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From Italy to Poland – Case Study of Santi Gucci Fiorentino

Abstract

This article aims to present one of the most outstanding artistic personalities of the second half of the 16th century – the Florentine artist who was active in the Polish royal court and worked in the service of high-ranking nobility – Santi Gucci (della Camilla). The author presents a closer look at the reasons leading to his arrival in Poland, the steps he took to achieve it, and the organization of artistic life outside Italy.

Key words: *Renaissance sculpture, Early Modern Poland, Santi Gucci, Renaissance Florence, Benvenuto Cellini workshop*

Despite the fact that versatile and complex Italian enterprises in Europe, and by extension, in Poland in the Renaissance period have been a popular subject of research and interest, as is the art history of this period, there is one more area that should be thoroughly researched and analyzed – not only single works of art that have been preserved but, first and foremost, both the way in which artistic workshops of that period operated as well as their migration across Europe. Italians who sought their fame, fortune, and accolades traveled to countries which were consolidated and in the process of economical development, where it was easier to make a career and gain recognition. That process was facilitated by the omnipresent popularity of the Italian style, closely related to the golden age of humanism and Renaissance culture, spawning plenty of talented artists thus creating a ‘demand’ for creative Italians, particularly those of Florentine origin. Their presence in Poland would sometimes take the form of intended emigration, most of the time however, they undertook short-term trips, by the invitation of monarchs or nobles.

In this article, I aim to present one of the most outstanding artistic personalities of the second half of the 16th century – the Florentine artist who was active in the Polish royal court and worked in the service of high-ranking nobility – Santi Gucci (della Camilla).¹ I would like to take a closer look at the reasons leading to his arrival in Poland, the steps he took to achieve it, and the organization of artistic life outside Italy.

¹ See O. M. Hajduk, *Santi Gucci Fiorentino*, in: *Słownik architektów i budowniczych środowiska warszawskiego XV-XVIII wieku*, ed. J. Sito, P. Migasiewicz, H. Osiecka-Samsonowicz, Warszawa 2016, 192-197.

Santi Gucci – the Florentine

Archival sources related to Gucci offer, first and foremost, a wide range of data on both the artist's family and financial matters during his stay and activity in Poland as well as some works attributed to him. Extracts from Florentine records, performed by Gaetano Milanese for Marian Sokołowski contain information about the artist's family. Santi Gucci was born to the restorer of the Florentine cathedral – Giovanni di Niccolo Albenghi Gucci, known as Giovanni della Camilla, and his second wife, Marietta. The *Registry of Baptisms* of Santa Maria del Fiore says that “on the Friday of the 11th of July 1533, at four o'clock, Santi Romolo was born, a son of Giovanni di Niccolo d'Arrigho, a sculptor from the S. Piernaggiore parish”.² This document does not simply correct the prior findings pertaining to the Florentine's date of birth but it also offers a valuable source of information about his family environment, making it evident that Santi was the son of a stonemason, Giovanni di Niccolo d'Arrigo, and by extension, 'Santi's step-brother - Francesco Camilliani.

Thanks to the extracts from Florentine archives collected by Fernando Loffredo we also know that Gucci's family resided in the San Giovanni district, in the parish of San Pier Maggiore. The 1552 population census of Florence says that “maestro Giovanni di Nic[ol]o scarpellino lived at *Via della Crocetta ovvero del Rosario*”, and that his family at that time consisted of seven men and three women.³ *Descrizione delle bocche della citta e stato di Fiorenza fatta l'anno 1562*⁴ indicates that at that time the family consisted only of one man, the patriarch Giovanni, and two women, which means that all sons have left the family home by then.

Santi Gucci as the son of Giovanni – an artisan employed at the Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral, had Baccio Bandinelli himself as his supervisor, and as the brother of Bandinelli's disciple Francesco Camilliani was most likely acquainted with the artist [Baccio Bandinelli] and knew his works. He most likely took his first steps in learning the craft in his father's workshop, situated at Via della Crocetta, nearby the Camilliani place of residence, in same area as the workshops of sculptors such as Baccio da

2 *Archivio dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore, Battesimi, maschi 1533-1542, k. 6 r.*, quoted from F. Loffredo, Un contributo alla biografia Fiorentini di Santi Gucci, *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* LXIX (2007), no. 1-2, 32.

