

# BLUMKA



Hubert Gerhard, attributed to  
(Netherlandish, 1540/50–1621, active Germany)

## Recumbent Lion

Germany (Augsburg or Nuremberg)

*Late 16<sup>th</sup> century*

Gilt bronze

12.5 x 21 x 7.5 cm (4.9 x 8.3 x 2.9 in.)

### Provenance:

Private collection (Madrid, 1999);  
Spanish art market (2008);  
Private collection (Valencia, since 2008)

### Related literature:

Felmayer, Johanna. Hubert Gerhard in Innsbruck und das Grabmal Maximilians des Deutschmeisters: Hintergründe, Zusammen. Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2005

Diemer, Dorothea. Hubert Gerhard und Carlo di Cesare del Palagio : Bronzeplastiker der Spätrenaissance. Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2004

Weinrauch, Hans R. Die Bildwerke in Bronze und in anderen Metallen. Mit einem Anhang: Die Bronzefiguren des Residenz museums. Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1956

Since the ancient times, lion has been symbolizing power, justice and wisdom. The lion image is widely used in heraldry, representing kings and clergy, as well as in the arts, inspiring generations of artists to depict “the king of animals” in all of its powerful glory. This splendid late Renaissance gilt bronze recumbent lion, of beautiful and mighty proportions, has delicate incised details accurately depicting its whole anatomy. Of lost-wax technique and preserving its original gilding in excellent condition, the strongly executed animal is reclining and looking firmly straight ahead in a frontal and symmetrical pose that enhances its powerful and imposing attitude. The lion has striking facial features, long mane and elegant tail which curls below the animal’s body. The skin texture is beautifully rendered all over the body by means of a skillful chiseling work, just as other meticulous details, such as the tiny locks of hair under the legs or the sharp claws.

The refinement of the sculpture points to the work of Hubert Gerhard, an acclaimed Dutch sculptor who, like many of his contemporaries, left the Netherlands due to religious strives and politics of the 1560’s period. Gerhard’s work was very much influenced by Giambologna, in whose Florentine circle he was training. The beauty of his sculptures was widely known and attracted many mighty patrons. The earliest ones – the wealthy banking family Fugger of Augsburg – brought him to Augsburg, where he executed numerous works of art.

After Augsburg, from 1584 to 1597, Gerhard resided in Munich. There, within a few years, Gerhard and his colleague Carlo di Cesare del Palagio established the court of Duke Wilhelm V (1579-1597) as the center for bronze sculptures of outstanding quality. Probably his most famous work of this period are two lions now in front of the façade of The Munich Residence. Between 1599 and 1613, Gerhard served Archduke Maximilian III of Austria, first in Bad Mergentheim and then in Innsbruck, where he produced many

small-scale bronzes in addition to large-scale projects such as Maximilian III's tomb. In 1613, Gerhard returned to Munich, where he worked until his death.

Gerhard's oeuvre encompasses both smaller and large-scale artworks made in bronze and terracotta. The excellence of execution of monumental sculptures for the façade, fountains and churches is equally present in commissioned smaller sculptures and more mundane pieces such as mantelpieces, door knockers and bronze ornaments. Gerhard's sculptures feature ancient myths, religious themes and fantastic compositions typical for the period. They also frequently depict animal motifs, either as a part of the larger composition or a sole piece (see the illustrations).

From the second half of the 16th century, Nürnberg and Augsburg became a renowned production centers of gilt bronze animal figures featuring such naturalistic search of details, of which this magnificent lion is an example of the highest quality. The commissions, in collaboration with artists, gave silversmiths the chance to prove their outstanding skills in a variety of forms. Such recumbent lions were commonly used as ornamental supports for pieces of furniture or caskets, in which cases they have visible holes or attachment marks on the back surface, which is not the case here. Other animals, in many cases rearing or recumbent lions, were also employed to surmount the top of luxurious table clocks, the gilt bronze animal being often the main decorative element, sometimes of much larger size than the clock itself. Also, lions and other animals were executed as decorative self-standing pieces, delighting noble patrons and their social circles, which is most probably the origin of our lion.

This artwork comes with a full metal analysis done in January 2024 by CIRAM laboratory.









Hubert Gerhard: One of the two lions in front of The Munich Residence, late 16<sup>th</sup> century



Above: Hubert Gerhard, Animal figure: hunting dog, around 1600. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich.  
Inv.no. R 6988

Below: Hubert Gerhard, Animal figure: shepherd dog, around 1600. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum,  
Munich. Inv.no. R 6989





Hubert Gerhard: The dragon detail from the tomb of Maximilian III, around 1619, St Jacob's Cathedral, Innsbruck



Above: Hubert Gerhard, Lion mask from the fountain group, castle fountain in Kirchheim, around 1589/1590. Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich. Inv.no. 72/302

Left: Hubert Gerhard, Door knocker, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg

Right: Hubert Gerhard, Door knocker, ca. 1600–1625. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Accession Number: 64.101.1559)