

BENJAMIN PROUST

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LONDON



TEFAF NEW YORK

FALL 2018

ATTRIBUTED TO
HUBERT LE SUEUR

Paris, 1580–1658

HERCULES AND TELEPHUS

circa 1630

Bronze

39.4 x 15.9 x 12.4 cm

Inventory mark '8' in red paint on lion skin tail

PROVENANCE

Most probably, François Le Vau (1613–1676), 'Maison du Centaure', 45 Quai de Bourbon, Paris, until his death;

Most probably, Louis, Grand Dauphin de France (1661–1711), Château de Versailles, from at least 1689 and until his death, when sold;

Most probably, Jean-Baptiste, Count du Barry (1723–1794), Paris;

His sale, 21 November 1774, lot 142;

Noble private collection, Provence, France, until 2017

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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G. Bresc-Bautier, 'L'activité parisienne d'Hubert Le Sueur sculpteur du roi (connu de 1596 à 1658)', in *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français*, 1985, pp. 35–54

C. Avery, 'Hubert Le Sueur, the 'Unworthy Praxiteles' of King Charles I', in *Studies in European Sculpture II*, London, 1988, pp. 145–235

J. Chlibec, 'Small Italian Renaissance Bronzes in the Collection of the National Gallery in Prague', in *Bulletin of the National Gallery in Prague*, III-IV (1993–94), pp. 36–52

A. Gallottini (ed.), 'Philippe Thomassin: Antiquarum Statuarum Urbis Romae Liber Primus (1610–1622)', in *Bollettino d'Arte*, 1995, pp. 21–23

S. Castelluccio, 'La Collection de bronzes du Grand Dauphin', in *Curiosité: Études d'histoire de l'art en l'honneur d'Antoine Schnapper*, Paris, 1998, pp. 355–63

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P. Kruse (ed.), *Hochrenaissance im Vatikan 1503–1534. Kunst und Kultur im Rom der Päpste*, Berlin-Stuttgart, 1999, p. 332, cat. no. 249

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J. Griswold, C. Hess, J. Bassett, et. al., 'Casts after the antique by Hubert Le Sueur', in

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1
 Roman, 2nd century AD
Hercules and Telephus
 Chiaramonti Museum, Vatican

Most probably from the collection of Louis, Grand Dauphin de France (1661–1711), son of Louis XIV and grandfather of Louis XV, this newly discovered *Hercules and Telephus* is one of the most remarkable bronzes to have been created in early 17th-century France, a stage in the history of sculpture that remains relatively undocumented.

The only known faithful reduction of a Roman marble in the Vatican to have been made in France, it would have required careful, *dal vero* examination of the original. The bronze stands out for the great attention to detail and understanding of the Greek hero's anatomical proportions and psychological stance displayed in its modelling.

The intensity of the hero's portrayal, but also the careful after-work, moreover, position *Hercules and Telephus* along a line of illustrious predecessors, rooted in the cultural phenomenon of the Italian Renaissance *studiolo* and the production of sculptors such as Antico. The heroic figure *par excellence* of classical mythology, Hercules would have resonated deeply within the political, cultural and artistic climate of early 17th-century France as it had done nearly one hundred years earlier in the fragile but artistically vibrant courts of the Italian peninsula.

France, in fact, was going through a period of turmoil following the assassination of King Henri IV (1553–1610) and the regency of Marie de' Medici (1575–1642). From a cultural viewpoint, it would not be until the ascent to power of Louis XIV, who began his rule in 1661, that the French court would regain a sovereign interested in promoting an artistic programme akin to that of François I one century earlier. Nonetheless, a rising number of private collectors, mostly members of the court and intellectuals of means, cultivated an appreciation for sculptures, many of which, like the present bronze, would later enter – sometimes to remain there – the French royal collection.¹

To the artists gravitating around the Parisian elite, Rome was the chief source of inspiration, with virtually all painters and sculptors from Barthélemy Prieur to Michel Anguier spending months, sometimes years, studying and working in the Eternal City, where Nicolas Poussin and a circle of erudite collectors were refashioning the way of looking at antiquities, moving the arts towards a new classicism.

UNEARTHING HERCULES AND HIS SON TELEPHUS

Discovered in Rome near Campo de' Fiori in May 1507, the marble group of *Hercules and Telephus* was instantly acquired by Pope Julius II (1443–1513).² A 2nd-century AD copy of a probably late Hellenistic original, it was in almost perfect condition apart from the right forearm and hand, which contemporaries assumed would have held the hero's attribute, the club. Also broken off was a fragment of the plinth together with the right foot's toes (fig. 1).³

Transported to the Vatican, the statue was soon installed in the *Antiquario*, the name given to the Belvedere Court designed by Bramante and completed



in 1514. Here were displayed the classical masterpieces in the Papal Collections, in accordance with and in support of Pope Julius II's project of a glorious Roman Renaissance. *Hercules and Telephus* was therefore placed next to other iconic sculptures such as the *Laocoön and his Sons*, the *Apollo* and the *Torso del Belvedere*, whose impact upon the imagination of contemporary artists can hardly be overstated.

