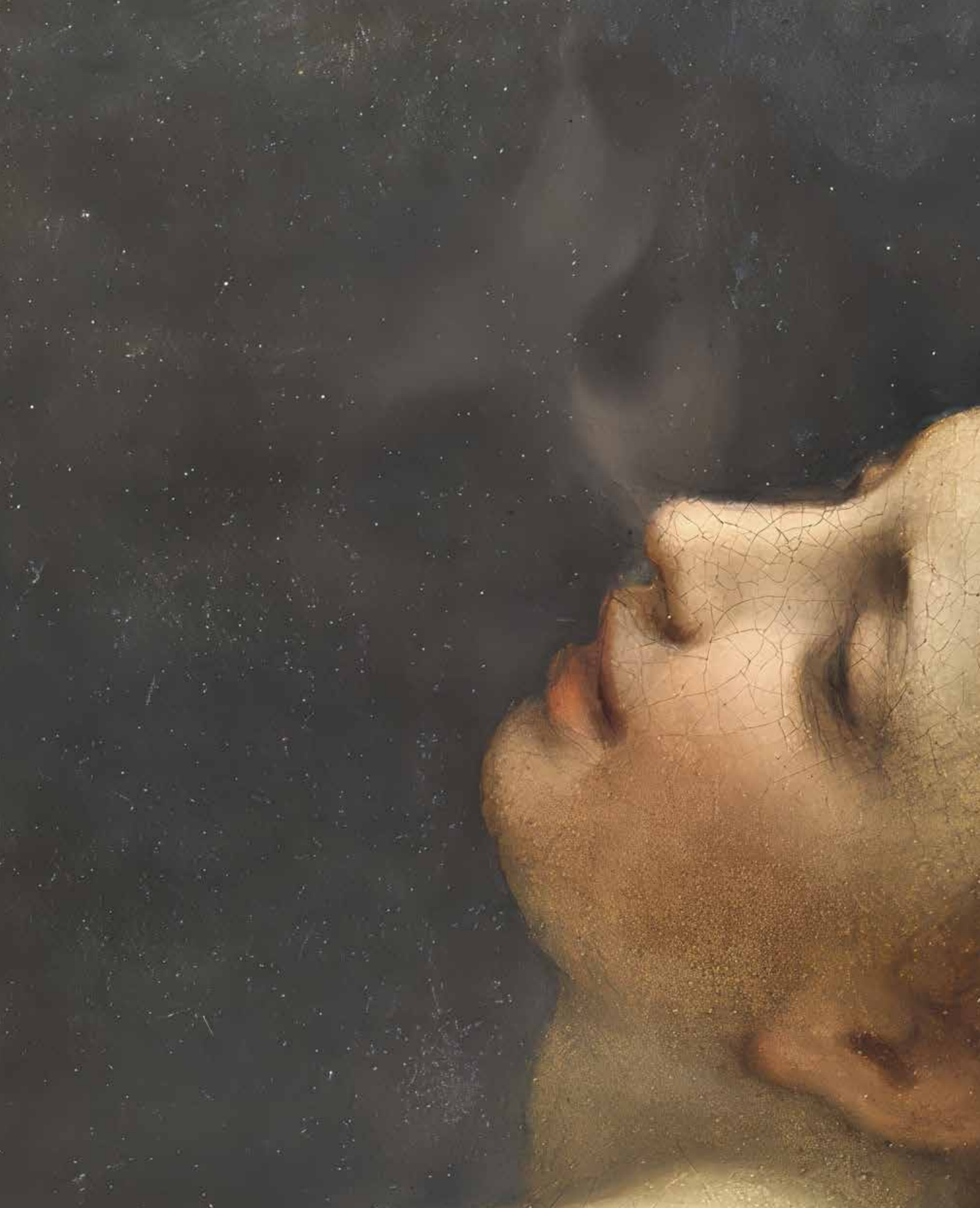

OMNIA MUTANTUR, NIHIL INTERIT

ALL THINGS CHANGE, BUT NOTHING DIES

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 15:165

METAMORPHOSES
OVID AND THE ARTS

EDITED BY
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RIJKS MUSEUM
GALLERIA BORGHESE
HANNIBAL

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FOREWORD

Some exhibition themes wait patiently for a museum to notice them. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is one such example: the subject was already in the air when we met one morning in Amsterdam in February 2023 to explore the possibilities for a joint project between the Galleria Borghese and the Rijksmuseum. Ovid, it turned out, had long been on each of our institutional wish lists, so it did not take us long to choose.

The Galleria Borghese was created by the visionary prelate, collector and patron Cardinal Scipione Borghese, while the Rijksmuseum is the Netherlands' 'national treasure house', born of a civic initiative. Our respective collections share a focus on 'home-grown' seventeenth-century art: the theatrical Italian Baroque in Rome, with Bernini's brilliant sculpture groups at its heart, and the restrained and realistic Dutch middle-class variant in Amsterdam, centring around the masterpieces of Rembrandt and Vermeer. These different backgrounds have yielded a magnificent result in the shape of an ambitious exhibition featuring works of art of the highest calibre – which span centuries and media alike – to do full justice to Ovid as a supreme source of artistic inspiration.

'*Metamorphoses* in art' is a perfectly logical theme given the immense influence that the Latin poem has exerted (and continues to exert) on Western culture. From the moment in 1497 when the first printed edition of Ovid's masterpiece appeared in Italian translation in Venice, its countless tales of the transmogrification of gods and humans found their way into the art of Italy and the rest of Europe. A century later, it had conquered the Low Countries too, so much so that the artists' biographer Karel van Mander could describe *Metamorphoses* in his *Schilder-Boeck* (1604) as 'a Bible for artists'.

Ovid's mythic retelling of the encounters between gods, humans and nature, and the transformations to which they gave rise, capture our imagination today as much as ever – despite being penned over two thousand years ago in what is no longer a living language. They can do this because they are so vivid, imaginative, comprehensive and, above all, universally human. Not only do the stories explain cosmic phenomena such as heaven, Earth, the course of the seasons and of the celestial bodies, they also speak to the human condition – our fears and passions, joys and sorrows, jealousy, revenge, lust and pain. Many of Ovid's myths describe the mystery of being touched by the divine: transcendent moments of enormous intensity and emotion, including the magical animation of dead matter when creating magnificent works of art. In short, the *Metamorphoses* are timeless and belong to everyone: Ovid might well be more relevant than ever.

We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to the realization of this fantastic project, including the many lenders who responded to our initiative with such confidence and enthusiasm. Particular thanks are due to our generous sponsors: The Bennink Foundation/Rijksmuseum Fonds, Blockbusterfonds, Rijksmuseum International Circle, Rijksmuseum Patrons and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in Amsterdam, and Intesa Sanpaolo – Gallerie d'Italia and Webuild S.p.A. in Rome.

Exhibitions are ephemeral events and even the substantial catalogues that accompany them will not endure forever. All the same, we hope that something of the soul of our collaborative project will live on and will give rise to new ideas, new artworks and new emotions, because, to leave the last word to Ovid: *All things change, but nothing dies.*

Francesca Cappelletti
General Director, Galleria Borghese

Taco Dibbits
General Director, Rijksmuseum

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Now

Frits Scholten

Self-assured, his task complete, the Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE) tells his readers in the closing lines of his *Metamorphoses* that although the passing day will end the uncertain course of his life, his name will not perish. On the contrary: *I shall live to all eternity, immortalized by fame*.[1] The poet has been dead for more than two thousand years – no reliable likeness of him survives, although his nickname, Naso, hints at a prominent nose[2] – but he lives on in his name and his verses. He (or his soul) has been transformed into his work, an inverted incarnation: flesh has become word. It is no coincidence that the final word of his poem is *vivam* – I live. Yet Ovid, like every mortal, knew one thing for certain: he would one day die – the most radical and definitive metamorphosis a human being can undergo. In the magisterial fifteenth and final book of the *Metamorphoses*, he has this truth voiced by the philosopher Pythagoras – one of the poet's alter egos – who observes humankind from a lofty height.[3]

> **I joy to journey among the stars, high above, to leave the earth and this dull abode, to ride on the clouds and stand on stout Atlas' shoulders, looking down from afar on men as they wander aimlessly, devoid of any guiding principle, to unroll for them the scroll of fate, and cheer their panic and their fear of death….[4]**

With a catascopic gaze, recalling Cicero's *Dream of Scipio,* Pythagoras looks down from a cloud or mountain upon a bewildered, frightened and uncertain humanity. Seldom has *la condition humaine* – the limitations of being human – been more tellingly expressed.[5] For this universal law alone – that everyone is mortal and human existence is fated – Ovid's epic poem of transformations remains strikingly current more than two millennia on. The path of life, which leads inexorably to death, is described at length by the poet – still speaking through Pythagoras – and introduced by a reflection on time and motion:

> **Nothing is constant in the whole world. Everything is in a state of flux, and comes into being as a transient appearance. Time itself flows on with constant motion, just like a river: for no more than a river can the fleeting hour stand still. As wave is driven on by wave, and, itself pursued, pursues the one before, so the moments of time at once flee and follow, and are ever new. What was before is left behind, that which was not comes to be, and every minute gives place to another.[6]**

This ceaseless flux is mirrored in the many transformations Ovid describes. Taken collectively, as part of the cosmic and biological order, they are eternal. The gods, moreover, possess the power to bring about and reverse individual transformations with ease – illustrated by Jupiter's many disguises – but humankind, in whatever form it takes, can only bear its fate until death follows. Ovid evokes this by shifting from the cosmic perspective – the alternation of day and night and the cycle of the seasons, which logically ends with the aged figure of Winter – to that of the insignificant, mortal human being:

> **In the same way, our own bodies are always ceaselessly changing, and what we have been, or now are, we shall not be tomorrow. There was a day when we lived in our mother's womb, mere seeds that held the first promise of a man.[7]**

1 Luciano Garbati, *Medusa with the Head of Perseus*, 2008. Bronze, h. 225 cm. Collect Pond Park, New York City, 2020. MWTH Project

Her Eyes Fell Upon Their Horns

The Art of Storytelling in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Bart Ramakers

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE) tells stories of *bodies which have been transformed into shapes of a different kind… from the earliest beginnings of the world, down to my own times*.[1] Ovid's times were around the beginning of our era, during the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus (64 BCE–14 CE), to whom Ovid dedicates his poem in the fifteenth and final book. The *Metamorphoses* relates a history of the cosmos, both the terrestrial and the celestial worlds, and their inhabitants: gods, demigods, nymphs, mortals, monsters and animals. It is a history of constant change and transformation – in other words, of metamorphosis – a history whose causes are intimated by Ovid in his writing.[2] This history is driven by relationships and confrontations in the areas of life that evidently matter most: love and sex (these above all) but also marriage, procreation, child-rearing, providing for oneself, social interaction and amusement, not to mention the creative arts. Ovid explains the events of his narrative by appealing not so much to natural law as to the instinctive urges of those many creatures that populate the heavens, Earth and Underworld. It becomes clear that nothing human – or animal – is alien to them, and that their motivations are more often vices than virtues: lust (including lust for power), envy, hubris, anger and so on.

Ovid wrote the *Metamorphoses* in dactylic hexameter, which was the traditional verse form of the epic, but was also marked by other genres.[3] Unlike the *Aeneid*, for instance, written by Virgil (70 BCE–19 BCE), the *Metamorphoses* tells not just one long tale, but what seems like a near-endless series of stories about a near-endless series of mythological figures, stories linked by literal transformations – a *carmen perpetuum*, an unbroken song.[4] This explains why the title is in the plural. More than a mythography,[5] a who's who of the ancient world of the gods,[6] the *Metamorphoses* has for centuries, and to this day, been read as a source of, or model for, new transformations, of adaptations in word and image of all the acts and twists of fate that Ovid describes – above all, the metamorphoses that his characters bring about or undergo.

