

# DOCUMENTED WORKS IN IVORY BY BALTHASAR PERMOSER AND SOME DOCUMENTS RELATED TO FILIPPO SENGER

by *Kirsten Aschengreen Piacenti*

## *I Documented Works in Ivory by Balthasar Permoser*

Two entries in a MS of the Florentine State Archives have enabled us to identify some works in ivory by Balthasar Permoser done during his stay in Florence towards the end of the 17th century.

In the MS "Entrata e Uscita di Camera del Principe Ferdinando"<sup>1</sup>, an entry on December 9th 1688 runs as follows: "Lire quattrocento cinquanta pagato a Baldassare Permonser Scultore sono per Valsuta di una figura di Marmo rappresentante Pallade e quattro Maniche da coltello di Avorio pagato detto... 64,2—."

The present whereabouts of the marble Pallas are unknown but the four ivory handles can be identified. In the Museo degli Argenti, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, there are four small statues of about equal height<sup>2</sup>, placed on similar square ebony plinths though obviously made to be joined to the blade of a knife. Two of them, nos 88 and 89 (Inv. Bargello), represent Adam and Eve (figs. 1, 2). The other two, nos 90 and 91 (Inv. Barg.), form compact groups of putti (figs. 3, 4). All four were in the collection of Prince Ferdinando de' Medici, mounted on the same plinths as to-day, as results from the inventory compiled at his death in 1713.<sup>3</sup>

These statuettes are stylistically similar and could be by the same hand. They show links with some statues by Permoser of this period: compare for instance the statue of Eve with the female figures over the pediments of San Gaetano in Florence.<sup>4</sup>

The same MS has on p. 112<sup>2</sup> a second entry concerning Permoser: "Adi 8 Febbraio 1688 — Lire dugento per dobole dieci dati di comandamento di S.A. a Baldassare per Monser per donato un ritratto della Ser<sup>ma</sup> Principessa Sposa in piccolo in avorio all'A.S."

This is undoubtedly the small and beautifully executed medallion n. 80 (Inv. Barg.) in the Museo degli Argenti (fig. 5).<sup>5</sup> It represents Violante of Bavaria who was married to Ferdinando in 1688. It has a later inscription on the back with her name written in full, and figures in the 1761 Inventory of Palazzo Pitti<sup>6</sup> as "ovatino entrovi fino a mezzo busto a basso rilievo ritratto della Ser<sup>ma</sup> Violante di Baviera, con contorno di metallo dorato". The youthful appearance of the sitter suggests a date around the time of her wedding.

<sup>1</sup> Depositeria (DEP) 434, p. 95<sup>2</sup>.

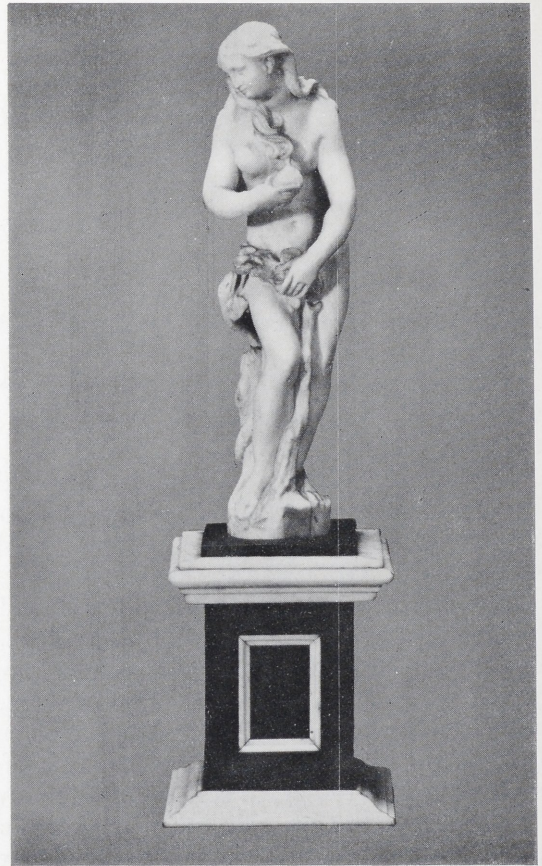
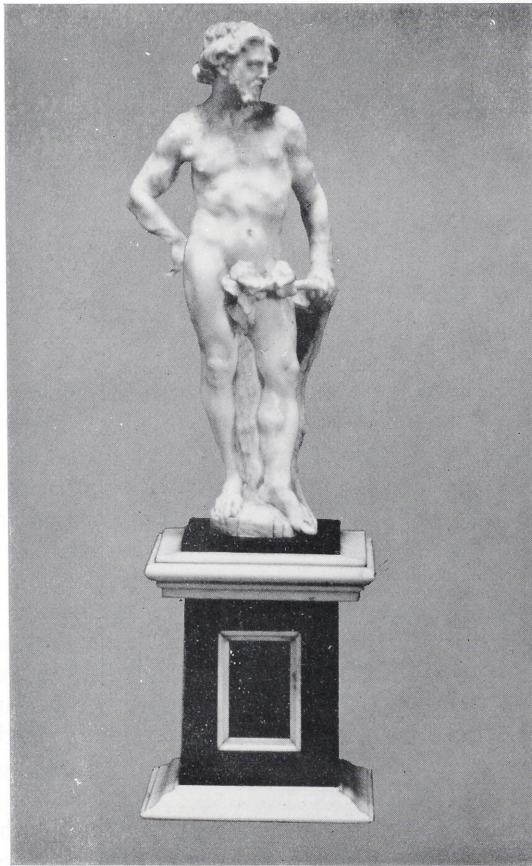
<sup>2</sup> The statues of Adam and Eve measure cm 9,1; the putti cm 8,6 and 9,2. In the inventory of 1713 all four are given as 'alti 1/6 (di braccio)'.  
<sup>3</sup> Guardaroba (GR) 1222, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> Ill. fig. 4 in 'Balthasar Permoser' by *Dr. Ernst Michalski*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1927; and in the article on Permoser by *Kurt Steinbart* ('Balthasar Permoser in Florenz') in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, IV, 1932-34.