Early restorations commissioned in 1533 by Pope Clement VI (1478–1534) to Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli (1507–1563) appear to have been limited to the reattaching of the hero's broken toes. Only in the late 18th century would the forearm be restored with the addition of a plaster club.⁴ In 1536, Clement VII ordered *Hercules and Telephus* to be placed in its own niche within the Belvedere Courtyard, which had by then effectively become a 'Pantheon of Heroes' for a renewed and more powerful Rome.

For centuries, the iconography of the marble was not unequivocally identified. *Hercules and Telephus* was alternatively interpreted as representing Hercules holding his son Ajax, or as Emperor Commodus as Hercules. From a letter by Giorgio da Negroponte to Sabba da Castiglione we know that, at the time of the statue's discovery, the child's identity was unknown, but that Fedra Inghirami proposed to identify in the figure of Hercules that of the young Emperor Commodus – an idea shared by Francesco Albertini (1510) and Aldrovandi (1556).⁵ Today, it is commonly accepted that the group represents Hercules and Telephus, son of the hero and Auge, the Arcadian princess and priestess of Athena who gave birth to the child within the sacred enclosure of the goddess.

The Renaissance's fascination with antiquity found in the Belvedere Court a centre of artistic pilgrimage, where artists and men of letters came to study. In 1513, Pope Leo X opened the *Antiquario* to a cultural elite which was then flocking to Rome from other Italian courts and foreign countries. Its sculptures became models to entire schools and their renown spread throughout Europe, thanks to drawings and to the diffusion of less costly engravings.





3

Girolamo da Carpi
Commodo di Belvedere, c. 1549–53
 Rosenbach Museum and Library,
 Philadelphia

The first reproduction of *Hercules and Telephus* is a pen and ink sketch by Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574) executed around 1523–37. It is a detailed study of Hercules's head from both side and front (fig. 2). Later sketches by Girolamo da Carpi (c. 1549–53, fig. 3) and Maarten de Vos and Goltzius portray the group following Montorsoli's restoration.

CASTING ANTIQUITY

Ideals of beauty and power and *exempla* of virtue were incarnated in Roman representations of gods and heroes. Just as the humanistic culture was recovering the classical texts of literature and of philosophy, so artists looked at the representation of the human body and decorative repertoire to update their figurative language. A founding element of the Renaissance, this passion for ancient times saw the development of bronze copies, interpretations and reductions of classical sculptures.

Art patrons from Italian courts wishing to have a memento of that perfection had to rely on contemporary artists, since the sculptures that were redefining the canon were typically incorporated into papal or princely collections linked to the Holy See very early after their discovery. Moreover, early 16th-century papal bans on exporting ancient sculpture from Rome made it virtually impossible even for great aristocrats to build such collections.

Bronze reductions thus came to satisfy and inform the novel courtly phenomenon of the *studiolo*, a room or study where the *signore* would spend his free time and handle and examine his art collection at leisure, or show it to a selected circle of friends and visitors. But this was also the expression of a culture 'tempted by a retreat to the inner world when faced with the troubles of history, [where] a gesture, a movement or even just the positioning of a naked body in the space, tended to express a philosophical or moral concept'.⁶ The creation of such a *microcosmos* further encouraged the production of small bronzes, plaquettes and marble reliefs to be displayed in cabinets. If the *studioli* of Federico da Montefeltro (1422–1482) in Urbino and Gubbio had been amongst the very first, others, more focused on painting and sculpture, came into being in the early Cinquecento, such as the *camerino d'alabastro* of Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (1476–1534), arguably the most magnificent art gallery of its time. Here, a rich array of small bronzes was displayed alongside the low reliefs in marble executed by Antonio Lombardo, whose language was directly inspired by classical themes.

At around the same time, Isabella d'Este (1474–1539), wife of Francesco II Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua, created her first *studiolo* in the Castello di San Giorgio, commissioning paintings from the likes of Perugino, Mantegna and Lorenzo Costa. Isabella's taste for sculpture resulted in commissions to some of the best artists of the time, including Tullio Lombardo and Gian Cristoforo Romano. Importantly, her passion for bronzes occasioned her patronage of the most talented artist in this field, Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, called L'Antico



4
Antico
Hercules, probably after 1519
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



5
Primaticcio
Hercules and Telephus, 1543
Fontainebleau

(c. 1460–1528). His unique interpretation of the antique resulted in a series of memorable bronzes which took the art of the Renaissance *bronzetto* on to an altogether different level (fig. 4).

