

A PICTURE GALLERY IN THE ITALIAN TRADITION OF THE

QUADRERIA

(1750-1850)

SPERONE WESTWATER

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**QUADRERIA**  
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10 January - 23 February 2013  
curated by Stefano Grandesso, Gian Enzo Sperone and Carlo Virgilio

**Essay by Joseph J. Rishel**

catalogue edited by Stefano Grandesso

**SPERONE WESTWATER**

in collaboration with  
GALLERIA CARLO VIRGILIO & Co. - ROME

This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition *A Picture Gallery in the Italian Tradition of the Quadreria\** (1750-1850), presented at Sperone Westwater, New York, 10 January through 23 February, 2013.

257 Bowery, New York, NY 10002

*\*A quadreria is a specifically Italian denomination for a collection of pictures (quadri) up to and beyond the eighteenth century, with the pictures normally covering the entire wall space from floor to ceiling. Before the advent of the illuminist concept of the picture gallery (pinacoteca), which followed a classification based on genre and chronology suitable for museums or didactic purposes, the quadreria developed mainly according to personal taste, affinity and reference to the figurative tradition.*

*Acknowledgements*

Leticia Azcue Brea, Liliana Barroero, Walter Biggs, Emilia Calbi, Giovanna Capitelli, Andrew Ciechanowiecki, Stefano Cracolici, Guecello di Porcia, Marta Galli, Eileen Jeng, Alexander Johnson, David Leiber, Nera Lerner, Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, Marena Marquet, Joe McDonnell, Roberta Olson, Ann Percy, Tania Pistone, Bianca Riccio, Mario Sartor, Angela Westwater  
Special thanks to Maryse Brand for editing the texts

*English translation*

Luciano Chianese

*Photographic Credits*

Arte Fotografica, Roma  
Studio Primo Piano di Giulio Archinà  
Marino Ierman, Trieste

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*Jacket illustration*

Francesco Celebrano, *Luncheon in the Countryside*, cat. no. 1

## *Foreword*

by Joseph J. Rishel





(cat. no. 22)

The works on view here date from approximately 1750-1850 and represent a great variety of styles and subjects. They include artists active through all parts of Italy as far south as Bourbonic Naples to progressive Trieste in the north, with others still further afield, including Germany, England, France and even Mexico (by translation). And yet for all this geographical and chronological range, they rest comfortably together. Both in objective view and poetic sentiment, they are all children of one cosmopolitan place - Rome - a place which retained, well into the 19th century, the distinction given to her in 1785 by Antonio Visconti of being there to which “nations flocked to the common mother of the fine arts, bringing a variety of notions and tastes which were clarified by this meeting, making the public of this city one of the most enlightened in Europe.” (Rishel/Bowron, *Art In Rome in The 18<sup>th</sup> Century* catg., p. 70) It was not, however, a unity lacking in doubt. One of the prices of living and thinking in this sophisticated and aesthetically favored place was the added burden that one was at the veritable edge of a future which would mark the end of the “Ancien régime” and the beginning of modern times. This sentiment, so beautifully explored by Italo Calvino in *The Baron in the Trees*, his musing on the gains and losses of liberty now redefined across a wide abyss.

This malaise (a central element to enlightened sentiment) could be entertaining, even comic, as played out here by the Francesco Caucig “Allegoria” where the seemingly irredeemable Prince Francesco Serafino di Porcia sinks into a melancholic meditation despite the efforts of Lady Happiness.

But it also takes root into deeper reality when one confronts a seemingly innocent allegory by August Nicodemo – *The Dauphin Presented to Minerva at the Tomb of his father Louis XVI* – painting in Rome in 1794 thought to be a Bourbon salute and royalist stability, Francia and Hercules assisting the child’s obedience to his father guillotined the previous year, as he one year later age ten in 1795 would die in a French prison. And in fast order of less than ten years, the same poignant homage to the lost past cannot, even now well into the 21st century, go unnoticed when this same picture is shown in company with an authoritative (and charming) portrait by Mathilde Malenchini of Madame Le Bon dated 1813, the sitter a member of the new Napoleonic aristocracy established in Rome by the new French prefect of the occupied city, the Baron de Tournon who was working hard to rejuvenate the arts of the city, so badly bruised by the first Napoleonic invasion. It truly was the best and worst of times.



To step back to something so innocent and fresh as Francesco Celebrano's tapestry cartoon of a country lunch, 1770, which puts the Neapolitan Bourbons in good company with their cousins in Madrid in a Goya-like ease of rural pleasure, it is a scene of Voltairian bliss. Or fifteen years later, another pastoral, this time by the wonderfully affable and adept Hanoverian trans-European, Friedrich Rehberg who, in his three trips to Rome starting in 1777, had among his friends both David and Thorvaldsen, (and later Mengs), taking full advantage of the charms and pleasures of Arcadian subjects in the manner of Poussin, such as his Bacchus and Cupid squeezing the grapes, assisted by Batillo, even while placing them in a literal, witnessed landscape, in this case the cliff in Vietri near Sorrento, brings a mystic past now into a real and definite place.

Or the erotic fantasy, via Titian and early Poussin of a Nymph and Cupid asleep, by the enterprising Henry Tresham who arrived in Rome in 1775 to be a dealer (in company with Gavin Hamilton) as well as a painter. He submitted this work to the Royal Academy, London, (where he was already an Associate) in 1797 to be elected as a full Academician, in 1799. Reference is sometimes made to his admiration of Fuseli, (they might have met in Rome where they overlapped in the '70s) fortified by this work, certainly.

But my intention here is not to address all of the objects on view, a task best left to others better schooled than myself. Best instead to return by addressing three of the latest works on exhibit, both to reinforce my essential observation of the shared nature of so much gathered here, in part established by their grounding in the profoundly Roman principals of elevation, dignity and authority to show (as with Calvino) the fatalistic, and sometimes very sad, decline and fall of old values.

The strangest work on display, and I can't doubt that others will join me in this observation, is the *Rape of the Sabines* of 1829 by the altogether remarkable Pelagio Palagi, his reconsideration of Poussin's *Rape* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (probably 1633-34), rather than his contemporary by a decade, Jacques-Louis David's happier variant, *The Reconciliation* 1796-1799 (Musée du Louvre). He was a complete artistic polymath, producing architecture, sculpture, decorative designs, and paintings from his youth in Bologna onward, while adapting his life skillfully during the turbulent Napoleonic times and arriving in Rome in 1806 just at the point of a French induction of large funds to restore the city and its monuments, bagging a major commission in the Quirinal. With the failure of the Imperial regime, he returned

to Milan to work with major figures in the Restoration, only to be lured to Turin by the Savoys to supervise ambitious architectural and decorative programs while keeping completely up to date as a painter to shifting tastes, much thanks to the new Romantic (most often via historic genre) of Francesco Hayez.

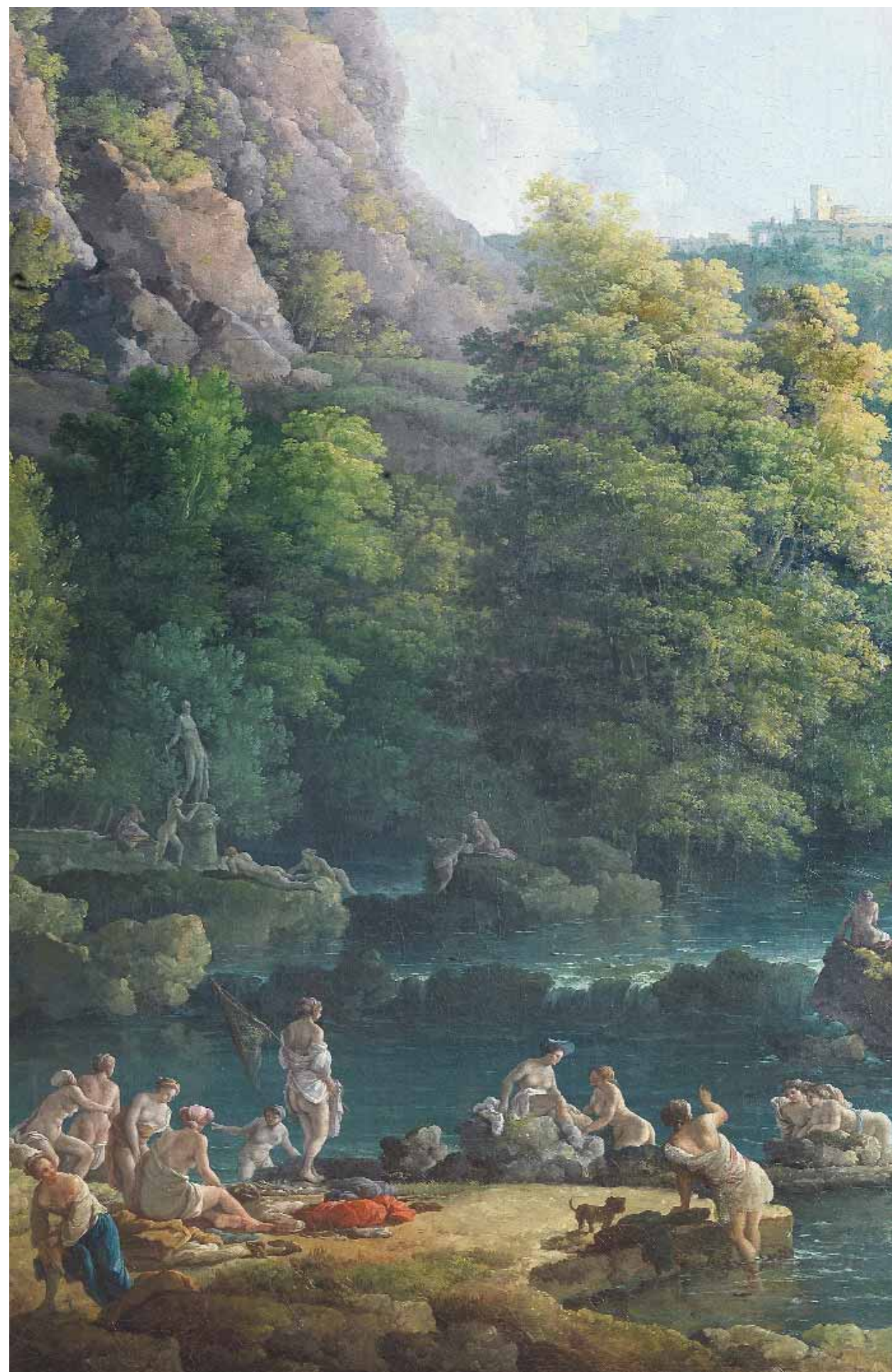
His *Rape* has been read as his swansong to neo-classicism, creating the highest possible drama, pose after pose, staged against a geometrical complex backdrop belying his love of architecture. And yet it is completely original, even as you can feel the old manner slipping out from under you, bringing us back to the enigma - gain and loss - of this Italo/cosmopolitan world at the beginning of the 19th century, deeply knowing and still celebrating its profound heritage, albeit in company of energetic exploration of the new.

Starkly different, but no less jarring in its complete command of the situation, is Giuseppe Tominz' Portrait of Aron Isach de Parente, a founder of the Assicurazioni Generali in Trieste, an altogether remarkable insight into a whole new world of entrepreneurial, bourgeois and liberal enterprise pointing in a new direction as far away from Papal Rome as one can imagine. The date of 1847 is poignant (and prescient), just on the threshold of a liberal surge throughout Europe to be challenged with tart reaction, particularly in the Austrian states which are, of course, Tominz's *prevue*. His celebration of the Beidermeier virtues of domesticity and democracy are at the very heart of the conflict.

And finally a matter of global knowledge about which I previously knew nothing, the most recent work in the show is a deeply satisfying surprise. It's a grand vista dated 1853 by the Roman-trained Carlo De Paris, of Pico de Orizaba, or Citlaltépetl (The Starry Mountain), the highest volcano in Mexico, which all North Americans will immediately associate with the equivalent celebratory awe and vastness found in the works of landscapist Frederick Church.

A student of Gaspare Landi in Rome, De Paris set off, to Mexico in 1828 for a new point of reference and vocation; a new contribution to a whole separate line of New World landscape. In so doing he missed, of course, a whole generation of northerners - Corot and hordes of others - who were in Rome and its environs exploring landscape for not such different purposes. So far the earth does shift on its axis in some cases, and to very good effect. To have the De Paris in the same room as the Voltaire Vesuvius will allow whole new layers of thought (and feelings) about the Sublime, getting us safely back to the Enlightenment.





# QUADRERIA

## *Contributing Authors*

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## Francesco Celebrano

Naples 1729 -1814

### 1. *Luncheon in the Countryside*

circa 1770-1780

Oil on canvas, 102¼ x 69 in (260 x 175 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

Exhibitions: *Un Museo tutto da bere* 2011

Bibliography: M. Confalone, in *Un Museo tutto da bere* 2011, no. 19, p. 115

Recently shown with the correct attribution to Celebrano at the exhibition *Un Museo tutto da bere... Arte e vino* at the Museo Nazionale 'Duca di Martina' in the Villa Floridiana in Naples, with catalogue entry by Maria Confalone, this painting certainly belongs to a series of compositions depicting scenes from country life. So far, two other works from the same series – a *Brawl* between four peasants or woodcutters and a *Dance in Costume* with two violin players and a cello player – have been traced to a private Neapolitan collection (published in Spinosa 1987, ed. 1993, no. 76, p. 93, figs 91-92). Besides their stylistic affinity and their similarity in terms of composition, formal layout and painting texture, the identical lateral measurements of these works clearly identify them as a single group. Most of all, however, the works share the same stage-like backdrop of gnarled oak tree trunks and leafy branches, as well as the elegantly decorative festoon of flowers in various hues placed at the upper centre of the composition.

As with the two canvases in the private collection, the manner in which Celebrano has chosen to clearly outline the various figures in the painting we have here – gentlemen, ladies, musicians and peasants – indicates that these works, together with the other canvases in the same series that have not yet been identified, were probably intended to be used as models for tapestries.

It is in fact well documented that right from the outset the tapestry weavers working in the Real Fabbrica degli Arazzi (or Reale Arazzeria) founded in 1737 by Charles of Bourbon in a building adjacent to the Church of San Carlo alle Mortelle, in Naples, used designs painted by famous artists working in Naples and Rome, in the service of the Bourbon Court. This practice was very common also in other tapestry weaving centers in France, Spain and across Italy, with the designs varying in size according to the tapestry series for which they were painted. A case in point is the well-known *Don Quixote Series*, woven in two separate stages in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century from designs by Giuseppe Bonito and other painters of his circle, including Benedetto Torre and Antonio Dominici. The paintings are currently in the Appartamento Storico of the Royal Palace in Naples, while the tapestries hang in the Palazzo del Quirinale in Rome. Of the tapestries depicting the *Four Seasons*, whose model for *Fire* was painted by Girolamo Starace Franchis, there is a documented sketch in a private collection while the tapestry is also in the Royal Palace of Naples. The *Conjugal Allegories* series was completed between 1762 and 1765 from models by Francesco De Mura, Giuseppe Bonito, Corrado Giaquinto, Pompeo Batoni and Stefano Pozzi (the originals still exist in the Royal Palace of Caserta) for the so-called "Stanza del Belvedere" bedroom of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon (where some still survive) in preparation for his marriage to Maria Carolina of Austria. The pair of tapestries *panni Portraits of Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina of Austria*

woven in the early 1770s after painted designs by Francesco Liani has been separated, with one at the Museo di Capodimonte and the other in the Royal Palace of Madrid. Of the series of episodes from the *Life of Henry IV of Bourbon* (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte) and *Stories of Love and Psyche* (Naples, Royal Palace), both of which were woven in the 1780s after designs by Fedele Fischetti, various elements have been dispersed (more details on these works can be found in Spinosa 1972; M. Siniscalco in *Civiltà del Settecento a Napoli* 1979; Spinosa 1987 and 1993). Although no specific archive documentation has yet been found as proof, the abundance of examples listed above make it more than likely that the paintings by Celebrano mentioned earlier were intended to function as models for tapestries. Whether the tapestries were ever actually woven is unknown. Both paintings and tapestries would certainly have been destined to decorate and furnish a sumptuous royal or patrician residence, probably in the country.

A number of critical texts (besides the one by N. Spinosa mentioned above, with particular reference to pp. 53 and 88-93; also worthy of note for his knowledge of the artist and his output is Pacelli 1984), have in fact already underlined that Celebrano – who was better known as a sculptor in marble and for his terracotta Nativity Crib figures or porcelain statuettes (in 1772 he was the first director of the Real Fabbrica di Porcellane founded by Ferdinand IV of Bourbon in a section of the Royal Palace in Naples) – produced a series of six canvases of country scenes in which there were allusions both to the seasons and to the various farming and shepherding activities currently in practice in the southern Italian kingdom under the reign of the second monarch of the Bourbon dynasty. It is still unclear whether these too were intended as painted designs for tapestries or whether they were destined for use as decoration in Vanvitelli's Royal Palace of Caserta. Sources dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century indicate that Celebrano had in fact completed either a series of paintings or frescoes of *Allegories of the Four Seasons* – since lost – for either Caserta or the royal hunting lodge at Persano. His country scenes series is instead currently at the Royal Palace in Naples. The sketch for the *Grape Harvest* scene is currently in a private collection in Cagliari (N. Spinosa in *Civiltà del Settecento a Napoli* 1979, no. 149, p. 280), while two other small canvases that are similar both in subject and style – *Fox Hunt* and *Deer Hunt* – are in the Petrucci collection in Rome (Spinosa 1987, no. 72, p. 93, figs 86-87).

The two other paintings currently in a private collection that belonged to the same series as our *Luncheon in the Countryside*, were shown as "School of Bonito" at the exhibition of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Neapolitan painting held in 1938 at Castelnuovo. Although they do in fact bear a number of clearly visible similarities – particularly in terms of theme – to certain well-known genre scenes painted by Giuseppe Bonito in the late 1730s, the formal and compositional solutions adopted by Celebrano for this series have more affinity with the equally well-known series of polychrome porcelain groups portraying *fêtes galantes* or scenes from everyday life that – under the direction of the painter and sculptor – were produced at the Real Fabbrica under Ferdinand IV, as imitation of the porcelain produced at the Real Fabbrica di Capodimonte, founded in 1742-1743 but destroyed by order of Charles of Bourbon on his departure for Spain in 1759.





Francesco Celebrano trained initially as a painter, working in the mid-1700s in the manner of Francesco Solimena and Francesco De Mura. He was also clearly familiar with the works of Corrado Giaquinto, which he may have observed during one of his trips to study in Rome and from which he gleaned his use of precious, glazed tones to outline elegant and graceful figures markedly in the rococo style. Another element that makes Giaquinto's influence all the more likely is the fact that in 1762 he returned from Spain to Naples, where through the influence of the two chief architects to the Bourbon court, Luigi Vanvitelli and Ferdinando Fuga, he obtained a number of commissions for the Real Fabbrica degli Arazzi and for the sacristy of the newly rebuilt Church of San Luigi di Palazzo.

As a painter Celebrano specialized in both religious and secular subjects, portraits of prominent members of the Neapolitan court, royal or popular festivities – both on canvas and as frescoes. Over the years a number of his canvases have been mistakenly attributed to Giaquinto. Of this production, bearing stylistic affinities with the canvas we have here and dating from between 1770 until after 1780, there is the *Presentation of Mary at the Temple* and the *Visitation of St Elizabeth* from the Collegiata di Santa Maria delle Grazie at Cerreto Sannita; the *Rebecca and Eleazar* from the Museo di Capodimonte (on loan to Rome's Palazzo di Montecitorio Chamber of Deputies); the *Assumption* in the Spirito Santo church in Naples; and the pair of compositions depicting *Ferdinand IV of Bourbon at the Boar Hunt* (Naples, Museo di San Martino) and *Maria Carolina of Austria Attending the Boar Hunt in a Carriage* (Madrid, Museo del Prado). Celebrano's most notable production in the fresco genre includes the *Allegories of the Seasons*, painted after 1764 for the Neapolitan palazzo of Prince Raimondo di Sangro, for whom he had worked as a sculptor in the nearby Sansevero Chapel.

Nicola Spinosa





## Matilde Malenchini

Leghorn 1779 – 1858 Fiesole

### 2. *Portrait of Madame Le Bon*

1813

Oil on canvas, 23 ¾ x 18 ¼ in (60,3 x 46,4 cm)

Signed and dated, lower left: "M. Malenchini Roma"

Old label on the back: "Portrait fait à Rome en 1813 de la B[...] Le Bon née à Phalsbourg le 23 mars 1768 décédée à Nanterre près Paris le 22 mars 1842"

Provenance: Private collection, France

Signed on the lower left hand corner, this portrait of a lady by Matilde Malenchini is small in size but of paramount quality. Completed in Rome, both the exact date – 1813 – and identity of the sitter are revealed in the scroll, sadly in poor condition and therefore somewhat difficult to decipher, which has been glued behind the work. The sitter is Madame A. Le Bon, born in Phalsbourg, Lorraine, in 1768 and died in Nanterre in 1842. We know no further details regarding this lady, although it would be natural to suppose that she was a member of the large French community that lived in Rome during the years of the Napoleonic empire. Although the situation would soon change, in 1813 Rome was still an integral part of the empire, governed by administrators dispatched specifically from France, who were leaving a strong mark of their presence on the city. Born in Leghorn in 1779, Matilde Malenchini had trained at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence and had arrived in the former Papal capital in these years, thanks to a bursary from the Tuscan government (Pinto 1972, p. 52). In Rome she immediately struck up excellent relations with the city's cultured French community, in particular with the governor of the Roman states General Miollis, who was a refined collector and appreciator of the arts. Miollis in fact ranks as Malenchini's most important collector, with a total of eighteen works by her present in his collection, whose catalogue was published in 1814. These included the series of seven portraits of notable men shown at the famous exhibition held in the Campidoglio in 1809 and a number of genre and interior scenes, the most noteworthy of which is the canvas depicting Alexandrine Bleschamp, the second wife of Lucien Bonaparte, praying in the Collegiata church of Canino together with her children Charles-Lucien and Letizia (Caracciolo 2006, p. 186). By Miollis' intercession Malenchini managed to set up her studio in the Trinità dei Monti convent, run in those days as part of the French Academy, which had been installed in the neighboring Villa Medici since the turn of the century (Hautecoeur p. 273). It was here that Malenchini came into direct contact with a modern and stimulating artistic milieu, broadening her artistic horizons that had hitherto been limited to portraits and copies of old masters. She began producing interior scenes of everyday life animated by figures, directly influenced by the initiator of this particular genre, François Marius Granet, but also by Ingres. Along with many other artists including the landscape painters Chauvin and Verstappen, both Granet and Ingres in fact had studios at Trinità dei Monti. In reference to Malenchini and another female painter – the Parisian Hortense Lescot – that gravitated around Villa Medici and Trinità dei Monti in those years, critic Giuseppe Tambroni employed the term *prezioso* (precious) to describe their genre scenes, in which he reputed Malenchini to have attained considerable proficiency (Rudolph

1982, p. 62). Further proof of the high esteem enjoyed by Malenchini can be found in the words of Antonio Canova, who in 1816 interceded with the Grand Duke of Tuscany asking him to raise the modest government pension accorded to her: "my engagement to favor the interests of this young woman has no other design than to increase the honor and glory of your nation, which cannot, nor any other Italian state can, boast a woman artist of such merit in her art" (Canova 2002, I, p. 135).

Malenchini continued her portrait painting alongside her interior genre scenes, although it is these for which she is best known today. The portrait of Madame Le Bon belongs to a consolidated type of portrait that, in the age of Neoclassicism, was widespread both in France and Italy, and which was directly inspired by the paintings of Pompeii. Typically for this kind of female portrait, the sitter is shown turned towards the viewer, seated in a relaxed or contemplative pose with her legs outstretched, generally resting on either a cushion or a stool, all within a setting that is finely detailed even down to the various furnishings. From the earliest prototypes produced by David, this genre became standard for the many portraits of members of the Napoleonic aristocracy that were completed by artists such as Gros, Fabre and particularly Gérard. In Italy Canova and Camuccini, whom Malenchini encountered professionally and with whom she became friends during her time spent in Rome, echoed the genre. There is a striking resemblance, for instance, between this portrait and Camuccini's portrait of the Princess of Partanna, completed a few years later and which was itself derived from models in which the same Roman artist experimented considerably. In relation to the often sumptuous portraits produced by these better known artists, Malenchini's portrait of Madame Le Bon appears a more intimate or bourgeois transposition, though no less accurate in terms of detail – note the antique style vase or the ubiquitous cashmere shawl – and effective psychological rendering.

Malenchini's years spent in Rome in the 1820s are arguably the most productive and fertile of her entire career. In 1815 Camuccini himself presented her for honorary membership of the Accademia di San Luca (Archivio Storico dell'Accademia di San Luca, Roma, ASASL, vol. 59, ff. 56v - 57), to which thirty years later she would donate the portrait he made of her in those years (ASASL, vol. 104, c. 157). Her salon was attended by distinguished artists and intellectuals (Giovannelli 1988, p. 415), including the Belgian Louis de Potter, with whom Malenchini entered into an intense and long-lasting relationship that continued even after de Potter's return to Brussels. Malenchini travelled to the city in 1824, passing through Paris and London (a portrait of de Potter by her is in the Groeningemuseum of Bruges). The irregularity of this union, due to Malenchini's married status, eventually decreed its inevitable end (Battistini 1937, p. 63). The deep regret she felt emerges in her correspondence with Gian Pietro Vieusseux, from which we learn that her support of de Potter's liberal ideals never faltered despite the considerable problems this had entailed with the Pontifical authorities (Battistini 1968, p. 90). At this point she was clearly *persona non grata* in Rome and returned to the city only sporadically. References to her visits appear in the letters of her friend Giuseppe Gioachino Belli.

Federica Giacomini





## Giuseppe Tominz

Gorizia 1790 – 1866 Gradiscutta

### 3. *Portrait of Aron Isaak de Parente*

After 1847

Oil on canvas, 88¾ x 44 in (225 x 112 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

Bibliography: De Grassi 2008, pp. 47-49; Quinzi 2011, p. 200, no. 153.

Active in Trieste from as early as the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the Parente family – like the Morpurgos, the Luzzattos and the della Vidas – were part of a group of Jewish families that successfully controlled the city's trading sector, consolidating their financial influence through frequent marriage alliances between their respective children. Aron Isaak Parente was born in Trieste on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1775 (Cf. Folnesics, Braun 1907 pp. 140-41) and married Regina Morpurgo at the age of 21. He died in Trieste on May 12<sup>th</sup> 1853. Together with his considerable business successes, the various public offices he held eventually earned him the title of baron of the Austrian Empire on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1847, hence the addition of the “de” that preceded the name from then onwards.

The Cross of Leopold in red enamel bordered with white stands out on the severe background of the clothes worn by the newly elevated baron, dressed entirely in black from his square buckled shoes to the bicorn hat, worn firmly set over the head in the manner of the 1790s. A very similar portrait confirms the identity of the sitter, painted posthumously and half-length in 1854. Signed by Lipparini, this painting is currently at the Camera di Commercio of Trieste and shows de Parente in almost identical dress.

