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VENETIAN EARLY MODERN SINGLE-LEAF PRINTS AFTER CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE: QUESTIONS OF FORM AND FUNCTION

Riassunto

Durante l'epoca moderna, sia la scultura classica che quella moderna furono spesso tradotte a stampa. Queste stampe sono state pubblicate in diverse occasioni e utilizzate per vari scopi, spesso in serie con illustrazioni di importanti opere d'arte, come ad esempio a Roma, o come cataloghi di intere collezioni di sculture. D'altra parte, potevano

rappresentare un singolo pezzo di scultura e potevano essere realizzate per scopi di marketing, celebrativi o propagandistici o altro ancora. L'articolo discute alcune di queste stampe singole, incise per illustrare le opere dello scultore veneziano Antonio Corradini, e pubblicate a Venezia, Vienna e Roma. Le incisioni vengono discusse in vista della loro funzione e dello sviluppo della carriera di Corradini.

Keywords: single-leaf prints, sculpture, Venice, Baroque, Antonio Corradini

In one of his early drawings, Giambattista Tiepolo portrayed his colleagues and friends, gathered sometime between 1716 and 1718 in a so-called “accademia del nudo”, a drawing academy organised by Collegio dei pittori on Fondamenta Nuove in contrada Santa Maria Formosa, in Venice (Fig. 1). Recently, the two figures on the right were identified as Gregorio Lazzarini (standing) and Antonio Balestra (sitting, and acting as a corrector), while the others remain anonymous. Mostly they are immersed in the drawing of a standing naked male model on the left. The only exception is the artist sitting in the upper row who stands out not only as a little taller than the others but also because he is evidently not drawing, but instead modelling a statue in clay with his hands: a

sculptor, therefore, whom Tiepolo wanted to distinguish from the others, most probably all of them painters. It would be intriguing to identify him with one of the younger Venetian sculptors of the time but, unfortunately, there is little evidence that would help us deduce his name.¹

Even though our anonymous sculptor was carefully singled out by his contemporary Tiepolo, at the time still a young, but already a very promising painter, this

¹ For the drawing see, most recently, E. LUCCHESI, ‘Nel segno della grazia. Antonio Balestra maestro di Anton Maria Zanetti di Girolamo e nella “Scuola del Nudo” di Giambattista Tiepolo’, in: *Valori Tattili*, 9 (2017), 166 ss. (with bibliography). The drawing, still in private collection, has been earlier in Haseltine collection in London and later in Rasini collection in Milan; see A. MORASSI, *Disegni antichi dalla collezione Rasini in Milano* (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1937), 47, cat. num. LXVIII; A. MORASSI, ‘A “Scuola del Nudo” by Tiepolo’, in: *Master Drawings*, 9 (1971), 43-50.



Fig.1: G. Tiepolo, *Scuola del Nudo*, 1716-1718. Private collection (Morassi, note 1 (1937), tab. LXVIII).

essay will discuss one of many specific connections between the arts of painting and sculpture, and especially the presentation of sculpture in two dimensions. Regarding this, there are several questions, for example, the importance of preparatory drawings for sculptors, drawings and paintings of sculpture, and presentation of sculpture in prints. Unfortunately, all these questions have rarely been discussed and only a small number of drawings by Venetian sculptors from the decades around 1700 have been identified; the number of known prints made after contemporary sculpture also remains considerably small. During the early modern period, these prints were published on different occasions and used for various purposes, often in series as illustrations of important works of art, or as catalogues of whole collections of sculpture. Furthermore, they could also represent a single piece of sculpture and

could be made for marketing, celebratory, or propagandistic purposes, among others. In the case of Venice, we will concentrate on this last group, on the single-leaf prints of contemporary sculpture, on prints that were not originally intended to become part of a larger compendium. Since they were not bound into books, they were also more vulnerable, and several prints are therefore available today in a very small number. Their form and function will be discussed on the example of Antonio Corradini, arguably most famous of the 18th-century Venetian sculptors before Antonio Canova. His unique position among contemporary Venetian sculptors and his extraordinary international career can shed a special light on illustrations of his most essential achievements in marble, their function, and contemporary response to them.