What the author aims for his readers to experience is *copia* – an abundance, of characters, events and images – including amazement at, and admiration for, his ability to evoke that experience by literary means. When we become fascinated by works of art that represent stories from the *Metamorphoses*, this is due in part to Ovid's success in sparking the imagination of their creators through his method of storytelling, his word choice and his style.[7] Artists are, of course, mindful of the visual tradition, the ways in which their peers before them depicted these stories. Nonetheless, they also develop their own original ideas for representing them, but in so far as they focus on the stories themselves, they are also consciously or unconsciously inspired by Ovid's narrative art.

The poem contains so many transformations – more than 250[8] – that it would be impossible to try and discuss them all. I will restrict my attention to a few stories. As one of my main objectives is to illustrate Ovid's narrative artistry, I will quote frequently from the *Metamorphoses*.[9] In so doing, my main intention is to show how visual, how ekphrastic, Ovid could make his descriptions.[10] What I mean is that they are not only vivid and detailed,

1 Giuseppe Cesari, *Diana Turning Actaeon into a Stag*, 1602–1603. Oil on copper, 50 × 69 cm.
Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 508

10 Ceramic factory De Grieksche A, Delft, *Charger with the Rape of Europa*, c. 1715–1722. Ceramics, ø 40 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-NM-12400-286; gift of the heirs of J.F. Loudon, The Hague

perpetrator and victim and the nature of the transformation – except in the first instance, that of Jupiter's transformation into a bull to abduct Europa **[fig. 10]**:

Arachne wove a picture of Europa, deceived by Jupiter when he presented himself in the shape of a bull. You would have thought that the bull was a live one, and that the waves were real waves. Europa herself was seen, looking back at the shore she had left behind, crying to her companions, and timidly drawing up her feet, shrinking from the touch of the surging waters.[141]

This passage reads like an entry from a book of iconographic models, with the basic facts required to represent the incident visually: the pose, behaviour and mental state of the protagonist, in this case Europa.[142] The emphasis on the verisimilitude of the bull and the waves – note the adjectives 'live' and 'real' – reinforces the passage's ekphrastic nature.[143] This description mirrors Ovid's account of the incident four books earlier:

Gradually the princess lost her fear, and with her innocent hands she stroked his breast when he offered it for her caress, and hung fresh garlands on his horns: till finally she even ventured to mount the bull, little knowing on whose back she was resting. Then the god drew away from the shore by easy stages, first planting the hooves that were part of his disguise in the surf at the water's edge, and then proceeding farther out to sea, till he bore his booty away over the wide stretches of mid ocean. The girl was sorely frightened and looked back at the sands behind her, from which she had been carried away. Her right hand grasped the bull's horn, the other rested on his back, and her fluttering garments floated in the breeze.[144]

Fluttering or floating garments, like windblown hair, are among the stereotypical images used by Ovid to describe a nymph's beauty and sexual attractiveness.[145] They make it clear what fate awaits Io; her fear is another clue.[146] Ovid writes euphemistically that, after their arrival in Crete, *He had laid aside the disguise of a bull, under which he had deceived the princess, and revealed himself for what he was*.[147] His disguise as a bull was another harbinger of his erotic intentions.[148]

Arachne wins the weaving contest, but Minerva proves a poor loser. In her anger at Arachne's public display of a visual catalogue of sexual misconduct by her male peers, but also out of envy, she changes Arachne into a spider: *You may go on living, you wicked girl, but you must be suspended in the air like this, all the time*.[149] And that is what Arachne does: *from* [her] *belly, she yet spins her thread, and as a spider is busy with her web as of old*.[150] However humiliating the transformation in itself may be, the fact that Arachne is able to continue weaving as a spider is a substantial consolation prize, as spiderwebs, too, are works of art.

Earlier in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid already draws a comparison to a spiderweb in order to describe the quality, artistry and literal refinement of the metal net that Vulcan weaves around his spouse Venus and her lover Mars to catch them in the act **[fig. 11]**.

11 Maarten van Heemskerck, *Vulcan, Venus and Mars*, c. 1540. Oil on oak, 96 × 99 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, inv. no. 6395; Dr Oswald Kutschera-Woborsky Bequest, 1922

Bernini, Reader of the *Metamorphoses*

Lucia Simonato

'The popes' former cardinal-nephews received the *Rape of Proserpina* and other depictions [sculptures] after Ovid from the said *cavaliere* Bernini'.[1] So reads a letter from Rome to the Este court in October 1626. Besides its explicit mention of this sculptural group of 1621–1622 (then housed in the Villa Ludovisi, before its transfer to the Galleria Borghese in the early twentieth century) the same message also refers to the masterpiece *Apollo and Daphne* (1622–1625) which, after its completion a mere year earlier, could be admired in Cardinal Scipione Borghese's (1577–1633) villa on the Pincian Hill.[2] A veritable marvel in marble, it originated from the sculptor's close engagement with the verses of the Roman poet – a dialogue extending beyond the decisive moment of metamorphosis itself, wondrously fixed in stone.[3] This is already evident from the central role that the sculptor accorded to Daphne's hair. Ovid presented it as a visible, vivid sign of the nymph's longing for freedom: unkempt and uncombed even before she (a follower of Diana) flees from Apollo.[4] During the pursuit, her hair is gently lifted by a breeze, streaming behind her,[5] enhancing Daphne's beauty, yet at the same time becoming her greatest vulnerability. By then the god is directly behind her, so close that his breath stirs the loosened strands falling over her neck.[6] In Bernini's group this is rendered, masterfully, as the ultimate sign of danger, compelling her not to yield but to beg for the terrible transformation of her body.

The sculptor immortalized in marble the opposing emotions that can be read on the faces of the two unfortunates involved in the chase: Apollo's hope and Daphne's fear **[fig. 1]**.[7] They are apparently not yet aware of the miraculous metamorphosis already in train. Here, Bernini seemed to follow the original text almost verbatim: *her arms grow into branches and her blonde hair fans out into green leaves*,[8] while *the swift foot clings to the ground, and with immovable roots burrows into it*.[9] The sculptor stops just short of the transformation's completion **[fig. 2]**, leaving visible the last traces of the girl's gentle face, yet including the Ovidian gesture of Apollo's hand (in the Borghese group the left, in the Latin verses the right), which he placed *against the trunk, and felt her heart still beating under the new bark*.[10] The god's marble hand touches precisely the spot where the encroaching tree is about to cover the nymph's stomach, where the bark is thinner and not yet fully hardened by the ongoing transformation, so that he can still feel the final beats of his beloved's thundering heart **[fig. 3]**. Bernini's library probably included a copy of Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara's (c. 1517–c. 1570) celebrated Italian translation of the *Metamorphoses*, published in 1598, which he likely used as his point of entry into Ovid's epic.[11] But in this passage, Bernini – described by contemporaries as having 'a command of belletrie and of mottos and intellectual wordplay that touch the soul'[12] – emerges as a no less refined exegete than the translator himself,[13] as though he had supplemented his reading with other Italian versions of the same lines that hew more closely to the original. He may even have consulted the Latin text directly, with the assistance of a well-read friend from Cardinal Scipione's circle.

Despite the appeal that other contemporary texts, such as Giovan Battista Marino's (1569–1625) pastoral poem *Dafne* (1616),[14] may have had for Bernini, for this ambitious sculptural group that would prove so pivotal to his career he seems to have preferred a personal, open engagement with classical poetry, much as he chose to 'appropriate' a classical sculptural source like the *Apollo Belvedere*.[15] Another detail of his marble masterpiece points in the same direction: in the *Metamorphoses*, the trunk's steady rising to envelop Daphne's body is not described with precision, whereas in Bernini's work the trunk is focal.

1 Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1622–1625 (detail). Carrara marble, h. 243 cm. Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. CV

Two bronze spiders stand side by side, completely intertwined, balancing on the razor-sharp tips of their long, spindly legs. The smaller of the pair nestles beneath the protective, angular limbs of the larger one. Together, their bodies form an architectural space, an organic shelter through which viewers can move. Since the 1990s, the spider has played a central role in Louise Bourgeois's work as the theme of a series of large-scale, bronze sculptures that includes *Spider Couple*. The piece is at once impressive and fragile, frightening and protective – a monument to the close bond that existed between the artist and her mother, a tapestry weaver and restorer who died when Bourgeois was twenty-one. The spiders allude to the wisdom and ingenuity of her mother, whose work at the family carpet-restoration business in Choisy-le-Roi helped inspire Louise's own artistic career, while also evoking memories of her childhood. As an ode to her mother, she likewise viewed her spiders as the embodiment of her own creative activity, tireless weavers who create complex webs and structures from their very bodies, reflecting Bourgeois's conception of her work as manifestations of the artist's body and experiences.[1]

The association of spiders with weavers is by no means a modern one: as early as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the art of weaving was closely bound up with the story of the spider's origin. So skilled a weaver was Arachne that the mere possibility of glimpsing her work was enough to lure the nymphs from their rivers and vineyards. The daughter of a modest family, she made the mistake of bragging to the Lydians that she could outdo the weaving skills of Minerva herself, provoking the goddess to challenge the arrogant mortal to a contest. Unable to fault Arachne's tapestry, which was devoted to Jupiter's violations of Europa, Leda, Danae and several other mortal women, the jealous Minerva turned her rival into a spider:

> *Immediately, at the touch of this baneful potion, the girl's hair dropped out, her nostrils and her ears went too, and her head shrank almost to nothing. Her whole body, likewise, became tiny. Her slender fingers were fastened to her sides, to serve as legs, and all the rest of her was belly; from that belly, she yet spins her thread, and as a spider is busy with her web as of old.*[2]

Weaving, as a traditionally female craft, is often used in both art and mythology as a symbol of womanly hubris and deception, especially towards men. In Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, Penelope outsmarts her relentless suitors by weaving a shroud and then unpicking it again each night; Ovid's silenced Philomela weaves the story of her rape as a warning to her sister; and Arachne uses her shuttle to create a brilliant series of scenes of divine injustice.[3] Arachne's tapestry can be interpreted as an indictment of both the cruelty of ever-changing gods and their boundless creativity. The girl's desire to claim this creative power for herself ultimately proves her downfall; of all the remarkable, figurative weaving she produced, only the ephemeral, geometric spider web remains.

Spiders feature in Bourgeois's oeuvre primarily as positive symbols of female and maternal strength: 'Spiders are friendly presences... helpful and protective, just like my mother.'[4] The arachnids in *Spider Couple* are ambiguous creatures that blur the boundaries between mother and spider, protector and predator, sculpture and architecture, while forming a loving portrait of the artist and her mother on the one hand and a clear allusion to the disruptive power of this traditionally feminine occupation on the other.

Anne Wildschut

Literature
Meyer-Thoss & Bourgeois 1991; Bourgeois 1998; Hardeman 2016, pp. 250–251, 268; Morris 2007, p. 313; Schiller 2017; Pacquement 2019, pp. 57, 62, 63 (no. 10); Oliensis 2023

Notes
1 Bourgeois 1998, p. 228.
2 Ovid 1980, p. 138 (Book 6:140–145).
3 Homer 2016, Book 2:93–111; *Metamorphoses*, Book 6:570–585 and 6:1–145.
4 Bourgeois quoted in the press release of 11 January 2008 from the Tate Modern, London ('Tate Acquires Louise Bourgeois's Giant Spider, *Maman*').

