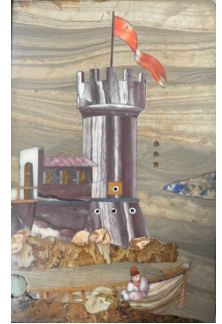


An Italian Florentine marble, soft- and hard- stone panel of the the Gran Ducal workshop, depicting a part of a tower of a sea fortification with a red flag and a small boat with a figure in the foreground, within a ebonised frame reduced from a cabinet door.



Florence, First half XVII Century

The piece, manufactured in the so-called *pietre dure* technique, in both the choice of the stones and depiction of buildings is very much in the style of Fabiano and Emanuele Tedesco, who were working in the *Opificio delle Pietre Dure* in the early years of the 17th century.

Pietra dura:

Height: 17,7 in. (17,7 cm)

Width: 4 1/2 in. (111,4 cm)

Framed:

Height: 24,68 in. (24,6 cm)

Width: 9 3/4 in. (20,5 cm)

Literature:

Anna Maria Giusti *L'arte delle pietre dure*, Ed.Le Lettere, Firenze 2005, pp.162–63.

The panel is compounded of colored stones of various types and forms, among them *corniola* for the flag, the rocks in *pietra paesina*, *pietra alberese* (*tigrato d'arno*), the boat in *alabaster*, the tower and little house in four different *fior di pesco* marbles; *lapis lazuli*, white *Carrara* marble; all set against a *cipollino* marble.

Hard and semiprecious stones were a strongly cultivated passion of the Medici family ever since the fifteenth century.

The art of inlaying in *pietre dure* was prized at all the courts of Europe, but it was at the Medici court of Florence that it reached its apogee, particularly under the patronage of Cosimo I (r. 1569–74), his son Francesco (r. 1574–87), and Cosimo's brother Ferdinand I (r. 1587–1609), who formally established the Grand Ducal workshop, the *Galleria dei Lavori*, in 1588.

Ferdinand had lived in Rome as Cardinal before succeeding as Grand Duke in 1587, and it was there, surrounded by the glorious ruins of ancient Rome, that he developed a passion for hardstones. One of the most important and consuming projects of his reign was the creation of the celebrated *Capella dei Principi* in S. Lorenzo, a spectacular mausoleum for the Medici rulers which was a dazzling display of hardstones and marbles and for which the foundation stone was laid in 1604.

A later version of the same panel, with a similar composition with tower, sea scape and figure in the foreground, is found in a *pietra dura* table-top (the left panel) in the so-called *Florentin Zimmer* in the castle of La Favorita at Förch, Rastatt. Both the table and the decorative scheme of the room at Rastatt date from the early eighteenth Century but have been assembled with pieces coming from Florence almost certainly realised at an earlier date.