

Northern Italy, probably Mantua

Portrait of a man, known as Gaius Marius
Bronze bust after the Antique

circa 1540 -60

Height: 47 cm / 18½ in

Provenance: De la Rochefoucauld and Estissac.[1]

Facture and Condition: This very finely crafted bust was cast by the lost wax method. Almost all of the detail is cast-in, and there is minimal after-working. The surface of the bronze retains traces of both dark brown- black lacquers and antico verde patination. This bust has even, thin walls and the method of facture is similar to that developed by Antico in Mantua in the late fifteenth century.[2] As with Antico's figure of *Spinario*,[3] a large, solid-cast, bronze spigot is cast-in to the bottom of the present bust. This spigot protrudes from the underside of the elaborate, strap-worked strut at the back of the bronze plinth on which the bust stands.[4] The spigot would have located the bust on its original socle, which was probably of marble.

This fine *all'antica* Renaissance bronze bust is after the marble head known as *Marius* in the Museo Chiaramonti (inv. no. 1488), in the Vatican.[5] Formerly described as a Republican portrait of the first century AD, the marble head in the Vatican has more recently been ascribed to the first century BC.[6] Historically, the head was paired with another ancient marble known variously as *Sulla* or *Cato*. Both of these antique marble heads were designed to be fitted into busts of either multi-coloured marble or of (possibly gilded) bronze.

Both antique heads were purchased for the Museo Chiaramonti in 1824 from the Marchesi Origo,[7] to whom they had passed by descent from the Roman Rondinini family in the eighteenth century (then described as busts).[8]

The provenance of the antique Marius and Sulla is confirmed by the *Diario Napoletano di Cassiano dal Pozzo* of 1639-1640, where they are described as being in the Rondinini collection.[9] Their earlier history is slightly less certain, but heads of Marius and Sulla are recorded to have belonged to Bishop Gerolamo Garimberto in the second half of the sixteenth century.[10] Garimberto (Parma, 1506-1575, Rome),[11] a respected antiquarian, had an important collection of antiquities in his residence in the Gaddi Palace on Montecitorio, Rome.

In 1569 the *Marius* was amongst the ancient statuary from Garimberto's collection that Otto Truchsess offered for sale to Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria, in Munich;[12] this is the earliest known record of a bust of *Marius*. Several years later, in 1576, heads representing *Marius* and *Sulla* were again being offered to Albrecht V: "*Etliche Ratsherrenköpfe sind auch darunter, als nämlich … Marii, Sillae, Fausti, so des Sillae Sohn*".[13] Many of these marbles, if not all of them, had belonged to Bishop Garimberto, who had died the previous year. Garimberto's two marble heads (*teste di marmo*) of *Marius* and one of *Sulla* were eventually sold by Orazio Muti to Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy. They are recorded in an inventory of 1583, still in Rome, pending shipment to Piedmont.[14]

Although Canova was said to have restored the head of Marius in the latter part of the eighteenth century, it has recently been established that the restoration was in fact carried out by the Swiss sculptor, Alexander Trippel (1744-1793), towards the end of the twenty years that he lived and worked in Rome.[15] Trippel also carved a marble copy (with variations) of the *Marius* in 1789, which is now in the Nationalgalerie, Berlin. In his replica, Trippel resolved the truncation of *Marius* quite differently from the sculptor of our bronze. Trippel included a larger expanse of chest than in the antique in the Vatican, but considerably less than in the present bronze. The style and superb modelling of the present bronze bust, particularly the pointed, slightly upturned shoulders, recall the portrait bust of *Andrea Mantegna* in the chapel of San Giovanni Battista in Sant' Andrea, Mantua.[16] Significantly, however, the eyes were left blank in the present bust, whereas the pupils of *Mantegna*'s eyes were drilled, and, according to Amadei in the eighteenth century, were originally set with diamonds.[17] *Mantegna*'s hair is longer and is more finely worked than *Marius*' shorter locks. The truncation of the two busts is very similar, although the *Mantegna* is slightly narrower at the bottom to fit within the curve of the roundel. The attribution of the bust of *Mantegna* has been widely discussed: more recently Radcliffe convincingly argued that we should revert to Scardeone's statement of 1560 "that Mantegna had cast the bronze bust himself".[18]

The provenance of the Vatican marble, as outlined above, might seem to indicate that the present Renaissance bronze bust of *Marius* was cast in Rome. While it might therefore be tempting to attribute it to one of the della Porta family (Tommaso, Giovanni Battista or Guglielmo), who are known to have made bronze busts in Rome after the antique for the Farnese family,[19] its style refutes this. Indeed, the facture of this bust would seem to indicate knowledge of the casting techniques developed in Mantua at the end of the fifteenth century, and the modelling coincides most closely with the bust of Mantegna. Plaster casts of antiquities are known to have existed in northern Italy by 1527 from the painting of *Andrea Odoni* by Lorenzo Lotti (Royal Collection, Hampton Court).[20] The artist of the present bust may well have used such a plaster copy as his model.[21]

1. Acquired from a member of the de la Rochefoucauld family, which comprises the Duke of La Rochefoucauld and Estissac and many Counts of La Rochefoucauld. The present bronze cast of *Marius* may have entered the collection of the de la Rochefoucauld family in the 17th century, when the Duke de la Rochefoucauld married a descendant of the Gonzaga family. 'Gonzague' is still used as a Christian name for male members of the de la Rochefoucauld family.

2. R. Stone, "Antico and the Developement of Bronze Casting in Italy at the end of the Quattrocento' in *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, vol. 16, 1981, pp. 87-116.

