

= Portrait of Monsieur Bertin =

Portrait of Monsieur Bertin is an 1832 oil on canvas painting by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres . It depicts Louis François Bertin (1766 ? 1841) , the French writer , art collector and director of the pro royalist Journal des débats . Ingres completed the portrait during his first period of success ; having achieved acclaim as a history painter , he accepted portrait commissions with reluctance , regarding them as a distraction from more important work . Bertin was a friend and a politically active member of the French upper middle class . Ingres presents him as a personification of the commercially minded leaders of the liberal reign of Louis Philippe I. He is physically imposing and self assured , but his real life personality shines through ? warm , wry and engaging to those who had earned his trust .

The painting had a prolonged genesis . Ingres agonised over the pose and made several preparatory sketches . The final work faithfully captures the sitter 's character , conveying both a restless energy and imposing bulk . It is an unflinchingly realistic depiction of ageing and emphasises the furrowed skin and thinning hair of an overweight man who yet maintains his resolve and determination . He sits in three quarter profile against a brown ground lit from the right , his fingers are pronounced and highly detailed , while the polish of his chair reflects light from an unseen window .

Ingres ' portrait of Bertin was a critical and popular success , but the sitter was a private person . Although his family worried about caricature and disapproved , it became widely known and sealed the artist 's reputation . It was praised at the Paris Salon of 1833 , and has been influential to both academic painters such as Léon Bonnat and later modernists including Pablo Picasso and Félix Vallotton . Today art critics regard it as Ingres ' finest male portrait . It has been on permanent display at the Musée du Louvre since 1897 .

= = Background = =

Louis François Bertin was 66 in 1832 , the year of the portrait . He befriended Ingres either through his son Édouard Bertin , a student of the painter , or via Étienne Jean Delécluze , Ingres ' friend and the Journal 's art critic . In either case the genesis of the commission is unknown . Bertin was a leader of the French upper class and a supporter of Louis Philippe and the Bourbon Restoration . He was a director of the Le Moniteur Universel until 1823 , when the Journal des débats became the recognised voice of the liberal constitutional opposition after he had come to criticize absolutism . He eventually gave his support to the July Monarchy . The Journal supported contemporary art , and Bertin was a patron , collector and cultivator of writers , painters and other artists . Ingres was sufficiently intrigued by Bertin 's personality to accept the commission .

It was completed within a month , during Ingres ' frequent visits to Bertin 's estate of retreat , Le Château des Roches , in Bièvres , Essonne . Ingres made daily visits , as Bertin entertained guests such as Victor Hugo , his mistress Juliette Drouet , Hector Berlioz , and later Franz Liszt and Charles Gounod . Ingres later made drawings of the Bertin family , including a depiction of his host 's wife and sketches of their son Armand and daughter in law , Cécile . The portrait of Armand evidences his physical resemblance to his father .

Ingres ' early career coincided with the Romantic movement , which reacted against the prevailing neoclassical style . Neoclassicism in French art had developed as artists saw themselves as part of the cultural center of Europe , and France as the successor to Rome . Romantic painting was freer and more expressive , preoccupied more with colour than with line or form , and more focused on style than on subject matter . Paintings based on classical themes fell out of fashion , replaced by contemporary rather than historical subject matter , especially in portraiture . Ingres resisted this trend , and wrote , " The history painter shows the species in general ; while the portrait painter represents only the specific individual ? a model often ordinary and full of shortcomings . " From his early career , Ingres ' main source of income was commissioned portraits , a genre he dismissed as lacking in grandeur . The success of his The Vow of Louis XIII at the 1824 Salon marked an abrupt change in his fortunes : he received a series of commissions for large history paintings , and for the

next decade he painted few portraits . His financial difficulties behind him , Ingres could afford to concentrate on historical subjects , although he was highly sought after as a portraitist . He wrote in 1847 , " Damned portraits , they are so difficult to do that they prevent me getting on with greater things that I could do more quickly . "

Ingres was more successful with female than male portraits . His 1814 Portrait of Madame de Senonnes was described as " to the feminine what the Louvre 's Bertin is to the masculine " . The sitter for his 1848 Portrait of Baronne de Rothschild looks out at the viewer with the same directness as Bertin , but is softened by her attractive dress and relaxed pose ; she is engaging and sympathetic rather than tough and imposing .

