

Synopsis  
“Portraits of Benvenuto Cellini”

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Logline:

*The principal methods that have been used in this study are the methods of biometric anthropological comparison, usually applied by criminal and forensic experts. It was established as a result of the current study that Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) is represented on 11 different pictures, reliefs and statues, contemporary to his life.*

Synopsis:

Benvenuto Cellini's art and heritage, though thoroughly studied, has not been understood completely by researchers because his self-portraits and lifetime portraits have not been identified until now. For three centuries, editions of millions books by or about him, including publications of the sculptor's autobiography, did not contain any reliable image of Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571). This common issue is well addressed by doctor John Pope-Hennessy in his tome “Benvenuto Cellini”: *“We do not know what Benvenuto Cellini looked like in a fairly young age.”*

The absence of identified pictorial self-portraits of Cellini until the appearance of this study was in striking contradiction with the general trends of 16th-century society and the sculptor's egocentric worldview. The paradox appears especially striking because a considerable number of Cellini's artistic masterpieces have survived. Among his heritage available to our days researchers are Cellini's monumental works, including the multi-figure “Perseus” complex, drawings, statues and sketches. We find it highly probable and are even certain that the sculptor made concealed self-portraits in some secondary figures found in his large creations, such as “Perseus” or Cosimo I Medici's bust.

Cellini was known to play a considerable role in the public life of Florence, Paris and Rome, rubbing shoulders with intellectuals, artists, sculptors and authors. It is quite logical to assume that outward features of this eminent Italian were fixed a number of times by his contemporaries. Until now, however, no lifetime pictures of him have been detected or identified. The only exception is a portrait of Benvenuto Cellini

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpWVNDczdiSFhGaiQ/view?usp=sharing> in his very advanced age on a 1563 fresco by Giorgio Vasari in Palazzo Vecchio.

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The principal methods that have been used in this study are the methods of biometric anthropological comparison, usually applied by criminal and forensic experts. The artworks selected for the anthropological examination were chosen with due account taken of their historical and cultural context, date of creation and authorship. In most cases, anthropological comparison makes it possible to establish either full identity either to express degree of likeness between persons represented in different oeuvres, and so, despite the objective limitations, when the methods applied to works of art. The methods are specially appropriated when applied to the works of Renaissance and Mannerism period, as the portraits of that time are particularly realistic. In the framework of this study, two methods of biometric comparison have been used consistently: method of Dr. Raoul Perrot

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpVlpBWFVCeHprUWc/view?usp=sharing> and method of A. Bertillon.

The universally acknowledged portrait of Cellini by Vasari, displayed in Palazzo Vecchio, served here as the reference image for comparison with all other selected faces in the study for this research. If comparison with the reference image led to a positive result, the examined picture was included in the set of images to be compared among them. What was considered, as a positive result was a degree of likeness of facial parameters equal to or greater than 60%.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpMDI2cEJUZEFTSWc/view?usp=sharing>

It was established as a result of the current study that Benvenuto Cellini is represented on 11 different pictures, reliefs and statues, contemporary to his life.

1. Cellini, Benvenuto. "Bust of Cosimo I Medici", 1545. Bronze 110 cm. Bargello Museum, Florence. Detail: anthropomorphic head on the Duke's right shoulder armour plate. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpOVF6R0hOaGRxRE0/view?usp=sharing>
2. Cellini, Benvenuto. "Perseus rescuing Andromeda", 1552-1553. Bronze, relief. 81 x 90 cm. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence. Detail: "man with his arm raised". <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpaHV0SE1rZ1h4blk/view?usp=sharing>
3. Cellini, Benvenuto. "Perseus", 1552-1553. Bronze. 320 cm. Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence. Detail: mask on the back of Perseus's head. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpMUIEc0VhQIZOdms/view?usp=sharing>
4. Cellini, Benvenuto. "Jupiter", 1552-1553. Bronze. 98 cm. Pedestal of Perseus. National Museum, Florence. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpSERIclYwOVhrNGM/view?usp=sharing>
5. Cellini, Benvenuto. "Bearded man", 1540-1545. Paper, graphite. 28.3 x 18.5 cm. Royal Library, Turin. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpc3NLcVZzVORHY1E/view?usp=sharing>

