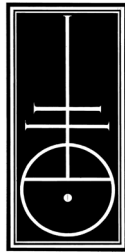


VISIBLE SPIRIT
THE ART OF
GIANLORENZO BERNINI

VOL. I

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Bernini's Bust of Cardinal Montalto

IN the Hamburg Kunsthalle is a marble bust of a cardinal (Figs. 1–4) bequeathed to the museum in 1910 by Freiherr Johann Heinrich von Schröder, along with his collection of nineteenth-century paintings.¹ The records of the gift are silent concerning the sculpture: no attribution or date, no mention of the time or place of acquisition. Described in the museum's 1918 inventory as by an *Italian Master of the Seventeenth Century*, it was re-assigned in 1939 to an *Unknown Master of the Nineteenth Century*. The work remained in the museum storeroom until the spring of 1984, when preparations were being made for a special exhibition of the von Schröder collection. The curator, Dr. Georg Syamken, then wrote to Jennifer Montagu of the Warburg Institute and myself, enclosing photographs of the bust and indicating that he had become doubtful of the nineteenth century date.

Dr. Montagu and I independently identified the sculpture as the lost portrait by Gianlorenzo Bernini of Cardinal Alessandro Damasceni-Peretti Montalto (1571–1623), grandnephew of Pope Sixtus V Peretti (1585–90). Indeed, to anyone knowledgeable in the field of Roman seventeenth-century sculpture, the sitter is immediately recognizable as the same personage represented by a well-known, half-length portrait of Cardinal

¹ *Ein Hamburger sammelt in London. Die Freiherr J. H. von Schröder Stiftung 1910*, Hamburger Kunsthalle 1984. The present note is by way of a preliminary announcement of the discovery of the bust, which I shall discuss in a larger essay on Bernini's portraiture.

The condition is excellent except for a nick in the upper edge of the figure's left ear, and the addition to the base, to be discussed below. Height overall 88 cm., with original portion of base 79 cm., without base 68.5 cm.; width 65 cm.



1. *Cardinal Alessandro Damasceni-Peretti Montalto*, by Gianlorenzo Bernini.
Marble; height, with original base, 79 cm. (Kunsthalle, Hamburg).

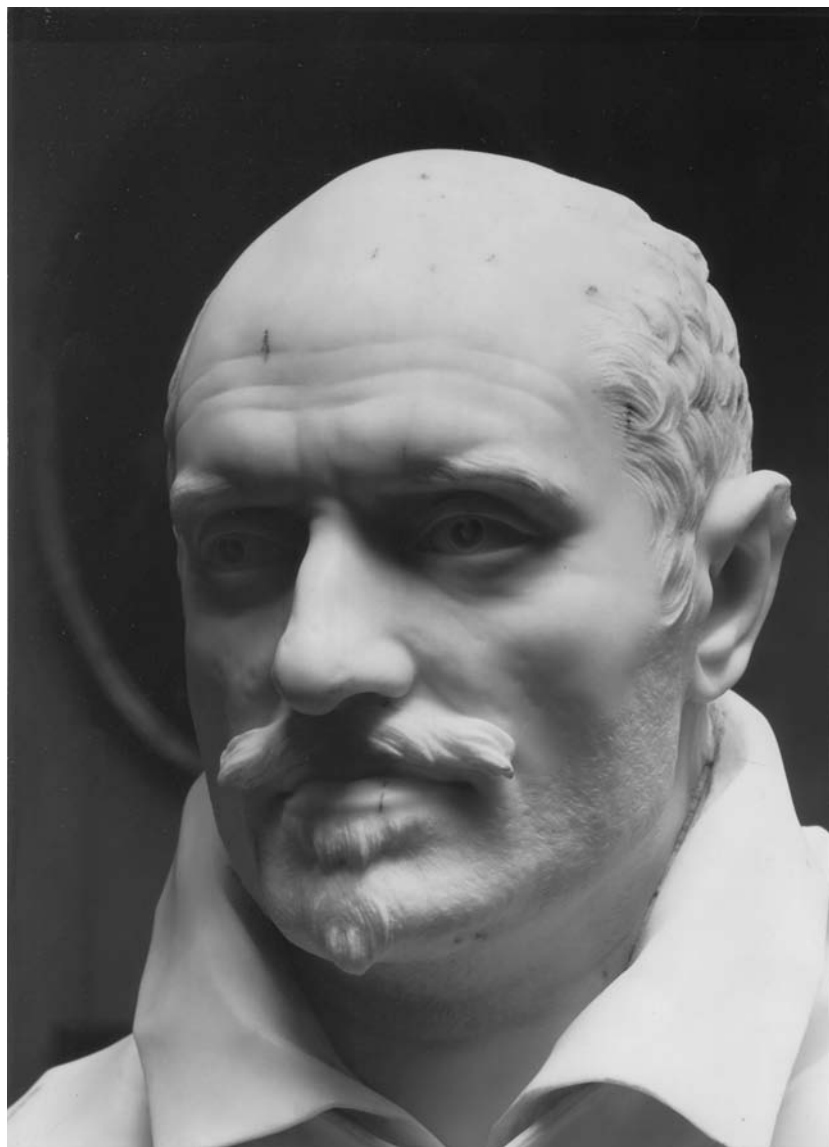
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2. Another view of the bust reproduced in Fig. 1.