Relations between sculptors and painters, reciprocal reception of their works,

and possible influences have been at least partially studied, especially for the later 17th century and for some of the most important artists of the *Settecento*: for Giusto Le Court, Enrico Merengo, Antonio Zanchi, and Johann Carl Loth, as well as for Sebastiano Ricci, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Pietro Baratta, Antonio Tarsia, Giovanni Maria Morlaiter, and Antonio Corradini, among others.² One of the most direct demonstrations of painters' reception of sculptural work is a drawing after a certain piece of sculpture. In such cases, we can observe how important for them was the choice of different points of view just to capture the main characteristics of the statue under observation. Classical statuary was evidently one of the most obvious choices to study,³ and so sometimes was also modern sculpture. Among the latter, drawings by Giambattista Tiepolo and his sons after busts by Alessandro Vittoria are among the best-known examples.⁴

In contrast, studies of contemporary drawings of sculptors are of great importance for understanding their working procedures. For Venice (and Veneto), an important nucleus of sculptural *bozzetti*, *modelli*,

and *ricordi* have been preserved in two workshop collections – *fondo di bottega* – of Giovanni Maria Morlaiter and the Marinali family, and several other works have also been identified.⁵ However, the number of known drawings remains relatively small, and the largest collection is again from the workshop collection of the Marinali family.⁶ Nevertheless, we know that sculptors' drawings were already eagerly collected by some contemporaries. Marble statues and drawings alike, works of Giusto Le Court, the foremost Venetian sculptor of the 17th century, nicknamed by contemporaries as “Bernini Adriatico”, have been an essential part of the collection of Zaccaria Sagredo.⁷ Unlike his Veronese drawings, they probably remain unidentified in museums and private collections. Recent discoveries of some of Le Court's drawings and models for the sculptural decoration of the Monument to Giovanni Pesaro show how important these works can be for understanding of his overall oeuvre.⁸

Sometimes, drawings were made of sculptures in order to prepare prints. Especially with regard to classical sculpture, it became increasingly necessary for artists and connoisseurs to have easy access to the most important items in churches, private or public collections, in Rome and elsewhere. Even modern sculpture was

2 See, for example, P. ROSSI, 'Il ruolo della scultura nel Seicento e la sua interrelazione con la pittura', in: *La pittura nel Veneto. Il Seicento* (ed. by M. Lucco, Milano: Electa, 2001), 2, 617-644; G. PAVANELLO, 'Tiepolo e la scultura: dalla copia all'invenzione', in: *Giambattista Tiepolo nel terzo centenario della nascita* (ed. L. Puppi, Padova: Poligrafo, 1998), 1, 165-170; P. ROSSI, 'Giambattista Tiepolo e la scultura del suo tempo', in: *Giambattista Tiepolo nel terzo centenario della nascita* (ed. L. Puppi, Padova: Poligrafo, 1998), 1, 171-176; M. DE VINCENTI, 'Per Giovanni Maria Morlaiter: uno scultore nella cerchia di Sebastiano Ricci', in: *Sebastiano Ricci, 1659-1734* (ed. G. Pavanello, Verona: Scripta, 2012), 375-382.

3 See, for example, many drawings and paintings that include the so-called Bust of Vitellio; an interesting, albeit rather earlier example of actual drawing study with three heads of Vitellio from different points of view by Jacopo Palma il Giovane, see S. MASON, *Palma il Giovane 1548-1628. Disegni e dipinti*, <Venice, Museo Correr> (Milano: Electa, 1990), 39, cat. 2b.

4 See, for example, K. E. MAISON, 'The Tiepolo Drawings after the Portrait Bust of Palma Giovane by Alessandro Vittoria', in: *Master Drawings*, 6 (1968), 392-294, 448-460; G. KNOX, T. MARTIN, 'Giambattista Tiepolo: A Series of Chalk Drawings after Alessandro Vittoria's Bust of Giulio Contarini', in: *Master Drawings*, 25 (1987), 158-163, 189-200.

5 For Morlaiter esp. M. DE VINCENTI, 'Catalogo del "fondo di bottega" di Giovanni Maria Morlaiter', in: *Bollettino dei Musei Civici Veneziani*, 6 (2011), 12-77; for Marinali, for example, S. CARMELLINI, *Zwischen Steinbruch und Studio: die Bildhauerwerkstatt von Orazio Marinali und Giacomo Cassetti (1683-1754)* (Marburg: Tectum, 2011). Among several recent publications see, for example (for Le Court), M. CLEMENTE, 'Giusto Le Court e i suoi "bellissimi modelli di creta": un'aggiunta al catalogo', in: *Giusto Le Court, due opere ritrovate* (Firenze: Giovanni Pratesi, 2015), 43-63.

