

TOMMASO RUES

(GERMANY, CIRCA 1639 -?, 1703)

AN IMPORTANT PAIR OF CARVED WHITE MARBLE BUSTS OF
MINERVA AND PURITY



SECOND HALF OF THE 17TH CENTURY

DIMENSIONS:

HEIGHT : 47 ¼ IN - WIDTH 27 ½ IN - DEPTH : 13 ¾ IN

THE ATTRIBUTION CONFIRMED BY MAICHOL CLEMENTE, THE SPECIALIST

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This important pair of marble busts depicting Minerva and Purity is by the German sculptor Tommaso Rues, the attribution was given by Maichol Clemente, the sculptor's specialist.

The bust of Minerva portrays the goddess wearing a plume-adorned helmet and an elegantly draped tunic. An identical model, though smaller, features in the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor (Figure1).



Figure 1. Tommaso Rues, Minerva, marble, height : 28 ½ in.
Waddesdon Manor, The Rothschild Collection

Purity, the second bust, symbolized by hair-adorned palm, clad in an elegant drape revealing her breast.

The pair of busts presented here is remarkable for its significantly large size, its composition and specific iconography. Each of the three sculptures is emblematic of Tommaso Rues's style. A feminine ideal of beauty usually expressed in busts, hair-locks gently trailing on to their shoulders, with almond-shaped eyes looking up. His particular care to details especially in the drapery is noticeable as well.

Tommaso Rues was born in Germany circa 1639 and studied in Giovanni Hach's workshop between 1650 and 1658, a sculptor from Bamberg. He made his débuts early in Germany for the Duke de Saxe and the Prince of Ratruil.

In a letter from 1679 to Francesco II of Este, the presence of the artist in Venice Italy to promote decorative arts is testified by the abbot Giovanni Parenti. Tommaso Rues was indeed involved in the construction of prestigious public buildings and more specifically in the decoration of famous Venetian churches during the XVIIth century.

He made several statues of saints for the Church San Pantalon in Venice. He also executed angels for the chapel of San Giovanni della Croce, for the Church of the Scalzi, and, on the isle of the Giudecca for the front of the Redentore church, he carved San Marco and San Francisco of Assise, The Christ, Veronique and the Deposition from 1682. He also worked for the Basilica of The Salute by Longhena. Tommaso Rues was thus involved in Venice's 17th century's most prestigious sites and collaborated with Giusto le Court (1627-1679), the famous Flemish baroque sculptor active in Venice at the time. Both printed their mark on Venice's most prestigious sites, each in a particular way: a sensual style for Tommaso Rues and a more realistic style for Giusto Le Court.

The sculptor also worked for private collectors throughout Italy.

The two sculptures presented here are in keeping with a typical German Baroque language characterized by intricate details. These are exceptional sculptures given their large sizes so different thus from the similar bust of Minerva kept in the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor.

Also, in Waddesdon Manor's collections another white marble sculpture depicting Diana that was bought by Ferdinand of Rothschild, a similar fine profile, shaped eyes, attention to details in the drapery, hair-locks gently unfolding over the shoulders (Fig.2).



Fig.2. Tommaso Rues, Diana, marble, height : 24 ½ in.
Waddesdon Manor, The Rothschild Collection

Bibliography :

Maichol CLEMENTE, « Tommaso Rues : contributo al catalogo » in Zbornik za umetnostno zgodovino, Archives d'histoire de l'art, Nouvelle série XLIX, Ljubljana, 2013, pp.73-95.