

The Frick Collection: Detail Report



Bust of a Woman

Francesco Laurana (Italian (Dalmatian), ca. 1420/30–ca. 1502)

Date ca. 1470s

Medium Marble

Dimensions 18 3/8 x 18 x 9 3/8 in. (46.7 x 45.7 x 23.8 cm)

Credit Line Henry Clay Frick Bequest

Accession Number 1916.2.01

Currently On View

First Floor, Room 4, Octagon Room

Commentary Far fewer male portraits are attributed to Laurana than portrait busts of women, possibly because the men are more varied and less easily recognized. Laurana's male heads—such as those in the large marble relief of Christ Carrying the Cross in the church of Saint-Didier, Avignon, and certain portraits in Sicily—are strongly characterized, even idiosyncratic. The surviving female busts are far more consistent in type and style. These include two named by inscriptions (one being the Frick's Beatrice of Aragon), several tentatively identified through comparison with other portraits, and at least two others known to be idealized, posthumous commemorations. Because they are so similar and so abstract, it is difficult to judge from the works themselves how closely they approximate a living likeness. The lady portrayed in the present marble bust has not yet been identified. If the enigmatic reliefs decorating the base offer clues to her identity, their message has resisted translation. As the bust was discovered in Marseille, the work may date from after Laurana's return to France in 1477, and the sitter might be French. This portrait retains even fewer traces of individual particularity than the Beatrice of Aragon. The marble is composed entirely of harmonious shapes, suavely orchestrated curves, and smoothly flowing surfaces. Like Multscher's saint and Barbet's angel, Laurana's aristocratic ladies with their downcast eyes seem to withdraw from the quotidian distractions of life. Source: *Art in The Frick Collection: Paintings, Sculpture, Decorative Arts*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996.

Collection History Said to have been discovered at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the Vieux Port of Marseille. Louis Hercule de Ricard Brégançon, Aix-en-Provence. Inherited from him by Madame de Narbonne, Paris. Marquise de Mailly-Nesle, Château de la Roche-Mailly, Requeil, Sarthe, and Paris. Duveen. Frick, 1916. Source: *Sculpture in The Frick Collection: Italian*. Volume III. New York: The Frick Collection, 1970.