3 *Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Miscellanea Medicea, 314, k. 162 v.* The faulty signature (Miscellanea Medicea, 314, c. 162v) is cited by Fernando Loffredo, see Un contributo alla biografia Fiorentini di Santi Gucci.

4 *Descrizione delle bocche della citta e stato di Fiorenza fatta l'anno 1562*, an anastatical copy [in:] I Fiorentini nel 1562, ed. S. Meloni Trkulja, Firenze 1991, Alberto Bruschi Editore, k. 118 r. Quoted from F. Loffredo, Un contributo alla biografia Fiorentini di Santi Gucci, 34.

Montelupo, Francesco da Sangallo, Zanobi Lastricati, or Giambologna. It is also worth noting that it was at the corner of Via della Crocetta and Via della Pergola where Benvenuto Cellini had made the cast of his famous sculpture of *Perseus* – a work which the twenty-year old Santi Gucci had an opportunity to participate in (fig. 1).⁵ According to a document published by Francesco Tassi in 1829, between approximately 7th February and 7th May 1553 Santi was responsible for chiseling the decorations on the pedestal.⁶ It is also known that at barely seventeen years of age, the artisan “created a marble statue of Venus”, the perfection of which was highly praised by the Medici diplomat in the Venetian Republic, Cosimo Bartoli in his dialogue “Il Martello” from the “Regionamenti accademici” collection.⁷ Thus, Santi Gucci was bound to be familiar (directly or indirectly, through the knowledge of their creation) with artists such as Andrea di Pietro Ferrucci, Giovanni Antonio Montorsoli, Bartolomeo Ammanati, Andrea, Jacopo and Francesco Sansovino or Michelangelo Buonarroti himself.⁸

Apart from the pedestal of Cellini’s sculpture of “Perseus and the Medusa”, which was the work of 20-year-old Santi, none of his Italian works have been preserved. Additional difficulty stems from the fact that archival research up until now was conducted in relation to the Polish ‘nickname’ Gucci – which was, as Loffredo concluded – originated in the course of the phonetic evolution of the Latin form of Giovanni di Niccolo’s grandfather – Arrigo. According to that rule, the diminutive of the name Arrigo goes through the following forms – Arriguccio, Guccio, finally into Gucci.⁹

As Santi della Camilla departs from Florence to Cracow in early 1550s, he somehow becomes Santi Gucci. The existing hypothesis suggests that he took the name from other Italians with the last name Gucci who were active in Cracow at that time. It is very likely that Matteo and Alessandro Gucci were in fact relatives, cousins, or perhaps even brothers of Giovanni (Santi’s father), and Arrigo was their common ancestor. Their patronym has transformed into a last name which Santi took upon his arrival in Poland, due to ties both to his blood, as well as an already existing favorable reputation.

5 *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini, orefice e scultore Fiorentini*, ed. Francesco Tassi, vol. III, Firenze 1829.

6 See M. Cole, *Cellini in Florence, 1545-1562*, in: Benvenuto Cellini. Sculptor, Goldsmith, Writer, ed. M. A. Gallucci, P. L. Rossi, 58-59

7 F. Loffredo, *Un contributo alla biografia Fiorentini di Santi Gucci*, 31.

8 Influences of sculptural realization of this artist are visible in the early works of Santi Gucci in Poland (The Family Kryski’s tombstone in Drobin).

