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CZARTORYSKI & TORLONIA.
A COLLECTION OF ROMAN
MARBLE STATUES IN THE PRINCES
CZARTORYSKI MUSEUM

Abstract: The objective of the article is to discuss the history of the acquiring of marble sculptures by Prince Władysław Czartoryski during his two stays in Italy: in Naples in 1889 and in Rome in 1891, based on preserved archival documents. The statues include such exquisite examples as a sculpture of Venus Medici from the beginning of the 1st century AD, as well as examples of compilations of ancient fragments that supposedly had previously belonged to the Roman Torlonia collection. Formal analysis of individual objects is expanded upon with information related to conservations they have been subject to.

Keywords: Roman sculptures; museum collection; Venus Medici; Princes Czartoryski Museum; Torlonia collection

The Princes Czartoryski collection, founded in Puławy in 1801, contains works of art, relics, and documents from Polish and European history. Items of ancient art were acquired by Prince Władysław Czartoryski (1828-1894) with the intention of creating a comprehensive picture of the development of art in his museum, opened in Krakow in 1876. The Prince's interest in antiquity arose from the fashion at the time for collecting, and it developed under the influence of his brother-in-law Jan Działyński (Gorzelańy 2014; Gorzelańy 2015).

The collection of ancient art includes a small but important group of Roman marble sculptures. It represents the ancient fine arts, combining

Greek patterns with examples of their transformations in the Roman period. These objects were later subject to conservation and restoration works, so their condition at the moment of sale was often different from their original appearance. Below, the author will present a history of a few sculptural transformations of monuments acquired by the prince during two transactions in Naples and Rome.

Statue of Venus

The first sculpture bought by Czartoryski was a slightly oversized statue of a Medici-type Venus that was to be given a prestigious place among the Roman monuments. In 1889, the expedition company Gaetano Questa sent a chest with the sculpture together with a letter to the custodian, Leon Bentkowski, containing technical specifications regarding the way the chest should be opened:

Mr. Mele, the restorer of the National Museum in Naples has ordered us to send a crate with a damaged marble statue to Krakow. Mr. Mele's son is absent, and shall write to Your Grace as soon as he gets back. The crate is well-packed and should be opened gently and carefully so as not to cause any damage: first remove the lid of the crate and then place it vertically to take out the sculpture¹.

According to the letter, the preparation of the shipment was taken care of by the restorer Giuseppe Mele, an acquaintance of the prince who intermediated in the trade of Greek vases. The seller was a Neapolitan antiquarian, Vincenzo Barone, who took over a thriving business from his father Raffael along with a warehouse in a palazzo in Strada Trinità Maggiore 6 (Iasiello 2017, 32, 298-300). The price also included the repair of the statue, broken at the height of the knees: adding the missing right calf² in Carrara marble by the d'Orsi sculptors (probably Achille d'Orsi working in Naples), and joining the upper part of the sculpture with the base. It is not known if the statue had been posted from Naples in one piece, as the certification of the parcel's arrival addressed to the late Bentkowski was received in December by Bolesław Biskupski, who after a few days wrote to the prince in a letter: 'The Statue

¹ Princes Czartoryski Library, Inv. 7287: Gaetano Questa & C. Spedizione Napoli to Leon Bentkowski, 22.10.1889

² A piece of marble is fixed with steel bolts and poured with lead through two channels above the right knee and by the foot. Probably, the fragment of stone below the left knee broke off when the bottom opening of a socket was being forged off. Due to slanting jointing, the weight of the top part of the statue made it slump at the crack by 6mm.

from Naples came with broken legs. I do not know if it had been like that or if it was damaged on the way, but I saw it like that when the lid was opened in my presence for customs control³.

The statue of Venus⁴ from the beginning of the 1st century AD (Felletti Maj 1951, 63 no. 14; Mikocki 1994, no. 66; Gorzelany 2014, 255; Pl. 1: 1), left in the chest and most probably placed on the ground floor of the Monastery (one of the museum buildings), will again be spoken of in the correspondence of March the following year. Professor Marian Sokołowski, the Director of the Museum, asked the prince about the place of origin of a few objects, including the

Marble Venus [...] as Your Grace has seen, is much damaged. Especially the missing fragment of the broken leg is visible. It would be good to put it up and join the fragments appropriately. [...] It comes to my mind that the missing broken fragment may still be there at the antiquarian's Your Grace has bought it from. Would Your Grace care to write to him? If it shall be impossible, [...] then we will have to look for a skilled sculptor and ask him to make this piece from plaster. There is only one here, Grejski (?), who could do it properly. I will go to him. It is, however, not restoration which I am against, but a necessary completion to erect the statue⁵.

