

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Jacob Cornelisz Cobaert (c. 1535 - Rome 1615)

The four Evangelists

29 cm high

These four splendid gilt bronzes represent the evangelists, saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They appear to be unique casts. Each figure has remnants of an attachment on its back and a hole in its base, suggesting that they originally adorned a niche, probably on an elaborate tabernacle or cabinet.

The quality of both the modeling and the casting is very high and each figure presents a different character, with detailed features and rich, heavy and animated draperies. The quality of the chiseling is particularly evident on Luke's accompanying ox.

The figures were once thought to be Venetian and then in 1988 they were attributed to the workshop of Leone Leoni. However the general style, proportions and graceful folds of drapery appear much more related to the production of metal sculpture in Rome at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century. The figures present strong parallels with the work of Jacob Cornelisz Cobaert, to whom J. Montagu attributed figures of the evangelists on the tabernacle of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome (see lit.). The conception of

the volumes, despite the solemnity of the poses, the heavy draperies with deep folds, nevertheless revealing the structure of the bodies, as well as the heads each carefully characterized are similar. Comparisons can also be made with the figures of saints or prophets on an altar cross by the artist in Palazzo di Venezia, Rome. Furthermore Saint Matthew's profile is very close to that of the only recorded marble statue by the artist (Rome, Santa Trinità de' Pellegrini, commissioned in 1587, remained unfinished).

Cobaert was a Flemish sculptor active in Italy. He settled in Rome in the 1570s and trained with Guglielmo della Porta[1] (1534-1577), excelling in sculpture on a small scale. Indeed, the influence of the latter in the present works is noticeable, for example in the swirling and somewhat abstract folds of the cloaks and the ornamental curls on the beards recall some of della Porta's work, for example his gilt bronze plaquettes of the group of Marys and group of Saint John the Baptist (Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid). There are also convergent elements with drawings representing evangelists in della

Porta's surviving sketchbooks (Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum). Further confirming the connection with della Porta's circle, a gilded terracotta relief of the Entombment (1602, Rome, Galleria Spada) by Teodoro della Porta (1567-1638), Guglielmo's son, also presents interesting parallels with our evangelists. Cobaert cast a series of bronze plaquettes with mythological subjects after designs by Guglielmo della Porta (Victoria and Albert Museum, London).

[1] G. Baglione: *Vite* (1642); ed. V. Mariani (1935), pp. 100–01

Exhibitions

Exhibited:

San Francisco, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Renaissance and Baroque bronzes from the Abbott Guggenheim Collection, March – September 1988, pp. 76-79, n. 25

Literature:

Published:

G. S. Salmann, "First stages in starting a collection of bronzes", *The Connoisseur*, September 1965, vol. 160, p. 20

M. Schwartz, ed., *European sculpture from the Abbott Guggenheim Collection*, New York, 2008, pp. 52-53, n. 20

Related literature

J. Montagu, *Gold, silver and bronze. Metal sculpture of the Roman Baroque*, New Haven and London, 1996, pp. 28-46

M. G. Barberini and M. S. Sconci, ed., *Guida al Museo Nazionale di Palazzo di Venezia*, 2009, p. 38