= = The portrait = =

= = Preparation and execution = = =

Ingres was self critical and consumed by self doubt . He often took months to complete a portrait , leaving large periods of inactivity between sittings . With Bertin , he agonised in finding a pose to best convey both the man 's restless energy and his age . At least seven studies survive , three are signed and dated . Ingres was a master draftsman and the sketches , if not fully realised , are highly regarded in their own right . The sketches are exemplary in their handling of line and form , and similar in size .

The earliest study has Bertin standing and leaning on a table in an almost Napoleonic pose . His hard , level stare is already established , but the focus seems to be on his groin rather than his face . It is obvious that Ingres struggled with the sketch ; the head is on a square of attached paper which must have replaced an earlier cut out version , and other areas have been rubbed over and heavily reworked . The next extant drawing shows Bertin seated , but the chair is missing . The last extant sketch is the closest to the eventual painting , with a chair , though his bulk has not yet been filled out .

Frustrated by his inability to capture his subject , Ingres broke down in tears in his studio , in company . Bertin recalled " consoling him : ' my dear Ingres , don 't bother about me ; and above all don 't torment yourself like that . You want to start my portrait over again ? Take your own time for it . You will never tire me , and just as long as you want me to come , I am at your orders . ' " After agreeing to a breathing spell Ingres finally settled on a design . Early biographers provide differing anecdotes regarding the inspiration for the distinctive seated pose . Henri Delaborde said Ingres observed Bertin in this posture while arguing politics after dinner with his sons . According to Eugène Emmanuel Amaury Duval (he said was related to him by Bertin) , Ingres noticed a pose Bertin took while seated outside with Ingres and a third man at a café .

Bertin said that Ingres , confident that he had finally established the pose for the portrait , " came close and speaking almost in my ear said : ' Come sit tomorrow , your portrait is [as good as] done . ' " Bertin 's final pose reverses the usual relationship between the two men . The artist becomes the cool , detached observer ; Bertin , usually calm and reasoned , is now restless and impatient , mirroring Ingres ' irritation at spending time on portraiture .

= = Description = = =

Bertin is presented as strong , energetic and warm hearted . His hair is grey verging on white , his fingers spread across his knees . Bertin 's fingers were described in 1959 by artist Henry de Waroquier as " crab like claws ... emerging from the tenebrous caverns that are the sleeves of his coat . " The bulk of his body is compacted in a tight black jacket , black trousers and brown satin waistcoat , with a starched white shirt and cravat revealing his open neck . He wears a gold watch and a pair of glasses in his right pocket . In the view of art historian Robert Rosenblum , his " nearly ferocious presence " is accentuated by the tightly constrained space . The chair and clothes appear too small to contain him . His coiled , stubby fingers rest on his thighs , barely protruding from the

sleeves of his jacket , while his neck cannot be seen above his narrow starched white collar .

The painting is composed in monochrome , muted colours ; predominately blacks , greys and browns . The exceptions are the whites of his collar and sleeves , the reds in the cushion and the light reflecting on the leather of the arm @-@ chair . In 19th @-@ century art , vivid colour was associated with femininity and emotion ; male portraiture tended towards muted shades and monochrome . Bertin leans slightly forward , boldly staring at the viewer in a manner that is both imposing and paternal . He seems engaged , and poised to speak , his body fully towards the viewer and his expression etched with certainty . Influenced by Nicolas Poussin 's 1650 Self @-@ Portrait with Allegory of Painting , Ingres minutely details the veins and wrinkles of his face . Bertin is in three @-@ quarter profile , against a gold ? brown background lit from the right . He rests on a curved @-@ back mahogany chair , the arms of which reflect light falling from the upper left of the pictorial space .