<sup>5</sup> The Museo degli Argenti has another medallion of the Princess. But it is one of a series of four portraits whereas no. 80 occupies a unique position among the portrait reliefs.

<sup>6</sup> GR App. 94, p. 364.





1 and 2 Balthasar Permoser, Ivory Knife Handles representing Adam ad Eve, 1688. Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.

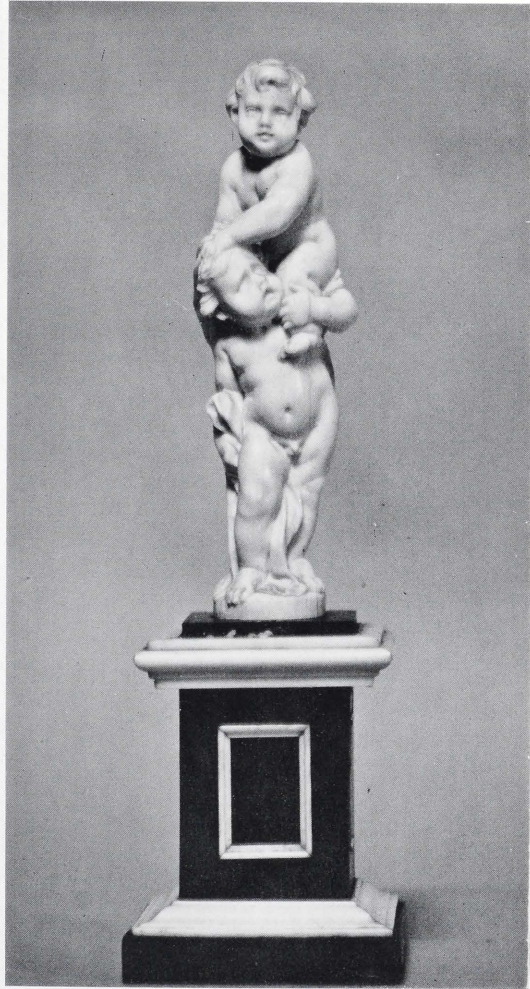
There are no works by Permoser with which to compare it. We know of a later portrait medallion of Georg IV von Sachsen (reigned 1691–94), signed B.P.<sup>7</sup>, which is much coarser. In the Pitti medallion the sitter is portrayed with sensitivity; and the handling of the ivory shows a great mastery of technique. The paper-thinness of the background and the special mounting that leaves the back free to enable us to appreciate the transparency of the ivory, lend a preciousness to the medallion that speaks for its being the present of a young artist to a great patron.

One more entry in the “Entrata e Uscita” MSS of Prince Ferdinando mentions Permoser<sup>8</sup>: “Lire trecento quindici pagati a Baldassar per Nanser tanti sono per valsuta e saldo di un suo conto”. This is probably the second instalment of the payment for the above mentioned marble Pallas and the four ivory handles.

<sup>7</sup> In the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin; ill. fig. 9 in *Michalski*.

<sup>8</sup> DEP 435, p. 123<sup>1</sup>, July 31st 1690. This then forms the terminus post quem for Permoser’s return to Germany which was generally supposed to have taken place in 1689.





3 and 4 Balthasar Permoser, Ivory Knife Handles with Putti, 1688. Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.

## II Some Documents Related to Filippo Senger

So far little was known of the life and activity of Filippo Senger, a 17th century German master turner of ivories. The literature deals with him only briefly<sup>9</sup>; not even his origin is mentioned in any source. On stylistic grounds von Philippovich assumes that he came from Nürnberg

<sup>9</sup> *Thieme Becker*, 1936, with reference to older literature; *Eugen von Philippovich*, *Elfenbeinkunstwerke Nürnberger Provenienz*, *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg*, 1959; by the same author, *Elfenbein*, Braunschweig, 1961. An article by *Eveline Schlumberger* in the *Connais-sance des Arts*, December 1962, talks about the Pitti ivories in general and mentions Senger.



but he does not figure in Doppelmayr's list of Nürnberg artists.<sup>10</sup> He is known to have worked at the courts of Denmark and Tuscany. From a reference to him in a poem of 1683 von Philippovich concludes that he was in Denmark prior to that year, and infers that he was called from Copenhagen to Florence.<sup>11</sup> Both Thieme Becker and von Philippovich date the Florentine stay in the years between 1681 and 1694.

Research in the State Archives of Florence has thrown new light on the chronology of Senger. We are now in a position to prove that he was working in Florence for a much longer period, that is from 1675 to 1704. Moreover, a study of the ivory collection of the Museo degli Argenti in Palazzo Pitti has brought to light two more signed works of his, datable from these years. Also additional knowledge concerning the activity of the Medici princes in the field of lathe turning has emerged.

