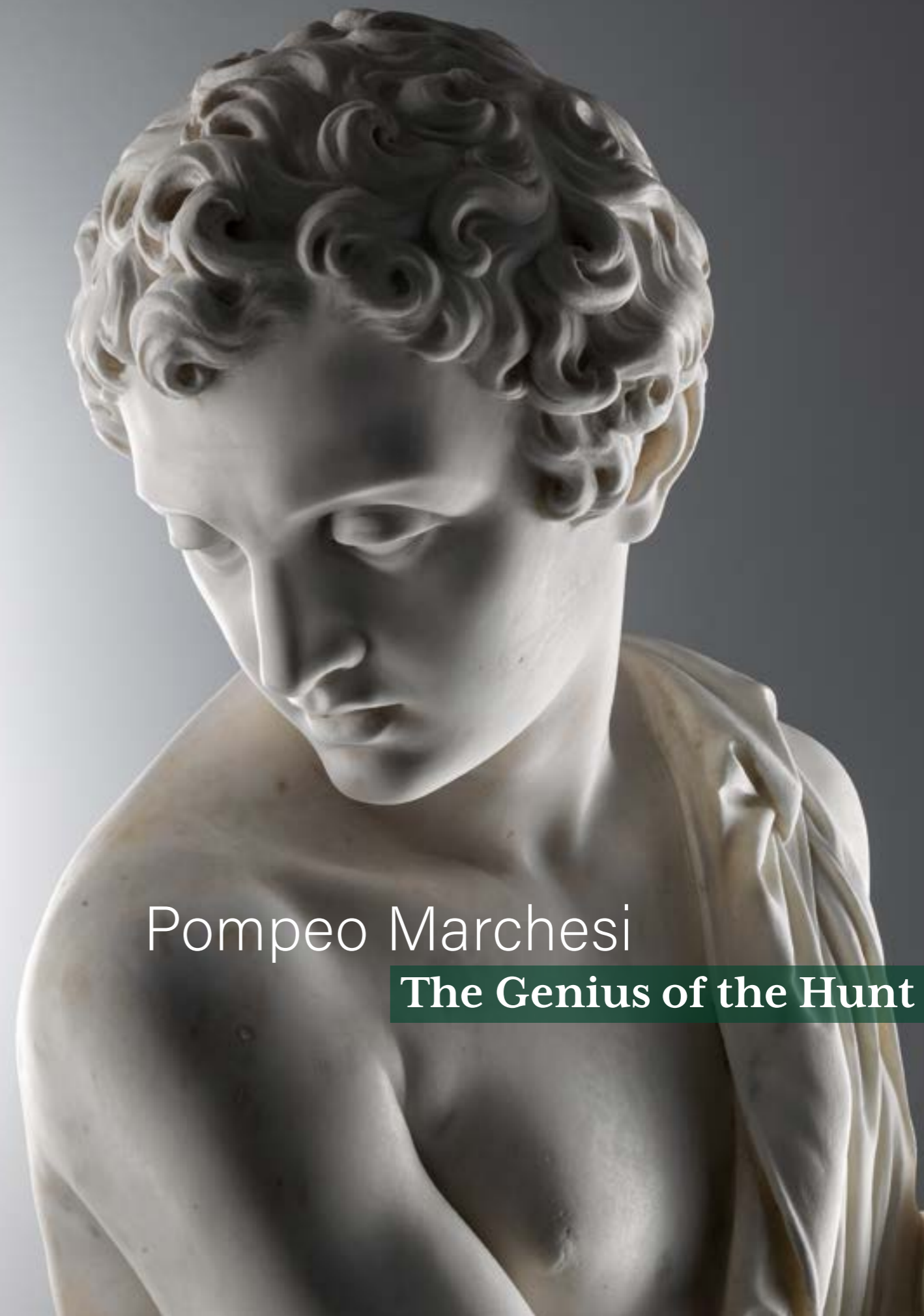




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Pompeo Marchesi
The Genius of the Hunt

Pompeo Marchesi
(Saltrio, 1790 - Milan, 1858)

The Genius of the Hunt, around 1830-35

White statuary marble, height 133 cm

SIGNED: C. P. Marchesi F.