6 See CARMELLINI, note 5.

7 C. MAZZA, *I Sagredo: committenti e collezionisti d'arte nella Venezia del Sei e Settecento* (Venezia: IVSLA, 2004), 105; S. GUERRIERO, 'Un disegno di Giusto Le Court nella collezione Certani', in: *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte*, 27 (2003), 254.

8 M. DE GRASSI, 'Un modellino di Giusto Le Court per il monumento Pesaro ai Frari', in: *Arte veneta*, 53 (1998), 124-127; GUERRIERO, note 7, 251-264; D. TULIĆ, 'Giusto Le Court e il Monumento Pesaro ai Frari: un bozzetto per i "quattro bellissimi Affricani"', in: *Arte veneta*, 69 (2012), 147-150.

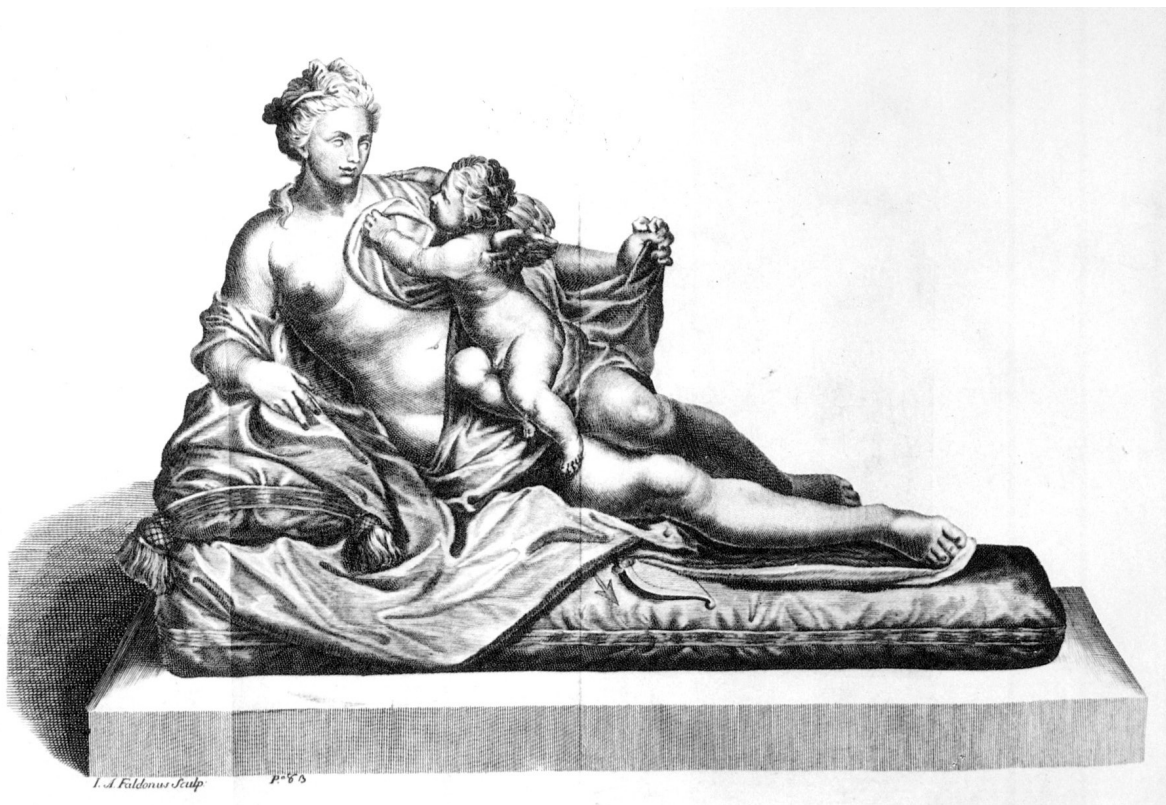


Fig. 2: G. A. Faldoni after Giuseppe Maria Mazza, *Venus and Cupid*, 1708 (Zava Boccazzi, note 12, 321, Fig. 15)

