

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Venetian, 16th century

Mars as a warrior a l'antica

Cast from a model by Tiziano Aspetti (Padua, 1557/59-1606, Pisa)

Bronze 45.5 cm (18 in.) high

With its bold movement and verve, this powerful sculpture of a warrior a l'antica is a remarkable example of the Venetian bronze of the Renaissance. The figure twists elegantly, revealing a play of shimmering effects on the surface as the light reflects off the pronounced musculature. Its large dimensions, combined with the very high quality of the casting indicate that the bronze was intended for an important patron.

This warrior presents analogies with two other bronzes of Mars by Aspetti, a heroic nude (Frick Collection, New York) and another in armour (Metropolitan Museum, New York). The male figures have comparable strong and nervous limbs, their faces presenting stern expressions, their strong eyebrows in a frown, with the characteristic mustache and pointy beard. Their elaborate armour and plumed helmets show lavish decorative surface effects, with extensive chasing. All these statuettes are stylistically very close to the soldiers appearing on the two bronze reliefs of the Martyrdom of San Daniele (Museo Diocesano d'Arte Sacra, Padua) both signed by Aspetti and datable, thanks to documents, to the years 1592-1593.

Tiziano Aspetti was the leading sculptor in Venice at the end of the 16th century and was particularly skilled at working in bronze. He was born in Padua and trained there under Girolamo Campagna. In 1577 Aspetti moved to Venice where he remained for 16 years, working mostly for the Patriarch of Aquileia Cardinal Giovanni Grimani, a famous patron and collector of antiquities.

The coat of arms is the one of the Melani family (members of the family were registered as part of the Venetian nobility in the 17th century).

Literature:

Comparative literature:

- Donatello e il suo tempo. Il bronzo a Padova nel Quattrocento e nel Cinquecento, Musei Civici, Padua, April-July 2001, pp. 343-361
- 'La bellissima maniera'. Alessandro Vittoria e la scultura veneta del Cinquecento, exhib. cat., Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento, June-September 1999, pp. 417-431