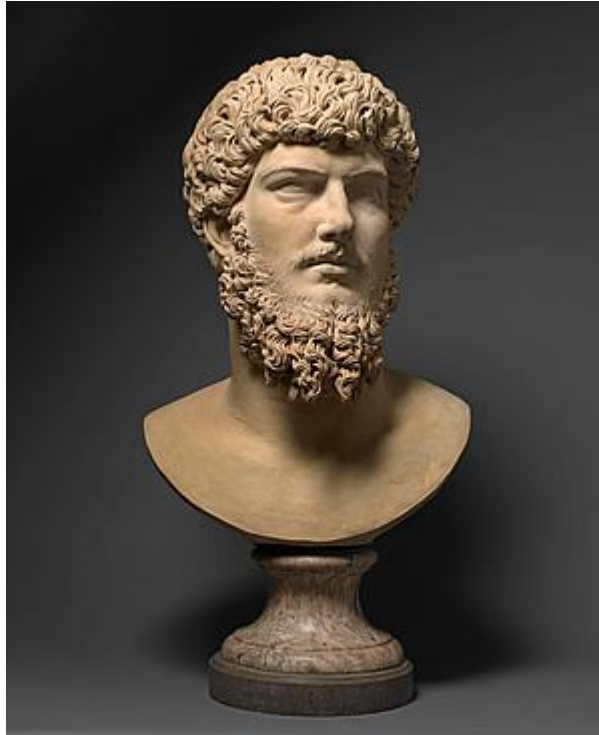


Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Carlo Albacini (Active in Rome ca. 1760 - 1807)

Portrait of the Emperor Lucius Verus

Terracotta

96 cm high (72 cm excluding socle)

This heroic size terracotta is a copy after the antique of a portrait of the Roman emperor Lucius Verus.

The magnified, larger-than-life dimensions of the effigy used as a model indicate that it had probably been commissioned to glorify the ruler after his death. Lucius Verus' features are familiar from a number of Roman portraits still extant; one of the finest ones, now in the Musée du Louvre, was in the Borghese collection in Rome until 1807 and is likely to have served as a model for the present terracotta. Lucius Verus was emperor from 161 to 169. He ruled with his adopted brother Marcus Aurelius as co-emperor from 161 until his own death in 169. Lucius Verus' features are notable for his luxuriant hair and beard, portrayed here with deeply sculpted curls. The exaggerated volumes of the hair and beard, deeply sculpted by the artist, contrast with the alluring smoothness of the face. Albacini, although nowadays best known as a proficient restorer of antiquities, was a gifted and successful sculptor in his own right and an honoured member of the Academia di San Luca in Rome. He was, for example, commissioned by Catherine the Great to design and execute the tomb of the painter Raphael Mengs in Saint Peter in Rome (1780) but he was also in high demand for his copies of admired prototypes in Roman collections. In 1777 Henry Blundell bought from Albacini a Minerva, a bust of Bacchus, a bust of Alexander the Great and a bust of Lucius Verus (all Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool). Canova, who visited Albacini's studio in 1780, saw yet another copy of the bust of Lucius Verus and was told that it would involve 19 months work. In the final quarter of the eighteenth century, Albacini was the sculptor and restorer most closely associated with the Anglo-Roman milieu; as a result, many of the finest Graeco-Roman sculptures which found their way into English collections passed through his hands. For example the Townley collection in the British Museum preserves intact an important group of Albacini's restorations. Portraits after the antique were the most thought-after type of sculpture at the time and ideally suited to filling the niches and pedestals proliferating in interior design at the time. The present

terracotta amply demonstrates the ease with which Albacini could use his ability in the field of antiquities to create a sculpture of immense presence in the antique idiom.

Literature:

Related literature:

- Foreign catalogue, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1977, pl. 412, n. 6358, p. 284
- G. Vaughan, "Albacini and his English patrons", Journal of the History of Collections, 1991, vol. 3, n. 2, pp. 183-197