sometimes published as part of larger illustrated publications, and far from being rare are the cases when a sculptor who was not able to go to Rome, used a print rather than a sketch or a model of the original, to produce his version of some important modern statue. This is particularly obvious when prints were made of less precise drawings or even included some iconographical changes. Among the Venetian examples, there is a marble statue of *Saint Catherine*, made in 1699 in Venice by Paolo Callalo, one of Le Court's followers, for the Altar of the Holy Cross in a former Franciscan church in Ljubljana. It was commissioned – together with *Saint James the Greater* – by a wealthy merchant, Jakob Schell von Schellenburg. Callalo based his saint – a patron saint of Schell's spouse Ana Katharina Schell – after a print of *Saint Catherine* by Benoit Thiboust, which is based on a drawing of a slightly altered *Saint Susanna*, a famous statue of François Duquesnoy in Santa Maria di Loreto of Rome.⁹

9 M. KLEMENČIČ, 'Od Enrica Merenga do Paola Callala: problem avtorstva kipov na oltarjih ljubljanskih kamno-

In Rome, a significant number of publications in book form was overshadowing a smaller number of single-leaf prints, making them seemingly unimportant. In Venice, the story is different. There were no similar publications of contemporary sculpture in book form, even though similar publications of prints of famous paintings in Venice exist. Sculpture does appear in publications on antiquities, like Scipione Maffei's *Verona illustrata*, which includes in her third part of 1732, a number of engravings by Andrea Zucchi of Tiepolo's drawings,¹⁰ or an illustrated catalogue of the public collection of classical sculpture in Libreria Marciana. The latter was prepared by the two cousins Anton Maria ("di Girolamo" and "di Alessandro") Zanetti in the late 1730s and published in two lavishly illustrated volumes in 1740 and 1743.¹¹

seških delavnic okrog leta 1700', in: *Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino*, n. s. 36 (2000), 201-202.

10 S. MAFFEI, *Verona illustrata. Parte terza* (Verona, 1732), esp. 399 ss.

11 A. M. ZANETTI, *Delle antiche statue Greche e Romane [...] Parte prima* (Venezia 1740); *Parte Seconda* (Venezia, 1742).

Apart from book compilations, prints of single sculptures were sometimes presented as single-leaf prints. To the best of my knowledge, their position within reproductions of sculpture has not yet been studied thoroughly, and even single prints were only rarely discussed. That means that we are usually not aware of the circumstances of their preparation and printing, we do not know who commissioned them and why, what their function was, and who their public was. In the case of Venice, there are some important prints of larger ensembles containing sculpture, like altarpieces and funeral monuments, but the illustration of sculpture on them often seems to have been of secondary importance to the engravers.

Similar to single leaf prints depicting contemporary sculpture in Venice is an engraving of *Venus and Cupid*, a marble group made by Bolognese sculptor Giuseppe Maria Mazza for the collection of the Manin family. It was not published separately, but as an addition to the journal *La Galleria di Minerva* in 1708 (Fig. 2).¹² Regarding its function, it does connect with examples discussed later here of the work of Antonio Corradini: it was an illustration of a sculpture that was highly praised by contemporaries.

All further examples presented in this paper were published as single leaf prints of the work of Antonio Corradini. Only two were made in Venice, but we will also discuss two later engravings from Vienna and Rome. Corradini, born in Venice in 1688, learned sculpture with Antonio Tarsia and received his first documented commissions in the beginnings of the 1710s. It seems that around 1716, when he was not yet thirty, he quickly rose to fame, and began to work for the most prominent patrons in Venice and abroad.¹³ On 12 September 1716, just three weeks after the critical defeat of the Turkish naval fleet at the Island of Corfu, the

Venetian Senate chose Corradini for a prestigious commission of the monumental statue of the Marshal Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg. The statue, proudly signed *Antonius Corradini venetus sculpsit*, was finished by the end of the following year and was shipped to Corfu in 1718.¹⁴ The commission itself and the possible public presentation of the statue in Venice must have been extraordinary events since the statue is mentioned in *Diario ordinario d'Ungheria* on 25 December of 1717.¹⁵ A print was made, probably soon after the monument was erected, in 1718, by Andrea Zucchi (Fig. 3), one of the most important engravers in Venice at the time. The author of the drawing is not documented, even though the name of Giovanni Battista Tiepolo has been suggested. The print presents the statue from a viewpoint that underlines the monumental scale of the whole and gives the standing marble figure of Marshall Schulenburg a victorious look. Since we do not know who actually commissioned the print by Zucchi, and the inscription is not clear on this, we can only assume that Zucchi's print was most probably intended to glorify the Venetian victory over the Turks, and probably also to give the necessary merit to Marshal Schulenburg. What does stand out is the detailed and carefully planned depiction of the full-length marble portrait itself.¹⁶

