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Fine European Sculpture and Works of Art



**Attributed to Filippo della Valle
(Florence, 1698 - 1768, Rome)**

Standing Amore

Bronze statuette

Height: 24.3 cm / 9½ in

Facture: Cast by the lost wax method. Most of the detail was modelled in the wax, but the eyes and toe and fingernails were chased after casting. The surface is lightly wire-brushed, and his hair, wings and the clouds on the base are matt punched. A contemporary repair to a casting flaw was made on top of his left shoulder. Core pin holes are visible in several places. The coppery base metal retains a rich dark brown patina over golden brown lacquers. The remains of a pin on his right hip indicates where the bow was attached.

This statuette compares directly in style, form and detail to two *putti* in biscuit porcelain in the deposit of the Società Ceramica Richard-Ginori, Doccia. The inventory made in 1780 of the waxes held at Doccia attributes the models to della Valle and relates them to the gilt bronze *Cherub Bearing a Candelabrum*, which stands on the rail of the confessional in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.¹ Jennifer Montagu confirms the accuracy of this entry in the inventory in her review of Lankheit's catalogue of 1982, and Vernon Hyde Minor points out that the *Cherub Bearing a Candelabrum* was cast from della Valle's model by Filippo Tofani.² Minor has also proven that a marble group of *Cupid and Psyche* in the Wallace Collection, which is inscribed Cayot 1706, is actually by della Valle.³ Indeed, a marble statue of this model is recorded in the post mortem inventory of Filippo della Valle.⁴

An engraving of the group of 1732 dedicated by della Valle to his biographer, Maria Niccolo Gaburri, is signed: "*Phil. Della Valle Romae*" and also states, "*Phil della Valle Florentinus inv. et Fec.*"⁵ The

group is also given to della Valle by Francesco Maria Baldinucci in his biography.⁶ Minor's suggestion that Cayot's signature was subsequently added to the *Cupid and Psyche* to help him to sell it to the Marquis of Hertford, is probably correct, as Hertford also owned Cayot's signed *Compagne de Diane* in his collection at Bagatelle in Paris.⁷ The argument is borne out by comparison between the faked inscription on the *Cupid and Psyche*, and Cayot's signature on the *Diane*, which are quite different. The engraving of della Valle's marble group of *Cupid and Psyche* shows Psyche with a distinctive 'butterfly' wing of the exact type seen on our *Amore*.⁸ Although the marble in the Wallace collection is now wingless, their loss is consistent with the replacement of the third finger of Cupid's right hand, the exact point at which, according to the print, the wing was attached. The wings are also absent from the various terracotta versions of the group;⁹ Minor correctly points out that the terracottas must therefore have been made after the marble was damaged; and that the *cache-sexe* present on some suggests a nineteenth-century origin. The *Cupid and Psyche*, the *Cherub Bearing a Candelabrum* in Santa Maria Maggiore, and the *Doccia putti* have a number of stylistic features in common with the present statuette. The articulated fingers are outstretched and curve smoothly; the hands and wrists are fleshy, and the skin is pinched where they join; the locks of hair are slightly curled, and the dimples and distinctive modelling of the belly button are typical of della Valle. The cherub at the left of the confessional rail has the same facial type, characterised by a slightly open mouth and raised top lip, and the fleshy, bulging chin and cheeks typical of young children's faces. The hair on both the Wallace collection group and our *Amore* obscures the ears and the fluttering draperies are modestly drawn up between the thighs. Both the *Doccia putti* in biscuit and the *Amore* stand upon a base of swirling clouds in similarly buoyant, rococo postures.

Biography:¹⁰

Filippo della Valle was a nephew of Giovanni Battista Foggini and trained in his studio. When Foggini died in 1725, Filippo left Florence for Rome, where he spent the rest of his life. He created medal portraits of Cosimo III de' Medici (Bargello, Florence) and Gian Gastone de' Medici (Galleria Estense, Modena).¹¹

In 1725 he competed against Pietro Bracci in the Accademia di San Luca's competition for young artists, sharing the first prize with Bracci for his terracotta relief of *Josiah, King of Judah, Giving Money for the Temple*. Soon afterwards he entered the studio of Camillo Rusconi, who then died in 1728. He became a full member of the Accademia di San Luca in 1730 and went on to become a major figure in the arts in Rome, working on the most important sculptural campaigns until the end of his career around 1765.

He became Principe of the Academy (1752-3 and 1760-1) and was Regente of the Congregazione dei Virtuosi al Pantheon in 1747, 1757 and 1762. The artistic climate in Rome was especially suited to della Valle during the papacy of the Clement XII, a member of the Florentine Corsini family. Under his plentiful patronage, he produced a figure of *Temperance* for the Corsini Chapel in the patriarchal basilica of St John Lateran.¹² He also made a relief with *St John Preaching* and a funerary monument to the Pope for S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini. Under Benedict XIV he contributed to the renovation of Santa Maria Maggiore, making a statue of the *Blessed Nicola Albergati*, a relief of the *Holy Spirit* and heads of putti. He added statues of *St John of God* (1745) and *St Teresa* (1754) to the Founders' series in St Peter's.

