

*A Renowned Pieta by  
Jacob Cornelis Cobaert*

*by Michael Riddick*



# The ‘Great School’ of Guglielmo della Porta

While a quantity of objects have been reasonably attributed to Guglielmo della Porta (1515-77), less attention has been given to the distinction of his collaborators. As a result, various artworks have doubtless been given Guglielmo’s signature authorship while they could instead be the workmanship of qualified assistants working from his models and designs.

In the survey of art historical literature, observing the distinction between individual craftsmen in a workshop has been an arduous undertaking with attributions debated for great lengths of time and few documents available to definitively confirm artistic authorship. Adding to this complexity are the diverse roles assumed by workshop assistants as well as the succession of ownership and diffusion of a workshop’s models which can make secure attributions virtually impossible.

We could compare this art historical maze with the past century of research invested in delineating the evident qualities that distinguish the workmanship of assistants operating in Giambologna’s (1529-1608) workshop: Antonio Susini, Pietro Tacca (1577-1640), Adriaen de Vries (1560-1626), *et al.* It is expected the artists active in Guglielmo’s workshop will be equally discussed in coming

decades, a process first initiated by Werner Gramberg and Ulrich Middeldorf who made great advancements in our understanding of Guglielmo’s output. It is the present author’s hope that the observations and ideas presented in this series of articles, tentative as they might be at times, may serve as a clarifying step in the course of understanding not just Guglielmo himself but also the distinct work of those with whom he collaborated.

Rosario Coppel commented, “A comparative study has yet to be made between Guglielmo’s documented works and those of his workshop assistants.”<sup>1</sup> It is this challenge of being categorical about the individual artists in Guglielmo’s circle that the present author adopts as the role of this series of articles concerning the “*Gran Scuola*” of Guglielmo.<sup>2</sup>





Fig. 01: A gilt bronze relief of the *Pieta*, here attributed to Jacob Cornelis Cobaert after a design by Guglielmo della Porta, Rome, ca. 1569 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)



## A renowned *Pieta* by Jacob Cornelis Cobaert, after a design by Guglielmo della Porta

The discourse among scholars of Renaissance plaquettes have alternatively given a German, Italian, Flemish<sup>3</sup> and Spanish<sup>4</sup> association to a particular relief of the *Pieta* (Fig. 01) found in numerous collections. One reason for these wide ranging suggestions is due to its vast diffusion.<sup>5</sup> Ulrich Middeldorf called it the “most famous sacred image in Europe around 1600,”<sup>6</sup> a valid comment considering the portability of small relief sculpture and the *Pieta*’s appeal to a very religiously inclined epoch in European history. In addition to these territories, the relief found its way to other parts of Europe as well as Central and South America during the Spanish conquests.<sup>7</sup> Also unique to this *Pieta* are examples of it in Japan where it was blasphemously employed for Christian persecutions during the 17th-19th centuries.<sup>8</sup> Owing to its wide distribution, the subject is likewise found in various mediums: stone,<sup>9</sup> wood,<sup>10</sup> wax,<sup>11</sup> terracotta,<sup>12</sup> stucco,<sup>13</sup> ivory,<sup>14</sup> silver,<sup>15</sup> alabaster,<sup>16</sup> amber,<sup>17</sup> glazed ceramic,<sup>18</sup> print<sup>19</sup> and painted reproductions.<sup>20</sup>

Considering the numerous variations upon the original model as well as a quantity of freehand versions that were produced, it remains difficult to determine the geographic origin of the relief’s various casts. However, Doug Lewis considers the earliest prototype of the relief to be those that feature no background.<sup>21</sup> This suggestion is logical when considering how plaquette reliefs become generationally embellished either contemporaneously in one or more workshop variations or later through plagiarized aftercasts, to which the majority of documented *Pieta* casts certainly belong. Promulgating the idea that several contemporary workshop variants were produced is marked by the quality observed on some surviving examples of the relief.<sup>22</sup>



Fig. 02: A freehand silver relief of the *Pieta* by Rodrigo de León, executed 1581 or earlier and set within an ebonized wood tabernacle (Cathedral of Cordoba Treasury).

Edmund Wilhelm Braun first suggested a German origin for the *Pieta*,<sup>23</sup> a proposal followed also by a quantity of other scholars.<sup>24</sup> The *Pieta*’s association with Germany is due to the high degree of finish work featured on some versions which recall the metalwork of South Germany during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The attractiveness of a South German origin has also served to explain its wide diffusion through a cultural center like Augsburg. Previously, the earliest date associated with the relief are two stone examples in Germany dated 1589: one





Fig. 03: Details of plates 151 (above) and 87 (below) from Guglielmo della Porta's sketchbook (W. Gramberg [1964]: *Die Düsseldorfer Skizzenbücher des Guglielmo della Porta*, 3. vols., Berlin.)

in Brunswick, signed and dated by Israel von der Milla; and the other nearby on a monument for Heinrich von Meschede at the Paderborn Cathedral.<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Warren has noted an extended use of the *Pieta* in Germany, such as Matthaus Wallbaum's incorporation of it on his Borghese Altar made ca. 1600-05 and on two additional paxes also connected with Wallbaum or his circle.<sup>26</sup>

However, an earlier appearance, not previously acknowledged, is a freehand gilt silver example framed in an elaborate ebonized wood tabernacle in the Cathedral of Cordoba's Treasury in Spain (Fig. 02). According to inventories it was donated to the cathedral in 1581 by the Duke of Segorbe. A hallmark indicates it is the work of Rodrigo de León (ca. 1539-1609), a late 16th century Cordoban silversmith and enameller. Maria Ángeles Raya Raya and Alicia Carrillo Calderdero's survey of the tabernacle notes the influence of Italian iconographic sources on Rodrigo and other Cordoban artists of the period. Unaware of the *Pieta* relief and its wide diffusion, their analysis suggests Rodrigo must have followed an engraving of Michelangelo's (1475-1564) *Pieta* for Vittoria Colonna (1490-1547) while introducing his own inventions into the composition,<sup>27</sup> however the relief is certainly based upon the diffusion of the *Pieta* plaque into Spain.