The years of 1716 and 1717 were a pivotal time in Corradini's career. Most probably at the same time as the Schulenburg portrait, Corradini was able to present to the Venetian public another of his works, the one that made him instantly the most famous of contemporary Venetian sculptors. It was his first depiction of a veiled female statue, the

12 F. ZAVA BOCCAZZI, 'I Veneti della galleria Conti di Lucca (1704-1707)', in: *Saggi e Memorie di storia dell'arte*, 17 (1990), 125-126.

13 For Corradini, see B. COGO, *Antonio Corradini: scultore veneziano. 1688-1752* (Este: Libr. Gregoriana Estense, 1996).

14 P. ROSSI, 'Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg e due scultori del suo tempo', in: *Arte veneta*, 70 (2013), 238-241.

15 See *Diario ordinario d'Ungheria* (118, 1717), 12. For the commission and for a suggestion of a public presentation in Venice see Rossi, note 14, 238.

16 See COGO, note 13, 162-163; for Zucchi, see, for example, L. TREVISAN, G. ZAVATTA, *Incisori itineranti nell'area veneta nel Seicento. Dizionario bio-bibliografico* (Verona: Università di Verona, 2013), 123-124 (with further bibliography).



Fig. 3: A. Zucchi, after A. Corradini's statue, *Marshal Johann Matthias von der Schulenburg*, ca. 1718. Vienna, National Library, PORT_00068509_01

so-called *Donna Velata*. On Christmas Day 1717, not only the report in *Diario ordinario* on Corfu monument was published; on the same day, Antonio Balestra, a well-known Venetian painter, wrote a letter to the Florentine art historian and collector Francesco Maria Niccolo Gabburri. In a short passage, he praised Corradini as a young Venetian sculptor who had made a statue of *Faith* with a veiled face, which managed to “astonish the whole city” because of the translucent veil in marble that covered the face of the statue. The statue is now recognized as the representation of *Faith*, finished by Corradini at the end of 1717 for the monument of the Manin family in the Cathedral of Udine.¹⁷

Unfortunately, there is no print of this statue, but from this moment onwards, Corradini's career was at its peak, and until the end of the 1720s he was enjoying a position that was rivalled only by that of Giusto Le

Court, if we consider the status of sculptors in Venice ever since the death of Alessandro Vittoria and before the era of Antonio Canova. If we consider an engraving of a sculpture, which was already a rare occasion in Venice, as part of Corradini's career, the Schulenburg print is even more extraordinary because of Corradini's young age, and the reason for producing it was probably the historical, political, and military importance of the defeat of the Turkish navy.

The situation was different in the case of the next engraving. In the early 1720s, Corradini was involved in a commission of Scula dei Carmini for their altarpiece in Santa Maria dei Carmini. In 1722–1723, he produced a marble statue of *Virginity*, placed on the altarpiece together with *Humility* by Giuseppe Torretti. Even though Corradini's *Virginity* is not a veiled statue, it stands out in his overall oeuvre and contemporary sculpture as one of the most beautiful adaptations of late Cinquecento works in a modern, Settecento idiom. Its immediate recognition and historical importance are testified to by a single-leaf print, which was produced probably no later than 1724, again by Andrea Zucchi after a drawing by Giambattista Tiepolo (Fig. 4). Here, the function of the print is documented: Zucchi himself, through the inscription below, dedicates the engraving to the famous art collector Zaccaria Sagredo for his promotion of fine arts “with nobility, authority and beneficence.” On the print, the statue is taken out of the context of the altarpiece; it remains isolated, and its qualities are again underlined by an excellent drawing, this time signed by Tiepolo. Again, a low viewpoint was chosen to achieve a monumental effect.

