

Museum Paper Assignment

Danielle Hueston

Course & Section: ARTH 1103-E414

Mars and Vulcan

Artist: Giovanni Bandini

(Italian, Castello 1540–1599 Florence)

Date: 1585–87

Culture: Italian, Urbino

Medium: Terracotta with copper-colored metal foil

Dimensions: Height (wt. confirmed): 31 1/8 in.,
43 lb. (79 cm, 19.5 kg)

Credit Line: On loan from The Quentin Foundation

Accession Number: L.2017.40.6



Marble Statue of a Youthful Hercules

Artist: Unknown

Date: A.D. 69–96

Culture: Roman

Medium: Marble, Island ?

Dimensions: H. 97 3/16 in. (246.9 cm)

Period: Early Imperial, Flavian

Credit Line: Gift of Mrs. Frederick F.
Thompson, 1903

Accession Number: 03.12.13



Two Sculptures Made in Italy

This formal comparison of two Italian sculptures located at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Mars and Vulcan* made between the years of 1585-87 by Giovanni Bandini and *Marble Statue of Youthful Hercules* (A.D. 69-96), who has no known artist, brings attention to two different approaches of showing a very popular stance in Italian art history in two different cultures and time periods. Although Bandini's sculpture includes two men instead of one, both sculptures show men standing in the nude from head to toe. All three men are also standing in a contrapposto stance, an Italian term which means "counterpoise". It is used in visual art representations to describe a human figure standing with most of its weight on one foot so that its shoulders and arms twist from the hips and legs.

The sculpture of Hercules shows him standing to one side holding an article of clothing in his left hand and what appears to be a weapon behind his back with his right. He has a slight frown which causes his right eyebrow to arch and his left eye to appear smaller than the right. This facial expression gives the viewer the idea that he is disturbed by something, maybe even angry. His eyes show that he is looking at something further into the distance and not directly at the viewer. Hercules was sculpted with an athletic figure, with abs carved onto his torso, muscular arms and noticeable veins popping out from his calves, which signifies strong legs. The sculpture is made of marble so it appears dull and unfortunately most of its damages are visible across his stomach. Hercules appears young, like the title insinuates, as his face shows no signs of wrinkles or aging. Like *Mars and Vulcan* the information placed next to the sculpture explained that this statue may have also been made as a pair, since it was apart of the collection of antiquities acquired in Rome by the Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani during the seventeenth

century. Hercules hair appears very unrealistic as the tight curls resemble more of a wig than natural hair, and shows no sense of gravity. The nudity comes as no surprise as this was very popular in Roman culture.

In contrast to the *Marble Statue of Youthful Hercules*, *Mars and Vulcan* has a more luster finish as it is made from Terracotta and copper colored metal foil. This most likely helped to preserve the art because there were no signs of damage. Both men felt smooth to the touch. The men in the sculpture, unlike Hercules, are much older. They are most likely middle-aged as wrinkles are prevalent on their foreheads, outer corners of their eyes and cheekbones. They also have immense facial hair in comparison to Hercules who has none. Their arms give the viewer the sense they are victorious as both men pose with their arms firmly pointed upwards in the air. The obvious difference between the sculptures are its sizes, as the *Mars and Vulcan* sculpture is only about two and a half feet in height and the *Marble Statue of Youthful Hercules* extends to about eight feet. Although Mars' and Vulcan's facial expressions also appear to be frowning, the rest of their body language gives off confidence.

It can be argued that Vulcan, depicted on the right of the *Mars and Vulcan* sculpture is looking directly at the viewer. Mars on the left, like Hercules, is looking off into the distance. Their faces also look way more realistic as opposed to Hercules. Both sculptures use excess medium to create something for the sculptures to stand on. If this was not done, none of the pieces of art would stand up right. Mars, the god of war, leans against his armor. Vulcan, who is a blacksmith, stands next to his anvil which is a metal working tool. The viewer can also see that the artist of *Marble Statue of Youthful Hercules* used extra clay right beneath Hercules knees in order to ensure stability. The *Mars and Vulcan* sculpture lacks this most likely because by this

time period artists found better ways of getting sculptures to stand upright or even the medium it was made from. Although there is not much color besides the foil, the sculpture gives off a gloomy and dark vibe. Mars and Vulcan also have athletic body shapes as abs are apparent in both men.

Although both sculptures appear to be very similar with a quick glance, further analyzing makes the vast differences become more clear to the viewer. It is quite amazing how art from two different cultures and time periods can share so many similar qualities. It is also intriguing that two different artists can create such a similar approach in their art. And despite the similar facial expressions and stances depicted in both sculptures, both sculptures capture unique personalities that are represented through the use of different techniques by the artists and speak to the viewer differently.