



Francesco Salviati  
*The Gentleman holding a medal*

TRINITY FINE ART

**FRANCESCO DE' ROSSI, called SALVIATI**  
(Florence, 1510 – Rome, 1563)

*Portrait of a Gentleman*

oil on slate, oval, 32¼ x 21⅞ in. (82 x 53.5 cm)

inscribed on the medal: CHE·CHI / MUORE·ONORATO / VIVE/ SEMPRE

**EXHIBITED**

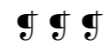
Saint Louis (Missouri, USA)  
Saint Louis Art Museum,  
*Painting on Stone: Science  
and the Sacred 1530 –  
1800*, 20 February – 15 May  
2022, cat. n. 62.

**LITERATURE**

C. MOMBEIG-GOGUEL, *Attualità  
della ricerca su Francesco  
Salviati, dieci anni dopo la  
monografia di Luisa Mortari*,  
in *Per la storia dell'arte in  
Italia e in Europa. Studi  
in onore di Luisa Mortari*,  
Rome 2004, pp. 208-21,  
reproduced fig. 12, p. 211;  
M. GIANESSELLI, *Un portrait  
sur porphyre de Piero  
Strozzi par Francesco  
Salviati*, in «Revue Du  
Louvre», 2020, n. 3, p. 58,  
reproduced fig. 7;  
J.W. MANN, in J.W. MANN  
(ed.), *Painting on Stone:  
Science and the Sacred  
1530 – 1800*, exh. cat.,  
Munich 2020, p. 222, cat.  
n. 62.

The long “Vita” which Giorgio Vasari devotes to Francesco Salviati<sup>1</sup> reveals that the painter already enjoyed a solid reputation among his contemporaries, causing him to become one of the most highly praised artists of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. His renown is due in part to his vast fresco output but also to his numerous portraits, thus we may consider him to be one of the most important exponents of the genre in the fitting company of his contemporaries Bronzino and Pontormo.

Salviati's work is found in the world's leading museums, including the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence, the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, the Musée du Louvre in Paris, the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota and the Saint Louis Art Museum in Saint Louis.



No mid-16<sup>th</sup> century painter proved as adept as Francesco Salviati in absorbing the influences of Florence, Rome and Venice in the space of only a few years. His career was a sum of sudden changes in style which, particularly in his portraiture, occasionally took the shape of abrupt changes of course. The difficulties implicit in the topic have been lucidly outlined by Philippe Costamagna in his essay on portraits for the exhibition entitled *Francesco Salviati o la Bella Maniera* held in 1998 in the Villa Medici in Rome and subsequently in the Louvre<sup>2</sup>.

Taking their cue from the work of Luisa Mortari<sup>3</sup>, which has been used as





a starting point for rethinking the catalogue of Francesco Salviati's painting and more especially of his portraits, scholars have attempted to grapple with the topic on more than one occasion, often adopting restrictive criteria and helped also by greater familiarity with the work of other artists, first and foremost with the work of Michele Tosini, to whom many of the paintings



<sup>1</sup> For the artist chief bibliography see at least: G. VASARI, *Le Vite*, ed. G. Milanesi, VII, Florence 1881, pp. 5-47; F. ZERI, *Salviati e Iacopino del Conte*, in "Proporzioni", II 1948, pp. 180 ff.; I. HOFFMEISTER CHENEY, *Francesco Salviati (1510-1563)*, Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, Ann Arbor, Mich. 1963; M. HIRST, Three ceiling decorations by Francesco Salviati, in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, XXVI, 1963, pp. 146-65; C. DUMONT, *Francesco Salviati au Palais Sacchetti de Rome et la décoration murale italienne (1520-1560)*, Rome 1973; A. NOVA, *Occasio Pars Virtutis. Considerazioni sugli affreschi di Francesco Salviati per il cardinale Ricci*, in "Paragone", XXXI, 1980, 365, pp. 29-63; A. NOVA, *Un'aggiunta alle considerazioni sugli affreschi di F. Salviati per il cardinale Ricci*, *Paragone*, XXXI, 1980, 365, pp. 94 ff.; L. MORTARI, *Gli affreschi di Francesco Salviati nella chiesa romana di S. Marcello*, in "Paragone", XXXIV, 1983, 401-2, pp. 100-6; L. MORTARI, *Francesco Salviati, Rome 1992; Francesco Salviati (1510 - 1563) o la Bella Maniera* exhibition catalogue, Académie de France à Rome - Villa Medici; Paris Musée du Louvre, ed. C. MONBEIG GOGUEL. M. HOCHMANN, Milan 1998; *Francesco Salviati et la bella Maniera*, *actes des colloques de Rome et de Paris (1998)*, ed. C. Monbeig Goguel e P. Costamagna, Rome 2001; *Francesco Salviati, "spirito veramente pellegrino ed eletto"*, ed. B. AGOSTI and A. GEREMICCA, Rome 2015.