Our information comes from two sets of MSS. The first group is concerned with the running of the Grand Ducal household, above all with the dispensing of materials to various artists. There are three MSS, all in the *Guardaroba*: 1) The personal inventory of Carlo Colzi, Dispenser of the Guardaroba, drawn up for his own use (GR 453); 2) the day-to-day order book (GR 742); and 3) the final list or 'inventory' of the orders actually executed (GR 749). At least in the case of Senger the entries are repeated in all three (each MS referring to the other). The books cover the period of 1666 to 1689 and mention Senger only from 1675 onwards.

The second series of MSS contains the accounts of Prince Ferdinando de' Medici (1663-1713). They go back to 1671 and have been kept till 1719, that is, till after his death. The ten books of "Entrata e Uscita di Camera" are kept as part of the *Depositeria*, covering the period of 1671 to 1705 with the years 1697-99 missing. The last book, DEP 439, is different from the rest and less detailed: evidently another account book had been introduced which contained the details of orders etc. but this has not been found. The book of "Debitori e Creditori" (GR 1055) covers the same period as DEP 439 but goes on for much longer (till 1719). This, too, is very summary, and the few entries about Senger only bear witness to his presence in Florence up to 1704.

In the first mention of May 30th 1675, Filippo Senger is described as Tornitore di Sua Altezza. He was assigned two tusks of ivory, the work on which was to be done for Cosimo III.<sup>12</sup> With slight but insignificant variations (once he is called the 'tornitore tedesco') similar entries occur on August 28th 1675<sup>13</sup>, June 10th 1676<sup>14</sup> and December 13th 1677.<sup>15</sup>

These are all entries from the Grand Ducal set of MSS. On May 3rd 1679 the name of Senger occurs for the first time also in the MSS of Prince Ferdinando<sup>16</sup>; and we may take this as the beginning of what was to become a life-long connection. From a slightly later entry, of May 9th<sup>17</sup>, it appears that Senger was supervising and directing the making of a lathe for the Prince, and we may perhaps assume that he was responsible also for training the Prince in its

<sup>10</sup> *Joh. Gabr. Doppelmayr*, Hist. Nachricht von den Nürnberghischen Mathematicis und Künstlern, Nürnberg 1730.

<sup>11</sup> *Eugen von Philippovich*, Elfenbeinkunstwerke Nürnberger Provenienz, p. 342. Unfortunately *von Philippovich* does not quote the text of the poem nor state where it can be found, so the question of Senger's stay in Denmark must remain open. As his movements are so well documented from 1675 onwards it seems unlikely that the visit took place after that date.

<sup>12</sup> GR 742, p. 34<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. I, p. 1 - GR 742, p. 36<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. I, p. 1 - GR 742, p. 38<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. I, p. 3 ("per lavori al tornio") - GR 742, p. 42 - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> DEP 431, p. 59<sup>2</sup>. He is paid for buying two tusks of ivory for the Prince.

<sup>17</sup> DEP 431, p. 60<sup>1</sup>: "A spese diverse lire trenta tre pagato a Gio. Piero ottonaio per più lavori fatti per il tornio di S. A. ordinategli a Filippo Senger".





5 Balthasar Permoser, Ivory Medallion with Portrait of Violante of Bavaria (cm 10,5 × 7,8), 1689. Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.



use. The lathe was not finished for some time and work in this connection is mentioned from time to time during the years 1680 and 1681.

The Grand Ducal MSS have three entries for 1679. Those of September 9th<sup>18</sup> and October 24th<sup>19</sup> have texts similar to the above mentioned early entries; in the third one, of November 6th<sup>20</sup>, a connection with Ferdinando is indicated, as the entry states that the work was to be done for both S.A.S. and his son.

On September 23rd 1681 the Grand Ducal MSS report that Senger was given some "legno violetta" to make for Ferdinando a musical instrument called a Salterio.<sup>21</sup> This was a sort of lute, a box with ten strings to be beaten by two hammers, one in each hand. The wooden box was executed by Leonardo van der Vim, the cabinet maker, as appears from the MS DEP 432, p. 18 (October 5th); the connection of Senger with the making of the instrument is uncertain.<sup>22</sup> A second Salterio was commissioned on July 9th 1682.

On June 22nd 1682 a consignment of tusks arrived from Lisbon, and Senger was immediately given two of them, for work for both S.A. and Ferdinando, on June 26th<sup>23</sup>, and two more on November 7th.<sup>24</sup> The Ferdinando MSS never describe any of the work executed by Senger from all this ivory.

On September 22nd 1682 Senger received money from the Prince to pay Leonardo van der Vim: evidently he was now holding a position within the administration of the Grand Ducal Guardaroba<sup>25</sup>. By March 1683 the relations with the Prince were such that he followed him on his annual visit to Pisa and Livorno.<sup>26</sup> We hear of his procuring for the Prince objects such as musical implements (bows for violins and strings for the Salterio) and clocks<sup>27</sup>, a practice that was to continue throughout the years and which evidently started while Senger was still in the service of the Grand Duke.

On July 1683 his position in the Grand Ducal administration is specified, as an entry refers to him as "di Camera di S.A.S."<sup>28</sup>, no longer as tornitore — in other words he had become personal attendant to Cosimo III. The entry of September 15th 1683<sup>29</sup>, however, shows that he went on receiving tusks of ivory. On October 10th we hear of him paying Leonardo van der Vim for a case made for "un vaso di avorio"<sup>30</sup> and this may in fact refer to a work of his in ivory.

