



A Bronze Passion Ensemble by François du Quesnoy and François Girardon

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• TECHNICAL NOTES BY ARIE PAPPOT •

In 2022, a superb bronze statuette depicting Christ at the Column entered the collection of the Rijksmuseum (fig. 1). Based on a model by the Flemish sculptor François du Quesnoy (1597-1643), the bronze is not only an important addition to the museum's holdings, but it has also prompted a re-evaluation of a previous acquisition made almost seventy years before. This bronze *Ecce Homo*, obtained by the museum in 1957, is similar in size, style and quality to the *Christ at the Column* and attributed to the same sculptor (fig. 2). Mounted on matching socles, their coherence is emphasized in their current display. In recent literature on Du Quesnoy, however, the old attribution of the *Ecce Homo* has garnered no support.¹ A close technical and art historical study of the two bronzes now shows they must have formed a pair. As we will propose here, the ensemble was created in Paris at the end of the seventeenth century and can be attributed to the French court sculptor François Girardon (1628-1715).

Du Quesnoy's Models

The original model of the *Christ at the Column* has traditionally been ascribed to François du Quesnoy, known as *il Fiammingo*. Growing up in Brussels, Du Quesnoy and his two brothers were apprenticed to their father,

<< Fig. 1
FRANÇOIS GIRARDON
after FRANÇOIS
DU QUESNOY,
Christ at the Column,
c. 1690, before 1709.
Bronze, h. approx.
30.5 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. BK-2021-191.
Gift of H.B. van der
Ven, The Hague.

<< Fig. 2
Attributed to
FRANÇOIS GIRARDON,
Ecce Homo,
before 1715.
Bronze, h. 33 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. BK-1957-39-1.

the Brussels court sculptor Jérôme du Quesnoy the Elder (1570-1641). The father mentored the sons, requiring they practice in a variety of materials, such as ivory and marble.² In 1618, with a stipend offered by Archduke Albert VII of Austria (1559-1621), Du Quesnoy left his native city for Rome in a desire to further his education in the art of sculpting.³ Although initially planning a stay of two years, he remained in Rome until just prior to his death occurring en route to Paris in 1643.

In Rome, Du Quesnoy and his friend the painter Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665) together developed a novel view on the art of the ancients based on the close study of works by or after classical Greek sculptors.⁴ This new ideal of restrained classical beauty – *la gran maniera Greca*, as one contemporary called it – is found in many of Du Quesnoy's works, as reflected in the facial types, coiffures, body proportions and dress inspired by the classical sculptures he studied in Rome.

During the seventeenth century, sculptures by Du Quesnoy himself and those made after his models – especially his soft, chubby putti – were widely disseminated within Italy and abroad. Such works were highly sought after by art collectors in France and the Low Countries.⁵ Du Quesnoy also appears to have turned to the inexpensive medium plaster to promote the popularity of his

inventions, by which means his models entered the workshops of his contemporaries and later generations of artists, where they were reworked in a sculptor's own style or preferred medium. A telling example involves the young British sculptor Nicholas Stone Jr (1618-1647), who, during his Italian sojourn in 1638-42, visited Du Quesnoy's workshop and purchased plaster and wax models directly from the sculptor.⁶ As a result, numerous variants and copies of Du Quesnoy's inventions exist, often dating from decades after the sculptor's death. Casts of the *Christ at the Column* survive in bronze and plaster, as do versions carved in ivory.⁷ In addition to the Amsterdam bronze, five other casts are known, some displaying slight differences in the shape of the column and the perizoma (loincloth).⁸ Closest to the Rijksmuseum *Christ* is a bronze in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, interestingly paired with an *Ecce Homo* of the same type as the Rijksmuseum's aforementioned 1957 acquisition. Other versions of the model are documented in seventeenth-century sources, listed in collections such as that of Parisian collector Louis Hesselin (1602-1662), the French court sculptor François Girardon and the Ghent bishop Antoine Triest (1576-1657).⁹ Previously unmentioned is that, in David Teniers II's (1610-1690) painted portrait of the bishop in his study from 1652, Du Quesnoy's *Christ at the Column* stands on a bookshelf next to a *Penitent Jerome* (fig. 3). Apart from a few differences in the drapery, the pillar, and the possible addition of a crown of thorns, this *Christ at the Column* displays significant similarities to the Rijksmuseum bronze, including the body posture and the hands. Bishop Triest was acquainted with both François and his brother Jérôme du Quesnoy (1602-1654), as is corroborated by the latter's marble portrait bust of the bishop today preserved in the Louvre, a work possibly

made after a model by his brother.¹⁰ Furthermore, Triest commissioned François to contribute to a mausoleum in St Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent, a project completed by Jérôme after his brother's unexpected death in 1643.¹¹ The inclusion of the *Christ at the Column* in Triest's portrait shows that these models were highly valued possessions.

An Exceptional Pairing

Visually, the Rijksmuseum *Christ at the Column* and the *Ecce Homo* ostensibly form a pair. Besides evident similarities in size, medium and theme, they share several remarkable stylistic and technical features. When displayed together, the two figures' traditional contrapposto continues in an essentially symmetrical composition, with the figure in the *Christ at the Column* looking downwards over his right shoulder and his counterpart in the *Ecce Homo* gazing upwards to the other side. More strongly accentuated in the *Christ at the Column*, this directional motion also exposes differences in the drapery and details of the body.

The bronze *Christ at the Column* portrays a solitary Christ before or after his flagellation as ordered by Pontius Pilate (John 19:1). He has a serene facial expression and a weary, but dignified posture. Christ is bound to the pillar by means of thinly woven metal threads encircling his delicate hands; the pillar's sturdiness emphasizes his graceful bearing. Respecting the traditional theological interpretation of the scene in which he is mocked and flogged, Christ wears only a perizoma draped about the waist.

As in traditional representations of the moment when Christ is presented to the public after his flagellation (John 19:2-4), Christ in the *Ecce Homo* is shown with his semi-covered body dressed in a large 'royal' cape. It is gathered at the neck and, at waist level, clasped by Christ with both hands. Like the crown of thorns, the cape alludes



Fig. 3
DAVID TENIERS II,
*Portrait of Bishop
Antoine Triest and
his brother Eugene,
a Capuchin*, 1652.
Oil on canvas,
44 x 36 cm.
St Petersburg,
The State Hermitage
Museum,
inv. no. ГЭ-589.

to his mockery as king. Descending in long diagonals all the way down to Christ's feet, the fabric appears denser and comprises fewer, though straighter lines, when compared to the many curvilinear drapery folds on the *Christ at the Column*. Moreover, the coiffure on the latter shows fine, discernible locks, whereas the *Ecce Homo* displays less movement and a greater uniformity in the hair surface. The same can be observed in the facial hair, with a more prominent beard and moustache on the *Christ at the Column*. The hands are another feature emphasizing the refinement of both casts, even if the fingers tied to the column appear thinner and shorter than those of its counterpart. Finally, the *Ecce Homo* is slightly taller, with a height difference of two-and-a-half centimetres.

In the search for the creator or creators of the present pair, the material examination of both bronze figures has provided other significant clues.

XRF testing conducted by Rijksmuseum scientist Arie Pappot surprisingly revealed that the bronze alloy of the two statuettes is virtually identical (see Pappot's technical notes at the end of this article), with each containing equal amounts of 89-90 % copper, 7-9 % zinc and low amounts of tin and lead. Such an agreement is a very rare occurrence among bronzes. According to Pappot, the determined alloy composition strongly suggests that both statuettes were cast in Paris in the late seventeenth century. Moreover, the casting techniques are similar, with the limbs cast separately and subsequently attached to the body by means of brazing. Both statuettes have been coated with a virtually identical warm-brown lacquer patina, which serves to enhance the delicately chased and polished surface of the bronze. These stylistic and technical parallels convincingly demonstrate that the *Christ at the Column* and the *Ecce Homo* must have been cast at the same time, circa 1700, and in the same workshop, likely to be situated in Paris.