The letter includes a proposal that was fulfilled in 1892, right before finishing the room designed to exhibit the sculptures.

'[...] Ancient marbles are being raised, which entails a lot of trouble and effort with such heavy weights, but I hope that this room will look especially nice. Venus will fit in a niche, the pedestals are ready, the most difficult thing is now to join and support the broken fragments [...]. The broken fragment of Venus' knee that I had been so worried about was found at the bottom of the chest and with the use of plaster it will complement the figure⁶.

The mentioned missing element is the size of a hand and was broken off below the left knee, near the assembly socket of the calf. Surely it was not the last time this element came loose, as it was later joined again with the use of shellac.

³ Princes Czartoryski Library, Inv. 7314: letter from Bolesław Biskupski to Władysław Czartoryski in Luxor dated 12.01.1890.

⁴ National Museum in Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Museum Inv. MNK XI-1156; H. 168cm.

⁵ Princes Czartoryski Library, Inv. 7314: letter from Marian Sokołowski to Władysław Czartoryski dated 12.03.1891.

⁶ Princes Czartoryski Library, Inv. 7314: note made by Marian Sokołowski on the letter of Bolesław Biskupski dated 3.02.1892.

Conservation works of the statue were performed at the turn of February and March, when Biskupski wrote to the prince: 'The room with marbles is arranged. All the marbles are equipped with wooden pedestals painted a stony colour. At last Venus left its bed and stood up in all its splendour. Unfortunately, without her head, she cannot hear the experts' praise'⁷. It should be noted that the knee fragment was not the only one left unspoken of in the letters. There must also have been a fragment of the left hand, without fingers, that could not have been joined with the statue due to the lack of the forearm.

Another examination of the Venus sculpture took place in 1954. The restorer Rudolf Kozłowski took radiographic photographs that showed the method of assembly inside the legs. Samples taken from the pouring channel of the left leg confirmed the good condition of the jointing, but the general assessment of the statue's stability – made a year later – was unfavorable. The statue was placed on a mobile scaffolding in a storeroom until the subsequent conservation works, which were not undertaken until 1984, as part of Donat Grzechowiak's diploma thesis under the supervision of Ireneusz Płuska at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. During the conservation, previous reconstruction of the legs was disassembled in order to replace the steel bolts with brass ones and reinforce the joints (Pl. 1: 2). The statue was also cleansed of the brown calcite deposit covering its back. The scope of layers indicated that prior to being found, the statue lay on its back partially depressed in the ground, which led to the formation of calcite infiltration on the surface of the dolomite marble. Simultaneously, the top part of the body and the base were eroded by precipitation. These works, performed a century after the statue had been purchased, allowed for restoring the original colour of the marble and adapting the sculpture for exhibition purposes. Being one of a number of copies of the Medici-type Venus, which together with the statues of the Capitoline Venus were often bought for aristocratic collections in the 18th and 19th centuries (Havelock 1995, 76-80), it was an important element of Czartoryski's collection, demonstrating his pursuit and acquisition of objects popular among collectors.

Apart from the statue of Venus, the room with marbles also contained sculptures that were said to have come from Ostia and which were bought by Czartoryski, probably from the collection of Alessandro Torlonia (Gorzelany 2014, 256). In April 1891, Prince Władysław Czartoryski was staying in Rome. His springtime travels through Italy were a continuation

⁷ Princes Czartoryski Library, Inv. 7314: letter from Bolesław Biskupski to Władysław Czartoryski dated 4.03.1892.

of his winter stay in Egypt. Italian cities such as Florence, Rome and Naples, offered up the atmosphere of old towns replete with monuments, and gave him the opportunity to acquire objects for the Krakow museum. In a letter to his sister Izabela Czartoryska-Działyńska, he wrote: ‘My Dear Izetka, someone should keep an eye on me. I keep doing silly things. I have bought wonderful things, you will see. Those antiquities are always so friendly, not like the living [...] now there is a mass of beautiful things to buy. Everybody is poverty-stricken and sells for nothing’⁸. Czartoryski sent this letter right after closing a purchase of several sculptures and reliefs from Ostia, bought from the Torlonia collection, as the Prince wrote in a letter to Biskupski⁹. The bill includes ‘Marmi comprati dal Signor Capponi 11 aprile 1891 Roma’ [Marbles bought from Mr Capponi 11 April, 1891 Rome] according to the list (the spelling is original):