once assigned to Salviati are now given<sup>4</sup>. If we run through the list of portraits attributed to Salviati, we are inevitably left with a sense of stylistic variety that perhaps only an exhibition placing all of his various paintings in sequence might dispel. As things stand today, at any rate, we can only add pieces to a puzzle that some comprehensive future assessment alone will be able to capture in all of its multiple facets.

**Fig.1:** Salviati, *Portrait of a Sculptor*, oil on slate, 68 x 51 cm, Montpellier, Musée Fabre

<sup>2</sup>P. COSTAMAGNA, *Il ritrattista*, in C. MONBEIG GOGUEL (ed.), *Francesco Salviati o la Bella Maniera*, catalogue of the exhibition held in Rome and Paris in 1998, Milan 1998, pp. 47-52. The problematic nature of the topic is highlighted also by the absence of any further study after the 1998 exhibition, either in the proceedings of the eponymous conference or in any art literature published thereafter, where no comprehensive study of the topic has been published despite the various additions to the artist's catalogue.

<sup>3</sup>L. MORTARI, *Francesco Salviati*, Rome 1992

<sup>4</sup>Especially such works as the *Portrait of a Young Man with a Letter* in the Uffizi (inv. 1890 n. 1581) which, despite its extremely lofty quality, is distinct from Salviati's work on account of its more multi-faceted, almost choppy style that is thoroughly Florentine in origin.

<sup>5</sup>MONBEIG GOGUEL, see literature

Our painting, on slate, was first attributed to Francesco Salviati by Catherine Monbeig Goguel in an article written in honour of Luisa Mortari in 2004<sup>5</sup>. Since it is clearly an autograph work, we can only attempt to place it more accurately in the difficult catalogue of Francesco Salviati's portraiture.

In presenting the work, Goguel associated it with another portrait, now in the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, which Michael Hirst had attributed to Salviati (fig.1).



**Fig.2:** Salviati, *Portrait of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi*, oil on canvas, 71.5 x 55.5 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Salviati painted that picture, which is oval in shape, also on slate – a support that was particularly fashionable in Rome thanks to the example set by Sebastiano del Piombo, who began to use it on his return to the city in 1529 after the Sack of Rome. But while they are both on slate, the two portraits do not seem to us to coincide in stylistic terms, which is why we would suggest somewhat different dates for them. The Montpellier slate, though in a poor



state of conservation, is more fluid in its brushwork and freer in defining the folds of the garment and the face of the sitter, a sculptor who holds in his hands a *bozzetto*, or trial run, now in the Casa Buonarroti). In the painting under examination here, on the other hand, the figure is built to an altogether stiffer and more monumental design. Though the result may be fluid and elegant, for instance in the bust's lute-like shape, its plastic, almost chiselled



**Figs. 3,4 (opposite page):**  
Salviati, *Portrait of a Goldsmith*, oil on panel,  
64 x 49 cm, private collection  
(full view and detail)

solidity prompts us to date it to an earlier moment in his career.

Thus we may confidently state that the sitter's features, austere and shadowy yet naturalistic and sophisticated in the interplay between light and shade on his skin, his rosy complexion contrasting with his dark beard, point to a date some time before the mid-1540s, which is the date usually given for the Montpellier slate.

The painting under discussion here, on the other hand, may have been painted

when Salviati had already completed his work in Venice, yet before the journey that was to bring him back to Florence for the decoration of Palazzo Vecchio (on which he worked from 1543 to 1548). The Montpellier painting's freer and more painterly brushwork, despite the slate support, seems to indicate that it is later in date than the *Portrait of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi* (fig. 2) which is generally dated to 1541, in other words around the time that Salviati travelled to Florence.