FROM PRIMATICCIO TO LE SUEUR

Under the reign of King François I of France, from 1515 to 1547, the royal court of Fontainebleau was able to contend with the most prestigious cultural centres of the Italian peninsula. As part of a programme which whilst looking at the Italian Renaissance sought to exalt and consolidate the prestige of the French crown, the king commissioned from Primaticcio (1504–1570) the first known life-size cast of the *Hercules and Telephus* marble, completed in 1543 (fig. 5), part of a series meant to rival the great statuary collections such as were to be admired in the Florence of the Medici.

A plaster cast had been realised during Primaticcio's first journey to Rome and transported back to Fontainebleau in several pieces. The sculpture was



6
Pietro da Barga
Hercules and Telephus, c. 1574
Bargello, Florence



7
Italian
Hercules and Telephus,
probably late 16th century
National Gallery, Prague

cast under the direction of Primaticcio and Vignola, together with nine other sculptures, half of them after marbles of the Belvedere courtyard. All the artists involved were French, except two Italians: Francisque Ribon and Laurent Regnaudin. The French included Pierre Bontemps, Picard, Jean Challuau and Carl Dumoustier for the sculptors, and Pierre Beauchesne, Benoît Leboucher and Guillaume Durant for the bronze casts.⁷

Surprisingly, aside from the present bronze, only two other reductions of *Hercules and Telephus* are known to have been cast between the unearthing of the marble and the end of the 18th century. The first, by the Florentine Pietro da Barga (active between 1574 and 1588), is datable to c. 1574 and displays a typically rough, almost *bozzetto*-like surface and *all'antica* patina (Bargello, Florence, fig. 6). The second, a much more faithful copy, is in the National Museum, Prague, catalogued as 16th century (fig. 7).⁸ It displays a less polished and detailed modelling, as well as noticeable differences, particularly in the pose of the young Telephus.

Around 1683, Nicolas Coustou (1658–1733), then at the Académie de France in Rome, executed a terracotta of the Vatican sculpture (Musée du Louvre, Paris). Interpreting it as a *Hercule Commode*, Coustou dispensed with



the figure of Telephus, placing instead in the hero's left hand the Golden Apples of Hesperides, another of his attributes. The model was the starting point for the famous marble (Château de Versailles, fig. 8), of which numerous bronze reductions exist. The absence of the hero's son makes these reductions impossible to mistake for the reproductions of the original marble group.

Starting with the discovery of the marble, artists and connoisseurs alike imagined the rest of the missing forearm complete with its club.⁹ For example, in 1543, long before the inclusion of the plaster club on the original at the end of the 18th century, Primaticcio had already 'restored' it. Interestingly, when translating the model from marble to bronze, Primaticcio was not in need of the tree stump supporting the antique version, and continued the lion skin to the ground. This indicates that our cast cannot be an adaptation of Primaticcio's in Fontainebleau.

It would, however, take several decades for another artist to undertake the creation of another life-size cast of *Hercules and Telephus*. This time, it was realised by Hubert Le Sueur in 1631 and not for the French court, but for the English king Charles I.



9
 Barthélémy Prieur
Henri IV as Jupiter, c. 1610
 Musée du Louvre, Paris

FRENCH SCULPTORS IN POUSSIN'S ROME

The understanding of the Greek hero's stance and the great detailing displayed by the present bronze indicate that its author must have seen the original in Rome, possibly first sketching it in wax. An attribution is therefore greatly complicated by the artist's accuracy in copying, as well as by the copious *lacunae* still extant in the study of early 17th-century French bronzes, especially small ones. Recent exhibitions, however, have brought interest and scholarly knowledge on this subject to a new level.

Hercules and Telephus was cast in rare cut-back core technique which became diffused in France during the 17th century¹⁰ and which conspicuously differs from the indirect process employed for instance in the Giambologna workshop. Importantly, the resulting wax of the sculptor's model, with a pre-made core inside, could be retouched before casting, allowing for substantial changes to the surface. Scientific analysis has revealed the present bronze was cast in a brassy alloy, with percentages indicating a French origin.¹¹ Moreover, thermo-luminescence examination of the core material has indicated a date of 1614, with a margin of twenty-six years, whilst comparison of the core composition with Italian and French examples has again concluded the bronze was cast in France.¹²

At first glance, *Hercules and Telephus* appears deeply informed by Italian 16th-century sculpture – the achievements of Giambologna and Susini, certainly, but also those of Guglielmo della Porta in Rome as well and the earlier production at Mantua and Padua. This should be read in the light of the fact not only that Fontainebleau had attracted a significant number of Italian artists, from Primaticcio to Cellini, but also that sojourns in Rome and other courts of Italy had, by the early 17th century, become an essential requirement for every self-respecting French artist. It is conceivable that a particularly attentive and receptive sculptor would have subsumed at least in part the spirit of the great Italian masters.