As mentioned above, the Metropolitan Museum of New York also holds bronze statuettes of the *Ecce Homo* and the *Christ at the Column*. With regard to the figures, drapery and pillar, these bronzes are seemingly identical to the Amsterdam statuettes, thus eliminating any doubt that more than one pair of matching statuettes was cast. Even if slightly more worn, the New York casts are of particular interest, as they are mounted on their original ebonized socles. Both socles have the same shape with gilt-bronze plaquettes on three of the four sides, each bearing various representations of putti carrying the Arma Christi, reflecting the popularity of images of Christ surrounded by the instruments of the Passion during the period of the Counter-Reformation.¹² The identical bases indicate that the New York bronzes were indeed conceived as a pair at a very early point in their history. The new bases that were recently made

for the Amsterdam pair were modelled after those in New York.

During the period following the Council of Trent (1545-63), religious scenes were stripped of all superfluous, with a view to present only the most essential, historically truthful subject matter. Crucifixion scenes became less common, with the focus shifting to the sorrowful personages in Passion scenes, illustrating the final episodes of the earthly life of Jesus Christ.¹³ Representations of Christ at the Column, for instance, changed from a static figure leaning against a tall column surrounded by his flagellators to a solitary Christ depicted more movingly and with greater realism. In these scenes, he is often bound to a shorter column resembling the low baluster-shaped column transported to Rome (Church of St Prassede) from Jerusalem in 1223, then considered the original column of Christ's flagellation. Reflecting the post-Tridentine focus on verism, it was not until the end of the sixteenth century that this lower column type began to appear in religious art.¹⁴ In the narrative of Christ's Passion, the scene of *Ecce Homo* succeeds that of the Christ at the Column. Before being forced to carry his cross to Golgotha (John 19:5), a scourged and bound Christ wearing a crown of thorns was presented to the people by Pontius Pilate, who then uttered the Latin words 'Ecce Homo' (Behold the Man). Independent of one another, these two emotionally charged scenes possess a strong spiritual significance and have often been depicted in sculpture. Whereas, to our knowledge, the pairing of the Flagellation and *Ecce Homo*, combined into a single iconographic entity, knows no precedent in sculpture.¹⁵

The notion of combining the two scenes can be found in both written and printed sources, among them Jesuit emblem books of the seventeenth century. One example is

the Flemish Jesuit Antoine Sucquet's (1574-1626) meditational guide (published in Latin in Antwerp, 1620), in which devotional concepts were based on selected topics rather than on chronological narratives, resulting in specific meditation exercises centred on conjoined scenes of the Passion. For the imagery of the Man of Sorrows, these comprised the passages of Christ's return to Pilate, the Flagellation and the Coronation.¹⁶ Combining text and images, Sucquet's guide commends post-Tridentine concepts such as the promotion of self-discipline and the call for compassion. This didactic meditation strategy was meant to reach a broad lay audience, encouraging the reader to embark on an introspective pilgrimage to the soul and sufferance of Jesus Christ. Growing in popularity, these religious manuals rapidly found their way into various languages, with a French edition of Sucquet's guide published as early as 1623. In the literature of the seventeenth century, the combination of the Flagellation and the *Ecce Homo* is perhaps not as surprising, as both formed part of the Man of Sorrows devotion and the traditional succession of scenes in the Passion of Christ. In sculpture, however, the focus on these two specific images remains exceptional.

La Galerie de Girardon

The question then arises: what might have prompted this unusual pairing of the two Passion bronzes? The place and time where/when the statuettes were likely cast possibly provides the answer: Paris, at the end of the seventeenth century. As noted above, the French court sculptor François Girardon – a highly talented sculptor who dominated the sculptural sphere at the court of King Louis XIV¹⁷ – owned a version of Du Quesnoy's *Christ at the Column*. Over the course of his lengthy career, Girardon was renowned for monumental statues like

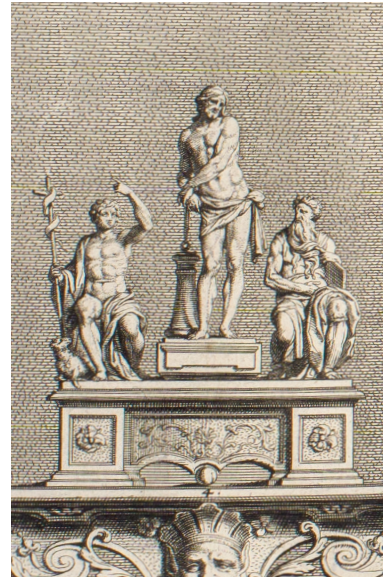
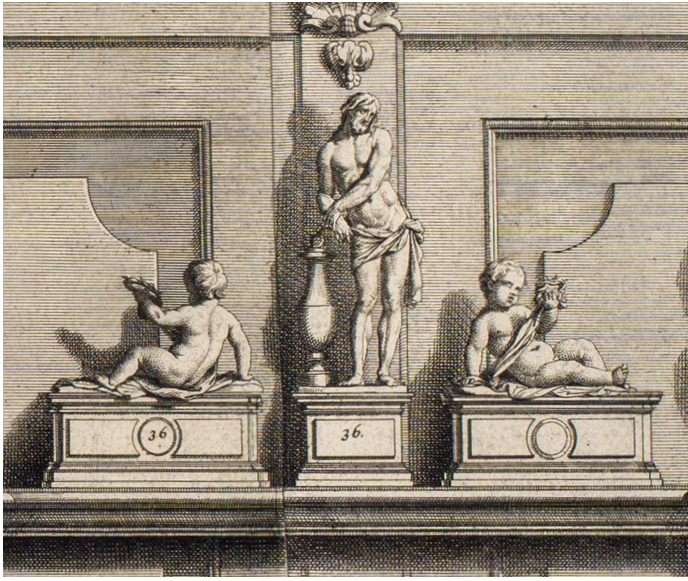


Fig. 4
Detail of the terracotta *Christ at the Column* in plate vi of *La Galerie de Girardon* (fig. 7)

Fig. 5
Detail of the bronze *Christ at the Column* in plate vi of *La Galerie de Girardon* (fig. 8)

the *Louis XIV on Horseback* (destroyed during the French Revolution) and his sculptures for the garden of Versailles. Yet he was also known for his large collection of sculptural works by other masters, comprising approximately 800 works.¹⁸ Girardon's private collection was housed in three different locations in Paris: his private residence in the Louvre and two depots on the Rue de Cléry and the Rue des Orties.¹⁹ At the French and Italian courts, collectors enjoyed keeping their prized art possessions – including bronze statuettes – near their living spaces, housed in custom-made interiors.²⁰ The reputation of Girardon's collection and its display was such that many art lovers wished to visit it. These visits sometimes even led to acquisition inquiries: William III of Orange, Stadholder of the Netherlands and King of England, is known to have offered Girardon 100 *écus* for his entire collection.²¹

