

A Portrait Bust of Luisa Deti by Ippolito Buzio

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ROMAN SCULPTURE of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the time between the death of Michelangelo in 1564 and the rise of Bernini about 1618, has been largely neglected by art historians.¹ Rudolf Wittkower's famous and often-quoted statement that "sculpture in Rome had reached a low-water mark during the period under review"² can be considered one of the reasons why artists of the so-called transitional period and their oeuvre have fallen into oblivion.

This fate befell a very fine marble bust of a veiled woman that is on display in the Kravis Wing of the Metropolitan Museum (Figures 1–3, 6, 15). It is the portrait of a woman in her late fifties or early sixties, captured in a serious and pensive mood. The slightly bowed head, with the artistically draped veil and mantle, suggests a mood of calm and controlled sorrow—a characteristic demeanor for a woman of noble birth. This representation of inner feelings is mastered by the artist through his technical virtuosity, especially evident in the delicate modulation of the face. His portrayal of varying textures, such as the contrast between the rough fabric of the veil and the smooth skin, shows a high level of talent (Figures 2, 6).

The woman's costume immediately calls to mind Gian Lorenzo Bernini's (1598–1680) portrait bust of Donna Camilla Barbadori, the mother of Pope Urban VIII Barberini (r. 1623–44), today in the Statens Museum in Copenhagen (Figure 4),³ as well as that of Olimpia Maidalchini by Alessandro Algardi (1598–1654) in the Palazzo Doria Pamphilij in Rome (Figure 5).⁴ Although the New York bust belongs to the same tradition, it is clearly not a work by either of these two major Baroque artists. The formal and stylistic representation of female beauty is instead comparable to the work of Ippolito Buzio (1562–1634), a sculptor who belongs to the large group of little-studied artists active in Rome about 1600.⁵

The earliest source for Buzio's life and work is Giovanni Baglione's *Vite* of 1642.⁶ Baglione's account was recently augmented by Sylvia Pressouyre in several

comprehensive studies.⁷ Buzio was born in 1562 in the small Lombard town of Viggiù, near Lake Como. The date of his arrival in Rome is unknown, but it was most likely in the early 1590s. Buzio's first documented assignment was the travertine figures of Peter and Paul for the facade of San Paolo alle Tre Fontane. The sculptures were commissioned by Pietro Aldobrandini, a nephew of Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592–1605), in 1599.⁸ Two years later Buzio carved a statue of Saint James for the Salviati Chapel in San Giacomo degli Incurabili.⁹ Over the next few years, he again worked for the Aldobrandini family, but now mainly for Pope Clement VIII, who engaged Buzio to work on the transept of San Giovanni in Laterano,¹⁰ as well as on the Aldobrandini Chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva.¹¹ After the death of Clement VIII, Buzio received commissions from his successor, Pope Paul V Borghese (r. 1605–21). Between 1610 and 1616, Buzio finished two narrative reliefs for the tombs of Paul V and Clement VIII in the Cappella Paolina in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. One relief depicts Pope Clement VIII negotiating a peace treaty between Philip II of Spain and Henry IV of France; the other represents the coronation of Paul V, for which Buzio also executed the flanking caryatids (Figure 8).¹²

The caryatids in the Pope Paul V tomb share the same round facial features with the bust belonging to the Metropolitan Museum (see Figures 1, 6). Similarly, the statue of Prudence (Figures 7, 9, 14) in the Aldobrandini Chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva has the same sensitively modulated skin, and the linear shape of the lips and eyes is identical. The virtuoso treatment of textiles can be observed again in the robe of Pope Clement VIII in the Aldobrandini Chapel (Figure 10). The realistic representation of converging folds of material in the Metropolitan bust is also present in the masterly depiction above the pope's right knee. This comparison between the bust and those works executed by Buzio in Rome seems to leave no doubt that the New York portrait was made by the same artist.