Barthélémy Prieur (1536–1611) is probably the first French sculptor whose corpus is sufficiently large to allow for comparisons with the present bronze. In the early 1550s, he was in Rome with Ponce Jacquio. Information about his activity in the city is scarce, but he is noted as working as a *stuccatore* and may have collaborated with Guglielmo della Porta.¹³ From 1564 he is attested in Turin, working at the Court of Savoy. More than any other French sculptor before him, Prieur's *corpus* centres around small bronzes, often interpreting mythological subjects, and figures, or busts, of the French kings.

The considerable confidence displayed by Prieur in the representation of the male figure is akin to that of the highly skilled author of the present *Hercules and Telephus*. His anatomical knowledge was such as to allow for variation and adaptation in the representation of the male body, as a simple comparison between his *Neptune et trois chevaux marins* (Melun, musée municipal), *Mercury* (New York, private collection) and *Henry IV* (Musée du Louvre, Paris, fig. 9) shows. Prieur adapts the musculature to the subject;





10

Michel Anguier
Pluton mélancolique, 1650s
 Private collection

thus, the first has the exaggerated torso that befits a marine god, the second is more ephebic, whilst the third one is more naturalistic (note the king's chest).

In the shadowy landscape of 17th-century French bronzes, Michel Anguier (1612–1686) holds a luminous position. Like many of his predecessors, he left for Rome in 1641, where he lived a decade, joining a circle of artists which included Nicolas Poussin and François Duquesnoy. There he became the assistant of Bernini, an influence clearly discernible in some of his best-known bronzes, such as the *Neptune agité* (private collection). Anguier came back to Paris in 1651, taking with him some models of antiquities such as the *Farnese Hercules* and the *Laocoön*, neighbours of the *Hercules and Telephus* marble. He famously produced a series of seven bronzes representing gods and goddesses: *Neptune*, *Amphitrite*, *Pluton*, *Ceres*, *Mea*, *Jupiter* and *Juno*. These inventions, informed by the antiquities he had studied during his Roman years, are akin to a manifesto, which, as noted by Wardropper,¹⁴ expresses the *teoria degli affetti*, or theory of passions, as was being discussed in the Roman intellectual circles of Poussin and Domenichino. The intense emotions that Anguier's bronzes betray are a direct result of his highly developed intellectual programme. Although reductions of a known classical marble are undocumented in Anguier's oeuvre, he would not have lacked the opportunity, and would certainly have had ample chance of admiring the original marble in the Vatican during his extensive Roman sojourn. If a 'reduction' seems far from Anguier's programmatic intentions, the project might have been an early one. Comparisons on pure stylistic grounds reveal striking similarities with the present *Hercules and Telephus*.

In general terms, the attention to proportions and anatomic details from the overall musculature to particulars such as the hands, ankles and feet, but also the cut of the eyes and chancing of the hair, is similar to that seen on our sculpture. A case in point is the *Pluton mélancolique* (fig. 10). Not only are the feet nearly identical; their positioning, and in fact that of most of the body – the right arm and hip, and both legs – is virtually the same. Moreover, details such as the protruding forehead structure, the cut of the eyes including the eyelids, and the chancing of the hair, is very similar to that of the *Jupiter foudroyant* in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (fig. 11). However, direct copies after the antique by Anguier are unknown, and similarities such as those of Pluto's can be explained by his fluency in the classical modes of representation which the artist adapted to his philosophical intentions.

