

Giovan Battista Moroni (1521-1580). Il Ritratto del suo tempo

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Giovan Battista Moroni (c. 1525 – February 5, 1578)

Giovan Battista Moroni (c. 1525 – February 5, 1578) was an exceptional Italian Renaissance painter renowned for his remarkable portraits, characterised by psychological depth and dignified realism. Born in Albino, near Bergamo, Moroni's contributions to the world of art are significant, especially in the realm of portraiture.

Early in his artistic journey, Moroni studied under the local painter Moretto da Brescia, who had a substantial influence on his early works, particularly in the creation of religious compositions. He was among the few Renaissance artists who made portraiture his primary focus, capturing the essence of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie of his time.

In his portraits, Moroni emphasised the sitter's dignity and nobility through natural, unstaged poses and masterful compositions, infusing each subject with physiognomic individuality and profound psychological depth. Despite the often impassive facial expressions, Moroni's subjects exude a sense of gentle melancholy, heightened by his restrained use of predominantly grey tonalities and exquisite treatment of textures, particularly cloth and draperies. His unique style of portraiture was unmistakably influenced by Titian, who held Moroni's work in high regard.

Moroni's career was primarily centred in and around Bergamo, with only brief interludes spent in Trento during the sessions of the Council of Trent. It was during his stays in Trento that Moroni made important connections with the Madruzzo family and with the renowned artist Titian. From the 1550s onwards, Moroni often found himself in demand as an alternative portraitist to Titian. Provincial lords and ladies eagerly sat for him, his oeuvre resulting in a collection of portraits characterised by a dignified humanity and a tangible sense of realism, devoid of heroic exaggeration.

Moroni's skill lay in the ability to capture the exact likeness of his sitters, creating portraits that remain as powerful and penetrating today as they were over 400 years ago. His works are not only visually striking but also convey profound psychological insight.

Today, Moroni's masterpieces such as *Il Sarto* and his numerous portraits, can be found in the National Gallery in London, which hosts the most extensive collection of his art.