As I have been able to show elsewhere, the altarpiece itself, especially the choice of models for the statues carved by Antonio Corradini and Giuseppe Torretti, was probably related to contemporary activities of sculptors in Venice, with the institution of Collegio dei scultori, and the first steps towards an academy of arts in Venice. Sagredo's role in these events is still not clear, but he was an admirer of sculpture, and he owned three

¹⁷ See M. KLEMENČIČ, ‘Antonio Corradini, Collegio dei scultori, and Neo-Cinquecentismo in Venice around 1720’, in: *The Enduring Legacy of the Venetian Renaissance* (ed. by A. Badiiee Banta, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 103–119, with bibliography.



Fig. 4: A. Zucchi, after G. Tiepolo's drawing of A. Corradini's statue, *Virginità*, ca. 1723-1724. Private collection.

crucial works of Corradini, a veiled *Religion* (most probably the one today in the Louvre, Paris), *Adonis* (now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York), and its companion piece *Venus* (remains missing).¹⁸ Still, the reason for Zucchi's choice to present Sagredo with an engraving of one of Corradini's works remains elusive. Was it Sagredo's affection for Corradini's work, was it the fact that both the collector and the sculptor collaborated in the proposal for the Colleggio and Accademia, or something else?

At the peak of his career in his hometown, Corradini left *Serenissima* for the Holy Roman Empire around 1730, and settled in Vienna for a decade, receiving the title of court sculptor by Emperor Charles VI. In the early 1740s, even though his title was confirmed by Maria Theresa, he left Vienna

18 See KLEMENČIČ, note 17, 110–116.



Fig. 5: J. J. Sedelmayr Jr. after J. E. Fischer von Erlach and A. Corradini, *Saint John of Nepomuk*, before 1736. Kunstbibliothek der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

for Rome, where he was, again, among the most celebrated sculptors, receiving distinguished guests in his studio, such as James Stuart, the so-called “Old Pretender” to the British throne, and Pope Benedict XIV himself. Eventually, he left Rome for Naples, where he died in 1752, while working on a demanding project of decorating the private chapel of Raimondo di Sangro, Prince of Sansevero. One of his last works, *Chastity*, as well as his invention of the *Veiled Christ*, carved in marble only after his death by Giuseppe Sanmartino, remain among the most intriguing sights of Naples to this day.¹⁹

During his time in Vienna, several of his earlier works in Dresden were published as part of Raymond Leplat's *Recueil des marbres antiques* in 1733.²⁰ At the same time, one more of his Viennese works was

19 See COGO, note 13, 97 ss.

20 R. LEPLAT, *Recueil des marbres antiques qui se trouvent dans la Galerie du Roy de Pologne à Dresden* (Dresde: Stössel, 1733); COGO, note 13, 240 ss.

engraved again as a single-leaf print (Fig. 5). It was a presentation of the new monument to *Saint John of Nepomuk* in Prague cathedral. It was executed by engraver Jeremias Jakob Sedelmayr before it was finished. The monument was designed by Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach and Antonio Corradini was commissioned with wooden models for the statues, which were later made by Viennese goldsmith Johann Joseph Würth, and the monument was erected in 1736. The print itself was part of a larger promotional campaign that initially led to the canonization of the saint in 1729 and later to the erection of the new monument. Long inscriptions in both Latin and German presented the main protagonists of the project and were evidently made in connection with the intention to raise money and to further promote Habsburg initiatives regarding Saint John of Nepomuk. The engraving was not directly promoting the artists involved, but their names and status were still conspicuously stressed and were obviously confirming the importance of the project.²¹

When Antonio Corradini came to Rome in the 1740s, he was enjoying celebrity status, but it seems that his fame was not enough to guarantee significant commissions. His activities there and his later move to Naples remain to be studied, as well as his works of the period. The last engraving discussed here will show how Corradini was by this time already aware of the importance that prints could have in attracting the attention of the larger public, including connoisseurs and patrons. In 1743, soon after his arrival to Rome, he made another veiled statue, *Vestal Tuccia*, which remained unsold and was offered to the public through a lottery, perhaps unsuccessfully, since it remained in Palazzo Barberini, where it was on view after Corradini's move to Naples. This time, Corradini