In or before 1709, Girardon commissioned Nicolas Chevalier (1661-1720) to produce engravings of his glorious possessions.²² Entitled *La Galerie de Girardon*, of which the Rijksmuseum holds a copy, this series of thirteen plates illustrates a representative

selection of the sculptor's collection, with approximately 350 works set in a spectacular, fictitious scenography evoking the grand style of Louis XIV's court (e.g. figs. 6-8).²³ Significantly, among them are no less than eighty-three terracottas and four bronzes either by Du Quesnoy himself or made after his models, including the *Christ at the Column*.²⁴ Fifty-six years earlier, Du Quesnoy had died at the port of Livorno while travelling from Rome to Paris after having accepted King Louis XIII's invitation to join the court as director of the new Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture in Paris.²⁵ Upon his death, Du Quesnoy left behind four large boxes containing his models; his brother, Jérôme, transported these works to Flanders and subsequently Paris. It is possible that Girardon acquired these works at that time, if not during the legal proceedings ensuing from the artist's estate.²⁶ Regardless, the fact that Girardon held eighty-seven works by Du Quesnoy in his possession underscores his deep admiration for *il Fiammingo*. Surprisingly, the model of the *Christ at the Column* appears twice in the engravings. In their respective legends,

each is described as a work by the Flemish artist, albeit made in different materials: an original formed in terracotta (plate IV), the other cast in bronze (plate VI). The terracotta is depicted between two casts of the same figure seen from two angles, a child perhaps holding the crown of thorns (figs. 4, 7). The bronze is part of a more comprehensive ensemble. On the left flanked by a reduced cast of Michelangelo's *Moses*, with Girardon's own *St John the Baptist* visible on the right, Du Quesnoy's Christ forms the central element of a composition bearing the title *L'Union de l'ancien et nouveau testament* (figs. 5, 8). This ensemble was created by Girardon for the 1699 Salon des Expositions in the Louvre.²⁷ By placing Du Quesnoy's work prominently alongside Michelangelo's and his own, Girardon expressed his high esteem for the Fleming; implicitly, he was also highlighting his own artistic importance as a sculptor on par with Michelangelo and Du Quesnoy.

Moreover, *La Gallerie* provides key information on Girardon's collection, its display, and the sculptor's relation to Du Quesnoy's works. For instance, the existence of two Hermaphrodite models by Du Quesnoy – one in terracotta (plate VI) and one in bronze (plate II), the latter cast by Girardon after an original Du Quesnoy terracotta, as is stated in the legend at the bottom of the engraving – verifies that Girardon did in fact cast models after works by others.²⁸ Minor variations in a *Madeleine pénitente couchée* (plate VI), cast after a model by Nicolas Legendre (1619-1671), demonstrate that Girardon did more than just simply copy other sculptors' models, but that he also adapted them to his own taste, perhaps with the intention of claiming them as his own inventions.²⁹

Many of the various distinguished guests who visited Girardon's collection recorded their experiences and

shared their surprise regarding the presence of so many of Du Quesnoy's sculptures. For example, Germain Brice (1653-1727), who listed Girardon's collection in his 1697 publication *Description nouvelle de ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans la ville de Paris*, provided a detailed overview of the cabinet, adding his personal reflection on the predominancy of Du Quesnoy's work:

... nothing could be rarer and more curious than the Statues and Antique Vases there, in which we find bronze pieces by Jean de Boulogne, repaired by Antoine Sousine Florentin, and a large number of Models by Francois Quesnoy, nicknamed the Flaman. ... All these beautiful pieces are orderly arranged in a small Galerie which is completely filled with them, and which infinitely satisfies those who have a taste for these nice things.³⁰

In other descriptions, a similar astonishment was expressed with respect to the gallery's well-balanced layout. The earliest known visitor's report, written by Charles le Maire in the third volume of his *Paris Ancien et Nouveau*, published in 1685, highlights the many models by Du Quesnoy as well as their presentation:

In the home of Mr. Girardon Sculptor of whom we spoke previously, there is a large cabinet where we find beautiful pieces of Sculpture, very interesting to see from Marble to Bronze... and fifty terracotta models of different figures, of men, of women, and of children, made in Rome by Mr. Francois Quenois Flamand, accompanied by an architecture proportionate to the place.³¹

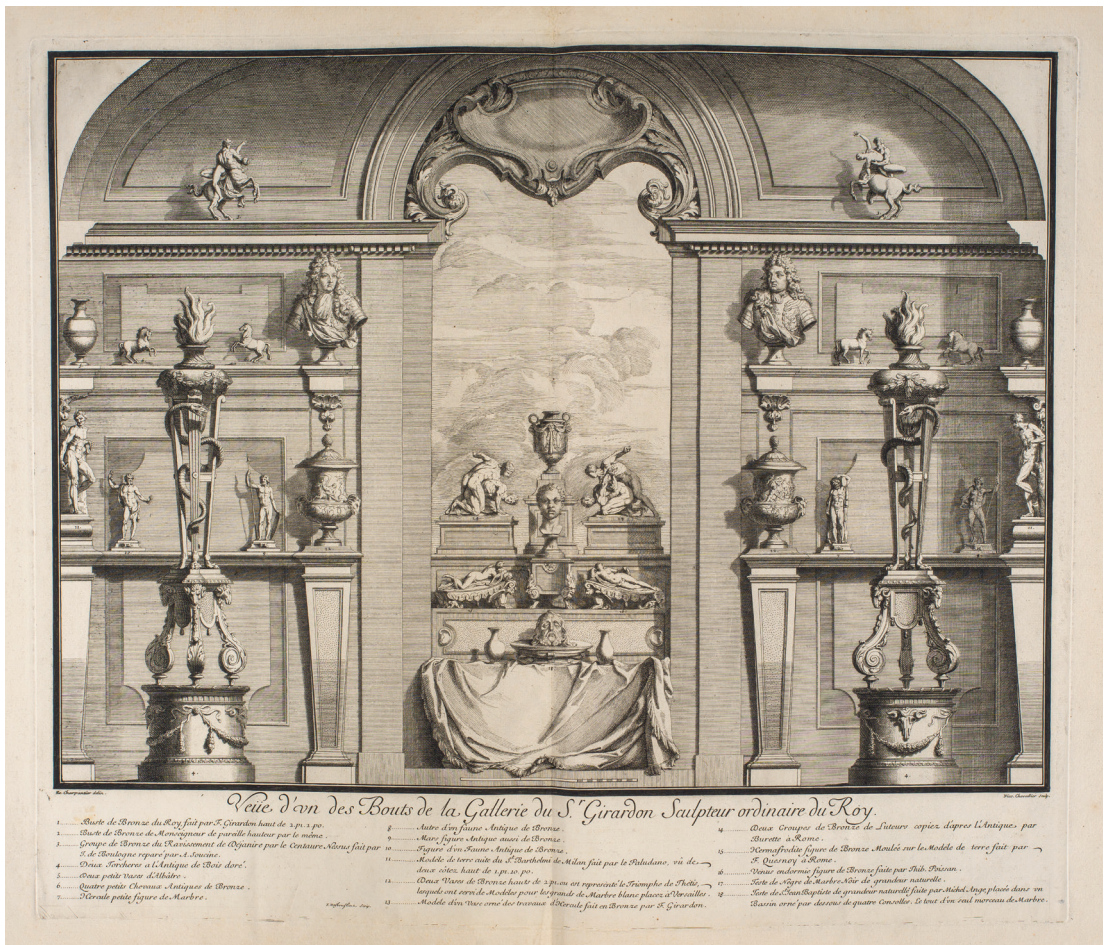
Striving for Symmetry

As reflected in these visitors' remarks and as the plates from *La Gallerie* amply demonstrate, a clever symmetry governs the display of sculptures in Girardon's collection. The fictitious

enfilade of rooms presents viewers with a princely, eclectic staging, in which every artefact has its proper place. One can only be impressed by the regularity in the presentation of sculptures according to shape and size, set in such an elaborate architectural design. The exceptional symmetry almost creates a mirroring effect. Girardon placed special care in achieving a balanced display of themes, as well as colour and material, achieved by means of objects in bronze, wax, terracotta and alabaster. Matching pedestals, socles and tables reinforce the sense of order, evoking an intense striving for uniformity.³² When observing the middle shelf of plate 11 (fig. 6) in *La Galerie de Girardon*, the

pairing of an antique bronze *Faune* and *Mars* is mirrored by a *Faune* and *Hercules* opposite, with both ensembles sharing analogous gestures and a Greek mythological reminiscence. Then, in the centre of the same plate, the aforementioned *Hermaphrodite* bronze is symmetrically paired with Thibault Poissant's (1605-1668) *Reclining Venus*. Girardon most likely combined these two female nudes based on their shared attitude of delicate repose and sensual connotation. Above them, he pursues his quest for symmetry even further in *Deux groupes de Bronze de Luteurs copies d'après l'Antique par Burette à Rome*, by pairing two exactly identical sculptures of wrestlers,

Fig. 6
Plate 11 in
Nicolas Chevalier,
La Galerie et la suite du cabinet de François Girardon, sculpteur ordinaire du roy Louis XIV ...,
s.l. 1706-10.
Engraving,
Rijksmuseum,
Research Library
15 A 18.