Having resolved the question of the bust's authorship, we may now attempt to determine the woman's identity. We have already seen that Buzio received his

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Figure 1. Ippolito Buzio (1562–1634). Portrait bust of Luisa Deti, 1604. Marble, H. 60 cm (without base), W. 52 cm, D. 23 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Arnold Seligmann, Rey and Co., 1921, 21.59



Figure 2. Detail of bust in Figure 1



Figure 3. Alternative view of bust in Figure 1



Figure 4. Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Portrait bust of Camilla Barbadori, 1626–27. Marble, H. 59.5 cm (without base). Copenhagen, Statens Museum (photo: Statens Museum)



Figure 5. Alessandro Algardi (1598–1654). Portrait bust of Olimpia Maidalchini, ca. 1647–50. Marble, H. 70 cm. Rome, Palazzo Doria Pamphilij (photo: ICCD)



Figure 6. Detail of bust in Figure 1



Figure 7. Detail of figure of Prudence in Figure 9



Figure 8. Ippolito Buzio. Relief of the coronation of Paul V flanked by caryatids, 1612–15. Marble. Rome, Santa Maria Maggiore, Pauline Chapel (photo: ICCD)

most important commissions from the Aldobrandini family. It therefore seems quite possible that the sculptor also made portraits of family members. The mother of Pope Clement VIII, Luisa Deti, who died in 1557, seems to be the most probable candidate. This hypothesis is confirmed by a document of September 10, 1604, concerning the Aldobrandini Chapel, that Sylvia Pressouyre published in 1971: "... et un retratto della bona memoria dell'Illustrissima Signora Lesa Deti madre della Santità di Nostro Signore di marmoro novo fatta da mastro Hipolito Butio, et il sudetto ritratto hoggi si ritrova in casa del sudetto mastro Hipolito, . . ."¹³

This passage suggests that the posthumous portrait of Luisa Deti was meant to be installed in the Aldobrandini Chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva. The reason why the bust was never installed in the chapel can be explained only by changes in the plans. Today the two tombs of Pope Clement VIII's parents are the main elements of the lateral sides of the Aldobrandini Chapel. On the right side of the entrance is the reclining figure of the pope's father, Silvestro Aldobrandini (1499–1558), which was carved by Nicolas Cordier (Figure 14); on the left is the recumbent figure of Clement's mother, Luisa Deti, by the same artist (Figures 11, 12). In available documents we find that the preliminary plans for the tombs differ distinctly from their actual appearance.

In 1587 Cardinal Camillo Aldobrandini, who became Pope Clement VIII, purchased the chapel from the Orsini family.¹⁴ The renovation and decoration began thirteen years later, in 1600, under the direction of Giacomo della Porta (ca. 1540–1602)¹⁵ and continued after his death by Carlo Maderno (1556–1629).¹⁶ The splendid sculptural decoration was executed by artists who had already worked for the pope at San Giovanni in Laterano. Aside from the two monumental tombs with the reclining figures and pairs of allegorical statues, there are four statues in the corners of the back and side walls. Federico Barocci's altar painting of the Last Supper¹⁷ is flanked by Camillo Mariani's (1556–1611) apostles Peter and Paul. On the left side wall is Buzio's statue of Pope Clement VIII (Figure 10); on the right side wall is a statue of Saint Sebastian by Nicolas Cordier (Figure 13). Under these statues are four round niches that were reserved for busts of family members. In 1604 most of the sculptural decoration was finished and in place. On August 5 of the same year, Clement VIII visited the chapel and decided that the recumbent figure of his brother Cardinal Giovanni should be replaced by one of his mother, and the commission was given to Nicolas Cordier.¹⁸ It is therefore evident that the change of



Figure 9. Ippolito Buzio. Detail of Figure 10, showing Prudence (photo: ICCD)