Both Massimo De Grassi and Alessandro Quinzi, who recently published a monograph on Tominz, agree on the paternity of this large-scale, formal and commemorative portrait, whose austere composition is nonetheless softened by a number of more ‘homely’ Biedermeier details. The surroundings in which Tominz has placed the black-clad figure recall the grand formality of the imperial portraits, almost as if the baron had wished to re-forge his image in the semblance of a tradition to which his title now gave him rightful access. In painting this portrait Tominz, who had already had the opportunity to measure his talents against such commissions with his large portraits – from etchings – of Francis I (1822) and Ferdinand I (1837), appears to have drawn on the canvas by Leopold Kupelweiser (1796-1862) of Emperor Ferdinand I in the Schönbrunn Palace. The painting shows the emperor in 1847, with the same column partially covered by a drape, the balustrade dropping sharply towards the countryside beneath and the black and white, diagonally checkered marble floor that creates the visual effect of propelling the baron towards the viewer. Clearly in Tominz's work the countryside is the port of Trieste. In the portrait of Francis I the emperor has his hand placed on an imposing, rococo-style console emblazoned with the symbols of his rank, while de Parente is flanked by a small, extremely simple rectangular table – traced by Grassi among Tominz's drawings – whose polished light wood surface reflects a solitary gilded porcelain cup placed on a saucer, with an oval in which there is a portrait of a young lady.

It is unlikely, as some have speculated, that the young lady in question is Regina Morpurgo, whose youth would have coincided with the neoclassical Empire style whereas both the style of the dress and the design of the cup instead date from around 1840. In any case we do have some idea of what Isaak's wife really

looked like from a miniature in the Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte in Trieste, which was acquired on the antique market as a *Portrait of Regina Morpurgo Parente*, (circa 1835 inv. 2527). The lady in the oval could conceivably be Stella, who married Isaak's son Salomon (1808-1873) in 1828 and who therefore embodied the hopes for a continuation in the de Parente baronial dynasty.

An important collector and erudite bibliophile, by 1832 Salomon was already the proud possessor of the exceptional *Florilège de Rothschild* – a compendium of Hebrew texts illuminated in 1479 by the same artists who had been in the service of Borso d'Este. When the manuscript went up for sale in 1855 the Rothschilds in Paris bought it. After escaping the Holocaust unscathed, the piece was eventually donated to the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, where it is to this day. It is by no means inconceivable that such a refined collector could have personally commissioned a cup of this kind, with his wife's portrait on it. The most likely possibility, however, is that – given his choice of a Habsburg ‘setting’ for his portrait – Isaak had wished to discreetly include an image of his sovereign in the picture: she who had visited Trieste alongside the emperor in 1844, Maria Anna Carolina of Savoy, whose long neck, pointed chin and thin lips appear just discernible amidst the gilt of the porcelain. It was customary at the time for Austrian emperors to circulate their informal effigies also on tasteful object of domestic use such as Viennese porcelain, as is amply documented by the many cups of this kind that still survive. Kaiser Franz and Kaiserin Maria Ludovika, for example, on two gilded cylindrical cups from 1806 (Folnesics, Braun 1907, pp. 140-141), are not wearing full imperial dress but the fashion of the time. Again, Kaiser Franz appears in civilian clothes on two other gilded, trumpet-shaped cups from 1830 (It is worthwhile noting that the shape of the cup, with its thick base and vaulted handle, is more akin to the Biedermeier series produced by the Königliche Porzellan Manufaktur of Berlin). It was not until Franz's successor, Franz Joseph and particularly his legendary consort Sissi – the media icon of the *finis austriae* par excellence, that the practice became commonplace to the point of pedestrian.

Patrizia Rosazza Ferraris



Miniature portrait of Regina Morpurgo Parente, 1835 ca, Trieste, Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte





## Francesco Monti

Bologna 1685 – 1768 Brescia

### 4. *Male Nude Study (bearded man covering backwards over a rock)*

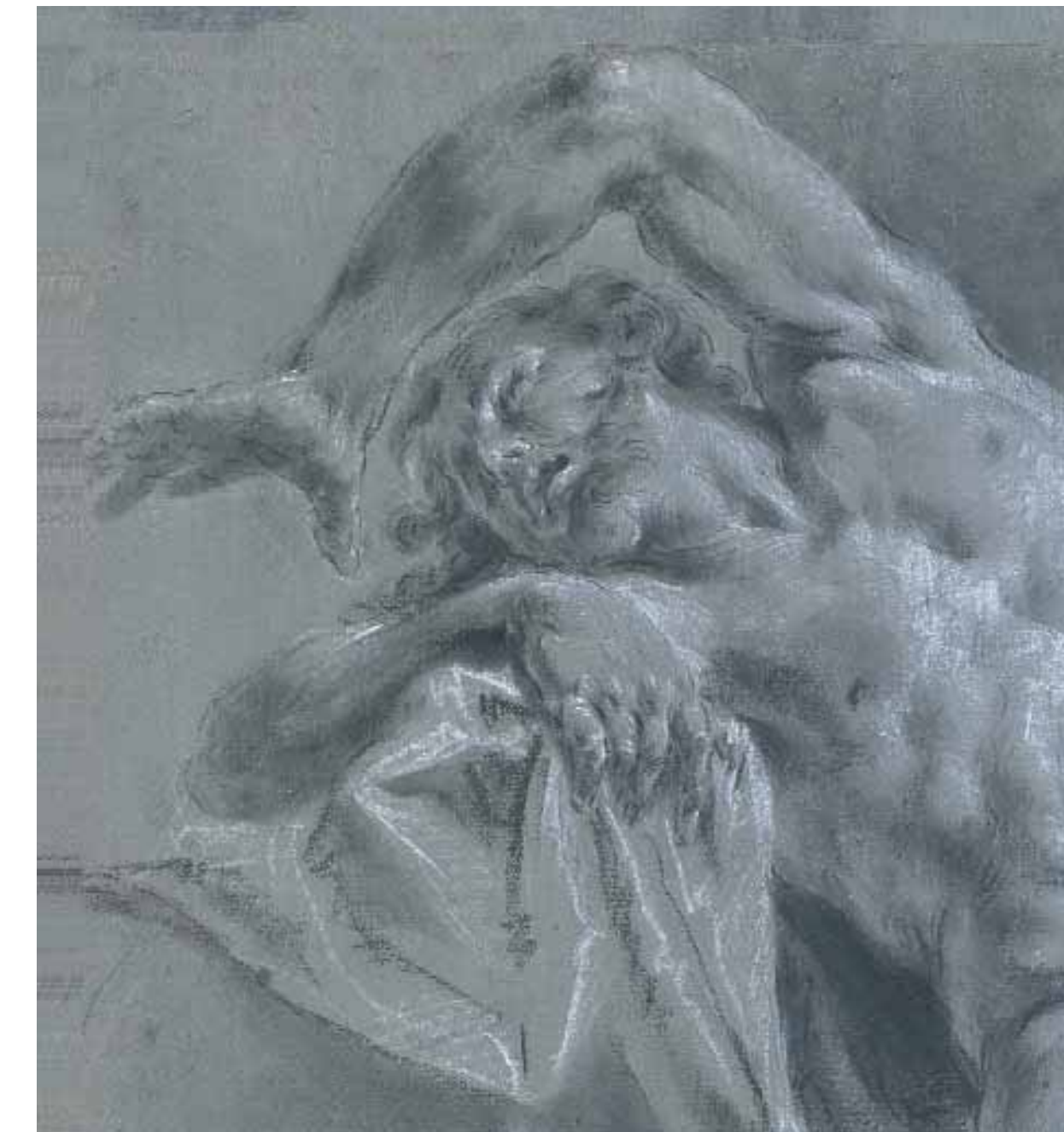
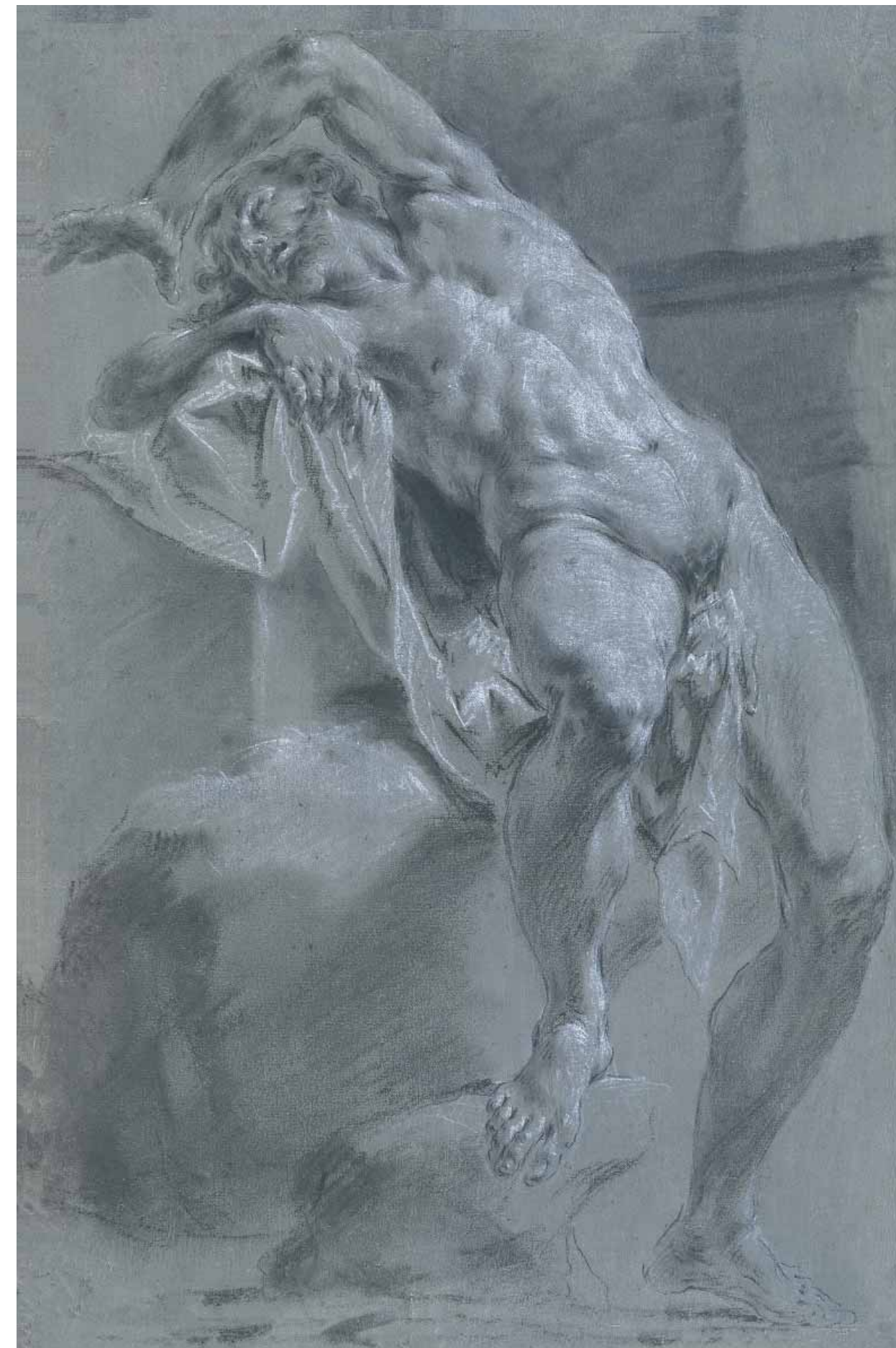
classes of painting from life. Sought after by collectors at the time, this genre continues to enjoy a much-deserved popularity also among contemporary collectors.

### 5. *Male Nude Study (young man leaning on a rock clutching a cloth in his right hand)*

circa 1740

Pencil and white chalk on paper, 16½ x 11 in (420 x 280 mm) each  
Provenance: the painter Carlo Ferrari, Rome

Donatella Biagi Maino



From the same collection, both these drawings were formerly attributed to Ubaldo Gandolfi, but have been unquestionably authenticated as part of the prolific graphic opus of Francesco Monti, largely reconstructed by Ugo Ruggeri back in 1968.

A comparison with works that are undisputedly by Monti, such as the *Male Nude With Child* in the Galleria degli Uffizi (Ruggeri 1968, p. 89, no. 114), the *Seated Male Nude With Staff* (no. 120 in the Ruggeri catalogue, p. 89), the *David and Study for the Martyrdom of Peter* (Ivi, p. 108, no. 444: painted in 1736/37 for the church of San Domenico in Modena, where it still hangs) or the *Study* in the Museo del Prado (Mena Marques 1990, p. 111, fig. 206.5) – all of which are in the same medium as the two drawings here – underlines also their shared stylistic quality. Their fluid trait, defined contours and use of white chalk to heighten certain areas, creating a vibrant play on light and shadow, are all typical characteristics of Monti. The compositional solution, in which the figures are perceived at an angle, corresponds to an aesthetic model that is still clearly rococo, the style under which the artist received his training. This began in Modena under Sigismondo Caula, who introduced Monti to the unfettered tempestuousness of Venetian art, and continued in his hometown of Bologna under Giovan Gioseffo Dal Sole, who steered the academy there away from its strongly Guido Reni imprinting into more open stylistic waters. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Monti was invited by Owen Mc Swiny to contribute to the well-known series of *Allegorical Tombs* (for more details see Haskell 1963, pp. 439 and succ), along with Donato Creti, Sebastiano Ricci, Giovan Battista Pittoni, Francesco Zuccarelli and Giovan Battista Piazzetta – all of whom were exponents of a painting manner that was graceful, exquisitely polished, cultivated and refined. It was Monti's adherence to this taste that eventually led him, in his late maturity, to withdraw to Brescia and work exclusively in Lombardy, at a time when in Bologna there was a marked tendency towards a classicizing style that emerged triumphant towards the middle of the century. With his undeniable talent, Monti continued to work with coherence and developed his style until the end.

The freedom and ethereal lightness of touch that characterize these two studies are simply fascinating, placing them among the highest points of Monti's graphic output. A highly proficient draughtsman, Monti had honed his skills in the academy (the prestigious Accademia Clementina di Pittura, Scultura e Architettura dell'Istituto delle Scienze in Bologna, of which he became principal in 1725), where the composition of figures and the study of the human body were perfected in regular



## Placido Fabris

Pieve d'Alpago/Belluno 1802 – 1852 Venice

### 6. *Academy Study of Two Male Nudes*

circa 1820-1824

Tempera and pencil on paper, applied to canvas, 25 3/4 x 19 in (65.5 x 48 cm)

Provenance: Paolo Fabris collection, Venice

Bibliography: Rollandini 2004, p. 30; E. Rollandini, catalogue entry in Conte, Rollandini 2004, pp. 82-83, cat. 8.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the study of the posed nude from life, either in a relaxed or tensely dramatic attitude, became – together with a detailed understanding of Classical statuary – the cornerstone in the training of any young artist intent on achieving artistic excellence in figure painting, which in those days was considered the most noble genre among those included in the classical academy tradition.

A large-scale and finely executed nude study used as a model for younger students was called an *accademia*. Fabris' one for the tempera on display here is in charcoal (fig. 1) and shows the two figures in exactly the same postures, one in a slouching position and the other standing in a defiant attitude, from a slightly more rotated angle. It is complete with the signature and approval stamp of the painting professor, Odorico Politi. The same session is documented also in the study of another student from Fabris' course in Venice, Gaspare Francesconi (Padua, Musei Civici agli Eremitani, publ. in *Da Giovanni De Min* 2005, cat. 159v, 161). Both of Placido Fabris' *accademie* therefore date from his lengthy training at the Venice Accademia di Belle Arti, from 1816 to 1824, when he quickly rose to a position of prominence among the other students thanks to a government pension obtained for him by Antonio Diedo. Antonio Canova subsequently raised the pension under the presidency of Count Leopoldo Cicognara and under the artistic guidance of the esteemed Teodoro Matteini, all of whom were impressed by young Fabris' extraordinary talent for drawing (Rollandini 2002).

In his *Memorie*, written later in life, Fabris remembers that during his eight years at the Venice academy, which ended in 1824 with his temporary move to Trieste (where he remained until 1832), he had tenaciously pursued his study of the nude on a daily basis, to the point that his fellow students recognized his primacy in the discipline. This is stridently apparent in these two studies, executed in the different mediums of drawing and painting as a means of practicing *chiaroscuro* shading in the drawing and the introduction of color in the painting. The 'unfinished' section is intentionally evocative of the extemporary nature of painting, of its quick application during the sitting from life.

Fabris' natural inclination towards academic studies from live models (but also from Classical statuary and plaster casts of works by Canova, which were already considered 'modern classics'), is amply documented in his *Memorie*, as well as in the words of praise offered by his teachers for his various assignments. Along with portraiture, for which he was highly admired, drawing in fact remained his preferred medium over the years. After collecting a number of prizes whilst still a student, as early as 1820 Fabris entered into competition even with a much elder Francesco Hayez on the theme of *Philoctetes Wounded*.

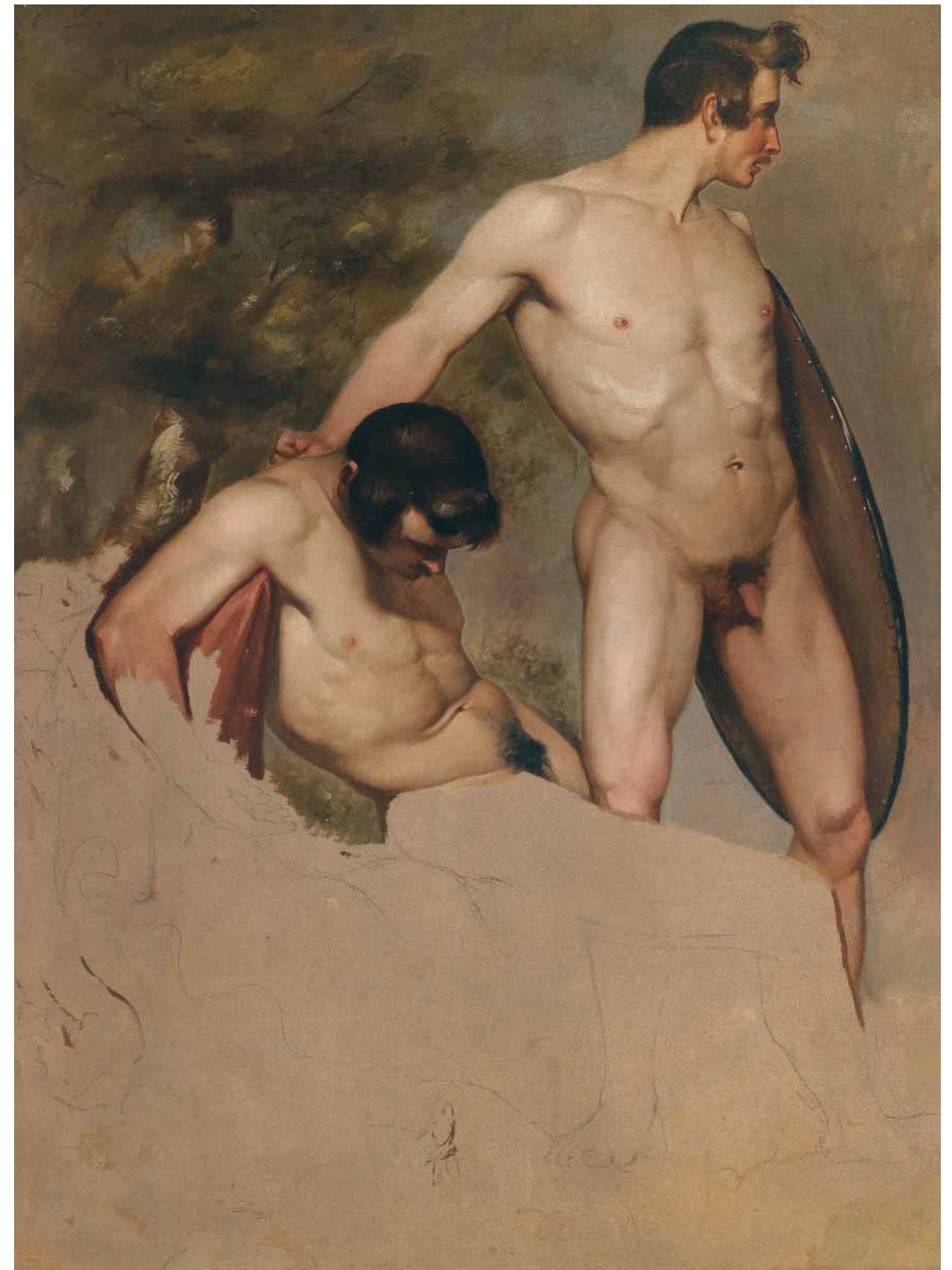
In the years that followed his return from Trieste in 1832 Fabris

established his reputation on the Venice art scene as one of the leading portrait painters of his day (Placido Fabris 2002; Conte, Rollandini 2004).

Stefano Grandesso



Placido Fabris, *Academy Study of Two Male Nudes*, Private collection





## Gaspare Landi

Piacenza 1754 - 1830 Rome

### 7. Alexander Defending His Father Philip in Battle Against the Triballi

circa 1797-1800

Oil on canvas, 78 ¼ x 93 in (195 x 236 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Turin

Bibliography: Grandesso 2008, pp. 20-21

This is almost certainly a depiction of Alexander in his youth, saving the life of his father Philip of Macedon during a battle against the Thracian tribe of the Triballi, which took place during Philip's homeward journey after an expedition against the Scythians. It has been possible to identify the subject by comparing it to the fresco with the same title that was painted later by Francesco Coghetti for the Sala di Alessandro in Villa Torlonia, Rome (cf. Giovanna Montani, in *Quadreria* 2009, cat. 29), as well as to other works inspired by episodes from the *Historia Alexandri Magni* by Curzio Rufo. Bertel Thorvaldsen used the same literary source for the well-known *Triumph of Alexander in Babylon* continuous frieze, completed in 1812 for the Palazzo del Quirinale, which at the time was destined to become a residence of Napoleon's.

Period references contain no specific mention of this painting among Landi's works. Some of his battle scenes were, however, known to his biographer Luciano Scarabelli, who in 1845 listed – together with his portraits and devotional subjects – those that Landi had completed as exercises prior to his departure for Rome in 1781 (Scarabelli 1845, p. 57). It is hard to imagine that such works could have possessed the maturity of style displayed in this complex painting. Without indicating either size or subject, Scarabelli did however specify that he was aware of two battle scenes in the ownership of Count Parma and a further two in possession of the musician Giuseppe Niccolini, all of them in Piacenza (Ibid. p. 117).

A canon named Parma, a member of the Piacenza cathedral chapter, does in fact feature in 1805 in the correspondence between Gaspare Landi and his patron, the Marchese Giambattista Landi delle Caselle, in relation to the shipment to Piacenza of the vast canvases for the Duomo (cf. Landi 2000, pp. 163, 165, 168). Giuseppe Niccolini was instead the brother of Mariano, a quadratura painter who had been a fellow student of Landi, with whom he had studied the traditional painting masters present in Piacenza (Pordenone, Camillo Procaccini, Ludovico Carracci, Guercino). The musician was a protégé of the Marchese Ranuzio Anguissola da Grazzano, who commissioned Landi to paint a pair of pictures, one of *Hector Chiding Paris for His Slackness* and the other of *Hector Bids Farewell to Andromache* (1793-94, Piacenza, Istituto Gazzola). He also commissioned from Landi a portrait of himself and one of his wife, *Bianca Anguissola* (circa 1792, Piacenza, Museo Civico), in which there is a tribute to Niccolini in the form of a score of a *canzoncina* that the sitter is about to play on the spinet (Gian Lorenzo Mellini, in *Il palazzo Farnese* 1997, p. 215).

The correspondence between Landi painter and Landi patron (published in Arisi, 2004) stands as a key source of information for reconstructing the artist's catalogue of works. Giambattista Landi had pledged the funds for Gaspare Landi to complete his artistic training in Rome, which throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was considered the paramount destination for artists of every nationality to learn from the exceptional wealth of classical and modern figurative heritage safeguarded there. In order to continuously

refresh his inspiration from the source of his artistic models, and confident that he would be able to count on the international market guaranteed by Grand Tour travelers to the city, Landi decided to pursue the rest of his career in Rome. The correspondence runs from 1792 to the marchese's death in 1806. There is no mention of the battle scenes indicated by Scarabelli in this source, although from 1797 to 1800, when Landi stayed in Piacenza to avoid the political unrest in Rome that would culminate in the creation of the Roman Republic, the correspondence was far less intense. This and a number of formal elements in our *Alexander* could point to it having been painted precisely during Landi's sojourn in Piacenza.

The work in fact presents a number of iconographic and stylistic elements in common with *St. George and the Dragon*, completed during this period (Piacenza, Le Mose, San Giorgio, reproduced in Mellini 1992, fig. 138; *Gaspare Landi* 2005, p. 142). The manner in which the horses have been painted is similar in both works, as is the idealized portrayal of the faces of the saint and Alexander. There is also the same elegantly decorative rendering of the folds of the fabrics, ruffled by the movements of the figures and billowing in the breeze. Given that Landi was at this time in touch with those mentioned by Scarabelli, it is all the more likely that this piece was painted in the aforementioned period.

With its life-size figures, this work must therefore belong to the series of paintings that runs from the *Stories of Hector* mentioned earlier



Gaspare Landi, *St. George*, Piacenza, St. George Church.





– in which Landi chose to broaden his characteristic half-figure representations derived from Guercino, adapting them to the larger canvases he had available (Stefano Grandesso, in *Art in Rome 2000*, pp. 386-388) – and his monumental scale works for the Duomo: the *Transit of the Virgin to the Sepulcher* and *The Apostles Find the Sepulcher Empty* (1802-1804). Elements from this last work, such as the leg and foot of the apostle to the left, correspond to those of Alexander. Like the Apostles in the painting for the Duomo, Philip's facial features are clearly in the manner of the faces of Leonardo and Raphael.

*Alexander Defending His Father Philip in Battle Against the Triballi* is in every respect emblematic of Landi's style, which strove to combine the artistic excellence of the great Renaissance masters in terms of expression (Raphael), color (Titian), chiaroscuro (Correggio, Leonardo), with the ideals of Classical antiquity according to the eclecticism advocated by Anton Raphael Mengs in his works on art theory (cf. Grandesso 2002, p. 193 onwards). The idealized facial features of Alexander are, for example, clearly derived from Classical statues, while his attitude is that of the *Borghese Gladiator* statue in the Louvre. The grounded horse in the foreground is also clearly a variation on the theme of the statue of a lion biting a horse, in the Capitoline Museums.

The entire composition is conceived as a Classical bas-relief, with the figures in the foreground generating a kind of rotating drive encompassing also the figure on the ground, which appears to be in defiance of anatomical correctness. This is frequent in Landi's works, as well as in the paintings and drawings by his friend Antonio Canova, in which the parallel or perpendicular planes are given precedence over depth.