The statue was commissioned probably by Countess Yuliya Samoylova (A. Musiari, G. Ortelli, ed. by, *Pompeo Marchesi...*, p. 72) and the plaster model is kept at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milan (L. Caramel, C. Pirovano, *Galleria d'Arte Moderna...*, II, n. 1777, p. 355 and plate).

PROVENANCE: Private collection, Milan.

LITERATURE: L. Caramel, C. Pirovano, *Galleria d'Arte Moderna. Opere dell'Ottocento*, 3 vols., Milan 1975;

A. Musiari, G. Ortelli, ed. by, *Pompeo Marchesi. Ricerche sulla personalità e sull'opera*, Gavirate 2003.



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Pompeo Marchesi spent his formative years at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera and went on to complete his training under the guiding hand of Antonio Canova in Rome. Returning to Milan in 1810, he embarked on a long and fertile career marked by success and by prestigious public and private commissions. He carved the statues of *St. Philip*, *St. Ambrose* and *St. Ezekiel* for Milan Cathedral, while in 1813 he was employed on the decoration of the *Arco della Pace*, the most important project of the entire Napoleonic era in Milan. Work on the project broke off when the Kingdom of Italy fell in 1814, only resuming under Habsburg Emperor Francis I of Austria when Marchesi was commissioned to carve a number of reliefs and huge allegorical statues. He also executed the monuments to Emperor Francis I in the courtyard of the Hofburg in Vienna and the Freiheitsplatz in Graz. He taught at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera from 1826 to 1857, initially standing in for others but as professor of sculpture in his own right from 1838 to 1852 and ultimately as emeritus professor of sculpture. His many accolades included the title of Knight of the Order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus conferred on him by King Carlo Alberto of Sardinia in 1832, and Knight of the Constantinian Order of St. George awarded to him by Archduchess Maria Luigia of Parma in 1835.

The Genius of the Hunt is portrayed as a young man standing, adopting a *contrapposto* pose accentuated by the inclination of his torso to the right. His head with its soft locks of hair also turns to the right, his gaze stretching beyond his shoulder to encompass an owl perched on a stand. Sporting a short, draped tunic, the *Genius* holds a bag with various implements associated with hunting. His right foot is crushing a serpent, while a small bird is trapped in a net on the ground. These details suggest that the sculpture is allegorical in nature. The statue strikes a superb balance between the canons of Neoclassicism harking back to Canova and a more contemporary attempt to convey sentiment and reality.

Antonio Musiari, the author of the most recent monograph on Marchesi, has dated the sculpture to c.1830–5, suggesting that it was commissioned by the Countess Yulija Samoylova (A. Musiari, G. Ortelli, ed. by, *Pompeo Marchesi...*, p. 72), basing his argument on the Russian noblewoman's boundless enthusiasm for the hunt. Yulija Samoylova awarded her most important commissions in the early 1830s, the very years in which Pompeo Marchesi was regularly showing his work at the Esposizioni at the Brera, but while the official catalogues include the numerous works displayed by the sculptor and owned by the Countess, they make no mention of the statue under discussion here.

The plaster model in the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milan (L. Caramel, C. Pirovano, *Galleria d'Arte Moderna...*, II, n. 1777, p. 355 and plate) presents several minor differences compared to the final marble version. For example, there are a number of variants in the tunic and different footwear: in the gypsum version the young man wears sandals in the ancient Roman style, while in the marble version he sports slippers with a central button that almost appear to echo the historical paintings of the period. The gypsum model, from the Galleria d'Arte Moderna collections in the Fogliani-Marchesi bequest, was present in the artist's workshop when he died.

Museums with work by the artist include the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milan, the Palazzo Reale in Turin, the Palazzo Nuovo in Bergamo, the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan and the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan.



***The Genius
of the Hunt,***

plaster.

Galleria d'Arte
Moderna,
Milan.

LITERATURE: L. Caramel, C. Pirovano, *Galleria d'Arte Moderna. Opere dell'Ottocento*, 3 vols., Milan 1975;
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