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ABSCONDITA

Gio Ponti
Società Ceramica Richard-Ginori, S. Cristoforo, Milano
Vase “Tutto ci attende”
1927
Hand-decorated earthenware with bichrome enamels
h 44,5 x diam. 17,5 cm
h 17,5 x diam. 6,8 in
Ginori stamp, dated and signed

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In 1924, Ponti used the decoration for the first time in a series of plates with similar layout and a common reference to themes from Greek lyric poetry. The series comprises five different subjects: 'The Love of Antiquity', 'The Lovers', 'Mea Lesbia', 'The Deceitful Camilla', and 'The New Love', whose decorations were showcased in Monza and Paris in 1925

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In the plates 'The New Love', from 1924, we find a figure with one leg bent and resting on a column on which is written 'Everything passes.' The figure drops a bleeding heart and gazes cheerfully at a second winged heart. The allegory seems to inspire the steadfastness of spirit necessary in the vicissitudes of love.

A similar decoration was then applied around 1925-26 on porcelain plaques from Doccia decorated with agate gold. The figure here is a winged angel, looking towards the earth, with a wide skirt and a pen with which it writes the message 'Everything passes' between an 'Alpha' and 'Omega' letter. On the column appears a palm tree, a Christian symbol of rebirth, victory, ascent, and immortality.

The same iconography recurs in the same years (1925-26) on decorative terracotta tiles glazed in San Cristoforo in Milan.

The decoration allegorizes the cardinal virtue of 'fortitudo', fortitude, often represented in Renaissance iconology right next to a column, for which - between the beginning and the end of earthly life - everything passes if the soul is firm and steadfastly and constantly seeks good.

The decoration is finally reprised in this vase and in its polychrome twin located in the MIC collection in Faenza, dated 1925, where 'Everything passes' is replaced by a more eschatological 'Everything awaits us', always accompanied by the Greek letters 'Alpha' and 'Omega', probably because the object, in a more prestigious form compared to a plate or a tile, was intended for a more educated audience.

The dating of 1927 leads us to suppose - although it is an idea still to be historically verified - that the object could have been presented in the collection of 'Il Labirinto', the boutique project inaugurated in '27 by Gio Ponti, Pietro Chiesa, Tomaso Buzzi, Carla Visconti di Modrone, and Emilio Lancia, formed in the form of 'Association for the diffusion of modern figurative arts in private homes' and hosted in the Venini store in Milan at via Montenapoleone 25.

Per quanto riguarda la forma elegante della cista, essa è stata utilizzata anche nei lavori in porcellana prodotti a Doccia a partire dal 1923: è celebre l'esemplare con il decoro omaggio a Sebastiano Serlio, architetto e scrittore dei "Sette Libri di Architettura" (pubblicati a partire dal 1537)
che rappresentava, insieme a Vitruvio e a Palladio, uno dei principali riferimenti storici a cui Ponti guardò con costanza sia per la progettazione architettonica, sia per l'ideazione di decori per le ceramiche della manifattura Richard-Ginori.

Literature
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