

<https://villaludovisi.org/2019/11/15/new-an-unnoticed-portrait-of-hadrians-first-heir-l-aelius-caesar-in-romes-casino-aurora/>



Head of L. Aelius Caesar in the Sala Aurora, as identified by Carole Raddato. Photo: David Neal Brennan

Did I make a great discovery in the Ludovisi collection of Roman antiquities?

While in Rome at the beginning of November, Corey Brennan (Associate Professor of Classics at Rutgers University), who generously invited me to stay at the American Academy of Rome, brought me to the Casino of the Villa Ludovisi (also known as Villa Aurora) for a private tour of the property, established in the 16th century by Cardinal Francesco Maria Del Monte and later bought by Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi. I was very excited to hear about the great work Brennan had done in the Villa with the collaboration of Princess Rita Boncompagni Ludovisi who resides there. I was also of course very excited to get to see the only Caravaggio ceiling ever painted.

Never would have I imagined that I was about to make the discovery (still to be confirmed by experts) of an unnoticed sculptural head of Hadrian's intended successor Lucius Aelius Caesar. The bust had been universally identified as "Marcus Aurelius" since 1880 (or maybe even 1633). But immediately after entering the Villa, I noticed the bust and thought, "wow, it's Aelius Caesar!" Then Brennan told me that the bust was supposed to be Marcus Aurelius, and I immediately replied "It's not Marcus Aurelius", "I think it's Lucius Aelius Caesar".

However, this discovery now requires much study from experts to secure the identification of this Boncompagni Ludovisi bust as that of Lucius Aelius Caesar.

Exciting times!



HSH Princess Rita Boncompagni Ludovisi and Carole Raddato in the Casino Aurora on 6 November 2019, shortly after Raddato made her identification of the bust as that of L. Aelius Caesar. Photo: TC Brennan

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