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Attributed to Antonio Moglia (B. 1765)

Ca. 1825

**A GIALLO TIGRATO
MARBLE PANTHER**

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A Giallo Tigrato marble Panther

H. 41 cm; H.T. 50 cm; L. 49 cm

Provenance: Buenos Aires, private collection

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Fig. 1 *A Giallo tigrato marble panther*,
Attributed to
Antonio Moglia (B.
1765), Circa 1825.

Giallo Tigrafo is a rare marble that the ancient Romans called “*marmor corinthium*”, because it was wrongly thought to be only quarried in the region of Corinth. On its polished surface, the marble has pockets of a cloudy yellowy-orange colour surrounded by dark round veins, which look like the pelt of a tiger or leopard (Fig 1). A number of blocks of the giallo tigrato were used to decorate the church of Santa Maria Maggiore and San Andrea della Valle, Rome, but it was used sparingly over the centuries, probably because the location of the quarries were unknown post-antiquity, and so any examples were generally re-carved from a small number of antique sources. In 1824 samples of the marble were discovered near Monte Calvo, north-east of Rome, thereby providing a fresh source of this rare marble. The beast is depicted seated still, poised, its head turned and its ears pricked and alert. Its eyes are constructed of reverse-painted glass which gives them their bright colouring that ignite the appearance of the wild animal.

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Figs. 2 a & b
Léopard Assis,
Attributed to
Antonio Moglia,
vers 1783,
Sotheby's, 2017.



The present panther is closely related to at least three other single leopards or pairs of leopards in private collections that have been dated from the 16th to the 18th centuries (Figs. 2a & b, 3a & b). However the most relevant comparison is to a number of carved marble animals in the Sala degli Animali in the Vatican museums.

The two rooms that make up the Sala degli Animali were set up under Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) with the intent of creating a “stone zoo”. The Pope recruited a number of artists to work on these rooms, who both restored ancient works and created new ones. The most celebrated and talented of these artists was Francesco Antonio Franzoni (1734-1818). Franzoni used coloured marbles to allude to the tones of the coat and

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Figs. 3 a & b *Modelo*
en marbre giallo tigrato
representant un leopard assis,
Italie, Rome, Fin du 18E
ou debut du 19E siecle,
Christie's, 2017.

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Fig.4 A *Giallo tigrato* marble panther, Attributed to Antonio Moglia (B. 1765), Circa 1825.

plumage of various animals and to give the works a unique richness, such as the use of *pavonazzetto* and *alabastro del circeo* in the “*Lupo di Pavonazzetto*”. (Gonzales-Palacios, op. cit. cat n° 13) and luxury stones in “*Tigre con la bocca aperta*” (cat. N° 97), that suggests an affinity with the present work (Fig. 4).

As mentioned above, there are at least three other known animals carved from *giallo tigrato* in existence, although the present example is much largest.

A seated leopard that was recently sold by Sotheby's Paris from the collection Madame Djahanguir Riahi previously in the Goldschmidt and is identical in form to the present example, but almost half the size. A group of two leopards depicted fighting or playing is located in a English private collection, and a pair of leopards lying down are also located in a French private collection. All of these appear to have glass eyes and can be thought of as a homogenous group. The existence of this group, suggest a most likely dating of *CIRCA 1824*, when this rare marble became more readily available following the discovery near Monte Calvo.

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Fig. 5 *Tigre e tigrotti*, marbre giallo tigrato, vers 1825, Antonio Moglia, Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana (inv. No. 339).

Little is Known about Antonio Moglia (b.1765) although he is known to have been active in Rome in early 19th century where he is documented as assisting in the workshop of the famous sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1884). By 1811, he is fully trained as a sculptor as specified by Thorvaldsen's account book in 1811, 1816 and 1817. Although not specified, the attribution to Moglia of the group (*Tigre e Tigrotti*) in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana is probably based on the first-hand knowledge. The group was donated in 1827 by Conte G.E. de Pecis to the Pinacoteca so is likely to have been executed shortly before this date (Fig. 5).

Condition Report

Numerous minor areas of infill overall; these are probably restoration to natural flaws in the marble.

Some very minor chips overall consistent with age and handling.

The panther's front proper left paw with a hairline crack to the proper left side.

Small area of resin to each front paws probably part of minor restoration.

The eyes with some surface scratches.

The tail probably broken and repaired.

The black marble base with minuscule chips to the edges as to be expected, and with some smaller shallow chips to the front edge and corners.

Very good condition overall and very impressive size.

References

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DEL BUFALO, Dario, *Marmi Antichi e Pietre Dure*, 2000, p. 159.

FALCHETTI, Antonia, *La Pinacoteca Ambrosiana*, Milan, 1969, pp 198 and 236, inv 339.

GONZÁLEZ- PALACIOS, Alvar *II serraglio de pietra. La sala degli animali in vaticano*, 2013.

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