

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Bartolomeo Passerotti

(Bologna, 1529 - 1592)

Portrait of a Collector

1570s

oil on canvas

135 x 80 cm

53 1/8 x 31 1/2 in

Provenance

Esterhazy collection, Hungary and Germany;

Sale, London, Sotheby's, 19 January 1966, lot 28 (attributed to Giovanni Battista Moroni);

Sale, New York, Sotheby's, 19 March 1981, lot 131 (attributed to Giovanni Battista Moroni);

Private collection, Milan.

Literature

L. D. Benati, 'Una Lucrezia e altre proposte per Bartolomeo Passerotti', in *Paragone*, 379, 1981, p. 31, fig. 42;

F. Porzio, *Tre ritratti di Bartolomeo Passerotti*, en *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Federico Zeri*, I, Milan 1984, p. 43;

C. Franzoni, "Rimembranze d'infinito cose". Le collezioni rinascimentali di antichità', in S. Settis (ed.), *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana*, I, *L'uso dei classici*, Turin 1984, p. 302, fig. 104;

A. Ghirardi, 'Bartolomeo Passerotti', in V. Fortunati Pietrantonio (ed.), *Pittura bolognese del '500*, II, Bologna 1986, p. 555;

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

- C. Höper, *Bartolomeo Passarotti (1529-1592)*, II, Worms 1987, p. 237, no. A 38;
D. Benati, in *Antologia di pittura emiliana dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, exh. cat., Milan 1988, no. 7;
A. Ghirardi, *Bartolomeo Passerotti pittore (1529-1592). Catalogo generale*, Rimini 1990, pp. 170-171, no. 20;
D. Benati in V. Sgarbi (ed.), *L'inquietudine del volto. Da Lotto a Freud. Da Tiziano a De Chirico*, exh. cat., Milan 2005, p. 151, no. 5 (reproduced on p. 36).
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Exhibited

- Bologna, Palacio Davia Bargellini, *Antologia di pittura emiliana dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, 5 - 27 November 1988;
Lodi, Bipitalia City, *L'inquietudine del volto. Da Lotto a Freud. Da Tiziano a De Chirico*, 12 November 2005 - 12 February 2006.
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The subject of the present painting does not look directly at the viewer but rather at a distant point outside of the pictorial space and the shadow of the room, as if instructed to do so by the artist sitting in front of him. In the manner of a talisman, in his right hand he holds a gilded medallion with the profile of a Roman emperor crowned with a laurel wreath within a black lacquer frame. His other hand grasps a folded sheet of paper that is now faded by time but which would have originally revealed the mystery of his name. Behind the man and piled up on a library table covered with a red cloth are the objects most dear to him, in other words those he wished to be accompanied by in the image that records him for posterity, and possibly also buried with in the manner of an ancient king. These objects include a headless, armless marble torso; a small, possibly Paduan bronze with a green patina and gold highlights; a Parian marble bust of Athena in profile; a sculpted head of a bald, pensive man, also in marble and with an extremely lifelike expression which suggests a Renaissance - rather than an excavated, classical – work; and a small pile of books bound in pale leather with cord fastenings. In front of them is a sheet of paper with three more medallions on it. Whether the subject of the painting is an art dealer or collector remains to be established.

Attributed to Moroni when it was rediscovered in Hungary, this canvas is in fact by the Bolognese painter Bartolomeo Passerotti, as indicated by the characteristic reddish-mauve tones of the background. The canvas should be compared with the anonymous portrait now in the Italian embassy in London of an approximately similar date, executed in the 1570s. The two works share the pose of the sitter holding a medallion and the presence of the rare and exquisite works piled upon a table (fig. 1).¹

Marco Riccòmini

¹ A. Ghirardi, *Bartolomeo Passerotti pittore (1529-1592). Catalogo generale*, Rimini 1990, pp. 257-258, no. 82. Oil on canvas, 120 x 98 cm.

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Figure 1. Bartolomeo Passerotti, *Portrait of a Collector*, 1570s.
Italian embassy, London