A comparison with the portrait of Rodolfo Pio da Carpi now in Vienna, on the other hand, allows us to suggest a specific date for the painting under examination here. The initial attribution of the Vienna portrait to Sebastiano del Piombo, quite rightly disputed by Michael Hirst, reveals, if nothing else, the



extent to which the primary model to which Salviati turned for his portraits (until 1538, when he was working with Jacopino del Conte on the Oratorio di San Giovanni Decollato) was precisely Del Piombo. Rather than the free and sparkling painting of the Vienna portrait, it is the austere and monumental design of Rodolfo Pio's face and the simplified, sculpted feel of his moiré silk mantle that is reminiscent beyond all question of Del Piombo's style. This is in effect the same style that we find in our oval portrait, where the artist's debt to Sebastiano del Piombo is even greater on account of the slate support which crystallises the paint, forcing the artist to use smooth, firm brush strokes. Also, the man's face with its austere nose and almost gruff expression displays firm

draughtsmanship and a steady control of the figure's statuary volumes. Yet features typical of Salviati are his invariably restless profiles (one has but to look at the sitter's cap with its fluidly undulating brim) or the design of the ear and the juxtaposition between the white ruff and the dark doublet. If we carefully observe the doublet, which at first sight almost appears to be dulled cuirass, we can see the free brush strokes in black on black added to define the volume of the arm that stands out against the oval bust support by a belt at the waist in accordance with a style which seems to herald the Montpellier slate. Another typical feature of Salviati's art is the vibrant design of the white cuff,



**Figs. 5,6:** Salviati (?), *Portrait of a Man*, formerly in Berlin, Schäfer Collection; Salviati, *Portrait of a Man*, oil on marble, formerly with Marco Grassi, New York

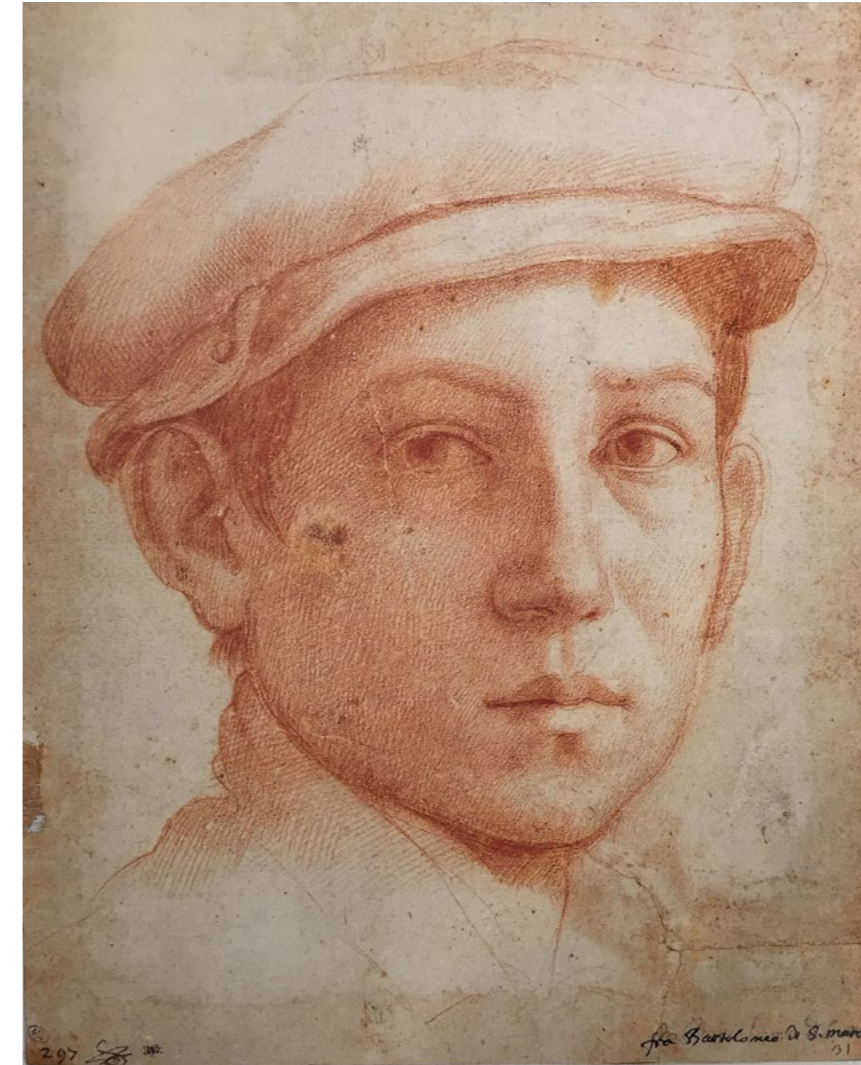
barely crinkled and trembling, which appears to be almost identical to the cuff in the so-called *Portrait of a Goldsmith*, exhibit no, 83 in *Francesco Salviati, o la Bella Maniera*<sup>6</sup>.