Landi's skill as a colorist emerges clearly in this work and was a renowned quality of his also among his contemporaries, who liked to hail him as the heir to the Venetian School as an antithesis to Camuccini, who instead was considered the chief exponent of the Tuscan and Roman School grounded on draftsmanship. Together with the emulation that ran between them, this academic conflict animated the commissions on which they both worked, from the Baglioni palazzi in Perugia to their projects for the Torlonia and Gabrielli families in Rome, the Napoleonic-era redecoration of the Quirinale or on the church of San Giovanni in Canale, in Piacenza. The brilliant transparency of the colors used for the foreground of the painting has been obtained with the *velatura* layering technique, which according to the great connoisseur Giovanni Gherardo De Rossi, enabled color to retain its tone even in areas of shadow. A quicker technique has been used for the background, where the dust beaten up in the fury of the battle calls for less detail and more muted colors, in line with the so-called "perspective of disappearance" and other teachings imparted by Leonardo in his *Trattato* on painting – one of Landi's preferred works on art theory.

Stefano Grandesso





## Giovan Battista Dell'Era

Treviglio 1765 – 1799 Florence

### 8. *A Roman Naumachia*

Circa 1795  
China ink and watercolor on paper, 24 7/8 x 38 1/8 in (630 x 970 mm)

### 9. *Triumphal Procession in Ancient Rome*

Circa 1795  
China ink and watercolor on paper, 24 7/8 x 38 1/8 in (630 x 970 mm)  
Provenance: Private collection, Rome

Despite the existence of a conspicuous corpus of Giovan Battista Dell'Era's drawings at the Museo Civico Della Torre of Treviglio (Calbi, Frabbi 1993-1997) and several albeit infrequent records of his paintings and drawings in various private and public collections, there is still much work to be done before this artist's production is fully and completely documented. This task has been partially tackled in the crucial and specific research carried out by Emilia Calbi (*Giovan Battista Dell'Era* 2000) but further work is needed in terms of contextualizing Dell'Era's art within the highly active and cosmopolitan artistic panorama of Rome at the end of the eighteenth century and, where possible, to outline a number of this artist's stylistic traits that have hitherto remained somewhat nebulous. Within such a context, the discovery of these two works, which in my view are attributable to Dell'Era (I add that Emilia Calbi shares my attribution with conviction) and date from the final period of his long Roman sojourn that went from 1785 to 1798, is of particular interest.

By comparing the theatrical design, composition, graphic traits and stylistic common ground of these two works with others by Dell'Era, it is possible to establish, point by point, much more than a questionable attribution. Both pieces feature dizzying evocations of the Ancient world, whose visionary perspectives Dell'Era must have gleaned from his close friendship with Luigi Ademollo (also from Lombardy), who worked in Rome from 1785 to 1788. This is starkly apparent if one compares Dell'Era's two works with Ademollo's *Naumachie* (cfr. Leone 2008, pp. 15-17), in which the same meticulous care has been accorded to the reconstruction of the setting as would befit the set of a Hollywood colossal, the ingenious theatrical compositions of Antonio Basoli or the subsequent and extravagant reconstructions of Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Leo von Klenze. But there are assonances also in Dell'Era's own production: the *Departure* and *Arrival* of his Berber horse race views in Treviglio, and most of all in the large scale *Pardon of Trajan* (fig. 1) or the *Chariot Race* (fig.2), sold by Finarte in the 1970s, published by Calbi in 1997 (p. 16) and today untraceable. All these works attest to the considerable level of proficiency that Dell'Era attained in the maturity of his short life, as well as to his specialization in the composition of beguiling subjects from antiquity. The formal construction of his figures is instead distinctive for its clear outlines, a feature that Bartolomeo Pinelli was to incorporate into his drawings later on. Precise, firmly executed and circumscribed, Dell'Era's drawing style owes much to the outline drawing of John Flaxman or Bénigne Gagneraux and is of an eloquence that is nothing short of remarkable. His manner of outlining figures is starkly concise and intellectualistic, at times un-naturalistic even, be it in his anatomical traits, his volumes, attitudes, the tension with which he imbues movement and the accentuated expressivity of his characters. This particular

compositional expedient, system and style is clearly visible in the two historical subjects presented here – bristling with countless figures and artfully peppered with flecks of watercolor – as well as throughout Dell'Era's entire production, with which they share this artist's characteristic manner of conveying the musculature of the shoulders, arms and calves, his same rendering of facial features, his manner of depicting the hair of his human figures, the manes of his horses and his distinctive touch when including architectural detail. Dell'Era's broad gestures, the compositional eloquence of the movements of his figures, his depiction of limbs that are frequently elongated and oversized, his icastic penchant for frequently highlighting dramatic expressions – all these elements appear frequently in the drawings of his sympathetic friend Ademollo, albeit with subtle differences. They also shed light on the cultural climate within which these two sublime pieces were created, which was not the sentimental classicism of the German artistic sphere, kept alive in Rome by the set that gathered around the figure of Angelica Kauffmann and with whom Dell'Era incidentally entertained close ties throughout his period spent in the papal capital. The heroic tones and severe layout of these two works are, in my view, instead perfectly aligned with the intellectual and stylistic dispositions that matured within



Fig.1 Giovan Battista Dell'Era, *The Pardon of Trajan*, china ink and pencil on cardboard, 730 x 2050 cm; Treviglio, Museo Civico Della Torre (detail).



Fig.2: Giovan Battista Dell'Era, *The Chariot Race*, china ink and pencil on paper; whereabouts unknown.

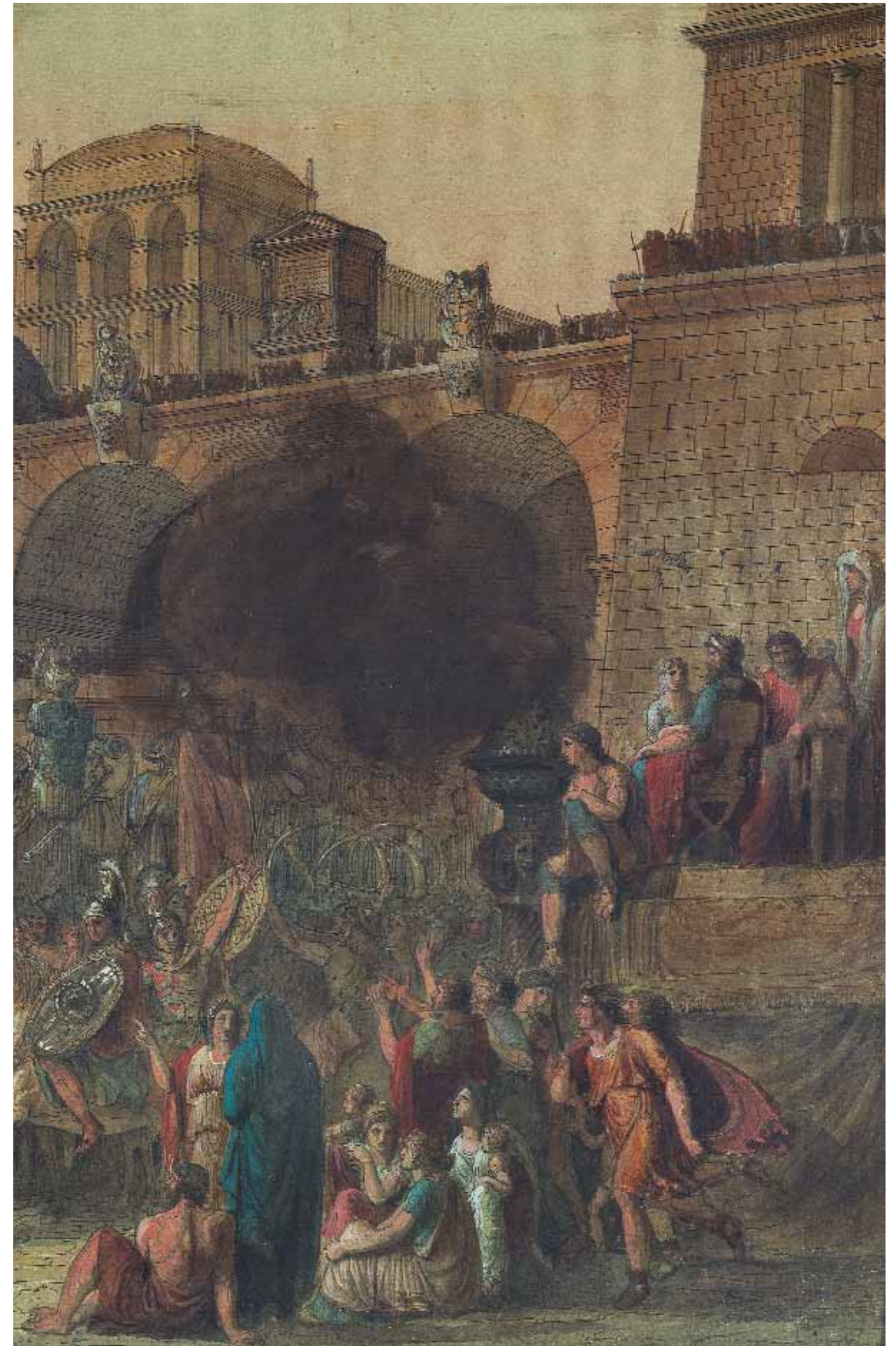




the set of young artists in Rome that revolved around the so-called Accademia de' Pensieri, founded by Felice Giani in his home in 1789-1790. Assuming the recollections of Tuscan painter Michelangelo Migliarini (Rudolph 1977) are correct, Dell'Era was part of this group along with a number of other foreign artists working in Rome at the time (François-Xavier Fabre, Humbert de Superville, the elusive Friedrich Müller – known as Maler Müller –, Bénigne Gagneraux, Jean-Baptiste Wicar and possibly even Girodet). Also members of the same group were those artists who were to become the leading exponents of Italian neoclassicism: Andrea Appiani, Vincenzo Camuccini, Pietro Benvenuti, Luigi Sabatelli, Giuseppe Bossi, Bartolomeo Pinelli (see *L'officina neoclassica* 2009; Leone 2009).

The lavish additions of watercolor in the two pieces, an unusual feature in this artist's graphic output, could be interpreted – as has been kindly suggested by Emilia Calbi – as an attempt to intercept the wealthy Grand Tour clientele, which in those years had a marked predilection for freehand watercolored drawings of Rome and the campagna, or genre scenes of Ancient Rome, produced in imitation of the fabulously successful initiators of this particular genre: Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros and Giovanni Volpato. Like many artists of the time, Dell'Era must have adopted the ingenious system perfected at the end of the century by the *vedutista* Franz Keiserman (Franz Keiserman 2007), also keeping a series of prototype drawings of his most popular compositions (such as the well-known Berber horserace down Via del Corso, or imaginary Ancient Roman details such as the two works presented here) in his studio. Probably drawn on tracing paper, the works were ready for a swift transposition into a large drawing format, on commission. From the 1790s onwards these large-scale drawings could be enriched with watercolor additions – in Dell'Era's case with the dark tonalities typical of his palette – to add a touch of glamour to these complex theatrical compositions. This sheds a new light on the many versions that exist – at times watercolored in shades of brown highlighted with white – of the Berber horse race captured at its beginning and end, as well as on the many pure and beguilingly accomplished drawings that make up this painter's opus.

Francesco Leone





## Pelagio Palagi

Bologna 1775 – 1806 Turin

### 10. *The Rape of the Sabine Women*

circa 1823 – 1824

Oil on canvas, 57 1/8 x 81 7/8 in (145 x 208 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

Exhibitions: *L'officina neoclassica* 2009

Bibliography: *L'officina neoclassica* 2009, pp. 51, 163, cat. VII.12;

Mazzetti D'Albertis 2011

This painting by Pelagio Palagi dates from a particularly fortunate and interesting time in this artist's career and is related to one of his most important commissions.

By 1822 Palagi had been living in Milan for seven years. After his supremely successful Roman sojourn, which had culminated in major commissions for the Quirinale and Palazzo Torlonia, he moved to Milan in order to follow up on a number of new and advantageous career prospects in various fields, from portraiture to historical painting, fresco, architecture and interior decoration. Although his ability to master so many different disciplines remained unequalled, Palagi's supremacy in the historical painting genre was beginning to be eroded by the younger Hayez, who he had employed as an assistant for the Theseus cycle in Palazzo Torlonia and who he himself had persuaded to move to Milan. Notwithstanding the inevitable rivalry, the two men remained friends and in 1821 they were jointly commissioned to complete the fresco cycle of Ancient Rome for the Sala della Lanterna of Palazzo Reale in Milan, left unfinished in 1813 by Andrea Appiani due to a sudden illness.

The commission in 1822 by Count Rasponi for a large painting to be placed on the ceiling of his town house in Ravenna came at a time when Palagi was overwhelmed with work. He had recently presented a second version of the monumental *Charles VIII King of France Visits Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza* to the Brera exhibition, completed for Count Gian Giacomo Mellerio (Lodi, Museo Civico), and he was in the process of painting another large-scale work taken from an episode of modern history, *Gustavus Adolphus Entrusting His Daughter Maria Christina to the Estates-General of Sweden Prior to Departing for the Thirty Years' War* (Milan, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna) commissioned by the German businessman Heinrich Mylius. Meanwhile another German collector, the Count of Schönborn, had entrusted him to paint *Pope Sixtus V Fails to Recognize His Own Sister* (cf. *Pelagio Palagi pittore* 1996).

Compared with the modern historical subjects he was working on, Rasponi's commission for *The Rape of the Sabine Women* was undeniably more in tune with Palagi's classicizing vein and with the frescoes he was completing for Palazzo Reale – a large rectangular composition of *Veturia and the Roman Matrons at the Feet of Coriolanus* and an octagon with two nude athletes representing *The Wrestling Match* (both works were lost in the bombing raids of 1943 but ample photographic documentation exists). Despite his busy schedule, Palagi must also have been intrigued at the chance to measure himself against one of the cult works of the neoclassical period, David's famous *The Sabine Women* (1799). The commission also provided him with the opportunity to pitch his talents against those of the various other reputed painters summoned by Rasponi for a complete makeover of the decorations of his *palazzo*. Mostly active in

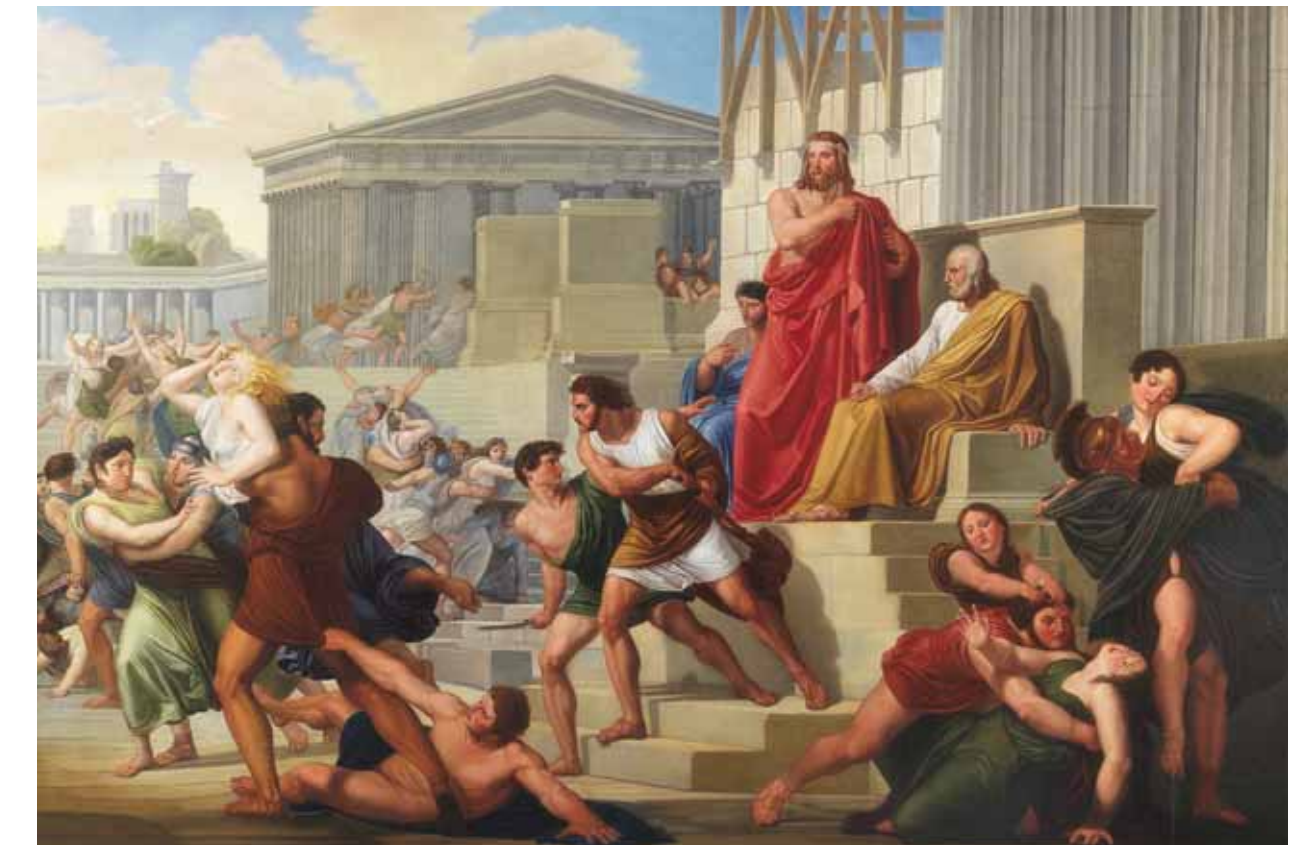
Rome, these included Tommaso Minardi, Filippo Agricola, Jean Baptiste Wicar, Francesco Nenci and Giovanni Barbiani (Mazzetti D'Albertis 2008; Ead. 2009; Ead. 2010).

In a letter penned to the count on August 9<sup>th</sup>, Palagi wrote of how the commission for the painting “destined to adorn the vaulted ceiling of a chamber” had reminded him of a previous, similar assignment, a large painting of *Caesar Dictating to Four Secretaries* (Rome, in deposit at the Istituto Italo Americano), completed between 1812 and 1813 for the Gabinetto Topografico of the Quirinale, which had posed problems with the chromatic effects when viewed from below. Once in place on the ceiling, the work had in fact turned out to be too dark.

From his correspondence with Rasponi, it emerges that by January 1824 the commission was almost complete, missing only “those corrections and finishing touches” that “I always notice on observing a work as a whole”. After completing the major commission for the frescoes of Palazzo Reale, Palagi was clearly able to work extremely fast on the Ravenna work. After several months of silence, however, at the end of 1825 Palagi wrote a new and conclusive letter to Rasponi in which he explained the reasons for the delay. Although the painting had in fact been ready in early 1824, Palagi explained that when he had hung it from the ceiling to see the effect he had been so disappointed that he had decided to start from scratch: “I fear this will be the last time I agree to paint oil paintings for vaulted ceilings... while oil as a genre far outmatches decorations painted day-by-day on fresh plaster, in which the colors are light and by nature extremely brilliant, in oil it is completely the reverse, with weaker colors that make up a far more vigorous painting texture... however one tries to obtain the requisites mentioned above, the result is always less vivid”.

Still in place in Ravenna, the painting is therefore the final – chromatically lighter and more brilliant – version of the previous one we have here, which presumably remained behind in Palagi's Milan studio. There is a slight difference in measurements between the two works (the Ravenna canvas being 166 x 245 cm), as if the artist had deemed a marginally larger piece to be more suitable, while in terms of composition the two canvases are much the same. Clearly Palagi was satisfied with the concision of the scene, his masterly staging of the movements of the figures, the opulence of the draperies and the suggestion of the majestic architectural background. The second version differs in terms of chromatic intensity and in the brighter tones employed by Palagi to improve the effect of the work when viewed from below. In any case both works mark the end of a chapter in Palagi's career as a painter of great historical subjects from Antiquity, a genre whose demise was being hastened by the advance of Romanticism.

Fernando Mazzocca





## Friedrich Rehberg

Hannover 1758 – 1835 Munich

### 11. *Young Bacchus, Cupid and Batillus at the Grape Harvest*

circa 1795

Oil on canvas, 24¼ x 31 7/8 (61.5 x 81 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Germany

Exhibitions: *Quadreria* 2009; *Un museo tutto da bere* 2011

Bibliography: S. Grandesso, in *Quadreria* 2009, cat. 9; Grandesso 2010, p. 97, fig. 105; Maia Confalone in *Un museo tutto da bere*, 2011, p. 116

In the opening of his pivotal essay *La pittura a Roma nella prima metà dell'Ottocento*, Stefano Susinno identified an artistic current that had developed at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century around the figure of Angelika Kauffmann. It was antithetical to the heroic and doctrinal emulation of Antiquity in favour of a more sophisticated selection of motifs associated with grace and the cult of individual sentiment. As an emblematic example of that particular taste, which favoured the writings of Anacreon, Ovid, Virgil and Apuleius over those of Homer, Plutarch and Livy, Susinno published another version of the Rehberg painting on display here (Susinno 1991, p. 402, fig. 567; now Susinno 2009, p. 116).

Such aspects of figurative culture, which would appear to derive from the all-pervading Arcadian ideals of 18<sup>th</sup> century Rome, were likewise destined to resurface at the end of the conflicts that culminated in the European Restoration, favouring a new vein of intimist sensitivity and a tendency towards sentimentality that lent a Romantic tinge to classicism in Rome. According to Susinno and Elena di Majo (1989, p. 8), a case in point was the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, the great rival of Canova. After his memorable debut with *Jason* in 1802 over the following decades Thorvaldsen was drawn increasingly towards a more idyllic and anecdotal form of classicism, as in the series of bas-reliefs emblematically published by the Rieti-born academic Angelo Maria Ricci as *L'Anacreonte di Thorvaldsen* (1828). In 1809 Rehberg had exhibited at the Campidoglio a number of paintings including *Love Crying to Venus Over a Bee Sting* (I. Sattel, *Schede* 1985, pp. 18-22), *The Encounter Between Aeneas and Dido*, *The Death of Procris*. It would appear that precisely at this time, when he was conceiving the composition of his *Love, Bacchus and Batillus* for the 1810 relief depicting the same subject (Copenhagen, Thorvaldsen Museum), Thorvaldsen wished to evoke the 18<sup>th</sup> century legacy of his elder teacher.

Four years beforehand, Giuseppe Antonio Guattani had published his account of a visit he had paid to the painter at his home. At the time Rehberg was mid-way through his career as a figure painter, which had begun in Leipzig and Dresden as a pupil of Adam Friedrich Oeser and Giovanni Battista Casanova, to be continued in Rome – where he arrived in 1777 – under the tutelage of Anton Raphael Mengs. Ten years later he was to return to the city, entrusted with setting up and directing a Prussian art academy along the lines of the Accademia di Francia in Rome. Although the project never came into being, he nonetheless remained in the Eternal City until 1820 (I. Sattel, in *La pittura in Italia* 1991, p. 988). Of his visit to Rehberg, Guattani remembers, “In visiting the many rooms of his house, all of which had been transformed into galleries for his art, we encountered a number of subjects, fine and delicate in both their choice and execution”. Guattani continued to describe our Anacreontic *Love Crying to Venus Over a Bee Sting* as well as the *Orpheus Bringing Eurydice Back from the Underworld* and the *Sleeping Endymion*, after Ovid, but also the sublime version of *Cain Slaying Abel*. Also in the Anacreontic category was, according to Guattani,

the “theme of a youthful Bacchus, Love and Batillus during the grape harvest. Within an agreeable country setting the two youthful deities press the grapes with their feet in a fine marble trough, while the poor mortal Batillus is condemned to carry basketfuls of grapes on his back to fill the trough: a very delightful painting” (Guattani 1806, pp. 84-85).

Rehberg had exhibited the first preparatory sketches for this subject at the fine arts academy in Berlin, in 1795. That same year Giovanni Gherardo De Rossi, a key figure also in Rome’s artistic debates, published through the Bodoni press his *Scherzi poetici e pittorici*, in which an illustration by the Portuguese José Teixeira Barreto (*Autunno*) depicts a similarly erotic subject. A first version of the painting was acquired by Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia for the Königszimmer of the Schloss in Berlin, from which it was subsequently moved to the Marmorpalais in Potsdam (destroyed during the War). A second version illustrated by Susinno (Wörlitz, Oranienbaum, Luisium Schlossmuseum) was commissioned in 1798 by Prince Franz von Anhalt-Dessau, a patron of Rehberg’s and for whom the painter acted as agent in Rome entrusted with the acquisition of antiquities. At Wörlitz the work was hung between two paintings by Jacob Philipp Hackert, in the prince’s bedchamber, who commented in a letter to Carl August, Duke of Weimar: “What an elegant painting! The figures are gracious and the landscape of such beauty that at times I do not even glance at the Hackert paintings” (Pfeifer 2006, p. 98). The popularity enjoyed by this subject commanded a number of replicas, eight in total according to Thieme-Becker, who failed to quote either his source or mention the destinations of the pictures, however. To date, the existence of two has been ascertained. One is at the Landesgalerie in Hannover and the other appeared for sale on the German antique market.

In a letter to the Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, Rehberg tells how the inspiration for this work came from an episode that he had personally experienced in the Italian countryside. Like many artists and travellers to Italy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it would appear that Rehberg felt he was reliving the myth of Arcadia complete with its Arcadian inhabitants: “I gleaned the idea for that landscape from a drawing I made early one autumn morning in the Kingdom of Naples, in one of the most blissful locations near Vietri, where lush vines grow fastened together with poplar branches and the shepherds are like those of Theocritus, singing to the accompaniment of bagpipes. No other place in the world comes closer to the pleasures of life evoked by Anacreon” (Siebigk 1876, p. 293; cit. in Pfeifer 2006, p. 99). This was therefore an idyll (the wider angle of the version presented here, with variations in a horizontal format, differs from the other known versions that are in a vertical format) generated by a landscape that was both real and ideal, evoked by the Etruscan or Roman vine-growing techniques that were still widespread in Campania, as well as by the bucolic setting. In the foreground Batillus, the beautiful ephebe described by Anacreon with Cupid and Bacchus (*Odes*, XVII, XVIII) carries the grape basket, possibly a double allusion to the Classical theme associating wine with love and the hardships that accompany mankind’s quest for pleasure and happiness. The fine detail of the antique basin – adorned with a relief depicting the birth of Bacchus from a thigh of Jupiter and being entrusted to Mercury and the Mount Nysa nymphs in a panther skin – is a faithful rendition of a Classical relief that was placed in the Sala delle Muse of the Pio Clementino Museum in 1778 (Pfeifer 2006, p. 99; Spinola 1999, p. 191, 1).

Stefano Grandesso





## Henry Tresham

Dublin 1751 – 1814 London

### 12. *Sleeping Nymph and Cupid*

1797

Oil on canvas, 60 x 93 ¾ in (153 x 238 cm)

Provenance: Lord Talbot de Malahide, Malahide Castle, County Dublin, Ireland; Malahide Castle sale; Christie's, 10 May 1976, lot. 591; Private collection, England.

Exhibitions: Royal Academy, London, 1797; Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 1853.

Bibliography: Crookshank and Glin 1978, pp. 96-97, no. 87; Crookshank and Glin 2002, p. 113.