Apollo, god of the Sun, is depicted here as a medieval knight in courtly robes and a gold foil crown. His red cloak flows behind him, indicating his haste as he runs against the blue and red chequered background with his arms outstretched towards the object of his unrequited affection. The nymph Daphne is halfway through her metamorphosis into the laurel tree. Her head emerges from the foliage of the tree which has replaced her human body. Daphne's wide eyes and open mouth evoke her desperate pleas to her father, the river god Peneus, moments before her transformation, as Apollo embraces her branches.[1]

This image does not illustrate Ovid's *Metamorphoses* directly, but rather the fourteenth-century retelling, the *Ovide moralisé* (c. 1315–1318). The anonymous poem translated and adapted Ovid's epic into French verse to 'reveal' Christian truth in the pagan poem. The author interprets the story of Apollo and Daphne as an allegory for chastity. Apollo represents the Sun which 'illuminates', with his rejected desire, the virtues of virginity represented by Daphne, who is transformed into a laurel tree because *like a laurel tree, virginity grows green and lives without bearing any fruit*.[2]

The depiction of Ovid's classical heroes in courtly dress evokes the poem's exegetical function by placing the scene into the moral world of the reader, making its lessons more immediate. Daphne and Apollo are depicted in a single moment of transformation, deviating from the illustration in this edition's more literal predecessor, manuscript 1044 in the Rouen Bibliothèque Municipale, which presents the moments before and after in a single frame. The motion implied by Apollo's wide stance and billowing cloak, coupled with Daphne's shocked expression, indicates a greater interest in the emotional stakes of the narrative. This small but seismic difference marks an early, pre-humanist inclination towards narrative immediacy over moralizing explanation. The *Ovide moralisé* was an important vehicle for allowing Ovid's tales to be appreciated in their own right, and the illustrations which decorated these texts gave the first visual forms to these myths which would echo and evolve in the art produced for centuries after.

The illuminations in this manuscript have been attributed to the Master of Fauvel, named after the watercolours in the c. 1320 *Roman de Fauvel*. The prolific illuminator is credited with the illustration of over 50 manuscripts, including the Rouen 1044, the earliest surviving illustrated *Ovide moralisé*. The Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal illuminations' compositional differences from their predecessor's likely reflect the tastes of a new patron. The stylistic differences, or 'deterioration', which leads some scholars to attribute this manuscript to another hand altogether, however, are representative of the more creative, but also more hastily executed, style associated with the latter end of the Master of Fauvel's near thirty-year career.

Literature
Stechow 1932; Barnard 1975; Lord 1975; Rouse & Rouse 2000, pp. 208–215; Blumenfeld-Kosinski 2002; Blume 2014; Clier-Colombani 2015; Di Febo 2017; Murray & Boyd 2023

Notes
1 *Metamorphoses*, Book 1:545–556.
2 Murray & Boyd 2023, pp. 174–176 (Book 1:3109–3214).

Ella Campbell

Leonardo da Vinci
1452–1519, after
Giovanni Antonio Bazzi
known as Il Sodoma
1477–1549, attributed

Leda and the Swan

before 1517

cat. 44

The myth of Leda, wife of King Tyndareus of Sparta, tells how she is seduced by Jupiter in the form of a swan on the bank of the river Eurotas. Their union produces eggs from which several children are born, including the divine twins Castor and Pollux, and Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra. The tale has been popular with visual artists since Antiquity, hence its mention in Ovid's ekphrasis of Arachne's tapestry, which depicts the escapades of Jupiter and other divine misdemeanours.[3] It continued to inspire artists in the Renaissance period, when the encounter between the woman and the swan was frequently depicted in an erotic context. The painting in the Galleria Borghese, by contrast, emphasizes the presence of the beautiful, standing Leda as she tenderly embraces the swan, which in turn wraps its wing around her, whilst she looks down on the two little children playing in the grass in front of an unhatched egg. X-ray examination shows that the artist originally planned four or possibly even six more putti.[4] The scene takes place in a serene, Leonardesque river landscape, presumably referring to the Eurotas, which is mentioned in the myth.

This painting is generally placed within an iconographic tradition stretching back to an original by Leonardo da Vinci – possibly a cartoon – of which numerous copies were made. The *Leda* in the Galleria Borghese is considered one of the earliest and most faithful of these, along with the *Leda Spiridon* in the Uffizi[5] and the *Leda and the Swan* attributed to Cesare da Sesto (c. 1515 in the Earl of Pembroke's collection at Wilton House). In stylistic terms, the Borghese version is the softest in tone and lighting of the three; it also pays more attention to the river element in the landscape and the soft features of Leda's face.

Leda was definitely painted before Leonardo left for France in 1517; it was among the works he took with him on his travels and was also present in Rome during his time there between 1514 and 1517 – the period in which Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, known as Il Sodoma, was likewise active in the city, and is highly likely to have met Leonardo there.[6] If we add to this the fact that the inventory of Il Sodoma's estate, dated 14 February 1548[7] includes a painting of *Leda*, Morelli's attribution of the painting to this artist becomes even more plausible.[8] This hypothesis is supported by the similarities between the painting in the Galleria Borghese and a work that Il Sodoma painted in Rome, namely the fresco *The Wedding of Alexander the Great and Roxana* in the Villa Farnesina, most notably in the detail of the woman, and the figure of Eve in *Christ's Descent into Limbo* (c. 1524–1526) in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena. The female nudes are at once powerful and extremely graceful; their sculptural bodies curve with the softness verging on languor that typifies the painter from Vercelli. That he chose to copy Leonardo's only known mythological work becomes even more significant when we consider that Il Sodoma was also an art dealer and collector of antiquities,[9] who even named his son Apelles after the great antique artist, testifying to his thorough knowledge of classical culture and mythology.

Provenance
Borghese Collection, Rome, before 1633–1902;[1] acquired by the Italian state, 1902[2]

Literature
Morelli 1897, pp. 148–152; Della Pergola 1955–1959, I, pp. 77, 78, no. 138; Della Pergola 1964, p. 457; cat. Rome 1983, p. 82 (entry by R. Barbiellini Amidei); Calvesi 1985, pp. 137–153; Corradini 1998, p. 451; Moreno & Stefani 2000, p. 279; cat. Milan 2001, pp. 67, 144, 145, no. III.6 (entry by di Bartoli); Costamagna 2003; Nanni & Monaco 2007; De Romanis 2007, pp. 233–239; Bartalini 2012; cat. Rome 2018, no. 114 (entry by F. Zalabra); cat. Rome 2019, pp. 315, 316, no. 3.2 (entry by M. Forcellino), pp. 272–275 (text by L. Calzona)

Notes
1 Borghese inventories from 1625–1633, no. 451; 1693, no. 313; 1700, Room VI, no. 4; 1790, Room VI, no. 33; 1812; and *inventario fidecommissario* 1833; Mariotti 1892, p. 88, no. 1.
2 Can be viewed at www.collezionegalleriaborghese.it/en/opere/leda-3 (accessed 2 November 2025).
3 *Metamorphoses* (Book 6:109).
4 Cat. Rome 1983 (four putti); cat. Milan 2001, p. 67 (six putti).
5 Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, inv. no. 9953 (1890 inventory).
6 Cat. Rome 2019, pp. 272–275.
7 Bartalini 2012.
8 Morelli 1897.
9 De Romanis 2007.

Lucia Calzona

Michele Tosini
known as Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio
1503–1577

Leda

c. 1560–1570

cat. 46

According to Hermann Fiore, this *Leda* by Michele Tosini entered the Borghese Collection in 1787, along with its pendant, *Lucrezia*. Both works were acquired that year from the collection of the sculptor Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (c. 1716–1799), who attributed them to Perino del Vaga (1501–1547). They were first recorded in the *Inventario Fidecommissario Borghese* of 1833, at which point their author was identified as Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574). The attribution would change several more times, until 1929, when Gamba proposed Michele Tosini as the painter, which since has been widely accepted.[1]

Tosini – known as Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio – was the favourite pupil of the celebrated Tuscan painter Domenico Ghirlandaio (1448–1494). He not only adopted his master's name but his classical style too, although he swiftly adapted it in response to new sources of inspiration. *Leda* and its pendant are now dated to the 1560s. Between 1557 and 1565, the painter worked closely with Vasari on the decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, as a result of which he developed a more pronounced Mannerist style, further intensified by the influence of Michelangelo,[2] Tosini's immense admiration of whom led him to make a thorough study of the Florentine master's sculptures and to borrow elements from them in his own work. Examples of this can be found in his painting *Allegoria della Notte* in the Galleria Colonna in Rome,[3] inspired by Michelangelo's sculptures for the Sagrestia Nuova in the Basilica di San Lorenzo, and the profile portrait of a woman ('Zenobia') in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence,[4] which is closely related to drawings by Michelangelo, including *Zenobia* in the Uffizi[5] and *Cleopatra* in the Casa Buonarroti, Florence.[6]

These latter two examples also provided the direct inspiration for the heads in the paintings of Leda and Lucretia, with their refined, opulent diadems worn over intricate hairstyles adorned with ribbons and gemstones. Here, painting plays a provocative game of material transformations: hair becomes gold, eyes become gemstones, fabrics become skin.

The virtuoso technique employed by the painter, combined with the distinctive turn of Leda's body, gives rise to an intriguing composition of rubies, black pearls and sparkling pupils in the foreground. Most of all, however, thanks to the fleeting kiss at the centre of the panel, the viewer's attention is focused on the erotic spark between the supreme god Jupiter who, having taken on the form of a swan, seduces the beautiful young woman.[7] The Greek Leda, a symbol of sensual pleasure, thus forms the frivolous counterpart to Lucretia, daughter of a Roman patrician and the epitome of virtue [fig. 46a]. The contrast between the two belongs to a popular genre in Florentine painting, in which female beauty is formed in accordance with ideal proportions, resulting in mysterious figures in which the soft sensuality of Venetian portraiture merges with the cool, almost alchemical treatment of the material, further enhanced by the flat black background.

Literature
Barbier de Montault 1870, p. 350; Piancastelli 1881–1891, p. 245; Venturi 1893, p. 160; Rusconi 1906, p. 90; Voss 1920, p. 194; Brinckmann 1923–1925, III (1925), p. 14; Longhi 1928, p. 207; Gamba 1929, p. 552; Antal 1951, p. 122; Della Pergola 1951, p. 22; Della Pergola 1959, II, p. 40; Rotondi Terminiello 1966, pp. 190–199; Prosperi Valenti 1974, V, pp. 373–375; Magnifico 1980, p. 146 (entry by S. Meloni Trkulja); Cieri Via 1996, pp. 200–201 (entry by I. Miarelli Mariani); Moreno & Stefani 2000, p. 237 (entry by C. Stefani); Negro 2001, p. 13; Falletti & Katz Nelson 2002, pp. IX–X (essay by A. Paolucci); Casazza 2005, pp. 138–139 (entry by K. Herrmann Fiore); Herrmann Fiore 2006, p. 107; Strinati, Mastroianni & Papi 2009, p. 133, nr. 31 (entry by M. Gianandrea)

Notes
1 Gamba 1929, pp. 552, 555 (fig.).
2 Vasari 1878–1885, vol. 6 (1881), p. 547, and vol. 8 (1882), p. 392.
3 Galleria Colonna, Rome, inv. no. 149.
4 Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, inv. no. 1890, 6072.
5 Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, inv. no. 598E.
6 Casa Buonarroti, Florence, inv. no. 2F.
7 *Metamorphoses*, Book 6:109.

[46a] Michele Tosini, known as Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, *Lucrezia*, c. 1560–1570. Oil on canvas, 72 × 51 cm. Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 322

Cecilia Vicentini

Gian Lorenzo Bernini's arresting sculpture group depicts the dynamic moment of violence in Book 5 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Pluto abducts and rapes Proserpina.[1] The god of death plucks Ceres' daughter from the meadow she is playing in and steals her to the Underworld as she cries out for her mother.[2] Conflict is carved into the two stone bodies which grapple against one another in their figural composition. Pluto's wide stance forms the solid base of the sculpture, his left leg bent forward to support the weight of the struggling girl. His rippling musculature evokes the *Belvedere Torso*, which Bernini no doubt studied and transformed in this sculpture, and his grin forms a stark contrast to Proserpina's tear-stricken face. She pushes her assailant away with one arm and raises the other into the sky, pushing the limits of the marble and demonstrating Bernini's mastery of it. Her anguished face turns towards the viewer, her lips parted in an eternal, silent cry. Pluto's three-headed dog Cerberus sits on the base; his savage heads snap at Proserpina's feet and act as a visual manifestation of the god's beastly behaviour.

