

To M<sup>r</sup> Simon Vierpyle, Statuary and Architect.

Dublin. 1

Dear Sir

As the Time approaches when I must leave to  
some Body else my Imperial Series of 78 Busts, with my 22 Statues,  
making in all 100 Figures, modell'd for me at Rome from <sup>the</sup> true Antique  
Originals by your most masterly Hand; and as the greatest Connois-  
seurs then in Rome declared to me, when they saw them finish'd,  
that they thought them rather Duplicates than Copies; I am naturally  
become very desirous to know, "What may be the real Value of the  
"whole Collection." Wherefore, I shall take it as an Act of great Friend-  
ship, if you will be so good as to consider all those Works; and to let  
me know, "What you really think them worth." Which will ex-  
tremely oblige,

Newtown, near the  
Black Rock; July the 25. 1774.

Dear Sir

ROYAL  
IRISH  
ACADEMY.

Your most affect<sup>d</sup> Friend

and most obed<sup>t</sup> Servant

Edward Murphy

Please to write your answer here below,  
as I would have it and the above closely connected.

To Edward Murphy Esq. Dublin August 15. 1774.

Dear Sir.

If I have finish'd your Busts and Statues as perfectly  
as the best Judges of our Day at Rome had been pleas'd  
to declare, they must be worth a Sum far exceeding what  
any Common Valuation would rate them at. For, to form  
a just Estimate of Things so very rare and curious  
requires a clear Knowledge of many Facts and Circumstances  
which very few know any thing of. wherefore I shall be  
here



endeavour to give a Detail of those Matters, not to inform you, but such as may hereafter be interested to know them.

First, the Original Series & raised up in the Capitoline Museum at Rome consists of real Antique Busts of the Roman Emperors, Emperesses and their nearest Relations.

2<sup>d</sup> All those Busts have been allowed by the greatest Modern Sculptors and Connoisseurs to be the works of ancient Greek and Roman Masters of the first Class.

3<sup>d</sup> All those Original Busts agree perfectly in Point of Features, Attitude &c, with the Heads struck on the best respective Medals of those Emperors, Emperesses, &c. and therefore are all those ancient Busts held as done from Life, as the Heads on those Coins certainly were; and therefore are they all true Originals, justly reckon'd perfect Effigies of those Great Personages.

4<sup>th</sup> If I have been so fortunate as to copy all those Original antique Busts as perfectly as the greatest Judges of our Day in Rome have been pleas'd to declare; then must your Busts also be a Series of



perfect Effigies of all those great Personages: which  
Circumstance must render them all most inestimable.

5. Your happy, and, I believe, singular Thought (of  
getting the whole Original Series copied, and this by one  
Artist only) has never before, nor to this Day been  
executed by any Sculptor, except me. So that your  
Imperial Series is the only one of the kind now in  
the world: which gives it an immense additional value,  
especially as it is probable in the highest Degree that any  
equal Series will never again be made for,

6. I am certain, that no eminent Artist will hereafter  
Work four years, winter and Summer (as I have done)  
in the (Killing-Capitoline Museum to Model so many  
Busts and Statues with his own Hands; except he be  
tempted with such a Reward, as none but Monarchs,  
or other Men of vast Superfluous Wealth, can  
conveniently pay. And as for any Series made by a great  
Number of different Hands (most of which must be  
very unequal to such an Undertaking) I hope I  
may



without <sup>+</sup> vanity say, That it can stand in no Comparison with you  
So that as yours now is, so it most probably ever will remain, the  
only Series kind in the world.

3. The Substance (Terre Cotta) of which your Busts and Statues are made is such  
that they will last in their Original Perfection for thousands of years, if preserved  
from such violence as would disfigure or break the same Figures down in Marble, and  
I think, their Colour is much more Natural than that of Marble.

4. They are all safe from the great Dangers of Sea and Land Carriage from Rome hither  
and they are safe out of the red hot Keller in which they were burnt; where had one  
of them cracked or broken (as it often happens) you must have at the Expence of getting  
them made Over again.

Now, Sir, I shall not hesitate to affirm, That, if all the above Particulars be duly  
weighed, your Series and Statues must be worth such a Sum of Money as few eyes  
all common Estimation. You would have me name this Sum, But this I can  
venture to do. Not, who can say, what Money they would bring, if Offer'd to  
highest Bidder of the Monarch of Europe: in the greatest Royal Museum, &  
which they would cut the first Figure.

But this I can assure you of. That if any Monarch, or other great Personage  
did me the Honour of an Offer to employ me to Model such another  
Series and so many Statues with my own Hands in the Capitoline Museum  
I would not take less than five thousand a year for ever, well assured to  
me finishing them all as yours are finish'd. and I further assure you,  
that were I master of your imperial Series and Statues I would not  
part with them for such an Offer.

I am

Sir Sir

your Most Humble & Obliged Humble

Servant

Simon Kirby