HUBERT LE SUEUR, SCULPTOR OF TWO KINGS

Whilst Prieur and Anguier's bronzes show certain stylistic traits in common with *Hercules and Telephus*, it is to Hubert Le Sueur (c. 1580–1660) – a veritable link between the two other artists – that the bronze may most



11

Michel Anguier
Jupiter, c. 1652
 J. Paul Getty Museum,
 Los Angeles (detail)

confidently be attributed, on the grounds of technique and cultural framework. Le Sueur was born in Paris of a family of *armuriers*, or gunsmiths. As such, it is right to suppose that from an early age he would have been familiar with this delicate art of chiselling, which has a great deal in common with that of the goldsmith's.¹⁵ Intriguingly, the biographer of Charles I mentions the sculptor's apprenticeship in Florence with Giambologna, which cannot be proved to date. It is certain, however, that before the death of the great master in 1608, Le Sueur is attested as being in Paris only in 1596, 1602, and 1604.¹⁶ Little is known of Le Sueur's work in Paris. He most likely worked for King Louis XIII, since in 1614 he became *Sculpteur ordinaire du roi*. Apart from the court, he worked for Michel de Lauzon and Henri de Montmorency, for whom he realised the first equestrian sculpture to be erected in France (now lost). Yet, although the actual sculptures are untraced, a production of small bronzes is attested from at least 1612.¹⁷

In 1624, he was sent by King Louis XIII to the court of Charles I, a place where his experience in equestrian sculpture would undoubtedly have played to his advantage. There, his services met with the approval of the English king, who enthusiastically collected and commissioned bronzes. In 1630–31, Le Sueur was dispatched to Rome by the king to create plaster casts of the best classical sculptures, including the *Belvedere Apollo* and *Borghese Gladiator*, as well as the *Hercules and Telephus*, in order to cast them in bronze. The project were likely achieved by 1634, the resulting life-size casts displaying occasional liberties from the original suggesting 'alterations of the compositions accomplished in the wax inter-models'.¹⁸

Back in Paris from 1640–41, at the start of the English civil war, Le Sueur appears to have mainly worked old ideas, as testified by the commission, in 1647, for four life-size *Dianas* (one lost) and two more *Commodus*, or *Hercules and Telephus*, of which one survives.¹⁹ The sculptures were destined for the gardens of the *maréchal* Nicolas de Neuville, marquis of Villeroy, in the service of the young Louis XIV, and Louis Phélypeaux. Importantly, these later versions are further removed from the Roman originals.

The present bronze is undoubtedly closer to the *Hercules and Telephus* Le Sueur made for Charles I, now at Windsor Castle (fig. 12), rather than the more experimental versions realised in or after 1648, of which the extant one is now in the Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino (fig. 13). In the latter, for example, there is no tree stump, and the knot of the lion's skin on the right shoulder is notably different. Interestingly, a detail differing from both large-scale sculptures is the hand of Telephus, which, on our bronze, is not resting on the lion's head but rather directed towards Hercules himself. This is an important detail since the incomplete right hand of the child on the marble does not rest on the lion but is rather extended towards the child's father, as seen on our reduction, a further proof that our artist was looking at the antique first-hand.

The quality of Le Sueur's bronzes varies, and, although we only rarely see in his oeuvre an after-work of comparable finesse and painstaking accuracy, this



12
 Hubert Le Sueur
Hercules and Telephus, c. 1631
 Windsor Castle



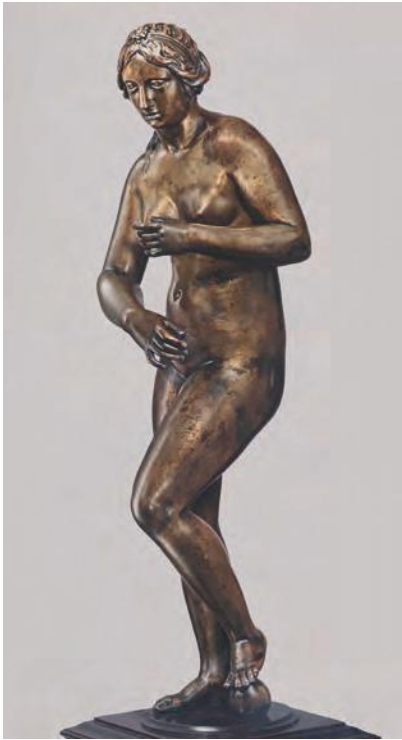
13
 Hubert Le Sueur
Hercules and Telephus, c. 1648
 Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino

is by no means an isolated case. Compare, for instance, the relatively bland surface of his *Fountain of Diana* (c. 1636, Bushy Park, Somerset), with the figure of *Charity* from the Richmond Tomb (c. 1628, Westminster Cathedral, London), in particular the fine treatment of the hair.

