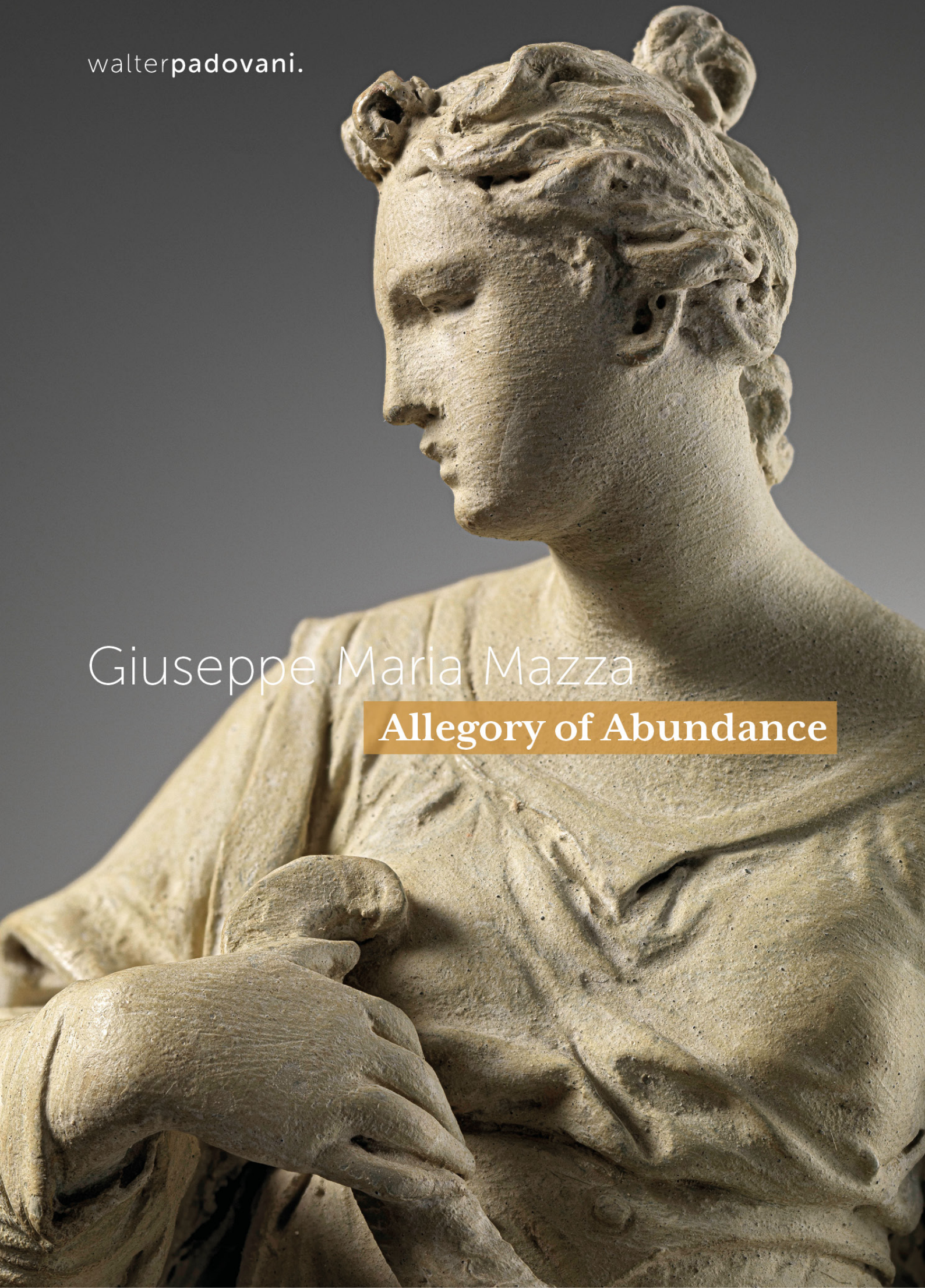


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Giuseppe Maria Mazza

Allegory of Abundance









Giuseppe Maria Mazza
(Bologna, 1653-1741)

Allegory of Abundance

Terracotta, height 30 cm

PROVENANCE: Mestrovich collection, Venice

A standing female figure, dressed in the ancient style, with one hip slightly protruding, holds a downwards facing cornucopia in both her hands from which some fruits emerge. Identifiable as a personification of *Abundance*, this terracotta statuette has a sinuous composition, enlivened by the softly arranged arms and the undulating line crossing its central axis. These compositional characteristics are combined with an impeccable elegance in the complex arrangement of the draperies, fundamental to ensuring that the surfaces quiver beneath the light. This effect is enhanced by a patina that, though it is difficult to identify with certainty as original, nevertheless confers a velvety softness on the chiaro-

scuro, accentuated by the fact that we are not dealing here with a roughly worked preparatory *bozzetto* but with a sort of completely finished model. Indeed, the cultural milieu expressed by this terracotta is unequivocally that of early 18th-century Bologna (similar figures can be seen, for example, in the paintings by Vittorio Maria Bigari, **fig.1**) and suggests that this is less a preparatory study for a monumental figure than an autonomous creation destined for private collectors. Thanks to Giuseppe Maria Mazza (1653-1741), Bologna saw the establishment of a production of small autonomous terracotta sculptures, highly refined in their execution and aimed at private collectors, particularly from the 1780s onwards. This *Abun-*



