

BIAF 2026: A TRIBUTE TO FLORENCE



Amid the many rich offerings of the fair, our aim is to invite visitors to take a breath, to slow their gaze and approach the works from a different perspective: that of objects living in their own time. Through this historical context, the reasons behind their commissions, the artists' visions, and the language of their age, we seek to tell the story of why and how these works came into being, building a bridge that draws them to us and allows them to emerge as living, comprehensible, and remarkably relevant creations.

The monumental marble portrait of *Cosimo III de' Medici in Classical Attire*, a masterpiece by Lorenzo



For our gallery this edition of BIAF is intended as a tribute to the magnificent city that hosts us: Florence. Florentine sculpture and works of art will be presented in a stand specifically designed as a space where each individual work can reveal its very essence and purpose.



Merlini, reveals its essential, profound objective: an extraordinary example of the dialogue between the memory of antiquity and modern portraiture, between celebratory rhetoric and the observation of truth. Its creation, in 1694, is documented by the artist himself in his autobiography, where the identity of its patron, Marchese Clemente Vitelli, is also recorded.

The silent dialogue of Lorenzo Bartolini's *Charity* leads us into the heart of the sculptor's poetic vision and of the ideal of *bello naturale* ("natural beauty") that shaped nineteenth-century sculpture. A reduced version of the group preserved in the Palatine Gallery of Palazzo Pitti, this work was commissioned in 1846 by the Balbi Senarega

family to celebrate the marriage of Francesco Balbi and Maddalena Pallavicino. In the relationship between the figures, one recognizes Bartolini's ability to transform a universal sentiment into a form of profound naturalism.

Three landscapes executed in the *commesso* technique of hardstones finally reveal the close relationship between nature and *techné*: between the precision of craftsmanship and the ability to transform the observed world into an image.

In this dialogue between past and present, Florence is not merely the backdrop, but the key: it is within its history that these works found their meaning, a meaning that we are still invited to rediscover today.



Lorenzo Merlini

(Florence, 1666 - Rome, 1745 ca.)

Portrait of Cosimo III de' Medici, 1694

Marble; h. 205 cm

PROVENANCE: Fiesole, Villa Rondinelli-Vitelli.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: K. Lankheit, *Florentinische Barockplastik.*

Die Kunst am Hofe der letzten Medici: 1670 - 1743, Munich

1962, p. 228 doc. 25, p. 239 doc. 50; K. Langedijk,

The Portraits of the Medici, 3 vols., Firenze 1981-1987, I, 1981,

p. 627, cat. 29; *Repertorio della scultura fiorentina del Seicento*

e del Settecento, 3 vols., ed. by G. Pratesi, Turin 1993, I,

p. 51, II, pp. n. n., figs. 327-328; S. Bellesi, *Merlini, Lorenzo*,

in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, LXXIII, Rome 2009, p. 705;

G. Moscariello, *Lorenzo Merlini e il Cosimo III di Villa Vitelli*,

Milan 2025.



Lorenzo Bartolini

(Savignano, Prato, 1777 - Florence, 1850)

Charity, 1846

Marble; h. 99 cm (the group), 184 cm (with the column)

INSCRIPTIONS: on the base "La Carità, gruppo di Bartolini"

EXHIBITIONS: *Il volto e l'allegoria. Sculture di Lorenzo Bartolini*,

edited by Carlo Sisi, September 25 - February 16 2025,

Fondazione Luigi Rovati, Milan.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: M. Tinti, *Lorenzo Bartolini*, 2 vols., Rome 1936, II,

p. 45; C. Sisi, ed. by, *Il volto e l'allegoria. Sculture di Lorenzo*

Bartolini, Milan 2024, pp. 42-45, ill.



Florentine Grand Ducal Workshops

Landscape with a fortified town, 1610 ca.

Hardstones mosaic (Persian lapis lazuli, agate, red and green Sicilian jasper, striped green—and—yellow Sicilian jasper, Boemian jasper, Corsican jasper, chalcedony, black paste of powdered marble); 22 x 35 cm (without frame), 32 x 45 cm (gilt -bronze frame with insets of red Cypriot jasper)

PROVENANCE: Liverpool, Gillaird & Kidson, ca. 1880; London, Sotheby's, *European Works of Art and Sculpture Including 'The Dancing Faun' by Adrien de Vries*, 7 December 1989, lot 286; Private collection.



Florentine Grand Ducal Workshops

River landscape with a Fisherman, 1610-20

River landscape with a Shepherd, 1610-20

Two hardstones mosaics (lapis lazuli, Sicilian jasper, Boemian jasper, Cypriot jasper, chalcedonies, agates, black marbles, metal inlays, traces of black paste of powdered marble); 26,3 x 19,2 cm (without frame), 37,5 x 30,7 cm (ebony, rosewood, and gilt-copper fitting frames)

PROVENANCE: Milan, Porro, *Oggetti d'Arte*, 12 October 2004, lot 315; Private collection.