After Braun's initial German association, Ernst Bange followed briefly with an Italian attribution<sup>28</sup> which he rescinded a year later. However, the suggestion has been approached by others<sup>29</sup> and the debate between a German and Italian origin has remained. In 1989 Anthony Geber poignantly commented on the disparity of opinion: "I must confess that I am baffled as to why some examples are considered Italian and others German."<sup>30 31</sup>





Fig. 04: A gilt bronze pax of the *Pieta*, here attributed to Sebastiano Torrigiani with possible assistance from Jacob Cornelis Cabaert (Workshop of Guglielmo della Porta), Rome, ca. 1570-77 (private collection)



The case for an Italian origin has gained more support in recent decades on account of Middeldorf's association of it with Girolamo Campagna (1549-1625) and the region of Venice. A *Pieta with Angels* by Campagna, executed around 1579, features a Christ that generically corresponds with the Christ of the *Pieta* plaque. Middeldorf therefore hypothesized the *Pieta* plaque could be Campagna's invention, possibly inspired by a celebrated *Pieta* painting formerly in Santa Maria della Navicella in Chioggia which Campagna could have reinvented in sculptural form.<sup>32</sup> Contrarily, Doug Lewis proposed instead that Campagna's *Pieta with Angels* instead borrows from the *Pieta* plaque. While most scholars supporting an Italian origin for the relief have fallen under the guidance of Middeldorf's hypothesis, Warren aptly notes that a Venetian origin "does not really take sufficient account of the Michelangesque influence upon the composition."<sup>33</sup> For example, the figure of Christ especially relates to Michelangelo's marble *Pieta*, ca. 1547-55, now in Florence but originally in Rome until 1671.<sup>34</sup>

A connection of the relief with Guglielmo della Porta is conceivable due to his Roman location, his manifest emulation of Michelangelo<sup>35</sup> and the capacity for his designs to travel widely throughout Europe.<sup>36</sup> A parallel art historical disclosure is likewise found with Werner Gramberg's attribution of Guglielmo's *Mount Calvary* relief in the 1960s, also known by important examples located in Spain, Germany and Italy but by early accounts first considered the product of a German artist trained in Italy, and later confirmed as a work by Guglielmo.<sup>37</sup>

Patricia Wengraf first drew comparisons of the *Pieta* composition with two of Guglielmo's sketches<sup>38</sup> while Warren has additionally compared it with a representation of Mary among Guglielmo's *Deposition* sketches (Fig. 03).<sup>39</sup> Suzanna Zanuso has also adopted a connection of the

relief with Guglielmo while assessing examples of them in Mario Scaglia's collection of plaquettes.<sup>40</sup>

The following elucidates on the association of exemplary casts of the *Pieta* and their connection with Guglielmo's assistants, in particular, Jacob Cornelis Cobaert (d. 1615).

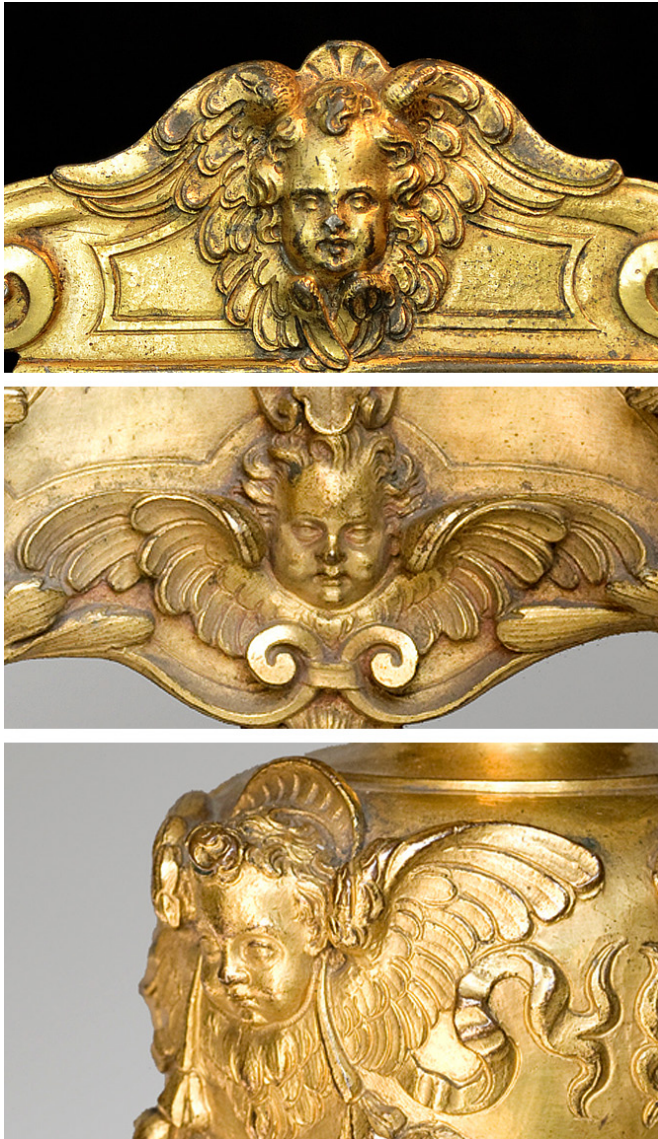
## A SMALL-SCALE 'EXPIRED CHRIST IN THE ARMS OF THE VIRGIN'

A small version of the *Pieta* relief cast integral with its pax frame is known by a fine contemporary example formerly with the New York dealer Cyril Humphris (Fig. 04).<sup>41 42</sup>