During 1684 his connection with Ferdinando seems to have become closer. In April he bought a Madonna and Child by Pontormo for the Prince in Livorno<sup>31</sup>, and in August he joined the Prince for the first time on his annual visit to Pratolino<sup>32</sup>. He was given ivory for one last

<sup>18</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 1, p. 4 - GR 742, p. 47<sup>2</sup> - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 1, p. 5 - GR 742, p. 48<sup>2</sup> - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> see note 19.

<sup>21</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 1, p. 6 - GR 742, p. 56<sup>1</sup> - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> DEP 432, p. 18: "A spese diverse lire ottanta quattro pagati a Comandamento di S.A. a Lionardo Ebanista in Ghalaria per la fattura d'Uno strumento chiamato Salterio".

„Lire nove pagati a filippo Senghere per tanti spesi nel sudetto Strumento".

2nd Salterio: GR 953, Colzi 1, p. 7 - GR 742, p. 59<sup>2</sup> - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> GR 935, Colzi Inv. 1, p. 7 - GR 742, p. 58<sup>1</sup> - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> GR 742, p. 64<sup>1</sup> - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>. No mention in GR 953.

<sup>25</sup> DEP 432, p. 61<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> DEP 432, p. 85<sup>1</sup> and 85<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> DEP 432, p. 88<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> DEP 432, p. 104<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 1, p. 9 - GR 742, p. 72<sup>1</sup> - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> DEP 432, p. 110<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> DEP 432, p. 142<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> DEP 433, p. 20<sup>1</sup>.





6 Filippo Senger, Ivory Medallion with Portrait of Cosimo III, and his Monogram (cm 13,3 × 12,7). Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.

commission for the Grand Duke, on October 22nd<sup>33</sup>, and as late as December 4th he is described as “di Camera di S.A.S.”<sup>34</sup>. But on April 30th 1685 he formally entered the service of Ferdinando: the entry in DEP 433 states that from that day onwards Filippo Senger Tornaio was to be paid scudi 10 a month until further notice (p. 51<sup>1</sup>).

The regular payment of this salary goes on through the years, up to the break in the MSS in 1697. All salaries were paid on the last day of every month; some times — due to the travels of the Prince or the absences of Senger — the salary for one month was paid together with that of a subsequent month. There are no gaps in the payment.

In 1685 (October 3rd) and in 1688 (September 12th) Ferdinando himself was given tusks of ivory, as well as more violet wood, and each time it was Senger who took it to him.<sup>35</sup> In these cases it is possible to infer that the Prince himself worked the ivory (though not the wood?).

On February 29th 1686 Senger was granted an assistant to help him with the lathe<sup>36</sup>. He was living with Senger, who was paid lire 35 for his board and lodging. For many years the assistant was one Giuseppe Bozzotti.

<sup>33</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 1, p. 10 - GR 742, p. 76 - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> DEP 433, p. 35<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> GR 742, p. 83 - GR 749, p. 83<sup>1</sup>.

GR 742, p. 89 - GR 749, p. 82<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> DEP 433, p. 92<sup>2</sup>.



A stray document<sup>37</sup> tells us that in 1687 the Grand Duke supplied Senger with three beds, chairs, tables, copper, pewter, and kitchen utensils — all the household necessities of a small family. Senger was probably living in the Boboli Gardens although ‘provisionato’ by Ferdinando.

In 1687 the Grand Ducal MSS talk for the first time about a commission for Giovanni Gastone de’ Medici (1671-1737) in an entry of June 2nd which states that Senger was to make a set of Trucco balls for him<sup>38</sup>. Later, on October 13th, he was commissioned to make a similar set for Ferdinando.<sup>39</sup> Trucco, a sort of boccia played with balls made from ivory and ebony, must have been a favourite game at the court of the Medici of the period judging from the innumerable commissions for balls and the great number of the them listed in all the inventories.

The Colzi inventories end with an entry of December 17th 1687<sup>40</sup> and the last entry in GR 742 and 749 is from October 15th 1689<sup>41</sup>, so that from 1689 onwards the Ferdinando MSS become our only source of information. From the moment of his entering the service of the Prince, the frequent entries in these MSS shed much light on Senger’s activities; and a picture of his life begins to take shape.

Apart from a single entry, in 1693<sup>42</sup>, when we hear of his preparing a room for the lathe of Ferdinando, there is never any reference to his activity as a turner, but presumably he continued to work as such, seeing that throughout these years he kept on the assistant. He can best be described by such a general term as ‘the trusted servant’ of the Prince (his ‘uomo di fiducia’), and we find him carrying on in the various capacities in which he had served even before entering into the regular service of Ferdinando. There are frequent references to his buying for the Prince pictures, clocks, knives, seals (‘sigilli’), mathematical instruments etc. He also was dispensing tips on behalf on the Prince (especially to foreigners of northern extraction) and effectuating payments to other artists.

His various absences from Florence are known to us as on returning he was paid for his board while away<sup>43</sup>. Apart from a trip to Parma, in 1687<sup>44</sup>, his only journeys without the Prince were to Pratolino, or an occasional visit to Pisa and Livorno. With the Prince he continued the annual round of visits to the various villas.