Ingres seems to have adapted elements of the approach and technique of Hans Holbein 's 1527 Portrait of William Warham , now in the Louvre . Neither artist placed much emphasis on colour , preferring dark or cool tones . The Warham portrait seems to have informed the indicators of Bertin 's aging and the emphasis on his fingers . Jacques @-@ Louis David also explored hyper @-@ realism in his depictions of Cooper Penrose (1802) and Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès (1817) . In the later painting , David shows tiny glints of light reflecting on the sitter 's chair and painstakingly details " every wayward curl of [Sieyès '] closely cropped auburn hair . "

The Greek meander pattern at the foot of the wall is unusually close to the picture plane , confining the sitter . The wall is painted in gold , adding to the sense of a monumental portrait of a modern icon . The details of Bertin 's face are highly symmetrical . His eyes are heavily lidded , circled by oppositely positioned twists of his white collar , the winds of his hair , eyebrows and eyelids . His mouth turns downwards at the left and upwards to the right . This dual expression is intended to show his duality and complex personality : he is a hard @-@ nosed businessman , and a patron of the arts . The reflection of a window can be seen in the rim of Bertin 's chair . It is barely discernible , but adds spatial depth . The Portrait of Pope Leo X (c . 1519) by Raphael , a source for the Bertin portrait , also features a window reflection of the pommel on the pope 's chair .

The painting is signed J.Ingres Pinxit 1832 in capitals at the top left , and L.F. Bertin , also in capitals , at the upper right . The frame is the original , and thought to have been designed by Ingres himself . It shows animals around a sinuous and richly carved grapevine . Art historians Paul Mitchell and Lynn Roberts note that the design follows an old French tradition of placing austere male portraits within " exuberantly carved " frames . The frame closely resembles that of Raphael 's c . 1514 ? 15 Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione , a painting that influenced Ingres , especially in colour and tone .

= = Reception = =

Monsieur Bertin was exhibited at the 1833 Salon alongside his 1807 Portrait of Mme Devauçay . It met with near universal praise to become his most successful artwork to that point . It sealed his reputation as a portraitist , reaching far enough into public consciousness to become a standard for newspaper political satires . Today it is considered his greatest portrait . Ingres viewed all this as a mixed blessing , remarking that " since my portraits of Bertin and Molé , everybody wants portraits . There are six that I 've turned down , or am avoiding , because I can 't stand them . " Before the official exhibition , Ingres displayed the painting in his studio for friends and pupils . Most were lavish in their praise , although Louis Lacuria confided to a friend that he feared people might " find the colouring a bit dreary " . He proved correct ; at the Salon , critics praised the draftsmanship , but some felt the portrait exemplified Ingres ' weakness as a colourist . It was routinely faulted for its " purplish tone " ? which the ageing of the oil medium has transformed over time to warm greys and browns . Bertin 's wife Louis @-@ Marie reportedly did not like the painting ; his daughter , Louise , thought it transformed her father from a " great lord " to a " fat farmer " .

Given the standings of the two men , the painting was received in both social and political terms . A number of writers mentioned Bertin 's eventful career , in tones that were , according to art historian

Andrew Carrington Shelton , either " bitingly sarcastic [or] fawningly reverential " . There were many satirical reproductions and pointed editorials in the following years . Aware of Bertin 's support of the July Monarchy , writers at the *La Gazette de France* viewed the portrait as the epitome of the " opportunism and cynicism " of the new regime . Their anonymous critic excitedly wondered " what bitter irony it expresses , what hardened skepticism , sarcasm and ... pronounced cynicism " .