3. Rear view of the bust reproduced in Fig. 1.



3. Detail of the bust reproduced in Fig. 1.

Alessandro in the Bode Museum, Berlin (Fig. 5). This sculpture, attributed to Algardi since the mid-eighteenth century, was acquired in 1786 along with an unfinished companion piece representing Alessandro's brother Michele (1571–1631), from the Villa Montalto in Rome.²

The list of Bernini's works appended by Filippo Baldinucci to his biography of the artist published in 1682 includes a portrait of Cardinal Montalto in Casa Peretti, the immense villa that had been created by Pope Sixtus on the Esquiline hill (on the site now occupied mainly by the railroad station).³ The bust is mentioned in inventories of the villa and in a guide to Rome written about 1660; it was placed on a carved and gilt wooden pedestal in a room adjoining the main *salone* on the *piano nobile* of the palace facing the Piazza di Termini, i.e., the Baths of Diocletian.⁴ The Hamburg marble is so closely related to other busts by Bernini dating from the early 1620s, and its quality is so high, that there can be no doubt of its being the lost work and, in my opinion, a completely autograph masterpiece by the young sculptor.

Cardinal Alessandro was an impassioned builder and patron of the arts. Among his most notable enterprises were the construction of the church of Sant' Andrea della Valle and, together with his brother, the embellishment of the Villa Montalto. By far the most splendid addition to the garden of the latter was Bernini's Neptune Fountain that adorned the great fishpond at the southwest corner of the property.⁵ There is no documentary evidence concerning the fountain, but it is generally assumed to have been made sometime between 1620 and 1623. The villa passed through several hands during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, remaining more or less intact until it was acquired in 1784 by a speculator who systematically

² See M. Heimburger Ravalli, *Alessandro Algardi scultore*, Rome 1973, No: 26, 99 f, 179 (the bust of Alessandro, dated c. 1634, is wrongly reported as destroyed).

³ F. Baldinucci, *Vita del Cavaliere Gio. Lorenzo Bernino*, Florence, 1682, ed. S. S. Ludovici, Milan, 1948, 176; cf. R. Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, Oxford, 1981, 268, No. 81(7). On the villa, besides the basic monograph by Massimo cited in the next footnote, see C. D'Onofrio, *Una grande scomparsa, Capitolium 45*, 1970, 59–63; D. R. Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, Princeton, 1979, 365–69.

⁴ V. Massimo, *Notizie storiche della Villa Massimo alle Terme Diocleziane*, Rome, 1836, 164; F. Martinelli, *Roma ornata dall'architettura, pittura a scultura, 1660–63*; ed. C. D'Onofrio, *Roma vista da Roma*, Rome, 1968, 326; *La testa con busto del Card. Alessandro Montalto di marmo bianco è del Cav. Bernino*.

⁵ J. Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London, 1964, No. 637, 596 ff; Wittkower, *Bernini*, 177 f, No. 9.

sold its contents. The Neptune group, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, went to England in 1786 and in view of the fact that the bulk of von Schröder's collection was acquired during his stay in England, one may surmise that Bernini's bust of the cardinal had a similar fate.