6 teste tonde medaglioni	150.00
2 candelieri o pilatri	200.00
1 testa antica gialla	40.00
1 gran torso	70.00
1 torso femminile panneggiato	60.00
1 torso maschile con base	100.00
2 teste termi	200.00
1 statua in pezzi	100.00
statua di donna infatta	920.00
grandezza naturale dormiendo	1180.00

The shipment was taken care of by the antiquarians Achille Capponi and C. Stein of Maison d’expédition at 42 via delle Morcede in Rome, which Czartoryski writes of a few days later: ‘I have sent 9 crates from Rome; 8 contain ancient marbles. The crates were sent from Rome to Trieste. 8 crates with Roman marbles: complete Ariadne, not missing anything, lying, asleep, of natural size, 3 bodies (torsos) 2 naked males, 1 female, in a tunic, with a base (nice) 2 male heads on pillars (termi), one yellow without a pillar’¹⁰.

A group of sculptures entered in the inventory of ancient monuments of the Museum comprises seven objects. All but one of them are examples of

⁸ Princes Czartoryski Library, Inv. 7411III: letter from Władysław Czartoryski to Izabela Działyńska, Rome 15.04.1891.

⁹ *Ibidem*: letter from Władysław Czartoryski to Bolesław Biskupski, Rome 16.04.1891.

¹⁰ Princes Czartoryski Library, Inv. 12534: letter from Czartoryski to Biskupski, Cannes 24.04.1891.

quite informal compositions aimed at creating objects suitable for aristocratic interiors.

‘Torso femminile panneggiato’

– A torso of a woman¹¹ wearing a chiton and himation dating back to the 2nd/3rd century (Mikocki 1994, no. 89; Pl. 2: 1) was again placed on an Ionic capital. The original statue referred to a monumental Greek sculpture ascribed to Kresilas or Polykleitos, representing Athena with the moniker *Eirene*: the goddess was resting her raised right arm on an upturned spear, and she was looking at Nike flying down to rest on her outstretched left arm. The founding of this statue at the Agora of Athens was related to the desire for peace that was growing among the Athenian society during the Peloponnesian War, and it directly followed the peace treaty signed between Nicias and Sparta in 421 BC. During the Roman period, the sculpture became a model for the representations of other goddesses (e.g. Cerera), as well as portrait statues. It is also present on brass Attic coins from the period of the Reign of Hadrian of the Nerva-Antonine Dynasty (Weber 2015).

‘Gran torso’

– Another compilation is a torso¹² with a paludamentum on the left arm from the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries (Mikocki 1994, no. 80; Pl. 2: 2) mounted on the base of an Ionic column. It represents a heroic portrait of a Roman as a military leader. Finger marks on the torso: an outstretched thumb and a bent index finger hidden under the cloak, with the remaining fingers straight, indicate that originally the left hand was resting on the hip. The torso was made according to Greek tradition and it refers to a votive statue of the Italian negotiator Caius Ofellius Fesus in the Agora of the Italians in Delos dating back to the late 2nd century BC, made in a prominent Attic workshop of a family of sculptors operating since the end of the 3rd century BC (Zanker 1983, 252-257; Hallett 2005, 103f.). These sculptors also executed orders in Rome. Greek composition patterns adopted during the Republic period were continued in honorary sculptures and heroic statues of emperors and junior commanders (Wegner *et al.* 1966, Pl. 23a; Hallett 2005, 108-115, 172-183, 190-193). The nudity

¹¹ National Museum in Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Museum Inv. MNK XI-1161; H. 51cm.

¹² National Museum in Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Museum Inv. MNK XI-1159; H. 91cm.

of the portrayed figure (the cloak covers only one shoulder) was not characteristic of Roman statues, instead deriving from Greek tradition and the canon of heroic representations of Romans that originated in the eastern regions. Romans living in Greek cities adopted and continued local patterns, defining the form of sculptures of Hellenistic rulers. The heroic aspects of nudity suggest great deeds of the person portrayed, matching those of mythological or god-like figures, creating a desired illusion of their effigy. Symbolically, the portrayed person acquired desired features such as youthful vigor, bravery, strength, and charisma.