Several critics mentioned Bertin 's hands . Twentieth @-@ century art historian Albert Boime described them as " powerful , vulturine ... grasping his thighs in a gesture ... projecting ... enormous strength controlled " . Some contemporary critics were not so kind . The photographer and critic Félix Tournachon was harshly critical , and disparaged what he saw as a " fantastical bundle of flesh ... under which , instead of bones and muscles , there can only be intestines ? this flatulent hand , the rumbling of which I can hear ! " Bertin 's hands made a different impression on the critic F. de Lagenevais , who remarked : " A mediocre artist would have modified them , he would have replaced those swollen joints with the cylindrical fingers of the first handy model ; but by this single alteration he would have changed the expression of the whole personality ... the energetic and mighty nature " .

The work 's realism attracted a large amount of commentary when it was first exhibited . Some saw it as an affront to Romanticism , others said that its small details not only showed an acute likeness , but built a psychological profile of the sitter . Art historian Geraldine Pellas sees Bertin as " at once intense , suspicious , and aggressive " . She notes that there is a certain amount of projection of the artist 's personality and recalls Théophile Silvestre 's description of Ingres ; " There he was squarely seated in an armchair , motionless as an Egyptian god carved of granite , his hands stretched wide over parallel knees , his torso stiff , his head haughty " . Some compared it to Balthasar Denner , a German realist painter influenced by Jan van Eyck . Denner , in the words of Ingres scholar Robert Rosenblum , " specialised in recording every last line on the faces of aged men and women , and even reflections of windows in their eyes . " The comparison was made by Ingres ' admirers and detractors alike . In 1833 , Louis de Maynard of the Collège @-@ lycée Ampère , writing in the influential *L 'Europe littéraire* , dismissed Denner as a weak painter concerned with hyperrealistic " curiosities " , and said that both he and Ingres fell short of the " sublime productions of Ingres ' self @-@ proclaimed hero , Raphael . "

The following year Ingres sought to capitalise on the success of his Bertin portrait . He showed his ambitious history painting *The Martyrdom of Saint Symphorian* at the 1834 Salon , but it was harshly criticised ; even Ingres ' admirers offered only faint praise . Offended and frustrated , Ingres declared he would disown the Salon , abandon his residence in Paris for Rome , and relinquish all current positions , ending his role in public life . This petulance was not to last .

Bertin bequeathed the portrait to his daughter Louise (1805 ? 77) on his death . She passed it to her niece Marie @-@ Louise @-@ Sophie Bertin (1836 ? 93) wife of Jules Bapst , a later director of the *Journal des débats* . They bequeathed it to their niece Cécile Bapst , its last private owner . In 1897 Cécile sold it to the Musée du Louvre for 80 @,@ 000 francs .

= = Legacy = =

The Bertin portrait has been hugely influential . At first it served as a model for depictions of energetic and intellectual 19th @-@ century men , and later as a more universal type . Several 1890s works closely echo its form and motifs . Jean @-@ Joseph Benjamin @-@ Constant 's monochrome and severe 1896 *Portrait of Alfred Chauchard* is heavily indebted , while Léon Bonnat 's stern 1892 portrait of the aging Ernest Renan has been described as a " direct citation " of Ingres ' portrait .

Its influence can be seen in the dismissive stare and overwhelming physical presence of the sitter in Pablo Picasso 's 1906 *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* . Picasso admired Ingres and referred to him throughout his career . His invoking of Bertin can be read as a humorous reference to , according to Robert Rosenblum , " Stein 's ponderous bulk and sexual preference " . Stein does not possess Bertin 's ironic stare , but is similarly dressed in black , and leans forward in an imposing manner , the painting emphasising her " massive , monumental presence " . In 1907 the Swiss artist Félix

Vallotton depicted Stein , in response to Picasso , making an even more direct reference to Ingres ' portrait , prompting Édouard Vuillard to exclaim , " That 's Madame Bertin ! "

The influence continued through the 20th century . Gerald Kelly recalled Bertin when painting his restless and confined series of portraits of Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1952 ? 61 . In 1975 Marcel Broodthaers produced a series of nine black and white photographs on board based on Ingres ' portraits of Bertin and Mademoiselle Caroline Rivière .