COLNAGHI



Tuscan School

Portrait of a Young Man with a Mustache

TUSCAN SCHOOL
(Early Seventeenth Century)

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN WITH A MOUSTACHE

Oil on paper
35 x 26 cm; 13 ¼ x 10 ¼ in.

Provenance

Private collection.

Literature

Unpublished.



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This intense portrait belongs to a substantial group of heads in oil on paper whose precise historical and attributional context remains unresolved. A uniform grey preparation covers the support, over which the face has been worked with remarkable control, while the clothing and collar remain at the stage of an *abbozzo*, leaving much of the prepared surface exposed. The contrast between the highly resolved head and the abbreviated surrounding passages is central to the image's effect, directing attention almost entirely to the sitter's presence.

The work was evidently conceived either as an autonomous portrait or as a painted study for one. The sitter appears to be a young man of approximately twenty to twenty-five years of age, represented without idealization but with notable restraint. His features are modelled through a limited range of grey, pink, and ochre tones, applied in economical transitions that establish volume and expression with very few pictorial means. These characteristics suggest a Tuscan, and more specifically Florentine, context around 1600, with the closest points of comparison in the orbit of Ludovico Cardi, called Cigoli.

Portraiture occupied a significant, if today only partially recoverable, place in Cigoli's production.[1] Franco Faranda's monograph also documents Cigoli's sustained interest in the independent study of the human head, including painted studies conceived as exercises in observation and verisimilitude rather than necessarily as preparations for larger compositions.[2]

Cigoli's use of oil on paper for head studies is securely documented by the *Study of Head and Bust of a Youth, Looking to Lower Left* in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (inv. PD.10-1983), an oil on paper laid down on canvas measuring 44.3 × 36.4 cm and dated to 1594. An even closer comparison to the portrait considered here is offered by a *Study of the Head of a Monk* that recently appeared on the Paris art market (fig. 1).[3] Painted on paper subsequently laid down on a cradled panel, the work has been attributed to Cigoli and connected with a small group of comparable heads of Franciscan monks now or formerly in collections in Paris, London, and Florence, generally dated around 1610. The group has been interpreted as a series of studies *dal vero*, consistent with Cigoli's broader practice of treating individual heads as exercises in observation and verisimilitude without requiring a direct connection with a major religious composition.[4]

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[1] Matteoli 1980, pp. 381-384. The Palatina portrait discussed by Matteoli as a youthful self-portrait of Cigoli was subsequently reassigned by Miles L. Chappell to the young Cristofano Allori; see Chappell 1984, p. 48.

[2] Faranda 1986, pp. 157, 170, 175.

[3] AuctionArt Rémy Le Fur & Associés, Paris, 25 March 2026, "Lodovico Cardi, dit Il Cigoli, *Étude de tête de moine*", oil on paper laid down on cradled panel, 32 × 24 cm, provenance Château de Sourches; catalogue entry by Cabinet Turquin.

[4] Faranda 1986, pp. 157, 170, 175; Moro 2006, pp. 43-46; Dumas and Esteves Mendes 2010; Dumas 2012.

These comparisons provide a coherent basis for locating the work within the Tuscan tradition, and more specifically within the Florentine environment in which Cigoli's example was particularly important. The controlled execution, selective use of the prepared paper and of the brush, unusual psychological concentration and pictorial economy distinguish the present portrait from the more materially assertive Bolognese tradition and offer a substantial point of departure for further study.



Fig. 1. Ludovico Cardi, called Cigoli, *Head of a Monk*, c. 1610, oil on paper laid down on panel, 32 × 24 cm, formerly Château de Sourches.

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