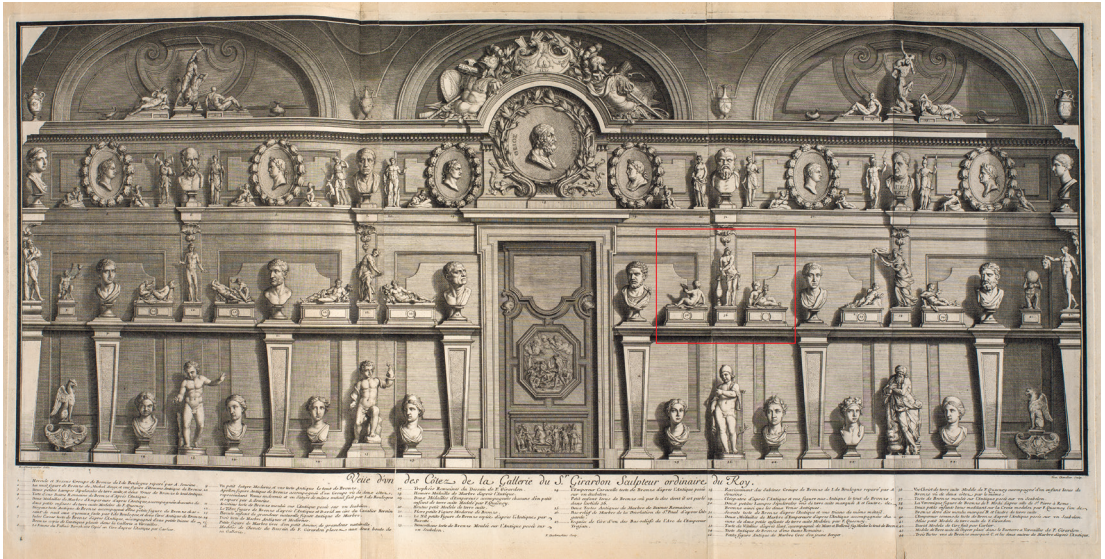


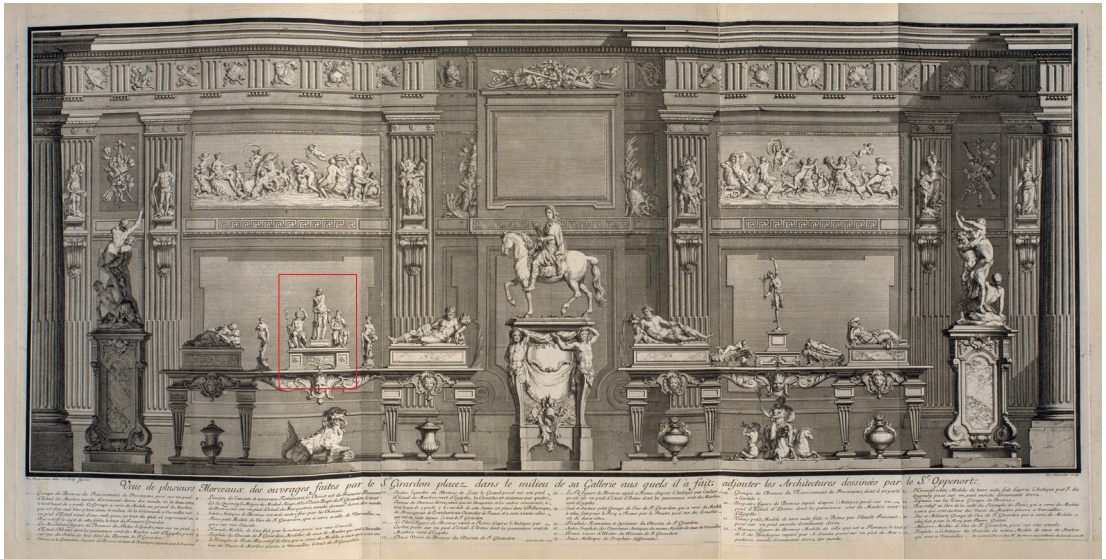
Fig. 7
Plate iv in *La Galerie de Girardon*. The red square indicates the detail in fig. 4.

but rotating one so as to face the other, thus enabling viewers to grasp both angles.

Other examples of Girardon's intense search for harmony and balance through symmetry can be seen on plate iv (fig. 7). This engraving reveals a symmetry achieved by the juxtaposition of the objects' materiality, as well as their shared Roman origin. Du Quesnoy's *Christ at the Column*, a solitary terracotta on a shelf populated by bronzes, is accompanied by a bronze statuette after Francesco Mochi's *Veronica* at St Peter's Cathedral ('La Veronique figure de Bronze de F. Mochi d'après celle de St. Pierre à Rome'), in a similar way flanked with two comparable sculptures of a child holding a cross. On the other side of the wall these statuettes are mirrored in a wax reduction of Bernini's *David* at the Villa Borghese ('David en cire du Cavalier Bernin'), with two reclining personifications of the river Tiber and the river Nile in bronze, and an Apollo figure in bronze flanked by two casts of a bronze group representing Venus approached by a satyr. Every facet of each artefact was taken into account,

thus expressing Girardon's principles of display, based on the interplay of dynamic versus static and standing versus recumbent figures.

By juxtaposing the sculptures' heights, materials and subjects in this manner, *La Galerie de Girardon* reflects the broader principles of display typical of the French courtly ideal of classicizing Baroque interior decoration and architecture, ruled by symmetry. Upon achieving prosperity, Girardon – like his royal employer – wished to exhibit his treasures in a systematic and grandiose manner.³³ During his reign, for example, King Louis XIV had commissioned a cabinet of curiosities, to be designed according to a formal and highly decorative mural arrangement and later disseminated via prints.³⁴ At this time, major interior decoration projects were underway at the Louvre and Versailles. For others, these plans provided examples of modern layout and arrangement. From the sixteen sixties onwards, this new style of interior design became fashionable throughout France and parts of north-western Europe.³⁵ Evidence of this can be observed, for example, in Gerard de Laresse's (1641-1711)



Schilderboek, published in Amsterdam in 1707, a classicist discourse on art theory that had a significant influence on eighteenth-century artists.³⁶ De Lairese's main objective was to achieve aesthetic beauty and perfection in the choice of subject, but also in relation to a work's composition and execution. One section in his book addresses principles of composition and object groupings. He instructs that crowded or sparsely elaborated spaces are inferior, and that one should place special importance on a reasonable symmetry of the design:

Statuary is an imitation of Nature, performing its work by a strong motivation of the body and dexterity of the hands. It consists in the symmetry or exact division of the objects, according to the particular qualities, especially in human figures (wherein it most excels) and next in quadruplets; all relieved and comfortable to the life.³⁷

Girardon left no writings regarding his gallery's organization. Nevertheless, the engravings of his imaginary wall arrangements illustrate what De Lairese so eloquently put into words.

A Companion Piece

Remarkably, *La Gallerie* includes very few religious works, and not one that could really match the *Christ at the Column* models. This omission may have incited Girardon's desire to create a companion piece to the *Christ at the Column*, in accordance with the same rules of composition based on symmetry, contrapposto and complementation. This might be what motivated Girardon to model the bronze *Ecce Homo* himself, an attribution that finds convincing support in the bronze's style. In this respect, it can be linked to Girardon's *Crucified Christ* in the Church of St Remy in Troyes (fig. 9). The handling of the facial features and the slight tilt of the head are remarkably similar, as is the dynamic but heavy play of the drapery. Bound together with the Rijksmuseum's copy of *La Gallerie de Girardon* are additional prints of funerary monuments designed by the sculptor. The monument commemorating Catherine du Chemin, Girardon's spouse, depicts the Lamentation scene from the Passion of Christ. Here the sculptural figure of the recumbent Christ also displays close parallels to the *Ecce Homo* in the drapery and a

Fig. 8
Plate vi in *La Gallerie de Girardon*. The red square indicates the detail in fig. 5.



