

# BURZIO.

A very important and unique pair of late-Baroque Italian polychrome majolica two-light wall-sconces, tin-glazed earthenware so called 'a gran fuoco', created probably for the Ferniani family under the direction of Ignazio Passanti  
Faenza, Ferniani Manufactory, c.1740  
Possibly decorated by Nicolas Letourneau or Nicoló Raccagni.

Height: 25 in. (63,5 cm)  
Width: 19,7 in. (50 cm)  
Depth: 8,6 in. (22 cm)



Painted in blue, yellow (*giallo limone*), iron red and green (*verde fieno*) with a central trellis panel on a motif of fruits motif and flower sprays, a radiating floral scrollwork enclosed by elaborate scrolling foliage, enclosing trellis panels, all within a border of continuous scrollwork, with a moulded shell cresting on top.

## Provenance:

Maria Antonia Gianetti, Milan, Via del Gesu' 7, 1991.  
Private European collection 2021.

## Literature:

C. Ravanelli Guidotti, *La Fabbrica Ferniani*, Milano, 2009.

The present pair of appliques is extraordinary for its dimension and quality. Firing such a large piece of ceramic, limiting damages and alterations of the shape in the process was extremely demanding from a technical point of view. The extraordinary quality of these pieces, therefore, suggests that they might have been made as unique pieces for the private use of the Ferniani family, rather than for the market. This would put the appliques on the same level as other extraordinary pieces made for the Ferniani family, real essays of technical virtuosity, such as the pair of Bureau cabinets (Fig.1) of c. 1760 made entirely in majolica today in a private collection (Ravanelli Guidotti, *La Fabbrica Ferniani*, Milano, 2009, p.59) as well as the table console today in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, also made entirely of majolica even if by another manufactory. Those pieces, however, are characterised by decorations depicting gallant and pastoral scenes derived from French engravings, which suggests a date around 1750 or 60 for their realisation. The present pair of appliques, on the other hand, presents a decoration of flower and fruit of late-Baroque flavour. On this base, we suggest a slightly earlier dating, around 1740.

The story of the Ferniani manufactory can be dated back to 13 October 1693, when Count Annibale Carlo Ferniani took over the old Cavina–Grossi–Tonducci manufactory. The manufactory in Faenza was to assume a prominent position in the decorative arts of the eighteenth century, so much so that the French refer to their tin-glazed ceramics with the term 'faïence', the French for Faenza. The Fernianis at

first continued with the 'white ware' production of the earlier manufactories. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, responding to and appropriating elements from Chinese porcelain and other European manufactories, they turned to polychromatic decorations. This is generally recognised as the golden age of the manufactory. The most exemplary of such encounters with international trends can be dated to the 1730s, when Maria Amalia of Saxony visited Faenza. Maria Amalia was the daughter of August III, elector of Saxony and King of Poland, the founder of the Meissen manufactory. Hosted by her aunt Dorothea Sophia, Duchess of Parma and Piacenza, Maria Amalia stayed in Faenza on her way to Naples, of which she was to become the queen, marrying Charles of Bourbon.

The Faenza production is characterised by a particular moulded shape, the tender quality of the glazing, and the delicate colours, most characteristic of which are the green 'verde fieno' and the yellow 'giallo limone'. The mid-century production, referred to with the term 'a gran fuoco', is of extremely high quality, as can be evidenced by a pair of large urn-shaped vases (Fig.2) (Ravanelli Guidotti, op. cit., p.56). However exquisite, these vases present a slight inconsistency in their decorative apparatus: the moulded elements are still Regency in style, whilst the painted decorations are of a markedly Louis XV style. The interior of their lid is inscribed 'FAENZA'. This provides an important element for the attribution of the present appliques, as the candle-holding arms share the same scroll-shaped moulding with the aforementioned vases. The same scroll-shaped mouldings can be found in another pair of vases, more or less from the same period, which today is divided, with one vase in the ceramic museum in Limoges, whilst the other appeared at auction at Semenzato, Venice in 1981, lot 471 (Ravanelli Guidotti, p.77). The same scroll-shaped elements can finally be found in a dessert, now in a private collection, whose delicate and airy structure can be considered a derivation of contemporary silver wares as well as of sculptures made of sugar by confectioners of the late seventeenth century used as triumphal decorations for aristocratic tables (Ravanelli Guidotti, p.58).

The present pair of appliques represent the apex of the 'a gran fuoco' production. In them we can find not only the characteristic elements of the Faenza manufactory (the chromatic scheme and the scroll shaped elements), but also a response to the aforementioned international trends. Most notably, the decorative pattern of fruit and flowers presents important similarities with decorative patterns found on wares from the Sacco manufactory in Bassano and, above all, the Antonibon one in Nove. This might suggest the authorship of Nicolas Latourneau, mentioned in contemporary documents as 'Sig Nicola Francese'. A native of Nevers, Letourneau had been working for the Sacco and Antonibon manufactories since 1737. In 1739 he is recorded in Faenza, where he presented samples painted by him in the Dutch style, in the Berrein style, and in the manner of Moustiers. He would be later hired in Florence by Carlo Ginori to direct his majolica manufactory in his country residence at Doccia.

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The most important decorator of the 'a gran fuoco' period was Niccoló Raccagni, also known as 'il pittore del 1740' (the painter of 1740). He might be the only other documented possible author of the present pair of appliques. He is recognised as the painter of two large trays today in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (Fig.3) (Giacomotti,1961, p.198, fig.16) and the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (Poole, 1995, pp.347 and ff.), which present important similarities with the present appliques.



Fig.1 Bureau cabinets, private collections, Faenza



Fig.2 a pair of vases, Fabbrica Ferniani. Private collection



Fig.3 Tray, V&A Museum n.C.139-1951