

BENJAMIN PROUST

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—
LONDON



ATTRIBUTED TO

CARLO DI CESARE DEL PALAGIO

FLORENCE, 1540 – C. 1598, ITALY

AFTER A MODEL BY

ADRIAEN DE VRIES

THE HAGUE, C. 1556 – 1626, PRAGUE

NYMPH

CIRCA 1590-93

Bronze

Dimensions: 34.5 x 21.5 x 15.5 cm

Provenance :

Likely Giovanni Maria Nosseni (1544 – 1620), Dresden

Thence likely Johann George I, Elector of Saxony

French Private collection

Literature:

Unpublished



Carlo di Cesare del Palagio (1538 - 98) produced some of the finest bronzes in the history of European sculpture during the late sixteenth century. In terms of period, quality and prestige, his bronze-work at the Saxon courts in Freiberg and Dresden between 1590 - 1593, should be considered analogous with Adriaen de Vries's achievements at the Prague court of Rudolf II and in Augsburg, or with Pompeo Leoni's bronzes for the Escorial.

Dorothea Diemer first introduced the name of 'Carlo del Palago' and his sculptural work for the Dukes of Bavaria and the Fugger families¹. Herbert Keutner then expanded on the biography of an Italian master known as 'Carlo di Cesare', who worked for the Elector Christian I of Saxony. After many years of scholars believing that 'Carlo di Cesare' and 'Carlo Pallago' to be different sculptors, Keutner was able to show that they were in fact referring to the same individual². Presently, the most authoritative catalogue raisonné of Palagio's oeuvre is Diemer's updated work of 2004: *Hubert Gerhard und Carlo di Cesare del Palagio : Bronzeplastiker der Spätrenaissance*.

Carlo di Cesare del Palagio was born in Florence on 25th January 1540 and by 1560 he was working as part of Giambologna's workshop. Here he assisted with the model of the *Neptune fountain* for the Piazza della Signoria and between 1565 and 1568 was listed as a member of the Accademia del Disegno in the city. Other known projects at this time include decorations for the wedding of Francesco de' Medici and Joanna of Austria in 1566.

In 1569, Palagio moved to Augsburg with the painter Friedrich Sustris, where he stayed in the service of the Fugger family until 1573. He then worked for Crown Prince Wilhelm V of Bavaria in the *Burg Trausnitz* near Landshut and the *Antiquarium* at Munich in 1576. Here Palagio created an ensemble of bronzes for the garden, in the form of satyrs, putti with a dragon and a fish (now in the Munich *Residenz*). After returning to Florence between 1579 and 1581, he moved to Augsburg to work with the sculptor Hubert Gerhard. Here they produced decorations for the Fugger Palace in Kirchheim, including twelve statues, with Christ and the Apostles for the Church of Saint Ulrich and Afra. In 1588, Palagio again left for Florence, before he was appointed to the court of Christian I in Dresden, through the mediation of Giambologna.

¹ Diemer, 1980 : 7 – 82

² Keutner, 1991 – 1992 : 8 – 11

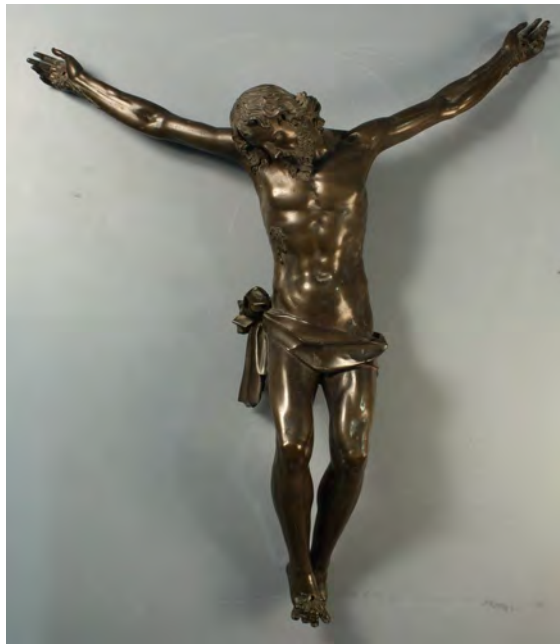


Fig.1 Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Crucifix*, 1590 – 1593, Bronze, 79 cm high. Dresden, Skulpturensammlung