‘Torso maschile con base’

– In the 18th century, a smaller male torso¹³ in a chlamys dating back to the beginning of the 1st century (Mikocki 1994, no. 79; Pl. 2: 3) was placed on an upturned stele with an inscription facing downwards, with three sides resculptured into garland motifs supported by putti, whereas on the fourth one, corresponding to the back of the stele in its new function as a base, there is an original representation of a jar. The inscription on the stele dating back to the 1st century reads: *D M ACILIAE APOLLONIAE L LORENIUS ARTEMA CONIVGI CARISSIMAE* – ‘To Manes Gods. To Acilia Apolonia my dearest wife [by] Lucius Lorenus Artema’ (CIL VI 10513; Fabretti 1699, 629 no. 249; Sadurska 1990, no. 10). Both elements of the compilation – the stele and torso – were separated during conservation work performed by Małgorzata Zagórska at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow in 1992. The torso belongs to a rare type of representation of mythological figures, gods, and heroes. From the perspective of form and style, as a reinterpretation of a pattern, it is quite loosely related to Greek patterns showing figures of men with a cloak draped over one shoulder, which due to lack of attributes can be placed within a mythological context. The preserved fragments of sculptures showing a similar pose can be identified thanks to their attributes as Poseidon in a sculpture at Museo delle Terme in Rome (Oehler 1961, Fig. 82-83, 84-85) or as Zeus in a sculpture at Museo Archeologico Nazionale (Oehler 1961, Fig. 84-85; Klöcker 1997, 188-190). The pattern for all these three statues is a sculpture from the 5th century BC (Kansteiner 2017, 46).

‘Statua in pezzi’

– A fuller reconstruction was performed on a statue of a young

¹³ National Museum in Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Museum Inv. MNK XI-1162; H. 59cm.

man in a chlamys¹⁴ from the period of the Nerva-Antonine Dynasty (Mikocki 1994 no. 78; Pl. 2: 4), to which an ephebos' head and a few missing elements were added and then the whole statue was placed on a modern base. The man's proportions and body pose indicate modelling on sculptures from the Hellenistic period. This work is eclectic and it was most probably inspired by statues showing Hermes: a similar sculpture, Hermes of Troezen, kept at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (Kaltsas 2002, 116 no. 209), is a 2nd-century AD copy of a statue made by Naukydes (late 5th century BC). A similar example of a sculpture modelled on Naukydes' statue, made in the second half of the 1st century AD, can be found in the collection of Palazzo Lancellotti (Barbanera and Freccero 2008, 175). The head added to the statue purchased by Czartoryski was made from Parian marble of a yellowish colour. Complements sculpted in Carrara marble with a white shade are an aggressive and unsightly addition in the area of the nose and the lower part of the face. Even though the head is said to date back to the 4th century BC (Bieńkowski 1919, 250-251), the way in which the wavy locks of hair are developed and carefully arranged around the face recalls the works of master Naukydes, Polykleitos, and it corresponds to an adolescent head dating back to the 1st century, kept at Liebieghaus in Frankfurt (Bol 1981, 130), and a head of Hermes Ludovisi from the collection of Colonna (Carinci 1990, 210ff. no. 114). The sculpture should be treated as a copy of a Greek pattern from the middle of the 5th century BC, made in the early period of the Roman Empire. Due to aesthetic reasons, during conservation works of the statue in 1989 as part of the diploma work of Wojciech Kurdziel at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, individual elements of the statue were separated, so now the head and the torso are exhibited separately.

In the same shipment from Rome, there were also two, quite complete herms¹⁵ with modern bases and the heads of centaurs, one young and the other old (Mikocki 1999, no. 81, 82). Not all of the monuments that were bought at that time could have been classified as ancient. Some of them were made according to ancient patterns, but are undoubtedly modern, such as the statue of a sleeping Ariadne, medallions, two Renaissance pilasters, and decorative medallions. Most certainly as well, a head of Silenus on a herm, made from yellowish marble, dates to the 19th century (Bieńkowski 1919, 269 no. 17).

¹⁴ National Museum in Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Museum Inv. MNK XI-1160/2; H. 95cm.

¹⁵ National Museum in Krakow, Princes Czartoryski Museum Inv. MNK XI-1168; H. 77cm (antique fragment); Inv. MN XI-1158; H. 56cm (antique fragment).

In this context, it is worth noting the prices of individual monuments that do not match their value. It seems that a sculpture's value was determined by its size, whereas the quantity and quality of the complements did not matter. The seller probably claimed that the complements were antique, allowing him to increase their prices. This is particularly visible in the price of two herms, in which only small fragments of the bodies come from original sculptures. Nonetheless, as complete statues they have acquired aesthetic value.

