

A close-up photograph of a Renaissance bronze sculpture of a woman's head. The sculpture is highly detailed, showing the texture of the bronze and the intricate curls of the hair. The woman's face is serene, with a slight smile. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of the face and the depth of the hair. The background is dark, making the sculpture stand out.

RENAISSANCE &
BAROQUE BRONZES
IN
THE FRICK
ART MUSEUM

Charles Avery

Mr. Alan Fausel has noted a similarity in this composition with the classical statue by Myron of a *Discus-thrower (Discobolus)*: one fragmentary marble torso of such a figure was known in the 16th century, but was not recognized for what it was, being regarded simply as a gladiator (now Rome, Capitoline Museum; see Haskell & Penny, 1981, pp. 199–202, pl. 104). It could however have served to inspire the creator of the present *Satyr*, and if he is indeed de Vries, a fascination with classical prototypes is a constant feature, e.g. in the case of the *Dancing Faun* (Fig. 38.2), which is a variation on a classical statue in the Uffizi Gallery.



Figure 38.5
Samson and the Philistine (detail),
 Follower of Giovanni da
 Bologna; bronze
 The Toledo Museum of Art;
 Purchased with funds from
 the Libbey Endowment, Gift
 of Edward Drummond Libbey
 (1951.383)

39 Charging Bull

Bronze statuette

FLEMISH, 17TH CENTURY (OR LATER?)

7 x 12³/₈ in. (17.8 x 31.5 cm)

1970.72
 Gift of Miss Frick, 1970

CONDITION
 Good

PROVENANCE
 Woronzoff Collection, location unknown
 J. P. Morgan Collection, New York
 Duveen
 Frick 1916
 Helen Clay Frick

LITERATURE
 Bode, 1910, II, no. 217, plate CLIV, Introduction, p. XLI
 Weihrauch, 1956, no. 209
 Auriti Collection catalogue, 1964, p. 29, p. XXXIX
 Château de Laarne, 1967, no. 97
 Weihrauch, 1967, p. 379
 Leeuwenberg & Halsema-Kubes, 1973, no. 208
 Hovey, 1975, p. 27
 Hunter Stiebel, 1985, no. 45

OTHER EXAMPLES
 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (RBK 16426)
 Belgium, private collection (exhibited Château de Laarne, 1967, no. 97)
 Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (52.281: ex-Eugene L. Garbaty, lent since 1946)
 Florence, Elia Volpi Collection (sale catalogue 1910, lot 611, pl. XXVII)
 The Hague, with Cramer (Supplement catalogue 10, 1964)
 London, Christie's, 11 February 1972, lot 86
 London, Heim Gallery (Autumn Exhibition 1967, no. 80, ill.)
 Moscow (?)
 Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum (50/119)
 New York, Michael Hall Fine Arts Inc. (1985)
 Rhineland, private collection
 Rome, Museo di Palazzo Venezia (Auriti Collection)

PLATE 39
Charging Bull
Bronze statuette



Of powerful build with head bent down preparing to dash forward, its tail lashing the air. — BODE, 1910: FLEMISH, 17th century, *Figure of a bull*.

This *Charging Bull* is a well known model, of which at least a dozen examples are recorded. They vary slightly in size, though this may be accounted for partly by the difficulty of measuring accurately and consistently such an item, with its extensions in various directions, and partly by relatively minor differences in the positions of the head and horns, and of the lashing tail, caused by original variations in casting and repairing, or subsequent accidental damages. It may also however, reflect the fact that some examples are after-casts (see below).

The model was regarded by Bode and Weihrauch as Flemish, 17th century, and this has been accepted with minor permutations by most other writers. In the present instance Bode associated it tentatively, but incorrectly, as it now emerges, with the *Leaping Hound* (Catalogue No. 20) and the *Hunter and his Dog* (Catalogue No. 35), which appeared to be of the same origin; Introduction, p. XLI:

As Flemish works of the seventeenth century showing a very decided strain of Italian feeling, I should designate three bronzes which must originally have belonged to a **large group** composed of many figures, principally animals and representing a bull-fight. The figures are coarse and unpleasing in conception and in the treatment of form.

How right Bode was, at least as regards the present *Bull*!

The bull is not to be connected with an extended group forming a *Bull Hunt* and including horsemen, huntsmen on foot and hounds (Fig. 39.1; formerly Garbaty Collection, Berlin; with Leopold Blumka, New York, c. 1968; on loan to the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, c. 1973): that group is different in facture and style, and is now attributed to a master active in Venice, Rome, or Naples.

The model is generically based on bulls by Giambologna and by Dutch or Flemish sculptors parallel with, or inspired by, him, as well as earlier mid-16th-century South German naturalistic renderings of bulls on fountains (e.g. those from the fountain formerly in Schloss Hessen, which Duke Julius von Braunschweig-Lüneberg ordered in Augsburg, now in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig (Bro 225); our Fig. 39.2); or the bellowing ones now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Leeuwenberg & Halsema-Kubes, 1973, no. 240) and in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich (Weihrauch, 1956, no. 209).

All of these are much more carefully modelled, detailed and characterized than any example of the present model. Careful comparison only serves to



Figure 39.1
Bull, Italian
Formerly Garbaty Collection,
Berlin; photograph supplied
by the author



Figure 39.2
Walking Bull, South German,
middle 16th century
Photograph courtesy Herzog
Anton Ulrich-Museum,
Braunschweig (Bro 225)

emphasize in the present bronze an unpleasantly schematized rendering of the bones and musculature, chiselling all over the body that makes the surface too bland, and perfunctory and uncomprehending chasing of details, e.g. in the curly hair of the forehead and the tuft at the tip of the tail, the folds of skin around the neck and dewlap.

It should be pointed out that no example with a provenance dating from before the late 19th century exists, and no corresponding references have so far been discovered in earlier archives, nor is it shown in any of the 17th-century Flemish paintings of gallery interiors, some of which illustrate other bronzes of bulls that were popular in that area and period (e.g. *Interior of Rubens' Studio*, attributed to Corneille de Bailleur in Palazzo Pitti, Florence: see S. Speth-Holterhoff, *Les peintres flamands des cabinets d'amateurs au XVIIe siècle*, Brussels, 1957, p. 119, pl. 49).

The present model is therefore open to suspicion of being a pastiche of comparatively recent, 19th-century, date. Or also, if the model itself is authentic, as has always been assumed, most of the examples in circulation seem to be recent aftercasts (*surmoulages*): it may be no coincidence that the examples in the Rijksmuseum and in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum were purchased in Lucerne in the same year, 1950.