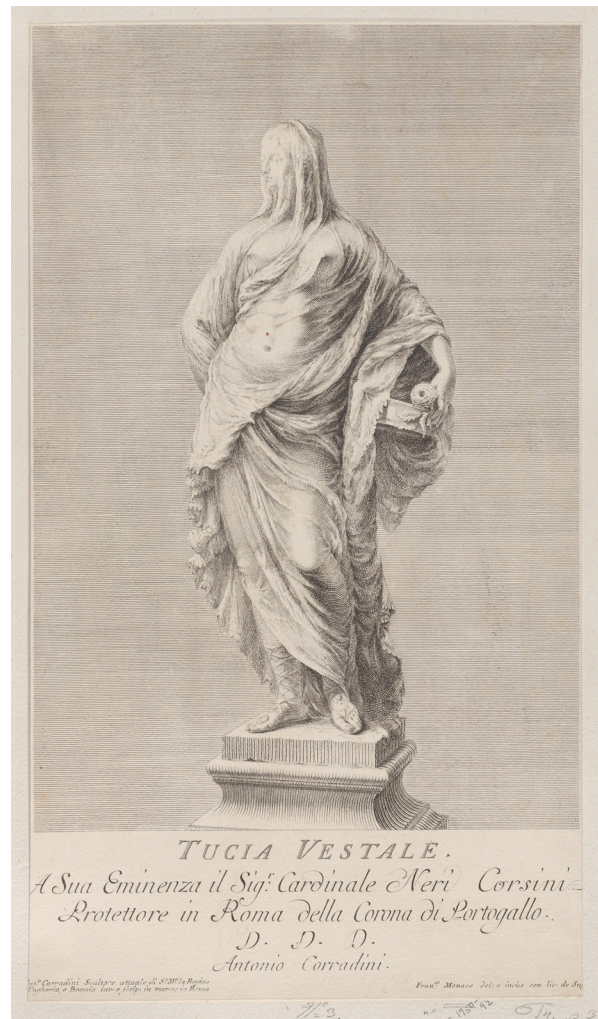


Fig. 6: F. Monaco after A. Corradini, *Vestal Tuccia*, ca. 1743/1747. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 51.501.2714

commissioned himself an engraving, made by Francesco Monaco (Fig. 6). It is not dated but was probably engraved between 1743 and 1747, since the print is dedicated to Cardinal Neri Maria Corsini, protector of the Portuguese crown in Rome. In these years, Corradini was involved in an important Roman commission for the church of Saint Roch in Lisbon, for the chapel of Saint John the Baptist, for which he presented two large marble angels.²² The engraving of *Vestal Tuccia* is probably the only genuinely self-promotional one of the four prints discussed here, and Corradini's name on the lower left is embellished with his title

21 For the complex story of the monument itself and for the print see F. MATSCHE, 'Das Grabmal des Johannes von Nepomuk im Prager Veitsdom als sakrales Denkmal', in: *Johannes von Nepomuk 1393–1993* (München, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum) (ed. by R. Baumstark, J. von Herzogenberg, P. Volk, München 1993), 44.

22 COGO, note 13, 296–303; T. L. M. VALE, *Scultura barocca italiana in Portogallo. Opere artisti committenti* (Roma: Gangemi, 2010), 129 ss.

of court sculptor to Maria Theresa (“her Majesty Queen of Hungary and Bohemia”).

The importance of single-leaf prints of Corradini’s sculptures should be further discussed in a wider context of similar engravings in Venice and elsewhere. Even when we can assume that such prints have predominately political or propagandistic functions, in general, and that rarely were the artists themselves their publishers, these prints were, in the end, also used as a self-promotional instrument by most ambitious artists. At least in the case of Antonio Corradini it seems that he was able to learn, throughout his career, the possibilities of such engravings, and he used the medium himself when he came to Rome. This corresponds to other proofs of his ambitions and self-promotional activities, which are beautifully phrased in a description of his veiled *Modesty*. On the occasion of its inauguration in the Cappella Sansevero in Naples on July 1752, shortly before Corradini’s death, *abate* Filippo Venuti, a Tuscan archaeologist and encyclopaedist, did not fail to observe that the sculptor with his veiled statues became the first artist who had the pleasure of surpassing the famous ancient Greek and Roman sculptors.²³ This statement was, of course, a result of the artistic qualities of Corradini, but it was also a result of carefully planned career moves, among which there was – last but not least – the use of engravings to promote his achievements.

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²³ See KLEMENČIČ, note 17, 103-104.