Fig. 9
FRANÇOIS GIRARDON,
Crucified Christ, 1691.
Bronze, h. approx.
130 cm.
Troyes, Church of
St Remy.
Photo: © Région
Grand Est – Inventaire
général / Patrice
Thomas

similar approach to the modelling of the toned body (fig. 10).

If indeed *Ecce Homo* was a Girardon invention, conceived to accompany Du Quesnoy's *Christ at the Column*, then the pair he created is very much in the spirit of *il Fiammingo*. Du Quesnoy's bronze *Apollo* and *Mercury* (Collection of the Prince of Liechtenstein) form a similarly subtle pair, engaged in an interplay of contrast and harmony.³⁸

Were we to accept that the *Ecce Homo* was created by Girardon to complement a model by Du Quesnoy, one must wonder why it was not included in *La Gallerie* or in the sculptor's estate inventory, which comprised an even larger selection of his collection.³⁹ Both mention Girardon's cast of the *Christ at the Column*, made after Du Quesnoy's terracotta original. Unfortunately, answers to such questions cannot be determined conclusively. One point of interest, however, is the earliest known owner of the *Christ at the Column*, as revealed to us by Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1613-1696), Du Quesnoy's biographer. Bellori describes the French aristocrat and

ardent art collector Louis Hesselin as the owner of a *Christ at the Column* modelled by Du Quesnoy, which he possibly commissioned from the Flemish sculptor on a trip to Rome in 1637.⁴⁰ Furthermore, an inventory compiled after Hesselin's death in 1662 shows he was in the possession of an *Ecce Homo* model, listed as a work by François du Quesnoy himself: '1 bronze figure of 18 inches high by Francois Flamand representing an *Ecce Homo* posed on its ebony pedestal.'⁴¹ However, a height of 18 *pouces* – equivalent to approximately 45.5 centimetres – considerably exceeds that of the *Ecce Homo* in the Rijksmuseum, which measures 33 centimetres. Additional details concerning or references to an *Ecce Homo* by François du Quesnoy are also lacking. Could it be that Girardon drew his inspiration from Hesselin's statuettes of Christ, of which he was undoubtedly aware, perhaps in a desire to pay them homage, as he already possessed an original terracotta version by Du Quesnoy? Interestingly, Hesselin also owned a bronze statuette of Mochi's *St Veronica*.⁴² Coincidence or not, in Girardon's *Gallerie*, as we have seen, the *Christ*

Fig. 10
ANONYMOUS AFTER
FRANÇOIS GIRARDON,
*Funerary Monument of
Catherine du Chemin
with the Lamentation*,
engraving, detail.
In *La Gallerie de
Girardon*. Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum Research
Library 15 A 18.



at the *Column* and the *Veronica* were in the very same arrangement (see fig. 7).⁴³ Technical research of the *Ecce Homo* and *Christ at the Column* in the Rijksmuseum has confirmed a similar bronze alloy and working method, indicating that both were made in the same Paris workshop during the late seventeenth century. Given his personal pursuit of symmetry, evident predilection for sculptural groupings and admiration for the Flemish sculptor François du Quesnoy, François Girardon emerges as the strongest candidate responsible for creating this religious-themed, aesthetically refined ensemble. This hypothesis is strongly supported by further technical and stylistic observations of the two casts. In

such a grandiose baroque display as encountered in Girardon's gallery, the pairing of the *Ecce Homo* and the *Christ at the Column* would have been highly fitting. Driven by his desire for a symmetrical, meaningful display of sculptures, all points to Girardon as the genius behind the creation of this Passion ensemble, of which the two bronzes in the Rijksmuseum, recently united, are the finest example.

TECHNICAL NOTES

The *Christ at the Column* (fig. 1) and the *Ecce Homo* (fig. 2) in the Rijksmuseum collection share several technical features. The detailing, or chasing, of the fingernails and toenails, beards and facial features, but also the subtle texture given to the hair locks, provide a strong visual indication that both sculptures were worked by the same hand. To determine whether this hypothesis could be corroborated, the two Christ figures were examined in detail. At first glance, the *Ecce Homo* appears lighter in colour, though this is largely attributable to the more severely worn patina. In fact, the darker areas and the hue of the alloy on the two bronzes are a striking match. Near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) of the patinas revealed that both are based on a drying oil with an added, iron-based pigment.⁴⁴ X-ray fluorescence (XRF) tests showed that both the *Christ at the Column* and the *Ecce Homo* were cast in refined brass alloys of similar chemical compositions, containing mostly zinc (9% vs 8%), some lead (0.8% vs 1.2%) and slightly less tin (0.3% vs 0.9%), with silver as the most prominent impurity (0.15% vs 0.12%).⁴⁵

To learn more about how the two bronzes were modelled and cast, x-ray images of the sculptures were obtained (fig. 11).⁴⁶ Both figures were cast hollow, with casting cores inside the metallic walls. Although the cores were removed after casting, an iron rod – tightly wrapped with wire and used to reinforce the core – still runs from the *Ecce Homo*'s head to its right foot. On both figures, the smooth-shaped portions of the body, e.g. the legs, arms and chest, show fairly thick, uniform metallic walls measuring 3-3.5 mm. The inner surface of textured areas like the hair, beard and drapery folds, but likewise the knees, has been smoothed out, resulting in even thicker walls. Extended limbs, i.e. both arms of the *Christ at the Column* and the *Ecce Homo*'s right arm and left leg, were cast separately and attached to the body by means of brazing. The right arms of both Christs contain folded pieces of iron wire used as core reinforcements. There are no signs of core pins, except possibly in the *Ecce Homo*'s separately cast right leg.

The features cited above have all been frequently identified in small-scale French sculptures dating from

the mid-seventeenth century onwards. The applied casting technique is indirect, meaning the wax model was made by means of a plaster piece-mould taken from a pre-existing sculpture or terracotta model.⁴⁷ With other indirect methods, such as those applied in the famous Florentine workshop of Giambologna and his successors, the wax was first slushcast in the mould, resulting in a hollow wax shell inside of which a plaster core was then cast. Added limbs were moulded separately and joined in the wax-modelling stage, resulting in a one-piece cast in bronze. Characteristic of this method are the drip marks on the inner surface of the casting model and the numerous core pins used to secure the unreinforced casting core. In the sculptures discussed here, no such features can be discerned.

What distinguishes the 'French' method is that the mould was first used to make a plaster core with its iron rein-

forcements as a 1:1 copy of the original. The next step was to remove a thin, superficial layer of plaster from this core – hence, the coined term 'cut-back core'. Subsequently, when reinserting the core into the piece-mould, a narrow gap remained, into which the molten wax was poured. After the hardened wax was removed from the mould, it could then be inspected and finished, prior to casting. This method enabled a greater control over the wall thickness, especially when it came to casting complex shapes or the composite sculptural groups fashionable in the later seventeenth century. Although tending to be heavier, French sculptures made in this manner generally show very few repairs with a cleaner overall appearance, as separately cast elements were joined only after the surface was finished, allowing room to manoeuvre chasing tools and other implements.

