

# C. G. BOERNER

DEALERS IN FINE ART SINCE 1826

Distraction / Abwechslung  
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Jan Lutma (ca. 1584–1669) came from Emden in East Friesland and had worked in Paris before settling in Amsterdam in 1621. He was among the most celebrated goldsmiths of his time and was especially admired for his mastery of the technique of metal chasing. When he was in his seventies, his eyesight gradually deteriorated for unknown reasons. In 1656, however, he announced that this ominous “blindness” had been cured. That was also the year when Rembrandt etched a portrait of Lutma that has ever since been celebrated as one of the finest examples of the Dutch master’s capacity to render his sitter’s likeness in a psychologically convincing way. In this venerable old man, we behold a real person who, at the same time, is looking back at us.

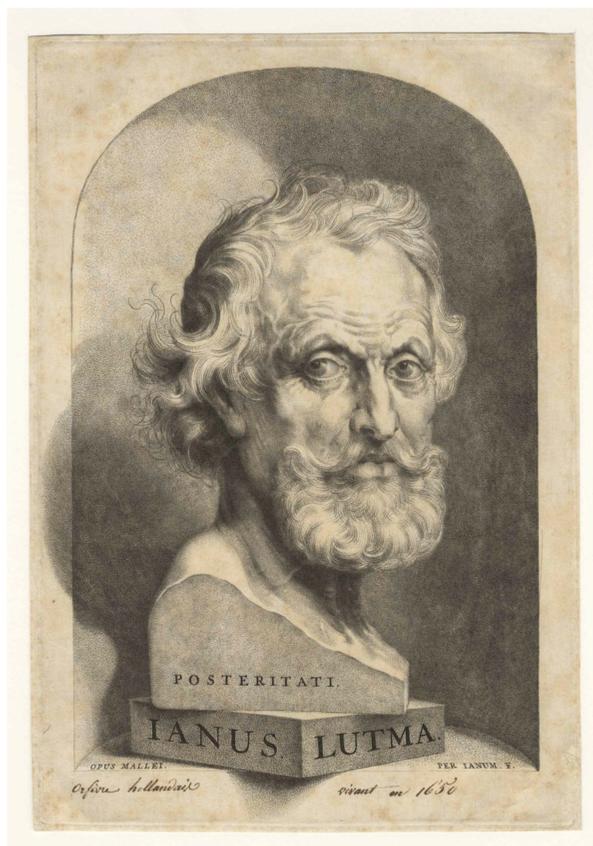


Rembrandt’s stupendous mastery becomes apparent when one compares his print with the portrait engraved by Lutma’s son Jan the Younger in the same year. The posture of the sitter seems to follow Rembrandt’s model (in reverse), but otherwise the composition is Lutma’s own invention. Here, the goldsmith’s heavy eyelids and the addition of spectacles in his right hand make a more explicit reference to the old man’s miraculous recovery.



The elder Lutma died in 1669 at the age of 85. Over a decade later, probably around 1681, his son made a posthumous portrait of his father. By now he had pretty much perfected his technique for achieving tonal passages through punches with a variety of different tools, such as spiked wheels or the roulette. As a result, the print and its pendant, a self-portrait dated 1681, both appear as if they have been drawn with a brush. Lutma himself refers to those works as “opera mallei” (literally, “hammer works”). While hardly used in printmaking, this technique was regularly employed by gold- and silversmiths, a profession that the younger Lutma had learned from his father.

The adaptation of the noble form of a classical bust to portraiture was pioneered by Rubens and can also be seen in Anthony van Dyck’s famous etched self-portrait. A further allusion to classical antiquity is the Latin inscription in Roman square capitals: “Jan Lutma [for] posterity.”



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