9 F. Loffredo, *Un contributo alla biografia Fiorentini di Santi Gucci*, 33.

The Gucci Family(?) in the Renaissance Cracow

By the Reign of Zygmunt I, the area of the Polish Crown (as distinct from the Commonwealth, to which the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with its vast territories in modern-day Belarus and Ukraine, belonged) had grown to approximately 265,000 square kilometers and a population of 4 million. The Crown's ethnically Polish core consisted of Małopolska (Little Poland), where the magnate class was concentrated, with its major city of Cracow.¹⁰ Italian artisans, merchants and professors had already begun to arrive in Poland in considerable numbers, when, in 1518, Zygmunt I married his second wife, Bona Sforza from Bari, the sole surviving child of Gian Galeazzo Sforza of Milan and Isabela of Aragon. An immediate consequence of the marriage was an influx of Italians into Poland. In Bona's train were 287 Italians, of which at least half remained in Poland. In the first half of the sixteenth century, courtiers formed the largest group of Italian immigrants in Poland; their numbers were surpassed by Italian merchants and craftsmen in the second half of the century. Among the various national groups in this country at the time, the Italian group was more numerous than any other. Royal accounts reveal that from 1500 to 1550, between 180 and 185 Italians found employment at the courts of Cracow and Vilnius; the number ranged from a maximum of 61 in 1518 to a maximum of 24 in 1560. They were enterprising, resourceful and clever, and upon gaining considerable money and property, were easily included into the ranks of Polish gentry. Italians filled important posts in the royal chancery as secretaries or treasurers to the queen, her husband, and her son.¹¹

At this point I want to refer to the family affinity, and the possible relationship between the Italians in Poland and Santi Gucci's future career. It is linked to the cultural relation between Poland and Italy, and the Tedaldi and Gucci families¹² who were prominent during the 16th century. They were among the most prominent Italians of that time. They were a merchant family on a large scale, and had extensive business relations with different towns in Poland. One of the courtiers to Queen Bona was Carlo Calvanus Gucci from Florence, who came to Poland along with her.¹³ He

10 A. Markham Schulz, *Giammaria Mosca called Padovano, a Renaissance Sculptor in Italy and Poland*, The Pennsylvania University Press 1998, 93.

11 *Ibid.*, 90.

12 The author is still working on this topic in the Italian and Polish archival sources.

13 K. Pieradzka, Gucci Carlo Calvanus, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 9, 131.

became a fully-fledged citizen of Cracow as late as 1550. He had a brother, Casper, whom due to a conflict in 1545 he had brought to Hungary. He was married to Anna de Wezerow, they had two sons – Octavian and Regnier. It is important to note that Octavian took a polonized name – *Guczewski*. Another fact of significance to the topic of the development of Santi's life and career was the fact that Carlo Calvanus Gucci was a "żupnik ruski"¹⁴ – a salt mine manager (Latin: *zuparius salis*). In 16th century these officials fulfilled an important role – they oversaw operations in royal salt mines and salt-works. One of the major responsibilities was overseeing transport – and in the context of the development of Santi's career as an artist-entrepreneur with his own sculpting workshop, somehow obliged to transport materials and works – being acquainted with a salt mine manager was priceless. Casper Gucci died in 1551 as a merchant and a city councilor in Cracow. In 1534 he came to Cracow and became a citizen. He was a city councilor in the years 1537 to 1554, and a supplier of cloth and silk to the royal court in the years 1540 – 1547. He maintained a wide network of business relations in various Polish cities, mainly in Poznań, often as an intermediary between traders from Lvov and Florence.

Sources also provide information about Matteo Gucci¹⁵ – he was an artist – sculptor from an Italian family, a Florentine one to be precise, who settled in Lvov, Przemyśl, and Cracow. His work includes the Renaissance reconstruction of the old synagogue in Cracow and minor work on Wawel Castle.¹⁶ He was a brother to Alessandro Gucci¹⁷ and Francesco, on whom there is scarce information available. Based on the few writings in the city records, it is known that Alessandro Gucci was embedded in the Italian circles in Cracow and cooperated with other Italian constructors. He was the owner of a brickyard in Dębniki near Cracow. He died in 1572. Records also speak of a Maciej Gucci, a stonemason living in Cracow in the middle of the 16th century.

There are endless complications related to the Gucci's active in Poland. At this time, it is very difficult to determine their family connections and relations. It is however possible to assume that they cooperated with one

14 *Żupnik ruski*, between 13th and 18th century, was a manager which oversaw the operations of a mining district, often in the name of the king.