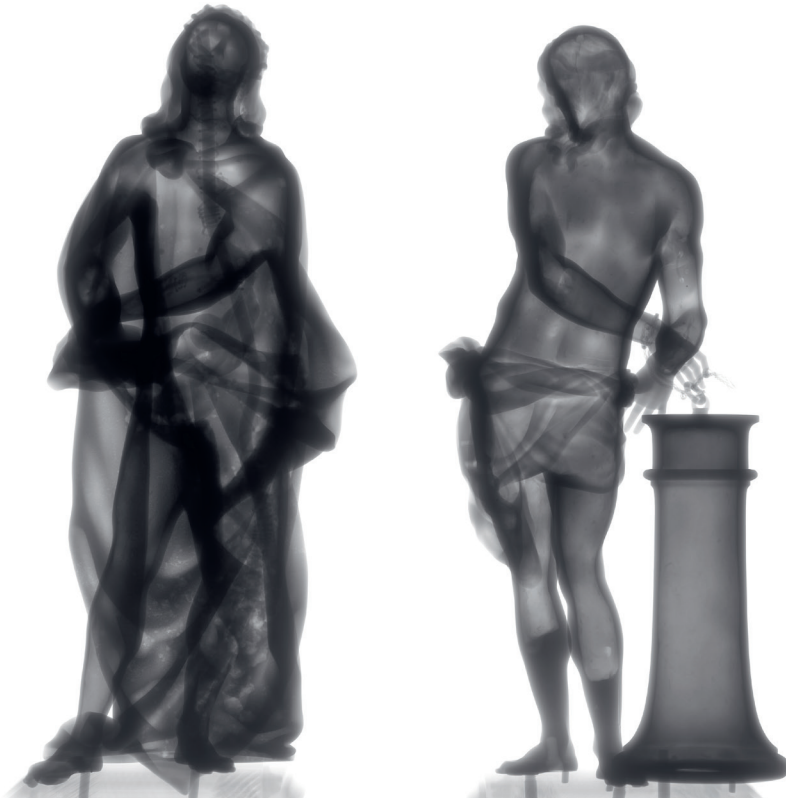


Fig. 11
X-rays showing the
Ecce Homo (left)
and the *Christ at
the Column* (right).

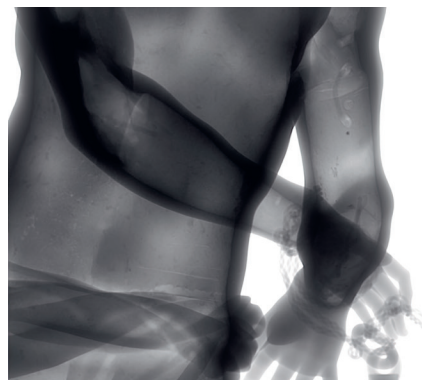
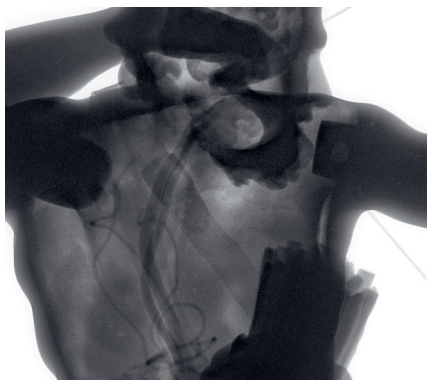
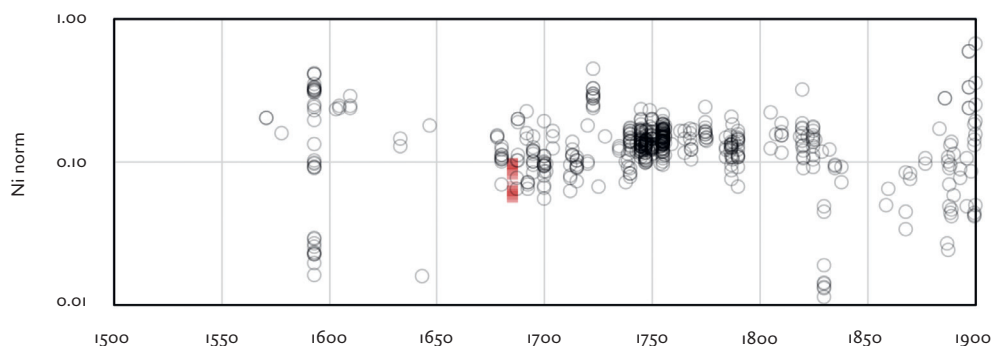


Fig. 12
X-rays showing the more common sleeve joint in a bronze group by Lespingola (BK-2008-93, left), versus a butt joint tied with wire in the *Christ at the Column*.

The cut-back core moulding technique and the copper-brass mixed alloy, as well as a shared ochre-containing oil used for patination, suggest the present bronze sculptures were made concurrently. All these properties are described in a contemporary French treatise.⁴⁸ Apart from these more general French features, two other characteristics stand out, affirming with even greater certainty that the Rijksmuseum casts were made as a pair in the late seventeenth century. Firstly, the limbs were attached with odd butt joints that were tied and fixed with wire prior to brazing; this, as opposed to more commonly observed sleeve joints (fig. 12). Secondly, a more crucial indication of the pair's age is provided by the alloy's specific composition. The prominent presence of silver as an impurity in the brass alloy together with the relatively low levels of nickel points to the use of copper originating from the Falun mine in Sweden.⁴⁹ Historically, Falun

faced competition from German copper mined near Mansfeld, the latter having nickel as major impurity. Both types were favoured among brass smelters in Aachen, Stolberg and Kornelimünster, who supplied most of north-western Europe with brass.⁵⁰ During the Thirty Years' War (1618-48), the mines and smelteries of Mansfeld were almost completely destroyed, with production restored to a significant level no earlier than the early eighteenth century.⁵¹ As the availability of Swedish and German copper changed during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, impurities of silver and nickel can be seen to fluctuate in French brass alloys, with the lowest nickel concentrations observed in those of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. The low nickel content in the alloys of the present *Christ* figures (0.05-0.09%) fits this period very well (fig. 13).

Fig. 13
Graph showing nickel in dated French brass alloys. Concentrations below 0.10% are less common in the eighteenth century.



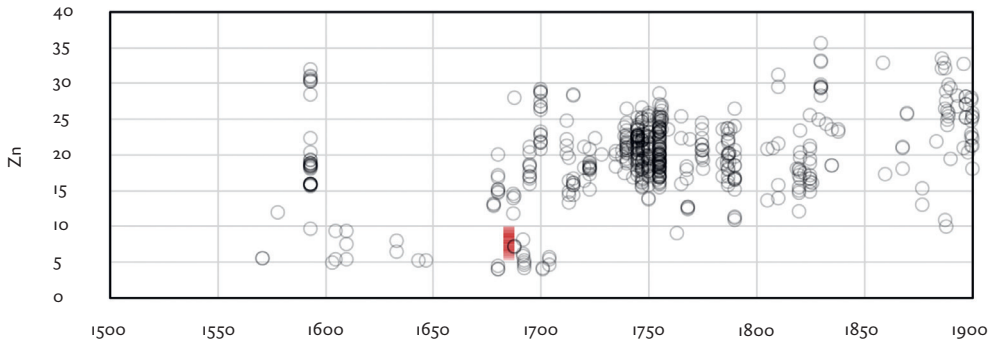


Fig. 14
Graph showing zinc in dated French brass alloys. Concentrations below 10% are less common in the eighteenth century.

Fig. 15
Table showing the alloy composition of the two Christ figures compared to similar alloys.