The myth has been used since Antiquity as a visual metaphor for the changing seasons and for the cycle of death and rebirth.[3] The rape of Proserpina was a popular motif on Roman sarcophagi, evoking the innocence of youth being snatched away by the spectre of death.[4] By the seventeenth century, the story had joined a number of mythological rapes employed in painting and sculpture to symbolize the absolute power of a reigning prince.[5] Following this tradition, Bernini revels in the violence of the scene. The physical power imbalance between the figures, and the sexual threat the god poses to the terrified maiden is summarized in Pluto's large hand pressing into Proserpina's thigh – a classical topos, based on Pliny and Callistratus.[6] Her flesh yields to his grip, illustrating Bernini's ability to render soft skin, hard muscle and might in marble. The image of Proserpina struggling against her captor corresponds to the advice from contemporary treatises on the effective representation of abduction scenes.[7]

These dual forces of death and power may well have suited the patron Scipione Borghese's (1577–1633) intentions for the sculpture. Borghese commissioned this work along with three other sculpture groups to be displayed in his villa. *The Rape of Proserpina*, however, was quickly gifted to the new cardinal-nephew Ludovico Ludovisi (1595–1632). Changing the display context also transformed the meaning of the sculpture, as the social and economic power granted by the papacy was transferred to the Ludovisi family on the death of Borghese Pope Paul V and the ascension of a scion of the Ludovisi family, Gregory XV, in 1621. In the Borghese villa, the sculpture could symbolize the family's power, and the looming threat that the pope's death posed to it.[8] In its new context, the work has been interpreted as a warning to Ludovisi of how one's political status can be brutally transformed by death, echoing Proserpina's transformation from playful maiden to sombre queen of the Underworld.[9]

Provenance
Commissioned by Cardinal Scipione Borghese; Ludovisi collection, 1622; purchased by the Italian state, 1908

Literature
Faldi 1954, pp. 29–31, no. 33; Hibbard 1965, pp. 45–48; Preimesberger 1989, pp. 115–123; Wittkower 1990, pp. 13, 14, 32–41, 235, no. 10; Avery 1997, pp. 48–55, 258–259; Montanari 2013, pp. 91–96; Strunck 2014; Montanari 2016, pp. 13–18; Bacchi & Coliva 2017, pp. 162–169 (text by M. Minozzi); Colivar & Brunetti 2022

Notes
1 *Metamorphoses*, Book 5:391–398.
2 *Metamorphoses*, Book 5:385–575.
3 Bernardini 2021, pp. 131–133. According to Ovid, Proserpina's absence on Earth causes a barren winter and her happy return brings the bloom of spring.
4 Zanker & Ewald 2012, p. 84.
5 Wolfthal 1999, pp. 9–28.
6 Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, Book 36:24; Callistratus' *Descriptions* no. 5 (On the statue of Narcissus) and 8 (On the statue of Bacchus), see Philostratus & Callistratus 1931, pp. 393–395, 405.
7 Lomazzo 1583, p. 148.
8 Such symbolic readings are certainly plausible as it has been suggested that Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* (cat. 24), another (attempted) mythological rape, was commissioned to replace this work and symbolize frustrated desire in the pursuit of power. Warwick 2012, p. 94.
9 Strunck 2014.

Ella Campbell

Two very similar versions of Rubens's *Head of Medusa* are known. The work discussed here, painted on panel, is housed in the Moravská Galerie in Brno, while the other, executed on canvas, is in Vienna.[1] Neither had been attributed to the Antwerp master when the two paintings first began to draw the attention of art historians in the nineteenth century. Not until 1899 was there an attempt to link the panel to Rubens and Frans Snijders – a hypothesis that had been proposed for the Vienna canvas fifteen years earlier. Subsequently, the *Medusa* in Brno was considered for many years to be a copy by another artist of the canvas in Austria, even though a steadily growing body of historical, technical and stylistic evidence was emerging that it was an autograph work by Rubens. It was ultimately identified as the painting mentioned by Constantijn Huygens in 1629/1631[2] and later in the 1642 inventory of the art dealer Nicolaes Sohier, in which it is attributed to 'Rubens en Snij[d]ers'.[3] Thanks in part to MA-XRF scans, which revealed numerous *pentimenti*, especially in the snakes, the Brno version is now widely recognized as an authentic work by Rubens, although Snijders's hand has also been acknowledged in the serpents. Furthermore, the panel is now considered the original model on which the version in Vienna is based. For its part, the canvas is currently viewed as a studio copy, presumably created using cartoons, but with significant interventions by Rubens himself. The *Medusa* composition was traditionally dated to around 1617–1618, but Gerlinde Gruber suggested an earlier dating for both works: in her view the Brno panel was made no later than 1613, followed shortly afterwards by the Vienna version.

The principal literary sources for the scene are Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Lucan's *Bellum civile* (The Civil War, c. 61–65 CE). Ovid's poem contains a detailed description of the fate of the Gorgon Medusa; after Neptune violates her in the temple of Minerva and is transformed by the goddess into a serpent-haired monster whose gaze turns its victims to stone.[4] Medusa's head retains its deadly power even after it has been severed: Perseus later uses it as a terrifying weapon.[5] Ovid also describes how natural elements are transformed when they come into contact with the head; twigs and leaves on which it is laid harden into coral[6] and new life arises from her blood – its first surge leads to the birth of Pegasus and Chrysaor,[7] while the drops that fall during the flight over Libya turn into venomous snakes.[8] Lucan, by contrast, mentions the aghast expression and terrifying gaze of the beheaded Medusa and above all describes in detail the variants of the Libyan snakes, including the *amphisbaena* – a fictional, two-headed serpent, which also appears in this painting and was still thought to be real in Rubens's time.[9]

None of these literary passages tallies precisely with Rubens's scene, which seems instead to combine different moments from the myth. The head has just been unwrapped from a cloth and lies on a rocky surface. Rather than directed towards the viewer, its lethal gaze becomes a grimace on a blue-tinged face that still bears the signs of recent death. A host of brightly coloured serpents coil around it, some growing out of Medusa's hair, others from her blood. Other venomous creatures move around among them, depicted with such verisimilitude that they are readily identifiable. This 'bloody horn of plenty', as Marisa Mandabach has aptly called the scene, has been the subject of much critical analysis, some of it emphasizing the Neostoic ideal of self-control in the face of a shocking experience, some detecting the Aristotelian paradox of art's ability to transform horror into pleasure.

Literature
Butti de Lima 2012, pp. 137–141, 144; Seelig 2017, pp. 42–45; Gruber & Tomášek 2018, pp. 20–24 (text by P. Tomášek); Suda & Nickel 2019, pp. 244–249; Marx 2020, pp. 23, 24; Mandabach 2021, pp. 12–18, 47, 48; Woollett 2021, pp. 16, 26 no. 28; McGrath, Schepers & Vanoppen 2022, I, pp. 345–368 (text by G. Gruber)

Notes
1 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. Gemäldegalerie, 3834.
2 See Huygens 1971, pp. 74, 75.
3 It is noteworthy that both artists are also mentioned in the first inventory, including the Vienna canvas.
4 *Metamorphoses*, Book 4:765–803.
5 *Metamorphoses*, Book 5:177–235.
6 *Metamorphoses*, Book 4:740–752.
7 *Metamorphoses*, Book 4:772–789.
8 *Metamorphoses*, Book 4:614–620.
9 Lucan, *Bellum civile*, Book 9:675–683, 696–838, 719.

Over three screens, a mass of pythons swarms slowly across the impassive face of a young woman. Her impenetrable eyes avoid the viewer's gaze. Though not explicitly an image of Ovid's Medusa, the image of writhing snakes encircling a woman's head is nonetheless immediately evocative of this snake-haired monster.[1] In *Spawn*, Juul Kraijer produces a strikingly introspective image of an 'alter-Medusa'. The denial of eye contact neutralizes the fatal potency of her petrifying gaze, enacting a reversal. The woman's gaze turns inward (a theme that Krayer also explored in her 2007 video *Inner Eye*) and, enhanced by the dark surroundings and lack of sound, her undulating snakes lose some of their aggressive potential: her stillness comes close to petrification. Rather than repelling, the woman's elusive, almost meditative tranquillity and the slow, fluid movements of the snakes draw the viewer in.

From the *gorgoneia* of ancient Greece to the decapitated, disembodied heads of Cellini, Caravaggio and Canova, the image of Medusa, mutilated and monstrous, is near ubiquitous in Western art. Though *Spawn* reproduces the typical focus on the Gorgon's bodiless head, Kraijer's snake-haired woman is a far cry from the Ovidian monster. Woman and snake meld together into one subdued, organic being, the self-contained nature of her gaze directing attention not towards her would-be victim but reflecting an inner perspective on the story of this 'monster' otherwise neglected in literature and art. Yet despite the woman's enigmatic, petrified calm, the resulting image is not always a comforting one. Kraijer's work – which also includes a significant body of drawings rendered in fine, feathery charcoal – is suffused with images of swarms: of snakes, butterflies, branches, birds, moths and bees, melding with or subsuming female bodies.

These fused bodies, overwhelming masses and crawling swarms which, on the one hand, capture the elegant unity of nature and the blurring of boundaries between the human and non-human, on the other also have great potential to cause discomfort in the viewer. Simultaneously fascinating and unnerving, Kraijer's figures teeter between uncanny beauty and the instinctual horror of thronging, writhing nature: the 'convulsive beauty' of the Surrealist artists who have inspired much of the artist's work.[2]

This is also a path that the figure of Medusa hesitantly follows. *Once renowned for her loveliness*, in Ovid's poem her hair is changed by the vengeful goddess Minerva into *revolting snakes*.[3] Not for the first time in the *Metamorphoses*, the consequence of male desire and sexual transgression is the destruction of a woman's body. In both art and literature, Medusa is suspended between seductive sexual object and repulsive monster, victim and villain, animal and human. Though the impression produced by *Spawn* is that of an elegant fusion of body and nature, the threat of obliteration and disfigurement is never wholly absent. As the snakes move over the woman's eyes, nose and mouth, she is rendered fragmentary, conjuring images of blinding and suffocation. The initial shock of the image may fade somewhat as we realize that the snakes pose little threat to the petrified woman beneath, giving way to fascination. Yet the underlying discomfort evoked by both *Spawn* and the destructive transformation of Ovid's Medusa is not entirely forgotten.

Anne Wildschut

Literature
Verzotti 2007; Andreasson 2014; Malbert & Van Alphen 2015; Welling & Teschmacher 2021, pp. 21, 43–45, 56; Croon & Prins 2024

Notes
1 *Metamorphoses*, Book 4:765–803.
2 Malbert & Van Alphen 2015, p. 80; Welling 2021, pp. 14–22.
3 Ovid 1980, p. 115 (Book 4:794, 801).

When Jean-Léon Gérôme embarked on a career as a sculptor in 1878, he was already a successful and celebrated painter in Paris with a penchant for themes from Classical Antiquity. Inspired by recent archaeological discoveries concerning the polychroming of ancient Greek marbles,[1] his coloured statues were radical three-dimensional experiments to 'breathe life into sculpture through painting'.[2] He moved back and forth between the two disciplines for the remainder of his professional life, with colour as the linking element. Gérôme's fascination with the verisimilitude of coloured sculpture reached its apotheosis in this *Pygmalion and Galatea* – the best known of the three versions he devoted to the theme from *Metamorphoses* [see cat. 68].[3] Ovid's sculptor, Pygmalion, is shown in an intimate embrace with the marble statue of Galatea, which he has just completed and the goddess Venus has brought to life. Cupid, floating on a cloud and loosing off his arrow, ignites Pygmalion's love for his own creation.

We witness the moment of metamorphosis as it unfolds in Galatea's marble body. Gérôme's ingenious use of colour shows the cool, white stone progressively transforming downwards into the warm, blood-infused skin of a living young woman. The way Galatea bends her newly animated upper body towards her creator is a clever invention on the painter's part.[4] Pygmalion's tanned arm contrasts beautifully with the fair tone of her back, in keeping with a long-standing pictorial convention that distinguishes between male and female flesh tones.[5] A variety of attributes in the background seem to offer a contrasting commentary on this metamorphosis. The small sculpture directly behind Galatea of a seated woman with a mirror might refer to the illusory nature of reflections – as brilliantly expressed in Ovid by the tale of Narcissus – while the metal shield with the head of Medusa alludes to the fatal petrifying power of her gaze and hence to a transformation in the opposite direction. The Gorgon's gaping mouth finds a visual echo in the two antique theatrical masks nearby, which might also reference the illusory world of the stage.