According to a letter by Prince Czartoryski, the sculptures purchased in Rome came from the Torlonia Collection. In the 19th century, this family of bankers amassed a collection deemed a most important private collection of ancient art, with high cultural value and of international significance. The initial monuments included over a thousand sculptures and crafts purchased by Giovanni Torlonia at the sale of the collection of the sculptor and restorer Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1717-1799, cf. Gasparri and Ghian-doni 1994). Due to serious intervention visible in the objects kept in Krakow, one may suppose that they had belonged to that collection and were resold because their condition and quality differed greatly from other objects at the Torlonia Museum. Another compilation was purchased from Marquis Vincenzo Giustiniani in 1816, and the next one as part of the villa of Cardinal Alessandro Albani in 1866¹⁶. Other sculptures and reliefs were acquired for the museum established by Alessandro Torlonia (1800-1886) in 1875 in Via della Lungara, mainly as guarantees from renowned Roman families (Cavaceppi, Vitali, Albacini, Savelli, Caetani, Cesarini, Orsini) for loans granted by the bank and from excavations around Rome, within the territory owned by the family. Most of the objects were placed in the catalogue (Visconti 1885, cf. Gasparri 1980) containing examples of combining torsos with column bases or capitols, similar to those of the sculptures in Krakow.

From the late 19th century the museum was opened only for special guests and, in 1948, the collection was made unavailable. The sculptures were kept in a palace in the Trastevere District, under unfavorable storage conditions. The authorities were dissatisfied with this situation, not only due to the inaccessibility of a collection of national heritage, but also because the objects were no longer subject to conservation. In 2002, a motion was put forward in the Italian Chamber of Deputies to take ownership rights of this exquisite private collection of exceptional artistic and historic significance – the third largest after those of the Vatican and Capitoline

¹⁶ Retrieved from <https://www.fondazionetorlonia.org/torlonia-collection/> (status as of 11.01.2019).

Museums – in order to protect it from damage and make it available to sightseers and scientists¹⁷. Successive talks related to purchasing the collection by the state and providing a building for its exposition went no further than the offer stage (in 2015, the amount discussed was EUR 125 million)¹⁸. In 2016, a consensus was finally reached, whereby the collection is managed by public-private cooperation. A foundation established in 2014 declared that it would show a part of the objects at an exhibition, but that did not come to pass. There are some cases in the history of the Torlonia Collection resembling the perturbations occurring during the activity of the Princes Czartoryski Foundation (1991-2016). They are related not only to making the collection available to third parties, but also to the care of the collection of monuments provided by private persons or institutions. In the Krakow case, the supervision of a state institution – the National Museum in Krakow — ensured that the monuments would be taken care of regarding their conservation and academic supervision. The set of objects purchased by Władysław Czartoryski from Torlonia has not been excluded from the area of exhibition and study. Even if it does not represent value approaching that of the original Roman collection, it still holds an important place among Polish collections of ancient marbles.

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¹⁷ Retrieved from http://www.camera.it/_dati/leg14/lavori/stampati/sk2500/relazion/2407.htm (status as of 11.01.2019).

¹⁸ Retrieved from <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Collezione-Torlonia-un-tesoro-nascosto-in-una-cantina-Franceschini-incontra-il-principe-0946ca0b-0279-4fa8-a6b0-2285acc91859.html> (status as of 11.01.2019).

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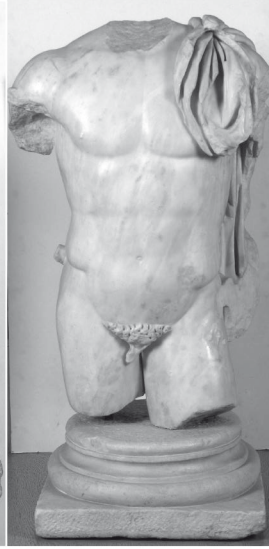
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Pl. 1: 1 – Medici-type Venus, National Museum in Krakow, inv. MNK XI-1156.
The National Museum in Krakow Archives

Pl. 1: 2 – Medici-type Venus, National Museum in Krakow, inv. MNK XI-1156.
The National Museum in Krakow Archives



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- Pl. 2: 1 – Torso of a woman placed on an Ionic capital, National Museum in Krakow, inv. MNK XI-1161. National Museum in Krakow
- Pl. 2: 2 – Torso with a paludamentum, National Museum in Krakow, inv. MNK XI-1159. National Museum in Krakow
- Pl. 2: 3 – Male torso in a chlamys on a stele, National Museum in Krakow, inv. MNK XI-1162/1,2. The National Museum in Krakow Archives
- Pl. 2: 4 – Male statue in a chlamys. National Museum in Krakow, inv. MNK XI-1160/1-2. The National Museum in Krakow Archives