In 1746 he collaborated with the architect Ferdinando Fuga on the tomb of Innocent XII in St Peter's. He completed his monumental relief of the *Annunciation* for the church of S. Ignazio in 1750. His final great public works were the two great statues of *Fecundity* and *Health* for the Fontana di Trevi, which were in place by 1760.

1. K. Lankheit, *Die Modellsammlung der Porzellanmanufaktur Doccia: Ein Dokument italienischer Barockplastik*, Munich, 1982, p. 114, no. 4, pl. 82-3: "Un putto in piedi che posa sopra le nuvole che serve per torciere, in Santa Maria Maggiore in Roma. Modello del Valle con sue forme." p. 117, no. 32, pl. 82-3: "Un putto in tutto come quello al No. 4 con le sue forme."
2. J. Montagu, in her review of *Die Modellsammlung der Porzellanmanufaktur Doccia*, *The Burlington Magazine*, Dec. 1983, pp. 757-9; note to cat. 13:4 and fig. 25 corrects Lankheit; V. H. Minor, *Passive Tranquility: The Sculpture of Filippo Della Valle*, Philadelphia, 1997, cat. 38, p. 228-9. Tofani was a bronze caster and silversmith active in Rome during the 1730s-50s. When collaborating with Francesco Giardoni on the statue of S. Feliciano in Foligno Cathedral, they were described as: "principali Argentieri della med.a Città di Roma." J. Montagu, *Gold, Silver and Bronze: Metal Sculpture of the Roman Baroque*, New Haven and London, 1996 p. 141 and p. 240, n. 89.
3. V. H. Minor, "Della Valle or Cayot?", *Apollo*, June 1986, pp. 418 – 421, referring to G. Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues. Sculpture. with Supplement*, London, 1931, 1981, no. S 22, p. 7, pl. 8; see also supplement (no page numbers).
4. See Minor 1997, p. 273. I am grateful to Camilla Parisi (verbal communication 25 February 2016), who is preparing her Ph.D on Filippo della Valla, (University of Pisa), for pointing out this reference which I had missed, and that Minor's belief that Gaburri had owned the *Cupid and Psyche* is ill-founded. Both views are endorsed by Jeremy Warren in his very lengthy entry for the *Wallace Cupid and Psyche* in J. Warren, *The Wallace Collection, Catalogue of Italian Sculpture*, London 2016, vol. II, no. 140, pp. 678-687, see p. 683.
5. Baldinucci records the care with which della Valle looked after a lost terracotta group of three playing putti. V. H. Minor, *Passive Tranquility*, no. 10 p. 114.
6. F. Baldinucci, *Vite di Artisti dei Secoli XVII-XVIII* (ed. A. Matteoli), Rome, 1975, p. 98: "... e in oltre un gruppo al naturale di due Putti figurati per Amore e Psiche sedente sopra uno scoglio l qual fra di loro baciano"; quoted in Minor, p. 420, no. 2.
7. Now Cliveden House, Berkshire, UK. See T. Hodgkinson, "Companions of Diana at Cliveden" in *National Trust Studies* 1979, London, 1978, pp. 91-98.
8. V. H. Minor 1986, p. 420.
9. Terracotta versions are in the Museum at Aix-en-Provence; another was with the Heim Gallery in 1975; reductions are in the Röhsska Konstslojdsmusee, Göteborg and in an English private collection (J. G. Mann, *Wallace Collection Catalogues*, S22, p. 7 and supplement in the same volume (unpaginated). I am grateful to Camila Parisi for pointing out that she knows of a bronze cast that bears angel wings.
10. See: H. Honour, "Filippo della Valle", *The Connoisseur*, CXLIV, 1959, pp. 172-179 and V. H. Minor in *Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century*, exh. cat. ed. by E. P. Bowron and J. J. Rishel, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 16 March – 28 May 2000 and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 25 June – 17 Sept. 2000, pp. 289-290.
11. *Gli Ultimi Medici, Il tardo barocco a Firenze, 1670-1743*, exh. cat. Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts, March-June 1974 and Florence, Palazzo Pitti June-September 1974, nos. 100-101, pp. 148-9.
12. A terracotta version of *Temperance*, with Trinity Fine Arts, London, is included in *Earth and Fire. Italian Terracotta Sculpture from Donatello to Canova*, exh. cat. ed. by B. Boucher, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 18 Nov. 2001 – 3 Feb. 2002 and Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 14 March – 7 July 2002, cat. 70, p. 248.

