

# The Purchase of the Collection Gargiulo in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples

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The proposal of selling Raffaele Gargiulo's terracotta collection to the Museum of Naples was made in December 1852. Gargiulo was an affirmed ceramist, restorer of ancient vases and bronzes, and one of the main figures of the Museum of Naples and of the trade of antiquities in Europe, besides being one of the greatest Neapolitan merchants of the 20s and 30s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It was only on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1855, after two years of heated confrontations about the price and the extent of the sale, that an agreement was reached on the price of about six thousand ducats. Two more smaller sales would lead to the purchase of a few more objects on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1856 and December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1859.

Gargiulo was born of Aniello Gargiulo on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1785, in Naples. In April 1808 he demanded to become part of the Restoration Workshop of Etruscan Vases of the Royal Museum of Naples. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1808, Gargiulo enters the Restoration Workshop of Etruscan Vases as "Second Restorer", although still unpaid. In February 1811 he was finally admitted among the salaried employees, with a monthly wage of 18 ducats, which was augmented by one third the following year. In 1812 he applied to become Restorer of Carolina Murat's private museum, for whom he claimed to have already repaired almost all the vases in the famous collections of Monsignor Terrusio and Giovanni Caminada, which had both been incorporated in her museum. In 1814 he restored, once more for Carolina Murat, the famous vases which had been excavated the year before in the hypogeum Monterisi Rossignoli in Canosa, and which are today preserved in Monaco. In 1816 he was promoted "Chief Restorer" of the Vases, his wage being of 28 ducats, and he was given an assistant, Domenico Fortunato (son of Michelangelo, who was himself a vase restorer) who, from the 30s, would often take Gargiulo's place in the material execution of the restorations. In 1817 he became the Director of the Workshop for the Restoration of Bronzes. In 1822 he was appointed Director of the Restoration Workshop of Vases. From 1832 he became Associate Correspondent from Naples for the Institute of Archaeological Correspondence. During these same years he also began to work as an antiquity merchant, as it is testified in a letter sent on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1824 to the Minister of Casa Reale:

*"Out of pleasure I cultivated the study of the Fine Arts and Antiquities; subsequently forced by circumstances to support my old Parent, one Aunt and two Sisters, I devoted myself to the restoration of the so-called Etruscan Vases, the Bronzes and other ancient Monuments, also becoming myself engaged in the trading of such..."*



Fig. 1: Group of Perseus and Andromeda. National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Inventory numbers 20247+25553. Provenance: Egnazia. III BC.



Fig. 2: Terracotta sarcophagus. National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Inventory number 24229. Provenance: Tuscania. Half II BC.



Fig. 3: Youth bust. National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Inventory number 21019. Provenance: Cales. First half III BC.

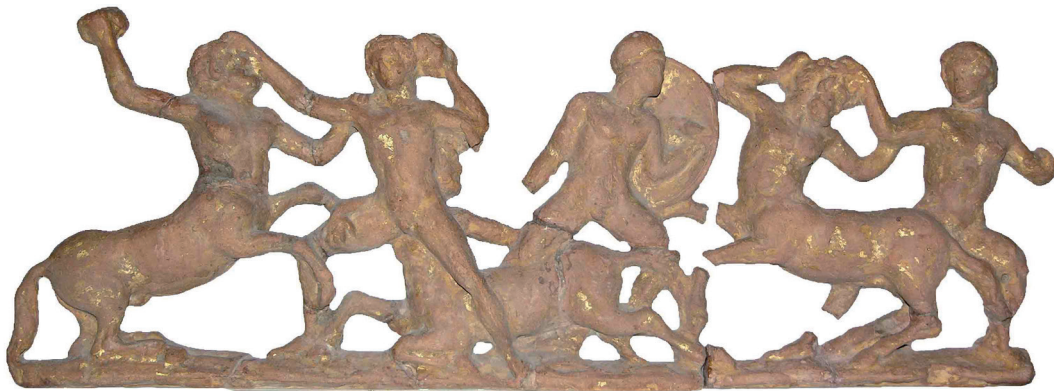


Fig. 4: Relief with struggle between Centauri and Lapiti. National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Inventory number 22342. Provenance: Capua. End IV BC.

In 1845 he became “Assistant Supervisor” of the Royal Museum which involved him, together with the Supervisor and the Director, in the daily managing of the Museum. In the same years, besides his assignments at the museum and the tasks performed for the Neapolitan monarchs, Gargiulo also worked as private restorer, having among his clients members of royal houses and famous collectors such as the Duke of Blacas, the French ambassador, who was one of the most famous collectors and patrons of his time. It was on one of the vases of the Blacas collection that Gargiulo experimented for the first time – between 1820 and 1821 – a glue of his invention, which very much enhanced the resistance and quality of the recombination of ceramics and which, the following year, on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1822, was officially adopted by the Bourbonic Museum.

In December 1822 the king of Prussia, who was visiting Naples, entrusted him with the restoration of the vases which Ferdinand I. has just donated to him; two years before he had already carried out other restoration works for the Hereditary Prince Christian of Denmark.

