

MOBILI ITALIANI 1

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Giardini and Passarini: facts and hypotheses

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UNTIL RECENTLY, WHAT was known about Giovanni Giardini (1646–1721), one of the greatest European goldsmiths of his age, came from Costantino Belgeri's book of 1958 and from Carlo Grigioni's subsequent research published in 1963. Over the past fifty years, Giardini has gradually been accorded the fame he deserves thanks to the work of Jennifer Montagu.¹ It seems time to turn again to Giardini, who has interested the present writer for over twenty years.²

The oldest document published here concerning Giardini dates from 16th December 1679 and is the work of the accountant to Benedetto Pamphili, a member of Innocent X's family and who was soon to be created cardinal in 1681. We know from a brief mention in Lisa Montali's monograph on the cardinal that Giardini supplied works in silver to the prelate. The document of 1679 gives a clear description of a piece that no longer exists:

for having made a silver salicollar that is in the form of a large rock with four sea horses, eight dolphins, four shells, two tritons and four snails to hold oil, vinegar and sugar, weighing 57 pounds and 9 ounces paid for the models of the tritons [...] paid for the little wooden moon on the corners of the support [...] for the models of the shells, dolphins, sea-horses, rock and for models that were not used.³

1679 was a year of change for Giardini. With Marco Ciccini (the two together presented the account just mentioned) he was put in charge of Marco Gambrocini's silver workshop. In 1680 this association broke down, and Gambrocini presented his workshop to Giardini. It is evident from the document that Giardini and Ciccini had paid out of their own pockets both for the little wooden moon that supported the salicollar (but were not part of it), and for the models of tritons, while they had personally made the models of dolphins, shells, horses and the rock. It has already been noted by Jennifer Montagu that Giardini was not very good at depicting the human figure⁴ but was capable of modelling other subjects, as is evident from his post mortem inventory, which lists various wax models from his hand. Additionally we know that he was awarded the title of Accademico di Merito di San Luca in 1714 for his skills as a sculptor.⁵

Needless to say there is no trace of Benedetto Pamphili's salicollar (its weight of fifty-seven pounds of silver would have probably sealed its fate), and it might be thought unlikely that it



1. Salicollar or table fountain, by Giovanni Giardini, engraved by M.J. Lemoch. From *Disegni diversi inventati e delineati da Giovanni Giardini da Fossé*, plate 86, Rome 1714, plate 86.

could be recognised among Giardini's designs that he published in 1714, engraved by Maximilian Joseph Lemoch, thirty-five years after the work was made. Yet in *Disegni diversi inventati e delineati da Giovanni Giardini da Fossé*, plate 86 reproduces what would seem to be the salicollar of Innocent X's great-nephew transformed into a table fountain. Taking account of the fact that the print reproduces a two-dimensional frontal image of a three-dimensional object, all the elements mentioned in the payment appear to be present, only the snails are missing (Fig. 1).

To the documents that I have already published relating to Giardini's work for the Borghese family around 1690, above all for the wedding of the Prince of Rosarno, the future head of the

18. 57 on. 9. [...] pagati li modelli delli tritoni [...] pagate p. li modelli di legno delle basi angolari [...] per li modelli delle conchiglie, delfini, animali marini, snail e modelli dei tronchi. Roberto Valentini alerted me to this document in the Archivio Diocesano, Pamphili, scuffale a. base 2; see also L. Montali: *Un memoriale in Roma barocca: il cardinale Benedetto Pamphili (1617–1706)*, Florence 1955, p. 260.

1. Montagu, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 141.
2. This is recorded on his coinage in the church of S. Ignazio in Rome; see Grigioni, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 102, and A. Lipinski: *Moneta aerea e romana: Giovanni Giardini da Fossé*, *Arte e Storia* 43–46 (1977), pp. 18–25, on p. 21. It is recorded Giuseppe Ghetti's inscription on the vase of Diego d'Amico given by Giardini to the Accademia on 2nd July 1714 on the occasion of his nomination.

