

## Possible Copernicus' portraits in Early Renaissance Italian art: a discussion

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Has Copernicus' Italian passage left some traces in art? Can we find his portrait somewhere in Early Renaissance Italy?

A scientist's portrait can be interesting in itself, but even more so, as it bears witness of his connection to a place and to an intellectual environment. Between 1496 (or maybe a little earlier), and 1503, Copernicus sojourned in Bologna, Ferrara and Padua as a student, and it is commonly accepted that the Italian years gave to his formation a relevant imprint.

However, the quest for possible new Copernicus portraits (Italian or otherwise), is made arduous by the fact that we don't possess a 100% reliable effigy created during his lifetime. None of his extant portraits can be traced before the half of the 16th century; and, unfortunately, some of the most accredited ones are not completely coherent between them.

Yet, proceeding very cautiously, it is possible to identify a set of peculiar facial features, recurrent in several of the accepted portraits of the scientist, and look for them in some Italian artworks compatible for epoch and provenance. Some of these Italian artworks have already been mentioned in the past as in hypothetical connection with Copernicus; one is proposed here for the first time. Among them are the Portrait of Luca Pacioli with a disciple (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte); an alleged Portrait of Copernicus formerly in a British private collection (bearing a traditional attribution to Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, and said to have been painted in Rome in the early 1500s); an early 16th-century fresco in the Scoletta del Santo in Padua, attributed, among others, to Giulio Campagnola; and the Portrait of a young man of the early 16th century (London, National Gallery), currently attributed to Titian.

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