Le Sueur's experience in chiselling and interest in the antique is well documented, and was greatly honed by his sojourn at the court of Charles I. A good example is his *Venus*, formerly in the French Royal collection (Hill Collection, fig. 14). The treatment of details such as the goddess's mouth and fingers, but also the idiosyncratic shape of her feet, compare well with the present bronze. Moreover, Le Sueur, who had a considerable experience in the casting process, is stated to have realised a number of small bronzes, few of which, aside from the Hill *Venus*, have been traced. Already in the 1620s royal contracts of employment cite him as a 'Sculpteur ayant fait preuve de jeter excellentement en bronze toutes sortes de figures.'²⁰

Further interesting elements of comparison are provided by a series of busts created by Le Sueur whilst in England. Consider a portrait bust of King Charles I (Windsor Castle, fig. 15), and note the lion masks on the pauldrons, which reappear throughout this series, as well as the chasing of the borders of the draped cloak, reminiscent of those found on our sculpture. Moreover, the chasing of the hair, with its characteristic curls, may be compared to the hair





14
Hubert Le Sueur
Venus, c. 1641–60
Hill Collection



15
Hubert Le Sueur
Charles I, mid 17th century
Windsor Castle

of the lion's head on our sculpture. A similar treatment also appears on a bronze bust of *Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, dated 1631.²¹

The very typical cut-back core technique employed for the present bronze necessarily indicates the casting process would have happened in Paris. Therefore, it is most likely that our sculpture was cast between Le Sueur's return from Italy and his departure for the English court. This reduction of a Roman antiquity could be amongst the reasons for Charles I's commissioning copies after the antique to Le Sueur. Nonetheless, it is known that, during his English years, the artist visited Paris at least twice. As noted by Avery, 'Several bronze sculptures now in England but depicting the French monarchs of the period may have been produced on either side of the Channel'.²²

While working on life-size casts for Charles I, Le Sueur may have wished to wait until his return to Paris to cast the present reduction, an occurrence which would have taken place in the 1630s. It would have been a very practical exercise for Le Sueur to show the French court what he had achieved in England and to reassert himself in the French artistic milieu. But it is also impossible to exclude a 1640s casting, following his definitive homecoming, which saw him working, once more, on the same subject. Nonetheless, this later date in the first half of the 17th century seems more unlikely.

NOBLE OWNERSHIPS THROUGHOUT TIME

Imposing and retaining all the authority of the original marble, *Hercules and Telephus* would have been conceived for a very important patron of means, whose identity may only be unveiled by future discoveries. From the latter part of the 17th century, the bronze has nonetheless been traced in the inventories of three eminent personages in the history of France – all, in their different ways, distinguished collectors of great importance: François Le Vau (1613–1676), Louis, Grand Dauphin de France (1661–1711), and Jean-Baptiste, comte du Barry (1723–1794), tying this work of art with over a century of French history, and shedding new light to the modes of collecting and taste of their time.

FRANÇOIS LE VAU

The younger brother of Louis Le Vau (1612–1670), *premier architecte* of King Louis XIV, largely responsible for the project of the Château de Versailles, François Le Vau was himself *architecte ordinaire des bâtiments du roi*, and collaborated with his brother on a number of projects, including that for the church of Saint-Louis-en-l'Île. In 1658, on the same Île Saint-Louis, he built his own *hôtel particulier*, the Maison du Centaure at 45 Quai de Bourbon, to whose façade he added medallions representing Hercules fighting the centaur Nessus, still *in situ*.²³ On 28 August 1676 his collection was inventoried by a number of experts following his death in July the same year. The works it contained reveal a greater appreciation for art than seen with most other architects of the time, including thirty-six paintings, including works by Blanchard, Le Brun and Vignon. The cabinet housed a quantity of marble busts and bronzes, mostly of famous groups, including a '*Comode ou Hercule tenant un enfant dans ses mains*' measuring between thirteen and fourteen *pouces*, one pouce equivalent to c. 2.7 cm, and thus extremely close to the the 39.4 cm of our bronze, allowing for some imprecisions in the system used at the time.²⁴

LOUIS, GRAND DAUPHIN OF FRANCE

Almost certainly sold on the open market soon after Le Vau's death together with his other possessions, *Hercules and Telephus* is next recorded, two decades later, in the legendary collection of the Grand Dauphin (fig. 16), whose eclecticism extended from the patronage of the *ébéniste* Charles-André Boulle to the collecting of precious stones, painting and sculpture.