Gérôme varied his viewpoint in the other versions he made of the theme, so that the paintings form a kind of virtual tour of the statue of Galatea,[6] lending weight to the idea that he based the paintings on the plaster model for his marble *Pygmalion and the Statue* (1892), which he began in 1891.[7] We constantly find transformations of this kind from painting to sculpture and vice versa in Gérôme's late works, in which the painter-sculptor's identification with Pygmalion is so strong that they might well be considered self-portraits. At the same time they are expressions of a centuries-old aspiration to animate lifeless material through mimetic art. Yet this was almost an artistic rearguard action at a moment when new media such as photography and film were opening up entirely new possibilities for representing reality in an ostensibly natural way.

Frits Scholten

Provenance
Art dealers Boussod, Valadon & Cie, Paris, 1892; Charles Tyson Yerkes, Chicago, 1892–1905; his estate 1905–1910; his estate sale, Mendelssohn Hall, New York, 5–8 April 1910, no. 21; Justice P.H. Dugro, New York, from 1910; Louis C. Raegner, New York, before 1927; gift of the latter to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1927

Literature
Blühm 1996, p. 47, fig. 47; Ackerman 2000, pp. 330, 338, 390, no. 385, and figs. on pp. 159, 331; Eschenburg 2001, pp. 73, 172, 210, 211, no. 79; Blühm 2002, pp. 150–151, fig. 5; Stoichita 2008, pp. 170–172, fig. 88; Des Cars, De Font-Réaulx & Papet 2010, no. 175; Roller 2014, fig. 65; Syson et al. 2018, pp. 140, 283, no. 36, 142 (fig.)

Notes
1 Blühm 1996, pp. 15–26, 45–47 and fig. 45.
2 *Sculpturae vitam insufflat pictura*, the title of an 1893 painting by Gérôme (The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, inv. no. 69/31); see Blühm 1996, fig. 45.
3 *Metamorphoses*, Book 10:243–297.
4 Eschenburg 2001, p. 210.
5 Eschenburg 2001, p. 73 (text by M. Fend).
6 Ackerman 2000, nos. 386, 387, 388, 388.2.
7 Hearst Castle, San Simeon, CA; sadly stripped of its polychromy. See Blühm 1996, p. 47, fig. 46; Blühm 2002, fig. 4.

At the centre of a verdant meadow populated with an array of woodland creatures, an elegantly dressed young man gazes serenely into the mirror-like waters of a marble fountain, entranced by his own solemn reflection. An inscription on his upper thigh identifies him as the cursed youth Narcissus from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[1] Pictured in the fatal moment of the discovery of his reflected self, Narcissus stands in a setting that replaces the rustic *locus amoenus* of Ovid's poem with the courtly environs of the medieval pleasure garden.

The millefleurs style of this tapestry reached the peak of its popularity between 1480 and 1520 in the royal and noble courts of northern France, where its functions were at the same time decorative, practical and didactic.[2] Characterized by ornate backdrops teeming with flora and fauna, these tapestries depicted a diverse range of figurative subjects: from rustic shepherds and amorous figures to scenes from history, mythology and the Bible.[3] Though not always related directly to their bucolic settings, these subjects invariably boasted of their owners' refined education and taste.

Among the classical figures rendered on extant millefleurs tapestries appear Aeneas, Hercules and the legendary Assyrian queen Semiramis. Unlike these inspiring moral exemplars, the myth of Narcissus presented its viewers with both a tantalizing amorous narrative and a grave moral warning of the perils of pride and earthly desire. The symbolism of the medieval pleasure garden – a fixture of the literary and artistic tradition of courtly love – played a crucial role in this fifteenth-century interpretation of the Ovidian myth. Popular in both sacred and secular art, the pleasure garden was at once an embodiment of divine paradise on Earth and a sensuous setting for the fulfilment of forbidden desires.[4] In replacing his Ovidian pool with an ornate fountain, and his hunter's garb with the fashionable dress of courtly life,[5] the designer(s) of this tapestry transposed the mythological Narcissus into the world of medieval chivalric tradition. Understood in the context of the Christian morality that suffused this medieval literary genre, Narcissus' fatal arrogance became a deadly sin. Cautioning against pride and the excessive admiration of earthly beauty, while simultaneously exalting through an ornate, sensual image the material and cultural capital of its owner, the woven threads of the tapestry form their own moralizing mirror.

The role of the courtly love tradition in reimagining the Narcissus myth would undoubtedly have been clearer to an educated medieval viewer than it might be to a modern audience today. In one fourteenth-century retelling of the Ovidian myth, the authors of the famous thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* placed the spring of Narcissus in a 'Garden of Pleasure' replete with 'beautiful violets, blooming, fresh and new… white flowers and red, and yellow ones in great profusion',[6] and compared the youth's sterile, insubstantial desire unfavourably with the outward, generative love of Pygmalion.[7]

Oppositions between terrestrial and celestial desire, appearance and reality, are thus brought to the fore in this tapestry through associations with the motifs of courtly love. The Ovidian myth is metamorphosed for the moral and literary expectations of the tapestry's fifteenth-century viewers. For those familiar with the myth, the extravagant flowers surrounding the doomed youth must have carried an additional and uneasy symbolism. Withered at the water's edge, Narcissus himself was transformed by the pitying gods into a white-yellow daffodil, joining the columbines, daisies, and marigolds that furnish his backdrop.[8]

Anne Wildschut

Literature
Siple 1928; Souchal 1974, no. 33; Cavallo 1979, pp. 30–39; Belozerskaya 2005, pp. 88, 123 (fig. III-224), 125; Macey 2020

Notes
1 *Metamorphoses*, Book 3:339–510.
2 Macey 2020, p. 356.
3 Cavallo 1979, p. 36.
4 Macey 2020, p. 366.
5 Ovid 1916, p. 153 (Book 3:405–415).
6 De Lorris & De Meun 2008, pp. 22–23.
7 De Lorris & De Meun 2008, p. 322.
8 Ovid 1916, p. 161 (Book 3:509–510).

In the myth depicted here from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the young Narcissus is chastised by Nemesis, goddess of retribution, for rejecting the nymph Echo. His punishment is to fall in love with his own reflection in the water – an impossible love that would lead to his transformation and death.[5] Caravaggio opted to express the moment of maximum emotional tension through an innovative, iconographic approach; Narcissus leans over the water to gaze at himself, failing to understand that the object of his desire is an illusion. As Ovid writes of the unfortunate lover:

> *How often did he offer vainly kiss the treacherous pool, how often plunge his arms deep in the waters, as he tried to clasp the neck he saw! …*
> *Poor foolish boy, why vainly grasp at the fleeting image that eludes you? The thing you are seeing does not exist: only turn aside and you will lose what you love. What you see is but the shadow cast by your reflection; in itself it is nothing.*[6]

Placing the scene against a dark background intensifies the figure's isolation, both visually and narratively, rendering the whole even more psychologically intense. While the composition is extremely simple, it possesses an immense theatrical charge. The young man kneels, his body forming an ellipse that is completed in the reflection on the water's surface. A closed structure emerges through this symmetry, a visual symbol of self-reflection that ultimately leads to the loss of self. No coincidence then that this painting has become something of a psychological icon and can be read as a reference to the Greek aphorism 'γνῶθι σεαυτόν' (know thyself).[7] In capturing the ephemeral nature of the reflection, Caravaggio likewise implicitly transcends the notion that painting is merely a two-dimensional illusion of reality.

In his 1916 work, art historian Roberto Longhi declared it an early painting by Caravaggio.[8] While it is not mentioned in any early sources, the canvas might be linked to a consignment of paintings sent to Savona by the Genoese Giovanni Battista Valdibella in 1645, which is said to have included a painting depicting Narcissus by Caravaggio;[9] or to the Giordani family from Pesaro, who were friends with Cardinal del Monte, one of the artist's patrons.[10] Longhi's attribution persuaded many other researchers in turn to attribute the work to Caravaggio.[11] In so doing, they cited similarities with works from the late sixteenth century, from his paintings in the Contarelli Chapel through to *The Penitent Mary Magdalene* in the Galleria Doria Pamphilj. Technical analysis performed during the 1995 restoration further supports the attribution to Caravaggio; a variety of *pentimenti* were discovered, as well as a painting technique that closely matches his.[12]

There have also been opposing voices. According to the most popular of these more recent hypotheses, the painting ought to be attributed to Giovanni Antonio Galli, known as Lo Spadarino (1585–1652). Cesare Brandi was the first to express this opinion in 1974,[13] and it was later reiterated, backed up with new arguments, by Gianni Papi, who dated *Narcissus* to around 1645.[14] Papi based his conclusion on stylistic affinities with other works by Lo Spadarino, most notably *The Baptism of Constantine* in the Colle di Val d'Elsa (Museo Civico e Diocesano d'Arte Sacra, c. 1650), and also on differences in the application of colour and Caravaggio's 'dramatic, powerful, tormented and austere expressiveness'.[15]

Alessandro Cosma

Provenance
Marchese Camillo Gavotti (1625–1678), Palazzo Gavotti, Savona and Genoa, 1645 (?); *Marchese* Francesco Serra (1644–1703), Palazzo Rebuffo Serra, Genoa, 1679 (?); possibly purchased by Laudadio della Ripa (c. 1792–1869), Castello di Volognano; his nephew, Sansone d'Ancona (1814–1894);[1] his brother, Alessandro d'Ancona (1835–1914); his son, Paolo d'Ancona (1878–1964), Milan, 1913;[2] purchased in Rome by Russian diplomat Vasily Bogdanovich Khvoshchinsky (1880–1953), c. 1914;[3] gifted by him to the Gallerie Nazionali d'Arte Antica, 1916[4]

Literature
Longhi 1916, pp. 258; Longhi 1968, p. 26; Marsicola 1979, p. 52; Gregori, Salerno & Spear 1985, pp. 265–268 (entry by M. Gregori); Papi 1986, pp. 24, 25; Vodret 1989, pp. 222–225; Gregori 1991, pp. 359–368 (entry by G. Papi); Vodret 1996, pp. 167–183; Marini 2001, pp. 445, 446; Papi 2003, pp. 155–160; Schütze 2009, pp. 75–77; Vodret 2009, pp. 242–247; Careri 2017, pp. 66–72; Papi 2018, pp. 217–232; Scholten & Swoboda 2019, no. 1 (entry by C. Ricasoli); Cappelletti & Terzaghi 2025, pp. 202–205 (entry by M. Di Monte)

Notes
1 Novati 1915, p. 102; Levi D'Ancona Modena 2012, p. 153.
2 Longhi 1916, p. 258; Vodret 1989, pp. 224, 225.
3 Giorgini 2011, pp. 16–21.
4 Vodret 1989, pp. 224, 225.
5 *Metamorphoses*, Book 3:339–510.
6 Ovid 1980, p. 85 (Book 3:427–430 and 432–434).
7 Macchi & Vitale 1987, pp. 118–124; Calvesi 1990, pp. 57, 58.
8 Longhi 1916; Longhi 1968.
9 Marini 2001, p. 445.
10 Vodret 1989, p. 224.
11 See Marini 2001, p. 445, for a summary.
12 Vodret 1996.
13 Marsicola 1979.
14 Papi 1986; Papi 2003; Papi 2018.
15 Papi 2003, p. 159.