Some of his visits to Pratolino coincided with those of the Prince (who always arrived there on August 16th), with long periods before and after, for preparation and closing-up of the villa. Plays and operas were performed there before Ferdinando and his guests; and at least from 1690 onwards Senger was in charge of the ‘teatrino’,<sup>45</sup> acting as stage manager and probably also as stage engineer.<sup>46</sup>

On March 28th 1700 a Ferdinando Maria Senger presented the bill of Filippo Senger for

<sup>37</sup> GR 953: “Nota di più e diversi debitori i quali la Guar<sup>a</sup> generale di SAS gli a somministrato mobili nel tempo dell’amministrazione del S. Niccolo Bernardi Gard<sup>re</sup> dall’1666 fino al present’anno (1687)”: “Filippo Senger Tedesco, tornitore, datoli d’ordine di SAS tre Letta che uno con cortinaggio, e tutti con sue app<sup>so</sup> = cioè materasse, lenzuola e coperte; seggiole, tavolo, tavolini, rami, stagni e Feramenti da cucina”.

<sup>38</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 2, p. 2 - GR 742, p. 94 - GR 749, p. 82<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 2, p. 3 - GR 742, p. 96 (“...per fare palle da trucco et altro...”) - GR 749, p. 82<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 2, p. 3 - GR 742, p. 97<sup>1</sup> - GR 749, p. 82<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> GR 742, p. 102<sup>1</sup> - GR 749, p. 90 (right).

<sup>42</sup> DEP 436, p. 29<sup>1</sup>.

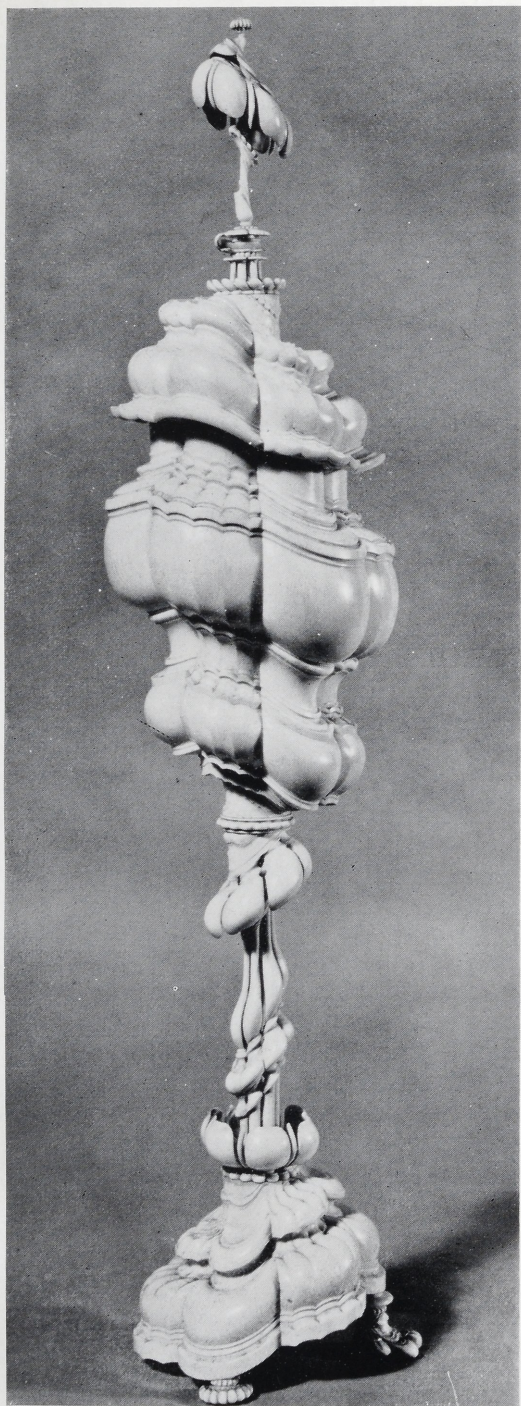
<sup>43</sup> The possibility of Senger having left Florence even for a brief visit to Denmark must consequently be discarded. There is no reference to such a journey in the MSS and it is unlikely that he could leave Florence without a special ‘leave of absence’ from the Prince which would have been recorded.

<sup>44</sup> DEP 434, p. 18<sup>1</sup> (June 25th).

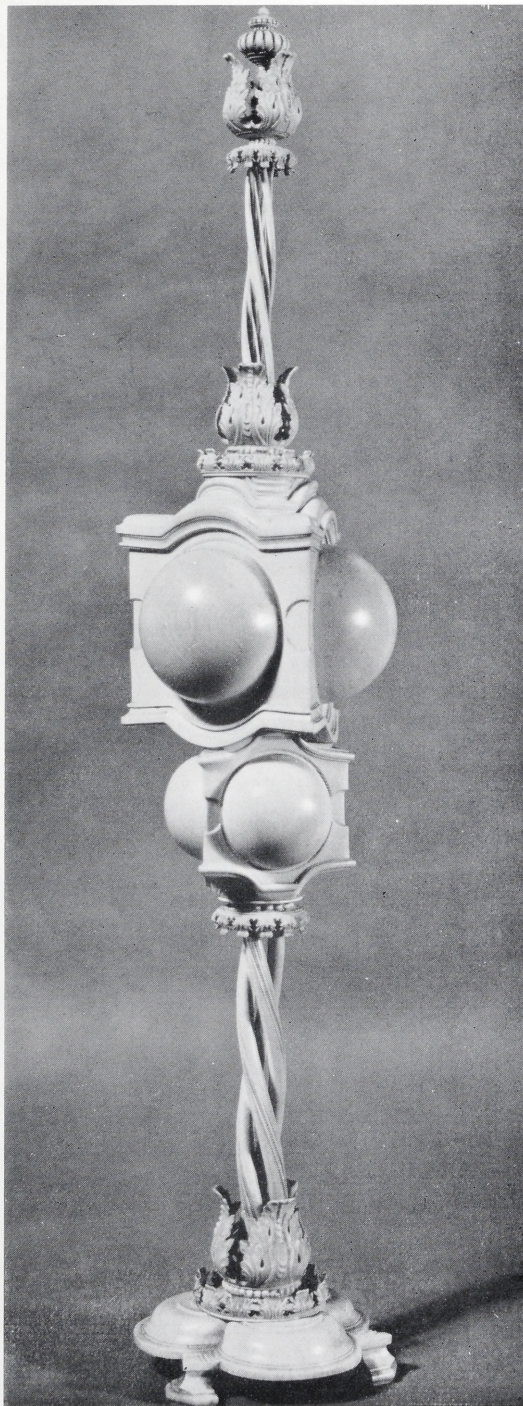
<sup>45</sup> The entries refer to his paying painters and workmen for work on the teatrino “secondo la sua listra”.