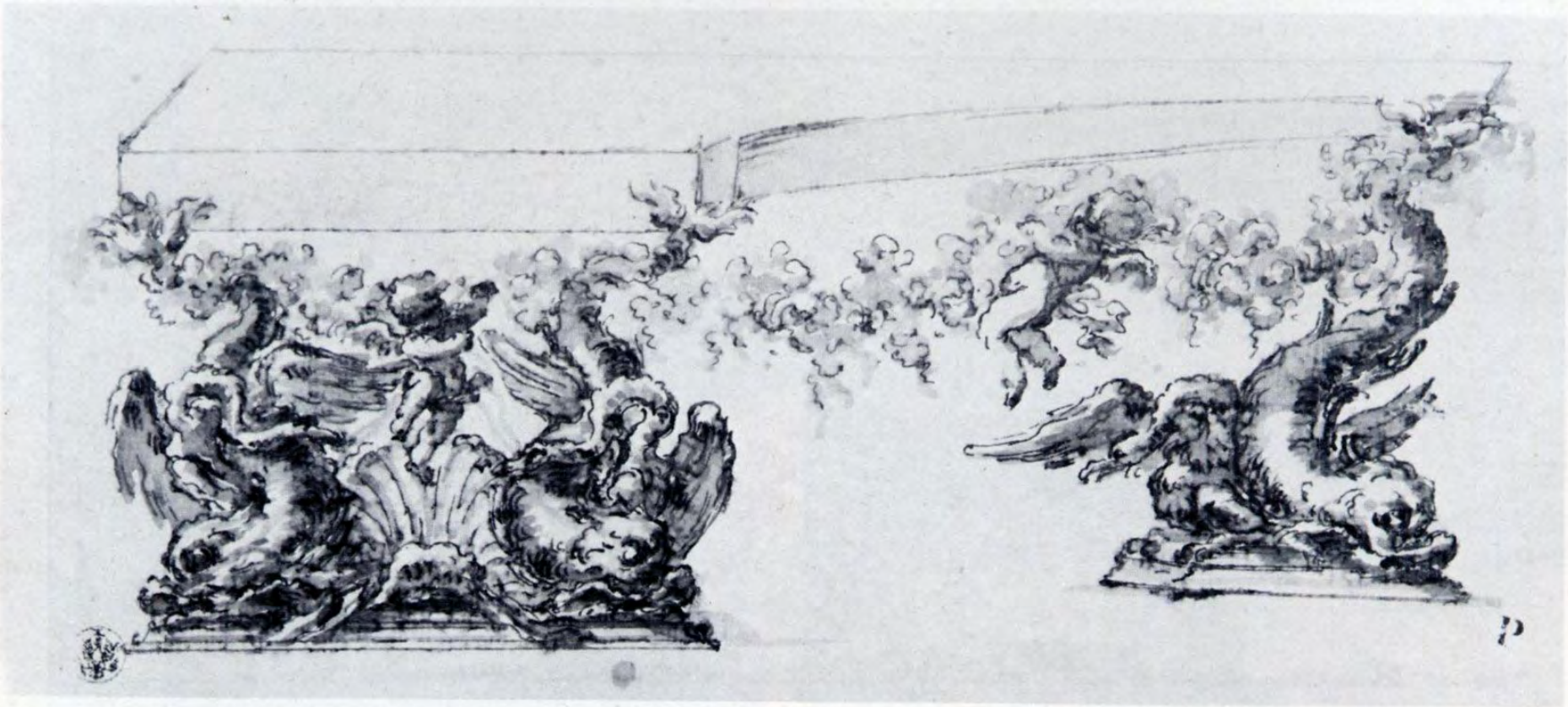
To Jennifer Montagu, for half a century of friendship.