Dating this oval portrait to some time between 1535 and 1538, immediately before the *Visitation* which Salviati painted in the Oratorio di San Giovanni Decollato, would also explain a clear similarity with the firmer, more rigid style

<sup>6</sup> See Costamagna's entry in *Francesco Salviati o la Bella Maniera*, op. cit., p. 224.

of Jacopino del Conte, who had already frescoed the *Annunciation to Zachary* in the oratory by that date. Del Conte was influenced by the same Florentine roots as Salviati and also by the late-Raphaellesque manner of Perin del Vaga, and in 1538 he was working alongside Salviati on the *Preaching of St. John the Baptist*, in which he built a number of portraits into the sombre, chiselled design – portraits which, while rough and powerful, fail to achieve the elegance of design that we find in Salviati's work and in this oval portrait.



Also the similarity in the sitter's pose, with his right hand raised and holding a medal bearing a maxim of ethical inspiration<sup>7</sup>, which we find in another oval portrait of a man known only from a photograph and formerly in Berlin (fig. 5), appears to point to a connection between the two artists, but also to the superiority of this painting over the Berlin picture. Precisely the painting that can no longer be found today shows a clear affinity with a small portrait of a man

**Fig. 7:** Salviati, *Portrait of a Young Man*, red chalk on paper, Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (inv. 2760)

<sup>7</sup> The maxim (*che chi / muore onorato / vive sempre*) written on the medal which the man is holding in his hands alludes to the moral austerity and honourable conduct that ensure one's immortal memory with posterity. While no precisely matching source has been found, similar values might be paraphrased in a passage in Cicero's *Lelius sive de amicitia* (23): "...tantus eos honos, memori?, desiderium prosequitur amicorum. Ex quo illorum beata mors videtur, horum vita laudabilis". Although the maxim does not refer explicitly to friendship, the nature of the portrait appears to be compatible with the austere ethic of Ciceronian inspiration

<sup>8</sup> For the painting formerly in the Schäffer collection in Berlin see the entry in MORTARI, *op. cit.*, p. 153, n. 137, which opposes its attribution to Salviati; see also A. DONATI, *Michelangelo Buonarroti, Jacopino del Conte, Daniele Ricciarelli. Ritratto e figura nel Manierismo a Roma*, San Marino 2010, fig. 205 where the picture is given to Jacopino; and finally, see the essay by COSTAMAGNA, *Il ritrattista*, in *Francesco Salviati o la Bella Maniera*, *op. cit.*, p. 49, where the small portrait painted on a circular piece of antique marble is dated 1548.

painted on a circular stone and quite rightly attributed to Salviati by Philippe Costamagna (fig. 6)<sup>8</sup>. The man's face is identical, as is the characterisation of his expression. Only a proper inspection of the oval formerly in Berlin would allow us to understand whether that work, too, should not be given to Salviati himself rather than to Jacopino.

But getting back to this portrait on slate, we would argue, therefore, that it is unnecessary to wait for Salviati to have completed the decoration in the Chigi Chapel left unfinished by Sebastiano del Piombo in 1547 before he followed del Piombo's lead in using slate. Del Piombo had been painting pictures on slate in Rome as early as the late 1520s and Salviati may thus have been very familiar with them from the moment he began, in that city, to move beyond the rigid confines of Florentine draughtsmanship and to show an interest in other models, as seems clear in this painting on slate. And finally, a date for this portrait corresponding to his early days in Rome appears to be borne out by the sitter's almost slanted eyes and the austerity of his features, which may be compared in stylistic terms with those in a drawing known for sure to be by Salviati and now in the Département des Arts graphiques in the Louvre (inv. 2760, fig. 7). Philippe Costamagna has associated the drawing with the *Portrait of a Lutenist* in the Musée Jacquemart-André, a painting which, despite its poor state of conservation, testifies nonetheless to Salviati's early portraiture at the time of his transfer from Florence to Rome.

We are grateful to Carlo Falciani for the information in the entry. Falciani has confirmed the attribution to Salviati following first hand inspection of the painting