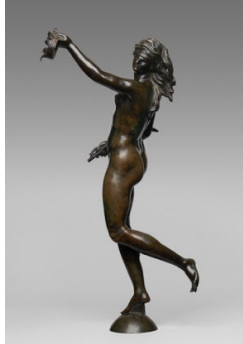


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**London**



ITALY  
PROBABLY ROME

***ALLEGORY OF FORTUNE***

CIRCA 1650

Bronze  
43.5 x 17 x 23cm

Provenance:

Heim Gallery, London, 1968;  
The Hatvany collection, *Highly important bronzes and other works of art*,  
Christie's London, 25 June 1980, lot 47;  
French private collection.

Comparative Literature:

W. von Bode, *Die Italienischen Bronzestatuetten der Renaissance*, vol. III, Berlin,  
1907, pl. CCLVI.  
W. von Bode, *Bronzes in the Collection of J. Pierpont Morgan*, vol. II, Paris, 1910,  
pl. XCIII.

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This unique bronze, representing the allegory of Fortune bearing a crown in her outstretched left hand and a palm branch in her right arm, can be confidently dated to the mid-Seventeenth century. The haphazard, powerful nature of fate is here depicted in the guise of a delicate woman fluctuating in the air, a blindfold obscuring her gaze, in the act of holding out power and riches. The dynamic pose with its extreme contrapposto is perhaps its most striking and successful features, and clearly shows a deep assimilation of the lesson of Giambologna's *Fortune and Mercury*, but also of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's marble groups such as the *Apollo and Daphne* (1622-25).

The Roman goddess Fortuna - corresponding to the Greek

Tyche - knew an extraordinary surge in popularity from the Renaissance, especially in its guise of *Fortuna marina*,

although representations from the Middle Ages are also

known. At the time, representations were sourced from

Roman art, where Fortune figured, for instance, on the

reverse of coins. A striking depiction is Mantegna's

*Occasio* and *Paenitentia* fresco (1500-5) in the Palazzo Ducale,

Mantova. Prints from Northern Europe were widely circulated:

a good example being Hans Sebald Beham's engraving from 1541, where the goddess is

represented with a palm branch,

a relatively unusual attribute for the subject. But it is towards the end of the Sixteenth century that the theme appears to

have attracted the most interest, with works such as Jacopo Ligozzi's *Fortune*

from circa 1580. A few years later, a similar pose appears in Frans Francken the Younger's *Occasio*,

or *Allegory of Good Fortune* (1626; Wawel Castle, Krakow): in



Fig. 1: Guido Reni, *Allegory of Fortune*, Accademia di San Luca, Rome.

the background, a sculpture of the goddess is represented with her mane in the wind, as is in an earlier canvas by the same artist of *Fortuna Marina* (1615-20; Musée du Louvre, Paris). The 1620s were particularly rich with allegories of fortune, and it is in 1623 that Guido Reni accomplishes his two versions of *Fortuna*, the first in the Pinacoteca Vaticana, the second (fig. 1) in the Accademia di San Luca, were the same attributes as on the present sculpture - the crown and the palm

branch, are found. Guido's painting will be the main source of inspiration behind a series of etchings by Simone Cantarini and Bartolomeo Coriolano, where Fortune takes on a pose that is even more similar to the present bronze (fig. 2). It is significant that the painting, commissioned by the Florentine Jacopo Altoviti, soon entered the collection of the Sacchetti family in Rome.

A number of elements suggest a probable Roman origin for the present bronze. The distinctive shape of mouth and chin, the oval of the face, are remindful of precedents by Gian Lorenzo Bernini: compare with the face of Daphne in *Apollo and Daphne* (1622-25, Galleria Borghese, Rome), or the bronze *Matilde di Canossa* (private collection). Note, also, *Fortuna's* mane, agitated

Fig. 2: Simone Cantarini, *Allegory of Fortune*, from an engraving

by the wind, and compare it with *Daphne's*. The abundance of iconographically comparable pieces to the present bronze in the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, together with the precedent set by Bernini, all appear to substantiate a dating probably not earlier than 1624, and not later than the middle of the century. At the same time, other elements, such as the relatively muscular body, might suggest a northern origin - Flemish or Dutch - for the author of the present bust, perhaps someone who had travelled or was active in Rome the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This possibility is sustained by the casting technique.

Interestingly, the only comparable bronze known so far is a notably less advanced and seemingly incomplete statuette, 20.3 cm high, formerly in the collection of J. Pierpont Morgan, and currently held in The Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino, California (fig. 3). The bronze was first published by Bode in 1907 (*op. cit.*, pl. CCLVI) and then again in his survey of Morgan's collection (*op. cit.*, pp. 7, pl. XCIII), in both cases as Florentine, 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 3: *Bronze of Fortuna*, The Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino (inv. no. 17.10).

Finally, it should be remembered that too little is known of Florentine sculpture after the death of Pietro Tacca (1577-1640) and Giovanni Francesco Susini (c. 1585-1653), and the appearance on the scene of bronze casting of Giovanni Battista Foggini (1652-1725), to entirely rule out a Florentine origin for the present sculpture. It is interesting to note that before 1929 - and certainly with the J. P. Morgan *Fortuna* in mind - Wilhelm von Bode had attributed our *Fortuna* to the circle of the Florentine Domenico Poggini (1520-1590).<sup>1</sup> Whilst

<sup>1</sup> Heim Archives, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

such an attribution appears today scarcely convincing, it does indicate that further researches in the landscape of Florentine sculpture may ultimately prove useful in relation to the present piece.