Fig.2: Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Bust portrait of Christian I of Saxony*, c.1591, Bronze, 79 cm high. Dresden, Historisches Museum

It was in Dresden that he created his *Magnus Opus*. Between 1590 – 1593, he made over seventy astonishing bronze and stucco sculptures for the mausoleum of the Wettin family in the Cathedral at Freiberg, not far from the city. Here he realised the designs of Elector Christian I's court architect Giovanni Maria Nosseni (1544 – 1620), for ten life-size bronzes of Saxon princes, princesses, virtues and putti - which are now considered to be among the most impressive series of funerary sculptures made during the late sixteenth century. Palagio also made a number of other bronzes, including a *Crucifix* (fig.1) and a *Bust portrait of Christian I* (fig.2), that were recorded in Nosseni's collection. It is during this period that we believe Palagio cast this *Nymph* for Nosseni, likely from a wax model by Adriaen de Vries that the architect perhaps had picked up in Turin in 1588. Palagio's final project was perhaps his unfinished monumental tomb of Duke William V of Bavaria and his wife, Renata of Lotharingia, before he returned to Italy in 1597. Palagio made his will in Mantua in 1598 and presumably died soon after this date.



Fig.3: Giambologna (1524 / 29 – 1608), *Flying Mercury*, c. 1587, Bronze, 61.8 cm high. Museum Grünes Gewölbe (inv. IX 94)



Fig.4: Giambologna (1524 / 29 – 1608), *Nessus and Deianira*, c. 1586, Bronze, 42.4 cm high. Museum Skulpturensammlung (inv. H2 023 / 095)



Fig.5: Giambologna (1524 / 29 – 1608), Antonio Susini (-1624), Adriaen de Vries (c.1550 -1626), *Reclining Nymph with Satyr*, c. 1587, Bronze, 20.7 cm high. Museum Grünes Gewölbe (inv. IX 34)

Christian I's request for a bronze sculptor from Florence in 1586 presumably indicated that the new Saxon elector was interested in work made in the modern style that was developed in the city by Giambologna and his associates. The following year Francesco de Medici sent a series of wonderful bronze statuettes by Giambologna to Dresden: a *Flying Mercury* (fig.3), the *Nessus and Deianira* group (fig.4) and his model of a *Reclining Nymph with Satyr* (fig.5).³ This did little to satisfy the elector's appetite for court sculpture made in the Florentine style and so in 1588, his chief designer and architect Nosseni travelled to northern Italy, with the mediation of Giambologna, in an attempt to find 'sculptors and stonemasons' to execute, among other things, sculptures for the cathedral at Freiberg and the Lusthaus in Dresden⁴.

³ Diemer, 2004: 259

⁴ Diemer, 2004: 260





Fig.6a: Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Portrait of Christian I von Sachsen*, Bronze, Wettiner Grablege, 1591 – 1592. Freiberg Cathedral, Saxony

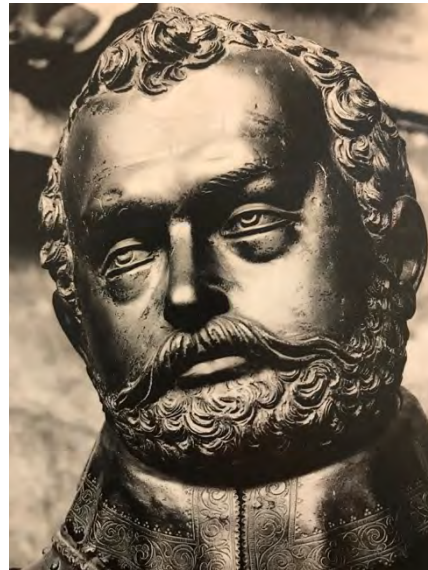


Fig.6b: (detail) Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Portrait sculpture of Christian I von Sachsen*, Bronze, Wettiner Grablege, 1591 – 1592. Freiberg Cathedral, Saxony