On arriving to Italy to perfect his training as a historical genre painter, Henry Tresham quickly discovered a vocation for the art market and also began working as an agent and dealer of antiquities (cf. biographies in Pressly 1979, pp. 101-106; Ingamells 1997, pp. 952-953; Figgis, Rooney 2001, pp. 447-450; Bignamini, Hornsby 2010, I, pp. 332-333). Tresham had studied at the Dublin Society from 1767 to 1770, exhibiting regularly at the Society of Artists in the years that followed – oil and pastel portraits, as well as historical and Biblical subjects. During a brief sojourn in London, in 1775, he met Colonel John Campbell, who would later become the 1st Baron Cawdor and his patron. On an annual allowance conceded to him by an aunt, Tresham was able to travel to Italy, where he remained for thirteen years. After arriving in Florence, he proceeded to Rome in September 1775, where he rapidly found his place as a member of the city's cosmopolitan community of artists. With Thomas Jones, Thomas Hardwick and William Pars, Tresham made painting expeditions into the surrounding countryside. Subsequently he travelled to Naples with Thomas Banks, Alexander Day and other artists. In 1777 Tresham managed to secure the purchase of frescoes from three rooms of a Roman villa, unearthed at Villa Negroni on the Esquiline Hill, as documented in the well-known painting by Thomas Jones at the Tate Gallery. As soon as they had been detached, the frescoes achieved widespread fame thanks to the prints that had been made of them and published by Camillo Buti to designs by Anton Raphael Mengs. The frescoes were then acquired by Frederick Hervey, the Earl-Bishop of Bristol, who began using Tresham as an intermediary for his commissions of artworks, as well as being his patron. In 1781 he was in fact working on two severe historical subjects for the earl, *Brutus Condemning His Children to Death* and *The Death of Julius Caesar*, probably taking his inspiration from the experimental series of Ancient Roman *exempla virtus* by Gavin Hamilton, another British historical painter and art dealer living in Rome.

From 1783 and into the following year Tresham accompanied Campbell to Sicily, documenting the ruins of Messina after the devastating earthquake there, the Greek remains at Agrigento and Segesta, and the theatres of Syracuse and Taormina (London, British Museum). The drawings formerly in the Cawdor collection instead feature views of Malta, Tunisia and Greece, to which the two also travelled on the same trip.

In Rome, Tresham acted as intermediary for Campbell in the commission from Antonio Canova of *Love and Psyche Embracing*, the group that was later acquired instead by Joachim Murat (Paris, Louvre). The completion of the plaster model for this piece is celebrated in the pastel by Hugh Douglas Hamilton, *Canova and*

*Tresham Before the Love and Psyche Group* (1788-89, Victoria & Albert Museum, London). In 1784 he published *Le Aventure di Saffo*, a volume of eighteen aquatints illustrating episodes from the novel by Alessandro Verri, whose dramatic emphasis could prompt a comparison with the work of Henry Fuseli, also in the city until 1778.

In 1788 Tresham left the Papal capital for London, where he exhibited his historical paintings regularly at the Royal Academy until 1806. He had been admitted to the institution as an associate member in 1791 and as a full member in 1799, when he presented as his diploma piece the *Death of Virginia* (London, RA collections). He also contributed to the John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery with three paintings from *Anthony and Cleopatra* and published several volumes of poetry illustrated with his drawings such as *Rome at the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (London 1799). Meanwhile he had opened a successful gallery that sold old masters and antiquities. In 1807 he was nominated Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy but soon had to renounce the post due to a deterioration in his health.

In 1797 Tresham exhibited three works at the Royal Academy, the *Death of Virginia* mentioned above, *The Earl of Warwick's Vow Before the Battle of Towton* for the Boydell's Gallery and a *Nymph and Cupid*, whose description published at the time in *The Monthly Mirror*, under the pseudonym Angelo, corresponds exactly with the painting we have here. "Painted with more ease than any other of Mr. Tresham's productions in this year's exhibition. Rich in colour, excepting the lights on the female, which have somewhat of chilliness; the drapery and bye works agreeably disposed to aid the effect of the figure; the landscape, partaking of the wildness of Salvator Rosa is painted with spirit. The figures are well imagined, and for the most part well drawn. As only part of the face is seen, and that not marked with precision, the subject loses in interest; but the most striking defect is in the proportion of the right arm, which from the shoulder to the elbow is deficient near a hand's breadth, without any foreshortening to plead in its excuse."

Due to its formal affinities with the Sappho aquatints, it was hitherto believed that this substantial, large format mythological painting – among Tresham's most important works and from another great Irish collection – had been painted while the artist was in Italy. This is however ruled out by the description quoted above, which pushes the date of completion forwards, to a time when Tresham had already returned to England, even though the work's richness and complexity is certainly a legacy of his Italian sojourn.

The Mediterranean landscape which in the eyes of *The Monthly Mirror* reviewer was evocative of the bitter grandeur of Salvator Rosa, animated by a Titianesque glow, resembles the shape of Monte Cavo above the lake of Albano. The spot could well have been included in one of the painting expeditions made into the Roman *campagna* by Tresham and his friend Thomas Jones. The figure of the reclining nymph follows an iconographic motif studied by Canova in many of his subsequent statues and could have been taken by Tresham from one of the sculptor's earliest experiments with painting, the *Venus with a Mirror* (circa 1785, Posagno, Gipsoteca), in which he measured himself against the reclining female figures of Titian and Reni. Enclosed within a lin-



ear abstraction that hearkens to Canova's readings of Homer, as well as to the outline designs of John Flaxman, the figure's organic deformation appears still tinged with the neo-mannerist formal expressive modes of the Fuseli Circle in Rome. The whole is enriched with references to Classical iconography, particularly in the detail of the arm curled behind the nymph's head, as in the *Sleeping Ariadne* in the Vatican or, even more so, in the *Adonis Sleeping on Mount Latmos*, discovered by Hamilton in 1774 and which was part of the Townley collection (London, British Museum). Canova himself would have adopted the same feature in his statue of the same name (Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection). The color tones, in particular those used by Tresham for the lavish drapes on which the two figures are slumbering, do however display stylistic elements from the work of Benjamin West, who at the time was director of the Royal Academy.

Stefano Grandesso



## Natale Carta

Messina 1800 – 1888 Montagnano, Arezzo

### 13. *Bacchus and Ariadne*

Circa 1840

Oil on canvas, 9 x 11 3/4 (23 x 30 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

The recent discovery of this previously unknown painting is indeed fortuitous in that it is without doubt a finely executed preparatory oil for the larger canvas by the Sicilian-born Natale Carta, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, currently in the collection of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (oil, cm 120 x 146, signed lower right: *Natale Carta*, inv. 2367, original frame and coat of arms; cf. di Majo, in *Civiltà dell'Ottocento. Le arti figurative* 1997-98, p. 483; di Majo-Lafranconi 2006, p. 81).

Prior to its inclusion into the 19<sup>th</sup> century art collection of the Galleria Nazionale in 1920 by bequest from Fabrizio Ruffo di Motta Bagnara, Carta's *Bacchus and Ariadne* was part of the prestigious collection of 'modern' art gathered from the early 1840s by Ruffo's father, Vincenzo Ruffo di Motta Bagnara Prince of Sant'Antimo, and housed in the family's 17<sup>th</sup> century *palazzo* in Via Pessina, Naples (or Largo Mercatello, then renamed Piazza Dante). An enthusiastic patron of the arts, the prince had established his main residence in Naples after his important marriage in 1838 to Sarah Louise Strachan, daughter of the English admiral Sir Richard John Strachan. Soon afterwards, in fact, he commissioned Francesco Hayez to paint the well-known portrait of her that currently hangs in the Museo di San Martino in Naples. Already by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Vincenzo Ruffo's magnificent town house was featured on the guides to Naples printed for Grand Tour travelers. In his *Descrizione della città di Napoli* (1855-57, vol. 3, part I, pp. 316-18), Gaetano Nobile offers a detailed description of the architecture and furnishings of the house, with particular attention devoted to the collection of antique art and a nucleus of contemporary paintings, clearly gathered with an eye directed specifically towards Italian painters: the "*Hayez milanese*", the "*Podesti veneziano*", the "*Carta siciliano*", the "*Mancinelli napoletano*", the "*Morani e il Rocco, napoletani anch'essi*". The paintings in question were Francesco Hayez's *Vespri Siciliani*, *Francis I in the Workshop of Benvenuto Cellini* by Francesco Podesti, *Bacchus and Ariadne* by Natale Carta, Giuseppe Mancinelli's *Rubens at Whitehall* and Vincenzo Morani's *Esther and Ahasuerus*. With the exception of the Luigi Rocco, all these works were bequeathed by Ruffo to the Galleria Nazionale in Rome in 1920, together with a painting by the Bergamo-born painter Francesco Coghetti that had not been listed by Nobili – *Ludovico Martelli Mortally Wounded*. Besides this group of mythological, historical or sentimental genre figure paintings, the collection also included a sizeable group of landscapes by *en plein air* painters (Giovambattista Bassi, Hendrik Voogd, Pierre-Athanase Chauvin, Wilhelm Huber, Anton Sminck Pitloo, Frans Vervloet, Gabriele Smargiassi), as well as sculptures by artists from across the various states that made up pre-Unification Italy (Pietro Tenerani, Luigi Bienaimè, Carlo Finelli, Luigi Bartolini) (cf. di Majo 1997).

Sicilian like his high-born patron Vincenzo Ruffo, whose mother was Nicoletta Filangieri of the Princes of Cutò, Natale Carta had been a pupil of Giuseppe Patania and Giuseppe Velasco in Palermo before setting out for Rome, at the time an essential destination for any artist seeking to train in his craft. He eventually settled permanently in the Eternal City, while still keeping close ties both with Naples and Sicily. Working with Vincenzo Camuc-

cini in Rome, Carta's style acquired a marked neoclassical imprinting, with a purity reminiscent of Guido Reni that earned him a degree of success among local patrons. These included the wealthy Torlonia family, for whom Carta worked on decorations both for their city *palazzo* and their villa on the outskirts of Rome. He remains chiefly known for his religious paintings (in Rome: *Santa Rosalia* for Santa Maria dell'Itria, an *Immaculate Conception* for Santa Maria delle Fratte, two large canvases for the Basilica di San Paolo, rebuilt after the fire of 1823; in Naples, two more canvases for the Church of San Francesco di Paola), his historical and literary subjects (two paintings taken from *Atala* by Chateaubriand, shown in 1830 at the Real Museo Borbonico exhibition and acquired by Francis I for the Capodimonte picture gallery, a commission from Queen Maria Cristina of Savoy glorifying her dynasty with *Odoardo of Savoy at the Siege of Genoa*) and his portraiture (of the Bourbon sovereigns Francis I and Ferdinand II, of Carlo Filangieri with his family, of Nicola Santangelo with his wife and children).

In 1834 Carta took part in the competition for the post of painting professor at the Reale Istituto di Belle Arti of Naples but lost to his rival Camillo Guerra. The painting he completed for the competition, *Adonis Taking Leave of Venus*, subsequently also entered the Ruffo Collection and from there in 1920 to the collection of the Galleria Nazionale in Rome (on loan since 1923 at the Italian Embassy in Tripoli, all traces of this work have been lost for some years now; cf. Archivio generale, G.N.A.M.). In 1838 he did manage to secure his nomination as honorary member of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, where in 1848 he was appointed professor of painting and in 1868 professor of drawing (on Carta, cf. Barbera 2008).

Carta's mythological subject *Bacchus and Ariadne* that belonged to Vincenzo Ruffo is outstanding for the pleasingly engaging quality of the two figures, with Bacchus positioned frontally towards the viewer and Ariadne in the foreground, in three quarter length from the side. The unusual composition has such a theatrical quality that one could almost imagine the painting to be of two opera singers performing an aria on stage.

Bacchus-Dionysus has saved and married Ariadne, daughter of



Natale Carta, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Roma, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna



King Minos of Crete, after Theseus treacherously abandoned her on the island of Naxos. His good-looking figure half revealed by his short tunic and mantle, the god is holding in his hands the scroll of poetry from which the episode is drawn. His head is crowned with the customary vine leaves that identify him as Bacchus and his ecstatic gaze is turned up towards an unexpected opening in the clouds. Ariadne is addressing him up close, holding him in an embrace that appears designed to wake him, her right hand shaking the thyrsus of the maenads. The almost perfect match between painting and preparatory study, which lacks only the element of the thyrsus, testifies to the self-assuredness with which Carta approached a composition that was ultimately fairly straightforward, involving only two figures. The Winckelmann phrase "to sketch with fire and execute with phlegm" (cit. in Honour 1993, p. 70), referred to the relation between preparatory study and completed work in the sculpture, seems particularly apt in this case too. The polished perfection, both in formal and chromatic terms, brought into play by Carta in the large canvas painted for Vincenzo Ruffo, is matched in the preparatory study by his masterful use of quick brushstrokes that transmit the expressive immediacy of the figures, humanizing them and conveying the urgency of the feelings they have for one another.

Elena di Majo



## August Nicodemo

Rastatt 1763 – circa 1797 Naples (?)

### 14. *Minerva Greets Charles-Louis of Bourbon at the Tomb of His Father Louis XVI, in the Presence France and the Bourbon Hercules*

1793

Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in (76 x 63 cm)

Signed and dated below centre, on the plinth: "August Nicodemo Roma 1793"

Provenance: Borromeo family, Italy

The few surviving examples of works by August Nicodemo, a refined Austrian-born painter of historical subjects and portraits who worked in Italy at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, nonetheless eloquently convey his relations with prominent artists of the time as well as the elevated social rank of his patrons.

Born in Rastatt where his father Jakob Philipp, originally from Salzburg, was court painter, Nicodemo's earliest known works include *Diana with Endymion and Cupid* (Karlsruhe, castle) and document his studies in painting figures and from the imagination, while his subsequent works attest to his success primarily as a portrait painter.

In 1793 Nicodemo was living in Rome, in Via di Porta Pinciana (Noack 1927, vol. 2 p. 424). His known works from this period include the allegorical painting presented here, the full length *Portrait of Monsignor Giuseppe Ciavoli* standing next to a bust of Pope Pius VI – to whom he was Secretary (Rome, Museo di Roma, cf. Giuntella 1971, fig. XXIX) – and the portrait of Alexander Trippel, the Swiss sculptor who ran his private nude study class in Rome known as the Trippeliana. A number of artists from Northern Europe would gather there, including Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein and Heinrich Friedrich Füger, whom Nicodemo would later meet in Naples. The original of this painting is lost and currently exists only in the print transposition made by Ernesto Morace in 1775 (cf. *Goethe e l'Italia* 1989, p. 76).

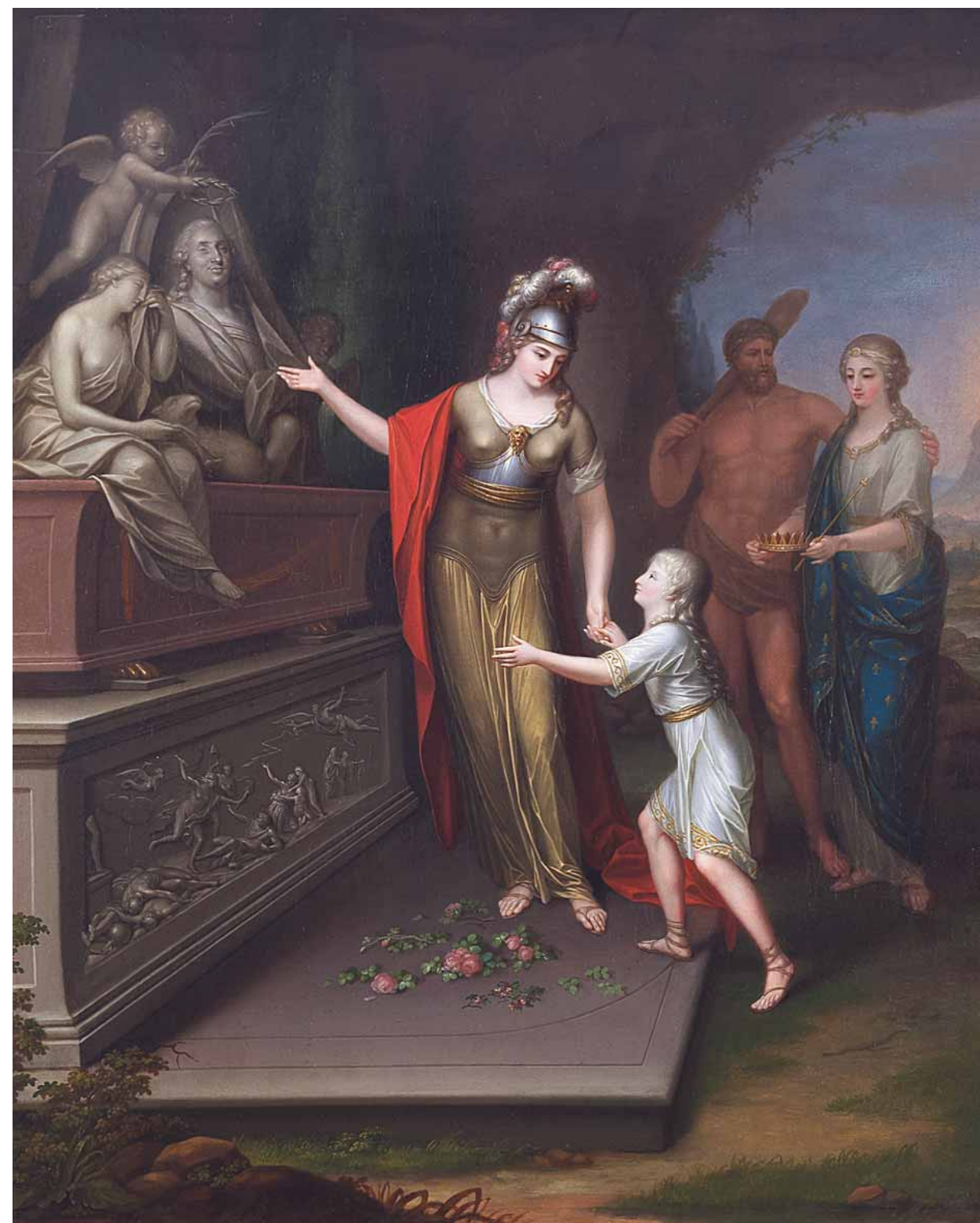
More of Nicodemo's works survive from his sojourn in Naples, where he went after Rome. There is the well known *Portrait of Jakob Philipp Hackert in His Studio*, completed in 1797 (Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie) and which was also rendered as a print by Morace, the portrait of Tischbein formerly at the Gemälde Galerie of Berlin, the portraits of *Maria Cristina* and *Leopoldo, Prince of Salerno* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), originally part of a series of portraits of the various children of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon and Maria Carolina of Habsburg-Lorraine that the queen took with her in exile to Vienna during the years of Napoleonic rule in Naples (Schülz 1987, pp. 329, 418). From the same period there is also the conversation piece of the *Lambton Family* in an interior with the Vesuvius in the background, completed in 1797, and the portrait of doctor and botanist *Domenico Cirillo* that was transposed into print form by Guglielmo Morghen.

The portraits of Trippel, Hackert and Tischbein can be read as a kind of map documenting Nicodemo's artistic contacts within the cosmopolitan circles of Rome and Naples. Besides these three who sat for Nicodemo, other members also included Angelika Kauffmann, with whom there are a number of common stylistic traits and who was the leading portraitist in Rome after Batoni

and Mengs. Kauffmann herself also enjoyed a number of important commissions from Naples. Another member of the group was Füger, the painter of historical subjects who was summoned to decorate the Royal Palace of Caserta. Füger's Austrian nationality, like portraitist and animal painter Martin Ferdinand Quadal, as well as Nicodemo himself, placed him in an advantageous position at the Neapolitan court, under Queen Maria Carolina of Austria.

In terms of influences, Nicodemo's work clearly contains elements of Hackert's illuminist dedication to conveying detail, while the classical taste and neo-mannerist traits of Kauffmann and Füger are visible in his elongated figures. The painting presented here, with Charles-Louis of France – Louis XVII – at the allegorical tomb of his father Louis XVI, is already pervaded with the new form of international classicism that developed in Rome. Its royalist and anti-Jacobin iconography, which flourished as propaganda art during the Revolution and which was rather more unusual than the iconography associated with the prevailing opposite political currents of the time, makes it of particular interest. Minerva, the goddess of reason, is in the act of leading Charles-Louis – whose features were well known after the portrait painted by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, widely copied and circulated as a miniature – to the sepulcher of his father. A clipeated bust of Louis XVI is unveiled by two supporting putti, one holding a laurel crown above the king's head and the other displaying the palm of his martyrdom. Beside them, completing the group of statues surmounting the sarcophagus, a mourning figure – probably intended as a personification of Meekness, given the lamb next to her, as in Canova's *Monument to Clement XIV* (Rome, SS. Apostoli) – holds a wilting lily of France. The front of the sarcophagus is adorned with a relief showing the destructive force of the Revolution, personified by blind Furies spreading fire and devastation, annihilating the royal family as well as the people and the arts. In the background Justice has fled while Time, flying overhead, promises revenge. Although in a more pondered declination, the iconography of the sarcophagus echoes many of the symbolical elements included by Rubens in his well known painting *The Consequences of War*, at Palazzo Pitti in Florence. Charles-Louis is accompanied by a personification of France, presenting him with the scepter and the crown, and Hercules, the mythical founder of the House of Bourbon, an allusion to the historical and divine legitimization of the monarchy. Behind them, outside the dark cavern embodying the revolutionary present, a shining temple of glory stands for what the future holds in store and as a reward for virtue, in line with the neo-Arcadian allegorical iconography revived in 18<sup>th</sup> century Rome.

The date of the picture, 1794, is also significant in that it is one year after the execution of the King and Queen of France and one year prior to the death of the Dauphin as a result of the appalling conditions of his imprisonment within the Tour du Temple. The fact that this politically allegorical painting was completed in Rome can be associated with a series of events and figurative accounts that took place in the city between 1793 and 1794. At least four funeral masses were dedicated to Louis XVI in the Papal capital during this period, complete with vast temporary structures in the French congregation churches of San Luigi dei Francesi and San Claudio dei Borgognoni, as well as in





Rome's cathedral, St John in the Lateran, where a large bier designed by Giovanni Battista Ceccarelli was installed (M. Gori Sassoli, in Fagiolo 1997, p. 250). Although no direct accounts of these structures has reached us, there is a series of designs by Giuseppe Barberi – which were to include sculptures by Vincenzo Pacetti – for a colossal temporary mausoleum destined for San Luigi dei Francesi (Pace 1997, pp. 236-238). A function was even held in the chapel of the Quirinal Palace, in the presence of Pius VI and the Daughters of France, Madame Marie-Adélaïde and Madame Victoire-Marie. The funeral oration was delivered by Monsignor Paolo Leardi and published in 1793 with allegorical illustrations by Francesco Morro, Carlo Antonini and Luigi Sabatelli, which were etched Francesco Mochetti and by Antonini himself. Morro's *Revolutionary Hydra* devours wealth, destroys the symbols of the arts and sciences and the shield bearing the lilies of France, while the Heavenly Eye welcomes the butterfly-soul of the king and threatens retribution in the form of Jupiter-like lightning bolts. Sabatelli instead portrayed *Pius VI Between Allegories of Religion and Hope*, the *Allegorical Monument to Louis XVI*, among personifications of *Prosperity*, or *Loyalty, Justice, Fortitude* and a more generic veiled mourning figure in the same attitude as *Temperance* in the monument by Canova quoted above. Lastly, a *Funerary Spirit* with its face thrown backwards embraces the sovereign urn.

Such allegorical and iconographic themes were all employed by Nicodemo and appear also in the plates by Pietro Leone Bombelli that were published in the official records of the secret consistory held by Pius VI on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1793 (*Acta Sanctissimi* 1793): a *Mourning Figure at the Urn of Louis XVI* under a stormy sky and *Fame* in flight above the symbols of the crown, to designs by Giuseppe Cades. It is therefore quite likely that the allegorical painting here was commissioned to coincide with one of these events. The work is also an indication of young Nicodemo's degree of proximity to the set that gathered around Felice Giani's Accademia dei Pensieri, which at the time was attended also by Luigi Sabatelli, a key figure in the development of the Classical and sublime mode in Rome around lofty historical or allegorical subjects.

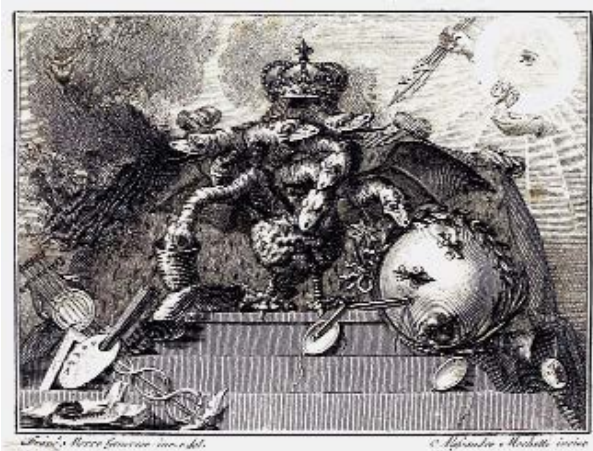
The presence of the Bourbon Hercules in the painting, combined with the ties that Nicodemo is known to have had with the Neapolitan court, prompt a parallel with the masterpiece of heroic sculpture *Hercules and Lichas* by Antonio Canova, who began working on the group a year later in 1795 (Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna). Originally commissioned by Duke Onorato Gaetani di Miranda, it was destined for the Real Museo Borbonico in Naples, where the message of the Bourbon Hercules avenging the regicidal revolution would have been plain (Susinno, Barroero 1999, pp. 103, 138-139, no. 95; Grandesso 2006, pp. 346-349). The fondness of the Bourbons for this iconography further manifested itself when, during his Sicilian exile, Ferdinand III of Sicily commissioned Giuseppe Velasco to complete the fresco decoration of the *Triumph and Labours of Hercules* for the Palazzo dei Normanni in Palermo.

It would not be unthinkable, therefore, that the Neapolitan court could have commissioned this painting. Its successive inclusion in the Borromeo collection is documented, but if it were possible to establish such an original commission this work would stand

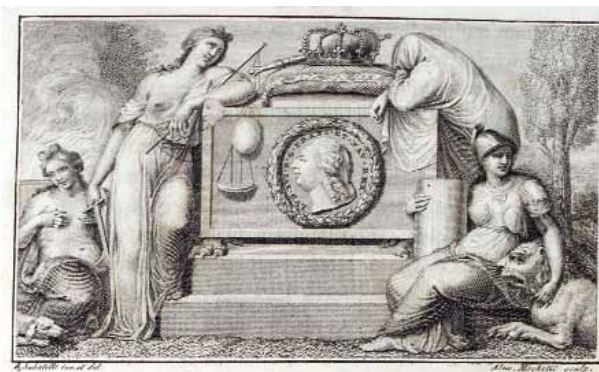
as both a significant precursor of the Canova *Hercules* and as an important testimony showing how the allusive power of mythology was harnessed in the neoclassical age, even in relation to grave historical and political events.

