

## 4.1 SOCIETY – GENDER



Left

Type: marble portrait of Matidia, niece of the emperor Trajan and Hadrian's mother in law.

Findspot: Rome

Chronology: 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD

Actual location: Rome, Capitoline Museums (inventory nr. 889).

Right

Type: marble portrait of an old woman

Chronology: 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD

Actual location: Madrid, Museo del Prado.

The images show two portraits, one of an important member of the imperial family, while the second is of an unknown, old woman, sharing an almost identical hairstyle to Matidia.

Hairstyle was an important aspect of a Roman woman's status and identity and there was a close relationship between the hairstyle adopted by an empress and that of her fellow women, at least as far as we can understand from portraiture.

Because Roman empresses played a relevant public role as wives of the emperors and mothers of the heirs, their portraits featured in many relevant public spaces (fora, temples, bath complexes, arches and so on) but also on smaller objects that had however a wide circulation, such as gemstones and most importantly coins.

Together with her hair, clothing and accessories also helped defining a woman's role and status in society. You may want to discover more on the use of garments such as the stola or to look at how women's clothing changed throughout the Roman period, from the early Empire to Late Antiquity.

### MY RESEARCH

How was gender visually defined in the Roman period?