Still life, allegory, portrait? Or even all three at once? Giuseppe Arcimboldo, the maker of this spectacular panel, presents us with an interesting question. Are we looking at a joke, a *scherzo*, constructed from ingeniously and amusingly arranged vegetables, grains, flowers and fruit in the form of a bust? Is this an anthropomorphic still life[1] that teases us with the paradox that the whole and its individual parts obstruct one another visually, as Arcimboldo often painted? Or is the painting actually intended as a real, possibly caricatured portrait of an existing person?[2] It is precisely this elusive and entirely new, ambiguous iconography that lends the work its transformative aspect: the panel can present itself to the viewer in different roles, in which capacity it is a direct reflection of its subject, Vertumnus, the Roman god of the seasons and change (*vertere* in Latin). Ovid describes the deity's ability to assume a whole range of convincing disguises: rough harvester, ox-herd, vineyard worker, fruit picker, soldier or fisherman, accompanied by their respective attributes – a basket of barley ears, wisps of fresh hay tied round his brow, ox-goads, a knife, a ladder, a sword or a fishing rod.[3]

The panel's identification as Vertumnus is based on *Il Figino* (1591) by Gregorio Comanini (1550–c. 1608), who was a friend of the painter. The poem – actually a poetic commentary – accompanied the painting when it was sent to the court in Prague as a gift from Arcimboldo to his patron Rudolf II of Milan in 1590–1591.[4] *Il Figino* describes the work in detail, surprisingly not merely as Vertumnus, but also as a portrait of Emperor Rudolf II in the guise of the Roman god. It formed the culmination, in a sense, of the two series of similar paintings that Arcimboldo produced during his time at the imperial court between 1562 and 1587: eight profile heads of the Four Seasons and the Four Elements, each composed of appropriate motifs. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann described the series as glorifying the emperor, 'because they are new kinds of metamorphoses',[5] while the Milanese humanist Giovanni Battista Fonteo (1546–1580) compared them in a poem with Jupiter's shape-shifting, based on Ovid's account.[6] It is certainly plausible that Arcimboldo had Ovid in mind while painting the series, although he also drew on another classical source for this *Vertumnus*, a poem about the god in the *Elegies* of Sextus Propertius (c. 47–15 BCE).[7]

Portraying Rudolf II as Vertumnus, together with the other eight paintings, created an imperial-allegorical ensemble in which the ruler was symbolically assigned the role of master over the Seasons and the Elements. The imperishable majesty of this cosmic position is underscored by the fact that the fruit and vegetables[8] – painted so naturalistically – from which the portrait is composed originate from every season.[9] While the panel, which Rudolf had awaited 'with extreme desire' ('*con estremo desiderio*'),[10] will surely have raised an imperial smile,[11] the tone of the work was in fact earnest and erudite rather than comical or teasing; this was 'a serious joke'.[12] Its deeper message was that the helmsman of the Seasons and Elements could ensure order and regularity and hence a return to the 'Golden Age', the 'everlasting spring' that Ovid described in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*.[13]

Frits Scholten

Provenance
Emperor Rudolf II (1552–1612), Prague, 1591–1612; Habsburg imperial collections, Prague, 1612–1648; taken to Sweden as war booty by Swedish troops commanded by Hans Christoph von Königsmarck (1600–1663), 1648; probably Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689), 1648–1652; Per Brahe the Younger (1602–1680), Bogesund Castle, before 1680; […] Magnus Brahe (1790–1844), Skokloster Castle, between 1828 and 1844

Literature
Lomazzo 1590, p. 157; Hulten et al. 1987, pp. 79, 94, 96, 103, 104, 164, 165 (fig.), 358–363 and cover; Maiorino 1991, pp. 76, 77, 80, 81, 91, 92, 96, 104, 126 and fig. 19; DaCosta Kaufmann 1993, pp. 103, 126–135, fig. 43; Ferino-Pagden 2007, pp. 80, 186, 187 (no. IV.38) (entry by T. DaCosta Kaufmann); cat. Washington 2010, pp. 18, 20 (no. 16) and cover; DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, pp. 46, 61, 91–103, 110, 199, fig. 0.3; Berra 2017, pp. 122, 124, 125, fig. 4; Ferino-Pagden 2017, p. 157, fig. 2

Notes
1 Berra 2017, pp. 124, 125.
2 Maiorino 1991, pp. 76, 77, 96 (Vertumnus as maze) and DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, p. 103, quoting Comanini's 1590 poem about the painting: '*Qual tu sii, che mi guardi/Strana e difforme imago*' (Whoever you are that looks at me, a strange and deformed portrait…); see, regarding 'caricature' in Arcimboldo, X. Vert in Weemans, Gamboni & Martin 2016, p. 211; Ferino-Pagden 2017, p. 162.
3 Ovid 1980, p. 328 (Book 14:643–651).
4 DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, p. 84.
5 DaCosta Kaufmann 1993, p. 114.
6 DaCosta Kaufmann 1993, p. 114
7 DaCosta Kaufmann 1993, pp. 124, 129–135; DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, pp. 91–93.
8 DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, p. 162 (*cavati dal naturale*, 'taken from nature').
9 DaCosta Kaufmann 1993, p. 127.
10 Lomazzo 1590, p. 157: '*Hà l'istesso Arcimboldo poco meno che perfetto un'altro quadro, nel quale sarà dipinto Vertunno sopra gli orti tutto fatti di frutti, per mandarlo all'istessa Maestà, che con lettere mostra di starla aspettando con estremo desiderio. E questo insieme con gli altri accresceranno infinito ornameno, & splendore a quel bellissimo Museo.*' ('Arcimboldo has another painting that is almost perfect, in which Vertumnus will be depicted above gardens full of fruit, to be sent to the same Majesty [Rudolf II], who in letters shows that he is awaiting it with extreme desire. This, together with the others, will add infinite ornamentation and splendour to that beautiful museum.')
11 Cf. DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, pp. 102, 103.
12 DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, p. 199.
13 Ovid 1980, pp. 31–32 (Book 1:89–112, esp. 100 and 107); DaCosta Kaufmann 1993, pp. 127; DaCosta Kaufmann 2009, pp. 110, 111.

Johann Michael Egner
fl. c. 1630–1660, ivory carving
Hans Jacob Erhart
fl., second and third quarter of the 17th century, goldsmithing

The Rothschild Oliphant c. 1645
Decorative hunting horn

The maker of this impressive, decorative horn – known as *The Rothschild Oliphant* after its illustrious former owners – was only identified as the Strasbourg ivory carver Johann Michael Egner in 2023.[1] Egner produced a stylistically and thematically cohesive body of carved work in ivory, wood and rhinoceros horn. A smaller, stylistically very similar horn bears his HME monogram and the year 1647.[2] While horns like this were showpieces in princely art cabinets – their origins in hunting (the preserve of the nobility) now only apparent in their decoration – they did occasionally find their way into the collections of the wealthy middle classes too. A smaller example made by Egner belonged, for instance, to the Amsterdam merchant Jacob de Sadeler (1640–1718) in 1673.[3]

Egner could be a little hesitant in his rendering of human figures, but he excelled in the ingenious stacking and interweaving of all manner of animals, often wild. The surface of *The Rothschild Oliphant* and its accompanying mount – undoubtedly his most ambitious piece – is decorated with almost thirty different animals, European, African and American, and even the mythical unicorn. Lower species – two fish, a snake and a kind of armadillo – form the appropriate decoration of the mount. What connects this bestial mêlée is the fact that most of the animals are in motion, desperately fleeing unseen hunters (or one another?) in apparent disorder, or else entangled in mutual combat. This is not a peaceful, paradisal scene, therefore, but an ingenious chain of fearsome fauna, the unravelling of which will have amused the horn's owner.

Egner evidently had access to bestiaries, zoological reference books or individual animal prints which he could adapt as he saw fit to meet the demands of the composition. The inclusion of a unicorn on the Rothschild horn suggests that his choices were guided by (now outdated) classifications of the animal kingdom stretching back to Aristotle, and which also took in monsters and mythical creatures. Furthermore, a remarkable number of the depicted species can also be found among the life-sized, sculptural animal scenes created around 1570 in the *Grotta degli animali* at Villa Medicea di Castello near Florence, albeit without the same dynamism or mutual conflict.[4]

As was often the case with *Kunstkammer* pieces fashioned from an elephant's tusk or rhinoceros horn, the natural, curved and pointed shape of the original ivory has been respected here. Other references to the raw, natural material include the prominent position given to an elephant at the horn's extremity. But other antlered and horned beasts are also given a firm place in Egner's menagerie: the unicorn, two ibexes, two red deer, and a moose, a buffalo and a wolf with large fangs. They allude to the artistic metamorphosis of the raw material, thanks to Egner's virtuoso working of the ivory.

Provenance
Mayer Carl von Rothschild (1820–1886), Frankfurt-am-Main; his daughter Thérèse, Baroness de Rothschild (1847–1931) and Baron James de Rothschild (1844–1881), Paris; by descent within the Rothschild family, Paris; Paris art trade; Kunstkammer Georg Laue, Munich

Literature
Jones 1912, pl. XVIII; Bastian, Kugel & Loeb-Obrenan 2014, p. 39 (fig.); Laue & Spenlé 2023; cat. Paris & Potsdam 2025, pp. 235, 236, no. 103

Notes
1 Laue & Spenlé 2023, pp. 15–17.
2 Laue & Spenlé 2023, p. 15 and figs. 6, 7 (Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, inv. no. D472).
3 Staatliches Museum Schwerin, inv. no. KJ 4455. Möller 2001, no. 296. De Sadeler was clearly a status-conscious burgher as he had his name and coat of arms engraved on the horn's silver mount (now lost), and also, in 1672, on the silver lid of a Westerwald beer mug (year letter 1669, master's mark of the Amsterdam silversmith Lucas Draef). The latter piece was offered for sale in 2024 by Rondom 1920, The Hague; see: www.rondom1920.nl/collectie/tafelzilver/westerwald-aardewerk-bierpul-met-zilveren-deksel-1669/ (accessed 11 July 2025).
4 Masseti 2008; Giannotti 2018.

Sculptor from the circle of Jan Gossart
'Master H.L.'?

St George and the Dragon

c. 1530

The maker of this 'wildly romantic' *St George* trampling the vanquished dragon is assumed to be from the Low Countries, in the immediate artistic circle of the influential painter Jan Gossart (c. 1478–1532). Shortly after visiting Rome in 1508–1509 in the company of his patron, Duke Philip of Burgundy, Gossart became one of the pioneers of the Renaissance in the North. With his effeminate pose, classical facial features and armour lavishly decorated in the *all'antica* style, this *St George* shows a great affinity with three drawings Gossart made during or shortly after his time in Italy.[1] There is also a strong resemblance to a standing St Adrian in an Antwerp miniature in a Book of Hours from Grimbergen Abbey, dating from around 1510.[2]

The chivalric tale of the knight George who saves a young princess from the clutches of a cruel dragon which can only be placated by the sacrifice of children, was included in the *Legenda aurea* or 'Golden Legend', a thirteenth-century collection of saints' lives compiled by Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1228/30–1298). Following his heroic deed, George marries the princess. The story is an ingenious Christian version of Ovid's tale of Perseus freeing Andromeda, who had been chained to a rock for a sea monster to devour.[3] Due in part to the influence of the Crusades, the legend of St George appealed to 'romantic' chivalric ideals and a 'dark yearning for heroism').[4] The conqueror of evil became a role model for rulers who – like the Burgundian dukes Charles the Bold and Philip the Handsome – liked to have themselves portrayed in the guise of the holy knight.[5]

The statuette of St George is an ingeniously conceived 'semi-finished product', in which the contrast between the meticulously detailed, overly elegant *all'antica* front and a rear part left deliberately rough is the underlying theme.[6] The maker was happy for it to be visible from the back that the sculpture has been constructed from small blocks of boxwood, some of which still even retain traces of bark [fig. 96a].[7] In the first instance, this speaks to the woodcarver's economy, in that larger blocks of this slow-growing variety were expensive and hard to come by. Above all, however, the seemingly casual finish was a deliberate display of his creative process and virtuosity. In its contrast with the refined front, the rough tree trunk – or blocks taken from it – reveals the true quality of the sculptor, who has taken this natural material and bestowed a meaningful, artful form on it. By turning the statuette around – its refinement and size meant it was also undoubtedly observed while held in the hand[8] – the viewer could experience this form of artistic metamorphosis with great immediacy.

