



Portrait of a Man

Date

ca. 1500

Primary Maker

Filippo Mazzola

Medium

oil on wood

Description

The Netherlandish portrait format of a bust-length figure behind a parapet was introduced into Italian Renaissance art by the painter Antonello da Messina (ca. 1436-1479) on his sojourn in Venice in 1475, and thereafter became popular throughout Italy. In this instance, the parapet consists of a narrow ledge that serves primarily as the substrate for the artist's name: "FILI MAZOLA." A second,

now fragmentary inscription on the sitter's collar may once have read, "ME[I] DEVS ET SIT FORT" ("May God Be My Strength"). The motto, together with the image of a lamb, a traditional symbol of Christ's sacrifice, on the metal badge on the man's cap, suggests that he may have been a lay member of one of the many religious confraternities in Italy devoted to prayer and charitable works. At the very least, these elements and the quality of the sitter's clothing identify him as a wealthy gentleman, most likely from Parma or Milan given the artist's sphere of activity.

Dimensions

Sight: 17 3/4 x 13 in. (45.1 x 33 cm) Framed: 28 3/8 x 23 5/8 x 3 1/2 in. (72.1 x 60 x 8.9 cm)