

Leonardo da Vinci **COLNAGHI**



Wenceslaus Hollar

Two deformed heads facing each other, the man in ear-flap cap

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WENCESLAUS HOLLAR, after LEONARDO DA VINCI
(Prague 1607 – 1677 London)

TWO DEFORMED HEADS FACING EACH OTHER, THE MAN IN EAR-FLAP CAP

Etching on laid paper
9.5 x 14 cm.; 3 3/4 x 5 1/2 in.

Inscribed (upper centre): *Leonardo da Vinci inv.*
First state of two.

Provenance

German private collection.

Literature

R. Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar 1607–1677*, Cambridge 1982, cat no. 1597.I.

S. Turner, *Wenceslaus Hollar: New Hollstein German engravings, etchings and woodcuts, 1400–1700*. Giulia Bartrum, vols. 1–9, 2009–2012, cat. no. 749.I.



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Hollar left his native Prague in 1627. He spent several years travelling and working in Germany before his patron, the Earl of Arundel brought him to London in 1636. It is during this time that Hollar engraved, amongst other works, the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci from the Arundel collection. During the civil wars, Hollar fought on the royalist side, after which he spent the years 1644-52 in Antwerp. Hollar's views of London form an important record of the city before the Great Fire of 1666. Among his most ambitious projects was a set of plates of women's costumes, entitled *Ornatus muliebris Anglicanus, or The severall habits of English women from the nobilities to the country woman* (1640). He was prolific and engraved a wide range of subjects, producing nearly 2,800 prints, numerous watercolours and many drawings.

The man at left is wrapped in a caricatural cap with ear-flaps, the heavy fabric of the cloak thrown over his shoulders creates a dark mass that anchors the composition; opposite, the woman's facial structure is satirised through protrusions - nose, lips, and chin articulated as stacked convex forms - set above a low-cut bodice. Hollar's etching technique is especially legible: the cap and cloak are built from crossed hatchings that thicken into near-black at the shoulder. The woman's face is handled more sharply, with decisive contour lines and darker pockets of cross-hatching beneath the jaw and around the mouth, intensifying the sense of leathery age.

The print belongs to Hollar's Antwerp series after Leonardo's studies of "grotesque" heads. Hollar's etched line translates Leonardo's physiognomic "counter-images" of ideal beauty into crisply articulated form. Leonardos's original drawings circulated in the Arundel collection and are now largely in the Royal Collection, Windsor.

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