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*After model by **Guglielmo della Porta***

Porlezza ca. 1515 - Roma 1557

Christ



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Italia circa 1569

Policrome Terracotta

32.5 x 31 cm

Provenance: Private collection, Madrid



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Both the iconography and the proportion of the figure of Christ, tall and slender with the elegant curve of the *contrapposto*, the facial features, the anatomical study and the shape of the *perizonium*, are undoubtedly the creation of the sculptor Guglielmo della Porta.¹

In the spring of 1569, Guglielmo Della Porta wrote to his friend, the also sculptor Bartolomeo mmannati, to tell him that he was working on the creation of some crucifixes of different sizes and materials, all of them made according to the norms of the Trento council.

That same year, Guglielmo, disillusioned his findings in the city of Rome, since Pius V was not so interested in sculpture as the previous Popes, sought the patronage of Maximilian II of Austria and sent him a crucifix, which is silver-gilt, and is now in Vienna at the Geistliche Schatzkammer. (Fig. 1) Two years later, on December 18th, in 1571, the Cardinal Alessandro Farnese thanked Guglielmo Della Porta for sending a crucifix with words of praise. It was a silver *Crucifix*, which in 1582 was donated to the Pope Gregory XIII by cardinal.

It was then placed on the main altar of the basilica of St. Peter's in the Vatican, on the great Cross that, together with two candlesticks, made Guglielmo's collaborators, Manno Sbarri and Antonio Gentilli, where he continues today.

Just like the altar Cross that was emptied by another of Guglielmo's assistants, Bastiano Torrigiani, following the same model as Della Porta for the figure of Christ. On the other hand, in the silver Calvary

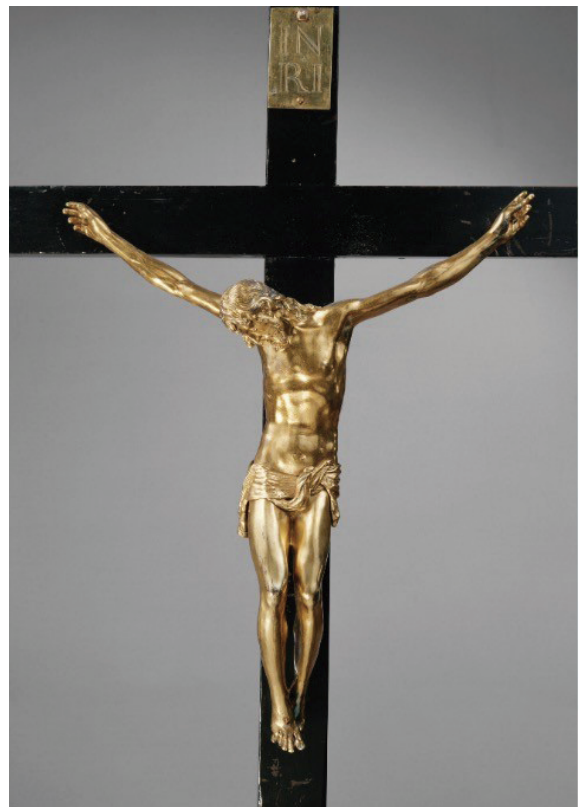


Fig. 1 Guglielmo della Porta, *Crucifixion*, silver-gilt.
Viena en la Geistliche Schatzkammer

¹ There is another replica also in polychrome terracotta and slightly larger than this one: 33.5cm in height by 32.5 cm from hand to hand. It is in a private collection. For the biography of Guglielmo della Porta see R. Coppel, M. Estella and C. Avery, *Guglielmo della Porta. A Counter-Reformation Sculptor*, Coll & Cortés Fine Arts, Madrid, 2012, where the previous bibliography, documentation and works cited in this study are published.

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Fig. 2 Guglielmo della Porta, *Crucifixion*, silver-gilt. monasterio de El Escorial



Fig. 3 Guglielmo della Porta, *Calvary*, gilded bronze. Private collection

relief that Gregory XIII gave to Bianca Capello, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, created by Guglielmo della Porta and cast by Antonio Gentili, and that he later sent to Felipe II (Monastery of El Escorial) the same model of Christ appears. (Fig. 2) Also, as in the gilt bronze replica of a private collection. (Fig. 3)

There is another version that only differs from the previous ones in small details, as the most frontal position of the body, the head falling less on the chest and on the entire perizonium, which is held by a cord that leaves part of the hip visible right. This model of Christ crucified, of which several replicas are known, continues the exactly same type attributed to Guglielmo Della Porta by Ulrich Middeldorf.² Among them, the silver *Crucifixion* stands out for its excellent quality. which is preserved in Madrid, in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional.³ (Fig. 4) There are others specimens of this same model made in gilt bronze, such as the Calvary of the El Parral Monastery (Segovia), the Portacoeli Convent in Valladolid, the convent of the Clarisas de Monforte de Lemos (Lugo), and more gold in a private collection.⁴

² U. Middeldorf, "In the wake of Guglielmo della Porta", *The Connoisseur*, 1977, pp. 75-84, figs. 13 and 14. This copy was then in a private collection in Florence.

³ W. Gramberg, *Notizen zu Kruzifixen des Guglielmo della Porta und zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Hochaltarkreuzes in S. Pietro in Vaticano*, *München Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst*, 22, 1981, pp. 95-114 (fig. 3); J. M. Cruz Valdovinos, *National Archaeological Museum. Silverware Catalogue*, Madrid, 1982, No. 2. Inventory No. 52,078.

⁴ R. Coppel, *en Faces*, Coll & Cortés Fine Arts, Madrid, 2013, pp. 46-55.

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The terracotta Christ disclosed in this study is exactly the same as the one made of silver from the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, about 4cm smaller, and therefore belongs to the series just cited.⁵ It must be a model made by the sculptor in the first moments of his activity, around 1569, before carrying out the waxes to be cast in metal. This was the usual procedure among sculptors of his time, who proceeded to capture first the idea in clay and then followed the different steps of the lost wax casting. If we take into account the originality of the figure of Christ created by Guglielmo della Porta and the technical perfection of the terracotta, as well as its style, we can clearly see that it is a model of the master. The way in which the cloth of purity is held, with a visible lace on the right side, leaving part of the body uncovered, can be considered the signature of the sculptor. It is this particular detail, together with the similarity of the version of silver from the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid and from the other above mentioned collections, that constitutes the basis of the attribution to follower of Guglielmo della Porta.



Fig. 4 Guglielmo della Porta, *Crucifixion*, silver-gilt. Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid.

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⁵ It measures 36 x 36 cm and entered the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in 1871 from the Miró Collection.