¹ C. Indugli: *Argomenti, romanzi e saggi d'Italia*, Roma, Roma 1958, I, p. 250; C. Grigioni: *Giovanni Giardini da Fossé*, Roma, San Giacomo 1963; and J. Montagu: *Gold, Silver and Bronze: Metal Sculpture of the Italian Baroque*, New Haven and London 1966.

² A. Giardini-Palacios: *Giovanni Giardini: New Works and New Documents*, *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 137 (1995), pp. 267–76; and also: *Giovanni (o Giandomenico) Giardini: In Search of ornaments de cour de Rome, Milan 1664*, pp. 113–47 (the same article but with additional unpublished documents).

³ S. p. *aveva fatto fare una salicolla d'oro et un vasa grande con quattro snaili marini, otto delfini, quattro conchiglie, due tronchi e quattro tronchi p. linee d'oro, anco e tronchi di pino*

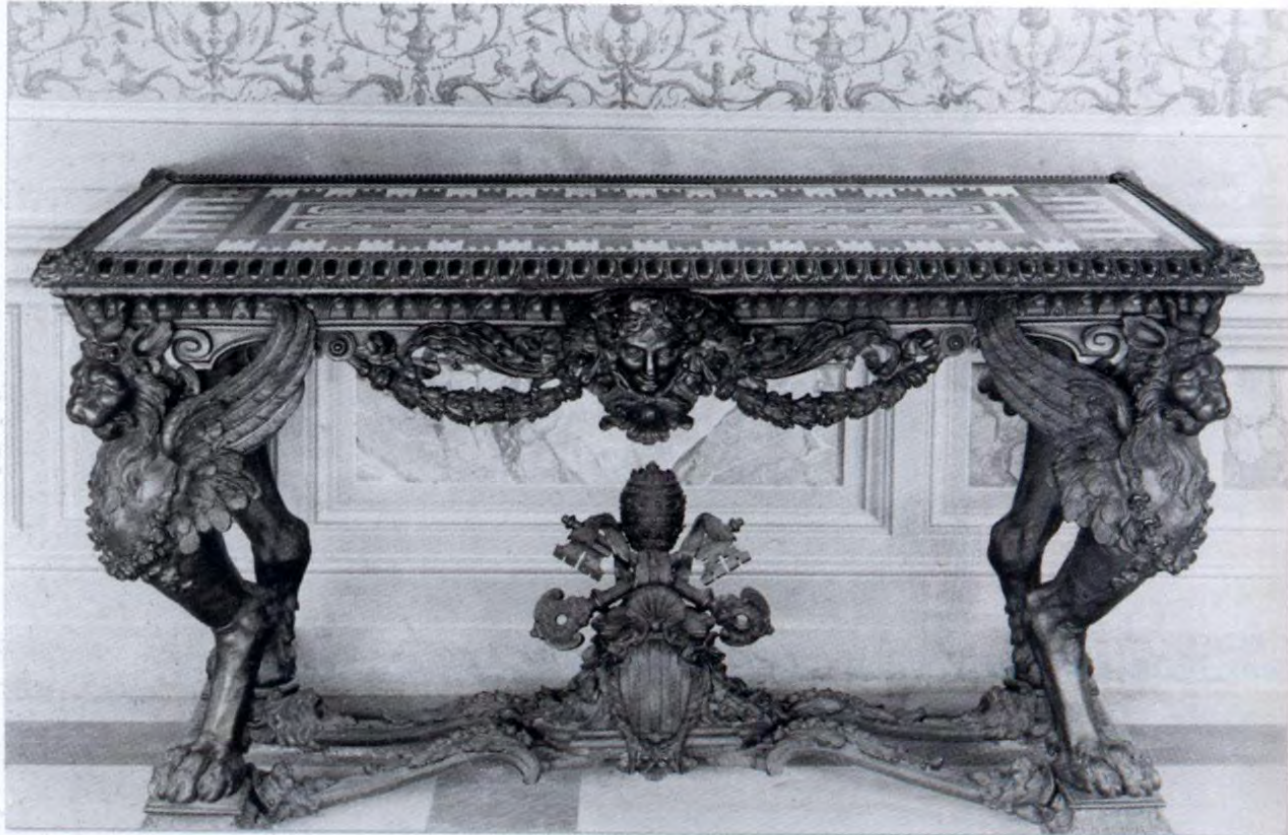
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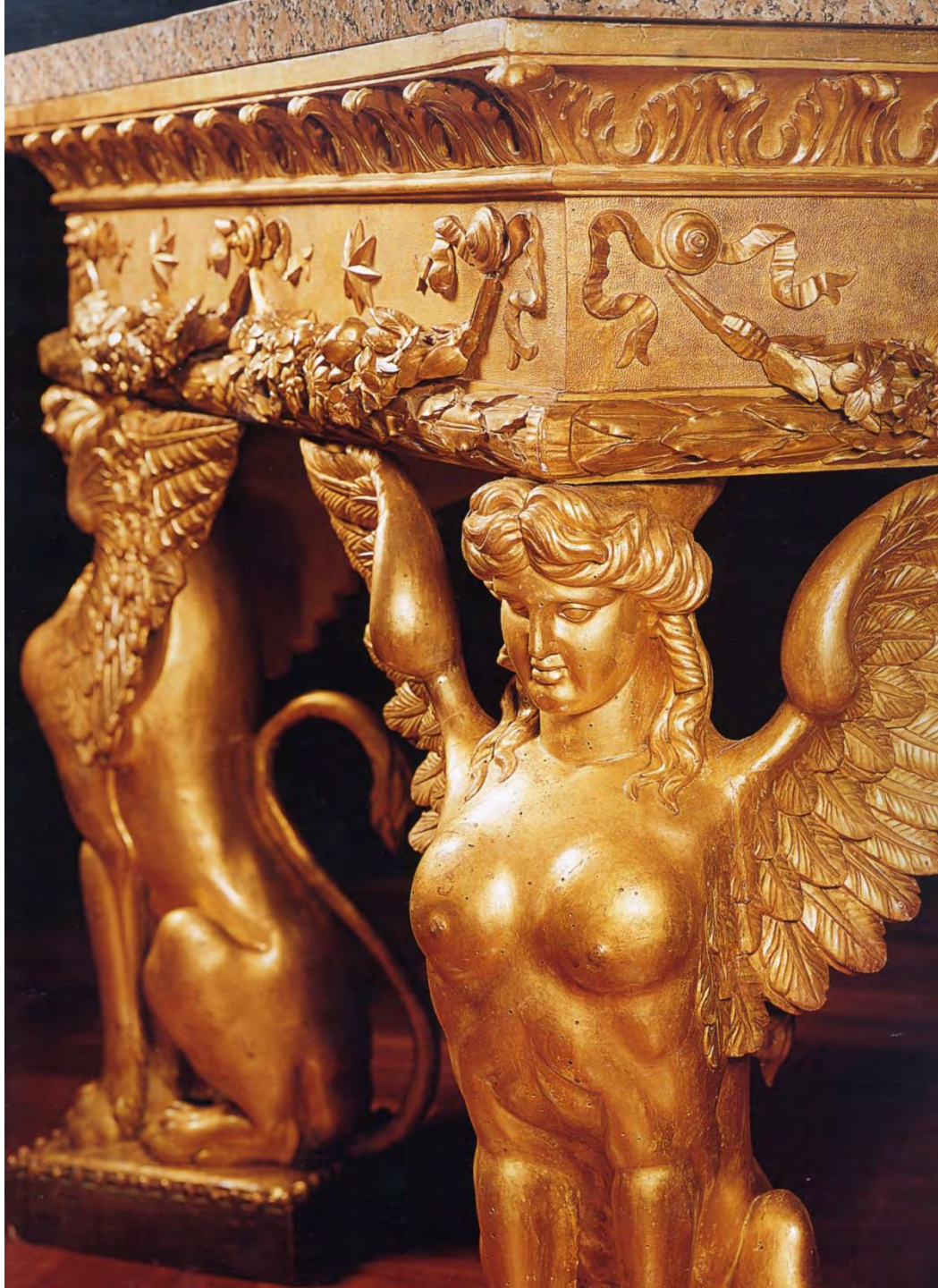


