

CALLISTO FINE ARTS

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Attributed to Lorenzo Vaccaro (Naples, 1655 – Torre del Greco, 1706)

David and Moses

Pair of bronzes, 34 cm

Lorenzo Vaccaro was an important sculptor and decorator of the late seventeenth-century Naples. In his youth, he was an apprentice of Cosimo Fanzago (1591-1678) and Dionisio Lazzari (1617-1689), the most famous sculptor-architects in Naples at the time. However, he did not keep producing decorative sculpture subordinated to architecture, but he dedicated his career to more sober and monumental works. Lorenzo's most noteworthy works are still housed by the most important ecclesiastical buildings in the city: the Duomo, the Church of S. Giovanni Maggiore, the Church of S. Maria delle Grazie at Caponapoli and in the Church of the Certosa di San Martino. He was also active as a modeller for silversmiths and worked in stucco and in bronze.

Lorenzo Vaccaro's chief inspiration during his career was the painter Francesco Solimena (1657-1747), who was also one of his closest friends. Both of them sojourned for a period in Rome and were deeply influenced by the Baroque artists operating in the city and in particular by Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680). Bernardo De Dominicis's *Vite de' Pittori, Scultori ed Architetti Napoletani* (Naples, 1742) gives us a lot of information regarding their relationship and reminds that Vaccaro modelled groups to help Solimena in his paintings, while Solimena in exchange gave Lorenzo the *bozzetti* that he composed from them. The influence of Solimena on Vaccaro is particularly evident in his sculpted characters' eloquent poses and gestures and in their ample draperies. Starting from this inspiration, Lorenzo reached a greater elegance and fineness in the stance and the attitude of

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his sculptures in his later works. Ciechanowieski (1979) associated this aspect of his later production to the '*barocchetto lieve e gentile*', which was further developed by his son Domenico Antonio (as well a great sculptor) and other artists formed in Lorenzo Vaccaro's studio.

These two elegant figures perfectly reflect Lorenzo Vaccaro's personal taste, especially in the torsion of the bodies, the theatrical gestures and in the care defining the elaborate embroideries of the dresses, which remind of the marvellous results reached by Giuseppe Sanmartino (1720-1793) in the following century.

The presence of small holes over both bronzes suggests that they originally bore some attributes that identified them as specific characters. In the last years of his career, Lorenzo Vaccaro was commissioned for a pair of marble figures of *King David* and *Moses* for the Jesuit Church of St Francis Xavier (renamed, in 1767, S. Ferdinando) in Naples. At the moment of his murder (1706), only *David* was nearing completion (Fig. 1), hence the Jesuits fathers turned to Lorenzo's son Domenico Antonio to finish the whole group (*Moses* is entirely by the latter – Fig.2). In the 1979 article mentioned above, Ciechanowieski published a terracotta *bozzetto* of *David* (Fig. 3) completed by Lorenzo before 1706, which differs from the finished marble only in the degree of elaboration.

These two bronzes might as well be the products of Lorenzo's preliminary studio works for this commission. They are finely elaborated and might be some of this artist's first solutions for this commission that later reached different results. The two bronzes would had then become part of Lorenzo's workshop, used by his pupils as models and probably later sold as *ricordi* associated with the master's important commission for the Jesuits. Therefore, the man with the crown would be *King David*, whilst the man with the book would be *Moses*.

Curiously, the bronzes have different patination, even though they seem to have been cast by the same founder for the same destination, i.e. probably Lorenzo's workshop.

Bibliography

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Fig.3



Fig.2



Fig.1