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SCHOOL OF
GIULIO DEL MORO
VERONA, 1555 – VENICE, 1618
BUST OF PARESANO PARESANI
CIRCA 1610

Bronze

64 x 63 x 29 cm

Height with base: 81 cm

Provenance:

Count Xavier Branicki Collection, Château de Montrésor, France.

Comparative Literature:

A. Venturi, *Storia dell'Arte italiana. La scultura del Cinquecento*, vol. III, Milan, 1937, pp. 265-78.

E. Comastri, "Profilo di Giulio dal Moro", in *Arte Veneta*, XLII, Venice, 1988, p. 93;

T. Martin, "Giulio del Moro and Alessandro Vittoria. New Attributions and Suggestions", in *Apollo Magazine*, London, June 1993, pp. 367-71;

P. Cannata, "The Savior", in Shelley E. Zuraw (ed.), *Masterpieces of Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture from the Palazzo Venezia, Rome*, exh. cat., Athens, 1996, p. 52.

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At first glance, this remarkable bronze bust affirms itself as quintessential of Venetian portraiture of the early 17th century. The head is symmetrically conceived; the gaze is fixed upon the observer, whilst the beard, attentively groomed, becomes a distinguishing trait of the sitter. The cloak's folds are dramatically arranged, and pinned by a brooch which, together with the buttoned tunic, identifies the sitter as a Venetian of high rank. The general type, certain solutions adopted in the rendering of the folds, speak of the influence of Alessandro Vittoria (1525-1608), who "single-handedly made the portrait bust the primary mode for sculpted portraiture in Venice during the second half of the sixteenth century".¹ Following Thomas Martin's seminal study (1993), however, it is possible not only to identify the sitter as the physician Paresano Paresani, but also to advance an attribution of the bust to the studio of Giulio del Moro, who had started his career in Vittoria's workshop.²



Fig. 1: Giulio del Moro, Bust of Paresano Paresani, marble, life-size, Venice, San Fantin

Two life-sized marble busts of our sitter exist, who is known to have died in 1609: one from circa 1610 and signed by del Moro sits atop the physician's tomb in the church of S. Fantin in Venice (**fig. 1**); the other, unsigned and re-attributed to our sculptor, in the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris (**fig. 2**). As argued by Martin, the Paris bust might have preceded Paresani's death and, being intended for his private residence, following a general practice and, as opposed to public commissions, would not have been signed.³

Giulio del Moro was born in Verona of a family of artists. His father, the painter Battista d'Angolo (1514-1574), took on the surname 'del Moro' after his father-in-law Francesco. Battista's three sons, including Giulio, were all trained in their father's workshop. Following the latter's death, Giulio worked for four years in the studio of his older brother Marco. In 1584, he was admitted to the guild of Venetian painters, the 'Fraglia', and participated to the decoration of the Great Council Room in the Doges Palace three years later. It is likely around this time that he could have entered Vittoria's workshop, trying his hand at sculpture. Vittoria died in 1608, and the vastly successful Campagna – whose busts had set new standards⁴ – could not take on more commissions, which were likely redirected towards del



Fig 2 - Giulio dal MOro, Paresano Paresani, Jacquemart André Museum, Paris

¹ See Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

² As convincingly suggested by Martin, *idem*, p. 369.

³ *Id.*, p. 368 and note 7.

⁴ See Zuraw, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Moro, who thereafter became one of the most sought-after artists for sculpted busts in Venice.

Six busts by del Moro are in public collections in Italy and France, and all share a number of characteristics with those realised under Vittoria's influence, which, following the death of Jacopo Sansovino (1486-1570), became unparalleled in the Serenissima. They are all signed with the exception of that of Paresani in Paris and of Marcantonio Memo in San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice.⁵ In general, such busts share the same characteristics: the sitters are elderly patricians, often bald and bearded; their head is slightly oriented to their right, and they are dressed with a coat fixed by a brooch and a high-collared tunic. Vittoria's *Bust of Ottavio Grimani* from 1571-76 (Berlin, Staatliche Museen, **fig. 3**) is an outstanding example of this newly codified trend, which was swiftly adapted by his followers – see, for example, Campagna's *Bust of Lorenzo Bragadin* in the Seminario Patriarcale, Venice.

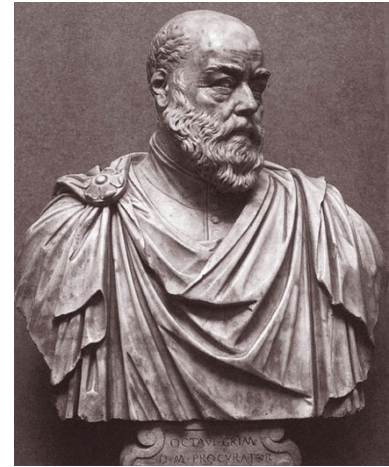


Fig. 3: Alessandro Vittoria, *Bust of Ottaviano Grimani*, 1571-76, cm, marble, 80,5 cm with base, Staatliche Museen, Berlin

Attributions for such types of busts can be tentative to a high degree, not least because of Vittoria's widespread influence. However, the similarities between the present bronze bust and other works by del Moro is such as to substantiate an attribution to the Veronese sculptor. They go beyond the mere reproduction of traits, and become evident in the treatment of drapery and beard. Furthermore, the Venice and Paris busts are the only known depictions of Paresani; consequently, it is more than likely that the sculptor of our bust had worked closely with Del Moro, to say the least.

The San Fantin bust is likely to have been copied directly from the Paris bust – notice the same attire, the folds of their cloaks identically arranged, the head turned to the typical forty-five-degree angle. The present bust, on the other hand, rather than a simple copy, could be read as a variation on a theme, and may have preceded or shortly followed the completion of the Musée Jacquemart-André.

A Polish-born aristocrat, political exile and patron of the arts, Count Xavier Branicki (1816-1879)⁶ was a friend and advisor of the young Prince Louis Bonaparte, the future Napoleon III. Interested in the arts, he spent the first years of his exile in Rome with her sister Sophie, Princess Odescalchi. In 1849, he acquired the Château de Montrésor in the Loire Valley (**fig. 4**), which became his main residence until his death. Built by the Count d'Anjou in the early 11th century, the ancient fortress took its present form during the Renaissance, at a time

⁵ Comastri, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁶ For an extensive biographical note on Branicki, see *Dictionnaire biographique de la Touraine*, 1990, pp. 213-18.

when it welcomed the grandfather of Diane de Poitiers, the celebrated favourite of King Henri II.

In the castle, Count Branicki found an ideal stage for the display of his art collection, which included paintings by the Italian Primitives, Filippino Lippi's *The Crossing of the Red Sea*, a Veronese reputedly won at a game of cards against Prince Jérôme Bonaparte, and family portraits by Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun. Interestingly, a number of works of art assembled by Branicky originally came from the fabled collection of Cardinal Joseph Fesch (1763-1839) – Napoleon Bonaparte's powerful uncle - at Palazzo Falconieri, Rome, which had been dispersed after his death between 1843-45.



Fig. 4. Château de Montrésor