

»Mi toccò un capriccio«. Herrschaftsinszenierung und künstlerischer Ehrgeiz in Leone Leonis Bronzestatue Karls V.

Abstract

Between 1549 and 1564 Leone Leoni created a bronze statue group, now housed in the Prado in Madrid, which shows Emperor Charles V standing over the personification of Fury. What is unique about the figure of the ruler is that Leoni equipped him with armor that can be put on and then removed, and under which the sovereign reveals himself in the form of a naked, idealized hero. Researchers have thus far directed their attention to the armor and the possible performance associated with it, even if it is only possible to speculate about the details of the latter. This article adopts a new approach by going several steps back in the story and reconstructing the history of the work's creation. Such a reconstruction demonstrates that the artist did not initially plan for the armor to be removable, but, driven by inventiveness and competitive ambition, progressively elaborated upon an initial idea by drawing upon successive *capricci*. Taking as his original point of departure the project of an armed statue of a ruler, Leoni realized a first *capriccio* by depicting Charles V as a naked Mars (ignoring thereby issues of decorum). A further *capriccio* saw Leoni add the ambivalent personification of rage, after which he finally went on to cleverly merge the god of war and the Habsburg emperor. The article thus examines how Leoni proceeded from a simple to a complex concept of the image, and how the meanings and interpretations of it varied in the course of this process.