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Prince Hoare

Portrait of Sir Horace Mann







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Prince Hoare
(Eye?, 1711 - Bath, 1769)

Portrait
of Sir Horace
Mann, ca. 1749

Terracotta; h. 51.5 cm

PROVENANCE: Private collection,
Great Britain.

EXHIBITIONS: S. Davoli, ed. by, *The Grand Tour, the Two Horaces and the Court of Florence (1740-1786)*, Twickenham, Strawberry Hill, 24 May - 21 July 2022.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: E. Newby, *William Hoare of Bath R.A., 1707 - 1792*, Bath 1990, pp. 90-127; I. Roscoe, M. G. Sullivan, E. Hardy, ed. by, *A Biographical Dictionary of Sculptors in Britain 1660-1851*, London 2009, pp. 623-24; G. Coco, *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Series IX. Memorie di scienze morali, storiche e filosofiche. Vol. 33\I: Artisti, dilettanti e mercanti d'arte nel salotto fiorentino di Sir Horace Mann*, Rome 2014; S. Davoli, ed. by, *The Grand Tour, the Two Horaces and the Court of Florence (1740 - 1786)*, Twickenham 2022.

This terracotta bust portraying an English gentleman is traditionally identified as the English diplomat Sir Horace Mann. Our sitter met the artist responsible for this work, Prince Hoare, in Florence, where he arrived towards the end of the 1730s. An English artist, Hoare was probably born in Eye, in the County of Suffolk, England, and owed his ascent as an artist in part to the support of his older brother William Hoare RA (1707/08 - 1792), a portraitist and printmaker. Through the latter, Prince secured numerous commissions in Bath, where William himself settled following a stay in Rome from about 1728 to 1737.



1. Prince Hoare, *Portrait of Plautilla*, Bath, The Royal Crescent Hotel

2. Roman period, *Portrait of Plautilla*, Florence, Uffizi Gallery

After an apprenticeship in the studio of the Flemish sculptor Peter Scheemakers (1691-1781), Hoare also left for Italy, where he resided for about eight years (from 1743 to 1750), visiting first Rome and then Florence. Here he executed works for figures of the calibre of Cardinal Albani, who judged him to be ‘very intelligent and eager to establish himself’ (Lewis 1961, 155). An important role was also played during his time in Italy by copying from the antique, as evidenced by the *Antinous* (whereabouts currently unknown) based on the famous work in the Albani collection, and a bust of *Plautilla* dated and signed P. HOARE Ft. FLOR: AE MDCCIL, based on the Uffizi model (figs. 1-2).

During his time in Florence, Hoare was elected a member of the Accademia Fiorentina on 3

September 1749; he returned to England the following year. Hoare was described by the antiquarian and printmaker George Vertue as ‘a tall, charming and pleasant person and somewhat skilled in music’; his artistic career was focused mainly on commissions linked to the city of Bath. Shortly after his return home he was engaged by some citizens to create a sculpture depicting the English fashion leader Richard ‘Beau’ Nash, probably finished by his assistant Giovanni Battista Plura, in the Abbey Church Yard, in Bath (fig. 3).

Hoare also executed a bust of Nash himself, dated 1761 (fig. 4); this latter, for obvious stylistic reasons, represents the closest parallel for our work.

The principal protagonists of Hoare’s works are the English ruling class of the time, alongside



3. Prince Hoare and Giovanni Battista Plura, *Monument to Richard Nash*, Bath, Abbey Church Yard

4. Prince Hoare, *Bust of Beau Nash*, Bath, Guildhall

some prominent cultural figures: they include the bust of Lord Chesterfield (**fig. 5**), a skilled politician and diplomat, depicted as a Roman orator in ancient attire, as well as that of the philanthropist and businessman Ralph Allen (**fig. 6**).

Hoare's marriage to the wealthy Miss Coulthurst of Melksham was important for his artistic success, effectively ensuring that he could choose which commissions to accept.

As concerns the execution of the bust under discussion here, we can ascribe it to Hoare's time in Florence, where, thanks to the mediation of Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692 - 1779), the sculptor was introduced to Horace Mann (1706 - 1786), the sitter for this bust.