The bust must have been made at the same time as the Neptune group, since it has two salient features in common with a series of portraits by Bernini that can be dated 1621–23 on independent grounds. One of these features is the low base with a cartouche carved on the front, the other is the bow-shaped lower silhouette. Parallel instances are the busts of Cardinal Giovanni Dolfin, before May 1621 (Fig. 6), Cardinal Escoubleau de Sourdis, before July 1622 (Fig. 7) and Antonio Cepparelli, April–August 1622 (Fig. 8).⁶ The carefully 'finished' back of the Hamburg bust, with two large hollows at the sides flanking a central vertical spine that includes the base, is very close to that of Bernini's recently rediscovered bust of Gregory XV, datable February–September 1621 (Fig. 9).⁷ Another feature common to nearly all these works, including the new one, is the rendering of the iris and pupil of the eye as a hemispherical depression surrounded by a thin, faintly-incised ring and filled with a tear-shaped protrusion; the configuration imparts to the eyes depth, sharp focus and a lively glint.

While the cartouche base alone suffices to assign the work to the 1620s, since the motif occurs in Bernini's busts only at that time, the design of the torso suggests a more precise date. A steady increase in the relative width and in the curvature of the bottom of the torso is evident throughout the series, culminating in the bust of Antonio Cepparelli. In the new portrait the upward and outward flare is even more dynamic. Of particular importance is the fact that the shoulders in the Hamburg sculpture are not parallel to the 'picture plane': the right shoulder is thrust slightly forward, imparting a subtle but insistent movement that is also found in the Cepparelli portrait. This action, in turn, has its counterpart in the treatment of the drapery, which seems more complex and broken than in the

⁶ For the dating and a discussion of these works, see I. Lavin, Five New Youthful Sculptures by Gianlorenzo Bernini and a Revised Chronology of his Early Works, *The Art Bulletin* 50, 1968, 238 ff. Very similar as well, although with a different kind of base, is the bust of Monsignor Carlo Antonio dal Pozzo, which is undated but must also belong to this period: S. Rinehart, A Bernini Bust at Castle Howard, *The Burlington Magazine* 109, 1967, 437–43.

⁷ I shall discuss this work in the study mentioned in n. 1 above.



5. *Cardinal Alessandro Damasceni-Peretti Montalto*, attributed to Alessandro Algardi. Marble, height 91 cm. (Bode Museum, Berlin).



6. *Cardinal Giovanni Dolfin*, by Gianlorenzo Bernini. Marble, life-size (S. Michele all'Isola, Venice).



7. *Cardinal Escoubleau de Sourdis*, by Gianlorenzo Bernini. Marble, height 75 cm. (St. Bruno, Bordeaux).

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8. *Antonio Cepparelli*, by Gianlorenzo Bernini. Marble, height 70 cm.
(S. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Rome).

9. Rear view of bust of Pope
Gergory XV, by
Gianlorenzo Bernini.
Marble, height 83.5 cm.
(Aart Gallery of Ontario,
Toronto).



10. Detail of the bust
reproduced in Fig. 1.

other works of the group. All these features, which will play significant roles in the later development of Bernini's portraiture, situate the Hamburg work toward the end of the series, 1622–early 1623.⁸

Other considerations help to confirm this chronology and may indicate the purpose for which the sculpture was made. Bernini's bases were regularly carved from the same block as the bust, unless a different colored stone was used. The base of the Hamburg portrait, which stood on its own pedestal in the Montalto villa, has a separate lower section that must have been added to increase the width and height. The upper, original portion alone does seem disproportionately small, suggesting that the sculpture was not designed to be seen in isolation but in an architectural context, such as a niche.

Cardinal Montalto died on 3 June 1623. His testament has not yet come to light, but according to the sources he stipulated that his heart be left to the Theatine Fathers of Sant' Andrea della Valle, and that his body be buried in the sumptuous chapel built by his granduncle at Santa Maria

⁸ Cartouche bases also appear in three busts dating from early in the reign of Urban VIII, elected August 1623. The type is virtually the same in the diminutive and exceptionally lively, informal bust of the Pope now in the collection of Prince Augusto Barberini; the scroll motif is developed into wing-like membranes combined with the Barberini bee in the portraits of Monsignor Francesco (National Gallery, Washington, previously dated by me two or three years too early: *Youthful Sculpture*, 241 f) and Antonio Barberini (Galleria Nazionale, Rome, attribution disputed but in any case closely dependent on Bernini), where the bulk and animation of the torsos are markedly increased; cf. Wittkower, *Bernini*, 184, No. 19(1), 191 f., Nos. 24 (a, b).

