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| | <p>Object: recto: Study for the Head of a Soldier in the Battle of Anghiari</p> <p>Museum: Szépművészeti Múzeum Dózsa György út 41. 1146 Budapest</p> <p>Collection: Grafikai Gyűjtemény</p> <p>Inventory number: GRA_1774</p> |
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Description

The magnificent head study was produced for the ill-fated Battle of Anghiari mural in the Sala del Gran Consiglio (Hall of the Grand Council) of the Palazzo della Signoria (Palazzo Vecchio) in Florence. Leonardo was commissioned to decorate one of the two longer walls of the hall around the middle of 1503. His composition commemorated the decisive military victory in the history of the Florentine Republic, the triumph over the Milanese at Anghiari in 1440. Leonardo worked on the battle scene from October 1503 with interruptions until May 1506, when he returned to Milan, leaving the unfinished work behind once and for all. He devised an oil-based technique for the wall painting, which rapidly deteriorated, but his mural was nevertheless regarded as one of the principal sights of Florence; its last traces were obliterated by Giorgio Vasari during his renovation of the hall in 1563. Although neither the wall painting nor its cartoon (a full-scale drawing used directly for copying the composition onto the wall) have survived, with the help of contemporary accounts, copies and Leonardo's extant sketches, the destroyed work can be reconstructed. Out of the complete composition Leonardo only painted the crucial episode of the battle, when the young Florentine captain-general, Pier Giampaolo Orsini, is just about to wrench the standard from the hand of Niccolo Piccinino, the Milanese condottiere. Leonardo created the masterly red chalk drawing depicting Pier Giampaolo Orsini in profile as preliminary studies for the full-scale cartoon. The scene, in which, in the words of Vasari, 'rage, fury and revenge are perceived as much in the men as in the horses', offered a perfect opportunity for the representation of intense emotions and extreme states of mind reflected on the human face. The vitality of the Budapest study results from the use of live models. The dramatic force of expression faithfully recalls the shocking horror of the brutal fighting rage of the soldiers, rushing on each other with unrestrained ferocity in the heat of battle, which Leonardo termed *pazzia bestialissima* – most bestial madness. Text: © Zoltán Kárpáti, 2015

Basic data

Material/Technique:

very pale pink prepared paper / red chalk

Measurements:

226 x 186 mm

Events

Drawn

When

1504-1505

Who

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

Where

Keywords

- Drawing
- olasz