Another chronological pattern observable in French brass alloys is a trend towards higher zinc concentrations from circa 1700 onwards (fig. 14), possibly stemming from the emergence of brass foundries specialized in the production of ormolu (gilt-bronze) mounts and related objects, which relied on a standardized alloy composed of 18-25% zinc. In the second half of the seventeenth century, Parisian foundries often utilized alloys more akin to statuary alloys. François Girardon’s monumental equestrian statue of Louis XIV, for example, cast in 1692 by Jean-Balthazar Keller (1635-1700), possesses a zinc content of 6% (fig. 15). In the case of the two

Christ figures, the precise chemical fingerprint appears quite rare, further strengthening the probability that the two bronzes were originally made together. Nevertheless, an ormolu mount on a coffer in the J. Paul Getty Museum attributed to André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732), circa 1684-89, and a Laocoön group in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden, acquired in Paris in 1714, both possess alloys with very similar chemical signatures.⁵²

To conclude, the technical features of the two Christ figures in the Rijksmuseum convincingly show that these two casts were made concurrently in the same – most likely Parisian – workshop, during the late seventeenth century.

object	part	date	Fe	Ni	Cu	Zn	As	Ag	Sn	Sb	Pb
BK-2021-191	Christ		0.22	0.06	88.81	9.01	0.07	0.15	0.34	0.08	0.80
	column		0.15	0.05	91.43	6.96	0.05	0.18	0.36	0.08	0.31
BK-1957-39-1	Christ		0.21	0.08	89.06	7.88	0.10	0.12	0.89	0.12	1.16
	left arm		0.19	0.09	89.33	6.47	0.12	0.11	1.64	0.11	1.71
	right arm		0.21	0.07	88.83	6.78	0.13	0.12	1.64	0.10	1.87
Equestrian statue of Louis XIV, Girardon & Keller left foot (Carnavalet Museum)	left foot	1692	0.18	0.13	88.08	6.20	0.28	0.04	3.30	0.19	1.60
Ormolu mount on a coffer (Getty Museum 82.DA.109)	right lion	1684-1689	0.61	0.06	86.40	11.91	0.13	0.08	0.46	0.04	0.30
Laocoön group (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden H4 155 / 043)	Laocoön	before 1714	0.16	0.10	90.86	4.31	0.15	0.11	1.47	0.13	2.79

ABSTRACT

A fine bronze statuette representing a *Christ at the Column* recently entered the collection of the Rijksmuseum, sparking an inquiry into why it shares so many commonalities with a bronze *Ecce Homo* acquired by the museum in 1957. In addition to observable stylistic parallels, technical analysis conducted by Rijksmuseum scientist Arie Pappot revealed that both statuettes were cast in the same (probably Parisian) workshop around 1700. The original model of the *Christ at the Column* is attributed to François du Quesnoy (1597-1643), whose models circulated around France and Italy. Among the many who collected his works was the French court sculptor François Girardon (1628-1715), whose collection, illustrated on a series of thirteen plates, comprised no less than eighty-three terracotta and four bronzes by Du Quesnoy himself or made after his models. In pursuit of symmetry in the presentation of his sculptures, the accomplished sculptor Girardon, as argued here, could very conceivably have created and cast the *Ecce Homo* as a companion piece to the *Christ at the Column* already held in his collection. The outcome is a harmonious ensemble of mirrored contrapposto figures, an exceptional religious duo calling for an introspective pilgrimage to the suffering of Christ.

NOTES

- 1 Marion Boudon-Machuel, *François du Quesnoy, 1597-1643*, Paris 2005. This publication also contains an oeuvre catalogue.
- 2 Mariette Fransolet, *François Du Quesnoy: Sculpteur d'Urbain VIII, 1597-1643*, Brussels 1942, p. 35; Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), p. 17. Charles Dempsey, 'The Greek Style and the Prehistory of Neoclassicism', in Elisabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Pietro Testa, 1612-1650: Prints and Drawings*, exh. cat. Philadelphia (Philadelphia Museum of Art) 1988, pp. xxxvii-lxv.
- 3 Estelle Lingo, *Duquesnoy and the Greek Ideal*, New Haven 2007, p. 6.
- 4 Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), pp. 27, 101; Dempsey 1988 (note 2).
- 5 Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), pp. 192-201.
- 6 Walter Lewis Spiers, 'The Note-Book and Account Book of Nicholas Stone', *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 7 (1918-1919), esp. the appendix ('Diary of Nicholas Stone, Junior 1638-1642', pp. 158-200), esp. p. 198.
- 7 Plaster version: The Louvre, Paris (inv. no. 205 B) (tree trunk as column) (Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), In.10 der.4). Ivory versions: 1. Collection Reiner Winkler, Munich (no column) (Boudon-Machuel In.10 der.1); 2. Michael Hall Fine Art Inc., New York (tree trunk as column) (Boudon-Machuel In.10 der.2); 3. Sale, Vienna (Wawra), 26 March 1928, no. 86 (bought in); Michael Hall Fine Art Inc., New York (Boudon-Machuel In.10 der.3); 4. Sale, London (Sotheby's), 4 July 1984, no. 270 (Boudon-Machuel In.10 der.5); 5. National Gallery, Washington (inv. no. 2007.67.1) (attributed to François du Quesnoy 1620s) (marks around the head indicating crown of thorns).
- 8 Bronze versions: 1. Sale, Paris (Le Doux), 25 February 1782, no. 61; 2. Private collection J. Montagu (signed Bouchardon); 3. Galerie Heim, Paris, 1974 (possibly Rijksmuseum's version) (Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), In.10 ex.3); 4. Michael Hall Fine Art Inc., New York, November 1967, *Connoisseur* November 1967, pl. LXXVI, and sale cat. New York (Knoedler) 1968, no. 66 (Boudon-Machuel In.10 ex.4); 5. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 40.91.1) (closest version to the Rijksmuseum's version) (Boudon-Machuel In.10 ex.5); 6. Strathallan Collection; Massey-Mainwarring collection; sale cat. London (Robinson and Fisher, Collection Massey-Mainwarring), 4 June 1904, no. 76; sale, London (Christie's), 4 July 1995, no. 78 (bought in); sale, London (Christie's), 2 July 1996, no. 184a (Boudon-Machuel In.10 ex.6); 7. Sale, Place? (Drouot, Tajan), 27 November 2002, no. 317 (tree trunk as column).
- 9 Version owned by Hesselin as mentioned by Bellori (Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, 1672 (facsimile published in 1976), p. 300; Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), In.10 ex.1); two versions in terracotta and bronze in *La Galerie de Girardon* (see note 23) (Boudon-Machuel In.10 and In.10 ex.2).
- 10 Jérôme Duquesnoy, *Portrait Buste of Antoine Triest, Bisschop of Ghent (1575-1657)*, 1600-1700, marble, h. 70.5 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. RF 4651.
- 11 Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), p. 360.
- 12 John B. Knipping, *Iconography and the Counter Reformation in the Netherlands*, Nieuwkoop 1974, p. 461.

