

T O M A S S O



Italian or French, 17th century

11. Venus

This fine bronze represents a rare variant of a model by the Venetian sculptor, Nicolò Roccatagliata (circa 1569-1629). Published by Weihrauch (op. cit.) with an attribution to Tiziano Aspetti (1559-1606), the bronze of Venus chastising Cupid in the Museo Nazionale in Trent was given to Roccatagliata by Radcliffe (op. cit.) and is now generally accepted as his work. Roccatagliata's playful bronze shows the nude goddess, now standing alone, with an integrally cast scourge in her right hand, and a book in her left, as if to strike the pair of putti that would have been playing at her feet. Though near-identical, the present model differs from the Trent bronze in the substitution of the book for a drape in Venus' left hand, the separate casting of the (now-lost) scourge.

A closely comparable cast of the present model was sold at Sotheby's New York on 17 October 2000 as lot 33, with an attribution to Roccatagliata, despite its differences from the Trent bronze. Even more notably than the New York bronze, the present cast of the variant model is distinct from the Trent bronze in style and facture, with a more delicate rendering of facial features and details, as well as a smooth surface finish that is uncharacteristic of Venetian bronzes around 1600. It is therefore likely that the present bronze was adapted from Roccatagliata's model by a sculptor or workshop active in another Italian centre, or perhaps even in France, as may be indicated by the reddish translucent lacquer and details in the casting. As such, the bronze would form a valuable testament to the dissemination and adaptation of sculptural models across 17th-century Europe.

Literature:

H. R. Weihrauch, *Europäische Bronzestatuetten*, Braunschweig, 1967, pp. 159-160, fig. 191

A. Radcliffe, *The Robert H. Smith Collection: Bronzes 1500-1650*, London, 1994, pp. 122-127, no. 22