<sup>46</sup> As a lathe turner Senger was considered a specialist in mechanics, for instance his “giuoco de’ cavalli” a Pratolino, see *Sgrilli*, Descrizione della Regia Villa, Fontane e Fabbriche di Pratolino, 1742, p. 8.





7 Filippo Senger, Ivory Vase (cm 48,8). Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.



8 Filippo Senger, Ivory Vase (cm 57,8). Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.



payment<sup>47</sup>: evidently this was his son, called after his princely patron. The last entry of all is from January 12th 1704 when the accounts to his credit were added up and the sum of 'Ducati Dugento Novanta Uno' was handed over to Orazio Mancini, another servant of the Prince.<sup>48</sup> Did Senger leave then? Or is the explanation that he had died by then? Ferdinando was undoubtedly the perfect patron for a master turner, and Senger had reached such a favoured position within the household of the Prince that one can hardly imagine him leaving voluntarily after so many years.

From the documents emerges the picture of Senger as a courtier, not as a turner. Yet he is called 'tornaio' and signed himself 'tornitore', and in his life-time he was famed for his skill as a lathe turner. This is worth remembering when examining the few works of his which we know by now.

So far the Museo degli Argenti in Palazzo Pitti has been said to possess one signed work by Senger: the well-known double medallion with the portrait of Cosimo III in one oval (verso: the signature of Senger) and the monogram of the Grand Duke in the other (Inv. Barg. no. 81). The two ovals are linked by a chain; the whole thing is made out of one piece of ivory and executed on the lathe (fig. 6)<sup>49</sup>.

In the same collection two more signed works have been found recently by the author: two incredible ornamental vases, nos 65 and 75 (Inv. Barg.) bearing witness to Senger's outstanding skill as a turner (figs. 7, 8). They are listed in the 1769 General Inventory under the nos 630 and 547, with a precise description and the indication of the name of the artist.

On no. 65 the signature, which is found in a circle under the base, is turned on the lathe, and reads as follows: "FIL.SENGER.TORNITORE.DI.SAS" (fig. 9). No. 75 has a similar inscription inside the lid whereas underneath the base a circular medallion-like relief has been inserted (fig. 10). Also this has been turned on the lathe and represents a hunting scene with a tree, in the foreground, and a man to the right shooting a stag pursued by two dogs. Such turned reliefs are extremely rare; von Philippovich illustrates a few<sup>50</sup> and also describes the method by which even such motifs as inscriptions, figures and portraits could be executed on the lathe.<sup>51</sup>

Both vases are singularly similar to the large ornamental vases of half a century before, already in the collection of the Medici at the time of Senger. The answer to this puzzle is given in the catalogue of the Museo Cospiano of Bologna of 1677<sup>52</sup>. In describing two of the Cospi vases as being by Filippo Senger and a gift from the Grand Duke of Tuscany<sup>53</sup>, the compiler goes on to add: "...nella cui inestimabile Galeria (i. e. of the Grand Duke) v'ha pur dell'opere, in questo genere, c'hanno fatto stupire anco l'artefice di queste due (i.e. Senger): e sono quelle un Triangolo perfetto d'avorio, con varii lavori tondi in ogni piano: & un vaso pur d'avorio con suo coperchio legatovi con una catena di molte annella torlite, e cavate tutte dallo stesso pezzo del Vaso, e del coperchio".

These older vases can be identified with two still in the Museo degli Argenti: no. 72, signed by Johann Eisenberg and dated 1628, the chalice of which has a triangular groundplan;

<sup>47</sup> DEP 439, p. 12<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> DEP 439, p. 26<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> See *Eugen von Philippovich*, *Elfenbeinkunstwerke*, p. 343, and 'Elfenbein' (same author), Braunschweig, 1961, p. 299, ill. fig. 228.