The pax, as will be suggested, is a product of Guglielmo's workshop. An immediate relationship is observed in the fluid expressiveness of the characters, the finely rendered undulating drapery, as well as the modeling of Christ's face which, though unfortunately rubbed due to wear, closely corresponds with the same features as his depictions of Christ on the small reliefs of the *Flagellation* (Victoria & Albert Museum) and *Risen Christ* (Metropolitan Museum of Art) intended for use on paxes and attributed rather confidently to his personal workmanship.<sup>43 44</sup>

As a whole, however, the small *Pieta* lacks the particular manner of Guglielmo's sculptural energy and his assistant, Cobaert is possibly the candidate responsible for its execution. The modeling of human form and drapery on the small *Pieta* relief can be compared with Cobaert's similarly scaled modeling for a series of *Metamorphosis* reliefs he created in the late 1550s from Guglielmo's designs.<sup>45</sup> A superficial comparison with the hands of Christ in the small *Pieta* is relatable to that of a participant in a gold repoussé example of *The Banquet of Gods*,<sup>46</sup> here attributed to Cesare Targone (Fig. 16),<sup>47</sup> which faithfully reproduces Cobaert's model.<sup>48</sup>





Figs. 05 (left) and 06 (above): Details of a *Pietà* pax (black background) whose frame is here attributed to Sebastiano Torrigiani. Details of a candlestick from the San Giacomo Maggiore altar service (gray background) by Sebastiano Torrigiani, 1581.

It should not be ruled out that Guglielmo could have been involved in working with Cobaert on the small *Pietà* since both sculptors collaborated in executing other works like a *Descent from the Cross* cited during Cobaert's testimony at the trial initiated by Guglielmo's son, Teodoro della Porta, in 1609.<sup>49</sup>

An additional correlation of the pax with Guglielmo's workshop is the punched addition of an anthropomorphic

sun and moon, uncommon in Italian art, but which appear on other works by Guglielmo such as his previously noted *Mount Calvary* relief or the panel for *God's Charity* on the funeral monument for Paul III at St. Peter's Cathedral.

The integral frame of the *Pietà* pax further connects it with Guglielmo's workshop, in particular, his assistant Sebastiano Torrigiani (d. 1596), with its scrolling volutes and finely chiseled foliates all which precisely correspond with the ornamentation featured on Torrigiani's 1581 altar service commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII (1502-85) for the Sacristy of San Giacomo Maggiore.<sup>50</sup> Especially commensurate in character are the winged cherub heads





Fig. 07: Reverse of a *Pieta* pax here attributed to Sebastiano Torrigiani with possible assistance from Jacob Cornelis Cobaert (Workshop of Guglielmo della Porta), Rome, ca. 1570-77 (private collection)

whose disposition represents the type identifiable with Torrigiani's output,<sup>51</sup> characterized by their cool and serene personality with pupils delineated by a small delicate punch and feathered wings, smoothly polished, graciously curved, and outlined by a modest bevel (Fig. 05).<sup>52</sup> The acanthi along the lower edges of the pax also correspond with those on the base of his altar service for San Giacomo Maggiore with their beautifully chiseled and channeled grooves allowing the effect of light to dance upon their surfaces (Fig. 06).

Although the San Giacomo Maggiore altar cross and candlesticks were made four years after Guglielmo's death,

its reasonable to suggest Torrigiani was earlier employing these motifs while serving as Guglielmo's chief assistant during the 1570s. Most interesting about the small *Pieta* pax is its potential indication of the collaborative environment in which Guglielmo's workshop operated with its design probably prepared under the genius of Guglielmo, the central relief executed by one sculptor and the frame by another. However, that the pax could have been executed by one hand (presumably Torrigiani's) should not be ruled out. What is certain, however, is that Guglielmo's workshop was making paxes during this late period as evidenced by his 1577 inventory which cites "three silver paxes with a gilt-metal back, and one in gilt-metal."<sup>53</sup> In accordance with this description, the *Pieta* pax indeed features a thinly cast gilt metal reverse, separately applied (Fig. 07). The incorporation of separate parts for a single pax, comprised of individual pieces such as the obverse, reverse and a handle were not standard protocol for the serial production of paxes during the late 16th century. Rather, most mainstream workshops would serially cast paxes as a single integral piece with only the handle prepared as a separate attachment. The multi-piece method of assembly was of more refined taste and facture and certainly, the incorporation of a gilt reverse as standard practice accents their importance and the extraneous expense in producing them.<sup>54</sup>

Examples of the *Pieta* pax are particularly rare, with the present example being the only known cast identifiable as a production probably made in Guglielmo's workshop.<sup>55</sup> A handful of unpublished examples of slightly later facture are located by the present author. They are heavily afterworked in respect to their surface treatment and some probably fall logically within the ambit of Torrigiani's activity after Guglielmo had died in 1577.<sup>56</sup>

## A LARGE-SCALE ‘EXPIRED CHRIST IN THE ARMS OF THE VIRGIN’

While Guglielmo’s sketches and the small *Pieta* pax indicate an origin in Guglielmo’s workshop an examination of the large *Pieta* can similarly be connected with his assistant Cobaert on stylistic grounds. Just as Cobaert was potentially responsible for modeling the small *Pieta* pax relief he may have had an earlier experience executing it in larger scale. The lack of severely elongated forms and anxious zeal found in Guglielmo’s confidently attributed work distances the large *Pieta* from Guglielmo’s hand. However, visual confirmation of Cobaert’s involvement in the large *Pieta* is discovered when comparing an exceptional example at the National Gallery of Art (NGA) (see Fig. 01) with Cobaert’s seated figures for the tabernacle he made for the church of San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome, completed by 1585. In particular, Cobaert’s seated figure of *St. Louis* matches the profile characteristics of Christ’s face on the *Pieta* plaquette (Fig. 08).<sup>57</sup> The arched hood of Cobaert’s figure of an unidentified *Prophet* also generically corresponds with the hood worn by Mary on the *Pieta* (Fig. 09). The richly modeled draperies of the seated prophets on the San Luigi tabernacle also compare with the dramatic configuration of Mary’s drapery on the *Pieta* relief. However, most analogous between the NGA *Pieta* and the seated figures on the San Luigi tabernacle is the remarkable attention given to the finishing of exteriors which leave smooth surfaces for the flesh and a vibrant texture for the draperies (Fig. 10). Cobaert’s signature finishing method involves a plain trim for the drapery, characterized by a linear stroke while the remainder is filled with an incredibly controlled striated technique involving short strokes which flow harmoniously over the complex folds of cloth. While this texture is found on other goldsmith



