

LACMA FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LACMA ACQUIRES TWO MAJOR SCULPTURES BY BAROQUE MASTER GIOVANNI BARATTA



(IMAGE CAPTION ON PAGE 3)

(Los Angeles, December 1, 2011)—The Los Angeles County Museum of Art has acquired two life-size allegorical figure statues by the late Florentine Baroque master, Giovanni Baratta (1640–1747). The rediscovery of these sculptures, *Wealth* and *Prudence*, has been recognized as a major contribution to the study of early eighteenth-century Florentine art. The works are generous gifts to the museum by long-time benefactor, The Ahmanson Foundation, which has contributed extensively to the development of LACMA’s collection of European Painting and Sculpture over the last forty years. The sculptures are on view on the third floor of the Ahmanson Building, in the recently reinstalled European galleries.

Originally part of one of the artist's most illustrious commissions, the works are noted for their refined elegance. The sculptures were commissioned by Niccolò Maria Giugni (1672–1717) for the gallery in his Palazzo on the Via degli Alfani in Florence. Facing one another at either end of the gallery, they were part of an elaborate iconographic scheme intended to glorify the Medici family and celebrate the Giugni family’s allegiance to the Medici. The choice of *Wealth* and *Prudence* was particularly appropriate to illustrate the joint virtues of the families,

as some members of the Giugni family had advised the Medici in various aspects of their governance.

The two allegories closely match the iconology of the subjects: Wealth is a woman bedecked with jewels and holding a crown in one hand, a scepter in the other (the scepter may either have disappeared or never have been intended by the sculptor); Prudence is identified by the mirror she's holding as well as an arrow and eel, all of which appear distinctly in Baratta's sculpture. In addition to their size, the extraordinary quality of carving in the sculptures is especially noteworthy. Of particular beauty are the hands whose fingers delicately press the fabrics, and folds that are thinly and sharply executed in a way that carries into the eighteenth century tradition of Bernini, in whose studio Baratta's uncle had worked. The sculptures were executed shortly before 1709, at the height of Baratta's fame. Shortly after, with well-established international recognition, he received commissions globally, including those from the Duke of Marlborough ("Princely Glory," Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum), the King of Denmark ("Peace," Fedensborg Castle), and the Royal House of Savoy in Turin (Decoration of the Church of St. Hubert in the Venaria Reale).

As the first marble examples of Baroque Florentine sculpture to enter the collection, *Wealth* and *Prudence* are important additions to LACMA's extensive grouping of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Florentine sculpture. The Baratta works join bronzes by Montauti, as well as a gilded terra-cotta, a wax relief, and medals by Massimo Soldani-Benzi, amongst other notable works in the museum's permanent collection.

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography and represent Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today, the museum features particularly strong collections of Asian, Latin American, European, and American art, as well as a contemporary museum on its campus. With this expanded space for contemporary art, innovative collaborations with artists, and an ongoing *Transformation* project, LACMA is creating a truly modern lens through which to view its rich encyclopedic collection.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: noon-8 pm; Friday: noon-9 pm; Saturday, Sunday: 11 am-8 pm; closed Wednesday

General Admission: Adults: \$15; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+: \$10

Free General Admission: Members; children 17 and under; after 5 pm weekdays for L.A. County residents; second Tuesday of every month; Target Free Holiday Mondays

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(Left) Giovanni Baratta (1640-1747), *Pair of Allegorical Figures - Wealth and Prudence*, c. 1703-08, photo © 2011 Museum Associates/LACMA

Press Contact: For additional information, contact LACMA Communications at press@lacma.org or 323 857-6522.

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