Whilst enroute to Italy, Nosseni stopped in Munich, where he had the chance to inspect the bronzes Palagio and Hubert Gerhard (c.1540 – 1620) had made for Duke Wilhelm, such as the *Mercury* and ~~with~~ the great *St. Michael* for the façade of the Jesuit church in the city (but which was still in Hubert Gerhard’s workshop). However, by the time of Nosseni’s arrival, Palagio had left Munich and returned to Florence, so he had to continue his search, stopping again in Augsburg and the Milan, to see the workshop of Leone and Pompeo Leoni.⁵ Leoni’s workshop in Milan would have been of great interest to Nosseni, for it was here that 15 over life-size bronzes were cast for the tomb of Philip II at Escorial during the 1580s.⁶

Nosseni spent the autumn in Turin, where Adrian de Vries had become court sculptor the previous March. We do not know whether Nosseni tried to get Adrian de Vries to work in Saxony before he hired Carlo di Cesare del Palagio, however one imagines he at least explored the prospect given de Vries’ renown. De Vries and Palagio probably knew each other as they were both in Florence during the 1570s and were perhaps even friends. It is also possible that Nosseni was in Turin waiting for the completion of bronze casts of de Vries’ models - such as that of the *Faun and*

⁵ Diemer, 2004: 260

⁶ Diemer, 2004: 260



*Nymph*⁷. In Florence, Nosseni clearly met and made an agreement with Palagio because the sculptor was at the Saxon court in Dresden from October 1590.⁸



Fig.6c: (detail of chasing) Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Portrait sculpture of Christian I von Sachsen*, Bronze, 1591 – 1592. Freiberg Cathedral, Saxony

The cast quality and patina of the present bronze is excellent and finds significant comparisons with works by Palagio for the court of Christian I. Not least his portrait of the elector himself in Freiberg Cathedral (fig.6a - 6c), which includes the exact same style of cruciform and linear punchwork to that appearing on the fabric wrapped around the rock or tree stump that our *Nymph* sits upon (fig.7). Diemer describes this exaggerated, ‘metallic’ chasing style of the elector’s portrait bust (fig.2) as similar to that apparent on the full-length Freiberg figures, although the armour of portrait is decidedly more finely chiselled in the area of the armour⁹. Diemer points out that Palagio’s chasing work on his Freiberg bronzes was valued highly¹⁰, noting that it can be seen from the records relating to these works, that Palagio included the casting and chasing process into his

⁷ Krahn et al., 1995: 440

⁸ Diemer, 2004: 262

⁹ Diemer, 2004: 268

¹⁰ Diemer, 2004: 262

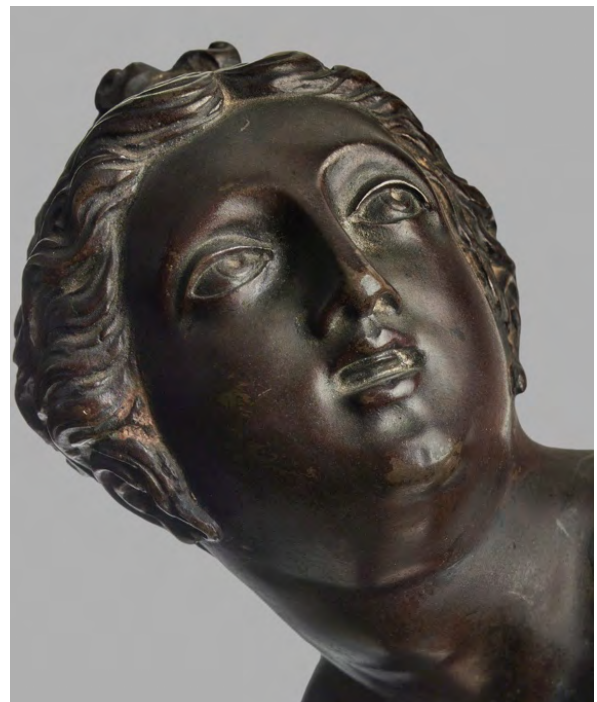


price, suggesting that he chased his works himself, as he had done in Munich¹¹. However, Diemer also notes that since that the electoral medalist Heinrich von Rehnen was named as the *Chiseler* of Christian's portrait bust, that he could have been involved in the final chasing of the Freiberg figures¹². In essence, the chasing technique in evidence on the bust, Freiberg figures and the present *Nymph* is so similar and specific that appear to be by the same hand and represent a hallmark of Palagio's bronze-work at Dresden and Freiberg.