To conclude with an amusing anecdote taken from the biography of the architect Giuseppe Valadier: during a visit paid in 1793 by the royal princesses of France to Valadier's studio, which had formerly belonged to his father Luigi, the princesses were so moved by his striking resemblance to Louis XVI that Valadier later sat as a model for Louis in the painting by Carlo Maria Viganoni of Pius VII and the French king in adoration of the Redeemer (Servi 1840, pp. 6-7; Ciampi 1870, pp. 73-74). A comparison with Valadier's features immortalized by Jean-Baptiste Wicar (Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca) indicates the likelihood that the young architect posed as the King of France also for this painting.

Stefano Grandesso



Francesco Morro, draughtsman, Alessandro Mochetti, printer, *The Revolutionary Hydra*, from Leardi 1793



Luigi Sabatelli, draughtsman, Alessandro Mochetti, printer, *Monument to Louis XVI Flanked by Prosperity, Justice, a Mourning Figure and Fortitude*, from Leardi 1793





## Francesco Caucig

Gorizia 1755 – 1825 Vienna

### 15. Allegory: Reflection on the Transience of Human Happiness. Francesco Serafino Prince of Porcia in Meditation

Circa 1815 (prior to 1825, after 1810)  
oil on canvas, 64 x 113 in (163 x 287 cm)  
Provenance: Prince Francesco Serafino di Porcia, castle of Porcia, or Spittal, Carinthia, Castle of Porcia; Private collection, Carinthia.

A number of elements permit the attribution of this hitherto unknown painting to Caucig, including the distinctive style, mentions of the work in period sources and the existence of preparatory sketches of two feet and a female head (Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, Kupferstichkabinett of Vienna, inv. no. 1456; publ. in Rozman 1978, ca. 144). The balanced composition of the piece, with the figures central on the narrative placed in the foreground, is closed in to the left by a tree and an upright cypress – a feature that was particularly dear to Caucig. At the right hand extremity of the picture a fashionably dressed gentleman draped in an Empire style mantle languidly sits on a rock in a semi-reclined position, lost in thought beneath a great oak tree. Typical elements of Caucig's work are the attention to botanical detail, the rosy Mediterranean sky at sunset, the style of the landscape and – most of all – the type and poses of the figures. The modest female figure with her head propped up on her hand, barefoot and with a saddlebag containing loaves of bread, reappears also in other oil paintings and drawings by Caucig, and is an element taken from Classical art. The painter had certainly assimilated such figures during his time spent drawing the Classical sculptures and reliefs present in collections in Rome. The Classical facial features of the attractive, elegant guitar player dressed in a heavy white gown, are taken from the faces and hairdos of ancient beauties such as Venus and other female figures present in works in the Capitoline Museums, in Villa Albani and elsewhere. Caucig redeveloped them and included them in a number of his compositions. The winged *putto* holding a cup of wine in one hand and a lit torch pointing towards the ground in the other, has the face and curly hair typical of Caucig's children or youthful subjects (*Narcissus*, *Semiramis Fed by the Doves*, *The Infant Cypselus*). These too were derived from Classical art, as we can surmise from the painter's drawings of *Eros Stringing His Bow* in the Capitoline Museums or of other statues at Palazzo Mattei, the Vatican Museums and in Villa Albani. The pose of the prince absorbed in his thoughts, wrapped in his mantle and with his left leg outstretched, is reminiscent of J. H. W. Tischbein's *Goethe in the Campagna*, which was painted in 1787 in Rome and subsequently reproduced in print form. It is not inconceivable, therefore, that Caucig also drew on this work for inspiration.

The clear, almost harsh outlines, the cool color palette, the brilliant, almost glazed quality of the painting surface, together with the characteristic scarlet details of the clothes, are all fully in line with the neoclassical painting manner of the time, which Caucig embraced and pursued for his entire career.

As well as the common stylistic traits with the work of Caucig, it has been possible to confirm the attribution to this artist thanks

to the existing preparatory sketches of the feet of the modest woman and – at the centre of the same sheet – one of the head of the woman at the centre of the painting. A third element of proof is in an article published in the magazine *Archiv* in 1825, according to which Caucig had completed "two allegorical paintings" for Prince Serafino di Porcia (Boeck 1825). A series of elements point to this very painting being one of the two mentioned in the article. One element is that Ignaz Kolmann, who for many years was the prince's secretary, was also a collaborator for *Archiv*. It would appear that he was responsible for providing F. H. Boeck with the news of Caucig's *Allegories*, which was first reported in the magazine.

Writer, painter and, as has emerged recently, also a documented connoisseur of Caucig's work, Kollmann gives an account of a visit to Francesco Serafino di Porcia in his castle at Porcia, in Friuli, in his volume *Triest und seine Umgebung* (1807, pp. 137-140). Kollmann writes that the walls of the residence were adorned with paintings, including "a magnificent painting by Signor Caucig of Vienna, *Portia, Wife of Brutus, Prior to Swallowing Burning Coals*", which was completed by the artist in Venice in 1794 and later donated by the prince in 1812 to the newly founded Joanneum museum of Graz (where there is currently also the *Orpheus Mourning Eurydice*, donated at the same time by Caucig himself). There is no mention of the canvas we have here, so presumably it had not yet been painted. At the time the castle was also adorned with a series of allegorical images, prints and inscriptions with a moral and philosophical message.

Prince Francesco Serafino of Porcia (Porzia), Brugnera and Ortenburg (Konjice/Gonobitz, today Slovenske Konjice at Celje 1755–1827 Venice) came from an ancient noble family with estates in Friuli, Trieste, Gorizia, Carinthia, Carniola (today part of Slovenia), Styria and Bavaria. A humanist and philanthropist, his interests ranged from medicine to philosophy, literature, painting and botany. He published several editions of his personal philosophical, moral and religious reflections on mankind, translated into Italian from German (Porcia 1814; 1815; 1820), and was known as an eccentric and a wit (*Neue Annalen* 1807; Wurzbach 1872, pp. 117-120; Benedetti 1963). A dilettante draughtsman and painter, the prince also produced a number of allegorical compositions of his own conjecture. On one occasion he caused a scandal by disguising himself as a street peddler at a dance at La Scala, where he handed out a print he had designed of a macabre ball. At a later date he commissioned a portrait of himself in the company of a skeleton, surrounded by allusive inscriptions. Eventually he had the same subject of the Caucig painting transposed into print form by the Viennese Johann Böhm, to a design by Kollmann. It has not yet been possible to trace the print but the description of it in the 1807 *Neue Annalen* says that it showed the melancholy prince in an allegorical portrait, seated in a thoughtful attitude by a young woman playing a guitar, with a playing card between her breasts and a mask attached to her sleeve. Her long train is described as being held by an unpleasant looking woman and by a skeleton, holding up a cup to her from behind from which issues forth the sentence "lude, post mortem nulla" (enjoy yourself, for there is nothing after death). Above the group an inscription reads "In casa della Tristezza è la Verità"





(truth abides with sadness), while below, divided by the Porcia coat of arms, “Madama Allegría – Il principe Francesco Serafino Porcia in Ipocondria” (Madame Happiness – the Prince Francesco Serafino Porcia in Hypochondria).

The description corresponds exactly to a small, unsigned painting still in the hands of the prince’s descendants at the castle of Porcia. Compared with that grotesque image, somewhat Nordic and Germanic in taste, Caucig’s large scale rendition has acquired a composed solemnity that is decidedly more classical, enabling the work to imbue the philosophical ideas behind the allegory with a more universal significance.

Fastened onto the left breast of his topcoat, the seated and thoughtful prince is wearing the grand cross of the Bavarian Order of St. Hubert, along with its green-bordered red band (Leist 1892, p. 51; Henning, Hertfurth 2010, p. 17), which the King of Bavaria granted for loyalty to his person or for charitable deeds towards the poor (Ackermann 1855, p. 35). The fact that Porcia was granted this decoration in 1805 is a *post quem* reference for the dating of this picture. “The temptress with the guitar, her chest in evidence and the mask on her sleeve, represents ostentation, lust, gambling and art” – was the description reserved for the central female figure in the 1807 *Neue Annalen*. The serene beauty of the same figure in this painting is however lent an additional, affectionate air of participation in the feelings of the protagonist. She is the personification of the beauty and amusement offered by gambling, music and theatre. In Caucig’s painting the skeleton with the cup has been replaced by a nude young boy bearing a torch pointed downwards, in reference to the Classical iconography for representing death. The wine he is in the act of offering symbolizes ecstasy but also abandonment and death. The poor, barefoot woman holding the train of the expensively dressed lady represents regret and nostalgia, but also the vanity inherent to material riches. Her misery recalls the condition of many, while the bread in her saddlebag could be an allusion to the prince’s generosity, given that he was universally remembered as a philanthropist. The landscape in the background is similar to the drawings made by Caucig on his peregrinations into the hinterland during his Venetian sojourn, and represents the Friuli Prealps, with the castle of Porcia just recognizable in the distance.

This erudite image therefore translates into a meditation on the remedies for hypochondria, considered one of the symptoms of melancholy from Hippocrates right through to the medicine of the time – one need only read the works of the Padua-born doctor Giuseppe Antonio Pujati on the subject, published in Venice in 1762 (cf. Riva 1992, p. 52 and onwards). Hence the open air, beauty, love, pleasure, the distraction of the arts, harmony, gambling, rest, wine and – in the attitude of the prince – philosophy itself. By placing all these elements on a par with vanity for honors and riches, the work is also a reflection on the human condition in general, and probably on how different social ranks ultimately share a common destiny. This is indeed more than a depiction of the bizarre imaginings of a saturnine prince; this is a visual rendition of that albeit universal sentiment that broke onto the scene in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the malady of the century afflicting intelligent human being – with a precise literary equivalent in the works of Vittorio Alfieri and an evolution of sensitivity that anticipated the birth of the Modern Man (on this subject cf. Riva 1992).

The exhaustive catalogue of Caucig’s works, *Annalen der Literatur*, published in Vienna in 1810, does not list this work, while the quotation mentioned earlier from 1825 marks the date prior to which it must have been executed. Its affinity with the 1807 print and its conceptual proximity with a painting commissioned by Porcia (although it is not known whether it was executed) in 1809 would point to the likelihood of a date closer to 1810. In a letter to the architect Pietro Nobile dated Vienna, April 5<sup>th</sup> 1809 (cit. in Benedetti 1963, p. 27) the painter informed him that the Prince of Porcia had commissioned another allegory, *Alexander the Great Resting on Ruins After His Many Conquests* – a philosophical theme dear to the prince.

Of Slovene origins, Franz Kavčič – or Caucig – was born in Gorizia but studied in Vienna, Bologna and Rome in the 1780s, at the same time that J. L. David was living and exhibiting in the city (cf. Rozman 2007; Ead. 2010, with prec. bibl.). In Rome he lived in the same house as Felice Giani and Joseph Bergler, the first director of the Prague Academy. Together with Bergler and his other colleagues, Caucig drew Rome and its surrounding *campagna*, developing a style that was in line with the classicism of the Rome school, which at the time was undergoing a rapid transformation within the city’s cosmopolitan community of artists. He met Antonio Canova, with whom he entertained a cordial and respectful correspondence for many years. In 1791 his patron and protector, Count Filippo Cobenzl, sent Caucig to study in Mantua for five months, with the task of procuring several plaster casts for the academy in Vienna and copying the reliefs of Palazzo Tè. Subsequently Caucig was sent to study in Venice. As Napoleon’s troops advanced through Italy, in 1797 he returned to Vienna where he embarked on a teaching career. For a time he directed the Vienna porcelain manufacture and, from 1820 until his death, Caucig occupied the post of director of the painting and sculpture school in the city’s applied arts academy. In 1795 he became an honorary member of the Accademia di Venezia and in 1823 of Rome’s Accademia di San Luca. Along with his patron, Count Filippo Cobenzl, Caucig’s clients were learned appreciators of the arts, nature, philosophy and linguistics, as well as followers of Illuminism and – in some cases – of freemasonry. They included the Auersperg princes, Count Colloredo, Count Mansfeld, Count Czernin, Count Fries and Count Schönborn, Prince Liechtenstein, the Prince of Porcia and the Duke von Sachsen-Teschen. Today most of Caucig’s works are to be found in Austria (including some 2000 of his drawings), in the Czech Republic, in Italy (Gorizia, Imola), Hungary, Germany, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and in the United States.

One of Caucig’s largest paintings, the work we have here commands a position of respect within the panorama of European painting in the 1820s. It is a testimony to this artist’s talent and to the studies he pursued in the international arts centre that was Rome in the 1780s, as well as to his long tenure of the professorship at the academy in Vienna. The subject and execution of this painting are a historical and spiritual document of the art, life and thinking of certain European personalities who did not surrender to those aspects of a world that were already declining into conventionality and violence.

Ksenija Rozman, Stefano Grandesso





## Francesco Podesti

Ancona 1800 – 1895 Rome

### 16. Study for the Head of Eleonora d'Este

circa 1834-38

Oil on canvas, 11 ¼ x 13 ½ in (28.5 x 34 cm)

Provenance: private collection, Rome

This is a study for the head of Eleonora D'Este in one of Podesti's most significant and emblematic works, *Torquato Tasso Reading the Gerusalemme Liberata at the Ferrara Court*. Whilst working on the *Myth of Bacchus* cycle of frescoes at Villa Torlonia, from 1832 to 1834 Podesti had also developed this painting – probably without any specific commission – to try his hand at producing a Romantic subject within a Renaissance setting. The following year Prince Alessandro Torlonia acquired the work (Rome, Luisa Briganti collection, cf. M. T. Barolo, in *Francesco Podesti* 1996, pp. 140-147), which had come to be regarded almost as a manifesto of Podesti's painting. It was in fact hailed as such by Giuseppe Mazzini in his influential essay *Pittura moderna in Italia*, which sanctioned the inclusion of Podesti within the "pittura nuova" group of artists responsible for reinvigorating Romantic painting with subjects taken from Italian history. Among the other leading exponents of the group were Francesco Hayez in Milan and Giuseppe Bezzuoli in Florence. Mazzini noted that Podesti did retain his specifically personal characteristics by "re-embracing" – particularly in his religious subjects – "the great masters of the sixteenth century" (Mazzini 1993, p. 105). In this sense he was interpreting that "neo-Renaissance purism" (Mazzocca 1991, p. 619, cf. also Mazzocca 2005) in a Raphaellesque key that would have conducted him along his personal "third path" formula, between academic classicism and Romanticism, which was to prove so hugely successful and influential in the Italian artistic panorama of the time.

Mellini has underlined Podesti's ability in this painting to reconcile the tradition of the old masters, from Raphael's *School of Athens* to Carracci, with recent artistic currents up to Palagi and Canova, as is visible in the poses of the "Eleonore" that echo those of the famous Canova *Dancers* (Mellini 1996, pp. 19-20). Maria Teresa Barolo has instead noted a similarity of psychological attitude in the expression of Eleonora, whose head is at an angle and her gaze askance, with that of the mature courtesan in Mantegna's *Camera degli Sposi*.

The popularity of Tasso during the Romantic period as the prototype of the hero tormented by love, madness and adverse destiny, was at the time reflected also in literature (Giovanni Rosini, *Saggio sugli amori del Tasso*, 1832) and music (Gaetano Donizetti, *Torquato Tasso*, taken from Rosini, 1833). Following the success of his painting, Podesti was immediately prompted to make two replicas. The first, currently untraceable, was destined for the Russian prince Theodore Galitzin and differed from the original version both in the arrangement and identities of the figures, as well as in its more Renaissance rather than Gothic architectural construction. The second version, completed in 1838, was probably similar to the Galitzin version and was bought by Count Paolo Tosio, a cultivated collector from Lombardy with a predilection for the great figures and glories of the Italian nation (Brescia, Musei Civici d'Arte e di Storia; M.T. Barolo, in *Francesco Podesti* 1996, p. 170).

Despite considerable differences in terms of dress and hairstyle,

the study presented here would appear to have more in common with the Galitzin or Tosio paintings than with the Torlonia work. It is probably the same work that Podesti mentions in his autobiographical memoirs when he says, "I then painted a small canvas bust of Eleonora from my Tasso" (Podesti 1982, p. 215). While the autobiography description would seem to indicate that the small canvas was painted after the main work had been completed, the unfinished paintwork and expressive details of the figure are typical of a preparatory model, as with the *Cardinal Head* (Florence, private collection), which is considered a study from life for the Galitzin version of the painting (M. T. Barolo, in *Francesco Podesti* 1996, p. 174).

Stefano Grandesso



Francesco Podesti, *Torquato Tasso reading the Gerusalemme Liberata at the Ferrara Court*, Brescia, Civici Musei d'Arte e Storia



## Bernardino Nocchi, attributed

Lucca 1741 – 1812 Rome

### 17. *Lamentation of Christ (after the relief by Canova)* 1800

Oil on canvas, 34 ¾ x 25 ¾ in (88 x 65.5 cm)

Provenance: private collection, Milan

Bibliography: Mellini 1997, p. 323, fig. 5; Id. 1999, pp. 16, 239.

Almost fifteen years have passed since Gian Lorenzo Mellini showed me a photograph of a chiaroscuro painting of a *Lamentation of Christ*, which besides a few variations was similar to a gesso model of similar size (92 x 73 cm) made by Antonio Canova after his return to Rome from Possagno in 1799. G. Pavanello has listed a corresponding print by Pietro Vitali (Pavanello 1976, no. 115), of which there exists another linear print (436 x 304 mm) by Antonio Banzo after a drawing by Giovanni De Min (*Canova e l'incisione* 1993, XXIX, p. 135).

Mellini had sought my advice on the paternity of the canvas in question, which was up for sale on the Milan antique market as an Appiani, on the basis of our many conversations regarding the models used by Canova, as well as on the possible purpose of the meticulous painting transpositions that the sculptor commissioned of his works by artists such as Bernardino Nocchi, Stefano Tofanelli and Pierre-Paul Prud'hon. It is worth noting that these transpositions were not simply destined to be used as models for printmaking or for a sophisticated clientele; they were also valuable instruments for Canova's personal reflections on theory.

Having excluded a convincing attribution to Appiani, I suggested that the prime quality of that work could be the hand of Bernardino Nocchi. I assumed that we had discovered one of those works that Nocchi painted for Canova and which he generally wrote of to his son Pietro in Lucca. For Nocchi these interpretations and pictorial transpositions had their roots in his study of glyptic art and bas-reliefs from Antiquity, which he elaborated into cameo and chiaroscuro decorations for the Apostolic Palace where, from 1780 and for the following ten years, he had occupied the position of official painter. For examples of his work there, one need only think of the two octagons painted for the apartment of the Secretary of Briefs to the Pontifical Tribunal.

Some of Nocchi's comments in his letters over the years now spring to mind: "I have suffered a rheumatism to the head though my study of Canova, for whom I have completed a four-handbreadth painting for the work destined for Count Alfieri in Florence, a surround to the statue of the Emperor of the French and now a further four-handbreadth of the work destined for the Marquise de St. Crux – with the urn and all the surrounding architecture" (November 20<sup>th</sup> 1807). Then there are the letters in which Nocchi is concerned with the "haste of Canova to have a small picture of the statue of the wife of Lucien Bonaparte seen from the front and from the rear" (July 9<sup>th</sup> 1808) – this painting only came to light again recently (Lucca, Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Mansi, cf. S. Grandesso, in *Canova e l'ideale classico* cat. VI.11). And again, "yesterday Canova sent me a bas-relief of a figure and a portrait bust for a funerary monument in the manner of Volpato, for me to paint" (December 30<sup>th</sup> 1809). Several months later, Nocchi again writes of "a little monument for Canova on a head-sized canvas, of which he sent me the great plaster to my house. And now I am to do one directly at his home, very ornate and consequently very laborious (April 13<sup>th</sup> 1810). There is no mention of the precise subject for any of these works, however (cf. Giovannelli 1985; Id. 1998). A generic mention of some of Nocchi's works in the Canova collection does appear in 1829, in the export request from Rome submitted by Canova's heir and

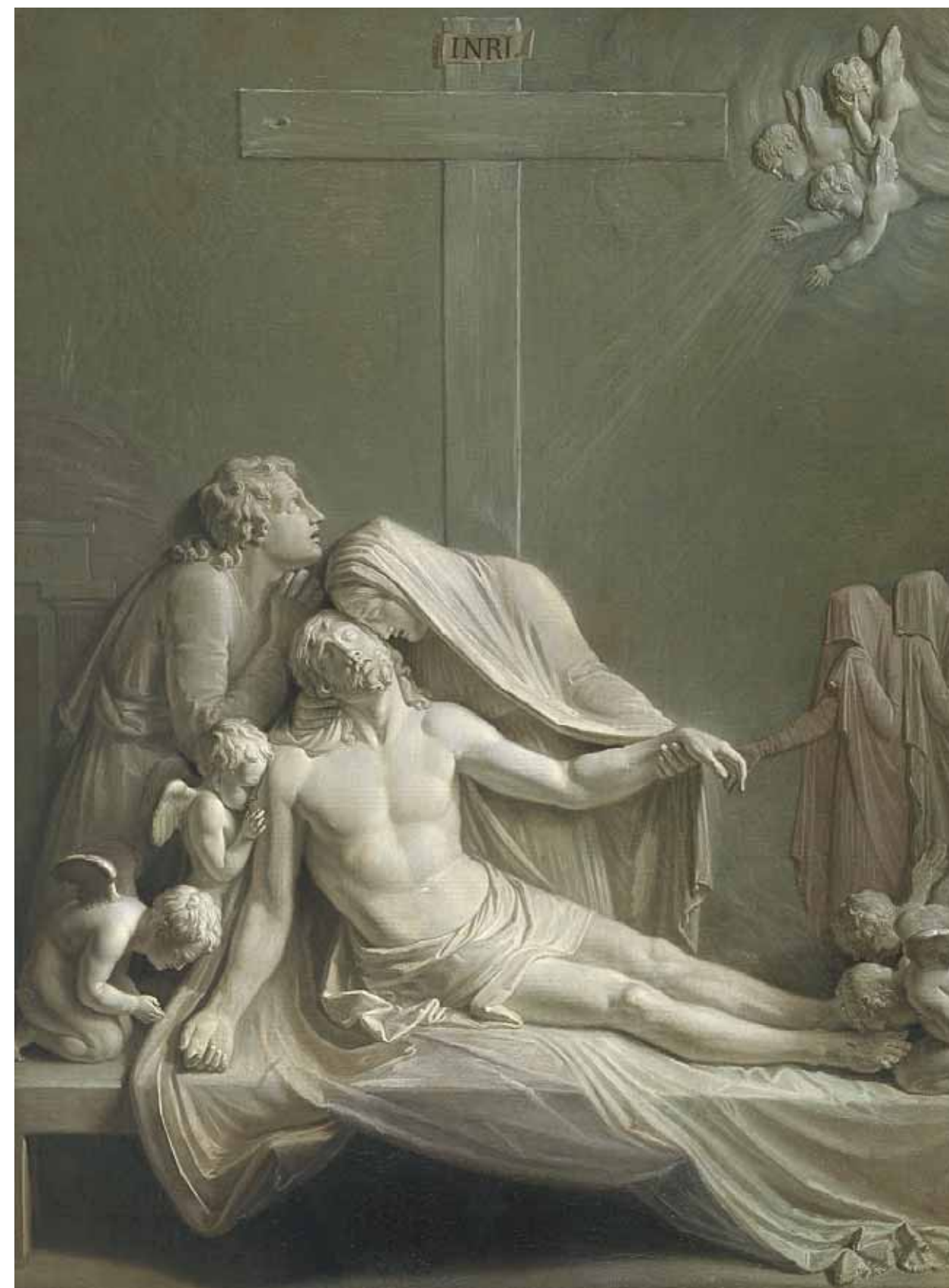
half-brother Giambattista Sartori Canova for three "Nocchi chiaroscuro depicting works by Canova" (cf. Pavanello 2001).

In any case these references date from after the presumed completion date of the work we have here, for which I have been unable to find any mention in Nocchi's extensive correspondence. The correspondence does however reveal that Canova and Nocchi must have been friends prior to 1805, since in mid-September of that year Nocchi's 22-year-old son Pietro was already employed in the sculptor's workshop, "toiling most hard" in exchange for a meager pay.

As well as the fascination for the subject matter and my epistolary research, my suggestion for the attribution of this work was also shared. In 1997, Mellini in fact published it, albeit with a problematic attribution to Nocchi, noting how the canvas was "clearly destined to function as an altarpiece for a domestic shrine". In his volume dedicated to Canova, Mellini later confirmed the attribution, along with that of a preliminary drawing of the same subject by Canova himself (noted by G. Pavanello, Cagli, Biblioteca Civica). Now that so many years have elapsed, I will make a few annotations concerning this magnificent monochrome, which shimmers with a tender, musky light so finely shed on the various figures that it is not hard to imagine the sculptor himself attending to the careful lighting of the piece. Although unconfirmed by precise documentary evidence, in view of the fine quality of the painting I would like to begin by confirming my original attribution to Bernardino Nocchi, adding that it would be extremely useful to know the details of the five drawings he made for a *Via Crucis* procession mentioned in the family papers (taken from a manuscript written by Pietro Nocchi, Arch. "Scraps", Nocchi 5). A comparison between these and the canvas we have here would offer insight into those subtly hidden forces that, at such supreme levels of pictorial accomplishment, enter into play as a kind of magnetic interchange between the real work and its 'interpreter'. I do indeed see the inspired strokes of Bernardino's brush in this *Lamentation of Christ*, which in certain areas is charged with the same emotivity that can be found in some of his models for altarpieces. A case in point is the *Transit of St. Joseph*, painted in the mid-1790s for the altarpiece in the church of San Secondo in Gubbio, where among the heads of the angels in the composition I discern the features of a young Pietro, the same features that appear with a latent familiarity in one of the heads of the angels included in the Canova bas-relief. Other than these intangible sensations and, as I have already mentioned, a convincing stylistic similarity with Nocchi's work, we are however lacking in concrete elements with which to confirm our attribution.

In the painting on display here it would appear that part of a kind of coffin is protruding from beneath the pallet onto which the body of Christ is being laid, with the fabric of the sheet creasing over its corners. In the final plaster bas-relief version and in the corresponding etching by Banzo this element is developed in volume to such an extent that it modifies the overall composition. This could indicate that the painting here was directly in the sculptor's workshop, from the clay model that was either still fresh or being completed, prior to inserting the cumbersome coffin that in the final version is slotted with precision at the centre of the scene, as if not to upset the folds of the already modeled shroud.

I would like to conclude these temporary annotations with a reminder that, among the works completed by Canova in 1800 and listed in Antonio D'Este's *Memorie* (1864, p. 317), there features a "small model of a bas-relief representing the Deposition of the Cross". D'Este himself later produced a version in marble for Count



Widmann in Venice, which later passed into the Loonis Collection in Chicago (Pavanello 1976, no. 115). Both the Canova bas-relief and our monochrome – which stands as a fine analysis of it – offer an enriching comparison with the large canvas of the *Lamentation of Christ* that Canova began in 1799 during his painful retreat back to his hometown, and which he would resume again in 1810 and in the summer of the following year. The same comparison is still

valid also for the circular *Deposition* in plaster that Canova completed in November that same year. Bartolomeo Ferrari made a bronze version of it in 1826 for the Canova Temple at Possagno, while a marble copy was later sculpted by Cincinnato Baruzzi and bought by Pope Gregory XVI in 1832 for the church of the SS Salvatore in Terracina.