Figs. 08, 09 and 10: Details of the seated figures from the San Luigi dei Francesi tabernacle by Jacob Cornelis Cobaert, Rome, before 1585 (in grayscale), detail of a *Pieta* (NGA; in color) here attributed to Jacob Cornelis Cobaert, ca. 1569

works of the period none compare with the incredible quality of Cobaert’s technique which is absolutely perfect in its execution. Cobaert is not averse to using a punch tool as an alternative for texturing distinguished articles of clothing such as Christ’s perizonium and Mary’s sash on the *Pieta* relief. It is also used to shade the portals of



buildings and to add texture to the cross. The ground is given life by remarkable chiseling and stroking not unlike the manner Guglielmo employs for decorating his *Mount Calvary* relief.<sup>58</sup> A particularly thought-provoking observation is Cobaert's choice use of the perizonium type featured by Guglielmo on his 1569 corpus for Maximilian II<sup>59</sup> (Fig. 11) as opposed to the slightly later type found on his 1571 corpus for Alessandro Farnese (1520-89).<sup>60</sup> Cobaert's preference for this perizonium type might suggest the large *Pieta* was conceived around 1569 and perhaps before 1571. The notion lends itself to the time required for the realization and wide distribution of the relief before its earliest confirmed copy in 1581 and its apparent influence on Campagna around 1579.

Apart from the visual correspondences that link the large *Pieta* to Cobaert, several documentary sources also support this hypothesis. One is an unpublished archive that documents Torrigiani having cast a *Pieta* made by Cobaert for the collector Simonetto Anastagi in 1585.<sup>61</sup> Another is Giovanni Baglione's 1642 *Vite* of Cobaert in which he comments that "he formed models of other sacred things, such as a Christ expired in the arms of the Virgin Mother, most beautiful."<sup>62</sup> Teodoro's trial of 1609 also mentions a "dead Christ in the arms of the Virgin" that Cobaert made<sup>63</sup> as well as his friend Antonio Gentili's possession of an example of the *Pieta*.<sup>64</sup> In the documents pertaining to the 1609 trial Cobaert himself speaks of a *Pieta* he modeled in clay<sup>65</sup> while another portion of the trial lists the type of items made by Guglielmo's assistants and following his designs. The list includes mention of a pax relief subsequent to the mention of a *Pieta*, possibly intimating of the small *Pieta* pax discussed earlier.<sup>66</sup> A launching point for the widespread diffusion of the *Pieta* may be accounted for when noting not only did Guglielmo reproduce Cobaert's model in his workshop but also his friends posthumously: Torrigiani and Gentili.

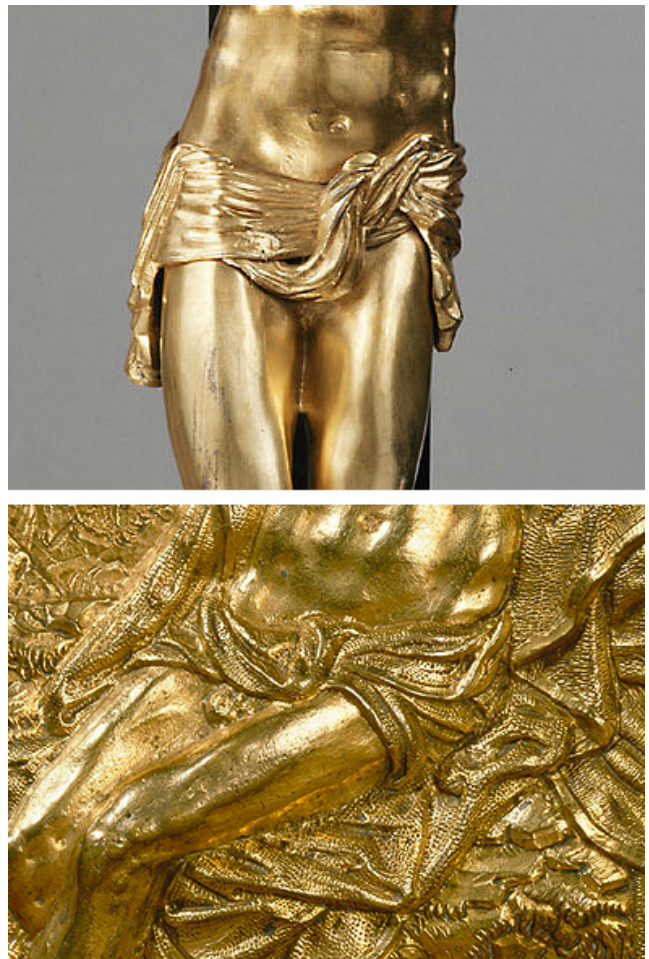


Fig. 11: Detail of a corpus (above) by Guglielmo della Porta, 1569 (Kunsthistorisches Museum), detail of a *Pieta* (NGA; below) here attributed to Jacob Cornelis Cobaert