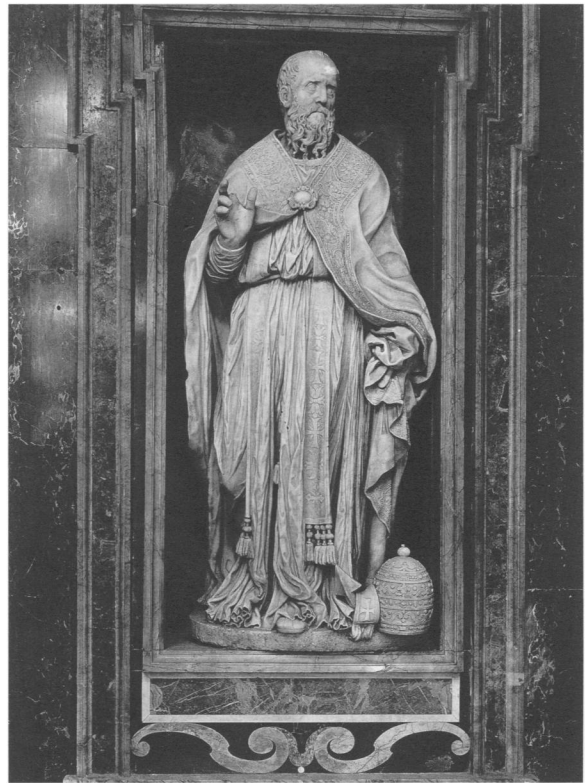


Figure 10. Ippolito Buzio. Pope Clement VIII, ca. 1602–4. Marble. Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Aldobrandini Chapel (photo: ICCD)

plans took place in August 1604. The statue of Giovanni Aldobrandini by Ambrogio Buonvicino (1552–1622) was removed in 1604 and is now lost.¹⁹

It seems clear that after the decision was made to use a monumental figure of the pope's mother, the preliminary plan to install her bust became superfluous and was therefore rescinded in August 1604. As the Aldobrandini family had no further use for this bust, it languished in Buzio's workshop.²⁰

Although the portrait was never installed in the chapel, it is today still possible to identify the intended niche for this bust. Aside from the two monumental tombs for his parents, Clement VIII decided to immortalize four other family members by placing portrait busts in the round niches under the statues in the corners of the back and side walls.²¹

The round contour of the frontal view of Luisa Deti's bust (Figure 1) and the convex form of the profile view (Figure 15) indicate that the portrait would fit perfectly into one of these niches (Figure 13).²² After the pope rejected the reclining statue of his brother, Cardinal Giovanni's portrait bust was installed in the niche—under the statue of Saint Paul—originally intended for that of his mother. The porphyry torso of Cardinal Giovanni visibly differs from the marble versions of his brothers (Figure 13),²³ while the Metropolitan Museum's marble bust of Luisa Deti matches perfectly those of her sons in the Aldobrandini Chapel in Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome.

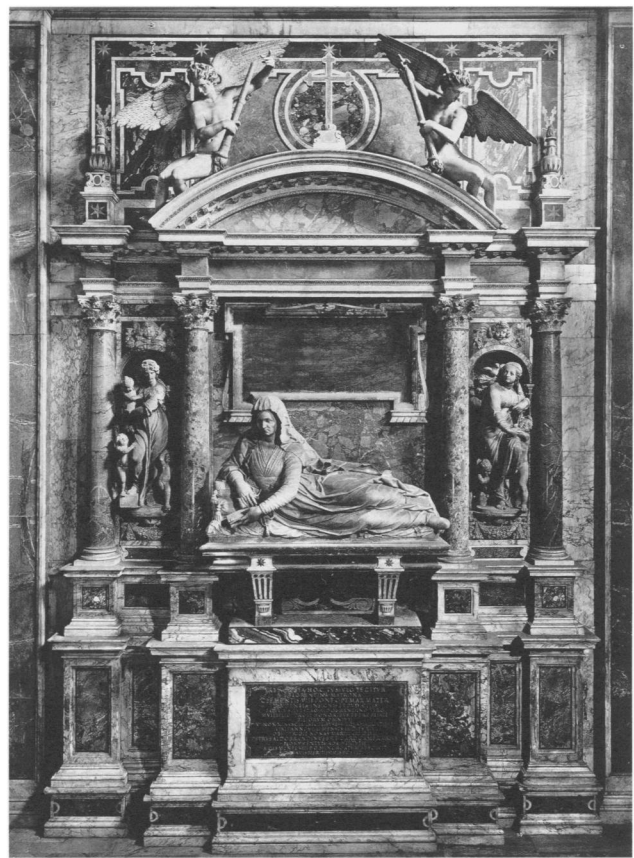


Figure 11. Nicolas Cordier. Tomb of Luisa Deti, ca. 1604–8. Statue of Charity by Nicolas Cordier and statue of Religion by Camillo Mariani (1556–1611). Marble. Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Aldobrandini Chapel (photo: Alinari)

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NOTES

1. The main exceptions are Adolfo Venturi: *La scultura del Cinquecento X*, part 3, in *Storia dell'arte italiana* (Milan, 1937) chaps. 2, 3; Sylvia Pressouyre, "Sur la sculpture à Rome autour de 1600," *Revue de l'art* 28 (1975) pp. 62–77; idem, *Nicolas Cordier, recherches sur la sculpture à Rome autour de 1600*, 2 vols. in *Collection de l'École*