6. Cellini, Benvenuto. "King Francis's salt seller", 1540-1543. Gold, enamel wood, ivory. 26,3 x 33,5 cm. Detail: "Ocean". Art History Museum, Vienna.  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpRVc2ZUluZjU3aDg/view?usp=sharing>
7. Cellini, Benvenuto (?). "Portrait of a bearded man in a red cap", 1558–1562. Oil, paper pasted to canvas. 61 x 48 cm. Private collection, Paris.  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpWnlFaWpxSkpEdkE/view?usp=sharing>  
Detail:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpZVI0NTN1QjZzMlk/view?usp=sharing>
8. Bordone, Paris (1500–1570). "Portrait of a jeweller", 1540. Oil on canvas. 98 x 80.5 cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpaFNzVEtBLVladzO/view?usp=sharing>
9. Bordone, Paris. "Lovers or Spouses", 1525-1530. Oil on canvas. 81 x 86 cm. Pinacothek de Brera, Milan.  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpaklsN1FHZkpCdlk/view?usp=sharing>
10. Allegrini, Francesco. "Portrait of Benvenuto Cellini", 1762. Engraving after drawing by Zocchi, Giuseppe. 29.5 x 19.2 cm. Versailles and Trianon, France.  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpU0tSOUJIRVlvMDg/view?usp=sharing>
11. Vasari, Giorgio (1511–1572). "Cosimo I Medici surrounded by his sculptors, architects and engineers", 1563. Fresco. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. Detail: Benvenuto Cellini's portrait.  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BzqcYTLVBHmpWVNDczdiSFhGajO/view?usp=sharing>

All the self-portraits of Benvenuto Cellini identified agree with his literary self-portrait in presenting the author as a heroic personality. The heroic nature of artistic images is created with the help of a technique discovered by Michelangelo and known as "*terribilita*" (or "*terribilita of Michelangelo*"): frowning brows and confident look of the eyes.

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Cellini's appearance has a few characteristics, some of which can be treated as his distinctive features:

- broad cheekbones;
- an underdeveloped and somewhat protruding mandible, with the lower lip overbiting the upper lip;
- a large nose which is thin and straight at the bridge, but has a thickening and a small dimple on the tip;
- green-greyish eyes which appear to be set close to the bridge of the nose;
- almond-shaped eyelids;

- rather thick eyebrows, although in some self-portraits Cellini tried to make them less expressed;
- Cellini began to grow bald early, but the process slowed down with age; in spite of that, Benvenuto Cellini had lost his hair on the top of his head by the age of 50;
- thin and strong hands;
- an athletic build and straight posture, which Cellini preserved throughout his life.

Cellini tended to idealize and heroicize his appearance. In some instances, the “improvements” of his facial features went beyond the limit. That reality does not allow then, to identify the personality of Cellini with one of two anthropological methods. So, both of them must be applied.

The portraits of Benvenuto’s life time that should be acknowledged as the most characteristic and realistic representations of Benvenuto Cellini’s appearance are the works “Lovers or Spouses” and “The Portrait of a Jeweller” by Paris Bordone.

“Lovers or spouses” (1525-1530) reveals some distinctive features of Benvenuto's that were later concealed by a thick beard. It turns out that Cellini had an underdeveloped mandible combined with a protruding lower lip. He may have had mandibular prognathism, or mesial occlusion (overbite). This type of occlusion is noticeable in all of his portraits where the lower lip is visible. It is probably his underdeveloped mandible and disproportionately weak chin that caused Benvenuto to wear a beard throughout his life. The shape of the nose, which is thin at the bridge but generally rather prominent, is the same as in the sculptor's other portraits. The “Lover” has high and broad cheekbones, which makes his eyes seem set a bit too close to the bridge. This optical effect is especially evident in the image on the back of Perseus's head.

Paris Bordone depicted Benvenuto Cellini again over a decade later in another work known as “The Portrait of a Jeweller”. There is an obvious compositional and semantic relationship between Bordone's two portraits of Cellini. In particular, they both depict the models' left hands from the same angle and in a similar manner. These are the only representations of Cellini's hands known today.

Apparently, this portrait should be considered as the closest representation of Benvenuto Cellini’s actual physical appearance. Unlike Cellini's self-portraits, Bordone's “The Portrait of a Jeweller” does not flatter the model: it clearly represents his ungainly facial features, which Cellini himself was prone to playing down or ‘ennobling’.

The appearance of Paris Bordone's "Jeweller" creates a general impression of the model's character, which can be described as self-confident, but does not convey either a high intellect or subtle spirituality. As is known from his autobiography, Cellini made every effort to distance himself from unrefined and poorly educated people. In his book, Benvenuto Cellini calls his

enemies "country fellows". In Bordone's portrait, however, Cellini does not look like a refined aristocrat or an inspired creator himself, which is why there may be reasons to believe that the sculptor did not like Bordone's portrait very much.

In contrast to Bordone's "The Portrait of a Jeweller", the painting from the Milor collection depicts Cellini as a sophisticated intellectual with a complex inner world to which he addresses himself in his mind's eye. A glance at this study tells the viewer that Cellini's internal life is at least as rich as his biography. Benvenuto's facial features are given an extremely ennobled appearance, and although the likeness of sitter's facial proportions remains sufficient for recognition, it is considerably lower in comparison with the more realistic portraits by Vasari and Bordone. In the painted sketch, Cellini is represented with the traits of St. Macarios the Great, a well-known personage from the fresco "The Triumph of Death" by Buonamico Buffalmacco in Campo Santo, Pisa.

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