# Endnotes

- 1 Rosario Coppel (2012): Guglielmo della Porta in Rome. *Guglielmo della Porta, A Counter-Reformation Sculptor*. Coll & Cortés, pp. 28-57.
- 2 For a discussion of the cultural environment within which Guglielmo's workshop operated see C.D. Dickerson III (2008): The "Gran Scuola" of Guglielmo della Porta, the Rise of the "Aurifex Inventor" and the Education of Stefano Maderno. *Storia dell'arte*, 121, pp. 25-71.
- 3 A Flemish origin was proposed by Christian Scherer (1912): Ein Werk des Bildhauers Israel von der Milla. *Der Cicerone*, 4, pp. 543-46.
- 4 Bertrand Bergbauer likely gave the *Pieta* relief a Spanish origin discussing only the later oval variant (see cover photo, from a private collection) which truncates the design and follows the format and border typology of a group of serially produced devotional plaquettes that have largely been thought to originate in Spain but more recently have been shown to have origins in the Netherlands, with a later development of the series in Spanish workshops. See Bertrand Bergbauer (2006): *Images in Relief. La Collection de Plaquettes du Musée National de la Renaissance*. Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux. Paris, France, No. 119, p. 115. The present author uniquely suggests the possibility that these oval devotional plaquettes are actually an Italian response to the popular Flemish-Spanish series, possibly being the product of a Venetian workshop seeking to capitalize on the concept. Suggestive of this is the borrowed use of several Italian, especially Venetian, designs that were already in circulation in plaquette-form and were truncated and appropriated for use in the oval format, probably ca. 1600.
- 5 Other scholars have attempted a census of examples such as Mária Aggházy (see note 25), Anthony Geber (see note 6) and Francesco Rossi (see note 13). The present author tentatively counts at least 100 examples in cast metal as plaquettes and appliques, not inclusive of other mediums.
- 6 Ulrich Middeldorf (1944): *Medals and Plaquettes from the Sigmund Morgenroth Collection*. Donnelley & Sons Co., Chicago, IL. No. 186, p. 28.
- 7 It is possible examples of the *Pieta* relief were further reproduced in workshops operated by natives in the territories conquered by the Spanish. The present author has owned two

examples acquired from Peru, one of which may have been imported into the country by missionaries and another possibly cast regionally as the quality and metal type was not typical of what is observed in traditional European casts. For a discussion regarding the training of indigenous peoples in the production of Spanish Renaissance art see Leah Kharibian (2009): *The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600-1700*. DVD, National Gallery of London.

- 8 The *Pieta* relief first reached Japan as part of missionary efforts; however its conversion for use in persecutions probably occurred after 1614 when intolerance for Christianity in Japan gained a foothold. The reliefs were used in *fumi-e* ceremonies involving the desecration of Christian icons in which suspected Christians were made to trample upon them as a sign of loyalty to the emperor. Wood and paper examples deteriorated quickly therefore bronze plaquettes became preferred for their durability. A foundry in Nagasaki is documented as being commissioned to produce aftercasts of the *Pieta* in 1669 for use in these ceremonies. See Anthony Geber (1989): Name Inscriptions: Solution or Problem? *Studies in the History of Art*, Vol. 22. *Italian Plaquettes*. National Gallery of Art, Washington DC., pp. 247-63.
- 9 The most commonly referred to stone version is the dated (1589) example by Israel von der Milla at the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum in Braunschweig, Germany.
- 10 An exceptional polychrome wood example serves as part of the relief program for the Cathedral of Pamplona's altarpiece completed by Domingo de Bidarte (d. 1632) in Spain (Fig. 12). Additionally, a remarkable



Fig. 12: Polychrome wood panel of the *Pieta* by Domingo de Bidarte (Cathedral of Pamplona, Spain)

interpretive version is in the obscure Sacred Art Museum of Igreja dos Clérigos in Portugal, from the former collection of Antonio Manuel Cipriano de Miranda (Fig. 13).

- 11 An exceptional Italian Baroque colored wax version of the relief, probably ca. 1750, in an arched tortoise shell frame was offered by the European Decorative Arts Company as of 2016.
- 12 A terracotta example sculpted in the round has appeared in the art market both in natural and polychrome versions. They are generally considered to be the invention of an 18th century Portuguese workshop.
- 13 Francesco Rossi cites a polychrome cartapasta example on the art market in 1986 through Semenzato auction house. See Francesco Rossi (2011). *La Collezione Mario Scaglia. Placchette, Vols. I-III*. Lubrina Editore, Bergamo. Nos. VIII.37, IX.24, XII.15, XIII.13, pp. 348-51, 389-90, 412-13, 467, 573, 593, 629, 636.





Fig. 13: Polychrome wood panel of the *Pieta* (Sacred Art Museum of Igreja dos Clérigos, Portugal)

- 14 An exceptional ivory version of the *Pieta*, following after the National Gallery of Art gilt plaquette (Fig. 01), was offered by Christie's auction house in 2014. Jacobus Cornelis Cobaert is documented as working in the medium of ivory. See for example an ivory *Deposition* long attributed to him at the Palazzo Venezia (Maria Giulia Barberini [1989]: *Cope scultore fiammingo ed un avorio di casa Patrizi*. Rome, pp. 17-25), or a note from Cobaert to Jacopo Crescenzi in 1596 in which he mentions his intent to finish an ivory relief of the *Virgin, St. Elizabeth, St. Joseph and other figures* for him (Maurizio Marini [1974]: *Io Michelangelo da Caravaggio*. Studio B, Bestetti e Bozzi, p. 485) though it would be difficult to make any determination if the Christie's auction example is by him given its wide diffusion not dissimilar from the quantity of ivory versions of his *Metamorphosis* reliefs that are known, many of which are certainly modern in facture.
- 15 Silver reproductions of the *Pieta* and related freehand derivations thereof were widely produced on paxes during the early Baroque era with many examples still found in Italian churches. A particularly nice example from this era is an embellished silver example used as a door, set into a marble tabernacle at the

Church of Sant'Anastasia in Verona (special thanks to Neil Goodman for pointing out this example via private communication, 2015).