1. Vittorio Maria Bigari, *Allegory of Friendship*, Private collection



dance presents close stylistic links with various works by Mazza, especially those dating to a late phase in his career, executed during the 1720s and 30s (for an up-to-date profile of the sculptor we must refer to the doctoral thesis by Silvia Massari, «Il nostro moderno Algardi». *Giuseppe Maria Mazza scultore bolognese tra Sei e Settecento*, University of Trento, 2014, available online; with ample preceding bibliography).

The son of the clay sculptor Camillo Mazza, Giuseppe also served as an apprentice in the workshops of painters such as Domenico Maria Canuti, Carlo Cignani and Lorenzo Pasinelli; from as early as around 1680 he frequented the

academy of Count Alessandro Fava, his first patron. The establishment in Bologna of the new taste for more pervasive sculptural decorations (borrowed, through Modena, from the Roman and Lombard Baroque), alongside the high quality of Mazza's work, guaranteed his success in his hometown. Yet, the sculptor's fortunes were not tied exclusively to local patronage. Thanks to the mediation of Marcantonio Franceschini he obtained prestigious assignments for the princes of Liechtenstein in Vienna; he worked on various occasions in Venice – the stuccoes in Palazzo Widmann and the large bronze reliefs in the basilica of San-





2. Giuseppe Maria Mazza, *Justicer*, Bologna, San Domenico



ti Giovanni e Paolo are famous; he was active in Emilia and in the territories of the Papal States, from Romagna to the Marche and Foligno. A terracotta by Mazza depicting *Abundance* is recorded in the Fava inventories from 1699

(Massari 2014, p. 842) but it seems unlikely that it can be identified as that studied here, whose stylistic features seem to belong to a far more advanced point in the sculptor's stylistic evolution.



Starting from the 1720s, the examples of Reni and Algardi, which in Mazza's work characterize the style of his youth and maturity, are sublimated in a refined "monumentality of form" and in the interest in an "ample and imposing rendering of the features" (Massari 2014, p. 828), expressed by the elderly sculptor in his now rare public commissions, such as the stuccos executed for the Dominicans in Bologna and Modena (Massari 2014, cat. 154-161) and in the numerous exquisite small-format terracottas. It

therefore seems possible to date our *Abundance* to this period; it is comparable, in the pose and in the arrangement of the draperies, to the monumental stucco *Justice* in San Domenico in Bologna (1728-1729, fig. 2) and above all completely analogous to the still tender and sensitive modelling of the signed terracottas dating to the 1720s, like the relief in the Bode museum in Berlin with the *Finding of Moses* and above all the signed *David* (fig. 3a, 3b) in a private collection (Bacchi, *Giuseppe Mazza, Davide in Sculture, dipinti, disegni*, ed. by Nadia

3a. Giuseppe Maria Mazza, *David*, Private collection





3b. Giuseppe Maria Mazza, *David*, Private collection

Roversi, *La Bottega di San Luca*, Torino 1991, pp. 7-10; Massari 2014 cat. nos 117; 163);

The decisive comparison is specifically with the *David*: in the monumentality of the two figures, in the firm but delicately resolved poses, in the melting appearance of the draperies – usually more criss-crossed and geometrical in Mazza –, in the chubby faces described with a few summary strokes (a rough depression for the eye sockets, the thin nose, the tiny mouth). Also particularly telling is the comparison be-



tween the rear of the two figures, in both cases presenting draperies hugging close to the bodies, with elegant folds, almost more drawn than sculptural. Further points of comparison can be found in works that are probably later such as the *Ceres* (fig. 4a, 4b, 4c) dated 1735 in the Museo Davia Bargellini (see Mampieri in *Presepi e terrecotte nei Musei Civici di Bologna*, ed. by Renzo Grandi, Massimo Medica, Stefano Tumidei, Antonella Mampieri, Carmen Lorenzetti, Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1991, no. 11, p.





4a. Giuseppe Maria Mazza, *Ceres*, 1735, Bologna, Museo Davia Bargellini



4b-c. Giuseppe Maria Mazza, *Ceres*, 1735, Bologna, Museo Davia Bargellini

107), perhaps more rigid in its pose but very similar, in the pliant arrangement of the fabrics, to the *Abundance* presented here, whose ex-

ecution should therefore be dated to a period not distant from 1730.

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