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Francesco Salviati's *Portrait of a Florentine Nobleman*, from 1545, provides an exemplar of Mannerist portraiture. Above all else, it elevates the sitter by placing him in an immemorial sphere of art, worthy of Pontormo's altarpiece. No matter how ostentatious or marmoreal an image—witness Bronzino's statuesque portrayal of Bartolomeo Pantiatichi—the Mannerist portrait inevitably assumes an air of poignancy. In fact, the poignancy of the visage may ironically increase in proportion to its sculptural, inhuman presence. Without modern medicine, few Florentines could expect to live long lives; diseases brought on by man and nature truncated even the most noble of family lineages. Nobility would commission artists to capture both their likenesses in an ideal light and to characterize their beings through paint, as the work of art possesses a longer life span than any person.

This concern clearly rises to the fore in Salviati's lush yet reserved portrait of a dignified man. Salviati limits idiosyncratic details of the sitter; he wishes not to capture fleshy foibles, but rather a polished presence greater than any possible reality. His eyes

gleam like two pearls; his lips part as two plump pillows of velveteen red. In this way, Salviati paints with a concern similar to Bronzino, for the painting attains a sculptural command—dignified, inaccessible, without flaw, safe from the ravages of time. Centered in the middle of the composition like most of Agnolo Bronzino's sitters, the young man seems confident and immovable, a slightly curving pillar in a temple of his own design.

Despite this statuesque presence, Salviati relishes the inclusion of details that somehow bring his sitter to uncanny life. Here Salviati reveals an almost mythological ability—a *la* Pygmalion and Galatea—to turn stone into flesh. Unlike Bronzino, Salviati flushes his centered sitter with blood; his face seems rosy and warm instead of a waxen white. A downy mustache sprouts above his upper lip, and his pearly eyes betray not only confidence but introspective reflection as well. His eyes shift to the left, which in Western art remains the provenance of the past. Though obviously robust in youth and wealth, the young man does not gaze confidently to the right, into the assured success of his future. Rather, his backward glance unveils a more contemplative nature, which seems defiant of his monumental stature within the taut composition of the painting.

Iconographically, Salviati includes all of the requisite elements of Mannerist portraiture. In his right hand, the young man grips a removed glove, a symbol of wealth also brandished by *Antea* in her portrait, by the Mannerist master Parmigianino. His hand, with its long fingers, appears as delicate as gossamer. Twisting nonchalantly in a serpentine form, his left arm reveals a grace and ease that defies the uncomfortable pose. Behind the green veil separating the sitter in his contemporary garb from the distant religious scene filling the background, the beholder sees an exotic and even moody landscape. Like other patrons, the sitter clearly wishes to align himself to a saint who

possesses the same admirable qualities as he; in this case, the erudite Saint Jerome reclines before a glimmering lake, with his lion and a strange creature emergent from a lily.

Yet here too Salviati distances himself from the polished masters Parmigianino and Bronzino. In the black velvet costume, Salviati lingers far less over detail and surface ornamentation than Bronzino. His manner of painting feels unlabored and even a bit impressionistic. Salviati's fluid touch emerges most clearly in the background, where energetic strokes and daubs of thick paint take the place of fan-brush smoothed flesh. Colorism also seems heightened by Salviati; the acidic green of the veil separating contemporary and ancient scenes contrasts with the flushed red of the sitter's cheeks, and the wild backdrop shows an attention to complementary, emotive color that does not appear in the more austere backdrops of Bronzino.

Indeed, the billowing yellow clouds dividing a turquoise and red sky can only emanate from an artistic imagination wishing to roam free, to revel in colors liberated from rational or symbolic application. Through the background especially, Salviati reveals a *sprezzatura*, a freedom and grace, in his colorism and paint application. Even in a reserved portrait, Salviati indulges in the flair and ease that shows he can court paint and, seemingly out of whim, coax from it the qualities he desires—all with an ease similar to the timeless gentleman posing in the foreground.