

French, Seventeenth Century,
after Giambologna

Lion Attacking a Horse, and Lion Attacking a Bull
Bronze groups after Giambologna's bronzes of 1580s

Height of Horse group: 24.5 cm / 9 ⅝ in

Height of Bull group: 22.25 cm / 8¾ in

Facture: Areas of a darker patina on both bronzes have been rubbed to reveal traces of the original golden and reddish lacquers applied to the coppery bronze metal from which they are cast.

The base of *Lion Attacking a Horse* is integrally cast with the horse's body and the lion's head, shoulders and back lower legs. Cast separately are the horse's head, its three legs, the lion's lower body and haunches.

The naturalistic base of *Lion Attacking a Bull* is separately cast and the group is bolted onto it. The legs and head of the bull and the lower body and back legs of the lion are all separately cast from the rest of the group.

Lion attacking horse is based on a Hellenistic marble which had been discovered in Rome by 1347; only the torso of the horse and the upper body of the lion remained and it was not until 1594 that Ruggiero Bescapè, a Milanese sculptor, restored the missing limbs and recreated the group according to his own invention[1]. Giambologna chose to complete the composition in a more dynamic way and the arched neck and backward turn of the horse's head in his version – seen in the present group – differ from Bescapè's group.[2] Giambologna would have seen the fragmentary Hellenistic group when he visited Rome in the early 1550s as a student of antiquity and was in Rome again on two occasions in the 1580s.

Giambologna's original small-scale model probably dates from one of these later visits to Rome in the 1580s and the model for *Lion attacking bull* was presumably created as a pendant after his return to Florence. The earliest recorded date for *Lion attacking horse* paired with *Lion attacking bull* is 1611, when Philip Hainhofer described '*un gruppo d'un lione ch'ammaza un cavallo*' and '*un gruppo d'un lione ch'uccide un toro*' as being amongst the bronzes by Giambologna owned by the imperial councilor Markus Zeh in Augsburg.[3] The whereabouts of those particular bronzes is no longer known, nor of the two bronzes listed in the 2 November 1623 inventory of Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi in Rome.[4] The only surviving casts whose contemporary dating is certain are two pairs signed by Antonio Susini (who died 1624).[5] One pair is now in Palazzo Corsini, Rome (formerly in Palazzo Venezia, F.N. 171-172).

Of the second pair, *Lion attacking bull* was bought by Louis XIV in 1663 (Louvre, OA 6062)[6] and *Lion attacking horse* is in the Detroit Institute of Arts (25.20). Susini was one of Giambologna's closest collaborators and a craftsman famous for the high-quality bronze replicas which he cast from Giambologna's models (and which he continued to cast after setting up his own workshop circa 1600). The present pair of bronzes may have been cast in Paris rather than in Florence, although there is still insufficient scientific analysis available to distinguish with certainty between the casting techniques of the two centres. The heavier-than-usual casts and the finish of the bronzes would, however, be consistent with a French origin and a similarly constructed pair of bronzes in Hamburg has also been assigned a French origin.[7] There were Florentine casts in Parisian collections during the first half of the 17th century and moulds taken from these bronzes would have enabled French founders to replicate the compositions. Cardinal de Richelieu (died 1643), chief minister to Louis XIII, is known to have owned a pair similar to the present compositions[8] and Jean-Baptiste de Bretagne (died 1650), the king's *commissaire des guerres,* owned a bronze of '*le Combat du cheval et du lion*' (but not of the bull group)[9]. In addition to the single *Lion attacking bull* signed by Susini which Louis XIV acquired in 1663, there was a pair of the present compositions in the king's collection by 20 March 1684, on which date they were entered as numbers 149 and 150 in an inventory of the bronzes recently moved to Versailles.[10] François Girardon (1628-1715) also owned '*deux groupes de bronze de combats d'animaux*'.[11]

The presence of these bronzes in France in the 17th century demonstrates that the models were readily available to local foundrymen working in Paris.

1. P. P. Bober & R. O. Rubinstein, *Renaissance artists and antique sculpture*, Oxford 1986, no. 185; F. Haskell & N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, Yale 1981, no. 54.

2. Both the Bescapè and Giambologna compositions are illustrated and discussed by Anthony Radcliffe in *The Robert H. Smith collection. Bronzes 1500-1650*, 1994, nos. 10 & 11.

3. O. Doering, 'Des Augsburger Patriciers Philipp Hainhofer Beziehung zum Herzog Philipp II. von Pommern-Stettin - Correspondenzen aus den Jahren 1610-1619', *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik* ..., Vienna 1894, pp. 96-97; quoted by M. Leithe-Jasper in his account of the Vienna *Lion attacking bull* in *Renaissance master bronzes from the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna*, 1986, p. 226.

4. B. Palma, *Museo Nazionale Romana. Le sculture I,4. I marmi Ludovisi. Storia della collezione*, 1983, pp. 66-67, nos. 193 & 207. Interestingly, they are not treated as a pair in the inventory.

5. For all four bronzes and transcriptions of the signatures, see Giambologna 1978, nos. 170-173; also Radcliffe, *Smith collection* 1994, p. 68. Susini appended *OPVS* to his signatures on Lion attacking horse to indicate that they are replicas of an ancient statue, whereas *F*. for *fecit* appears on *Lion attacking bull* to denote that they are 'modern' bronzes. It is not clear whether *fecit* should also be understood to mean that he (rather than Giambologna) invented the original model for the latter

composition.

6. *Les bronzes de la couronne*, exhib. cat., Musée du Louvre, Paris, April-July 1999, p. 78, no. 19. For bronzes cast by Susini in the collections of Hesselin, Girardon and Louis XIV, see A. Lefébure, 'Une collection dominée par l'art de Jean Bologne' in idem, pp. 37-42.

7. U. Berger & V. Krahn, *Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig. Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock*, 1994, nos. 71-72 as French, circa 1700 (base of bull group missing).

8. M. de Boislisle, 'Les collections de sculptures du Cardinal de Richelieu', *Mémoires de la société nationale des antiquaires de France*, xlii, 1881, pp. 71-128. However, it is possible that these were casts by Giovanni Francesco Susini in which the lion has been replaced by a tiger (Radcliffe, *Smith collection*, 1994, p. 68).

9. C. Mignot, 'Le cabinet de Jean-Baptiste de Bretagne, un curieux parisien oublié (1650)', *Archives de l'art français, nouvelle période*, xxvi, 1984 p. 82, item 12.

10. *Les Bronzes de la couronne* 1999, nos. 149-150.

11. F. Souchal, 'La collection du sculpteur Girardon d'après son inventaire après décès', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. 82, 1973, pp. 54-55, no. 64.