

GALERIE LAMY
CHABOLLE



Saint Mark and Saint Matthew, by the
Master of Ciechanowiecki

Mercury-gilt bronze, base sealed with silver-soldered copper

Northern Italy or Germany

17th century

h. 22 cm (8.6 in., without accessories)



These two gilded bronze sculptures depict two of the Evangelists. They are identifiable by their attributes: the lion for Saint Mark, the winged man for Saint Matthew, and each holds a scroll in one hand and a quill in the other. The extraordinary refinement of the sculpture and the care given to every detail attest to the talent of an artist whose name remains unknown to this day.



Fig. 1 — Young Hercules, Master of Ciechanowiecki. Christie's, 4 July 1989, lot 128 — sold for £85,000.

Nevertheless, these two figures can be integrated into the body of works brought to light by Andrew Ciechanowiecki from the 1960s onwards. This patron, gallerist and bronze specialist had identified a group of around forty sculptures that all appeared to have been made by the same hand. The artist behind these works is today known as the “Master of Ciechanowiecki” or the *Master of the Fitzwilliam Museum*, as part of Ciechanowiecki’s collection had been placed on deposit at that museum for a number of years.



Fig. 2 — Hercules, attributed to the Master of Ciechanowiecki. Victoria and Albert Museum, h. 33.3 cm.

The characteristics shared by these works have been described by several specialists, beginning with Ciechanowiecki himself in his correspondence (Doc. 1). This letter reveals his difficulty in pinpointing a geographical region for these bronzes, so thoroughly do the works appear to synthesise the styles and techniques employed in Italy, Germany, Flanders and France during the 17th century.

Doc. 1 — Lettre de A.S. Ciechanowiecki à K. Lankheit. Extrait de Biłonowska, M. (2012). *Andrzej Stanisław Ciechanowiecki. Collectionneur, marchand et mécène*, Lublin. Pages 79-81.

“In January 1969 A. S. Ciechanowiecki asked Klaus Lankheit: The bronze of which I enclose a photograph has been a headache to me for some time. I had ori-

ginally seen it in the circle of Hubert Gerhard, then moved towards the idea of an unidentified Flemish master, by whom a group of works could be assembled, including the very pretty bronze in the Huntington collection in San Marino and a gilt group in my own collection [...]. This is still my opinion but one or two colleagues have suggested that it may be around 1700 and have again pointed towards Florence. I am not at all convinced by this suggestion [...]. In response, Klaus Lankheit confirmed the dating: “Die Figur gehört in die Epoche um 1700. Die Faltengebung könnte in der Tat für Soldani sprechen, inc drängt sich mir das Französische in der Figur sehr Stark auf.” The correspondence shows that at the end of the 1960s, A. S. Ciechanowiecki had a certain number of statuettes in his collection, which allowed him to draw conclusions about their attribution after observing their common features. It is also known that from the very beginning the collector and researchers saw in the works of an unknown master both features of Italian sculpture, mainly Florentine, and South German, French and even Flemish.”



Fig. 3 —
Neptune, Master of Ciechanowiecki. Museo
Civico Amedeo Lia, La Spezia, h. 22 cm.

It has thus been possible to isolate a number of shared characteristics that allow one to identify the hand of this master. These include their small size (averaging around twenty centimetres), the frequent use of gilt bronze, an exceptionally fine level of chasing throughout, and a delicacy in the treatment of surfaces that calls to mind the work of a goldsmith. Then there is the hair of the figures, composed of thick, curling locks that fall heavily over the forehead (as in the model of a young *Hercules* commonly attributed to the Master of Ciechanowiecki, Fig. 1). The barely incised irises, the furrowed, pronounced brows (Fig. 2 and 3), and the high, prominent cheekbones (Figs. 1, 4 and 5). The lean, powerful musculature, which betrays an excellent knowledge of anatomy, is heightened by predominantly frontal and dramatic poses that reflect a distinctly Baroque sensibility. Attention to detail — such as veins and fingernails (Figs. 4 and 5) — combined with

the wide variety of chasing techniques employed (notably on the bases of most sculptures) creates contrast between the textures depicted.



Fig. 4 — Seated Hercules, Master of Ciechanowiecki, Italy, Rome, 2nd half of the 16th century, h. 15.2 cm.

The fact that certain elements appear so strikingly similar (the faces of the *Hercules*, Fig. 1, and our *Saint Matthew*) and that some sculptures present variations in pose suggests that the artist created separate components that were then assembled onto the main figure: arms, head, hands and accessories were likely cast from individual moulds, allowing the artist to vary the composition without having to create an entirely new model. All of these elements have led the specialists who have grappled with this genuine puzzle to associate the master with an artist active in the first half of the 17th century, who probably worked in Rome or Florence and was influenced by the styles of Giambologna, Bernini and Adriaen de Vries. The techniques employed suggest that the master may have been a Ger-

man goldsmith trained in Augsburg, a major centre of gilt bronze sculpture at the time. In terms of style, the work shows a strong influence of Italian Mannerism, and more specifically that of an artist who would have worked in Rome during the 17th century.

