

Making and Moving Sculpture in Early Modern Italy.

Kelley Helmstutler Di Dio, ed.

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Giambologna's 1567 sculpture of Oceanus rises above a simple granite basin in Florence's Boboli Gardens. Most of the art historical focus has been on the elegant male figure of Oceanus and his river-god attendants, rather than the curved lines of the large, shallow bowl below. But when you realize that the latter is an antiquity discovered on the island of Elba, and that it took seventeen years to transport the basin to Florence (including breaking down city gates and widening streets to enable its passage), one's attention shifts dramatically. The granite basin cannot be taken for granted; the investment in its transportation invites serious investigation into the logistics of the fountain's creation.

This collection of ten essays invites us to reconsider Renaissance and early modern sculpture by asking not only what a piece looks like, but also how it got made, moved, and, indeed, moved again. At their very best, the authors connect these questions to come up with surprising answers. Based on a conference held at the University of Vermont in 2013, the book is noteworthy for the range of scholars, from some of the most established to graduate students completing their doctorates, and for the types of methodologies employed, from archival to literary interpretations and scientific analysis. It invites us to see sculpture not so much as art in motion, as materials in transit. This could be from the quarry to the studio or from the studio to its intended site of display or redisplay.

Each of the authors approaches this challenge from a different angle. There is considerable speculation (with William Wallace asking how Michelangelo would have moved the *David* to its original intended position on the cupola of the Duomo in Florence); there are important unpublished documents that track the costs of stones, marble, and manufactures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including, respectively, Vicky Avery on the sixteenth-century artist Alessandro Vittoria, and Emma Jones on how marbles were sourced and supplied in early modern Venice. There is an essay that resolutely refuses to answer the question, is this by Leonardo? Instead the conservators and curators (Shelley Sturman, Katherine May, and Alison Luchs) ponder a small bronze horse and its rider from Budapest, asking how it was made and whether it was likely that it was created using fifteenth-century techniques. The answer, perhaps unsurprisingly, is yes, but. The collection finishes with an interview with a sculptor from Vermont in order to bring the issues up to the present day, reminding us that logistics do not disappear in the modern age.

The overarching themes that emerge center around the sheer weight of marble and bronze sculpture, and the highly specialized techniques that were required for lifting, shifting, and packing. There is an impressive amount of detail about the costs and expertise associated with each of the moves required to get a large sculpture into place. A

number of essays argue that most sculptors were very well aware of these issues and adapted their choice of materials and designs accordingly; although expensive, bronze could be assembled and disassembled with greater ease than marble. But boxes could go missing in transport and no one could guarantee that the workers at the other end of the chain would know how to properly reassemble the piece on arrival. Thus Helmstutler Di Dio suggests that Cristoforo Stati's *Samson and the Lion* (now in the Art Institute of Chicago) was carved in a way that would ensure its successful transport to Spain. Only Bernini, with his marble Louis XIV on horseback, refused to acknowledge the challenges his writhing figures would pose to the packers. In Karen Lloyd's study of the otherwise unknown Giacomo Borzacchi, who moved Bernini's figure from Rome to Versailles, we get a real sense of the unsung heroes of early modern sculpture. It was these men who took great works, protected them with mattresses, canvas, and wood, and hired the mules, oxen, and barges that created the displays we still enjoy today. We owe them a greater appreciation of the role they played in creating Renaissance and early modern sculpture, a feat this volume achieves.

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