3. Stone 1981, p. 103 fig. 20, illustrating a similar spigot cast-in to the underside of Antico's seated bronze statuette of *Paris*. Stone refers to a 'tang', an older word meaning 'spigot'.

4. See K. Fittschen in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung*, vol., 98, 1991, pl. 84.3, illustrating a bust in Göttingen, Wallmoden Collection, with a similar but cruder strut at the back, which he dates early 18th century. Wengraf here observes that a similar strut appears on the back of the bust of Winckelmann by Louis Valadier of 1777/78 (Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Neue Galerie, see *Von allen Seiten schön. Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock*, exh. cat., ed. V. Krahn, Berlin, Altes Museum, 31 October 1995 - 28 January 1996, pp. 628-629, no. 242). However, the neoclassical style, rendition and truncation of Valadier's Winckelmann follows Trippel's rendition of *Marius* (see nn. 7 & 15 below).

5. W. Amelung, *Die Skulpturen des Vaticanischen Museums*, vol. 1, Berlin, 1903, p. 648, no. 512, pl. 69; H. von Heintze in W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom. I. Die päpstlichen Sammlungen im Vatikan und Lateran*, 4th ed., Tübingen, 1963, no. 334; O. Vessberg, "Studien zur Kunstgeschichte der römischen Republik", *Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Rom (Acta Instituti Romani Regni Sueciae)*, vol. 8, 1941, pl. LV, no. 3 & p. 275 citing earlier literature; see also *Roman Portraits*, London, 1945, pl. 12 and J. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, f.p. 1958, this edition Oxford, 1986, p. 48 & fig. 78.

6. R. Wünsche, "Marius und Sulla", *Münchener Jahrbuch*, vol. 33, 1982, pp. 7-37. In a private communication, Arnold Nesselrath has pointed out that there is no known, documented image of Marius that proves the identity of the subject of these busts.

7. B. Maaz, "Die sogenannte Marius-Büste. Eine Antike oder ein Werk von Alexander Trippel?", *Forschungen und Berichte*, vol. 31, Berlin, 1991, pp. 221-228; A. Uncini in *Bollettino dei Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1989, pp. 154 & 174, no. 309 (Marius, inv. no. 1488) & p. 647, no. 510, pl. 69 (Sulla, inv. no. 1494); Wünsche 1982, pp. 20-22, figs 23-26; Helbig 1963, p. 257; Vessberg 1941, p. 275, pl. LV, nos 3 & 4.

8. The busts were incorporated into the design of the Rondinini Palace in the 18th century (L. Salerno & E. Paribeni, *Palazzo Rondinini*, Rome 1965). Dr Paolo Liverani, Musei e Gallerie Pontifiche, Vatican City, has kindly communicated the history of the ancient heads and references to them.

9. T. Schreiber in *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der königlichen sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig* , vol. 37, 1885, p. 110, no. 53.

10. C. M. Brown & A. M. Lorenzoni, *Our Accustomed Discourse on the Antique. Cesare Gonzaga and Gerolamo Garimberti, Two Renaissance Collectors of Greco-Roman Art* , New York and London, 1993, Chapter Two. For different models identified as Marius and Sulla, in other collections, see Wünsche 1982, pp. 7 ff.

11. For his tomb in San Giovanni in Laterano, see S. Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier. Recherches sur la sculpture â Rome autor de 1600*, Rome, 1984, vol. ll, pp. 448-449.

12. Brown & Lorenzoni 1993, p. 166, no. 61.

13.lbid, pp. 155-157.

14. lbid, illus. p. 269. For the history of the sale, see pp. 56 ff. Muti's sister was married to Garimberto's heir and nephew (see pp. 224-225). For Emmanuel Philibert, see pp. 199-201.

15. B. Maaz, "Alexander Trippel zwischen Freiheit und Amt …", *Asmus Jakob Carstens und Joseph Anton Koch, zwei Zeitgenossen der französischen Revolution*, exh. cat., Berlin, Nationalgalerie, December 1989 - February 1990, pp. 13-15 & 153-154, no. 170. ln his more recent discussion of these busts Maaz infers that the extent of Trippel's restoration of the Vatican *Marius* relegates it to the status of a restored marble predominantly of the 18th century, but in so doing he fails to observe that Trippel's signed bust of 1789 is fully neo-classical in style, whereas the antique bust in the Vatican is not.

16. A. Radcliffe in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., London, Royal Academy, 1992, pp. 89-90, fig. 45, citing the earlier literature.

17. F. Amadei, Cronca universale della città di Mantova, ed. G. Amadei, E. Marini, L. Mazzoldi and G. Pratico. ll Mantua 1955, p. 440.

18. See Radcliffe in *Andrea Mantegna* 1992.

19. See L. Arcangeli in *Der Glanz der Farnese. Kunst und Sammelleidenschaft in der Renaissance,* exh. cat., Parma, Palazzo Ducale di Colorno, 4 March – 21 May 1995, Munich, Haus der Kunst, 2 June – 27 August 1995, Naples, Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte, 30 September – 17 December 1995, 408-412, nos 189-192. See also Brown & Lorenzoni 1993, pp. 228-232; this publication was seemingly not known by Arcangeli.

20. P. Zampetti in *The Genius of Venice 1500-1600*, exh. cat., ed. J. Martineau & C. Hope, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 25 November 1983 – 11 March 1984, no. 46, pp. 177-178. See also M. Leithe-Jasper and P. Wengraf, *European Bronzes from the Quentin Collection*, New York , Frick Collection, 28 September 2004 – 2 January 2005 , p. 61 & p. 67, n. 30.

21. We are grateful to Dr Klaus Fittschen for this suggestion.