I append here a table of the dimensions in centimeters of some early busts of Bernini; those datable on external grounds are named in italics. (On the bust of Antonio Coppola in San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, Rome, cf. Lavin, *Youthful Sculpture*, see note 6, pp. 223 ff.)

	H	h	W	Ratio	Ratio
	Height	Height	Width	$\frac{H}{W}$	$\frac{h}{W}$
	overall	without base			
<i>Coppola</i>	67	58	48	1.4	1.21
<i>Gregory XV</i>	83.5	63.5	62.5	1.34	1.02
<i>De Sourdís</i>	75	62	61	1.23	1.02
<i>Cepparelli</i>	70	60	60	1.17	1
Montalto	79	68.5	65	1.22	1.05
Dal Pozzo	82.5	68.5	68.5	1.2	1
F. Barberini	80.3	62.2	66.1	1.22	0.94

Maggiore.⁹ These provisions were duly carried out, yet it seems anomalous that no monument or inscription was installed in either building. A contemporary account of the funeral suggests that a sculptural commemoration was intended at Santa Maria Maggiore, and most probably in the form of a portrait.¹⁰ I submit that the image was commissioned as part of a memorial to be placed in the Sistine chapel. The project was for some reason abandoned after the Cardinal's death and the bust, its base raised, was displayed in the villa as an independent work along with a bronze portrait of Pope Sixtus himself.¹¹

These observations may help to determine the date and purpose of the work, but its historical importance derives from the extraordinary qualities of vitality and refinement with which Bernini suffused the conventions of formal ecclesiastical portraiture. The symmetrical shape retained from earlier tradition seems to take flight on the wings of the undulating lower edge. A generally symmetrical arrangement of the drapery is also retained, but the surfaces and edges of the folds are modulated and subtle asymmetries that reflect the action of the 'sitter' are introduced. The Cardinal had evidently suffered from smallpox at some point in his life, and a remarkable feature of the portrait is the pockmarks that dot the cheeks.¹² Such a detail should not be taken simply as a bit of virtuoso realism, or a moralistic proclamation of unvarnished truth like Cromwell's insistence that his portraitist include *pimples, warts and everything*.¹³ In an uncanny way, the blemishes on

⁹ A. Chacon, *Vitae et res gestae pontificum romanorum et S.R.E cardinalium*, 4 vols., Rome, 1677, IV, 149, G. Gigli, *Diario romano* (1608–1670), ed. G. Ricciotti, Rome, 1958, 71.

¹⁰ . . . si portò alla Chiesa di S. Maria Maggiore, dove finita la cerimonia dell'Essequie fu sepolto nella ricca, a sontuosa Capella del presepio, fabricata con tanta spesa dalla buona mem. di Sisto V. suo zio, dove essendo viva la memoria sua, & de Pio Papa V. viverà ancora la sua scolpita ne' marmi [emphasis mine], ma molto più nel petto de gl'huomini . . . (G. Briccio, *Il pianto, et la mestitia dell'alma città di Roma per la morte dell'illustriss. et reverendiss. sig. Alessandro Peretti cardinal Montalto, vescovo Vicecancellario, summator papae, & protettore di Polonia*, Rome, 1623, last page of preface).

¹¹ On the portrait of Sixtus by Bastiano Torrigiani, which exists in two versions, see Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue*, No. 523, 494 f.

¹² The pockmarks, faintly visible in our Fig. 4, should not be confused with the flecks of black that occur naturally in the marble. Dr. Syamken kindly informs me that the pockmarks also appear in the bust in the Bode Museum.

¹³ Cf. *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 29 vols., Oxford, 1917–81. V. 182. (I am indebted to William Heckscher for reminding me of the source of this dictum.)



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Cardinal Alessandro's face also evoke the passage of time, comparable to the movement of the drapery, the turn of the body, and the intense concentration that animates the face.

