

Attributed to Francesco Moratti (or Maratti),
called *Il Padovano*
Padua, circa 1669 – Rome, 1719

Two Angels Kneeling in Adoration
Early eighteenth century
Terracotta, with minor repairs
40 x 37 cm.



Provenance:
Private collection, Amsterdam, before 1995;
Bruce Livie, Munich;
The Daniel Katz Gallery, London.

Comparative Literature:

A. Riccoboni, *Roma nell'arte: La scultura nell'evo moderno, dal quattrocento ad oggi*, Rome, 1942, pp. 270-71.

C. Faccioli, "Dello scultore Francesco Moratti, detto 'Il Padovano' " in *L'Urbe*, new series 37, 3-4, 1974, pp. 8-18.

R. Enggass, *Early Eighteenth-Century Sculpture in Rome*, University Park, 1976, pp. 115, pls. 81-87.



This beautiful and emotionally intense pair of highly finished terracotta statuettes of angels was made for presentation to a potential client, in preparation for some great commission to be executed in marble. The style is undoubtedly Roman and suggests a sculptor in the first or second generation of followers of Bernini and Algardi. The angels' poses of loving adoration—even their respective praying and folded hands - recall those of the *locus classicus* for such angels, the splendid pair in gilt bronze made by Bernini for the Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento off the right aisle of St Peter's, Rome, of 1675 (Fig.1).

Their intended size when finished can be calculated quite precisely from the scale carefully incised along the upper edge of the angel to the viewer's right. Assuming this to be in Roman *palmi* ['hand-spans'], their width at that point would be 67 cm, and the height of the angels themselves [without the pedestal] about twice that, i.e. 134 cm—nearly five feet. They must therefore have been models for monumental statue.

The most likely author of the statues presented here was Francesco Moratti (whose surname was spelt in various ways). Moratti came from Padua, where he was a pupil of the Genoese immigrant sculptor, Filippo Parodi. According to a contemporary biographer, they fell out because Parodi feared Moratti's competition, and so the promising young sculptor left for Rome around 1690.

There he received a number of major commissions: in 1697 he took over from Papaleo the carving of one of the large *Flying Angels* for the Chapel of Saint Ignatius Loyola in the Gesù (2) (Fig.2). He also produced a major narrative group of *Saint Francis de Sales* with an angel for the church dedicated to this saint (3). These angels closely resemble the ones in the present pair. The wings of the right-hand angels in both the Gesù and here are spread to the viewer's right, with bold swathes of drapery settling round the midriff. The wings of the left hand angel accompanying *Saint Francis de Sales*, on the other hand, resemble the ones of the left angel in the pair presented here: in both cases, the wings are closed so as not to interrupt the angel's downward look and the silhouette to the viewer's left.

Another pair of similar although flying angels, support a portrait medallion on the tomb of Francesco Erizzo (d. 1700) in the Basilica of San Marco, Rome. The deceased was the young son of the representative of the Republic of Venice in Rome, supporting the attribution of this tomb to Moratti,. (4). Moratti would go on to produce four statues for the Abbey of Montecassino, one of them depicting Pope Clement XI (1703-1709); *Saint Simon*, one of the great Twelve Apostles in the church of Saint John Lateran (1708-15); and the Berniniesque *Triton Fountain* in Piazza Bocca della Verità, from 1717 until his death in 1719. Moratti was thus one of the best of the secondary sculptors of the third generation of the Roman Baroque.

Charles Avery

(1) See Avery, C. *Bernini, Genius of the Baroque*. London, 1997, 115, pl.142.

(2) Finished in 1699: Enggass, R. *Early Eighteenth-Century sculpture in Rome*. University Park, 1976.

(3) c. 1700: Enggass, cit. pl. 81a-b.

(4) Ferrari, O. and Papaldo, S. *Le sculture del Seicento a Roma*. Rome, 1999, 203.



Fig. 1. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Angels*
Chapel of the Santissimo Sacramento, Saint Peter's, Rome



Fig. 2. Francesco Moratti (and Papaleo), *Flying Angels*
Chapel of Saint Ignatius Loyola, church of the Gesù, Rome