The details of the facial physiognomy of the *Nymph* is also highly suggestive of Palagio's hand and modelling style. The long thin nose, the large, heavy-lidded eyes, the deeply incised iris' and heavily punched pupils of the *Nymph*— all compare favourably to those of the portrait of *Anna von Sachsen* (fig.8) and the *Caritas* figure (fig.9) at Freiberg Cathedral. The soft, but clearly delineated, handling of our figure's hair is very similar to Christ's hair from Palagio's Crucifix (fig.10).



Fig.8) (detail) Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Portrait sculpture of Anna von Sachsen*, Bronze, 1591 – 1592. Freiberg Cathedral, Saxony



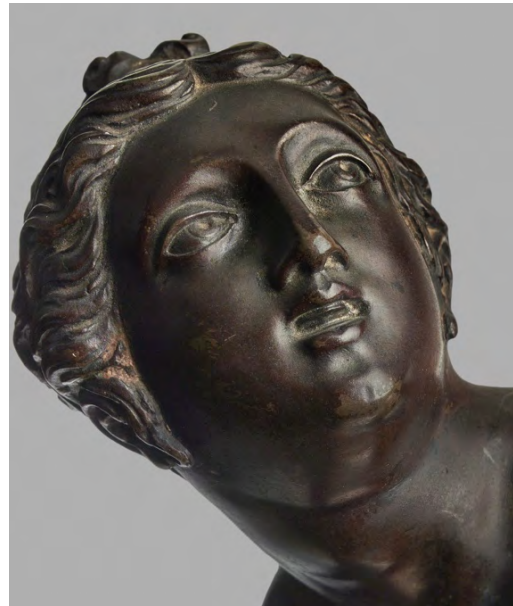
(detail) Attributed to Carlo di Cesare del Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Nymph*, After a model by Adriaen de Vries, 1590-93, Bronze

¹¹ Diemer, 2004: 268

¹² Diemer, 2004: 268



Fig.9 (detail) Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Caritas*, Bronze, 1591 – 1592. Freiberg Cathedral, Saxony



(detail) Attributed to Carlo di Cesare del Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Nymph*, After a model by Adriaen de Vries, 1590-93, Bronze

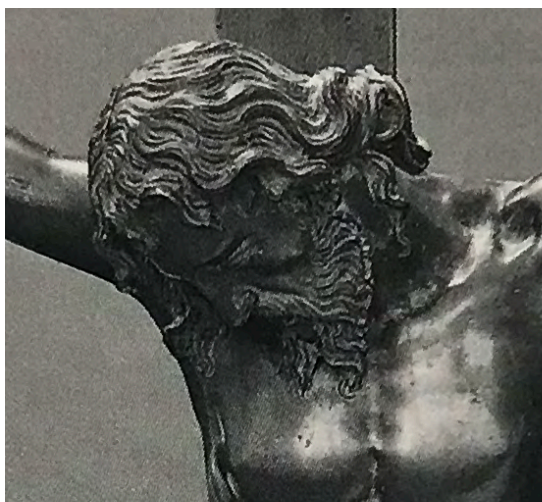
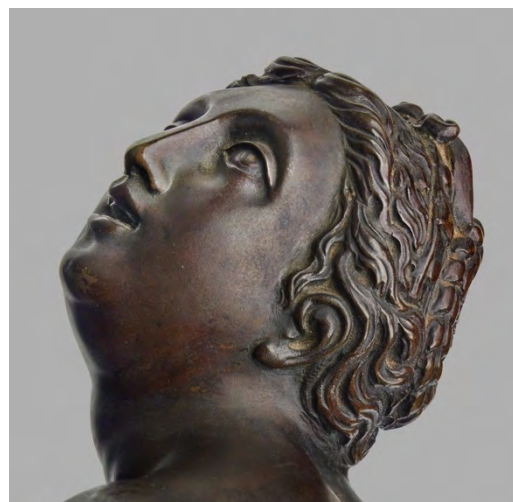


Fig.10 (detail) Carlo di Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Crucifix*, 1590 – 1593, Bronze, 79 cm high. Museum Skulpturensammlung, Dresden



(detail) Attributed to Carlo di Cesare del Palagio (1540 – c.1598), *Nymph*, After a model by Adriaen de Vries, 1590-93, Bronze

Most of Nossen's sculpture collection consisted of clay, plaster and wax works and mostly took the form of casts and copies of important works of art, known as 'Paradigmatica', which was typical of the period. Interestingly, with the exception the small copies of Michelangelo's works, the collection was entirely made up of models by contemporary masters, who primarily specialised in the medium of bronze, such as: Giambologna, de Vries, Gerhard, Krumper, Johann Gregor van

der Schardt, Alexander Colin – who were employed at the rival courts of Florence, Prague, Munich, Nuremberg and Innsbruck.