Literature
Baker 1998; Jopek 2002, no. 52; cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, no. 61; Scholten 2017, pp. 461–467, 631 (no. 74), and figs. 209, 213

Notes
1 Ainsworth 2010, nos. 103–105; Ainsworth 2014, pp. 7–8.
2 Cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, no. 24.
3 *Metamorphoses*, Book 4:665–764.
4 Müller 1959, p. 195, citing Friedländer: '*dunkle Sehnsucht nach Heldentum*'.
5 Van der Velden 2000, pp. 107–115. cat. Grand-Hornu 2015, pp. 117–120, fig. 96 and no. 35. The sculpture of St George in Sint-Joris-ten-Distel (Belgium) is a portrait of Philip the Handsome.
6 Baker 1998, p. 498; Scholten 2017, pp. 461–467.
7 Cf. cat. 8.
8 Cf. Carruthers 2014, pp. 178–180.

[96a] *St George and the Dragon*, back

Frits Scholten

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Apollo, the Poet and His Work
***Metamorphoses*, Book 1:1–4**

Cat. 1 Amsterdam
Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)
Triumph of Ovid
Rome, c. 1624–1625
Oil on canvas, 148 × 176 cm
Rome, Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica di Roma, Galleria Corsini, inv. no. 478
Photo: Courtesy of Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica, MIC – Bibliotheca Hertziana, Istituto Max Planck for the History of Art/Enrico Fontolan

Cat. 2 Amsterdam
Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)
The Inspiration of a Poet
Rome, 1628
Oil on canvas, 94 × 69.5 cm
Hanover, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, inv. no. PAM 839
Photo: Landesmuseum Hanover – Artothek

Cat. 3 Amsterdam
Georg Lotter the Elder (*fl.* 1618–1661) or Georg Lotter the Younger (*fl.* 1651–1670), partly after prints by Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607–1642)
Goblet with Orpheus and eight other scenes from Ovid's Metamorphoses
Augsburg, c. 1650
Gold, enamel, h. 20.5 cm; ø 17.3 cm
Inscription, inside *cuppa*: *G. LOT F.* and, in ligature, on a rock in the scene with the Gigantomachy: *IGB*
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-17095

Cat. 4 Not included in the exhibition
Antonio Tempesta (c. 1555–1630), attributed to
Frontispiece for Antonio Tempesta, *Metamorphoseon sive Transformationum,*
Amsterdam, 1606–1620
Engraving, 112 × 142 mm
Inscribed on bottom centre: *Wilhelmus Iansonius excudit, Amsterodami.*
Rome, Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, inv. no. S-FC115398
Photo: Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, published with permission from the Ministero della cultura, Fondo Corsini, proprietà Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei

Cat. 5 Amsterdam
Giacomo Franco (1550–1620)
Le metamorfosi di Ovidio, *Libro secondo,* p. 28
Venice, 1584
Engraving, 295 × 129 mm
Signed, on bottom on either side of grotesque head: *Giacomo Franco*
The Hague, KB, National Library of the Netherlands, KW 758 B 24

Cat. 6 Rome
Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)
Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide
(The Metamorphosis of Ovid)
Paris, c. 1886
Plaster, h. 34 cm
Inscribed, on the base: *Au poète W.E. Henley/son vieil ami/A. Rodin*
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. A.117–1937; bequeathed by Mr Charles Shannon, 1937

Chaos & Creation
***Metamorphoses*, Book 1:5–88**

Cat. 7 Amsterdam & Rome
Louis Finson (1570/78–1617)
Chaos or *The Battle of the Four Elements*
Naples, 1611
Oil on canvas, 179 × 169.2 cm
Signed and dated: [LVDO]*VICVS. FINSONIVS.FECIT.NAPOLI. A 1611*
Houston, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, inv. no. 2018.1

Cat. 8 Amsterdam & Rome
Jan Pietersz Beelthouwer (c. 1603–1669)
Chaos: the Disorder of the Four Elements
Amsterdam, 1663
Boxwood, h. 22.5 cm
Inscribed, around the base: *I·P· STATVARIVS INVENTOR · AMSTERDAMI 1663* and · Χ ά ος ·
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-2021–215; purchased with the support of the Rijsterborgh Fonds/ Rijksmuseum Fonds

Cat. 9 Rome
Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617), and workshop
Order in Chaos or *The Creation of the Four Elements*
Haarlem, 1589
Engraving, 176 × 252 mm
Inscription: *E' tenebris deforme Chaos secessit oborta/ Luce, suoq*[ue] *loco sunt quaeq*[ue] *Elementa locata/ Astra polo radiant, quibus imminet igneus Aether,/ Aera subsequitur Pontus, subit ultima Tellus. F. Estius*
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1882-A-6343

Cat. 10 Amsterdam
George Frederic Watts (1817–1904)
Chaos
London (or Isle of Wight), c. 1875–1882
Oil on canvas, 106.7 × 304.8 cm
London, Tate, inv. no. N01647; presented by George Frederic Watts, 1897

Cat. 11 Amsterdam & Rome
Herri met de Bles (c. 1510–1566)
Paradise
Flanders, c. 1541–1550
Oil on panel, 46.6 × 45.5 cm
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-780

Cat. 12 Amsterdam & Rome
Constantin Brâncuși (1876–1957)
Promethée (*Prometheus*)
Paris, 1911
Carrara marble, 13.7 × 18.8 × 13.7 cm
Philadelphia, Philadelphia Art Museum, inv. no. 1950–134-5; The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950
Photo: © Succession Brancusi, All Rights Reserved (ADAGP), c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2026

Cat. 13 Amsterdam & Rome
Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)
La Terre (The Earth)
Paris, 1884 (original model), 1896 (this version)
Plaster, 47.5 × 114 × 40 cm
Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, inv. no. NMSk 2392
Photo: Viktor Fordell

Cat. 14 Amsterdam
Ana Mendieta (1948–1985)
Birth (Gunpowder Works)
New York, 1981
Black-and-white photograph, 76.2 × 101.6 cm
London, Alison Jacques Gallery, inv. no. AJG-AMe-00108b
© The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC. Licensed by Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York, Pictoright Amsterdam 2026, Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery

Venus, Amor and the Power of Love

Cat. 15 Rome
Tiziano Vecellio, known as Titian (c. 1485–1576)
Sacred and Profane Love
Venice, 1515–1516
Oil on canvas, 118 × 278 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 147
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Mauro Coen

Cat. 16 Rome
Tiziano Vecellio, known as Titian (c. 1485–1576)
Venus Blindfolding Cupid
Venice, c. 1565
Oil on canvas, 118 × 185 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 170
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Mauro Coen

Cat. 17 Not included in the exhibition
Joseph Heintz the Elder, known as il Vecchio (1564–1609)
Bow-carving Amor
Prague, after 1603
Oil on panel, 135 × 64 cm
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. Gemäldegalerie 1588
Photo: © KHM-Museumsverband

Arachne: Weaving Stories
***Metamorphoses*, Book 6:1–145**

Cat. 18 Amsterdam & Rome
Jacopo Robusti, known as Tintoretto (1518–1594)
Minerva and Arachne
Venice, c. 1575–1585
Oil on canvas, 145 × 272 cm
Florence, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, inv. no. Contini Bonacossi 35
Photo: © Gabinetto Fotografico delle Gallerie degli Uffizi. Courtesy of the Italian Ministery of Culture – Uffizi Galleries

Cat. 19 Amsterdam & Rome
Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)
Pallas and Arachne
Antwerp, 1636–1637
Oil on oak, 26.7 × 38.1 cm.
Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 58.18; Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund
Photo: © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts/Travis Fullerton

Cat. 20 Amsterdam
Luca Giordano (1634–1705)
Arachne and Minerva
Madrid, 1695
Oil on canvas, 211 × 195 cm
Inscription: *GIORDANUS F.F.* and *SIC, CVM SVPERIS*
Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional. Colecciones Reales. Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, inv. no. 10013393

Cat. 21 Amsterdam
Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)
Spider Couple
2003
Bronze with silver nitrate patina, 229 × 361 × 366 cm
The Hague, Kunstmuseum, inv. no. 1054408; long-term loan from the Louise Bourgeois Trust Collection, New York, IB4272 BC-0003476
Photo: © Louise Bourgeois Trust/ VAGA New York, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2026

Cat. 22 Rome
Karel van Mander (1548–1606), design attributed
Workshop of François Spiering (1549/51–1630), execution
Diana and Procris Bidding Each Other Farewell
Delft, c. 1610
Wool and silk, 354/351 × 546/542 cm
Inscription, at the centre of the narrow yellow inner border: *FRANCISCVS SPIRINGIVS.FECIT.*, H D (Holland Delft); on the left, and respectively on the lower right of the narrow outer border: *MARS. ET. VENVS.* and *LEANDER.ET.HAERO.*
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-1954-69-B; gift of Van Leer's Vatenfabriek N.V., Amsterdam

Cat. 23 Rome
Jean (Jan) Jans the Younger (c. 1644–1723), design
Manufacture Royale des Gobelins, execution
Bacchus and Ariadne and *Pan and Syrinx*
Paris, c. 1680
Wool and silk, 321 × 248 cm (*Bacchus and Ariadne*) and 328 × 212 cm (*Pan and Syrinx*)
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-1959-59-C and -D

Apollo and Daphne
***Metamorphoses*, Book 1:452–567**

Cat. 24 Rome
Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680)
Apollo and Daphne
Rome, 1622–1625
Carrara marble, h. 243 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. CV
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Luciano Romano

Cat. 25 Rome
Master of the Roman de Fauvel
Apollo and Daphne in *Ovide moralisé en vers*, folio 4 recto
Paris, c. 1325–1330
Parchment, c. 80 × 80 mm
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Ms. 5069 rès

Cat. 26 Rome
Piero del Pollaiuolo (c. 1441–before 1496)
Apollo and Daphne
Florence, c. 1470–1475
Oil on panel, 29.5 × 20 cm
London, The National Gallery, inv. no. NG928; Wynn Ellis Bequest, 1876

Cat. 27 Rome
Giovanni di Niccolò de Luteri, known as Dosso Dossi (c. 1487–1542)
Apollo
Ferrara, c. 1525
Oil on canvas, 191 × 116 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 001
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Mauro Coen

Cat. 28 Rome
Apollo and Daphne in *Ovidio Metamorphoseos Vulgare*, folio VII recto
Venice, c. 1497
Woodcut, 90 × 142 mm
Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, Vol. INC. 681
Photo: © Casanatense Library/ Giovanni De Angelis

Cat. 29 Amsterdam
Bernard Salomon (1506–1566)
Daphne werdt eenen Laurierboom, in Guillaume Borluyt, *Excellente figueren ghesneden vuyten vppersten poëte Ovidius vuyt vyfthien boucken der veranderinghen met huerlier bedietsele duer Guilliaume Borluit, burgher der stede van Ghendt*
Lyon, 1557
Woodcut, octavo, h. 170 mm
The Hague, KB, National Library of the Netherlands, KW 1705 E 3

Cat. 30 Rome
Giovanni Antonio Rusconi (1520–1587)
Apollo and Daphne, in Lodovico Dolce, *Le Trasformationi,* p. 18
Venice, c. 1548–1552
Woodcut, 63 × 90 mm
Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, CCC.N.VII.18
Photo: © Casanatense Library/ Giovanni De Angelis

Cat. 31 Not included in the exhibition
Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665)
Apollo and Daphne
Rome, 1663–1664
Oil on canvas, 155 × 200 cm
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures, inv. no. MI 776
Photo: © GrandPalaisRmn (Musée du Louvre)/Mathieu Rabeau

Cat. 32 Amsterdam
Clemente Maioli (1625–1671), design
Barberini workshop, execution
Apollo and Daphne and *Latona Turning the Lycian Peasants into Frogs*
Rome, 1659–1663
Wool and silk, 419 × 477 cm (*Apollo and Daphne*) and 419 × 484 cm (*Latona*)
Stamped on the back of the original linen: *FB* (Francesco Barberini)
Lausanne, Fondation Toms Pauli, inv. nos. 87 and 86

