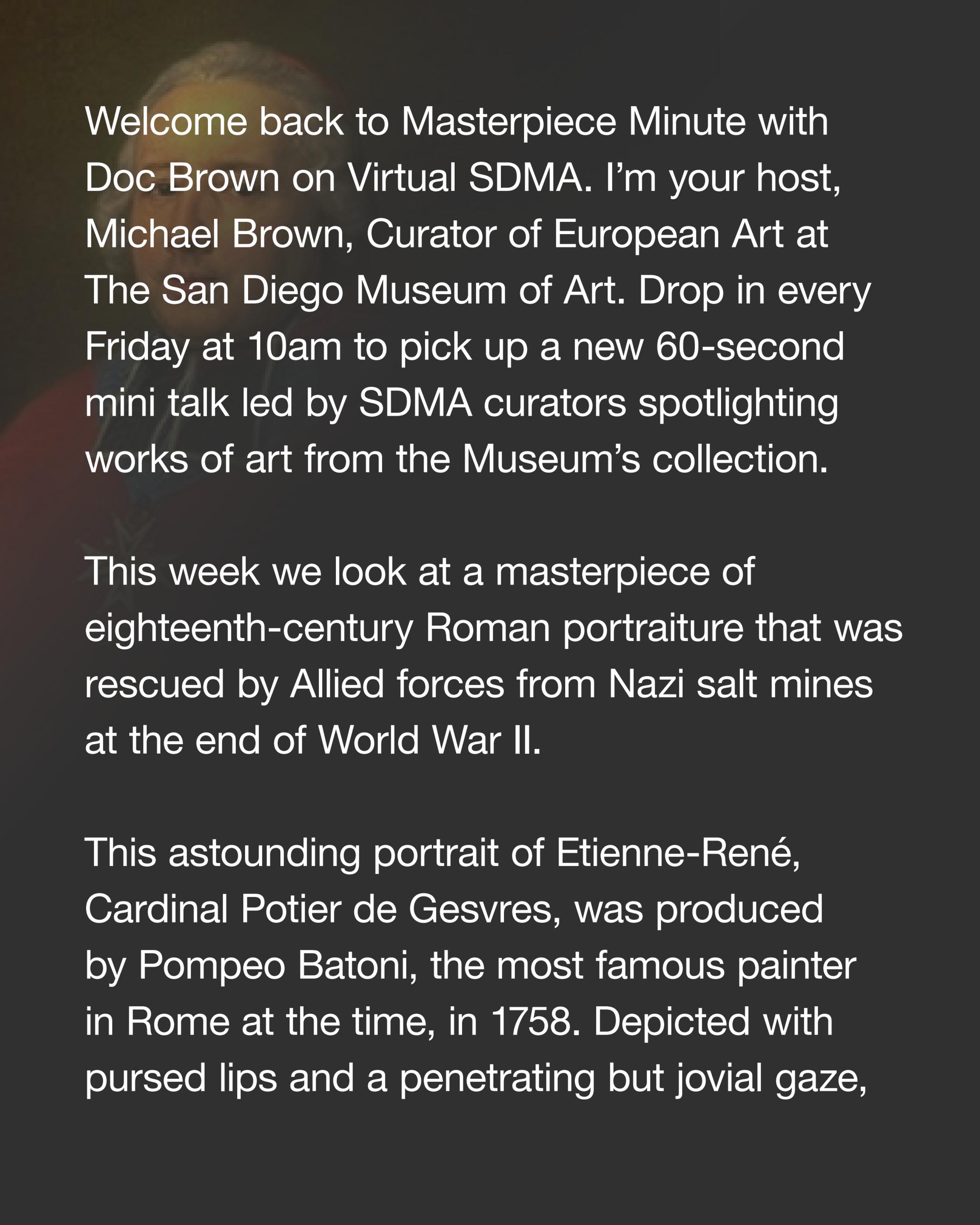


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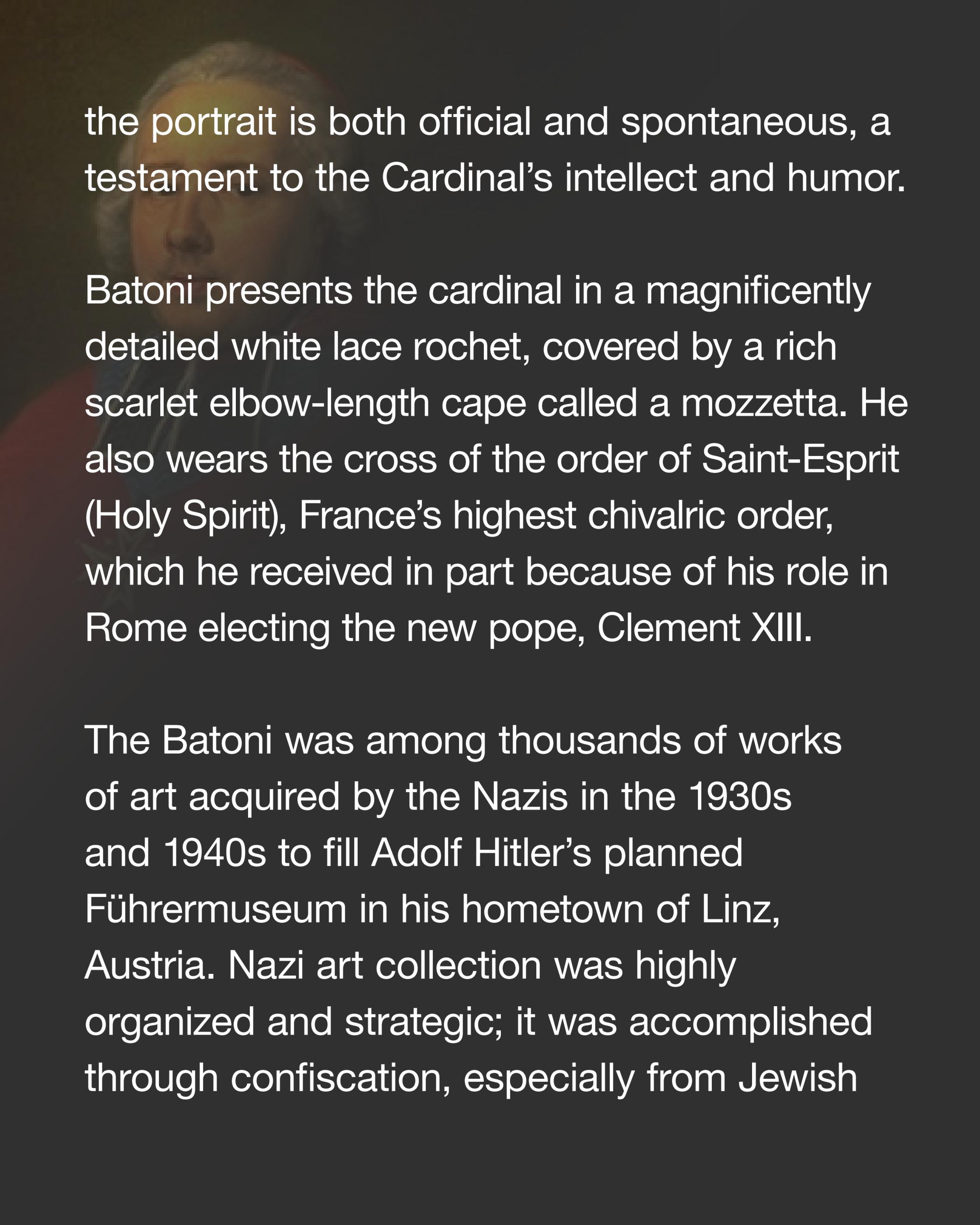




Welcome back to Masterpiece Minute with Doc Brown on Virtual SDMA. I'm your host, Michael Brown, Curator of European Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. Drop in every Friday at 10am to pick up a new 60-second mini talk led by SDMA curators spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

This week we look at a masterpiece of eighteenth-century Roman portraiture that was rescued by Allied forces from Nazi salt mines at the end of World War II.