Figure 12. Detail of Figure 11

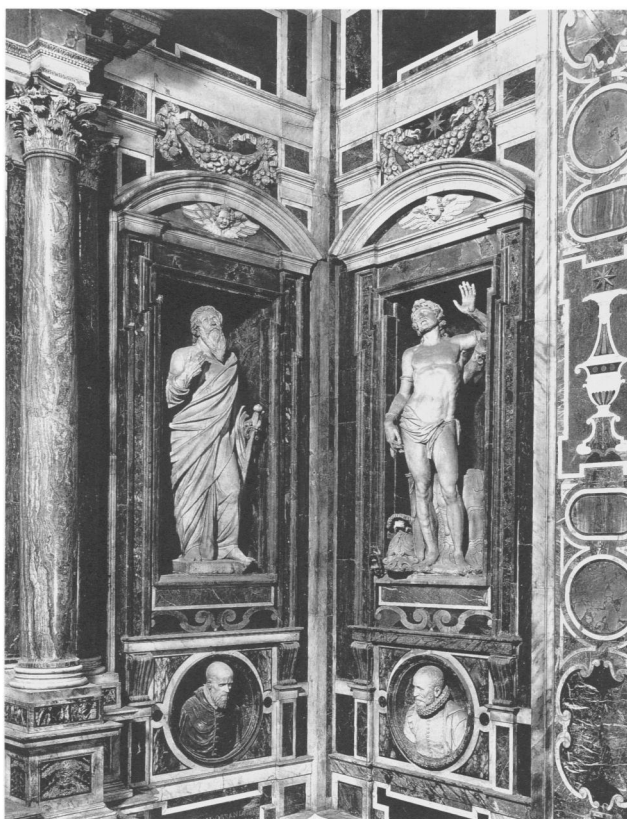


Figure 13. View of the right rear corner of the Aldobrandini Chapel (photo: Alinari)



Figure 14. Nicolas Cordier (1567–1612). Tomb of Silvestro Aldobrandini, ca. 1602–4. Statue of Justice by Giovanni Antonio Paracca de Valsoldo (act. 1572–1628) and statue of Prudence by Ippolito Buzio. Marble. Rome, Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Aldobrandini Chapel (photo: Alinari)



française de Rome LXXIII (Rome, 1984); and Catherine Elna Fruhan, *Trends in Roman Sculpture circa 1600* (Ann Arbor, 1985).

2. Rudolf Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1600–1750* (Harmondsworth, 1958) p. 83.

3. Valentino Martinelli, "Novità berniniane, 1. Un busto ritrovato: la madre d'Urbano VIII," *Commentari* 7 (1956) pp. 23–34, pls. vi–viii; Rudolf Wittkower, *Gianlorenzo Bernini: The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque*, 3rd ed. (London, 1981) pp. 192–193, 275, cat. no. 24c, pl. 33; Harald Olsen, *Statens Museum for Kunst. Aeldre Udenlandsk Skulptur*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1980) I, pp. 19–20; II, pl. 84; compare also the portrait of Isabella Orsini in Castello Bracciano, reproduced in Wittkower, *Bernini*, p. 205, fig. 45, cat. no. 36b.

4. Jennifer Montagu, *Alessandro Algardi* (New Haven/London, 1985) II, p. 437, cat. no. 165, fig. 170.

5. Along with Ippolito Buzio, the most important artist during this period are Ambrogio Buonvicino (1552–1622), Nicolas Cordier (1567–1612), Stefano Maderno (1576–1636), Camillo Mariano (1556–1611), and Giovanni Antonio Paracca da Valsoldo (act. 1572–1628).

6. Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti dal pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572, in fino a' tempi di Papa Urbano ottavo nel 1642* (Rome, 1642) pp. 340–341.