Born in 1661, Louis of France was the eldest son and heir of King Louis XIV and his queen, Maria Theresa of Spain. After the birth of his own son – who would, in turn, father Louis XV – he became known as Le Grand Dauphin, but died before he could become king. At the age of twenty, the Grand Dauphin was initiated into collecting by his father, who in 1681 – one year after his son's marriage to Maria of Bavaria – presented him with a number of *curiosités*, amongst which were nine bronzes.²⁵

Hyacinthe Rigaud
Louis, Grand Dauphin of France, 1688
 Château de Versailles



Rather than purchasing entire collections, the Prince – probably with the mediation of the duc d'Aumont or M. de Joyeuse, his *valet de chambre* – bought from Parisian *marchands* such as the Le Bruns or Danet. The quality of chiselling and patina of the bronzes given by Louis XIV, which included works such as Adrien de Vries's *Hercules, Deianira and Nessus* (Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. OA 5424), Ferdinando Tacca's *Hercules and Achelous* (private collection) and Pietro Tacca's *Nessus and Deianira* (Musée du Louvre, inv. no. OA 9480), must have dictated the level of the following acquisitions. The collection was displayed at Versailles in its entirety until 1693; thereafter, some of the bronzes – excluding the *Hercules and Telephus* – were moved to the castles of Choisy and Meudon.²⁶

In 1689, an inventory was prepared detailing the possessions of the Grand Dauphin. Number 16 is described as '*Un Hercule tenant un petit enfant sur un pied d'estal d'ebenne*', with a value of 18 *pistoles*.²⁷

After his death in April 1711, Louis XIV took back the nine bronzes given in 1681, whilst the Grand Dauphin's three children retained some jewels and pieces of furniture as well as a few more bronzes, which thereafter entered the royal collection,²⁸ and amongst which the *Hercule tenant un petit enfant* does not figure. To cover the huge debts accumulated by the Prince, his heirs dispersed the rest of the collection at Marly, '*avec une indécence qui n'a peut-*



être point d'exemple' (Saint-Simon). It is logical to believe that valuable works of art would have had to be included in the sale in order to meet the creditors' expectations.

JEAN-BAPTISTE, COMTE DU BARRY

The pace of the French art market in the 18th century was a quick one. Paintings, sculptures and works of art were regularly sold at the death of a *collectionneur*, or sometimes during their lifetime, to pay off debts. Thus, some sixty years after the death of the Grand Dauphin, the *Hercule and Telephus* reappears in the collection of a nobleman whose relationship with the French crown was a very close one indeed.

Known for his dissolute life as 'Le Roué', Count Jean-Baptiste du Barry was born at Lévigac, in Haute-Garonne, in 1723. His fortunes rose upon his arranging the marriage of his former lover, Jeanne Bécu, with his younger brother Guillaume du Barry in 1768. By giving her a title, Jean-Batiste and Guillaume legitimized her position as the mistress of King Louis XV, and benefited from the king's lifelong gratitude. Following the King's demise and Madame du Barry's banishment from the court in 1774, Jean-Baptiste acquired estates near Toulouse and an *hôtel particulier* in the centre of the town, rebuilt *ex novo* in a lavish Neoclassical style. In 1776, in order to finance the building campaign, the contents of his rue de Richelieu apartment – then inhabited by his son, the vicomte Alphonse du Barry – were sold at auction. Significant works dispersed in the 11 March and 21 November 1774 sales included Rembrandt's *Simeon in the Temple* (1627–28; now Kunsthalle, Hamburg), Joseph-Marie Vien's *Sweet Melancholy* (Cleveland Museum of Art), and Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *Annette at the Age of Twenty* (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome) to name but a few. Importantly for establishing the provenance of the present sculpture, one copy of the du Barry sale catalogue (Petit Palais, Paris) was illustrated by one of the most original personalities of 18th-century France, Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724–1780). Lot 142 included '*Hercule tenant sur son bras gauche un enfant. [...] 15 pouces de haut*'.

Only last year, the bronze resurfaced in the collection of a noble family near Aix-en-Provence in the south of France, where it had remained for generations, thus allowing us to appreciate the remarkable quality French bronze production had already achieved in the early 17th century, with nothing to envy of the output of the best workshops active for the Italian courts. *Hercules and Telephus* thus gives us an extraordinary opportunity better to understand the influences that played such a great role on sculptors of the time, and the rare methods they developed for casting in bronze.