15 Z. Wencel-Homecka, Gucci Mateusz, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 9 , 132.

16 I. Rodov, *The Development of Medieval and Renaissance Sculptural Decoration in Ashkenazi Synagogues from Worms to the Cracow Area*, Thesis Submitted for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy to the Senate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003, vol. 2, 307

17 Z. Wencel-Homecka, Gucci Aleksander, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 9, 131.

another and their strong position in Cracow may have been the cause of young Santi Gucci's choice to move to Poland in particular. Another reason for his migration could have been the sheer number of outstanding sculptors and stonemasons active in Florence at that time. Furthermore, cooperating with a talented but a criminally inclined individual, Benvenuto Cellini was an obstacle in the development of his career. Santi's step-brother – Francesco Camilliani, also decided against pursuing a future in Florence. Instead, he chose to travel to the south of Italy (however he returned after to Florence). It was not an isolated case. Giorgio Vasari's work on "the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects" mentions a Florentine painter, Giovanni Battista, known as Il Rosso (1494-1541). His biography is rather intriguing because the painter, as Vasari points out – "has found the popularity that he could not find neither in Rome nor in Florence, in the country of France, and the fame he attained would fulfill every ambition that may exist in the life of an artist".¹⁸ It is very likely that Gucci was not satisfied with his position in Italy and that is why he chose to seek his fame in a foreign country.

Work in Poland

The very first mention of Gucci's activity in Poland comes from the bills of the Cracow city council in 1557.¹⁹ It is however very probable that Gucci arrived in Poland before that time. One of his first works is the tombstone of the Kryski family in Drobin (fig. 2) and the mascarons from the attic of the Cracow Cloth Hall (Sukiennice).²⁰ In the years to follow Gucci worked in the service of the king as a royal servitor and on commission for aristocrats, performing a variety of tasks in the areas of sculpture and architecture. The latter are outside the scope of my research interests since according to the sources the architectural works included only sculpting details. From 1570s onward, Gucci created and developed his own sculpture workshop in Pińczów. He built a family by marrying a Polish woman, and employed a number of people to enable mass-production. The only

18 See G. Vasari, *Vita del Rosso, pittor fiorentino*, in: *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* (1568), vol. 4, ed. G. Milanesi, 472. Translated by author. Originally: "Le quali, se in Roma et in Fiorenza non furono da quei che le potevano remunerare sodisfatte, trovò egli pure in Francia chi per quelle lo riconobbe di sorte, che la gloria di lui poté spegnere la sete in ogni grado d'ambizione che possa 'l petto di qual si voglia artefice occupare".

19 See O. M. Hajduk, *op.cit.*

20 See O. M. Hajduk, *Santi Gucci Fiorentino – włoska proveniencja a pierwsze realizacje rzeźbiarskie na ziemiach polskich*, in: *Artyści włoscy na ziemiach południowo-wschodniej Rzeczypospolitej w czasach nowożytnych. (Artisti Italiani nelle terre sud-est della Repubblica Polacca nell'epoca moderna)*, ed. P. Łopatkiewicz, Rzeszów – Łańcut 2016, 99-118.

work bearing his signature is the royal statue of king Stefan Batory from the Wawel cathedral (fig. 3). There are also no contracts to be found. However, the lack of signatures is a more complex issue which affected almost every artist active in Poland in the 16th century. However, if we take a look at Santi Gucci's house mark – in the form of a two-handle amphora, and make a deduction based on the analysis of a decoration which filled pilasters, commonly used by the artist, we can suspect that it was what the artist used as his mark – a kind of a sculptor's signature.

The Italian Provenience

Both architecture, figural art, as well as ornamental decoration of the works attributed to Santi Gucci which includes mainly tomb statues, follows the repertoire of forms used by a group of Italian artists active in Florence, Venice, and Rome, in the first half of the 16th century. In particular, the Italian origin is evident in the configuration of sitting figures and the anthropo- and zoomorphic ornamental forms which were not used in funeral art in Poland.

