

Pietro Tacca 1577–1640

Jumping Horse Florence, ca. 1619

Bronze. Inv. Nr. 7252

The Berlin collection of bronzes is above all a credit to Wilhelm von Bode, whose collecting passion developed in parallel to his research activities in this area, as documented in numerous publications. While the holdings of the Berlin collection have been significantly reduced since 1945 by numerous war-related losses, it still counts today among the most important of its kind. The high regard in which Italian small bronzes of the Renaissance were held in Bode's time can also be measured by the fact that they were presented in a luxurious atmosphere – the fireplace room on the Spree side of the upper floor – whose furnishings evoked the feeling of a room in a Venetian palace (Fig. 1). In Berlin at that time, there were many collectors of small bronzes, among them James Simon, who on the occasion of the opening of the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum donated a large number of them to the Berlin Museums. After a recent reinstatement, most of them can once again be seen in the James Simon Cabinet (Room 216), which is located next to the fireplace room.

Within the collection of Italian small bronzes, the depiction of a horse in the gait known as “corvetta” has a special status. This bronze was made by the Tuscan court sculptor Pietro Tacca, who above all is known to a wider audience through his bronze boar in the Mercato Nuovo in Florence (Fig. 2). As recounted in Filippo Baldinucci's biography of Tacca, the Florentine sculptor received a commission in 1619 from Duke Karl Emanuel of Savoy for a bronze equestrian monument that was supposed to be installed in Turin. For this purpose, Tacca prepared small wax models whose design reflects the bronze in Berlin among others. Baldinucci also reports that the stable master of the Grand Duke Cosimo II, named “Cavallerizzo Lorenzino”, was helpful for this project, since he, together with Tacca, studied the movement and anatomy of horses. The depiction of a horse rearing up on its hind

legs represented an ambitious and novel sculptural endeavour – one which had already engaged the efforts of Leonardo da Vinci.

The bronze, acquired for the Berlin collection in 1928, suffered severe damage in May 1945 due to the effects of fire during its storage in the Friedrichshain flak bunker. The surface, which had a luminous hue with a natural yellow patina, was irreversibly ruined. The reins were already missing, but also lost was the artfully designed pedestal, similarly a Florentine work from the 17th century.



Fig. 1 Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, room with the Italian bronzes from the Renaissance, ca. 1915 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv



Fig. 2 Pietro Tacca, The Bronze Boar in the Mercato Nuovo in Florence © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst / Archiv



Fig. 3 Pietro Tacca, Jumping Horse © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst / Antje Voigt