

MARCHESE

POMPEO MARCHESI

(Saltrio/Como 1783-Milan 1858)

Born into a family of marble-workers, Marchesi was a pupil of Giuseppe Franchi in Milan, before being sent by the city to Rome from 1804 to 1811. Returning to Milan, he worked under Pacetti on the Arco del Sempione (1808-13) and on statues for the Cathedral (1808-15). Thereafter he was employed on all major sculptural projects in Milan and Lombardy, as the most important Neo-classical sculptor of the area, particularly after Camillo Pacetti was struck by paralysis in 1822. In 1826 he succeeded Pacetti as director of the Brera Academy, a post he held until 1852, when he retired, already outmoded by the change of taste. His most important works include the colossal marble group of St. John of God (Milan, Ospedale Fate-benefratelli); the Tomb of Count Sommariva (1826, Villa Carlotta); and statues of Goethe (1838; Stadtbibliothek, Frankfurt), Volta (1838, Como), Kaiser Franz I (1841, Graz; 1846, Vienna), and King Emanuele Filiberto (1842, Turin Cathedral). His Reclining Venus (1829) and Reclining Magdalen (1832) are in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, whilst the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Milan has a substantial collection of his sketches and models.

Bust of Correggio

Marble

H. 101.5 cm.

Vasari already regretted the **lack** of a likeness of Correggio with which to embellish his Vita in 1568. It is thus a little surprising to find that the 1647 Bolognese edition of his Vite is illustrated by a portrait of the artist. But, as Corrado Ricci pointed out, this and a whole succession of other images of Correggio all derive from the head of a man who appears in Lattanzio Gambara's frescoes in the nave of Parma Cathedral. Gambara was not born until after the death of Correggio, and painted these frescoes in 1568-73, so that it is evident that the spurious identification was the work of some imaginative sacristan seeking to sing for his supper (cf. Corrado Ricci, Antonio Allegri da Correggio, London, 1896, pp. 328-31; do., 'Il ritratto del Correggio', Rassegna d'Arte XVII (1917), pp. 55-67). Not the least curious thing about this image is that it should have found such wide acceptance despite presenting Correggio - who died young - as an old man.

The second prime source from which supposed portraits of Correggio depend was a picture which - if genuine at all - may only have been of a homonym of the painter.

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This was a panel inscribed on the back: Ritratto de Maestro Antonio da Correggio fatto per mano de Dosso Dosso, of which in 1781 G. G. Ratti published a drawing made when it was still in Genoa, prior to its sale to an Englishman, and which was also drawn by Mengs.

It is from this second image that the present bust derives, but with one significant difference, that it shares only with the simulated cameo profile engraving by Giovanni Rocca placed as the frontispiece to Pungileoni's Memorie istoriche di Antonio Allegri detto il Correggio (Parma, 1817). In the latter, instead of the slantwise cap found in other versions of the image, the back of Correggio's head is covered by a kind of peaked coif, which gives it a more classical air appropriate to the profile cameo format. It seems clear that the present bust depends upon this engraving (and is apparently alone in doing so), whilst making the image yet more classical with the aid of antique drapery.

The known history of the bust sheds little light on its authorship or origin. It was formerly in the Casa Cabassi in Correggio, from which it was sold in 1930, so as even to lose its identity thereafter, so unexpected an image is it of the painter. Its close dependence upon the portrait placed as the frontispiece to Pungileoni, together with its strict frontality and classicising detail, suggest that it must date from shortly after 1817. This was a time when interest in historicising sculptures of dead artists was very much alive, thanks in great part to the additions of busts to the Pantheon promoted by Canova from 1809 onwards, which were transferred to the Palazzo de' Conservatori in 1820 (cf. La Protomoteca Capitolina, ed. V. Martinelli & C. Petrangeli, Rome, 1955, pp. 9-11). Amongst these was a very different image of Correggio by Filippo Albacini (cf. Pietro Righetti, Descrizione del Campidoglio, Rome, 1836, vol. II, pl. CCCLXXVIII; Finzi, op. cit., fig. 54). In 1812 the town of Correggio itself invited designs for a statue of its most famous son from a number of artists, including Camillo Pacetti and Angelo Pizzi, but the troubles of 1813 prevented anything being executed (cf. Gérard Hubert, La sculpture dans l'Italie Napoléonienne, Paris, 1964, pp. 278-9; the present statues, by Vincenzo Vela and Eusebio Casalgrandi, were only put up in 1880). Nevertheless, in view of the present bust's original presence in Correggio, it seems likely that a bust was commissioned in compensation, most probably from a sculptor of the Lombard or Emilian region.

The likeliest candidate would appear to be Pompeo Marchesi, who was not only one of the three students of the Milanese Academy in Rome who executed herm busts of artists for their annual envoi to the Brera - Pietro Fontana (Raphael, 1808), Marchese (Leonardo da Vinci, 1809), and Carlo Finelli (Titian, 1810; cf. L. Caramel & C. Pirovano, Galleria d'Arte Moderna: Opere dell'Ottocento, Milan, 1975, pls.

941, 1706 & 925) - but also subsequently executed busts of Guercino, Canova, and Appiani: the last two for his own studio. The hard flowing beard of his Leonardo, and his bizarre inclusion of a head-dress despite the herm format, both suggest affinities with the present bust. Even closer in character, but for the fact that it is of a contemporary, and so more intimate in spite of the sitter's severity, is the draped bust on a herm base of Giovanni Bozzotti (1827) in the Galleria d'Arte Moderna (cat. cit., pl. 1725; Silvio Vigezzi, La scultura italiana dell'ottocento, Milan, 1932, pl. 12).

Hist.: Casa Cabassi, Correggio (sold in 1930)
Exv: Exh: Heim, London Summer 1983, no. 36
Bibl.: Riccardo Finzi, Le Sembianze del Correggio, Reggio Emilia, 1954, pp. 16 & 34, n. 12 and fig. 20.