The configuration of a recumbent figure, leaning on one hand bent, and the other positioned along the body, with one leg straight and the other bent at the knee can be found in the sculptures of Florentine masters. Some of the figure configurations which represent this type in particular are: Mario Nari by Ammanati, cardinal del Monte from the Rome statue in San Pietro in Montorio by Ammanati, bishop Rafaello Maffei from the tombstone of Silvio Cosini, but also the figure representing the personification of the River Nile from the Orion fountain by Montorsoli. The configuration of sitting figures on the tombstone, known to be used only by Santi Gucci was otherwise not adopted in the Polish environment at all. His sculptures – the tombstone of the Kryski and Jordan families (fig. 4) also originate from the Italian style of funeral art. Some of the earliest examples of tombstones with sitting figures include the grave of Jacopo Sanseverino by Giovanni Marigliano in the church of SS. Severino e Sosio in Naples, and the statue of Ludovico Gonzadino by Giovanni Zacchi from Santa Maria dei Servi in Bologna. Sitting figures in funeral sculpture were however used most extensively by Michelangelo Buonarroti and his figures of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici from the graves in the Florentine San Lorenzo are considered to be the origin for the concept of the sitting figure of Paweł Kryski in the Drobin tombstone.

In regard with the ornamental forms, it is important to note the manner in which the framings are shaped. In Gucci's works it takes the form of a scrollwork with 'leathery' elements, shallowly cut edges, curled into rhythmically repeated rollers, which originated in Italy. Cartouches resembling forms used by Santi Gucci's workshop are typical in the works of Baccio Bandinelli, with whom the young Gucci had most likely cooperated. Other elements from Bandinelli's repertoire which can be noticed in the work of the Florentine are lion masks, ribbons, fruit garlands, or fantastical heads which decorate the pedestal of the "Hercules and Cacus" sculpture group, or lion heads from the well at the Florentine Villa Le Tre Pulzele, Herms, forms of medusas, or finally the cartouches from the pedestal of the "Perseus with Medusa's head" statue by Cellini to which Gucci had contributed, are reflected in the significant group of Polish tombstones attributed to Gucci. The ornamental urns and candelabras which are indicative of Gucci's style often appear in a form similar to the works of Montorsoli, for example in the main altar and the presbytery of the Bologna church of Santa Maria dei Servi. Gucci's artistic biography also includes cartouches used by Montorsoli, with fantastical masks woven into them. The latter are also typical in the works of Michelangelo. Winged mascarons with whippers decorating the figures of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici from the San Lorenzo grave are very similar to their equivalent forms used in the tombstones of Kryski family, Jordan's, Koczmerowska (fig. 5), and first and foremost in the statue of Batory. These forms are particularly related to the works of Ferrucci whose sculptures contain a parallel manner of candelabra decoration on the pilaster shafts, like the one from the central pilaster dividing the niches of the first level of the Drobin grave. An entire group of ornamental motifs, starting from herms, winged angel heads, to the motifs of stylized and a female head, present in the later works of Gucci are also represented in the baptismal font of the Santa Trinità church by Battista Lorenzi (fig. 6).

In conclusion, the work of Santi Gucci Fiorentino resonated in funeral art, beginning from the last third of the 16th century up to the first third of the 17th century. After his death, around 1600, his prosperous workshop in Pińczów continued to operate and the forms introduced by the artist into the circulation can still be found in the first half of the 17th century. A continuation of work on a thorough description of his oeuvre and the question of his family relations requires further arduous archival research, which poses an ambitious challenge.



Fig. 1: Benvenuto Cellini, the base of statue of Perseus, detail of Mercurius, 1545-54, Florence, The National Museum of Bargello, (photo by Olga M. Hajduk)



Fig. 2: Tombstone of Paweł, Anna and Wojciech Kryski, c. 1563-69, Drobin, parish church, (photo by Mariusz Smoliński)



Fig. 3: Tombstone of King Stefan Batory, 1595, Cracow, Wawel Cathedral, (photo by Grażyna Chromy)



Fig. 4: Tombstone of Spytek Jordan and his family, 1568-84, Cracow, Saint. Catherine's church (photo by Michał Wardzyński)



Fig. 5: Tombstone of Magdalena Koczmerowska, Czchów, parish church (photo by Michał Wardzyński)



Fig. 6: Battista Lorenzi, Baptismal font, Florence, church of Santa Trinità, (photo by Olga M. Hajduk)