- 1 For example, upon his death Charles Errard, first director of the Académie de France in Rome, gifted his collection of seventy-one bronzes to Louis XIV. Cf. S. Castelluccio, *op. cit.*, p. 355 and note 5.
- 2 Cf. F. Haskell, N. Penny, *Pour l'Amour de l'Antique: La Statuaire Gréco-Romaine et le Goût Européen 1500–1900*, Paris, 1999, pp. 209–11.
- 3 *Ibidem*.
- 4 These restorations, including the iron clamps, would only be removed during the 1980s.
- 5 Cf., respectively, A. Luzio, 'Lettere inedite di Fra' Sabba da Castiglione', in *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, III, Milan, 1886, pp. 91–112; F. Albertini, *Opusculum de mirabilibus Urbis Romae*, Rome, 1510; L. Mauro, *Le antichità della città di Roma*, 1556. The identity of the child will remain doubtful until much later. It will be seen that, unlike reductions of the immediately identifiable *Silenus holding the young Bacchus in his arms*, the present bronze will generally be described in inventories and sales catalogues as 'Hercules holding an infant'. Cf. below, notes 24 and 26.
- 6 M. Ceriana, *Il Camerino di alabastro: Antonio Lombardo e la scultura antica*, exh. cat., Milan, 2004, p. 13.
- 7 Cf. S. Pressouyre, 'Les fontes de Primatice à Fontainebleau', in *Bulletin Monumental*, 127, 3 (1969), p. 227. After the French Revolution, the sculpture was transferred to the Louvre. It is now back at Fontainebleau, in the Galerie des Cerfs. See also G. Bresc-Bautier, 'L'art du bronze en France 1500–1660', in *Bronzes français...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–60.
- 8 Cf. *Hochrenaissance...*, *op. cit.*, p. 522, cat. no. 249; J. Chhibec, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–52.
- 9 Cf. P. Liverani, A. Nesselrath, 'Statue of Hercules and the Infant Telephus', in M. Koshikawa, M. J. McClintock, *High Renaissance in the Vatican: The Age of Julius II and Leo X*, exh. cat., Tokyo, 1994, pp. 69–70.
- 10 Cf. J. Bassett, F.G. Bewer, 'The Cut-Back Core Process in Late 17th- and 18th-century French Bronzes', in D. Bourgarit, G. Bresc-Bautier *et al.* (eds.), *French Bronze Sculpture*, 2014, pp. 205–14.
- 11 The analysis was carried out in 2018 by Dr Arie Pappot, Junior Conservator of Metals, at the laboratories of the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.
- 12 Thermoluminescence test of the core material was carried out in 2018 under the supervision of Art Analysis & Research Inc., London, New York, and Vienna.
- 13 It is interesting at this stage to note the existence of a small bronze bust of *Hercules's* head from the *Hercules and Telephus* marble group in the Kuntshistorisches Museum, Vienna. Catalogued as probably Roman, mid 16th century, it may be connected to the circle of Guglielmo della Porta and workshop. Cf. *Hochrenaissance...*, *op. cit.*, cat. 250.
- 14 Cf. *Bronzes français...*, *op. cit.*, p. 205.
- 15 G. Bresc-Bautier, *op. cit.*, 1985, p. 36.
- 16 *Ibidem*.
- 17 *Ibidem*, p. 40, note 22.
- 18 Cf. 'Casts after the antique...', *op. cit.*, p. 63, note 27.
- 19 G. Bresc-Bautier, *op. cit.*, 1985, p. 44.
- 20 Quoted in C. Avery, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
- 21 In a private collection. Cf. Avery, *op. cit.*, p. 190, cat. 34. Note also the knot on a bronze bust of Henry IV formerly in the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch, illustrated *ibidem*, p. 152, cat. no. 48, and the equestrian bronze of Charles I, c. 1632 (Ickworth, Suffolk) illustrated *ibidem*, p. 171, cat. no. 15.
- 22 *Ibidem*, p. 148.
- 23 The medallions are casts from two of the twelve Labours of Hercules sculpted by Flemish sculptor Gerard van Opstal (1594–1668) for the Galerie d'Hercule of the Hôtel Lambert de Thorigny, built by Louis Le Vau (cf. *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français*, 1998, p. 161; Blanche Penaud-Lambert, 'La galerie de l'hôtel Lambert: la part du peintre et celle de l'architecte', in *Bulletin Monumental*, 166, 1 (2008), pp. 53–62.
- 24 Cf. Mignot, *op. cit.*, p. 322–23. Archives nationales, MC/ET/XII/172, *Inventaire après décès de François le Vau, 28 août 1676*, p. 32.
- 25 Cf. S. Castelluccio, *op. cit.*, p. 355, note 3.
- 26 The removal of each individual item to the various castles would be annotated on the inventory (see below, note 26).
- 27 *Agates, cristaux, porcelaines, bronzes et autres curiosités qui sont dans le cabinet de Monseigneur le Dauphin à Versailles. Inventoriés en MDCLXXXIX*, Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, Fondation Jacques Doucet, 231 p. (MS 1046; original in a private collection).
- 28 It is worth mentioning that the procedure of marking the bronzes of the French royal collection was first introduced by Moïse Augustin Fontanieu, who became the head of the Garde-Meuble on 11 October 1711. Cf. *Les Bronzes de la Couronne*, *op. cit.*, p. 15 and note 16.