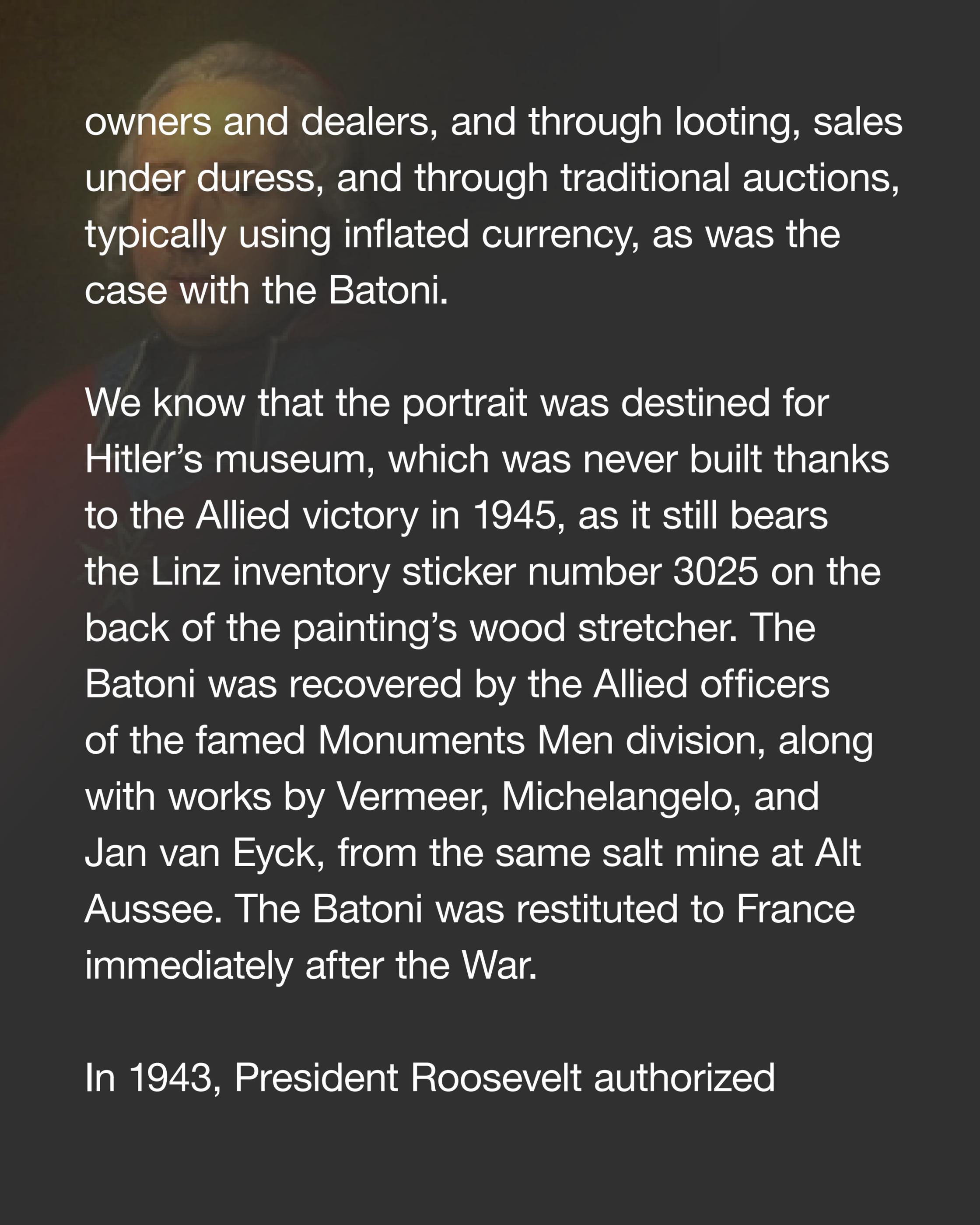
This astounding portrait of Etienne-René, Cardinal Potier de Gesvres, was produced by Pompeo Batoni, the most famous painter in Rome at the time, in 1758. Depicted with pursed lips and a penetrating but jovial gaze,

A portrait of a man, likely a cardinal, wearing a white lace rochet and a red mozzetta. He is also wearing a cross on his chest. The background is dark and out of focus.

the portrait is both official and spontaneous, a testament to the Cardinal's intellect and humor.

Batoni presents the cardinal in a magnificently detailed white lace rochet, covered by a rich scarlet elbow-length cape called a mozzetta. He also wears the cross of the order of Saint-Esprit (Holy Spirit), France's highest chivalric order, which he received in part because of his role in Rome electing the new pope, Clement XIII.

The Batoni was among thousands of works of art acquired by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s to fill Adolf Hitler's planned Führermuseum in his hometown of Linz, Austria. Nazi art collection was highly organized and strategic; it was accomplished through confiscation, especially from Jewish



owners and dealers, and through looting, sales under duress, and through traditional auctions, typically using inflated currency, as was the case with the Batoni.

We know that the portrait was destined for Hitler's museum, which was never built thanks to the Allied victory in 1945, as it still bears the Linz inventory sticker number 3025 on the back of the painting's wood stretcher. The Batoni was recovered by the Allied officers of the famed Monuments Men division, along with works by Vermeer, Michelangelo, and Jan van Eyck, from the same salt mine at Alt Aussee. The Batoni was restituted to France immediately after the War.

In 1943, President Roosevelt authorized

the creation of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives program, whose mission was persistently supported by General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Divisions such as the 101st Airborne (the Screaming Eagles), helped protect the 345 men and women volunteers from 13 countries, which included the US, UK, Canada, Australia and Belgium. The MFAA was active in the European, Mediterranean, Asian theaters and was the world's first official wartime program to protect cultural property.

The Monuments Men and Women were university professors, artists, conservators, and museum curators, some of whom would go on to become directors of major US art museums. These soldier-scholars knew from their studies the rightful owners of the works and where

they had originated, whether museums or private collectors. Some even stayed on after the war to help recover roughly 5 million works of art. Restitution of Nazi-era looted artwork continues to this day, aided by museums and professional organizations.

This has been Doc Brown with Masterpiece Minute. Thanks for joining us here on Virtual SDMA—catch ya next Friday!