- 16 Several examples in alabaster have appeared in the art market, one recently through Maître Hervé Legroux et Hôtel des Ventes de Rodez in October 2015.
- 17 Jeremy Warren cites a version in amber. See Jeremy Warren (2014): *Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum, Vol. 3: Plaquettes*. Ashmolean Museum Publications, UK. No. 268, pp. 803-06.
- 18 An interesting and repetitious use of the relief appears on a majolica *stufa* (room heater) at Buonconsiglio Castle in Trento, Italy, dated 1765 (Fig. 14) (special thanks to Neil Goodman for pointing out this example via private communication, 2015).
- 19 Anthony Geber directs our attention to a print of the subject from a 16th century Florentine collection, in reverse and formed in outline using a punched plate (see A. Geber [1989], *op. cit.* [note 6], Fig. 13, p. 257), formerly in the Kaiserliche Hofbibliothek in Vienna. The present author suggests the print probably served as a

goldsmith template for working in repoussé. The inclusion of haloes on the figures of Mary and Christ shown within the print, as well as its narrowly trimmed sides and arched top might relate it to a silver example of the subject set into a pax which presently resides in an unidentified church within the Diocese of Venezia (Fig. 15).

- 20 Painted reproductions of the *Pieta* are numerous. The most popular is an embellished version by El Greco, known by two examples, one at the Hispanic Society of America (NY) and another at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Another interesting example is in the Temple of Nuestra Señora de la Piedad in Mexico City. The painting, presumably unfinished, was delivered by boat from Spain. When the sailors responsible for delivering the painting encountered a violent storm they prayed to the icon and upon their arrival it is fabled to have miraculously been finished.
- 21 Doug Lewis associates the plain background example with a Roman origin. See A. Geber (1989), *op. cit.* (note 6).
- 22 A reasonable example of the relief, silhouetted against a plain background, is at the MET (Inv. 38.152.7); a remarkable example inclusive of an elaborate background is at the NGA (Inv. 1989.57.1, see Fig. 01); a superb silhouetted example in the Scaglia



Fig. 14: Glazed ceramic *Pieta* ornament on a majolica *stufa* at the Castle in Trento, Italy, dated 1765 (photo: N. Goodman)



Fig. 15: A pax of the *Pieta* (Diocese of Venezia)

collection (No. VIII.37) features Mary's proper left hand falling over Christ's forearm rather than resting upon it and also includes an alternative ground favoring a rocky terrain in which the vegetation of the original model and the crown of thorns have been worked over prior to casting. The quality of the Scaglia example suggests it could also be a contemporary workshop production or perhaps a cast made by someone belonging to Guglielmo della Porta's immediate circle. The feature of Mary's hand falling over Christ's forearm is observed on a large quantity of derivative aftercasts and is also featured on a smaller version of the relief, discussed in this article (Fig. 04), which appears to be the contemporaneous product of Cobaert and/or Sebastiano Torrigiani while active in Guglielmo's studio.

- 23 Edmund Braun suggested a late 16th century German origin, possibly Augsburg. See Edmund Wilhelm Braun (1918): *Die Deutschen Renaissanceplaketten der Sammlung Alfred Walcher Ritter von Moltheim in Wien*. Vienna, Nos. 194-95, p. 69.
- 24 Scholars in support of a German origin for the *Pieta* include: Ernst Bange (1923): *Die Bildwerke des Deutschen Museums. Die Bildwerke in Bronze und in anderen Metallen*. Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin,

Nos. 5771-72, p. 136 (Bange initially suggested an Italian origin but changed the attribution a year later, following Braun's earlier suggestion); Jacques Fischer (1969): *Sculpture in Miniature. The Andrew S. Ciechanowiecki Collection of Gilt & Gold Medals and Plaquettes*. Shenvall Press, UK, No. 446, p. 88 (Fischer opted for a South German origin, first half of the 17th century, though considered it after an Italian model, presumably by Girolamo Campagna); Ingrid Weber (1975): *Deutsche, Niederländische und Französische Renaissanceplaketten, 1500-1650*. Bruckmann München, Germany, No. 452, pp. 232-33, plate 132 (considered it South German though after an Italian model); Mario Scalini (1999): *La Collezione Cagnola, II: Arazzi, Sculture, Mobili, Ceramiche*. Busto Arsizio, No. 97, p. 107, et al.

- 25 Mária Aggházy (1947): 'Pieta.' Egy barokk motívumvándorlás kérdése. *Regnum*, 6, pp. 3-13.
- 26 The present author hasn't observed these but the association might be generic given the quantity of objects attributed or associated with Mattheus Wallbaum.
- 27 Maria Ángeles Raya Raya, Alicia Carrillo Calderero (2011): Una obra desconocida de Rodrigo de León en el Tesoro de la Catedral de Córdoba. *Estudios de Platería San Eloy 2011*. Universidad de Murcia, pp. 433-50.
- 28 Ernst Bange (1922), *op. cit.* (note 24), Nos. 49, 1043, pp. 8, 134.
- 29 Ranieri Varese (1975): *Comune di Ferrara: Placchette e bronzi nelle Civiche Collezioni*. Florence, No. 35, p. 48; U. Middeldorf (1944), *op. cit.* (note 6), F. Rossi (2011), *op. cit.* (note 13), Nos. VIII.37, IX.24, pp. 348-51, 389-90.
- 30 A. Geber (1989), *op. cit.* (note 8), p. 258
- 31 It is worth noting Geber's discussion of examples of the *Pieta* in Japan are of the type commensurate with his example of the relief now in the National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), presumed to be South German in origin. He comments on the problem of a German work reaching Japan in the 16th century since missionary efforts to Japan were launched from Spain, Portugal and Italy. Restituting an Italian origin for the relief helps settle this improbability for a German association of the relief's origin.

