

# T O M A S S O



**Francesco Bertos (1678 - 1741)**

The Heroism of Marcus Curtius The Farnese Bull

81 cm (31 ¾ in.) high

74 cm (29 in.) high

Bronze, each on an integrally cast naturalistic base, blackish brown patina with warm medium brown high points

These magnificent groups are amongst the largest bronzes by Francesco Bertos, a prominent Venetian sculptor of the first half of the 18th century. According to Charles Avery, whose 2008 monograph has provided significant new research about the artist and his work, Bertos found inspiration in Italian Renaissance and Baroque sculpture but developed a personal and distinguishable style.

The coats of arms have been identified as belonging to the Paduan family Dondi Orologio who were raised to the Venetian nobility in perpetuity after the brothers Giovanni Antonio, Gerolamo and Franco donated 100,000 ducats to the cause of the Venetian war against the Turks in Crete. The commissioning of two such magnificent bronzes would have served to enhance the reputation of the family as members of the Venetian cultural elite.

The recent discovery of the identity of the family who originally commissioned the groups makes them a great rarity in the artist's work. They represent two scenes from classical literature: Livy's legend of the Heroism of Marcus Curtius and Pliny's tale of the Fable of Dirce.

Francesco Bertos' patrons included Tsar Peter the Great, and some of the most prestigious Venetian names of his time such as Field Marshal Johan Mathias von den Schulenburg and Antonio Manin, who were attracted by the exquisite delicacy of his marble carvings and his unrivalled virtuosity in metal casting, as Avery attests. The dispersal of some of these historic collections in the 20th century, and the subsequent renewal of interest in Bertos has resulted in the

resurrection of his reputation to a level enjoyed by the sculptor in his own day.

Charles Avery, Ph.D.

**Provenance:**

Marchese Giovanni Antonio Galeazzo Dondi Orologio (1673–1749), Padua,  
in whose posthumous inventory they appear 2 January 1750, no. 316

By descent to Conte Paolo Avanzetti

By descent to his daughter (d. 1837), who married into the Plateo family

Sig. Bombarda

Antonio Monterumici, 'Avvocato di Venezia', circa 1900

Marchese Ferdinando Pica-Alfieri, Milan, but kept at his home Villa la Vallée, Castagnola, Switzerland

**Exhibitions**

The Place of the Antique in Early Modern Europe, Smart Museum, University of Chicago, 1999, nos. 36 and 37

**Literature:**

Simone Guirriero, 'Per l'attività padovana di Giovanni Bonazza e del suo 'valente discepolo' Francesco Bertos',  
Bolletino del Museo Civico di Padova, XCI, 2002, pp. 105-120

C. Avery, The Triumph of Motion: Francesco Bertos (1678-1741) and the Art of Sculpture, Catalogue Raisonné,  
Turin, 2008, nos. 138 and 139, pp. 20-21, 232-235, pls. 5 and 6