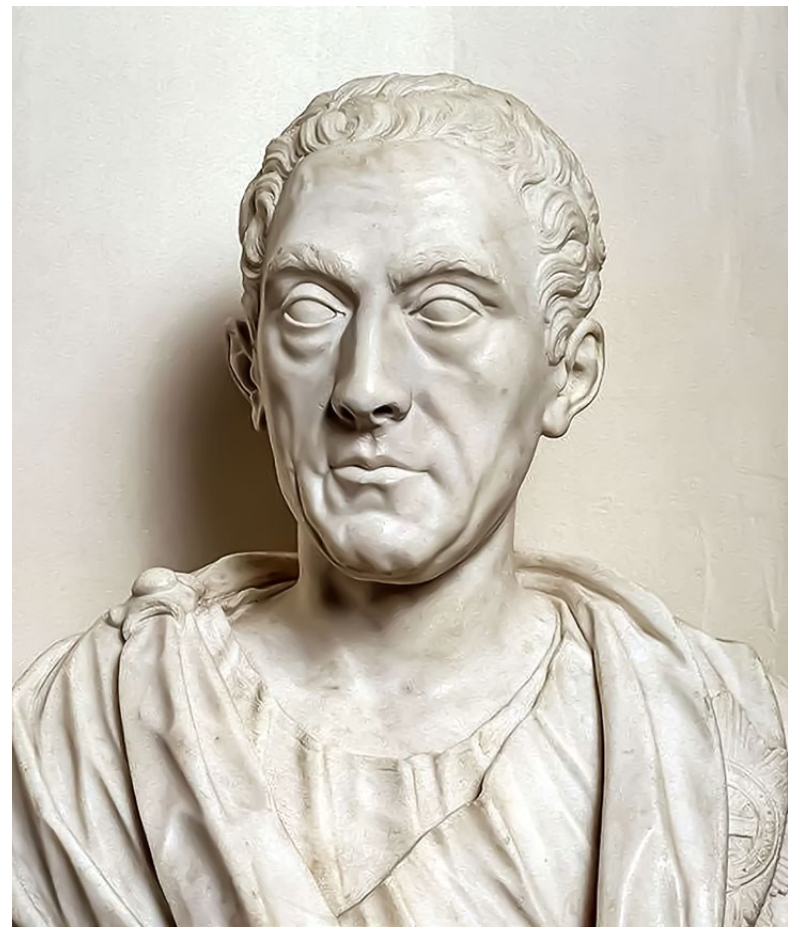
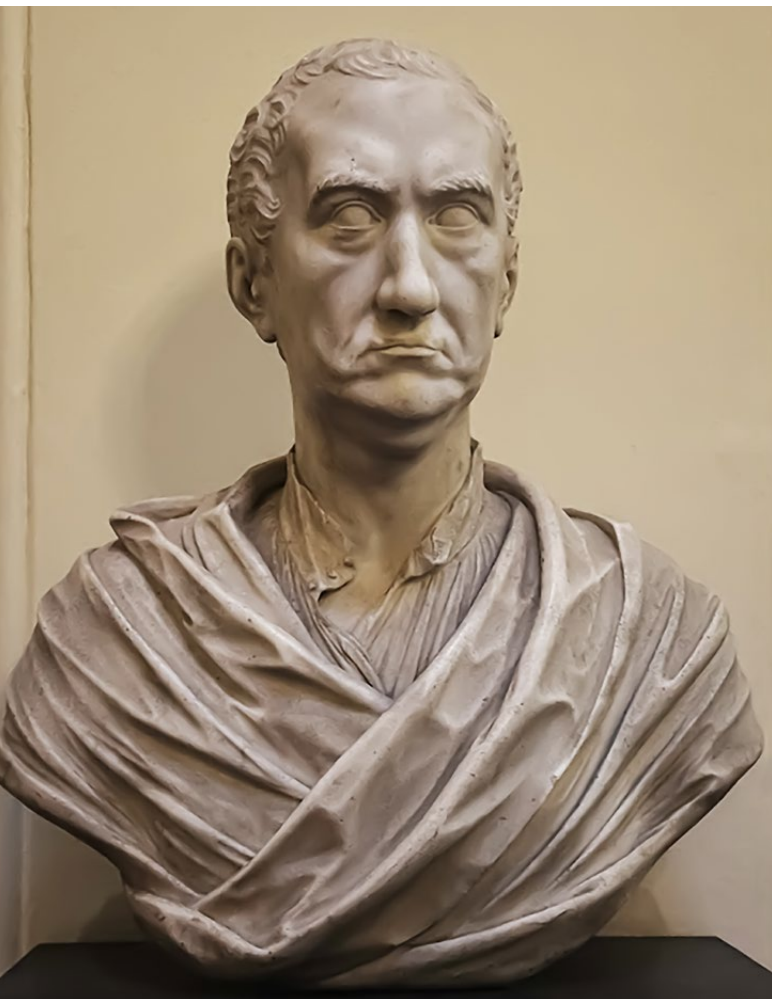
A renowned and intriguing personality of his day, still vividly imprinted on the memory of Florence, Horace Mann initially arrived at the Tuscan court as a diplomat and immediately began his social ascent, becoming first baronet, then a Knight of Bath and finally Minister Plenipotentiary. He made a fundamental contribution to the culture of the time thanks to the attraction exerted by his person and his home, Palazzo Manetti, which rapidly became a magnet in the city for intellectuals, antique dealers and *connoisseurs*.





Connected to his home country by important family ties, Mann's appointment as English representative received strong support from his uncle, the renowned British Prime Minister Robert Walpole. He maintained an intense correspondence with the latter's cousin, the writer Horace Walpole (1717 - 1797), who also lived in Florence in the same years, following his return to England. Mann, by contrast, never left Florence, where he died in 1786.

Before his arrival in the Tuscan capital, in 1732 Mann visited Naples, then continued to travel through Italy to Rome, Venice and Padua. After a brief return to England, Mann returned to Florence in 1738, where he held first the position of assistant to Charles Fane, English Resident at the Tuscan court, and then the office itself from 1740.



