



JAIME EGUIGUREN

ARTS & ANTIQUES

MEMENTO MORI

Italy

End of the XVI century - XVII century

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ARTS & ANTIQUES



Memento Mori

Italy. End of the XVI century - XVII century

Marble

23.2 x 18.5 x 6.3 inches (59 x 47 x 16 cm)

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ARTS & ANTIQUES

This remarkable shield composed by scrolls and volutes, with a skull wearing a flower wreath in its inside, must have been part of the ornamentation of a burial monument.

From the iconographic point of view, we are faced by an allegory of the ephemeral nature of life, represented by the “Memento mori” (“Remember you are going to die”). The skull is also associated with melancholy and, when wearing a laurel wreath, it conveys that virtue and fame will outlive death.



The human skull, represented in a realistic manner, is frequently part of the Renaissance and baroque repertoire. Since the end of the sixteenth century, beginning with the Council of Trent, and throughout the rest of the seventeenth century, it became one of the themes of Christian thought, at the feet of the cross of the Calvary. It was even an instrument of mercy, as can be appreciated in the representations of Penitent Saint Jerome, Saint Francis of Assisi and Mary Magdalene in the desert.

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ARTS & ANTIQUES

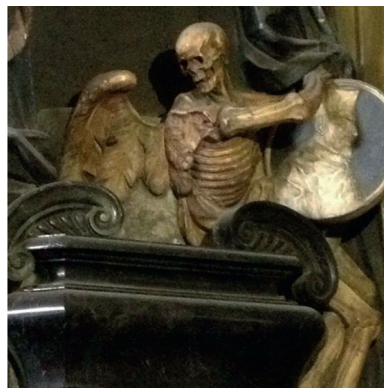
In burial monuments, skulls are a frequent element that can be located in different places: at the base of the architectonic structure, below the epitaph and at the feet or sides of the catafalque. Frequently, they are placed on top and at the central part of the monument, where the coat of arms of the deceased can be found.

This piece undoubtedly belongs to a mausoleum built against a wall. Its eyes and nose cavities and its line of teeth reflect the cruelest aspect of death. The flower wreath, however, offers a more positive point of view as it makes reference to the future immortality of the soul. In this sense, it should be interpreted as an allegory of good death, *ars moriendi*, a Jesuit and mystical belief that defines death as a personal moment and a rite of passage, that allows devotees to come out triumphant. This can be the meaning of the flower wreath that crowns the skull.



Fig. 1 *Monument to Giovanni Vigeveno* (detail), Rome, S. Maria sopra Minerva.

ROSARIO COPPEL



Figs. 2 & 3 (left) *Monument to Cardinal Cinzio Aldobrandini* by Carlo Bizzaccheri, Rome, S. Pietro in Vincoli; (right) *Monument to Cardinal Stefano Durazzo*, Rome, S. Maria in Monterone.



Fig. 4 *Monument to Mariano Pietro Vecchiarelli*, Rome, S. Pietro in Vincoli.



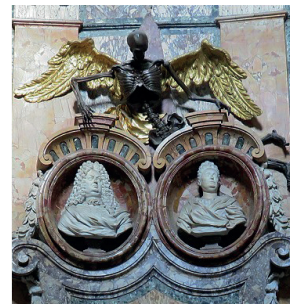
Fig. 5 *Monument to Maria Eleonora Boncompagni Ludovisi*, (detail), Rome, S. Maria del Popolo.

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ARTS & ANTIQUES



Fig. 6 Monument to Cardinal Giuseppe Renato Imperiali, Rome, S. Agostino by Paolo Posi and Pietro Bracci.



Figs. 7 & 8 Tombs in S. Francesco a Ripa (Pallavicini-Rospigliosi Chapel), designed by Nicola Michetti with sculptures by Giuseppe Mazzuoli.



Fig. 8 Albrecht Dürer, *Coat of Arms with a Skull*; German, 1471-1528. Engraving. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

JAIME EGUIGUREN

ARTS & ANTIQUES



BIBLIOGRAPHY

MÂLE, E., *L'Art religieux de la fin du XVIème siècle du XVIIème siècle et de XVIIIème siècle*, Paris, 1972.

MÂLE, E., *El Barroco. Escultura religiosa del siglo XVII*, Madrid, 1985.

RÉAU, L., *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, Paris, 1955.

REDONDO CANTERA, M. J., *El sepulcro en España en el siglo XVI. Tipología e iconografía*, Madrid, 1987.