Nosseni had roughly the same number of models in his collection by Giambologna, as he did Palagio. So it is clear that in addition to his extensive assignments, Palagio still had time to make casts of existing models, as well as new additional works. It is reasonable to assume that the court *Kunstammer* founded by the elector August in 1560, also possessed Palagio's works, although the focus of the collection in the 17th century was largely the 'artes mechanicae'. The inventories up to 1619 still show very little sculpture – for it was not until 1619 that the term 'art piece' appeared for the first time. The most prominent being Filarete's *Marcus Aurelius* (fig.11), the *Leaping Unicorn* from the workshop of Hans Reisinger, bought in Augsburg (fig.12), and the aforementioned bronze groups by Giambologna, sent by Francesco de Medici.¹³



Fig.11) Antonio Filarete, *Marcus Aurelius*, 1465. Bronze, 0.37 cm. Museum Skulpturensammlung, Dresden



Fig.12) workshop of Hans Reisinger, *Leaping Unicorn*, Bronze, 37cm. Museum Grünes Gewölbe, Dresden

The *Faun and Nymph* group is believed to be one of the earliest compositions by Adrian de Vries (c.1556 – 1626). The figures, which are grouped together by gesture and direction of view, perhaps represent the characters of virtue and vice: the *Faun* perhaps makes an erotic request, while the *Nymph* rejects the offer by pointing at her beauty reflected in a mirror – citing it as the price of

¹³ Diemer, 2004: 283



virtue. The ancient model for the *Faun* could have been provided by the *Satyr* shown in extreme rotation in the Thermenmuseum in Rome. The spiral rotation of the faun running from head to foot was a primary concern of the mannerist sculpture and such *figura serpentinata* is demonstrated here in an exemplary manner. No particular model appears to be used directly for the female figure, but it is very close to Giambologna's *Kneeling Nymph Surprised while Bathing*, itself derived from the ancient *Aphrodite des Doidalses*.

Adrian de Vries is celebrated as the unparalleled master of bronze sculpture made north of the Alps during the late mannerist period. Before 1574 he must have moved from the Lowlands to Italy, living several years in Florence, where he worked in Giambologna's workshop. In 1586 he worked at the court of Philip II of Spain with Leone and Pompeo Leoni. Nothing much is known about his activity at the Savoyard court in Turin between 1588 - 1589, however, some of his most important work was carried out in Augsburg and at the imperial court in Prague. His monumental fountains for the Maximilianstrasse in Augsburg, the *Mercury* and the *Hercules Fountain* (completed in 1599 and 1602) represent remarkable achievements in bronze sculpture and earned him the title of Imperial Chamber Sculptor in 1601. He then moved to the Prague court of Rudolf II, who died in 1612. Between 1613 and 1622, De Vries worked for Prince Ernst von Schaumburg-Lippe and he later supplied the Danish court of Christian IV with bronze sculptures, which are now in Stockholm and Drottningholm.

The Augsburg patrician and art agent Philipp Hainhofer visited Dresden on his return trip from Pomerania in 1617 and saw, in the collection belonging to the aged Giovanni Maria Nosseni: 'A Faun with Venus and mirror from Adrian de Vries'¹⁴. At the time of Nosseni's death in 1621, there were in fact three versions of the *Faun and Nymph* group in his collection:

“Nr. 63. 40 R - Zwey bilder Metall *Adona* (!) und *Venus* vf hülzernem Postament . ein hoch fecit Adrian de Friss.

Nr. 64. 25 R - Ein ander stehend *Satyrus Adone* (!) bild unvorschnitten von Metall Eiusdem vf ein hülzen Postament hierzu gehöret **ein weiblein**.

Nr. 65. 25 R - Ein ander stehend *Adona* (!) Metall Unverschnitten Eiusdem gehort *ein weiblein* darzu unverschnitten.”

¹⁴ Holzhausen, 1933: 77 (“Ain Faun mit Venere und Spiegel vom Adrian de Vriess”)

It is worth noting that the term ‘unverschnitten’ can in this case be translated as ‘unfinished or unchased’¹⁵.

In 1622, Nossen’s collection was acquired by Johann Georg I, Elector of Saxony (1585 – 1656) and came into the possession of the Electoral Chamber of Art¹⁶. It is interesting to note that only two of these works were listed in the Grünes Gewölbe inventory of 1640¹⁷ and were recorded in the first special inventory of the electoral sculptural holdings from 1726 and 1728¹⁸. Since the original documents have been lost, the publication of the directory which Viktor Hantzsch made in 1903, today forms the basis of our knowledge of Nossen’s personal collection¹⁹. Today, only a *Faun and Nymph* and a *Faun (Adonis)* survive in the Dresden collections. The groups of the original list could well have been mixed up, swapped and some figures finished later. Including the Proust *Nymph*, the total number of extant models known consist of four *Nymphs (Venus)* and three *Fauns (Adonis)*. Nossen’s original inventory only lists three groups, therefore at least one of the following *Nymphs* was not in Nossen’s inventory.

The Faun and Nymph (Venus and Adonis) group, with the broken mirror, in the Grünes Gewölbe, Dresden and belonged to the old inventory of the Electoral Art Chamber (fig. 13 & 13a). The two figures in this group may not be a true pair and the *Nymph* could have originally been paired with the *Faun* in the Skulpturen Sammlung, Dresden. In 1967, Larsson only attributed the model only to de Vries and questioned whether this version was cast by him at all and enquiring whether it could actually be an after cast commissioned by Nossen, from an autograph group in his collection²⁰. In 1995, Krahn fully attributed the Grünes Gewölbe group to de Vries²¹. However, de Vries didn’t usually make multiple casts of his sculptures like Giambologna did, with only one other exception of the two signed *Cain and Abel* works, one in Edinburgh and another in Copenhagen, which are dated 10 years apart. Bassett states that although de Vries no doubt conceived the *Faun and Nymph*

¹⁵ Syndram and Scherner, 2004: 277

¹⁶ Syndram and Scherner, 2004: 277

¹⁷ Holzhausen, 1933: 77 (“Kunstammerinventar 1640 (Fol. 502) wieder auf: ‘Zwey Bilder als Adone vnd Venus von Metall, vff einem höltzern Postament, fecit Adrian de Friess.’ ‘Zwey von Metall gegossene Bilder, deren eines Mannes, das andere aber weibliches geschlechts sitzende ist, vnd einen von dergleichen Metall gegossenen spigel in der einen hand hat, vff einen holtzern schwarz angestrichenen Postament angeschraubet Zubefinden, welches Adrian de Fries gemacht vnd sein Posse oder Adone Bild mit dem Weibel.’”)

¹⁸ Krahn et al., 1995: 440

¹⁹ In 1933 - W. Holzhausen, ‘Die Bronzen der Kurfürstlich Sächsischen kunstammer zu Dresden’, *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*. 54. Bd., *Beibefte zum Vierundfünfzigsten Band*. Berlin, 1933, pp. 45 – 88; in 1992 - Meine-Shawe collated the entries which related to works of art, sculptures and pictures with Hainhofer’s short description and tracked the pieces in the inventories of the Dresden collections (Meine-Schawe 1992, pp. 173 - 189)

²⁰ Bassett, 2008: 63

²¹ Krahn et al., 1995: 40

composition, his personal involvement in the actual casting process should be reassessed²², pointing out that the highly uncharacteristic handling of the wax, the unique plaster composition of the core, variations of the alloy, unusual cold work, unusual repairs – concluding that de Vries was likely not involved in the casting or finishing of the figures²³ and that they were cast in Prague before 1621²⁴. Scholten, in his 1998 catalogue, observes that this group was probably not chased until later, when it was accepted into the electoral art chamber²⁵.



Fig. 13) *Faun and Nymph* (After a model by Adriaen de Vries), Bronze, 34.5cm.
Museum Grünes Gewölbe (inv. IX 20 & IX 36)



Fig. 13a) *Faun and Nymph* (After a model by Adriaen de Vries), Bronze, 34.5cm.
Museum Grünes Gewölbe (inv. IX 20 & IX 36)

According to Larsson, this *Faun*, belongs to the original autograph group by De Vries. The *Nymph* from one of these groups is now lost and this single *Faun* is in the Skulpturensammlung, Dresden, (fig.14)²⁶.