- 13 Knipping 1974 (note 12), p. 456.
- 14 Émile Mâle, *L'Art Religieux après le Concile de Trente: Italie, France, Espagne, Flandres: Étude sur l'iconographie de la fin du 16e siècle, du 17e, du 18e siècle*, Paris 1932, p. 263.
- 15 The combination of the Ecce Homo, the instruments of the Passion and the low column was introduced in the seventeenth century, as can be observed in *The Man of Sorrows with the Instruments of His Passion* by Cornelis Galle the Younger, c. 1650, engraving, in Knipping 1974 (note 12), p. 462.
- 16 Antoine Sucquet, *Via vitae aeternae iconibus illustrata per Boetium a Bolswert*, Antwerp 1620, p. 888 (French translation 1623, Book III, Chapitre XIV).
- 17 Alexandre Maral, *Girardon: Le Sculpteur de Louis XIV*, Paris 2015.
- 18 François Souchal, 'La collection du sculpteur Girardon d'après son inventaire après décès', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 82 (1973), pp. 1-112.
- 19 Souchal 1973 (note 18), p. 21.
- 20 Dora Thornton, 'The Status and Display of Small Bronzes in the Italian Renaissance Interior', *The Sculpture Journal* 5 (2001), no. 1, pp. 33-41, esp. p. 34.
- 21 Maral 2015 (note 17), p. 418.
- 22 Souchal 1973 (note 18), p. 2. Souchal states that the series was printed in or before 1709, based on a document found with an *estampes* merchant; the Rijksmuseum prints are dated slightly later, 1706-10, possibly because this series has been supplemented with additional engravings by Girardon.
- 23 Nicolas Chevalier, *La Gallerie et la suite du cabinet de François Girardon, sculpteur ordinaire du roy Louis XIV, s.l.* 1706-10. At the time, the spelling 'Gallerie' was used instead of 'Galerie', with the latter form adopted in modern research. This article applies the name as it is given on the title page of the set of engravings.
- 24 Pierre Francastel, *Girardon: biographie et catalogue critiques: l'oeuvre complète de l'artiste reproduite en quatre-vingt-treize héliogravures*, Paris 1928, p. 37.
- 25 Lingo 2007 (note 3), p. 8.
- 26 Boudon-Machuel 2005 (note 1), p. 13; Souchal 1973 (note 18), pp. 16-17; Françoise de La Moureyre, 'Girardon and Bronze', in Jane Bassett et al. (eds.), *Cast in Bronze: French Sculpture from Renaissance to Revolution*, exh. cat. Paris (Musée du Louvre), pp. 248-50, esp. p. 249.
- 27 Maral 2015 (note 17), p. 421; Francastel 1928 (note 24), p. 73.
- 28 'sur le modèle de terre fait par F. Quesnoy à Rome'.
- 29 Maral 2015 (note 17), p. 431.
- 30 '... on ne peut rien de plus rare & de plus curieux, que les Statues & les Vases Antiques qui y font, avec lesquelles il conserve les pièces en bronze de Jean de Boulogne, réparées par Antoine Sousine Florentin, & un grand nombre de Modèles de François Quesnoy, surnomme le Flaman. ... Toutes ces belles pièces sont disposées par ordre dans un petite Gallerie qui en est toute remplie, & qui satisfait infiniment ceux qui ont le gout de ces belles choses.' Germain Brice, *Description nouvelle de ce qu'il y a de plus remarquable dans la ville de Paris*, Paris 1697 (2nd edition), pp. 30-32.
- 31 'Dans le logement du Sieur Girardon Sculpteur dont on a parlé auparavant, il y a un grand Cabinet ou font de très-bons morceaux de Sculpture, fort curieux à voir tant en Marbre qu'en Bronze ..., & cinquante modèles en terre cuite de figures différentes, d'hommes, de femmes, & d'enfants, faites à Rome par le Sieur Francois Quenois Flamand, le tout d'une Cimetrie & d'une grande régularité, accompagne d'une Architecture proportionnée au lieu.' Charles Le Maire, *Paris Ancien et Nouveau* ..., part 3, Paris 1685, p. 198.
- 32 Anne-Lise Desmas, 'Gallerie du S.r Girardon Sculpteur ordinaire du Roy', in Malcolm Baker and Inge Reist (eds.), *Sculpture Collections in Europe and the United States 1500-1930: Variety and Ambiguity*, Leiden/Boston 2021, pp. 157-73.
- 33 Souchal 1973 (note 18), p. 3.
- 34 Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France and Holland*, New Haven 1978, p. 249.
- 35 Ibid., p. 25.
- 36 Gerard de Lairese, *Groot schilderboek*, Amsterdam 1707.
- 37 *The Art of Painting: In All Its Branches, ... By Gerard de Lairese. Translated by John Frederick Fritsch* ..., London 1778, p. 399.
- 38 Gudrun Swoboda and Frits Scholten (eds.), *Caravaggio Bernini: Early Baroque in Rome*, exh. cat. Vienna (Kunsthistorisches Museum)/Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 2019, no. 67.
- 39 Souchal 1973 (note 18), pp. 1-112.
- 40 'Circa la medesima grandezza di tre palmi e la statua di Christo ignudo di marmo con le mani auanti legate alla Colonna fatto per lo Signore Hesselin, che era Gran Mestro dell Erario della Camera del Re Christianissimo.' (About the same size of three palms is the statue of the bare Christ in marble with his

- hands tied to the column, made for Lord Hesselin, who was Grand Master of the Treasury of the Chamber of the Most Christian King.) Bellori 1672 (note 9), p. 282; this quote appears in the chapter on Francesco Di Quesnoy, see pp. 269-84.
- 41 '1 figure de bronze de 18 pouces de haut de Francois Flamand representant un Ecce Homo pose sur son piédestal d'ébene'. Paris, Archives nationales, Minutier central des notaires de Paris: inv. no. xx, no. 310 Louis Hesselin estate inventory, 31 August 1662, pp. 307-08.
- 42 Ibid., p. 308.
- 43 Chevalier 1706-10 (note 23).
- 44 Dagmar Beyaard, 'NIRME (Near-Infrared for Metals): Researching the Applicability of a MICRONIR for Identifying and Monitoring Protective Organic Coatings on Outdoor Bronze Sculpture', Amsterdam (master thesis University of Amsterdam) 2022, pp. 48-49.
- 45 The tests were collected with a handheld Olympus Delta x professional with a 40kV Rh tube, 8 mm spot size and an acquisition time of 13 seconds (livetime). The XRF fluorescence spectra were deconvoluted and quantified with fundamental parameter software (PyMca), the results were calibrated against the MBH CHARM set of historic bronze reference standards for 16 elements: chromium, manganese, iron, cobalt, nickel, copper, zinc, arsenic (K-beta peak), selenium, silver, cadmium, tin (K-peaks), antimony, gold, lead and bismuth, according to a method developed by Heginbotham and Solé: Arlen Heginbotham and V. Armando Solé, 'CHARMED PyMca, Part I: A Protocol for Improved Inter-Laboratory Reproducibility in the Quantitative ED-XRF Analysis of Copper Alloys', *Archaeometry* 59 (2017), no. 4, pp. 714-30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/arcm.12282>.
- 46 X-ray images were obtained with a Comet X-ray source, at 320 kV, 1300 mA, and a 16-bit Dereo RAD 4343 digital flat panel detector with a 43 x 43 cm active area and a 139 µm pixel size, using x-ris software.
- 47 Jane Bassett and Francesca Gabrielle Bewer, 'The Cut-Back Core Process in Late 17th- and 18th-Century French Bronzes', in David Bourgarit et al. (eds.), *French Bronze Sculpture: Materials and Techniques 16th-18th Century*, London 2014, pp. 205-14.
- 48 André Félibien, *Des principes de l'architecture, de la sculpture, de la peinture, et des autres arts qui en dépendent: avec un Dictionnaire des termes propres à chacun de ces arts*, Paris 1676, pp. 316-30.
- 49 Helena Forshell, *The Inception of Copper Mining in Falun: Relation Between Element Composition in Copper Artifacts, Mining and Manufacturing Technology and Historic Development with Particular Emphasis on Copper from the Falu Mine*, Stockholm (doctoral thesis Stockholm University) 1992, pp. 99-100.
- 50 Rudolf A. Peltzer, 'Geschichte der Messingindustrie und der künstlerischen Arbeiten in Messing (Dinanderie) in Aachen und den Ländern zwischen Maas und Rhein von der Römerzeit bis zur Gegenwart', *Zeitschrift des Aachener Geschichtsvereins* 30 (1908), pp. 235-463, esp. pp. 341-42; Otto Werner, 'Analysen mittelalterlicher Bronzen und Messinge r', in *Archäologie und Naturwissenschaften*, Mainz/Bonn 1977, pp. 144-220, esp. p. 146.
- 51 Hermann Schrader, 'Der Mansfeldsche Kupferschiefer-Bergbau', *Zeitschrift für das Berg-, Hütten- und Salinenwesen in dem Preussischen Staate* 17 (1869), no. b, pp. 251-303, esp. pp. 273, 285.
- 52 Arlen S. Heginbotham, 'The Optimization and Application of Quantitative Energy Dispersive X-Ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy to the Collaborative Study of Historic Copper Alloys', Amsterdam (doctoral thesis Vrije Universiteit) 2018, p. 186.