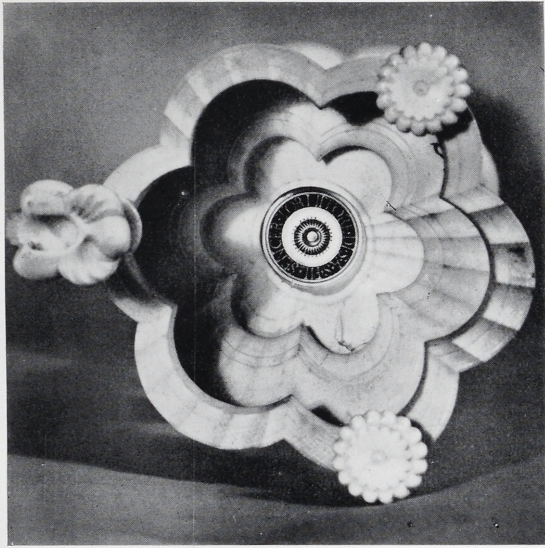
<sup>50</sup> 'Elfenbein', p. 296, fig. 224 and p. 299, fig. 227.

<sup>51</sup> 'Elfenbein', p. 295.

<sup>52</sup> *Legati*, Museo Cospiano, Bologna 1677, p. 293.

<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately the ivories of the Museo Civico in Bologna where the Museo Cospiano is now housed, are packed away so that it has not been possible to verify if these two documented Senger vases, datable before 1677, are extant.





9 Detail of fig. 7. Vase seen from below with turned inscription (diameter : cm 2).



10 Detail of fig. 8. Vase seen from below with turned relief (diameter : cm 4).

and no. 54, also signed by Eisenberg and dated 1626<sup>54</sup>. The chain of the latter undoubtedly inspired Senger into making the chain of the double medallion. The former he almost copied in vase no. 75, to the point of imitating the “*triangolo perfetto*” so exactly that the two lids are interchangeable.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, has a vase by Senger, signed “*FIL. SENGER. TORN.DEL.S.G.D.DI.TOSCANA. INVENT*”, with a further inscription inside the lid: “*Anche la figura fatta al torno*”. It is mentioned by von Philippovich<sup>55</sup> together with another vase, signed by Prince Ferdinando and dated 1681 (*PRINCEPS F MDCLXXXI*). This is stylistically similar to the vases by Senger so that the inference is justified that Ferdinando was taught the use of the lathe by Senger.<sup>56</sup>

In the Museo degli Argenti an even earlier work with a similar inscription has been found and can be added to the output of the Prince: a small and beautifully executed box or vase, no. 45 (*Inv. Barg.*), inscribed inside the lid “*PRINCEPS F MDCLXXVIII*” (*fig. 11*).<sup>57</sup> In the 1769 Inventory the authorship of Ferdinando is taken for granted and the name of the Prince written in full (no. 625). The date is exceptionally early. Evidently already at the age of 15

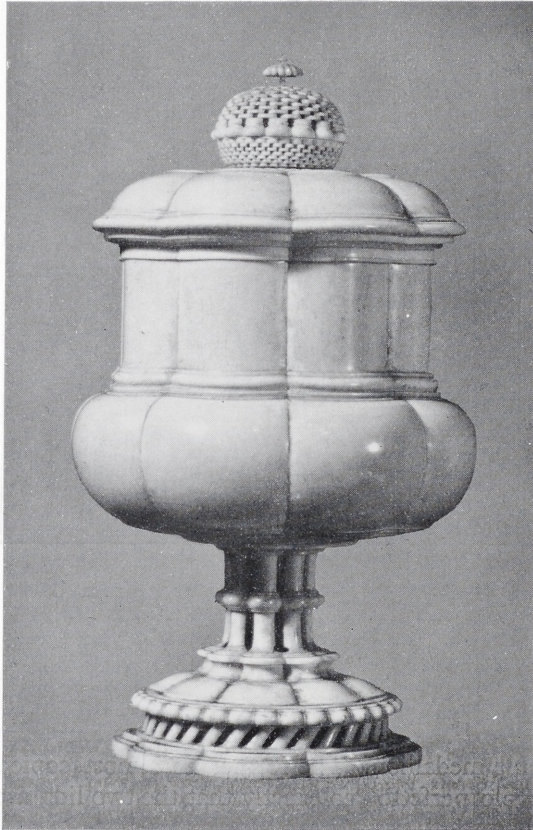
<sup>54</sup> For information about Eisenberg and illustrations of the two vases in question, see *K. A. Piacenti* in “*Antichità Viva*”, January 1963.

<sup>55</sup> *Elfenbeinkunstwerke Nürnberger Provenienz*, p. 357, ill. fig. 8. I see no reason why the vase should have been ‘invented’ by the Grand Duke. The vase was formerly in the Pourtalès Collection and is mentioned in the article by *Albert Jacquemart*, in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 1864, p. 386. Both this and the vase by Ferdinando were published by *Margaret Longhurst* in the *Catalogue of Carvings in Ivory* of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1929, p. 89 and 90.

<sup>56</sup> *Von Philippovich*, *Elfenbeinkunstwerke Nürnberger Provenienz*, p. 358.

<sup>57</sup> The open-work globe has been broken off and now sits heavily on the lid whereas it should rest on a tiny circular colonnade similar to that of the stem.





11 Ferdinando de' Medici, Ivory Container (cm 13,5), 1678. Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.

Ferdinando was working on the lathe and had reached a certain stage of proficiency. The little vase was probably executed in Senger's workshop, as in 1678 the lathe of the Prince was not yet ready.

The recurrence of certain motifs — such as the open-work globe and the umbrella-shaped crowning feature — of the vases by Senger and his pupil in the “Lamp in a Glass”, no. 199 (Inv. Barg.) in the Museo degli Argenti, makes it likely that the latter belongs to this group and probably was executed by Senger himself (fig. 12). Apart from this one suggestion, however, it seems wiser not to attempt on stylistic evidence any attributions to Senger of other ivory vases at the Pitti.