²² Bassett, 2008: 70

²³ Bassett, 2008: 70

²⁴ Bassett, 2008: 63

²⁵ Scholten, 1998: 112 – 114, Nr. 4

²⁶ Bassett, 2008: 71 (Illustrated Larsson, 1967: pl 8)



Fig.14) *Faun* (After a model by *Adriaen de Vries*), Bronze, 48.5 cm. Museum Skulpturensammlung (inv. ZV 3205)



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Fig.15) *Nymph with intact mirror* (After a model by *Adriaen de Vries*), Bronze. Private collection, Paris. Photographed here in the sale catalogue of Albert Kende, *Freiwillige Versteigerung der Antiquitäten und Gemälde der Firma Pollak & Winternitz*, Wien 1933, lot no.

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The Nymph, with intact mirror, from the Haus Wettin collection (fig.15). Frederick August III (1865 – 1932) was the last king of the House of Wettin, who ruled Saxony, until he abdicated due to the German ‘November Revolution’ of 1918. The House subsequently fell and much of the collection was sold. This *Nymph* was restituted back to the Wettin family in 1924, as part of the proposed expropriation of the dynastic properties of the former ruling families of the German Empire during the Weimar Republic, known as the *Fürstenabfindung* (Princely severance payment)²⁷. It was sold by the family and later appeared at auction in Vienna in 1933²⁸ and it is now in a private collection in France. However, it is not a good quality cast.

²⁷ Krahn et al., 1995: 440

²⁸ Albert Kende, *Freiwillige Versteigerung der Antiquitäten und Gemälde der Firma Pollak & Winternitz*, Wien 1933, lot no. 212

The Nymph, with no mirror (fig.16). This was sold in the Joseph Simon sale, Berlin, 1932²⁹. Its location is now unknown and it appears to be a very crude version compared to our bronze. The cast is not of a very good quality and the tree trunk and rocks are awkwardly defined.



Fig.16) *Nymph with no mirror* (After a model by *Adriaen de Vries*), Bronze. Photographed here in the catalogue of Joseph Simon sale, Berlin: Nachlass Dr. James Simon, Berlin - [Vente] 29 November 1932, Rudolph Lepke's Kunst-Auctions-Haus, Berlin, lot 73



Fig.17) *Fawn / Adonis* (After a model by *Adriaen de Vries*), Bronze. Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Formerly in the Collection of Graf Dönhoff-Friedrichstein, reproduced in Bode, *Bronzestatuetten* Taf. CCCXXIII)

A Fawn (Adonis) in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (fig.17). Formerly in the collection of Graf Dönhoff-Friedrichstein³⁰ and reproduced in Bode³¹. It must be noted that the hair and fingers are of poor quality.

²⁹ Nachlass Dr. James Simon, Berlin - [Vente] 29 November 1932, Rudolph Lepke's Kunst-Auctions-Haus, Berlin, lot 73

³⁰ Holzhausen, 1933: 78

³¹ Bode, *Bronzestatuetten* Taf. CCCXXIII



The present *Nymph*, with intact mirror is the highest quality cast known and its modelling style and chasing technique is in accordance with the work of Carlo di Palagio. Therefore we suggest the present bronze was cast by Cesare del Palagio, from a wax model by Adriaen de Vries that Nosseni perhaps had in his collection, which he picked up in Turin in 1588 when they were both in the city – Nosseni looking for sculptors to employ for the Saxon court and de Vries working as court sculptor to the Savoy family. A full technical analysis at the Rijksmuseum facilities proved that the composition of the alloy is very similar to that of Palagio's *Portrait Bust of Christian I of Saxony* at the Historisches Museum, Dresden, particularly in levels of Bismuth in both bronzes. A TL test was also conducted on the core material and revealed a firing about 420 years ago, dating it to around 1600, which coincides with the period Palagio was working in Dresden. The present work is therefore a fascinating addition to both Palagio's oeuvre and scholarship regarding the transmission of de Vries' work and other contemporary sculptures throughout the most important European courts, during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

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