- 32 U. Middeldorf (1944), *op. cit.* (note 6).
- 33 J. Warren (2014), *op. cit.* (note 17).
- 34 Michelangelo's ca. 1547-55 *Pieta* became the property of the Bandini family in Rome and was eventually sold in 1671 to Cosimo III de' Medici (1642-1723) in Florence.
- 35 For a discussion on Michelangelo's influence upon Guglielmo see Charles Avery (2012): Guglielmo della Porta's Relationship with Michelangelo. *Guglielmo della Porta, A Counter-Reformation Sculptor*. Coll & Cortés, pp. 113-137.
- 36 For one discussion on the distribution of Guglielmo's work, see Margarita Estella (2012): Guglielmo della Porta's Early Years and Some of His Works in Spain. *Guglielmo della Porta, A Counter-Reformation Sculptor*. Coll & Cortés, pp. 14-27.
- 37 Jolán Balogh's discussion of Guglielmo's Mount Calvary relief in Budapest considers it close to Italian versions but due to the fine workmanship of its background instead deemed it the work of a German master who had trained in Italy (first given to Hans Reichle and later to his circle). See Jolán Balogh (1964): Un bas-relief en bronze de l'atelier de Hans Reichle. *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts*, 24, pp. 79-84, 138-39 or Miriam Szócs (2013): From Hans Reichle to Guglielmo Della Porta. *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts*. Budapest, pp. 129-47. Werner Gramberg shortly thereafter made the connection between the relief and Guglielmo's sketches. See Werner Gramberg (1973): *Das Kalvarienberg-Relief des Guglielmo della Porta und seine Silber-Gold Ausführung von Antonio Gentile da Faenza*. Intuition und Kunstwissenschaft. Berlin, pp. 449-60.
- 38 For Wengraf's observations, see J. Warren (2014), *op. cit.* (note 17).
- 39 J. Warren (2014), *op. cit.* (note 17).
- 40 Suzanna Zanuso (Andrea di Lorenzo and Francesco Frangi, eds.) (2007): *La raccolta Mario Scaglia. Dipinti e sculture, medaglie e placchette da Pisanello a Cerati*. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan, Nos. 46-47, pp. 130-33.
- 41 To the present author's knowledge, this pax has not been discussed in the literature concerning plaquettes and paxes.



- 42 At least five aftercasts of this model have been counted by the present author: three examples in recent art market auctions, one example at a church in the Diocese of Orvieto-Todi and one example in the National Museum of Ceramics in Naples.
- 43 For a discussion about the attribution of these pax reliefs to Guglielmo, see Stefanie Walker (1991): A Pax by Guglielmo della Porta. *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 26, pp. 167-176, or Rosario Coppel (2012): Guglielmo della Porta in Rome + Catalogue. *Guglielmo della Porta, A Counter-Reformation Sculptor*. Coll & Cortés, pp. 28-111.
- 44 Though a nominal observation, it is worth noting the style of Christ's perizonium which likewise follows that found on his *Risen Christ* pax relief (attributed ca. 1566-77) and his 1571 crucifix for Alessandro Farnese.
- 45 *Operò alcune historiette, o fauollette delle Metamorfosi d'Ovidio in forma ouate, & alcune ottangole composte per gettare in oro, o in argento; e feruiiuano per adornare un ricchissimo tauolino; li quali modelli vanno in volta gettati di cera molto vaghi.* See Giovanni Baglione (1642): *Le vite de' pittori scultori et architetti. Dal pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572. In fino a' tempi di Papa Vrbano Ottauo nel 1642*, pp. 100-01.
- 46 MET Inv. 12.135.5
- 47 The group of gold examples of Guglielmo's *Metamorphosis* designs (Fig. 16), all featured in the same frame, is currently attributed to Antonio Gentili da Faenza's execution based on documentation that Gentili owned casts or molds from the series and was reproducing them between 1586 and 1609 (see John Goldsmith Phillips [1939]: Guglielmo Della Porta: His Ovid Plaquettes. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 34[6], pp. 148-151). However, the present author contends that this edition of the series was executed instead by another collaborator: Cesare Targone. Targone's workmanship is apparent by the extremely fine stipple work used to portray the ground (Fig. 17), being a hallmark of Targone's masterful repoussé technique. His work is known by other examples reproducing Guglielmo's designs (for details on Targone's autograph style see Marietta Cambareri [2002]: *Italian and Spanish Sculpture: Catalogue of the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, No. 14, pp. 108-15). Further

suggesting Targone's authorship is the scene's application against a stone ground of lapis lazuli, a practice favored by Targone. Additionally, the frame does not follow the ornamental program typical of Gentili's confidently attributed works.

- 48 The gold examples of Cobaert's *Metamorphosis* series are an ideal reference point considering the majority of bronze casts of the scene are aftercasts, lacking the fidelity of the original model.
- 49 *Grande circa tre palmi di basso e alto rilievo, con molte figure dentro, scolpite eccellentemente per mano di mio Padre, nella qual'Historia ha lavorato anche il Coppa fiamengo.* / Almost three palms in size (66.9 cm) of high and bas relief, with many figures inside, beautifully sculpted by the hand of my father, with Coppe Fiamingo (Cobaert) also being involved in this work. See R. Coppel (2012), *op. cit.* (note 43), pp. 56-57.

