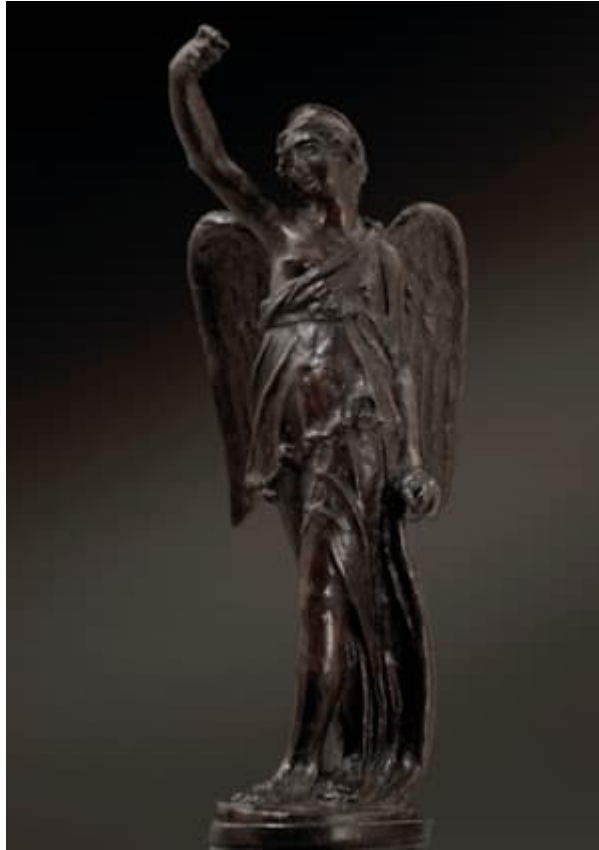


T O M A S S O



Pietro Francavilla (1548-1615) (Workshop of)

36. Fame (Victory)

Bronze, on a turned wooden socle
24.7 x 0 cm (9 ³/₄ x 0 inches)

Plainly from the circle of Giambologna, and yet evidently not by his hand, this type of statuette was attributed to Francavilla by the present author (with the assent of his then colleague, Anthony Radcliffe, co-organizer of the exhibition of 1978) on the strength of analogies with a wax model of Fame (described as such by Baldinucci) which that sculptor is shown holding in his hands in two painted portraits of him. One is signed by G.B. Paggi in 1589 in Genoa; while a derivative, showing him older and greyer, may have been painted before he left Florence for Paris in 1605; Galleria Palatina, Pitti Palace, Florence: Exhibition, 1978, no. 219). It is surely significant that the sculptor should choose to be shown twice with a similar model of his, albeit shown from different angles, doubtless owing to its significance as an emblem of his own skill as a designer and consequent high reputation.

The attributes that are missing from both hands, having been cast separately and inserted, may be mentally supplied by consideration of another, slightly smaller and less fine cast in English private hands,[1] where the remains of two trumpets are cast in the hands.

Lars Larsson writes of a similar piece in Stockholm:

“This figure is a free adaptation of an ancient sculpture, which today is in the Uffizi Gallery. Following an old tradition this sculpture came into the possession of the Medici with the Cesi Collection in 1584. Several aspects confirm that the statue was known in the second half of the 16th century. The drapery of the statuette differs in important points from that of the ancient figure and suggests its origin in the circle of the Florentine Mannerists. The statuette shows great similarity to works by Pietro Francavilla, especially with the Diana, signed and dated 1580, from the Villa Bracci at Rovezzano, today in the Orangery of Kensington Palace, London. Therefore, there are good reasons to assume that the statuette was executed in Florence around 1570-80.”

A slightly variant figure on an unusual – and hence slightly dubious – octagonal, stepped base, and holding disconcertingly strange attributes, was purchased in Florence in the mid-19th century by the usually astute English collector-connoisseur, Charles Drury Fortnum, and given to the Ashmolean Museum. In cataloguing this recently, Nicholas Penny challenges my ‘ingenious’ attribution (as he generously describes it!) of the model to Francavilla because, he believes, the discrepancies between the bronze statuette and the tiny and rather sketchy images of Francavilla’s model of Fame in the paintings are too great. In fact, he seems to have consulted only one of the two portraits, and the wax model represented in the Pitti Palace portrait clearly holds two trumpets, just as does the duplicate of the present statuette, even if, as Penny points out, details of the drapery may not coincide precisely. In any case, one should make allowance for differences between an original wax bozzetto and a statuette modified to make it convenient for the production line in a busy foundry, which is what I surmise happened in this case.

“Nevertheless,” concedes Penny, “the Victory ... is likely to be a Florentine invention. A diminutive version of the figure serves as a finial on a bronze standard lamp in the Museum für Kunsthandwerk, Frankfurt-am-Main (inv. no. V218) which is inscribed ‘FERDINANDUS MEDICES MAGNUS ETRURIAE DUX . This must date from after 1587, when Ferdinando became Grand Duke.

Literature:

C. Avery, ‘Francavilla’, in *The Dictionary of Art*, London, 1996, vol. 11, pp. 502-3

C. Avery, *Giambologna: an exhibition of sculpture by the master and his followers from the collection of Michael Hall, Esq.*, exh. cat. Salander-O’Reilly Galleries, New York, 1998, pp. 34-36, no. 11; ‘Note in margine all’iconografia del Francavilla ...’, in D. Pegazzano, *Il Giasone di palazzo Zanchini: Pietro Francavilla al Museo del Bargello*, Florence, 2002, pp. 9-13.