

AUGUSTUS, NERO, SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS AND BALBINO

Artist: Unknown
 Date: Various
 Dimensions: Various
 Material: Bronze
 Inventory Number : 67903, 67904, 67905, 67906

Total Cost: € 5.050,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

The conservation work on the four busts is necessary in order for these four pieces to be ready for the unveiling of the Profane Museum. Its architectural elements and wooden furnishings, the four Valadier Cabinets, have already been restored thanks to the generosity of the Patrons of the Arts. During the restoration, scientific analysis will also be carried out to increase knowledge about these artifacts and their history.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Cleaning and elimination of corrosive salt bi-products
- Systematic cleaning of all the surfaces
- Stabilizing the residual products of corrosion
- Consolidation of the fractures and filling of existing lacunae (small holes)
- Scientific analysis
- Protective final varnish
- Photographic documentation



These four bronze busts portray four famous Roman emperors: Augustus, Nero Septimius Severus and Balbino, and have adorned the Profane Museum since the time of Pius VI Braschi (1775-1799). They are situated on grey marble bases.

These pieces are placed in the four niches of this room, whose walls are entirely covered with marble pieces. All these works give the Profane Museum the appearance of 18th century cabinet of antiquities, though their stories and origins are different.

The bust of Augustus was found during an archaeological excavation at the end of the 18th century in the small city of San Giuliano and then donated to Pope Pius VI. This bust is not original, but it is a perfect copy which dates back to Renaissance period, influenced by models like the Augustus of Prima Porta.

The bust of Nero is also modern and was part of the important collection of Ciriaco and Hasdrubal Mattei. It has likely been in their possession since 1613 and was kept in their family villa. In this villa at the Celio, the bust was placed above the entrance of the Great Hall of the Palace Mattei. In 1770 it was sold, along with the rest of the collection, by Duke Giuseppe Mattei to Clement XIV.

The origins of the bust of Septimius Severus are unknown. This bust shows the emperor in the so-called "Serapis" type and the head seems a result of two different pieces (an old portion and a more recent one).

The bust of the Emperor Decius Celio Calvinio Balbino (238 AD) is the only original piece and was found in the vineyard of the Casali family at San Sebastiano on the Via Appia Antica. In 1771, it was donated by Msgr. Antonio Casali, the Governor of Rome, to Clement XIV. In 1775 it was transferred to the Library where it was to be located, along with three other bronze busts, during the papacy of Pius VI.

