

T O M A S S O



Giovanni Francesco Susini (1585 - c.1653)

1. The Wild Boar (Il Porcellino)

After the Antique

Bronze, dark olive patina

17.8 cm (7 in.) high x 20.3 cm (8 in.) wide

Affectionately known as Il Porcellino, the present composition owes its fame to the life-size bronze cast of the original ancient sculpture by Pietro Tacca (1577-1640) that sat proudly in the Mercato Nuovo in the centre of Florence until 2004, and is now in the city's Museo Bardini for conservation purposes. Excavated in the courtyard of a private residence in Rome in the mid 16th century, the antique prototype, carved in white marble, is first recorded in Florence in 1568, when it entered the Pitti Palace. By 1591 it was in the Uffizi, where it resides to the present day. Since its discovery the Wild Boar has been admired for its naturalism and artistic quality, and was historically associated with the legend of the Calydonian Boar killed by the young hero Meleager, a figure with which it has sometimes been paired in later versions, such as Nicolas Coustou's for Marly.

Our bronze, an exquisitely cast small-scale model of the celebrated antiquity, bears the hallmarks of Giovanni Francesco, or Gianfrancesco, Susini's production, from the precise yet vibrant treatment of the animal's fur to the neat contouring of its anatomy. Interestingly, Filippo Baldinucci (ed. Ranalli, 1846, IV, p. 118) notes that Gianfrancesco made a model of the Wild Boar upon returning from a visit to Rome. However, a version of the Boar signed by our artist's uncle, Antonio Susini, exists (now Berlin, Staatliche Museen) and we must not forget the marble would already have been in Florence during Gianfrancesco's time. This suggests he worked from a mould present in his uncle's workshop – which he had inherited in 1624 – and first-hand observation of the ancient original.

Conceived to be held in the hands of a passionate collector, this bronze belongs to the tradition of models after renowned antiquities that represented both homages to the masterpieces of the past and statements of their owners' refined taste and cultural aspirations. An important version of the Porcellino, fully attributed to Gianfrancesco, is today in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello. Sitting on an elaborate ebonised and pietra dura base – probably supplied by the Ducal Opificio delle Pietre Dure – it is surrounded by four gilt bronze figures, an arrangement that points towards the high esteem this bronze was held in.

Literature:

C. Avery and A. Radcliffe, Giambologna, Sculptor to the Medici , exh. cat., Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1978, p. 196, no. 187, ill. p. 197

F. Haskell and N. Penny, Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1550–1900 , New Haven and London, 1981, p. 161, no. 13, ill. p. 162