Roberto Giovannelli



## François Pascal Simon Gérard

Rome 1770 – 1837 Paris

### 18. *Conjured by the Witch of Endor, the Spirit of Samuel Appears to Saul*

1801

Oil on canvas, 11 1/3 x 8 2/3 in (28.6 x 22 cm)

Signed and dated, lower right: *F. Gérard 1801*

Provenance: Private collection, Florence

“Comme peintre d’histoire, il a pu être égalé, surpassé même par quelques uns de ses successeurs; comme peintre de portrait, je veux dire de portrait *historié*, pour employer un terme autrefois en usage, il n’a pas laissé d’héritiers.” Thus Henri Delaborde in 1864 summed up the career of the artist François Pascal Gérard, to whom he had devoted a long chapter in the second volume of his *Études sur les beaux-arts en France et en Italie*. Twenty years previously Charles Lenormant had consecrated his *Gérard, peintre d’histoire. Essai de biographie et de critique* to the painter, attempting towards the end of his text to compile a list of Gérard’s most important works subdivided by genre. Only three religious paintings, included in the historical paintings section and one of them incomplete, featured in this list. In the tenth and final chapter of his treatise, Lenormant describes Gérard’s working method, claiming that the artist was in the habit of having a good deal of texts read to him. According to Lenormant Gérard had a predilection for history and memoirs, while in poetry his tastes spanned from Homer to the Bible, Dante and Petrarch.

The subject for this small oil study is taken from the Book of Samuel (I, 28:3-24). Gérard has placed the three characters within a confined space, lit from several angles – through a small window high to the right filters pale moonlight, then there is the brazier placed before the Witch of Endor and the figure of Samuel, which glows to underline its supernatural status. A bone on the floor at the base of the vase to lower left of the composition alludes to the fact that Samuel has emerged from the world of the dead. The Old Testament tells how, following the death of Samuel, King Saul is concerned at the advance of the Philistines and gathers an army of Israelites to meet them in battle. After receiving no answer from the Lord on how to best proceed against the enemy, either in a dream or through the prophets, Saul resolves to consult a medium and arrives in the city of Endor. At Saul’s request the medium conjures up the spirit of Samuel, who emerges from the ground as an old man, draped in a cloak (Samuel I, 28:13-15). Gérard’s painting faithfully captures the moment in which the biblical text reads “And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and prostrated himself” (Ibid, v. 15).

Equally respectful of the original source is Benjamin West’s *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (oil on canvas h. 52.1; w. 68.6 cm, Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum), painted in 1777 (Dillenberger 1977, p. 30; Erffa-Staley 1986, pp. 311-312, n. 275) at the same time as another version of the same subject (London, Victoria and Albert Museum). In West’s version the witch is depicted with more monstrous features and Samuel’s face is partially covered by a white cloak, while two terrified secondary figures witness the scene. Both Gérard’s and West’s versions show Saul in exactly the same manner of prostration and share the same arrangement of the biblical characters within the composition.

The episode of Samuel, Saul and the Witch of Endor enjoyed re-

newed popularity as a subject towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, following the illustrious precedent painted a century before by Salvator Rosa (1668), at the Louvre. From the Rosa version Gérard has borrowed the element of the lit brazier used by the necromancer, to whom he has conferred a terrified expression rather than the terrifying features painted by Rosa. The biblical text contains no reference whatsoever to the process by which Samuel’s shade is conjured up (Schmitt 1987, p. 42). In his canvas, Gérard has transferred onto the witch the same expression of stupefied terror at perceiving Samuel that West employed for his two secondary characters – a means to convey in visual terms that element of the Sublime of which Edmund Burke had written earlier in the century (Staley 1988, p. 85) and which in the 1770s and 1780s had been rendered in ink and watercolor also by Johann Heinrich Füssli (1777) and William Blake (1783).

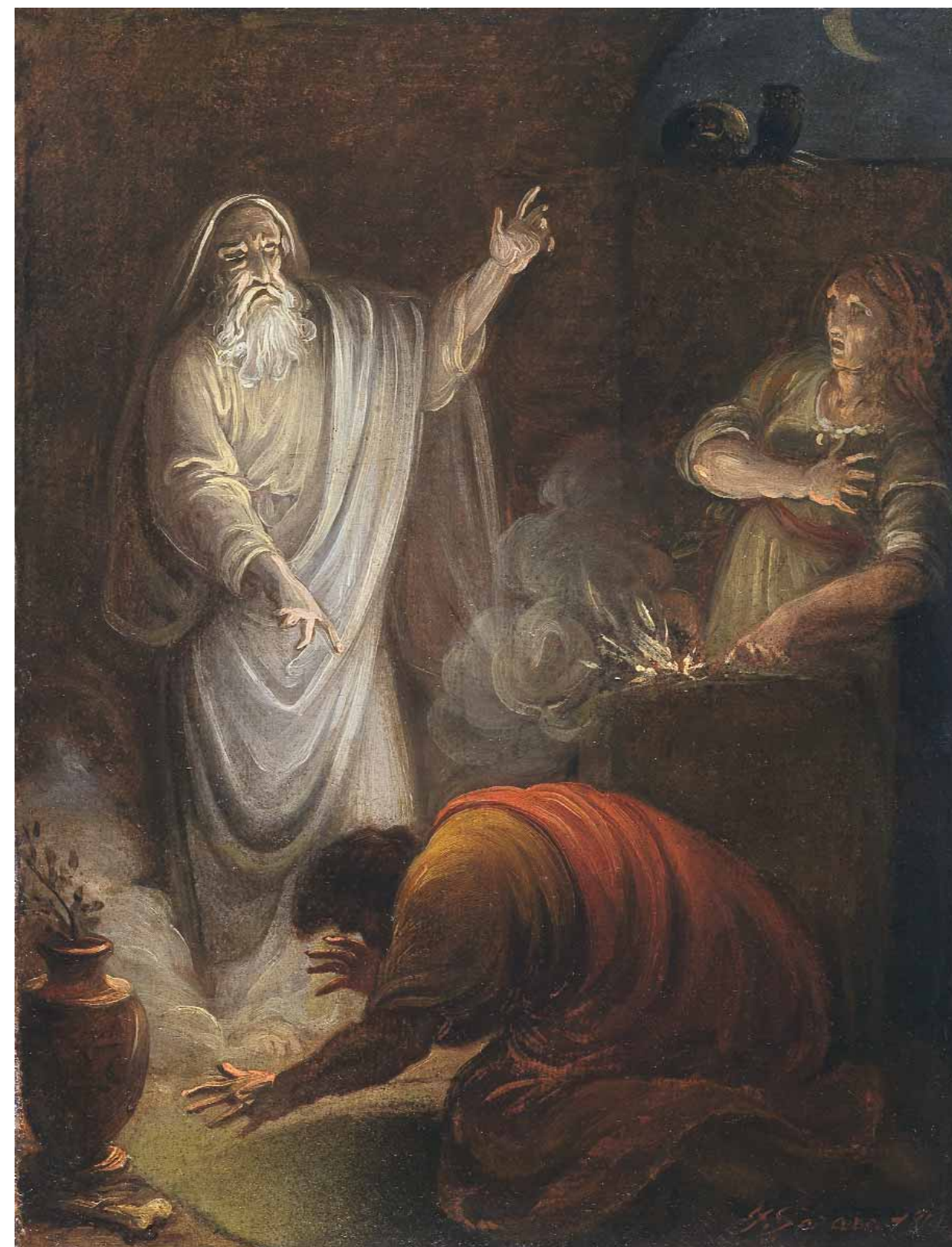
Through the medium of Endor, Samuel prophesizes to Saul the imminent defeat and loss of his kingdom. It is arguable that Benjamin West’s work contains a political allusion to the defeat of King George III at the Battle of Saratoga (1777) – the event that was decisive in the involvement of France in the American War of Independence – or at any rate a warning reference to times when both kings and their realms could fall foul of a monarch’s hybris (Staley 1989, p. 86; Marks 1997, p. 131). The image certainly received a wide circulation when from 1797 it was included as an illustration plate etched by William Sharp within the Holy Bible printed by Thomas Macklin, an editorial project that involved a number of artists, including the English naturalized French painter Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg.

Given that this edition of the Holy Bible was published also in an apocryphal version in 1800, it is likely that François Gérard would have been familiar with West’s painting, if only in its illustration form. Following the failed assassination attempt on Napoleon’s life in rue Nicaise, Paris, on December 24<sup>th</sup> 1800 and the end of the campaign in Egypt on September 27<sup>th</sup> 1801, it is not unthinkable that Gérard’s painting also contains a hint of political allegory.

This small oil was not among the works that Gérard presented at the Paris Salon from 1808 and 1827, a period in which he exhibited almost exclusively portraits. Neither can this painting be considered a preparatory work for a larger format piece, despite its loose, vibrant brushstrokes. The fact that it is signed and dated points rather to it being a *d’après* study of a completed canvas of which the artist wished to keep a reminder, probably for the purpose of composition. A theory that is further corroborated by the measurements of the picture, exactly the same as the series of 84 *tableautines* produced by the artist – reproductions of works in the collections of Versailles and referred to by Madame Gérard in a document dated 1837 as *esquisses d’après les portraits en pied*. All measuring 20x30 centimeters, the *tableautines* are of life-size portraits completed by Gérard between 1796 and 1836 (Ziesenis 1961, p. 171).

Given the unusual subject and this painting’s documentary relevance, this is therefore both a valuable addition to the *corpus* of works by Gérard and an important element within the painting context of early northern European Romanticism.

Chiara Stefani





## Hubert Robert

Paris 1733 – 1808 Paris

### 19. *The spiraling staircase of the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola*

1764

Oil on canvas, 9½ x 12 ½ in (24, 5 x 31, 7 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, England

Born in Paris in 1733, Hubert Robert went to Rome in 1754 where he spent the next eleven years, beginning his stay a *pensionnaire* at the French Académie, under the directorship of Charles-Joseph Natoire (1700 – 1777). Later, as a freelance artist, he developed his natural talent for painting antiquities as well as for creating architectural fantasies, the genre for which, after his return to France in 1765, Robert achieve international fame.

The date of Hubert Robert's visit to Caprarola is not documented, but several drawings executed during Robert's visit bear the date 1764. These include in particular a view of the Palace's courtyard inscribed and dated 1764, *Caprarola* from the Pierre-Adrien Paris collection at the Bibliothèque de Besançon (Album 453, no.37), and in the same collection a counterproof view of a ramp leading to the Palace (Album 451, no. 27), also inscribed *Caprarola 1764* (on the subject of Robert's visit to Caprarola, see Victor Carlson 1968). There is no reason to believe that this small painting was not executed at the same time.

The small town of Caprarola was known then as now for its imposing Palazzo originally designed by Antonio da Sangallo (1484 – 1546) for Alessandro Farnese, later Pope Paul III (1468 – 1549) but considerably remodeled by Giacomo da Vignola (1507 – 1573) from 1546 until his death in 1573, for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese "il Giovane" (1520 -1589), the Pope's grandson. Vignola bestowed upon the building some of its most distinctive mannerist features, notably the spectacular sweeping staircase leading to the upper floor. Robert's repertoire of antique buildings and fantastic architecture could easily accommodate Caprarola's spiraling staircase, an extraordinary architectural feat that must have made a lasting impression on the young artist. Typically, Robert did not paint a straightforward view of the staircase but considerably altered its architecture: most notably he replaced the frescoed walls attributed to Antonio Tempesta (1555 – 1630) with sculptures set in niches and openings, thus adding light to the stairwell as well as an almost vertiginous illusion of depth to his composition.

Robert painted another version of this composition now in the Musée du Louvre (25 x 34 cm, coll. La Caze, M.I. 1108). The almost similar dimensions of both paintings exclude the possibility of considering the slightly smaller one a study for the other, although the one exhibited here is more sketchily executed. Rather, both should be considered original, perhaps painted for different amateurs. In painting another version of this image Robert could also have used a drawing possibly executed *in situ* (but already showing some of the alterations brought by the artist to his subject), now in the Musée de Valence (Musée de Valence, Inv. D. 61, see de Cayeux 1985, pp. 190 – 192, no. 46). As often the case with Robert, the artist revisited the subject later in his career, incorporating some elements of the Caprarola staircase in fantasy compositions (Cayeux mentions a painting executed c. 1793 -94 at the time in a French private collection, using the motif of the spiraling staircase – obviously derived from Caprarola's – but inserted in a different context).

J. Patrice Marandel





## Carlo Bonavia

Naples or Rome, documented information from between 1751 and 1788

### 20. *Imaginary Landscape with the Temple of Diana at Baia*

circa 1770

Oil on canvas, 51 ¼ x 76 ¾ in (130 x 195 cm)  
Provenance: Private collection, France

Never previously displayed in public, this painting is an 'imaginary' depiction of a rocky landscape featuring a small waterfall and a pond, on the banks of which several young women are undressing before bathing. Presumably this is an intended reference to the mythological episode of Diana bathing, particularly given that the centre of this fantastical landscape is occupied by a depiction of the ruined Temple of Diana that still stands – within a group of other Roman era ruins including the Temple of Venus – on the coast at Baia, near Pozzuoli.

The composition is almost identical to the 80 x 122 cm picture that, along with its pair, *Coastal Landscape with the Villa delle Cannonate at Posillipo*, went up for sale in London some time back. Both works were correctly attributed to Bonavia by W. G. Constable (1960, pp. 371-374, fig. 4, written in collaboration with T. McCormick and with a reproduction of the *Coastal Landscape*). The pair was also published by N. Spinosa (1987, no. 277, p. 157, and 1989, second edition 1993, no. 65, p. 192, figs. 61-62). Given the remarkable quality of the paintwork, the version we have here was in all likelihood painted around 1770. It is also in excellent condition and within a fine period frame. The London version differs both in its reduced size and, most importantly, by the inclusion to the left-hand side of several male figures together with peasant women instead of the female bathers. To the bottom right-hand side of the picture there is also a young man and woman seated on a rock, with a dog next to them, engrossed in amiable conversation.

Although the precise location and date of his birth are unknown (either Rome or Naples, probably the latter), Carlo Bonavia's existence is amply documented by his prolific output of landscapes. Largely imaginary 'views', these works do however feature an arbitrary and effective inclusion of existing natural features. This combination of imaginary and real elements derives from a long-standing tradition in Neapolitan art circles, with important examples already in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in the works of Domenico Gargiulo, known as Micco Spadaro. Most of these existing natural features are sections of the coastline around Naples or in the immediate countryside inland, with Roman ruins such as the Temple of Diana at Baia or the Temple of Venus, or more recent – and still existing – constructions such as Castel dell'Ovo in Naples, Castelnuovo, the Villa delle Cannonate or the Aragonese Castle of Ischia. Other works feature buildings that were demolished towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Lanterna in the port of Naples. There are also a number of depictions of unremarkable houses in the countryside or by the sea, most of which have since vanished.

In purely stylistic terms, experts have already established a close connection (particularly Constable in 1960 and Spinosa in 1987, also on pp. 21-22) between Bonavia and the French artist Claude-Joseph Vernet. During his sojourn in Rome, Vernet travelled to Naples in 1737 and 1746, where he completed a number of drawings from life and several conventional views of the city that

stand out for their theatrical and visual modernity. These include Naples seen from the Marinella with the Torrione del Carmine, or from the beach at Mergellina with the city spread out as if in a great, open-air theatre (Paris, Musée du Louvre; United Kingdom, collection of the Duke of Northumberland). He also completed some finely detailed depictions of life at the Court of Charles de Bourbon (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte). At times, the solutions adopted by Bonavia in his works were so similar to Vernet's in dramatic and pictorial terms, particularly his use of light and lavish chromaticism, that until recently the two artists were sometimes confused. In relation to Vernet's production from his time in Rome and Naples, Bonavia's 'imaginary' landscapes stand out for his masterful inclusion of Roman ruins, as well as for his refined accomplishment in depicting human figures of varied extraction, from peasants to travellers, fishermen, gentlemen and ladies. A case in point is the canvas we have here, where the figures captured in normal, everyday poses enliven the landscape by lending it greater credibility and informality. Interestingly, Bonavia also completed a number of noteworthy night scenes of the Vesuvius erupting (Naples, Museo di San Martino, Alisio collection), some of which predate the vaster production in this genre of another French artist working in Naples at the time – Jean-Jacques Volaire.

The Temple of Diana and the nearby Temple of Venus were frequently painted, both from life and in imaginary compositions, from as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the protracted period known as the *Grand Tour d'Italie*, by Italian and international painters. The great apse featured in our painting still stands today and is all that remains of a Roman era building believed to be a temple dedicated to Diana, the goddess of the hunt, on account of a series of marble bas-reliefs with animals and various references to hunting that were unearthed in its vicinity. Subsequent research has revealed that the structure is in fact probably all that is left of a circular plan *palazzo* erected by order of Emperor Alexander Severus (222-235 AD) as a commemorative sanctuary for the imperial family.

Nicola Spinosa





## Andrea Appiani

Milan 1754 – 1817 Milan

### 21. *Bathing Figures Among Classical Ruins*

### 22. *A Couple Dressed in the Modern Style Visiting Classical Ruins*

circa 1795-1800

Tempera on canvas, 19¾ x 25¼ each (50 x 64 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

These two extraordinary temperas, which have never been on public display before, are a significant addition to the catalogue of works produced by Andrea Appiani who (as indicated by his Monza-born biographer, the etcher Pietro Beretta), had found in tempera his preferred expressive medium – the best suited to his individual sensitivity. His earliest and most accomplished efforts in this medium were, according to Beretta, the four large temperas completed around 1775 for a commission by one of Lombardy's most prominent exponents of Illuminism, Count Ercole Silva, the author of a successful treatise on gardens – *Dell'arte dei giardini inglesi* – which came out in Milan in 1803 and was reprinted in 1813. Beretta indicates that these works “were completed for a chamber in the house in Lauro [the ancient, centrally located district of Milan that today corresponds to Via Lauro] where for a long while they were in fixed frames arranged around the room... In recent years they have passed by inheritance to the noble Signor Girolamo Ghirlanda, who carefully transferred them to his villa at Cinisello, which he had also inherited from Silva. These four temperas represent the Rape of Europa in four pieces. The compositions are rational and joyful, with generally well crafted figure groups.” (Beretta 1848, ed. 1999, p. 96). Still much appreciated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they were published as prints in 1827-1828 by Paolo Caronni (*Canova e Appiani* 1999, p. 172), their current whereabouts is unknown, although they are well documented also by period photographs (Mazzocca, Morandotti, Colle 2001, p. 446).

The works should probably be dated later than the date indicated by Beretta, more towards the early 1780s. The finely crafted landscapes in the backgrounds of the four scenes, distinctly reminiscent of Albani and in general of the classicism prevalent in Emilia, would appear to predate the landscapes of our temperas, as does the skillful transparency in rendering the water in which putti and other mythological figures are playing. The figures in the Silva temperas still appear somewhat wooden, an early characteristic of Appiani's work that earned him the nickname *seccone*. Through feverish practice in drawing, over the years his figures assumed softer, more blurred contours that prompted the appellation *pittore delle Grazie*, which would be associated with Appiani into posterity. The bathing figures in the two temperas we have here have been executed with the same softness of touch as those in the small but brilliant oils on wood *Mars and Venus* and *Diana and Actaeon*, in the Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna of Milan (*La Milano del Giovine Signore* 1999, pp. 144-145, 235). Dated at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and plausibly completed at the same time that Appiani was working on the fresco cycle for Palazzo Sanzaro in Milan (these have since been detached and are in the Pinacoteca di Brera), these two works also underline the artist's inclination towards the landscape genre, which he nonetheless appears to have practiced little, although Beretta does assure us

that “...neither was landscape overlooked by him, with many finely executed studies from life found in his home after his death” (Beretta 1848, p. 73). The figures of the three bathers in the foreground have the same soft-contoured anatomies and sensual movements as the group of nymphs in *Diana and Actaeon*, while the tree that concludes the composition to the right has the same meticulously painted foliage as the one that appears in the same position in *Mars and Venus*.

The blend of nature and ruins, which has been employed to great effect in these works, was highly popular at the time. Appiani would certainly have been able to appreciate examples during his sojourn in Rome in 1791, where he may well have seen the watercolors of Charles-Louis Clérisseau and Abraham Louis Rodolphe Ducros. One should also bear in mind that there was an established fashion for ruins as garden features at the time – elements that were studied and designed by Appiani's patron Ercole Silva.

Fernando Mazzocca



Andrea Appiani, *Diana and Actaeon*, Milano, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna





## Pierre-Jacques Volaire, known as “Chevalier Volaire”

Toulon 1729 - 1799 Naples

### 23. *Eruption of the Vesuvius in 1771*

1789  
Oil on canvas, 39 ¾ x 60 ¼ in (101 x 153 cm)

Signed below left: *le Chevalier Volaire. f.*

Provenance: private collection, Rome

Exhibitions: *Napoli e Ercolano* 2006

Bibliography: Gonzalez-Palacios 2001, pp. 46, 219, fig. 4 (specular reproduction), p. 221; Beck Saitello 2004, p. 103, note 288; *Napoli-Ercolano* 2006, p. 142; Beck Saitello 2010, pp. 251-252, no. p. 112

The beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Italy – forever considered the cradle of the arts and *bon goût* in general – became also the prime destination for the Grand Tour. Towards the second half of the century a combination of factors – the return to activity of Vesuvius in 1737, the discovery of Herculaneum in 1738 and of Pompeii in 1748, as well as the arrival in the city of the Farnese Collection during the reign of Charles of Bourbon (1734-1759) – transformed Naples into the final destination for this kind of journey. Besides offering everything the grand tourist desired – the ruins, palazzi and collections were part of a well-trodden itinerary – Naples had the additional allure of its magnificent concerts and receptions. The city’s flourishing trade in medals, cameos and sculpture also provided visitors with objects to take home with them, in memory of their sojourn to the area and as symbols of the cultural status they had attained during their formative journey. Painters living in the city at the time were able to profit from the lucrative market that developed when visitors began requesting their portraits to be painted, either in front of a famous monument or with one of the views of the places they had visited in the background. More than any other Italian region they had visited, the mild climate and picturesque landscapes of Campania offered travelers unparalleled serenity, to which there was the added thrill of witnessing the ‘anger’ of the erupting Vesuvius, whose spectacular ‘fireworks’ became an unmissable event for any visitor to the region at this time.

Within such a context, Volaire had the intelligence to quickly grasp – as did Canaletto with his views of the Canal Grande in Venice or Pannini with his depictions of the ruins of Ancient Rome – the key role played by the eruptions of the Vesuvius in shaping the *genius loci* of Naples, promptly specializing in depictions of this particular subject.

“Monsieur de Voltaire [...] a native of France, long resident in this city, has obtained by perpetual observation, a power of representing Vesuvius without black shadow, which others have thought necessary to increase the contrast, by which greatly takes away all resemblance of its original” (Lynch Piozzi, 1789, 2, p. 5). Thus wrote Hester Lynch Piozzi (1741-1821) during her visit to Naples in the winter of 1785. The English lady was so stricken with the eruption she had witnessed, that she acquired a view of the Vesuvius from Volaire. Her account underlines the considerable evocative power of Volaire’s works, obtained through lengthy observations of the various eruptions and his particular talent for capturing their effects with color. Although not directly referring to the work we have here, this passage from Hester Lynch Piozzi’s diary describes it to perfection. The work dates from the artist’s final period of activity, when many years of experience had crys-

tallized into a remarkable precision in representing the phenomenon and his color palette had taken on a lighter tonal range.

Born in Toulon in 1729 into a family of artists (his father Jacques was the city’s official painter), Pierre-Jacques Volaire was the assistant to Joseph Vernet from 1754 to 1762 on the *Seaports of France* series. In 1763 he moved to Rome and then to Naples in 1768, where he forged his personal style, independent from that of his master, by specializing in depictions of the erupting Vesuvius. Besides his many depictions of the volcano, Volaire’s Neapolitan production – which includes signed works from 1767 to 1784 – included also a number of delicately executed country views and a sizeable corpus of drawings, (cf. the two *Eruptions of the Vesuvius*, one in the Louvre and the other in the Museo di Capodimonte (inv. D’AV 22), signed and dated). Some thirty works (*Eruption of the Vesuvius*, Paris, Galerie Heim; *Marina*, Paris, private collection; *Eruption of the Vesuvius by Day* and *Eruption of the Vesuvius by Night*, Naples, private collection) certainly date from after 1784, however.

Voltaire’s depictions of Vesuvius fall into three distinct types, or formulae, designed to suit the range of his clients’ financial resources, their personal tastes, the eruption they had witnessed and whether or not they had climbed the mountain itself. Painted from three different angles, the volcano appears from the eastern part of the city of Naples with the Ponte della Maddalena (cf. the painting from the D’Avalos collection in the Museo di Capodimonte), from Atrio del Cavallo (cf. the version in the Art Institute of Chicago) or from the beach at Chiaia (cf. the picture in the museum of Brest). For this last formula Volaire adopted a vertical format.

The view we have here belongs to the second formula, Volaire’s most popular, and shows the eruption that lasted from May 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> 1771, whose effects lasted for some time, with lava accumulating at Atrio del Cavallo and a series of Strombolian eruptions. During this activity a fracture appeared in the great cone of the volcano, causing a river of lava to flow down the mountainside, forming a tunnel that eventually split into three parts at Atrio del Cavallo. Later, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, a vast lava flow passed beneath the Crocelle promontory and reached the Collina del Salvatore. It was not until the end of the month that the flow finally exhausted itself.

Voltaire chose to depict the lava flow from Atrio del Cavallo, from where – according to the inscription that features on several paintings – he was able to observe it personally. Literally “atrium of the horse”, the Atrio, which occupies the western section of the Valle del Gigante around the crater, probably took its name from its horseshoe shape (some instead believe it derives from the fact that this was the spot where horses were stationed before visitors made their ascent on foot). This formula, of which Volaire is the inventor, was probably destined to those clients who had mustered the strength and courage required to brave the difficult ascent up the volcano. The route taken by the travelers, their stops at the little church of the Salvatore and at Colo delle Crocelle (the cemetery of the hermits), the horses, the guides (simple farmers or cicerones), are all depicted with clarity. In every respect, as an account of an experience, these works even dwell on the reactions of the travelers to this exceptional phenomenon – at times fearful but mostly in admiration and full of scientific curiosity. This for-



mula would be the most painted by Volaire and the most in demand from his clients: more spectacular, more original than the views painted by his colleagues, and more effective both pictorially and anecdotally.

The view presented here, in particular, is taken from the Crocelle promontory, with the Salvatore hermitage in the middle plain and the city of Naples in the background, with the outline of the Castel dell’Ovo just visible. It presents a number of differences from the other version of the same formula – the number of figures, the presence of the horses and the blue-gray tones used for the sky. Alvar González Palacios in fact noted that the chromatic range used in this work is particularly seductive. Together with the red and black plumes of the eruption, the mountains and figures are silhouetted against the silvery-blue waters of the Gulf of Naples, under a pale sky enlivened by a few white clouds. Volaire has chosen to employ a delicate range of tones and contrasts in this work, rather than overwhelm the picture with the red and orange tones of the eruption. Clearly this is a late work, as confirmed in the partially preserved inscription that reads “le chevalier Volaire fecit 1789”. Other elements that point to this are the desire to enrich his consolidated repertoire with new solutions, the bright chromatic range Volaire has employed and his spidery handwriting in the inscription.