139 Spinetta in legno dipinto e dorato con sostegni in legno scolpito e dorato. Fine del XVII secolo. Ubicazione ignota

140 Progetto per una spinetta. Fine del XVII secolo. Berlino, Kunstbibliothek

123. Francesco Giardini
Tavolo parietale in bronzo
patinato con piano in
mosaico antico, 1742
Roma, Pinacoteca Capitolina









*Figura, come, fra i volti di morte
 ridente il viso, con negli occhi
 il fior del suo sorriso. Amabile, nel
 suo, e il core, che, fra il tutto
 d'una.*

*Il busto, che reggeva, sospeso
 nella sua sinistra il suo braccio
 nudo, e il suo seno, ed il suo
 il suo, e il suo, e il suo, e il suo,
 in tutta la bellezza di suoi era.*

*Figura, e fra i volti di morte
 ridente il viso, con negli occhi
 il fior del suo sorriso. Amabile, nel
 suo, e il core, che, fra il tutto
 d'una.*

*Il busto, che reggeva, sospeso
 nella sua sinistra il suo braccio
 nudo, e il suo seno, ed il suo
 il suo, e il suo, e il suo, e il suo,
 in tutta la bellezza di suoi era.*

*Al Sig. Francesco Bafet Cavaliere Inglese e
 Amatore delle belle Arti.
 In un'Opera di Carlo G. della Brezza. 1772.*





*Al Signor Egidio Earle Cavaliere Inglese
amatore delle belle arti.
In atto d'Ossequio il Cavaliere Gio. Battista Piranesi D.D.D.*

1791. 4



Urna cineraria antica di marmo adornata con varj simboli allusivi alla vita umana, la Civetta rappresenta il Simbolo della Vigilanza, le Sfingi il Simbolo della Prudenza. Questo monumento si vede fra le altre antichità dell'Autore.

Giov. Battista Piranesi del 1791.

131. Sostegno in bronzo dorato, argento e rame, Roma, 1770-1785 circa
Collezione privata

132. Giovanni Grespi
Piedistallo con l'arme di Clemente XIV, 1774
Legno scolpito e dorato
Roma, Palazzo del Quirinale





Trono in rosso antico con restauri e aggiunte di Francesco Antonio Franzoni, 1786. Parigi, Museo del Louvre.

Jacques-Louis David, Sedile marmoreo al Vaticano, disegno, 1775-1780. Parigi, Museo del Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins.



fig. 9

Trono in rosso antico con restauri e aggiunte di Francesco Antonio Franzoni, 1786. Roma, Musei Vaticani.

Jacques-Louis David, Trono marmoreo, disegno. New York, collezione privata.



fig. 10

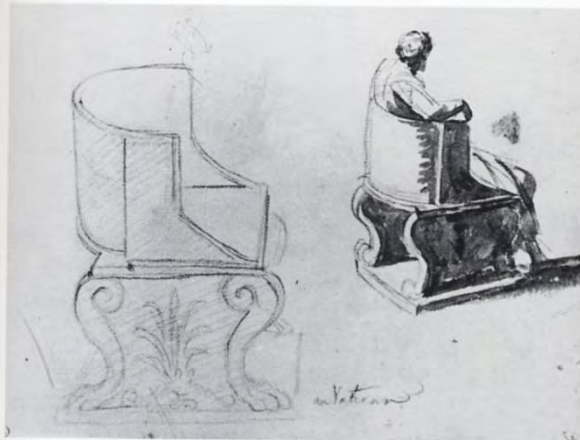


fig. 11



fig. 12

124. Jacques-Louis David
Il dolore di Andromaca, 1783
Olio su tela
Parigi, Musée du Louvre

