary women who have just come together. On the left, a woman walks in, still dressed; on the right, women are taking off their clothes and footwear. Two bearded men stand in the background on the left, who take no notice of the dance and are preoccupied with conversation. On the right in the background are two clothed women. A bearded man with a hood over his head observes the dance from the gallery. Although we have no knowledge of the scene's meaning, there is no doubt that the central figure is the evil

demon. The marble column and its capital with horned heads bears the golden inscription VENUS. The naked Venus stands on the column, holding a pouch of money in her right hand and an object (a mirror) in the other. Venus's demonic character is indicated by her partially shaved head.


85. Hans Bock the Elder, Dance around the statue of Venus, 60 x 80 cm, combined technique on canvas, 1570-1580.

The aversion to the statue of Venus in Renaissance Europe is evidenced by its ritualistic damaging. A fragment of a marble statue of Venus, which is now in a local museum, was housed in the courtyard of the St. Matthias's Abbey in Trier until 1811. The first mention of the statue was made in 1551 by Caspar Brusch, who saw the statue in the abbey's cemetery, which was accompanied by stone stela with an inscription in Latin and German, which he recorded.[308] The inscriptions from around 1500 had been copied onto the preserved stone stela from the second half of the 16th century.[309] The inscriptions speak of a statue of a pagan deity, which the first Trier bishop Eucharius had torn down; the German inscription ends with a declaration made by the statue itself: *[…] I was once venerated as a goddess, but now I stand here to be ridiculed by the whole world.* Between the Latin and German inscription are relief figures of the first three Trier bishops; St. Eucharius has a statue of a naked woman at his feet, a reference to the legend of the tearing down of the pagan statue. Caspar Brusch interpreted the statue as Diana or Venus, giving proof that it was in a relatively intact state. Later

[308] Caspar Bruschius, *Monasteriorum Germaniae praecipuorum ac maxime illustrium centuria prima* (Ingolstadt: Weissenhorn, 1551), 122b.
[309] Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier 1914,1114W. See Wolfgang Binsfeld, "Zur Inschrifttafel bei der Venus von St. Matthias in Trier," *Trierer Zeitschrift* 69-70 (2006-2007), 297–298.

reports claim the statue was stoned, proof of which is found in the state of the preserved statue fragment, the original surface of which has been completely removed.[310] Today, only the torso, which lacks a head and legs, has been preserved; despite this fact, however, it is evident that it belonged to the same sculptural type as the Capuan Venus.[311]

In Renaissance Europe, Venus could still be seen as a mortally dangerous demon, and her statues were also potentially toxic. In Trier, each person was obliged to throw a rock at the statue. In Italy, there were more tolerant conditions, but they had their strict limits. Pirro Ligorio describes in detail the course of a commission meeting to assess thoroughly a series of proposals for a fountain on a public square. Ligorio wrote the following about the drawing of the fountain with the naked Venus: (*it) was ridiculed by some monks who said that for it to be a nude Venus was a dirty and obscene thing*. A design of naked Leda was also considered: *contrary to the examples which should be worthy of decorum in public judgement, and lascivious things should be used or placed in locations which were not always seen, since they are not worthy of being permitted in every location*.[312] It is not clear from the text which fountain was involved, but Ligorio's text can be dated to around 1573. Ligorio's proposal of a fountain with the naked Venus has also been preserved from this time.[313] We can thus deduce from the existence of the unrealized proposal that Ligorio also had personal experience with the critique of depictions of this goddess.

In the 16th century, the demonization of Venus prevailed, but a return to the medieval stance on the matter never took place.[314] Art theorists and clergy carefully differentiated between private and public space.[315] The public space was intended for religious displays to educate the illiterate crowd that frequented them, and therefore it was inappropriate to show statues of a naked Venus here. However, in the private residences of the social elite, the rules were different. The rich and powerful continued to highly value the statues of Venus not only for their erotic charge and aesthetic qualities but also as the embodiment of the prestigious tradition of the ancient Roman Empire.

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[310] Wilhelm Ferdinand Chassot von Florencourt, "Der gesteinigte Venus-Torso zu St. Matthias bei Trier," *Bonner Jahrbücher* 13 (1848), 128-140.

[311] H. 99 cm, Trier Rheinisches Landesmuseum G. 44 d. Wolfgang Binsfeld et al., *Katalog der römischen Steindenkmäler des Rheiethos ethos nischen Landesmuseums Trier, 1. Götter und Weihedenkmäler*, Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani Deutschland 4,3*:* Gallia Belgica. Trier und Trierer Land (Mainz: Zabern Verlag, 1988), 165, no. 333.

[312] Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte*, vol. 6, 1420, 1426, English translation D.R. Coffin. Cf. Schreurs, *Antikenbild und Kunstanschauungen des Pirro Ligorio*, 122; Anatole Tchikine, "The 'Candelabrum' Fountain Reconsidered," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 29 (2009): 257-269.

[313] London, The British Museum 1910,0212.36.

[314] Cf. Édouard Pommier, "Diabolisation, tolérance, glorification? La Renaissance et la sculpture antique," *Études littéraires*, 32 (2000): 55–70.

[315] Cf. Elena Lazzarini,. *Nudo, arte e decoro. Oscillazioni estetiche negli scritti d'arte del Cinquecento* (Pisa: Pacini, 2010).