Figure 15. Side view of bust in Figure 1

7. Sylvia Pressouyre, "Actes relatifs aux sculptures de la chapelle Aldobrandini à Sainte-Marie-de-la-Minerve à Rome," in *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1971) pp. 195–206, pls. xxv–xxvi; idem, "Sur la sculpture à Rome," pp. 62–77; idem, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, figs. 311–321. Other studies of Ippolito Buzio are: Friedrich Noack, "Ippolito Buzio," in U. Thieme and F. Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler* (Leipzig, 1909) V, p. 313; Venturi, "Ippolito Buzio," pp. 606–611; Alberto Riccoboni, *Roma nell'arte. La scultura nell'età moderna dal Quattrocento ad oggi* (Rome, 1942) pp. 127–130; Antonella Pampalone, "Ippolito Buzio," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* XV (Rome, 1972) pp. 659–660; Catherine Elna Fruhan, *Trends*, pp. 157–180.
8. Baglione, *Le vite*, p. 341; Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, pp. 438–439, cat. no. 61, figs. 309–311; Fruhan, *Trends*, p. 159.
9. Baglione, *Le vite*, p. 341; Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, fig. 318; Fruhan, *Trends*, pp. 159–162.
10. Baglione, *Le vite*, p. 341; Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, fig. 306; Fruhan, *Trends*, p. 159.
11. Baglione, *Le vite*, p. 341; Pressouyre, "Actes relatifs," pp. 195–206; idem, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, pp. 440–441, cat. no. 63; Fruhan, *Trends*, pp. 162–167.
12. Baglione, *Le vite*, p. 341; Fruhan, *Trends*, pp. 167–168.
13. "... and one portrait for the dear memory of the most honored Signora Lesa Deti, mother of the Holiness of Our Father, made of new marble by master Hipolito Butio, and this above-mentioned portrait is now in the house of the above-mentioned master Hipolito," Archivio Aldobrandini, Cappellanie, 10. Santa Maria sopra Minerva, fol. 52r. See Pressouyre, "Actes relatifs," p. 201; idem, *Nicolas Cordier*, I, p. 248.
14. Archivio di Stato, Rome, Collegio de' Not. Capitonini, P. Campana, July 6, 1587. See Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, p. 375.
15. J.-J. Berthier, *L'Église de la Minerve à Rome* (Rome, 1910) p. 109; Ludwig von Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der katholischen Reformation und Restauration, Clemens VIII (1592–1605)* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1927) XI, p. 657.
16. Howard Hibbard, *Carlo Maderno and Roman Architecture 1580–1630* (London, 1971) pp. 134–135.
17. Andrea Emiliani, *Federico Barocci (Urbino 1535–1612)* (Bologna, 1981) II, pp. 376–385.
18. "Roma 7 Agosto 1604. Nella Minerba quando vi fu l'altro hieri Nostro Signore diede ordine che dalla sua capella si levasse la statua del Cardinal Giovanni posta incontro à quella del Signor Silvestro suo padre, et che si metta quella della Signora Lisa Deti sua madre, et che si rifaccino meglio le statue di San Pietro, et di San Paolo per le mani di quello scultore Lorenese, che andò Sua Santità à veder più giorni sono fin à casa" (In the Minerva, where He had been the day before yesterday, Our Father gave the order to remove the statue of Cardinal Giovanni from his chapel, which is located on the opposite side of [the tomb of] Signor Silvestro, his father, and there should be installed the one [figure] of Signora Lisa Deti, his mother, and that the statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul should be improved by the Lorenese sculptor [Cordier], whom the Holy Father visited a few days ago in his house). Biblioteca Vaticana, Urb. lat. 1072, Avvisi sacri 1604, fol. 408r. This document was previously published by Ermete Rossi, "Roma ignorata," in *Roma: Rivista di studi e di vita romana* 13 (1935) pp. 35–36, and by Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier*, I, p. 247, doc. no. 49.
19. Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, p. 376.
20. See note 13.
21. See note 23.
22. The diameter of the niche is 66 cm and its depth is about 20 cm. The comparison with the measurements of the bust also confirms that it was the intended place for the marble portrait of Luisa Deti.
23. It has not been possible to identify the other three brothers as only Giovanni's bust has an inscription. See Pressouyre, *Nicolas Cordier*, II, pp. 453–455, cat. no. 78, figs. 316, 317; for Cardinal Giovanni, see August Griesebach, "Römische Porträtbüsten der Gegenreformation," in *Römische Forschungen der Bibliotheca Hertziana* XIII (Leipzig, 1936) pp. 118–119; see also Pompeo Litta, Aldobrandini, in *Famiglie celebri d'Italia* VII (Milan, 1838) pl. II.