A *Christ at the Column* (Figs. 6) sold at Sotheby's London in December 2021 can also be associated with this corpus: it shares similar dimensions with the pieces previously discussed, and its expression, the treatment of the drapery, the handling of the base, and the rendering of the musculature are all comparable. It has been linked to the Italian sculptor Alessandro Algardi, as this model of Christ was traditionally attributed alternately to Algardi and Duquesnoy, with experts never having reached agreement. This example illustrates how significant artistic exchanges between artists of different nationalities were during this period: a model attributed to a Frenchman and an Italian was taken up by the Master of Ciechanowiecki, an artist who was probably German.



Fig. 6 — Christ at the Column, follower of Alessandro Algardi, Italy, Rome or Southern Germany, 17th century, h. 21 cm. Sotheby's London, 7 December 2021.

There is a *Saint John the Baptist* (Fig. 7) in the Louvre that has been attributed to a German artist by the name of Georg Petel, nicknamed the “German Michelangelo.” This work could be associated with the corpus attributed to the Master of Ciechanowiecki. Petel, German by origin, visited Italy and almost certainly France, and built his career in Augsburg in the context of the Counter-Reformation. Furthermore, as a friend of Rubens and Van Dyck, he was acquainted with the sculptures of Giambologna and Bernini. It is possible that the Master of Ciechanowiecki belonged to this artist's circle.



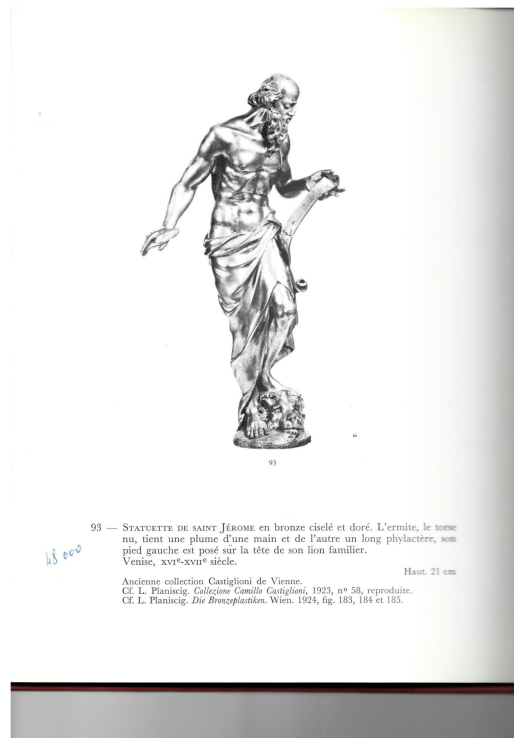
Fig. 7 — Saint Sebastian, formerly attributed to Georg Petel. Musée du Louvre.

What is in any case certain is that our master's models were produced in variants, known across different periods and reproduced with varying degrees of success. In the case of our Evangelists, a *Saint John* and a *Saint Mark* were sold in 1925 (Fig. 8); they formed part of the prestigious Camillo Castiglioni collection and had been attributed to Tiziano Aspetti by Leo Planiscig. The *Saint Mark* from the Castiglioni collection subsequently appeared as a *Saint Jerome* in the David David-Weill collection, sold in Paris on 16 June 1971 (Fig. 8). Another *Saint John* is known in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, though that piece is of mediocre quality and considerably later in date, as is a *Saint Matthew* held by the Royal Palace Museum in Warsaw.



Fig. 8 — Saint John and Saint Mark, attributed to Tiziano Aspetti. Camillo Castiglioni collection, sold in 1925.

In light of all these elements, we can confidently state that this pair of sculptures represents an extremely significant landmark in art history: combining characteristics of both Italian and German sculpture, of Mannerism and the Baroque, these are works of geographical and stylistic transition — witnesses to the extraordinary vitality of the artistic world at the turn of the 17th century, despite the prevailing climate of political turmoil.



93 — STATUETTE DE SAINT JÉRÔME en bronze ciselé et doré. L'ermite, le torse nu, tient une plume d'une main et de l'autre un long phylactère, son pied gauche est posé sur la tête de son lion familier.
Venise, XVI^e-XVII^e siècle. Haut. 21 cm
Ancienne collection Castiglioni de Vienne.
Cf. L. Planiscig, *Collezione Gemito Castiglioni*, 1923, n° 58, reproduite.
Cf. L. Planiscig, *Die Bronzeplastiken*, Wien, 1924, fig. 183, 184 et 185.

Fig. 9 — Lot 93, "Collection D. David-Weill"
sale, Ader, Paris, 16 June 1971.

PROVENANCE

Saint Mark: possibly the Camillo Castiglioni collection, then David David-Weill;

Saint Mark and Saint Matthew: collection of Jacques Favre de Thierrens.

LITERATURE

See Białonowska, M. (2012). *Andrzej Stanisław Ciechanowiecki. Collectionneur, marchand et mécène*, Lublin, pp. 79-81; Warren, J., Bewer, F. G., Cosentino, L., & Dormont, R. (2010). *Beauty & Power: Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes from the Peter Marino Collection*, Wallace Collection, p. 54; Avery, C. (1998). *Sculture, bronzetti, placchette, medaglie*, Museo Civico Amedeo Lia, La Spezia, n. 97; Planiscig, L. (1921). *Venezianische Bildhauer der Renaissance*, Schroll, p. 591; sale catalogue, Collection D. David-Weill, Ader, Paris, 16 June 1971, lot 93.

14 rue de Beaune, 75007 Paris

+33 1 42 60 66 71

galerie@lamychabolle.com — www.galerielamychabolle.com

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