

The link between a sculpture in Laeken and Maserati cars

You may have seen many times this sculpture of Neptune, close to the Chinese Pavilion and Japanese Tower, without taking any particular notice of it: but it is something quite special and beautiful which warrants a closer look.



The sculpture and surrounding fountain is an exact replica of the original, located in Bologna, and which was commissioned in 1563 by Cardinal Carlo Borromeo (1538-1584) in honour of Pope Pius IV (pope from 1559-1565). Cardinal Borromeo was canonised a saint in 1610.

A Flemish sculptor - Jean de Boulogne (1529-1608) also known as Giambologna - sculpted the original Neptune and the subsidiary figures. The surrounding fountain was designed by Tommaso Laureti. The work took three years to complete (1563-1565).

Jean de Boulogne began his art studies in Antwerp but moved to Italy in 1550. Although greatly influenced by the work of Michelangelo (1475-1564) he developed his own mannerist style which emphasises "refined surfaces, cool elegance and beauty" (source: Wikipedia).

A member of the prestigious Academy of Art and Design, founded by Cosimo De Medici, Jean de Boulogne is considered to have been one of the most significant sculptors under the artistic patronage of the De Medici family in Florence.

His sculpture in Bologna is justly described as "one of the masterpieces of the renaissance" (source: musee de l'eau et de la fontaine, Belgique).



However, the story goes that Jean was disappointed not to have been chosen by the De Medici family to sculpt the Fountain of Neptune in Florence, which commemorates the marriage of Francesco De Medici. He therefore put extra effort into his design for the sculpture in Bologna, and won the commission (source: <http://www.bellitalie.org/bologne-fontaine.html>).

Here is a picture of the sculpture and fountain in Bologna:

At the base of the fountain are four water-nymphs - one at each corner. At Neptune's feet are four cherubs who each hold a dolphin in their arms. The four winds are depicted on the plinth supporting the sculpture.

The perfection, elegance and sheer beauty of Jean de Boulogne's "mannerist" sculpture impressed King Leopold II, who saw it whilst on a visit to Bologna. He arranged for a mould to be taken of the original, from which an exact replica in bronze was cast by Giorgio Sangiorgi the eminent sculptor and art collector.

The replica was erected in the Royal Domain in Laeken in 1903.

Maserati, the prestigious car manufacturer, was founded in Bologna in 1914. Since 1926, it has used a trident logo on its cars, which is based on Neptune's trident from the sculpture.



Thus, there is a design-link between our sculpture in Laeken and Maserati cars!