# TOMASSO



**Paul Heermann (1673 - 1732)**

Saturn and Ops

Paul Heermann (1673–1732) was perhaps both the finest, and the last great, practitioner of the Baroque style of sculpture in the regions of Bohemia and Saxony. His flamboyant, idiosyncratic style emerged out of the fertile artistic environment that had been established in the cultured, metropolitan centres of Dresden and Prague during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As a signed and dated boxwood work in the Grassi Museum Leipzig reveals (ROMA/PAUL HERM[ANN]/ 1700), he spent time in Rome c. 1700 (Schmidt 2005, p. 66). He also had the benefit of working closely with his uncle, Johann George Heermann, the Electoral Saxon sculptor, who himself had spent perhaps a decade in Rome, Venice and other Italian cities, working in the Roman High Baroque style associated with Gian Lorenzo Bernini (Schmidt 2005, p. 59). The court of Dresden attracted important artists such as Balthasar Permoser (1651–1732), who moved there from Florence in 1690. François Coundray (1678–1727) and Jean-Joseph Vinache (1699–1754) were later summoned from the French Academy between 1715 and 1719. There were also a handful of notable native sculptors such as Johann Joachim Kretzschmar (1677–1740), Benjamin Thomae (1682□–1751) and Christian Kirchner (1691–1732). These sculptors and their followers composed a busy and vibrant milieu of international artists, who capitalized on a ready supply of patronage in the cities of Dresden and Prague which perhaps achieved its zenith under the reign of Augustus the Strong (1670–1733), First Prince Elector of Saxony and King of Poland (Schmidt 2005, p. 58). The import of Venetian works by Antonio Corradini (1688–1752) and numerous small bronze statuettes and other statuary from Paris to these cities may have inspired and further fuelled the appetite of wealthy citizens to commission great works of sculpture.

Both Paul and Johann's most important project at the end of seventeenth century was undoubtedly the grand staircase on the external façade of the Troja Castle in Prague, owned by Reichsgraf Wenzel Adalbert von Sternberg of

Bohemia. Between 1685 and 1703 they carved a host of colossal, Olympian figures that descended on the balustrades of the staircase down from the tympanum above the main portal in a highly ostentatious style. The composition of these monumental, writhing, figures represented an overt homage to the achievements of the Italian Baroque, but filtered through the lens of the two Heermann's particular Saxon Bohemian style. The staircase is now rightly revered as one of the most impressive artistic achievements of the period.

The extensive programme of figures from classical mythology at Troja included Triton, Vulcan, Jupiter, Minerva, Bacchus, a pair of fallen giants floundering in the stairwell, Diana and Ceres reclining, among others. Another figure relevant to the present marble group is the Chronus, or Saturn, placed prominently at the front left of the staircase as you approached from the garden, who appears, typically, devouring his children. Since the stairs led down to the gardens of the estate, it is possible that Heermann intended this Chronus/Saturn figure to represent Winter as part of a decorative scheme that formed a standard allegorical representation of the Four Seasons – with Flora (Spring), Ceres (Summer) and Bacchus (Autumn).

The allegorical personification of the Four Seasons and the representation of their protagonists was a theme Paul Heermann was to return to several times during his career. He carved a wonderful pair of busts of Autumn and Winter, now in the sculpture collection at Dresden. The Dresden bust of Winter is almost identical in the style of carving and facial physiognomy to our bust. He also produced a further bust of Winter, now at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and, of course, the present sculptural group, which depicts figures with the attributes of Saturn/Chronus and Ops/Rhea as Winter and Summer, respectively.

Other works in Heermann's oeuvre that possess passages of sculpture which are extremely similar in style, technique and facture to ours, include an altar angel he carved for the church of Lommatzsch in 1714, whose style of wings appear to be replicated here. There is also a signed and dated pair of putti crowning each other with a laurel wreath, now in the Los Angeles County Museum, which provides some interesting points of comparison. The upward glance of the crowned putto, with deeply incised pupils so typical of Paul Heermann, strongly evokes Saturn's gaze in our group. In conjunction with this, the particular style of modelling in the same putto's clumps of wavy hair, the virtuoso use of the drill to enhance the sense of movement, and the flame-like laurel leaves of the crown constitute a passage of sculpture that is almost identical to those which form our similarly crowned head of Ops. The rock-work bases of these two groups and the creamy, alabaster-like marble from which they are carved is also almost identical. The great number of similarities between the style, technique and facture of these works and our group of Saturn and Ops leave no doubt as to its authorship by Paul Heermann.

At Versailles, Charles Le Brun established the fashion for including statues of the Seasons for programmes of garden sculpture. In the Louvre collection there exists a sketch by Le Brun, apparently of Saturn and Cybele, in an arrangement very similar to the present work. An aged, nude and bearded Saturn, complete with a fine set of wings, crouches below a nude female figure, in order to lift her upwards. Le Brun drafted this arrangement as a preliminary study for a sculptural group intended for Versailles. Regnaudin later made a version loosely based upon it which was installed at the Palace's Orangerie in 1687. It was then transferred to the garden of the Tuileries in Paris and now resides in the Louvre (inv. MR 2084). Regnaudin largely departed from Le Brun's initial idea through the addition of a figure of Ceres. Houasse also used the drawing in a manner almost unchanged in one of the medallions painted on the ceiling of the Salon de Vénus at Versailles. Another drawing by Le Brun, preserved in the Albertina, Vienna (inv. 11689), is closer to Regnaudin's group, but with the figure of Ceres also absent.

Ops was revered as the Roman goddess of abundance and fertility. She appears in the present group by Paul Heermann accompanied by her consort Saturn, an early Roman deity of agriculture, who reigned on earth during the Golden Age. He was worshipped as the eponymous deity of the festival of Saturnalia, held in December, at the time of the modern day Christian festival of Christmas, which replaced it. The Romans identified him with the Greek god

Chronus, the king of the Titans and god of Time. The iconographic interchangeability between Chronus and Saturn and their allegorical personification of Winter mirrors the relationship between Rhea, Ops and Ceres and their association as Summer. Rhea was the wife of Chronus and mother of the gods and so represented female fertility and motherhood. She was closely identified with the Anatolian mother-goddess Cybele. The Romans equated these deities with Ops, as the wife of Saturn, and built a temple in her honour on the Palatine.

The present sculptural group was at the historically important Schloss and beautiful surrounding estate of Rittergut Lucklum by 1806. In the thirteenth century, the German Knights Templar settled in Lucklum, where they founded an administrative centre and operated the land and forestry estate. In 1809, the Order was expropriated under Napoleon and Lucklum passed into private ownership.

Dr Eike D. Schmidt, Director of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence, and author of Paul Heermann (1673–1732): Meister der Barockskulptur in Böhmen und Sachsen: Neue Aspekte seines Schaffens (Munich, 2005), will publish the present work in his forthcoming publication regarding the sculpture of Paul Heermann.

**Literature:**

Related Literature

Eike D. Schmidt, *Paul Heermann (1673–1732): Meister der Barockskulptur in Böhmen und Sachsen: Neue Aspekte seines Schaffens*, Munich, 2005