- 50 The altar service, consisting of two gilt candlesticks and an altar cross, was commissioned by Gregory XIII upon the request of Lodovico Vianchetti. See Emmanuel Lamouche (2011): L'activité de Bastiano Torrigiani sous le pontificat de Grégoire XIII. "Dalla gran scuola di Guglielmo Della Porta." *Revue de l'art*, No. 173, pp. 51-58.
- 51 The winged cherub heads featured on the *Pieta* pax are precisely comparable to those featured on the stems and bases of Torrigiani's San Giacomo Maggiore altar service and also those featured on the cope of a bronze bust of Pope Sixtus V (1521-90) by Torrigiani, ca. 1585-90, at the Victoria & Albert Museum (Inv. A.40:0, 1-1950).
- 52 Though the winged cherub head motif is generically found in many late Renaissance goldsmith works, and especially during the Baroque era, there are subtle particulars that distinguish the execution of them between



Fig. 16: Gold relief of *The Banquet of the Gods* (Metropolitan Museum of Art), here attributed to Cesare Targone, after a model by Jacob Cornelis Cobaert, after a design by Guglielmo della Porta

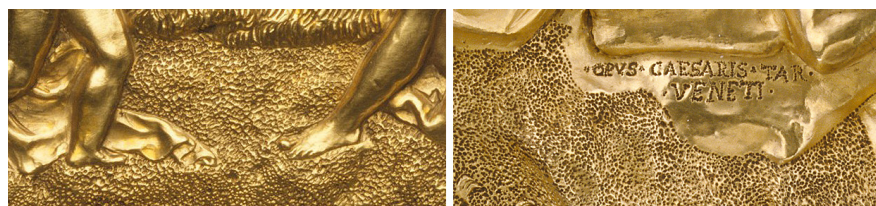


Fig. 17: Detail of a gold relief of *The Banquet of the Gods* (MET), here attributed to Cesare Targone (left), detail of a gold relief of the *Virgin Mourning the Dead Christ* by Cesare Targone (Getty Museum; right)

particular sculptors in Guglielmo's circle. For example, Cobaert's cherubim feature pinched faces, a flattened bowl-shaped hair style with exaggerated locks upheaving along the central forehead, flanked by feathered wings often articulated in great detail with delineated veins while Gentili's cherubim are much closer in manner to Torrigiani's but are often recognizable by their *art nouveau* character that is more rigid than the coolness of Torrigiani's facial types.

53 *Tre paxi de argento con li fondi de metalo indorato et una de metalo indorato...* See R. Coppel (2012), *op. cit.* (note 43), p. 84.

54 We may similarly note the gilt reverse on Guglielmo's *Risen Christ* pax, certainly an earlier creation of more robust facture.

55 Encouraging this claim is the present author's inability to locate any alike contemporary examples and Rossi's thorough census of the subject cites only the present example discussed here. See F. Rossi (2011), *op. cit.* (note 13), No. VIII.37, p. 349, Variant E, C.21.

56 An additional pax frame, derived from the example here discussed and only slightly varied in its ornamentation is known by a quantity of casts, the most contemporaneous of which is identified by an example at the Casa del Camerlengo in Sezze featuring a separately cast silver *Doubting Thomas* relief (which the present author suggests is possibly the work of Gentili [see Michael Riddick {2017-18}: *Paxes and Reliefs from the Circle of Guglielmo della Porta*. RenBronze.com]). This derivative frame is likewise reproduced in debased form by much later workshops plagiarizing it for use with other related and unrelated reliefs, though these are in themselves also not commonly known due to a lack of representation in the published literature concerning plaquettes and paxes.

57 It should be noted, however, correspondences with the face of Christ on the large *Pieta* plaquette may also be compared with the face of Christ on Guglielmo's corpus of 1571 for Alessandro Farnese.

58 One could reasonably question if Cobaert had a hand in finishing some of Guglielmo's *Mount Calvary* reliefs.

59 Kunsthistorisches Museum (Inv. Schatzkammer, GS E 14); measuring 23.8 cm

in height. This crucifix is documented by a letter delivered by Guglielmo to Maximilian II on 23 May 1569. See R. Coppel (2012), *op. cit.* (note 43), p. 66.

60 Guglielmo's 1571 corpus for Alessandro Farnese was added to an altar cross completed by Gentili in 1581 and donated by Alessandro to St. Peter's Cathedral in 1582 where it remains in the Treasury to this day. See R. Coppel (2012), *op. cit.* (note 43), pp. 47-48.

61 E. Lamouche (2011), *op. cit.* (note 50), see his footnote 54.

62 *Formo ancora altri modelli di cose sacre, e tra le altre un Christo morto in braccio alla Vergine Madre, affai bello.* See G. Baglione (1642), *op. cit.* (note 45), pp. 100-01.

63 Cobaert states: *...modelli di terra della detta pietà doue è stata get tata detta pietà et dico che l'ho fatto io il modello di creta.* See Antonino Bertolotti (1881): *Artisti lombardi a Rome nei secoli XV, XVI, XVII. Studi e ricerche negli archivi romani*, 2 vols. Milan, pp. 142-44.

64 A witness, Johannes Baptista Montani Mediolanensis, describes seeing the *Pieta* and/or the *Descent from the Cross* in Gentili's possession: *Io di queste robe ho visto in mano di M<sup>o</sup>. Antonio da Faenza una pietà o Cristo in Croce cosa bellissima che era di cera longa più di una canna che vedendo io quella bella cosa mi disse che quella opera andava in S. Pietro...* / Among these things I have seen in the hand of Master Antonio da Faenza a most beautiful *Pieta* or *Christ on the Cross* made of wax, of more than one caña in length, and when I saw that beautiful object he told me that the piece was in St. Peter's... (the latter referring to Guglielmo's 1571 corpus [see note 59]). See A. Bertolotti (1881), *op. cit.* (note 63).

65 *...detta pietà et dico che l'ho fatto io il modello di creta.* See A. Bertolotti (1881), *op. cit.* (note 63), p. 137.

66 *Fatte da lui et da altri suoi Alievi in Casa sua sotto li suoi disegni di molto valore, che rapresentano Misteri della passione di Giesu Xpto, in specie il Descendente di Croce, Pietà et Pace di bassorilievo et altre figure di devotione...* See A. Bertolotti (1881), *op. cit.* (note 63), p. 127.