Emilie Beck Saitello



## Beniamino de Francesco

Barletta 1807- 1869 Saint Enogat (Dinard/  
Saint Malo)

### 24. *Landscape with Uprooted Tree*

circa 1838

Oil on canvas, 19 1/3 x 19 1/3 (49 x 49 cm)

Signed lower left: "De Francesco"

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

This landscape depicts part of the Roman *campagna* with the ruins of an aqueduct in the background. The task of identifying the location as somewhere in the countryside around Rome is rendered somewhat easier by the presence of a half-shadowed male figure, dressed in the traditional garb of the Ciociaria, a prevalent rural area south of the city. With the aid of a stick, the man is negotiating his way through the undergrowth, clambering over rocks towards the overturned stump of a great oak tree in the foreground. The bizarre and picturesque form of the broken trunk occupies the centre of the composition. A multitude of spontaneous plants and flowers rendered by de Francesco in the minutest detail and bathed in the stark light typical of a spring morning, have sprung up all around. Amidst the vast array of wild plants growing around the broken tree, prime position is occupied by a vigorous strawberry tree, with its orange and red fruits and its spatula-shaped leaves. An almost palpable array of flowering bushes occupies the ground level of the picture, some grey-violet in color, others – such as the poppy and garden rose – providing a touch of more intense red. A little to the right, the broad leaves of an acanthus, curled at the edges, complete the picture of luxuriant Mediterranean flora.

With his definition of Beniamino de Francesco as "(...) romantic he began and romantic he ended" (cf. Ortolani 2009, p. 165; for the artist cf. also: Causa 1967; M. Picone Petrusa, biography in, Greco, Picone Petrusa, Valente 1993, p. 117; V. Carotenuto, catalogue entry in *Civiltà dell'Ottocento a Napoli* 1997, p. 167; Ead., catalogue entry in *Dal vero* 2002, p. 177), Ortolani identified a degree of common ground with those non-Italian artists who settled in Italy and followed Franz Vervloet and Felice Cottrau, rather than with the group of Neapolitan painters known as the Posillipo School.

After an early "troubadour" phase with which he distinguished himself on his arrival in Naples (winning a gold medal at the Bourbon exhibition in 1833 with *Moonlit Landscape with Figures* – Naples, Palazzo Reale – and in 1835 with *View of the Catacombs of San Gennaro de' Poveri* and *Torquato Tasso in Sorrento*. *Moonlit Landscape* – Naples, Palazzo Reale), de Francesco developed a romantic but classically inspired vision of the landscape into a highly personal and original style. His concept of the landscape appears distant from the atmospherically charged views that Pitloo had produced in Naples in the 1830s and 40s. The paintings of Gabriele Smargiassi, weaker in all respects and weighed down by conventionality, cannot compare to the landscapes by de Francesco, who was a refined and cultivated elaborator of classical form. This is conspicuous in *Countryside with Woman and Girl Startled by a Snake* (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte, inv. O. A. 111/1907), which was awarded a gold medal at the 1837 Bourbon exhibition.

A certain amount of influence by Carlo Markò cannot be ruled out in de Francesco's painting. The two men had met in 1838, at the beginning of de Francesco's four-year sojourn in Florence, during which he incorporated into his work a number of the most recently developed techniques in classical landscape painting. His *Roman Landscape* (Florence, Galleria d'Arte Moderna of Palazzo Pitti)

Painted for the Grand Duke of Tuscany dates from this period, as does our *Landscape with an Uprooted Tree*.

De Francesco had managed to secure a privileged position at court thanks to the intercession of Danish sculptor Berthel Thorvaldsen, whose collection included two works by de Francesco dated 1838: *Landscape with Aeneas and the Sybil* and *Landscape with Mule Track* (Copenhagen, Thorvaldsen Museum). In a letter to Thorvaldsen – then a prominent figure on the international art scene – dated that same year, de Francesco is quick to explain the reasons for the delayed missive, which he ascribes to both a busy work schedule and to the difficulties he encountered in settling into a new city. De Francesco prepares to offer all his gratitude for the encouragement that Thorvaldsen has given him:

"(...) I have no words to explain away my silence to you, illustrious Commendatore, if not through the pressing business of my new living quarters and work, which I hope you will soon inspect. I must regard your person as one of the chief instruments of my advancement, for which I am all the more touched! The generous soul which you possess, along with all those merits and virtues that render you an oracle of the arts and earn you the admiration of all of Europe, make the constantly germinating benefits that you impart an honor to all your beneficiaries; and because no such favor will be considered by me equal, my gratitude and pleasant pride shall not be diminished for any reason other than the knowledge that such encouragement is undeserved by me and comes from your kindness (...)" (cf. Copenhagen, The Thorvaldsen Museum Letter Archive, m. 22 1838, no. 46).

In Florence, de Francesco took part in the activities organized by the city's academy, exhibiting his work locally from 1839 to 1842. He moved to France in 1842 and settled definitively in Dinard, Brittany, from where he maintained his contacts with the Kingdom of Naples whilst exhibiting at the Paris Salon from 1843 to 1849, in 1853, 1866 and 1867. In 1845 the painting *Courtyard with a Rural Home* (Rome, on permanent loan to Montecitorio) was awarded a gold medal. His works were also featured at the Bourbon exhibitions of 1851 and 1855. The work listed in the catalogue for the 1855 exhibition, *Harvest Scene in Brittany-France* (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte inv. O. A. 7266/1907), was presented by the House of Savoy to the 1861 national exposition in Florence (cf. Napoli 2009).

Beniamino de Francesco was widely recognized at an international level. Besides Thorvaldsen, one of his more famous collectors was the old Camille Corot, who bought *A View of Mergellina*, discovered by Jacques Thuiller in 1988 (p. 401, fig. 1), at the auction of works by the artist held at the Hotel Drouot in 1870 (cf. *Catalogue des tableaux et des études provenant de la succession de Beniamin de Francesco, dont la vente aura lieu Hôtel Drouot, Salle n. 8, le samedi 26 mars 1870*, in Thuiller 1988, p. 407, note 1). The same French expert has identified a number of other works by de Francesco in Corot's personal collection (cf. *Catalogue des tableaux, études, esquisses, dessins et eaux-fortes par Corot (...) et des tableaux, dessins, curiosités diverses composant sa collection particulière. Vente par suite du décès de Corot. Hôtel Drouot. Le mercredi 26 mai 1875 et jours suivants...* de Francesco's works are market at nos. 696-698, in Thuiller 1988, p. 407, note 2), although these have yet to be listed individually.

Further proof of the high esteem in which de Francesco was held by collectors outside Italy can be found in the catalogue to the 1870 auction of his works, with a preface by Théophile Gauthier, in which the acclaimed writer expressed great admiration for the painter's work, venturing even a comparison with Bonington in terms of his



chromatic *stesura* and radiant atmospheres:

"(...) these lively sketches by M. De Francesco, displaying a remarkable confidence and steadiness of hand. What virginal clarity of tone, what freshness of touch! All is right at the first try. Under this artist's brush, oil painting preserves the glistening quality of when it has been freshly applied (...) This Neapolitan artist, it must be said over again, because it is true, has something of the stately effortlessness of Bonington, particularly in his skies, his water, his seaside beaches (...) M. B. de Francesco has the indispensable gift it takes to paint this radiant climate (that of Naples): the gift of light. His palette has a range of light tonalities, soft blues, amethyst violets, sun-drenched whites, pearly grays and a particular shady green like cactus or aloe. He requires no recourse to brash exaggeration to obtain results that are arresting for their clarity. He truly conveys the flavor of hot climes, with their intense white light, their sapphire-blue seas, their clear blue skies, their grey earth, their golden dust, their chalk-white or ochre buildings (...)" (cf. Théophile Gauthier, in *Catalogue des tableaux...* cit., 1870, p. VII, p. IV, in Thuiller 1988, pp. 405-406, note 35, p. 408).

Luisa Martorelli



## Antonio Basoli

Castelguelfo/Bologna 1774 – 1848 Bologna

### 25. *The Fire of Madeira in 1512*

1842

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 18½ x 24¼ in (46,7 x 62,4 cm)  
Signed below left: “Basoli inv.tò e fece 1842”

Inscribed along the upper margin: “Madera nella Lusitania, tutta coperta di boschi, incendiata dai portoghesi per ordine di Enrico nel 1512, incendio che dicesi durò 7 anni”

### 26. *Flood with Monks, a Castle and Imaginary Buildings*

1839

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 18 7/8 x 25 in (47,7 x 63,7 cm)  
Signed below left: “Antonio Basoli inv.tò e fece 1839”

Partially legible inscription above left: “[...] degli Ellenici” (of the Hellenics)

### 27. *Imaginary Landscape with Buildings and Knights in the Foreground*

circa 1840

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 18 7/8 x 24 2/3 in (47,7 x 62,6 cm)

### 28. *The Interior of Noah's Arc*

circa 1833-39

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 20 2/3 x 30 2/3 in (52,3 x 77,7 cm)  
Provenance: Private collection, Rome

As was clearly illustrated by the fine exhibition devoted to him in 2008, Antonio Basoli was a great ‘traveller’ despite hardly ever having left Bologna – an apparent paradox that dissolves on closer examination of this artist’s work (*Antonio Basoli* 2008; cf. also Masini 1848; *Antonio Basoli* 1993). Despite ranking as the most international artist working in Bologna in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Basoli was also by far the least mobile, leaving his city only in his youth for brief trips to Rome, Trieste and Milan. This was a condition shared by a number of his contemporaries who, like Basoli, chose – at times with a degree of tenacity – to favour the journey of the intellect over that of the body, entrusting themselves to the mythic and poetic significance of their imagination and the unparalleled fascination generated by the great heritage of texts at their disposal. To cite two other prominent examples of artists from Bologna and Emilia to follow in this tradition, one need only think of Guercino and Giorgio Morandi.

But Basoli, who was largely self-taught and who circumnavigated the globe much in the manner of Salgari, is a case apart. It would be unthinkable even to attempt to trace the confines of the culture and erudition that this multi-faceted artist accumulated during his lifetime. A voracious, bulimic reader since childhood, Basoli had been attracted to the world of the imaginary and the unknown while studying at the Accademia Clementina with his lifelong friend Pelagio Palagi. In a sense, also because he stands in the middle of the aesthetic period of which they are the grand opening and the grand conclusion, Basoli is reminiscent of the visionary excursus of Louis-Jean Desprez (1743-1804) and even more so of the Englishman John Martin (1789-1854). A profound connoisseur of Martin’s graphic works and audacious for-

ays into the ‘panoramic’ genre, Basoli, his strong contender for the primacy in Europe of that very particular imaginary landscape genre that straddles the visionary and the antiquarian, evoking far-flung, uncharted worlds through a kaleidoscopic assemblage of monuments representing archetype locations, be they from mythology such as Rhodes or Babylon, or Biblical and exotic such as Delhi, Moscow or Mexico City.

In the *Alfabeto pittorico*, published in 1839 (Basoli 1987; Borgogelli 2004), Basoli himself uses the term *cosmogramma* to explain his particular frame of mind that spans time and space, creating unexpected space-time crases worthy of Hollywood. It is no coincidence that, just like Basoli, both Desprez and Martin were all-around artists, working as etchers and designers of temporary structures and sets. For artists throughout neoclassical and romantic Europe, the craft of set designing functioned as the formal and creative gymnasium for their fantastical, unreal compositions. It should be noted that Basoli, having grown up in a land that had given birth to the Bibiena dynasty, was a master in this genre for over half a century, on a par with greats such as Karl Friedrich Schinkel or the extraordinary Alessandro Sanquirico. Basoli developed a burning passion for books and literature during his adolescence, from the moment when in 1788, aged just fourteen, he was admitted into the circle of one of Bologna’s grandest families, the Conti Aldrovandi, who were great collectors and art patrons. As Basoli himself recalls in his precious autobiography (a compendium of notes kept at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna and published for the first time in 2006) he began exploring the pages of wondrous volumes and recent publications, largely in English or French, “having had the opportunity to immerse myself in the library and picture gallery of the counts”. This thirst for literature was to accompany Basoli for his entire life. Until the end of his days he acquired and read books of all kinds, even copying out sections, commenting, filling them with annotations and footnotes that served as material for the subjects, themes and models of his tireless and precious creations. It was on these volumes that Basoli drew for his dazzling artistic inventions, from his many designs for interiors to his set designs, etchings or canvases. His extraordinary talent for visual and mental re-assemblage, the fecundity of his genial ability to break up and re-compose, brings to mind his contemporary and near-compatriot Felice Giani. Together these two men stand firmly within the firmament of Italian and European neoclassical art.

Basoli, whose boundless graphic material (drawings, manuscripts, notebooks of all kinds) passed in 1857 to the Bologna Accademia di Belle Arti, where he had taught – tends with surprising consistency towards a certain monumentality in his work, at least in part derived – by his own admission in his autobiography – from his early studies in the Aldrovandi home together with Palagi. “I studied together with Palagi and Corsini in the evenings in casa Aldrovandi, having at our disposal their library. I traced the fireplaces of Piranesi and copied some works by Mauro Tesi [...] and in that library I studied many of the volumes of Piranesi, the decorations of Albertolli, the architecture of the Englishman Inigo Jones, the buildings of Palladio”. The inspiration for Basoli’s depictions of far flung worlds instead derived from his – as always – highly informed study of the works of the milestones of West-





ern Illuminist culture (Milizia, Durand, Fischer von Erlach, Rollin, Sismondi), from the contemporary developments of Romanticism (Walter Scott, Manzoni, Byron, Cooper, etc.) and from an attentive reading of accounts of adventurous expeditions to distant lands. And this is precisely the reason why today Basoli is regarded with great appreciation on an international level, as though if he were a truly international artist. His work is a concentrate of modern European culture.

One remarkable section of his *Lezioni di paesaggio*, written in 1845-46 and kept among the 104 volumes and manuscripts at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna, clarifies with disarming lucidity, more than any other, the working method of this brilliant artist. The passage refers to a painting, *The Delights of the Garden of Eden*, which he completed in 1828 and for which he lists all the literary sources that contributed towards his creative process. "First of all we read and consulted the sacred history of the Old Testament, by Calmet. For the location of Eden we turned to the customs of Doctor Giulio Ferrario and also the geography of Buffier, noting also what Salmon recounted of his journey around the world [...]. For the various plant species of those places we consulted the Durante herbarium [...] and to fire our imagination we read Milton's *Paradise Lost* and other relevant writers. The above-listed observations point towards a general opinion that Eden was in Asia, among the mountains of Armenia [...]. In all likelihood the Great Flood destroyed much of the original semblance of those lands, so a great measure of imagination was necessary to comprehend with certainty". Basoli brings into play stories and subjects that are so cultured and eccentric that it would have been impossible to decipher them without his explanations.

The four recently discovered paintings illustrated here are emblematic of this particular cultural waywardness, representing both the climax and maturity of that extraordinary fusion of literature and art reminiscent of the *ut pictura poësis* of Horace and which, if one excludes De Chirico in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, finds in Basoli the last exponent in the visual arts. Shortly after, in fact, the same aesthetic of the fantastical and the imaginary would have slipped from the neoclassical world into Romanticism, with unprecedented results that can be admired in the canvases of Turner.

The three paintings of landscapes are the quintessence of the idea of tempestuous nature in movement so typical of Romantic culture, particularly in its English declination. In his natural settings Basoli tends towards a representation of natural elements in a cosmogonical and Biblical key, where the subjects are purely literary pretexts used to describe nature in its becoming and in which the figures are reminiscent of those in the paintings of Massimo d'Azeglio. Without Basoli's own notes it would be impossible to decipher the subject. Clearly Basoli was well aware of this when he added a lengthy note along the upper border of the support explaining that the Portuguese had unleashed a fire that raged from 1512 to 1519 on the island of Madeira, the largest of the islands in the archipelago that bears the same name, situated off the coast of Africa, north of the Canaries, believed to have once been part of the legendary civilisation of Atlantis. The precise sources for the other two landscapes instead remain obscure. In the painting of the Great Flood Basoli has included monks, a castle and some imaginary buildings in the gothic style – a playful 'modern' twist on the familiar theme of the Great Flood, which along with all Biblical themes was particularly dear to Basoli.

The extraordinary painting of the interior of Noah's Arc is instead worthy of a few additional annotations. In this work Basoli has drawn on his vast experience and skills as a painter of stage sets. To my knowledge the only work of its kind in Basoli's prolific output, this large painting dates from between 1833 and 1839, when Basoli was working on a series of watercolour draw-

ings that he entitled *Hebrew History of the Old Testament*. Along with the other paintings illustrated here, in terms of style this one clearly belongs to the same mature stage of Basoli's career, in which he favoured this particular technique of combining clearly visible India ink with densely applied oils.

Francesco Leone





## Carlo de Paris

Barcelona 1800 - 1861 Rome

### 29. View of Pico de Orizaba or Citlaltépetl in Mexico 1853

Oil on canvas, 49 x 69 7/8 in (124.5 x 175 cm)  
Signed and dated: "C. de Paris 1853"  
Provenance: private collection, Rome

Despite some important recent re-evaluations (R. Leone, entry in *Il Risorgimento* 2011, pp. 132-133; Capitelli 2011, pp. 44, 60-62), and an overdue biography (S. Gnisci, in *La pittura in Italia* 1991, II, p. 801), the reconstruction of Carlo de Paris' singular artistic career still mainly relies on contemporary literary sources, due to the fact that most of the works documented there still cannot be located.

The recent recovery of this extraordinary exotic view finally enables us to re-examine from the point of view of the Roman context the most original and perhaps most significant aspect of his work. I refer to his paintings of Mexican subjects during and after his long stay in that Central American state, which had only just gained independence from Spain. De Paris was in fact one of the first students of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome who chose to explore the potential of the Americas from 1828, after the fundamental experience of the sculptor Giuseppe Ceracchi, who had made the portraits of the founding fathers of the USA, and considerably earlier than the famous allegorical fresco decoration done by Costantini Brumidi in the Washington Capitol. At that time, Mexico was considered to be a practically unexplored destination; de Paris went there with his brother, a theatre impresario. Later this brother brought over there a company of singers from Italy, to be directed by Filippo Galli, a highly-appreciated Rossini performer, at the Coliseo de México, whose decoration he himself contributed to (Galí Boadella 2002, pp. 301-302).

On his arrival in Mexico City, de Paris was submitted to an impromptu painting test with a live model by the members of the Academia of San Carlos, to prove that he really was the author of the sample paintings he had brought with him from Europe. It may well be that his experience as an historical painter, portraitist and view painter contributed to reinforcing the classicist orientation the academy had adopted since its foundation under Charles III of Bourbon. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this tradition became more and more pro-Roman: young art scholars were sent to Rome; the works of the teachers of the Accademia di San Luca (G. Silvagni, F. Podesti, F. Cogheti, N. Consoni, A. Solà, P. Tenarani) were regularly purchased as teaching models, and teachers were recruited from Rome (cf. Sartor 1997). Moreover, de Paris' activity as a view-painter must have predated that of the Piedmontese artist Eugenio Landeso, who took up a teaching post at the Accademia in 1855 (Sartor 2006, p. 429).

De Paris was born into a well-to-do family in Barcelona, of an Aragonese father and Roman mother, but after just a few months the family moved to Rome, where he lived until 1825. Having lost his parents at a very young age, he was put under the care of the famous tutor Giovan Francesco Masdeu, who intuited his artistic bent and sent him to study under the Spanish painter José Aparicio; from there he passed into the atelier of Luigi Agricola. From 1817 he attended Gaspare Landi's painting course at the Accademia di San Luca, taking part in the Canova competition in which he came second to Luigi Cochetti with the *Continence of*

*Scipio*. Before leaving for Provence then Barcelona, de Paris specialized in the historical genre, making both classical and literary/Romantic paintings. Finally, in 1828 he arrived in Mexico City where, after being received into the academy, he immediately made his name with a picture on a Roman subject, an interior probably in the style of the genre introduced by Francois-Marius Granet, showing *The Pontifical Chapel in the Quirinal Palace During a Papal Function*, followed by the commission from the Philippine fathers for a large apse tempera of *Calvary*.

In a curious, spirited first draft of an autobiography, published posthumously by Francesco Gasparoni in 1863, de Paris described the success of the portraits and historical paintings, which generated numerous commissions. In these works he deliberately tried to adapt to the taste of the country, especially in the modern history painting showing the *Surrender of the Spanish Division Commanded by General Barradas in the Province of Tampico* (Mexico City, Museo Nacional de Historia del Castillo de Chapultepec), painted under the iconographical supervision of the adjutants of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna (whose portrait is in the Museo de la Ciudad de Mexico) and hung in the general congress chamber. Then the portraits of all the presidents of the republic – Victoria, Guerrero, Pedrasa, of the vice-president Gomez Farias and of Agostino Turbide, which all had the honor of being hung in the city hall (Mazio 1845, p. 163; Acevedo 2000, pp. 128-129). Writing in his memoirs about the style adopted in the portraits, de Paris admitted something which was to shed light on the technical choices of much Spanish-American art of the period, saying he had painted them "almost without shadows, because some clients complained they did not have dirty faces" (Paris 1863, p. 336).

In those years de Paris travelled widely around that vast country, "drawing the varied clothing of those natives, and painting many views of those regions which were extremely interesting from the landscape point of view, the nature of the places and the vegetation always varying according to how high above sea level the land was, thus dividing the country into three parts, i.e. the so-called hot, temperate and cold lands" (de Paris 1863, p. 336). These wanderings produced, not only a natural history and archaeology museum, but also an album of 100 drawings of Mexican figures and landscapes and others of Mexican customs, which he took back to Rome in 1836. These drawings were to form the



José Maria Velasco, *The Pico de Orizaba or Citlaltépetl from the San Miguelito Farm*



basis for the Mexican paintings done in the following years, such as for example the "historical landscapes", a genre in which his friend Massimo D'Azeglio excelled, described in the newspaper *Il Saggiatore* as grandiose views where he set the historical events of the Spanish conquest (Mazio 1844). De Paris alternated these works with Roman views, Romantic historical subjects (*Cecilia da Romano*, *Dante in Exile*, *Tasso Fighting the Brigand Mattered Sciarra*) and subjects from contemporary history, ranging from the series dedicated to the 1848-49 revolutionary vicissitudes (*Civilian Volunteers Enter the Northern European Wars, Artillery Exchange Between San Pietro Montorio and Villa Spada*, *Prospero Colonna Defeating the French Militia at the Garigliano Bridge*), to the *Return of Pius IX to Rome on April 12<sup>th</sup> 1850* (Rome, Museo di Roma and Museo Storico Vaticano) and the *Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* (Rome, Pinacoteca Vaticana).

The large landscape with a volcano painted in Rome in 1853, one of the rare Mexican views to have been published to date (for example the *Vista de la cattedral metropolitana*, Museo Franz Mayer, cf. *Mexico* 1994, pp. 40, 116-17), echoes the memorable descriptions of the Mexican volcanoes in de Paris' autobiography. He had twice attempted the ascent of the Popocatepetl, a mountain the natives believed to be forbidden to human beings, eventually reaching the summit in 1835 after thirteen hours of walking at night, in the light of the full moon. Another excursion, to the inland "great mountain ranges", is directly related to this view: "there we see landscapes which are imposing for their grandiose lines and immense gorges and valleys, as well as for the magical effects of the clouds which gather continuously above and between those immense mountains".

Here he observed the volcano of Orizaba, impregnable and permanently covered with ice, noting the surrounding "deepest gorges with crystal-clear streams running beneath" (de Paris 1863, pp. 398-399). Through a comparison with the morphol-

ogy of the mountain, as well as with its pictorial iconography – for example with the later painting by José Maria Velasco – it is possible to identify the mountain at the centre of the painting on show here as the Pico de Orizaba, which was completed in the studio on the basis of drawings from life. It was common practice among the Northern European landscape painters working in Rome at the time – N. D. Boguet and P. A. Chauvin, H. Voogd, M. Verstappen and F. Catel, or Italians such as G. B. Bassi and D'Azeglio – to use rapid sketches made from the life and recompose them into large painted versions in a classical manner back in the studio.

The insertion in the foreground – against the sublime majesty of the natural background – of a clearing populated by felines, a jaguar threateningly observing a family of pumas, a brightly-colored parrot, and by exotic presences like the papaya tree, had another scope other than meeting the classical requirement of a theatrical-type lateral wing. It also reflected one of the more profound drives behind Mexican painting, which was to represent the unspoiled, wild environment of the continent prior to the arrival of civilization as a kind of exotic but truly existing Eden. A commentator of the time wrote that de Paris had "studied the history of the conquest, the domestic, funeral, rural customs of the Mexican peasantry which had not yet been destroyed or deformed by our civilization. He studied that teeming, towering nature which presented so many new objects for a foreign artist's brush and eyes. That place of pyramidal or conical basalt rocks, mountains with their summits hidden in the clouds, volcanoes so high and so active they seem fantastical; that place of dense, lush, rich vegetation which shows the fecundity of a wild nature" (Mazio 1844, p. 211).

Stefano Grandesso





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ISBN 9788890817601

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*Printed in Italy by Officine Tipografiche, Roma  
December 2012*





(cat. no. 15)

A PICTURE GALLERY  
IN THE ITALIAN TRADITION OF THE  
**QUADRERIA**  
(1750-1850)

10 January - 23 February 2013  
curated by Stefano Grandesso, Gian Enzo Sperone and Carlo Virgilio

**Essay by Joseph J. Rishel**

catalogue edited by Stefano Grandesso

**SPERONE WESTWATER**

in collaboration with  
GALLERIA CARLO VIRGILIO & Co. - ROME



This catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition *A Picture Gallery in the Italian Tradition of the Quadreria\** (1750-1850), presented at Sperone Westwater, New York, 10 January through 23 February, 2013.

257 Bowery, New York, NY 10002

*\*A quadreria is a specifically Italian denomination for a collection of pictures (quadri) up to and beyond the eighteenth century, with the pictures normally covering the entire wall space from floor to ceiling. Before the advent of the illuminist concept of the picture gallery (pinacoteca), which followed a classification based on genre and chronology suitable for museums or didactic purposes, the quadreria developed mainly according to personal taste, affinity and reference to the figurative tradition.*

*Acknowledgements*

Leticia Azcue Brea, Liliana Barroero, Walter Biggs, Emilia Calbi, Giovanna Capitelli, Andrew Ciechanowiecki, Stefano Cracolici, Guецello di Porcia, Marta Galli, Eileen Jeng, Alexander Johnson, David Leiber, Nera Lerner, Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, Marena Marquet, Joe McDonnell, Roberta Olson, Ann Percy, Tania Pistone, Bianca Riccio, Mario Sartor, Angela Westwater  
Special thanks to Maryse Brand for editing the texts

*English translation*

Luciano Chianese

*Photographic Credits*

Arte Fotografica, Roma  
Studio Primo Piano di Giulio Archinà  
Marino Ierman, Trieste

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*Jacket illustration*

Francesco Celebrano, *Luncheon in the Countryside*, cat. no. 1

## *Foreword*

by Joseph J. Rishel





(cat. no. 22)

The works on view here date from approximately 1750-1850 and represent a great variety of styles and subjects. They include artists active through all parts of Italy as far south as Bourbonic Naples to progressive Trieste in the north, with others still further afield, including Germany, England, France and even Mexico (by translation). And yet for all this geographical and chronological range, they rest comfortably together. Both in objective view and poetic sentiment, they are all children of one cosmopolitan place - Rome - a place which retained, well into the 19th century, the distinction given to her in 1785 by Antonio Visconti of being there to which “nations flocked to the common mother of the fine arts, bringing a variety of notions and tastes which were clarified by this meeting, making the public of this city one of the most enlightened in Europe.” (Rishel/Bowron, *Art In Rome in The 18<sup>th</sup> Century* catg., p. 70) It was not, however, a unity lacking in doubt. One of the prices of living and thinking in this sophisticated and aesthetically favored place was the added burden that one was at the veritable edge of a future which would mark the end of the “Ancien régime” and the beginning of modern times. This sentiment, so beautifully explored by Italo Calvino in *The Baron in the Trees*, his musing on the gains and losses of liberty now redefined across a wide abyss.