5. Prince Hoare, *Bust of Lord Chesterfield*, Bath, Victoria Art Gallery

6. Prince Hoare, *Bust of Ralph Allen*, Bath, Mineral Water Hospital

A brilliant and charismatic man, Mann succeeded in building a crucially important cultural bridge between England and Italy, and his role as artistic mediator had a significant impact on the collecting of the time. Mann became the idol of the Florentines, guiding their tastes and their acquisitions, while simultaneously promoting the art of his compatriots in Tuscany. His prestigious posts as advisor and intermediary to wealthy individuals in Europe, such as Frederick Louis of Hanover, Prince of Wales, guaranteed Mann a respectability and standing that ensured his success despite his mainly bourgeois origins.

An important testimony on Mann is provided by Giacomo Casanova (1725-1798), who remembers him as follows in his memoirs: "I made the acquaintance of Sir Mann, the English

ambassador, who was the idol of Florence, very rich and with the most charming manners, full of spirit, taste and a great love for the Fine Arts [...]”. Casanova’s writings also offer a description of Mann’s residence at Palazzo Manetti, in Via Santo Spirito (fig. 7): “in this house that he made, the furniture, paintings and books selected were all a demonstration of the brilliant man that he was”.

The meeting between Mann and our sculptor thus took place in the lively cultural climate of mid-18th century Florence, inserted into the broader phenomenon of the Grand Tour.

Although the correspondence between Mann and Walpole does not speak of the terracotta under discussion here, it is worth noting a letter of 26 August 1749 in which Mann mentions to his

friend a visit from the sculptor, who arrived directly from Rome. In addition to the copies after works of antiquity executed for Cardinal Albani, we know that Hoare made a *Cicero* (modelled on a bust in the Uffizi) for Mann as a gift to be sent to his father at Linton Park.

The proposal that the face of the sitter is that of Horace Mann is based both on information provided by the Heinz Archive* of the National Portrait Gallery and on a comparison with the portraits of Horace and his twin brother Galfridus Mann (1706-1757), both executed by the painter John Astley (1724-1787) in 1751/1752, when the two brothers were aged 45 and 46 respectively (figs. 8-9). These paintings were sent by Mann to his friend Walpole in March 1752, as confirmation of the strong bond be-



7. Thomas Patch, *English Gentlemen at Sir Horace Mann's House in Florence* (detail), New Haven, Yale Center for British Art





8. John Astley, *Portrait of Horace Mann*, New Haven, Yale University

tween them, and were later hung in the Great Parlour, the room in which Walpole kept all his family portraits.

Another famous depiction of Mann is that in Johann Zoffany's *Tribuna of the Uffizi* (fig. 10), where we see him on the right, deep in conversation in front of Titian's *Venus*, wearing a red sash and the medal of the Knights of Bath on his breast.

This honour, conferred on him on 27 October 1786 by Grand Duke Peter Leopold on behalf of

King George III, can also be seen in the painting by Anton Von Maron (fig. 11), previously thought lost. Its absence from our bust can therefore be explained by the fact that in 1749, the date of its execution, Mann still lacked this privilege. Though in the two paintings mentioned above Mann is older than in the sculpture, the shape of the chin and the structure of the face are similar. The greater corpulence of the painted portraits can perhaps be explained by the fact that as he aged Mann began to suffer from gout.





9. John Astley, *Portrait of Galfridus Mann*, New Haven, Yale University

The expression of our English diplomat, confident and full of determination, becomes the subject of this sculptural portrait. The face, proudly turned to the right, seems to invite us to see with him that promising future that his career, here only at its beginning, will reserve for him. The portrait gives the viewer the sense that they are also an active witness to that cultural climate that, since the early 1700s, fed the interest and curiosity of numerous travellers, attracted by the beauty of Italy.

Framed between the curls of the thick wig that fall over the right shoulder, even the clothing reflects Mann's high social status as well as that decorum *à la française* that characterized the typical clothing of the 18th-century gentleman: he wears a gilet, probably of silk and held together at the centre by a brooch, and is partially wrapped in a cloak that covers the right shoulder and falls over the chest. The ensemble is completed by the linen shirt beneath, which rises in pleats up to the neck.



10. Johann Zoffany, *The Uffizi Tribune*, Windsor Castle, Royal Collection

11. Anton von Maron, *Portrait of Sir Horace Mann Wearing the Order of Bath*, Private Collection

The bust was recently rediscovered by Dr Silvia Davoli, Head Curator at Strawberry Hill, who proposed its attribution to Prince Hoare, also supported by the London dealer Jonny Yarker.

At Strawberry Hill, a splendid villa in the neo-Gothic style and the former home of Horace Walpole himself, the work was also recently displayed at the exhibition *The Grand Tour, the Two Horaces and the Court of Florence (1740 - 1786)*, (24 May - 21 July 2022).

STATE OF CONSERVATION: excellent.

*British Sitters Index





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