Around 1820 he opened up a public antiquity warehouse in Naples, in Via Santa Lucia 87–88, apparently in the name of Salvatore Calì, who was a marble worker and a colleague of his at the Museum. About during this same period, and certainly not later than 1821, in order to reduce the competition in business and improve the productivity of his activities, he decided to join in business two of his colleagues, Giuseppe De Crescenzo, a Neapolitan antiquities merchant, and Onofrio Pacileo, a hunter of ancient objects. During these same years, together with Pasquale Mollica, a famous ceramist, he founded a new society aimed at the production and selling of objects in the Etruscan style. They opened a new shop strategically placed within tourists’ reach, right in front of the building of the Royal Bourbonic Museum.

Gargiulo is also present, in November 1839, at the first public photographic experiment in town, thus becoming the first Neapolitan ever to be portrayed in a daguerreotype, only a few months after its invention in Paris.

He was also committed in the promotion of his own image through a brief but interesting scientific production – which was not new for arts merchants in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – and published some volumes and several papers. One of these papers, published for the first time in Naples in 1825, the “Collection of the most interesting Monuments of the Bourbonic Museum and various private collections”, was actually an efficient means of promotion of his own societies which went far beyond what the title anticipated. The book was in fact sold for decades not only in his own shops, but also at the Royal Museum, thus representing a smart marketing operation. Half of the objects in the tables were in fact, besides being part of private collections, sold by the Gargiulo Enterprise. This way Gargiulo promoted in press that his objects had been sold and distributed among the most famous private and public collectors in the Continent: The Duke of Blacas, Chevalier Durand, and Millingen at the Royal Museum of Berlin.

He probably died after 1864, date of the edition of his non-posthumous “Historical and descriptive notes on the building of the National Museum with Guide” and prob-

ably even later than 1876, when he still appeared as Associate Correspondent from Naples for the Institute of Archaeological Correspondence. Although the first phases of Gargiulo's activity as a collector are unknown, it seems likely that his collection had already been assembled in 1822, the year of the edition of another of his volumes, the "*Collection of drawings of the so-far known different shapes of the Italic-Greek vases, commonly referred to as Etruscan*". The collection was nevertheless already famous in 1829 when, together with other private collections, it began to be visited by the major scholars of the time, like Panofka who, in a paper of that same period, mentions the "collection of Mr. Gargiulo, De Crescenzo and Pacileo". In 1847 Gerhard and Panofka again visited Gargiulo's terracotta collection – which he was already willing to sell – at his own house in Vico Santa Maria della Purità 23, Materdei, Naples, and they compared it to the one which was considered the most important collection at that time, that of the Marquis Campana in Rome.

April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1843 is the date of the first purchase of objects belonging to Gargiulo concluded by the Royal Bourbonic Museum. They were "eleven excellent column shafts made of many types of marble, with the corresponding bases", which were bought for 490 ducats. Strong with this past economic transaction, the following year Gargiulo asks for the permission to export out of the Reign, to Rome, "21 Italic-Greek vases, and twenty-one bronze objects", under the pseudonym of Giuseppe Aurelio di Gennaro, most likely in order not to have troubles connected to his double role of arts merchant on one hand, and of employee of the Bourbonic Royal Museum on the other. Of the entire negotiation nothing more is known for several years: neither if the objects were actually exported to Rome by Gargiulo, nor if they were instead purchased and absorbed by the Royal Museum.

The material being from a private collection, it cannot be associated to any particular offering set or tomb, and therefore has no stratigraphic or chronological reference; for this reason, it is not possible to gain a unique picture from it, but only a few data. Small figures are undoubtedly the best represented class of material, building up as much as about three fourths of the entire terracotta collection, 443 specimens on 605, 73.88% of the collection. The percentage data about pottery (59 specimens, 9.59%) and, most of all, about large figures (46 specimens, 7.60%), which are not always common in 19<sup>th</sup> century collections, are the most relevant. There are also 34 Architectural Elements (5.12%), 22 Lamps (3.64%), and 1 Personal Ornament.

The areas of provenance indicated in Gargiulo's catalogue are mainly Apulia (336 objects, 55.54%) and Campania (242 objects, 40%), in all 578 objects, 95.54% of the entire collection. Campania's preeminence can be easily explained by Gargiulo's presence in the region, while Apulia should not be so surprising as, in 19<sup>th</sup> century, the route between Naples and Apulia was extremely exploited in the trading of antiquities.

About the single areas, in the first places one may note the Apulian (Egnatia, 163 specimens, 26.95%, Ruvo, 87 specimens, 14.38%, and Canosa 82 specimens, 13.56%)

and Campanian (Capua, 128 objects, 21.16%, and Cales, 40 objects, 6.61%) areas which were more famous for their coroplastic products.

While the chronology of the architectural elements' spans over a very long period, from the end of the VI BC. to the I century AD, coroplastic elements are mostly dating between mid-IV BC and the end of the III BC. It should be remembered that the production of such generic themes as animals or standing, sitting and recumbent figures, was particularly extended in its average duration, although with adaptations deriving from the stylistic trends of the moment. As far as pottery is concerned, its chronologic span ranges between IV and III century BC, especially for pottery with plastic and polychrome decoration and unpainted pottery. The chronology of plastic vases is more varied, with specimens which can be dated between the end of the IV and the III century BC. Lamps are all dated between the first half and the last quarter of the I century AD.

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Fig. 1-4: Riccardo Berriola (Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo – Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli).