



FERDINAND VOET
(Antwerp 1639 - ?Paris 1700)

Jacques-Ferdinand Voet is first heard of lodging in Rome with the engraver Cornelius Bloemaert from 1663-5, and he remained in that city, with a flourishing career as a portraitist, until he was expelled for libertinism in 1678. On the death of Sustermans in 1681, he went to Florence, where he painted a number of grand-ducal portraits for despatch to Portugal; he was offered, but declined, the post of court painter in Tuscany, and instead made his way back to Antwerp, stopping to paint portraits of the Dukes of Savoy in Turin in 1684. He ended his life in France, painting such ministers as Michel Le Tellier and Louvois. Though Houbraken relates that he also painted history-pieces and landscapes, it was for his sober and penetrating portraiture that Voet was sought after by his contemporaries, whether they were royal - like Christina of Sweden - ecclesiastical - like the dozen cardinals he painted for the Effigies cardinalium nunc viventium - or simply connoisseurs of female charm - like the commissioners of his galleries of "Beauties".

Portrait of Cardinal Federico (Baldeschi) Colonna

Oil on canvas

74 x 59.5 cm.

Voet painted twelve and drew one of the cardinal's portraits engraved in the Effigies cardinalium nunc viventium, in addition to others not so recorded. It appears to have been around 1669 that he broke into the lucrative field of ecclesiastical portraiture - just as Maratta was turning aside from portraiture to "higher" art - for all but two of his sitters were created cardinals between 1669 and 1675 (the remaining two had been raised to the purple before his arrival in Rome).

Cardinal Colonna's portrait, which has more affinity with Baciccio than Maratta, was engraved by Albert Clouet for the Effigies Cardinalium; the plate in the Chalcographia Nazionale was subsequently retouched to take account of his increasing age. Cardinal Federico (Baldeschi) Colonna (1625-1691) was born into the Perugian family of the Baldeschi, but related through his mother to the Colonna. Called to Rome by Cardinal Panciroli, he was governor successively of Faenze, Sabina, and Fabriano. Sent as Nunzio to Switzerland by Alexander VII to bring the Catholic cantons together and open a dialogue with the Protestants, his mission was ended prematurely by the death of the pontiff. Clement IX made him Secretary, first of the Congregation of Bishops, and then of the Propaganda Fide. His change of name came about when Clement X, wishing to show favour to Giulio Cesare Sciarra Colonna, invited him to nominate a member of his family as candidate for a cardinalate; finding no nearer relative suitable, he chose Federico Baldeschi, who was promoted cardinal-priest of S. Marcello in 1673 (exchanged for S. Anastasia the next year) and adopted by his

relative in 1674. Though later made Prefect of the Congregation of the Council, his increasing interest in doctrinal matters discouraged him from taking political advantage of his position.

Exhib: Heim Gallery, Summer Exhibition, cat. no. 22.