

COLNAGHI



Wenceslaus Hollar

A large man with a bald head facing a grotesque female, 1645

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WENCESLAUS HOLLAR, after LEONARDO DA VINCI
(Prague 1607 – 1677 London)

A LARGE MAN WITH A BALD HEAD FACING A GROTESQUE FEMALE, 1645

Etching on laid paper
7.5 x 10.6 cm.; 3 x 4 1/8 in.

Signed in the plate (upper right): *Leonardo da Vinci inv. W. Hollar Fecit.*
First state of two.

Provenance

German private collection.

Literature

R. Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607–1677*, Cambridge 1982, cat no. 1592.I.
S. Turner, *Wenceslaus Hollar: New Hollstein German engravings, etchings and woodcuts, 1400–1700*. Giulia Bartrum, vols. 1–9, 2009–2012, cat. no. 745.I.



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Hollar left his native Prague in 1627. He spent several years travelling and working in Germany before his patron, the Earl of Arundel brought him to London in 1636. It is during this time that Hollar engraved, amongst other works, the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci from the Arundel collection. During the civil wars, Hollar fought on the royalist side, after which he spent the years 1644-52 in Antwerp. Hollar's views of London form an important record of the city before the Great Fire of 1666. Among his most ambitious projects was a set of plates of women's costumes, entitled *Ornatus muliebris Anglicanus*, or *The severall habits of English women from the nobilities to the country woman* (1640). He was prolific and engraved a wide range of subjects, producing nearly 2,800 prints, numerous watercolours and many drawings.

At left, a bald, heavy-jowled man with a pronounced chin and compressed smile turns in strict profile. Facing him, at right, a smaller female grotesque emerges with pinched brow, bulbous nose, projecting upper lip and double chin; the neck and low bodice are lightly indicated, the breast contour exaggerated. The compositional joke hinges on asymmetry of scale and physiognomy, creating a parodic pendant pair.

The print belongs to Hollar's Antwerp series after Leonardo's studies of "grotesque" heads - drawings that circulated in the Arundel collection and are now largely in the Royal Collection, Windsor - translating Leonardo's probing physiognomic distortions into the precise, reproducible language of etching.

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