Also Giovanni Gastone de' Medici is known to have practiced the craft of turning; yet so far none of his work has been traced. The following notices come from the above mentioned documents as well as from the GR 901, “Il Quaderno di Ordine di Lavoro”, of 1685.

From the latter we learn that Gian Gastone was given a lathe in 1687<sup>58</sup>, whereas two entries in MS 742, from June 2nd and July 27th 1687<sup>59</sup>, mention that ivory was given to him through a certain Tordino, who is referred to as instructing the Prince in the use of the

lathe (“...porta tordino che insegna il Principe a tornire”). Tordino was the nickname of Jacopo Mariani, as we learn from an entry in DEP 431 for October 22nd 1680 (p. 112<sup>2</sup>): “a mancia lire quattrocento dati a... Mariani detto Tordino...”. It is the compiler of the document who is uncertain about his Christian name. In 1685 “Jacopo Mariani detto Tordino in Galleria tornitore” is listed among the ‘provisionati’ of the Grand Duke.<sup>60</sup> Payment of a monthly salary to him has been found also for the years 1688 and 1689.

From the Medici correspondence it appears that in 1675 this Jacopo Mariani was sent by the Grand Duke to Augsburg, to study with Cristof Treffler, the turner.<sup>61</sup> He became court turner on his return to Florence and was the teacher of Gian Gastone at the time when Senger entered the services of Prince Ferdinando; it is likely that Mariani came to occupy the position with Gian Gastone that Senger held with Ferdinando.

<sup>58</sup> GR 901, p. 91.

<sup>59</sup> GR 953, Colzi Inv. 2, p. 2 - GR 742, p. 94 and 95 - GR 749, p. 82.

<sup>60</sup> GR 901, p. 1.

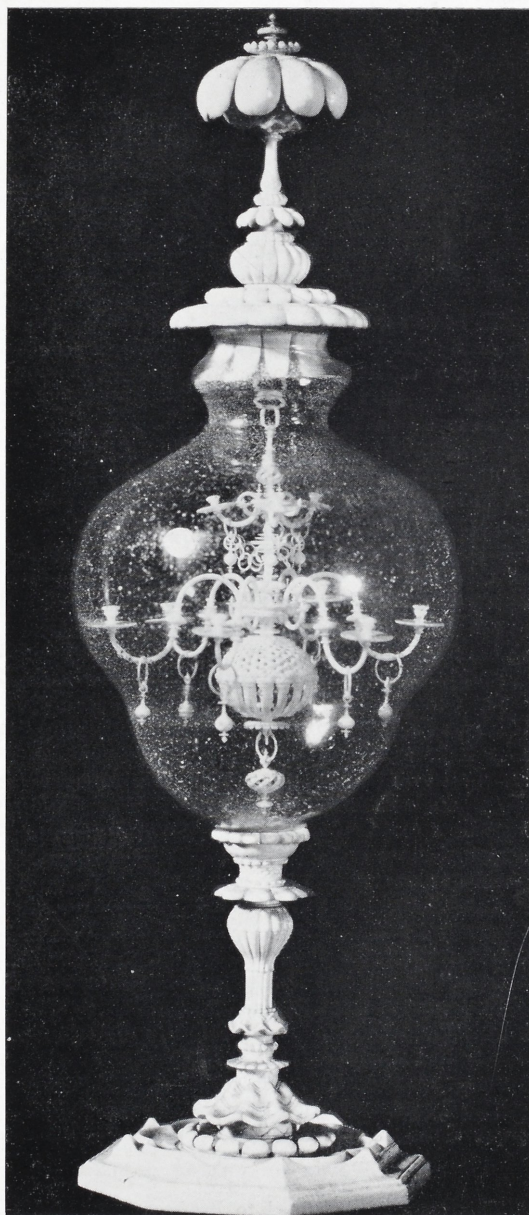
<sup>61</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Wolfram Prinz for this information.



## RIASSUNTO

Sono riportati tre riferimenti trovati dall'A. fra i manoscritti nell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze, dai quali risulta come lo scultore tedesco, Baldassarre Permoser, abbia eseguito per il Principe Ferdinando una Pallade di marmo e quattro 'maniche da coltello' in avorio (il 9 di Dicembre 1688), e un ritratto in avorio della Principessa Violante di Baviera (l'8 di Febbraio 1689). I lavori in avorio sono stati identificati con quattro statuette e un rilievo oggi al Museo degli Argenti, Palazzo Pitti, Firenze.

Nella seconda parte viene ricostruita, sulla base di documenti nell'A.S.F., la presenza e l'attività di Filippo Senger, tornitore tedesco, alla corte di Firenze dal 1675 al 1704. Si mostra come egli sia entrato al servizio del Principe Ferdinando de' Medici nel 1685 e sia stato il suo 'uomo di fiducia' per molti anni. Due vasi in avorio firmati dal Senger e uno del Principe Ferdinando del 1678 sono stati trovati al Museo degli Argenti; una « Lampada in vetro » viene attribuita al Senger sulla base di evidenza stilistica. Altri documenti ci informano che anche Giovanni Gastone de' Medici lavorò al tornio sotto la guida di Jacopo Mariani, tornitore italiano.



12 Filippo Senger (attributed), Ivory Lamp inside a Glass (cm 24,2). Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti.