

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres
(Montauban 1780 – 1867 Paris)

Portrait of Alexandre-Michel Beljame in profile, 1812.

Graphite on paper. Signed, located, and dated lower right: "Ingres à Rome 1812". Annotated on the back in black pencil: "M. Beljame / 224 Rue de Rivoli".
17 x 17 cm (6 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.)

Provenance:

Probably Beljame collection, Paris;
Henri Delacroix collection (1873–1937);
His sale, Paris, Palais Galliera, Me Étienne Ader, March 31, 1962, no. 60;
Private collection, Alpes-Maritimes.

Exhibited:

Paris, Salon des Arts-Unis, *Dessins [d'Ingres] tirés de collections d'amateurs, 2e cahier*, 1861.
Paris, École des Beaux-Arts, 1867, n° 546, p. 93.

Literature:

Blanc, Charles. *Ingres*, Paris, 1870, p. 235 (titled "M. Beljame").
Galichon, Émile. "Dessins de M. Ingres, deuxième série", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, July 1861, p. 46 ("M. Beljame est représenté en buste, le visage de profil regardant à gauche. Signé à droite Ingres à Rome, 1812").
Delaborde, Henri. *Ingres*, Paris, 1870, p. 290, n° 256 (titled "M. Beljame").
Naef, Hans. *Die Bildniszeichnungen von J.-A.-D. Ingres*, Bern, 1977, vol. I, pp. 273-275; vol. IV, n° 80, p. 148 (titled "Portrait présumé d'Alexandre-Michel Beljame", "uniquement connu par les publications énumérées [...]").



Despite being awarded the *Grand Prix de Peinture* in 1801, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres did not make his way to Rome until October 1806. Upon his arrival, he took up residence at the Villa Medici as a *pensionnaire*, staying there until December 1810. When his request for an extension was denied, the thirty-year-old Ingres was compelled to leave the Villa but chose to remain in Rome, settling in an apartment on the first floor at 34 Via Gregoriana. During this period, he produced a series of portraits of high-ranking officials and wealthy visitors - work that he considered a means of livelihood, supplementing his major imperial commissions. In 1812, he executed this splendid graphite profile portrait of a young man in his twenties. The tondo format, combined with the choice of a pure profile, aligns this work with the aesthetic of antique medals. A recent reframing has revealed the sitter's surname, as well as a Parisian address inscribed on the verso: "M. Beljame / 224 Rue de Rivoli".

In 1977, Hans Naef was the first to suggest that this M. Beljame was in fact Alexandre-Michel Beljambe (1791–1881). In his catalogue raisonné of Ingres' portraits, under no. 80, he specifies that he knew of this portrait only through it being mentioned in various publications. Born in Paris on 9 September 1791, the sitter was 21 years old when Ingres drew his portrait in Rome. He was the son of Pierre-Guillaume-Alexandre Beljambe (1759–1820), an artist, draughtsman, and engraver born in Rouen, and a member of the academies of Caen and Orléans, whose works are now held in various museums. In Paris, Pierre-Guillaume-Alexandre lived with his two sons: Alexandre-Michel, the eldest, and his younger brother, Alphonse-Eugène, born in 1793. Two years after their father's death, the brothers petitioned for an official surname change in 1822, likely to avoid ridicule associated with their original name, transforming *Beljambe* into *Beljame*.

According to the official decree granting the name change, Alexandre-Michel was employed at the Treasury and resided in Paris at the time. His presence in Rome is documented solely through the discovery of this portrait. Archival records indicate that he worked at the Ministry of Finance at least until 1838. In 1827, he married Julie Adélaïde Philippine Leblanc, who passed away two years later. At that time, he resided at 7 Rue Dauphine. In May 1830, he remarried Clémentine Bosc (1809–1897), eighteen years his junior, with whom he had four children: Clotilde (1831–1832), Claire (1836–1902), Alexandre (1842–1906), and Auguste (c. 1843–1869). The sitter appears to have moved to England in the mid-1840s. His two sons, who grew up in London, later became linguists.

By 1865, Alexandre-Michel Beljame reappears in Paris, listed in the *Almanach Impérial* as a sworn translator and interpreter in Italian, residing at 224 Rue de Rivoli - the same address found on the reverse of the drawing. His son, Auguste, is recorded at the same address from 1863, as the author of a grammar book for English students, published in London by Galignani & Co. Alexandre-Michel Beljame passed away on 19 November 1881 at 7 Rue de l'Éperon in Paris, now a language exchange centre.

In 1861 the drawing was described in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* by Émile Galichon as follows: "M. Beljame is depicted in bust, his face in profile looking to the left. Signed on the right: Ingres in Rome, 1812". (Height: 160 mm). Apart from a discrepancy in size, which may be attributed to the presence of a mount, the description aligns perfectly with the drawing. The portrait was subsequently exhibited at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1867, in a retrospective held after Ingres' death. At this time, it likely still belonged to the sitter. In 1870, both Henri Delaborde and Charles Blanc included the drawing in their respective catalogues, merely citing Galichon's description as *Portrait de M. Beljame*. The drawing then disappeared for nearly a century before reappearing at the 1962 auction of the Henri Delacroix collection. Although the work was reproduced in the sale catalogue, the sitter's identification had by then been lost. The lot preceding it, an Ingres *Venus* from the "His de la Salle collection", sold for 4,500 francs, whereas this magnificent portrait fetched 16,000 francs.

In a letter dated 1981, Hans Naef questioned the authenticity of the drawing but admitted he had only seen it in reproduction and was unaware of the inscriptions on the verso.

From a stylistic perspective, the portrait of Beljame is comparable to that of the architect Jean-Baptiste Desdébant (1781–1833), a *pensionnaire* at the Villa Medici, painted by Ingres in Rome in 1810 (Fig. 1). It can also be compared to several other portraits drawn between 1810 and 1812. These include a *Portrait of a Man* (formerly thought to depict the art critic Auguste Jal) dated 1811, held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Fig. 2); a portrait of Guillon-Lethière, drawn in 1811 and now in the Musée Bonnat-Helleu in Bayonne (Fig. 3); and the portrait of Philippe de Mengin de Bionval, housed in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, which bears the inscription "Ingres à Rome 1812" (Fig. 4). The portrait of Beljame shares with these works a similar sense of spontaneity. The sitters, depicted in profile, all have slightly parted lips, as if about to speak. Ingres had already experimented with profile portraits in his youth, inspired by the physiognomic tracing portraits his father created in the late 18th century, following the fashion of physiognotracés.

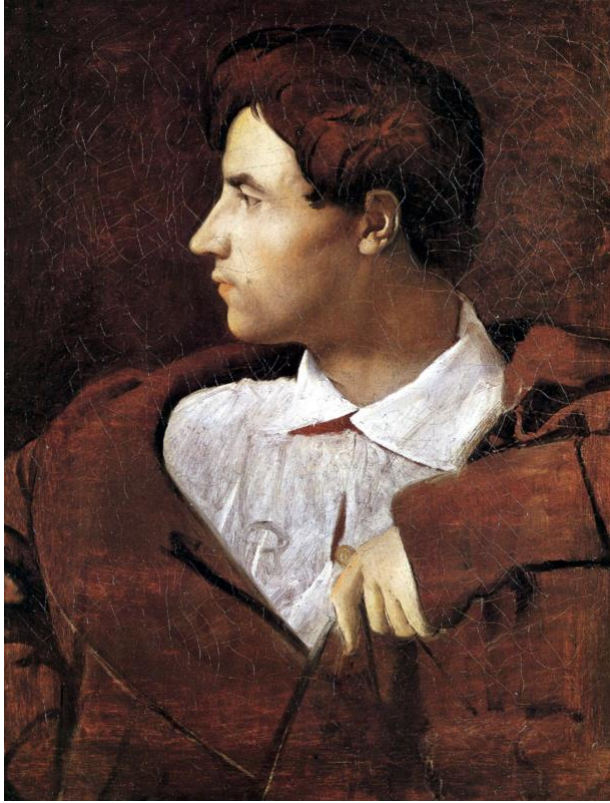


Fig. 1. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of a man*, 1810, Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Fig. 2. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of a man*, 1811, graphite on white wove paper. Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Fig. 3. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of Guillaume Guillon Lethiere*, 1811, graphite on paper. Bayonne, Musée Bonnat-Helleu.



Fig. 4. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Portrait of Philippe Mengin de Bionval*, 1812, graphite on wove paper. Washington, National Gallery of Art.