Diana and Actaeon
***Metamorphoses*, Book 3:138–252**

Cat. 33 Amsterdam
Jeremias Ritter (1582–1646)
Goblet in the Shape of Actaeon
Nuremberg, c. 1609–1629
Gilded silver and red coral (*Corallium rubrum*), h. 50 cm
Inscriptions: Maker's mark of Jeremias Ritter (shield with raised arm holding a sword surrounded by three stars) and Nuremberg hallmark ('N' in circle) for the period 1609–1629
Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, inv. no. IV.261
Photo: Jürgen Karpinski

Cat. 34 Rome
Paulus van Vianen (c. 1570–1613)
Ewer and basin with scenes from the story of Diana, Callisto and Actaeon
Prague, 1613
Silver, h. 34 cm (ewer); 40.5 × 52.3 cm (basin)
Inscription, on the front of the basin, on a rock: *PV 1613*
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. nos. BK-16089-A and -B

Jupiter's Loves: Europa
***Metamorphoses*, Book 2:834–875**

Cat. 35 Amsterdam
Giuseppe Cesari, known as Cavaliere d'Arpino (1568–1640)
The Rape of Europa
Rome, c. 1603–1606
Oil on canvas, 57 × 45 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 378
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Mauro Coen

Cat. 36 Amsterdam
Jacques Jordaens (1593–1678)
The Rape of Europa
Antwerp, 1643
Oil on canvas, 172.1 × 190 cm
Signed and dated, at bottom left: *J. Jord:ns. Fec. 1643*
Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille, inv. no. 76
Photo: © GrandPalaisRmn (PBA, Lille)/Philipp Bernard

Cat. 37 Amsterdam
Laurent de La Hyre (1606–1656), design
Manufacture Royale des Gobelins, atelier Faubourg Saint-Marcel, headed by Hippolyte de Comans, Paris, execution
Europa on the Bull
Paris, 1650–1670
Wool and silk, 254 × 194 cm
Lausanne, Fondation Toms Pauli, inv. no. 54

Cat. 38 Amsterdam
Minotaur
Roman, second half 1st century CE
White marble on *bigio morato* base, h. 68 cm (bust)
Vatican City, Vatican Museums, inv. no. MV.461.0.0
Photo: © Governorate of the Vatican City State – Directorate of the Vatican Museums

Cat. 39 Amsterdam
Nandipha Mntambo (b. 1982)
Zeus
Johannesburg, 2009
Bronze, 88 × 84 × 58 cm
Cape Town, Zeitz MOCAA Permanent Collection, Zeitz Collection
Photo: © Nandipha Mntambo

Cat. 40 Amsterdam
Koen Vanmechelen (b. 1965)
Seduction
2021
Rosa Portogallo marble, 80 × 50 × 66 cm
Collection of the artist
© Koen Vanmechelen
Photo: Stoffel Hias

Jupiter's Loves: Danae
***Metamorphoses*, Book 4:610–611**

Cat. 41 Amsterdam
Tiziano Vecellio, known as Titian (c. 1489–1576)
Danae
Venice, c. 1551
Oil on canvas, 114.6 × 192.5 cm
London, The Wellington Collection, Apsley House
Photo: © Stratfield Saye Preservation Trust

Cat. 42 Amsterdam
Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617)
The Sleeping Danae Being Prepared for Jupiter
Haarlem, 1603
Oil on canvas, 173.4 × 200 cm
Signed and dated, bottom left, along lid of chest: *HGoltzius ANNO.1603*
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inv. no. M.84.191; gift of The Ahmanson Foundation

Jupiter's Loves: Leda
***Metamorphoses*, Book 6:109**

Cat. 43 Amsterdam & Rome
Leda and the Swan
Rome, 2nd century CE
White marble, h. 127 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. CVIIC
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Luciano Romano

Cat. 44 Amsterdam & Rome
Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), after Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, known as Il Sodoma (1477–1549), attributed
Leda and the Swan
Rome, before 1517
Tempera on panel, 115 × 86 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 434
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Mauro Coen

Cat. 45 Amsterdam & Rome
Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), after
Leda and the Swan
Florence, after 1530
Oil on canvas, 105.4 × 141 cm
London, The National Gallery, inv. no. NG1868; presented by the Duke of Northumberland, 1838

Cat. 46 Amsterdam & Rome
Michele Tosini, known as Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (1503–1577)
Leda
Florence, c. 1560–1570
Oil on canvas, 78 × 51 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 323
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Mauro Coen

Cat. 47 Amsterdam & Rome
Vincenzo Danti (1530–1576) or Bartolomeo Ammannati (1511–1592), attributed
Leda and the Swan
Florence, c. 1535 (Ammannati) or c. 1562–1563 (Danti)
Marble, 139 × 59 × 51 cm
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. A.100–1937; purchased by the John Webb Trust

Cat. 48 Amsterdam
Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988)
Leda (two versions)
Paris, 1928; New York, 1942
Aluminium, bronze and brass, marble, 59.5 × 30.2 × 32 cm (1928 version) and alabaster, 26 × 47.6 × 47.6 cm (1942 version)
New York, The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, nos. 38a and 179
© The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum New York, c/o Pictoright Amsterdam 2026
Photo: The Noguchi Museum Archives, 00004 and 00059/Kevin Noble

Cat. 49 Amsterdam
Juul Kraijer (b. 1970)
Untitled
Rotterdam, 2016
Archival pigment print on Hahnemühle Museum Etching, 78.3 × 79.8 cm
Collection of the artist
© Juul Kraijer

Jupiter's Loves: Correggio's *Amori*

Cat. 50 Amsterdam
Antonio Allegri, known as Correggio (c. 1489/94–1534)
Jupiter and Io
Parma, c. 1531–1532
Oil on canvas, 162 × 73.5 cm
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. Gemäldegalerie 274
Photo: © KHM-Museumsverband

Cat. 51 Rome
Antonio Allegri, known as Correggio (1489/94–1534)
The Rape of Ganymede
Parma or Mantua, c. 1530
Oil on canvas, 163.5 × 72 cm
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. no. Gemäldegalerie 276
Photo: © KHM-Museumsverband

Cat. 52 Amsterdam & Rome
Antonio Allegri, known as Correggio (1489/94–1534)
Danae
Parma or Mantua, 1530–1534
Oil on canvas, 158 × 189 cm
Rome, Galleria Borghese, inv. no. 125
Photo: © Galleria Borghese/Mauro Coen

Pluto and Proserpina
***Metamorphoses*, Book 5:390–532**

Cat. 53 Rome
Agostino Carracci (1557–1602)
Pluto
Bologna, c. 1592
Oil on canvas, 109 × 130 cm
Modena, Galleria Estense, inv. no. R.C.G.E. 340
Photo: Published with permission of the Ministero della Cultura – Archivio fotografico delle Gallerie Estensi/ Carlo Vannini

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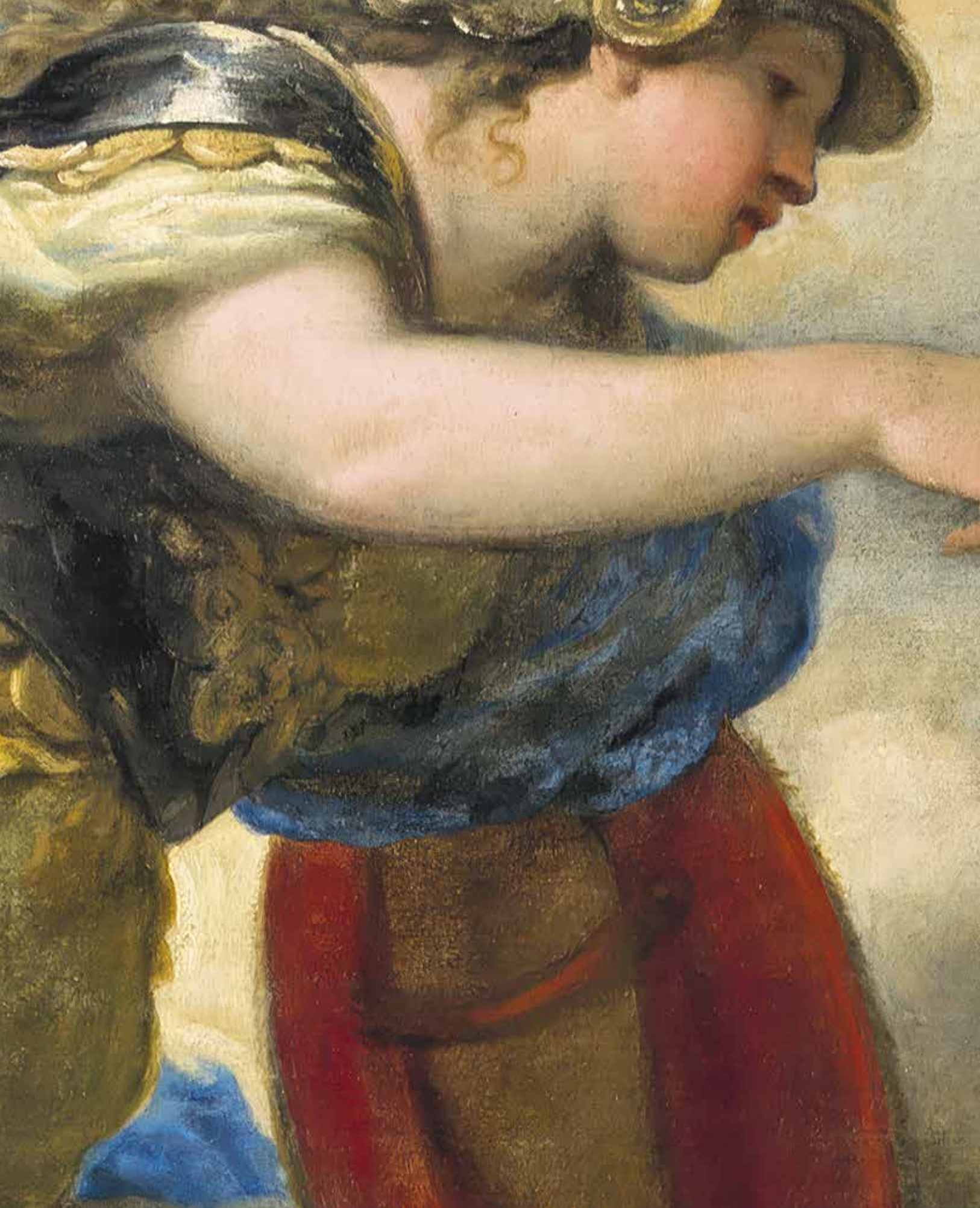

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

Amsterdam, private collection
Arnhem, Museum Arnhem
Arnhem, private collection
Basel, Historical Museum
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig
Brno, Moravská Galerie
Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium
Cape Town, Zeitz MOCAA Permanent Collection, Zeitz Collection
Cremona, Museo Civico Ala Ponzone
Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden
Florence, Le Gallerie degli Uffizi
Florence, Musei del Bargello
Genk, Koen Vanmechelen
Ghent, Museum of Fine Arts
Hanover, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum
Houston, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation
Icking, Marco Pesarese Fine Art
Lausanne, Fondation Toms Pauli
Lille, Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille
Limassol – Amathus, Collection of Dr. Andreas Pittas
Ljubljana, Ulay Foundation
London, Tate
London, The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC, Alison Jacques and Marian Goodman Gallery
London, The National Gallery
London, The Wellington Collection, Apsley House
London, Victoria and Albert Museum
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, The J. Paul Getty Museum
Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado
Madrid, Patrimonio Nacional. Colecciones Reales. Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial
Modena, Gallerie Estensi
Munich, Bayerische Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen – Residenz
Munich, Kunstkammer Georg Laue
Naples, Museo Civico Gaetano Filangieri
New York, The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum
New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum
Oxford, The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal
Paris, Institut de France, Musée Jacquemart-André
Paris, Musée du Louvre
Paris, Musée Rodin
Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art
Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense
Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica
Rotterdam, Juul Kraijer Studio
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen
Skokloster, National Historical Museums, Skokloster Castle
Stockholm, Nationalmuseum
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