This malaise (a central element to enlightened sentiment) could be entertaining, even comic, as played out here by the Francesco Caucig “Allegoria” where the seemingly irredeemable Prince Francesco Serafino di Porcia sinks into a melancholic meditation despite the efforts of Lady Happiness.

But it also takes root into deeper reality when one confronts a seemingly innocent allegory by August Nicodemo – *The Dauphin Presented to Minerva at the Tomb of his father Louis XVI* – painting in Rome in 1794 thought to be a Bourbon salute and royalist stability, Francia and Hercules assisting the child’s obedience to his father guillotined the previous year, as he one year later age ten in 1795 would die in a French prison. And in fast order of less than ten years, the same poignant homage to the lost past cannot, even now well into the 21st century, go unnoticed when this same picture is shown in company with an authoritative (and charming) portrait by Mathilde Malenchini of Madame Le Bon dated 1813, the sitter a member of the new Napoleonic aristocracy established in Rome by the new French prefect of the occupied city, the Baron de Tournon who was working hard to rejuvenate the arts of the city, so badly bruised by the first Napoleonic invasion. It truly was the best and worst of times.



To step back to something so innocent and fresh as Francesco Celebrano's tapestry cartoon of a country lunch, 1770, which puts the Neapolitan Bourbons in good company with their cousins in Madrid in a Goya-like ease of rural pleasure, it is a scene of Voltairian bliss. Or fifteen years later, another pastoral, this time by the wonderfully affable and adept Hanoverian trans-European, Friedrich Rehberg who, in his three trips to Rome starting in 1777, had among his friends both David and Thorvaldsen, (and later Mengs), taking full advantage of the charms and pleasures of Arcadian subjects in the manner of Poussin, such as his Bacchus and Cupid squeezing the grapes, assisted by Batillo, even while placing them in a literal, witnessed landscape, in this case the cliff in Vietri near Sorrento, brings a mystic past now into a real and definite place.

Or the erotic fantasy, via Titian and early Poussin of a Nymph and Cupid asleep, by the enterprising Henry Tresham who arrived in Rome in 1775 to be a dealer (in company with Gavin Hamilton) as well as a painter. He submitted this work to the Royal Academy, London, (where he was already an Associate) in 1797 to be elected as a full Academician, in 1799. Reference is sometimes made to his admiration of Fuseli, (they might have met in Rome where they overlapped in the '70s) fortified by this work, certainly.

But my intention here is not to address all of the objects on view, a task best left to others better schooled than myself. Best instead to return by addressing three of the latest works on exhibit, both to reinforce my essential observation of the shared nature of so much gathered here, in part established by their grounding in the profoundly Roman principals of elevation, dignity and authority to show (as with Calvino) the fatalistic, and sometimes very sad, decline and fall of old values.

The strangest work on display, and I can't doubt that others will join me in this observation, is the *Rape of the Sabines* of 1829 by the altogether remarkable Pelagio Palagi, his reconsideration of Poussin's *Rape* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (probably 1633-34), rather than his contemporary by a decade, Jacques-Louis David's happier variant, *The Reconciliation* 1796-1799 (Musée du Louvre). He was a complete artistic polymath, producing architecture, sculpture, decorative designs, and paintings from his youth in Bologna onward, while adapting his life skillfully during the turbulent Napoleonic times and arriving in Rome in 1806 just at the point of a French induction of large funds to restore the city and its monuments, bagging a major commission in the Quirinal. With the failure of the Imperial regime, he returned

to Milan to work with major figures in the Restoration, only to be lured to Turin by the Savoys to supervise ambitious architectural and decorative programs while keeping completely up to date as a painter to shifting tastes, much thanks to the new Romantic (most often via historic genre) of Francesco Hayez.

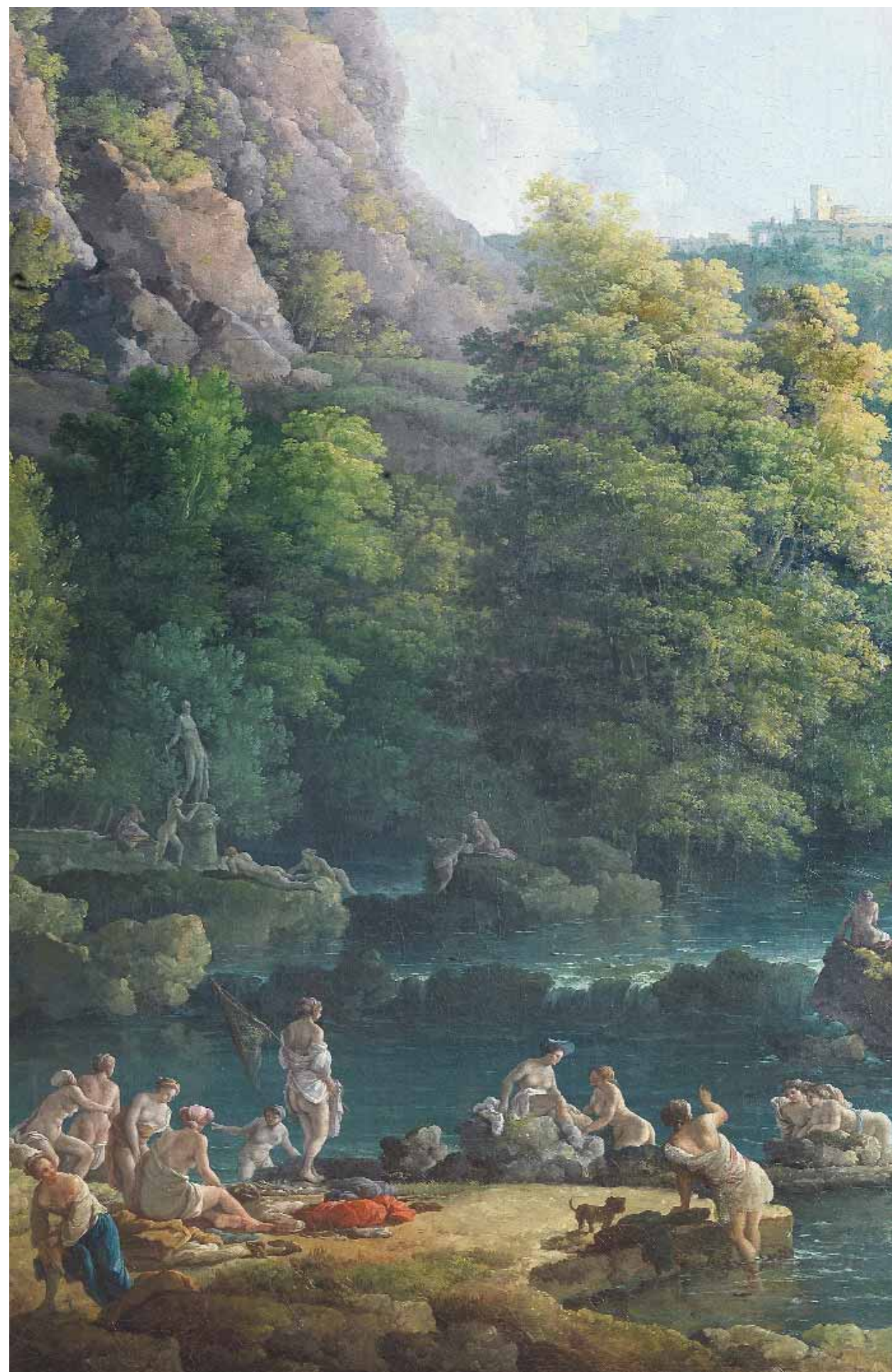
His *Rape* has been read as his swansong to neo-classicism, creating the highest possible drama, pose after pose, staged against a geometrical complex backdrop belying his love of architecture. And yet it is completely original, even as you can feel the old manner slipping out from under you, bringing us back to the enigma - gain and loss - of this Italo/cosmopolitan world at the beginning of the 19th century, deeply knowing and still celebrating its profound heritage, albeit in company of energetic exploration of the new.

Starkly different, but no less jarring in its complete command of the situation, is Giuseppe Tominz' Portrait of Aron Isach de Parente, a founder of the Assicurazioni Generali in Trieste, an altogether remarkable insight into a whole new world of entrepreneurial, bourgeois and liberal enterprise pointing in a new direction as far away from Papal Rome as one can imagine. The date of 1847 is poignant (and prescient), just on the threshold of a liberal surge throughout Europe to be challenged with tart reaction, particularly in the Austrian states which are, of course, Tominz's *prevue*. His celebration of the Beidermeier virtues of domesticity and democracy are at the very heart of the conflict.

And finally a matter of global knowledge about which I previously knew nothing, the most recent work in the show is a deeply satisfying surprise. It's a grand vista dated 1853 by the Roman-trained Carlo De Paris, of Pico de Orizaba, or Citlaltépetl (The Starry Mountain), the highest volcano in Mexico, which all North Americans will immediately associate with the equivalent celebratory awe and vastness found in the works of landscapist Frederick Church.

A student of Gaspare Landi in Rome, De Paris set off, to Mexico in 1828 for a new point of reference and vocation; a new contribution to a whole separate line of New World landscape. In so doing he missed, of course, a whole generation of northerners - Corot and hordes of others - who were in Rome and its environs exploring landscape for not such different purposes. So far the earth does shift on its axis in some cases, and to very good effect. To have the De Paris in the same room as the *Voltaire* Vesuvius will allow whole new layers of thought (and feelings) about the Sublime, getting us safely back to the Enlightenment.





(cat. no. 20)

# QUADRERIA

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## Francesco Celebrano

Naples 1729 -1814

### 1. *Luncheon in the Countryside*

circa 1770-1780

Oil on canvas, 102...x 69 in (260 x 175 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

Exhibitions: *Un Museo tutto da bere* 2011

Bibliography: M. Confalone, in *Un Museo tutto da bere* 2011, no. 19, p. 115

Recently shown with the correct attribution to Celebrano at the exhibition *Un Museo tutto da bere... Arte e vino* at the Museo Nazionale 'Duca di Martina' in the Villa Floridiana in Naples, with catalogue entry by Maria Confalone, this painting certainly belongs to a series of compositions depicting scenes from country life. So far, two other works from the same series – a *Brawl* between four peasants or woodcutters and a *Dance in Costume* with two violin players and a cello player – have been traced to a private Neapolitan collection (published in Spinosa 1987, ed. 1993, no. 76, p. 93, figs 91-92). Besides their stylistic affinity and their similarity in terms of composition, formal layout and painting texture, the identical lateral measurements of these works clearly identify them as a single group. Most of all, however, the works share the same stage-like backdrop of gnarled oak tree trunks and leafy branches, as well as the elegantly decorative festoon of flowers in various hues placed at the upper centre of the composition.

As with the two canvases in the private collection, the manner in which Celebrano has chosen to clearly outline the various figures in the painting we have here – gentlemen, ladies, musicians and peasants – indicates that these works, together with the other canvases in the same series that have not yet been identified, were probably intended to be used as models for tapestries.

It is in fact well documented that right from the outset the tapestry weavers working in the Real Fabbrica degli Arazzi (or Reale Arazzeria) founded in 1737 by Charles of Bourbon in a building adjacent to the Church of San Carlo alle Mortelle, in Naples, used designs painted by famous artists working in Naples and Rome, in the service of the Bourbon Court. This practice was very common also in other tapestry weaving centers in France, Spain and across Italy, with the designs varying in size according to the tapestry series for which they were painted. A case in point is the well-known *Don Quixote Series*, woven in two separate stages in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century from designs by Giuseppe Bonito and other painters of his circle, including Benedetto Torre and Antonio Dominici. The paintings are currently in the Appartamento Storico of the Royal Palace in Naples, while the tapestries hang in the Palazzo del Quirinale in Rome. Of the tapestries depicting the *Four Seasons*, whose model for *Fire* was painted by Girolamo Starace Franchis, there is a documented sketch in a private collection while the tapestry is also in the Royal Palace of Naples. The *Conjugal Allegories* series was completed between 1762 and 1765 from models by Francesco De Mura, Giuseppe Bonito, Corrado Giaquinto, Pompeo Batoni and Stefano Pozzi (the originals still exist in the Royal Palace of Caserta) for the so-called "Stanza del Belvedere" bedroom of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon (where some still survive) in preparation for his marriage to Maria Carolina of Austria. The pair of tapestries *panni Portraits of Ferdinand IV and Maria Carolina of Austria*

woven in the early 1770s after painted designs by Francesco Liani has been separated, with one at the Museo di Capodimonte and the other in the Royal Palace of Madrid. Of the series of episodes from the *Life of Henry IV of Bourbon* (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte) and *Stories of Love and Psyche* (Naples, Royal Palace), both of which were woven in the 1780s after designs by Fedele Fischetti, various elements have been dispersed (more details on these works can be found in Spinosa 1972; M. Siniscalco in *Civiltà del Settecento a Napoli* 1979; Spinosa 1987 and 1993). Although no specific archive documentation has yet been found as proof, the abundance of examples listed above make it more than likely that the paintings by Celebrano mentioned earlier were intended to function as models for tapestries. Whether the tapestries were ever actually woven is unknown. Both paintings and tapestries would certainly have been destined to decorate and furnish a sumptuous royal or patrician residence, probably in the country.

A number of critical texts (besides the one by N. Spinosa mentioned above, with particular reference to pp. 53 and 88-93; also worthy of note for his knowledge of the artist and his output is Pacelli 1984), have in fact already underlined that Celebrano – who was better known as a sculptor in marble and for his terracotta Nativity Crib figures or porcelain statuettes (in 1772 he was the first director of the Real Fabbrica di Porcellane founded by Ferdinand IV of Bourbon in a section of the Royal Palace in Naples) – produced a series of six canvases of country scenes in which there were allusions both to the seasons and to the various farming and shepherding activities currently in practice in the southern Italian kingdom under the reign of the second monarch of the Bourbon dynasty. It is still unclear whether these too were intended as painted designs for tapestries or whether they were destined for use as decoration in Vanvitelli's Royal Palace of Caserta. Sources dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century indicate that Celebrano had in fact completed either a series of paintings or frescoes of *Allegories of the Four Seasons* – since lost – for either Caserta or the royal hunting lodge at Persano. His country scenes series is instead currently at the Royal Palace in Naples. The sketch for the *Grape Harvest* scene is currently in a private collection in Cagliari (N. Spinosa in *Civiltà del Settecento a Napoli* 1979, no. 149, p. 280), while two other small canvases that are similar both in subject and style – *Fox Hunt* and *Deer Hunt* – are in the Petrucci collection in Rome (Spinosa 1987, no. 72, p. 93, figs 86-87).

The two other paintings currently in a private collection that belonged to the same series as our *Luncheon in the Countryside*, were shown as "School of Bonito" at the exhibition of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Neapolitan painting held in 1938 at Castelnuovo. Although they do in fact bear a number of clearly visible similarities – particularly in terms of theme – to certain well-known genre scenes painted by Giuseppe Bonito in the late 1730s, the formal and compositional solutions adopted by Celebrano for this series have more affinity with the equally well-known series of polychrome porcelain groups portraying *figli galantes* or scenes from everyday life that – under the direction of the painter and sculptor – were produced at the Real Fabbrica under Ferdinand IV, as imitation of the porcelain produced at the Real Fabbrica di Capodimonte, founded in 1742-1743 but destroyed by order of Charles of Bourbon on his departure for Spain in 1759.





Francesco Celebrano trained initially as a painter, working in the mid-1700s in the manner of Francesco Solimena and Francesco De Mura. He was also clearly familiar with the works of Corrado Giaquinto, which he may have observed during one of his trips to study in Rome and from which he gleaned his use of precious, glazed tones to outline elegant and graceful figures markedly in the rococo style. Another element that makes Giaquinto's influence all the more likely is the fact that in 1762 he returned from Spain to Naples, where through the influence of the two chief architects to the Bourbon court, Luigi Vanvitelli and Ferdinando Fuga, he obtained a number of commissions for the Real Fabbrica degli Arazzi and for the sacristy of the newly rebuilt Church of San Luigi di Palazzo.

As a painter Celebrano specialized in both religious and secular subjects, portraits of prominent members of the Neapolitan court, royal or popular festivities – both on canvas and as frescoes. Over the years a number of his canvases have been mistakenly attributed to Giaquinto. Of this production, bearing stylistic affinities with the canvas we have here and dating from between 1770 until after 1780, there is the *Presentation of Mary at the Temple* and the *Visitation of St Elizabeth* from the Collegiata di Santa Maria delle Grazie at Cerreto Sannita; the *Rebecca and Eleazar* from the Museo di Capodimonte (on loan to Rome's Palazzo di Montecitorio Chamber of Deputies); the *Assumption* in the Spirito Santo church in Naples; and the pair of compositions depicting *Ferdinand IV of Bourbon at the Boar Hunt* (Naples, Museo di San Martino) and *Maria Carolina of Austria Attending the Boar Hunt in a Carriage* (Madrid, Museo del Prado). Celebrano's most notable production in the fresco genre includes the *Allegories of the Seasons*, painted after 1764 for the Neapolitan palazzo of Prince Raimondo di Sangro, for whom he had worked as a sculptor in the nearby Sansevero Chapel.

Nicola Spinosa





## Matilde Malenchini

Leghorn 1779 – 1858 Fiesole

### 2. Portrait of Madame Le Bon

1813

Oil on canvas, 23 x 18 ...in (60,3 x 46,4 cm)

Signed and dated, lower left: "M. Malenchini Roma"

Old label on the back: "Portrait fait à Rome en 1813 de la B[...]

Le Bon née à Phalsbourg le 23 mars 1768 décédée à Nanterre pr s Paris le 22 mars 1842"

Provenance: Private collection, France

Signed on the lower left hand corner, this portrait of a lady by Matilde Malenchini is small in size but of paramount quality. Completed in Rome, both the exact date – 1813 – and identity of the sitter are revealed in the scroll, sadly in poor condition and therefore somewhat difficult to decipher, which has been glued behind the work. The sitter is Madame A. Le Bon, born in Phalsbourg, Lorraine, in 1768 and died in Nanterre in 1842. We know no further details regarding this lady, although it would be natural to suppose that she was a member of the large French community that lived in Rome during the years of the Napoleonic empire. Although the situation would soon change, in 1813 Rome was still an integral part of the empire, governed by administrators dispatched specifically from France, who were leaving a strong mark of their presence on the city. Born in Leghorn in 1779, Matilde Malenchini had trained at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence and had arrived in the former Papal capital in these years, thanks to a bursary from the Tuscan government (Pinto 1972, p. 52). In Rome she immediately struck up excellent relations with the city's cultured French community, in particular with the governor of the Roman states General Miollis, who was a refined collector and appreciator of the arts. Miollis in fact ranks as Malenchini's most important collector, with a total of eighteen works by her present in his collection, whose catalogue was published in 1814. These included the series of seven portraits of notable men shown at the famous exhibition held in the Campidoglio in 1809 and a number of genre and interior scenes, the most noteworthy of which is the canvas depicting Alexandrine Bleschamp, the second wife of Lucien Bonaparte, praying in the Collegiata church of Canino together with her children Charles-Lucien and Letizia (Caracciolo 2006, p. 186). By Miollis' intercession Malenchini managed to set up her studio in the Trinità dei Monti convent, run in those days as part of the French Academy, which had been installed in the neighboring Villa Medici since the turn of the century (Hautecoeur p. 273). It was here that Malenchini came into direct contact with a modern and stimulating artistic milieu, broadening her artistic horizons that had hitherto been limited to portraits and copies of old masters. She began producing interior scenes of everyday life animated by figures, directly influenced by the initiator of this particular genre, François-Marius Granet, but also by Ingres. Along with many other artists including the landscape painters Chauvin and Verstappen, both Granet and Ingres in fact had studios at Trinità dei Monti. In reference to Malenchini and another female painter – the Parisian Hortense Lescot – that gravitated around Villa Medici and Trinità dei Monti in those years, critic Giuseppe Tambroni employed the term *prezioso* (precious) to describe their genre scenes, in which he reputed Malenchini to have attained considerable proficiency (Rudolph

1982, p. 62). Further proof of the high esteem enjoyed by Malenchini can be found in the words of Antonio Canova, who in 1816 interceded with the Grand Duke of Tuscany asking him to raise the modest government pension accorded to her: "my engagement to favor the interests of this young woman has no other design than to increase the honor and glory of your nation, which cannot, nor any other Italian state can, boast a woman artist of such merit in her art" (Canova 2002, I, p. 135).

Malenchini continued her portrait painting alongside her interior genre scenes, although it is these for which she is best known today. The portrait of Madame Le Bon belongs to a consolidated type of portrait that, in the age of Neoclassicism, was widespread both in France and Italy, and which was directly inspired by the paintings of Pompeii. Typically for this kind of female portrait, the sitter is shown turned towards the viewer, seated in a relaxed or contemplative pose with her legs outstretched, generally resting on either a cushion or a stool, all within a setting that is finely detailed even down to the various furnishings. From the earliest prototypes produced by David, this genre became standard for the many portraits of members of the Napoleonic aristocracy that were completed by artists such as Gros, Fabre and particularly Gérard. In Italy Canova and Camuccini, whom Malenchini encountered professionally and with whom she became friends during her time spent in Rome, echoed the genre. There is a striking resemblance, for instance, between this portrait and Camuccini's portrait of the Princess of Partanna, completed a few years later and which was itself derived from models in which the same Roman artist experimented considerably. In relation to the often sumptuous portraits produced by these better known artists, Malenchini's portrait of Madame Le Bon appears a more intimate or bourgeois transposition, though no less accurate in terms of detail – note the antique style vase or the ubiquitous cashmere shawl – and effective psychological rendering.

Malenchini's years spent in Rome in the 1820s are arguably the most productive and fertile of her entire career. In 1815 Camuccini himself presented her for honorary membership of the Accademia di San Luca (Archivio Storico dell'Accademia di San Luca, Roma, ASASL, vol. 59, ff. 56v - 57), to which thirty years later she would donate the portrait he made of her in those years (ASASL, vol. 104, c. 157). Her salon was attended by distinguished artists and intellectuals (Giovannelli 1988, p. 415), including the Belgian Louis de Potter, with whom Malenchini entered into an intense and long-lasting relationship that continued even after de Potter's return to Brussels. Malenchini travelled to the city in 1824, passing through Paris and London (a portrait of de Potter by her is in the Groeningemuseum of Bruges). The irregularity of this union, due to Malenchini's married status, eventually decreed its inevitable end (Battistini 1937, p. 63). The deep regret she felt emerges in her correspondence with Gian Pietro Vieusseux, from which we learn that her support of de Potter's liberal ideals never faltered despite the considerable problems this had entailed with the Pontifical authorities (Battistini 1968, p. 90). At this point she was clearly *persona non grata* in Rome and returned to the city only sporadically. References to her visits appear in the letters of her friend Giuseppe Gioachino Belli.

Federica Giacomini





## Giuseppe Tominz

Gorizia 1790 – 1866 Gradiscutta

### 3. *Portrait of Aron Isaak de Parente*

After 1847

Oil on canvas, 88 x 44 in (225 x 112 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

Bibliography: De Grassi 2008, pp. 47-49; Quinzi 2011, p. 200, no. 153.

Active in Trieste from as early as the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, the Parente family – like the Morpurgos, the Luzzattos and the della Vidas – were part of a group of Jewish families that successfully controlled the city's trading sector, consolidating their financial influence through frequent marriage alliances between their respective children. Aron Isaak Parente was born in Trieste on May 21<sup>st</sup> 1775 (Cf. Folnesics, Braun 1907 pp. 140-41) and married Regina Morpurgo at the age of 21. He died in Trieste on May 12<sup>th</sup> 1853. Together with his considerable business successes, the various public offices he held eventually earned him the title of baron of the Austrian Empire on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1847, hence the addition of the “de” that preceded the name from then onwards.

The Cross of Leopold in red enamel bordered with white stands out on the severe background of the clothes worn by the newly elevated baron, dressed entirely in black from his square buckled shoes to the bicorn hat, worn firmly set over the head in the manner of the 1790s. A very similar portrait confirms the identity of the sitter, painted posthumously and half-length in 1854. Signed by Lipparini, this painting is currently at the Camera di Commercio of Trieste and shows de Parente in almost identical dress.

Both Massimo De Grassi and Alessandro Quinzi, who recently published a monograph on Tominz, agree on the paternity of this large-scale, formal and commemorative portrait, whose austere composition is nonetheless softened by a number of more ‘homely’ Biedermeier details. The surroundings in which Tominz has placed the black-clad figure recall the grand formality of the imperial portraits, almost as if the baron had wished to re-forge his image in the semblance of a tradition to which his title now gave him rightful access. In painting this portrait Tominz, who had already had the opportunity to measure his talents against such commissions with his large portraits – from etchings – of Francis I (1822) and Ferdinand I (1837), appears to have drawn on the canvas by Leopold Kupelweiser (1796-1862) of Emperor Ferdinand I in the Sch nbrunn Palace. The painting shows the emperor in 1847, with the same column partially covered by a drape, the balustrade dropping sharply towards the countryside beneath and the black and white, diagonally checkered marble floor that creates the visual effect of propelling the baron towards the viewer. Clearly in Tominz's work the countryside is the port of Trieste. In the portrait of Francis I the emperor has his hand placed on an imposing, rococo-style console emblazoned with the symbols of his rank, while de Parente is flanked by a small, extremely simple rectangular table – traced by Grassi among Tominz's drawings – whose polished light wood surface reflects a solitary gilded porcelain cup placed on a saucer, with an oval in which there is a portrait of a young lady.

It is unlikely, as some have speculated, that the young lady in question is Regina Morpurgo, whose youth would have coincided with the neoclassical Empire style whereas both the style of the dress and the design of the cup instead date from around 1840. In any case we do have some idea of what Isaak's wife really

looked like from a miniature in the Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte in Trieste, which was acquired on the antique market as a *Portrait of Regina Morpurgo Parente*, (circa 1835 inv. 2527). The lady in the oval could conceivably be Stella, who married Isaak's son Salomon (1808-1873) in 1828 and who therefore embodied the hopes for a continuation in the de Parente baronial dynasty.

An important collector and erudite bibliophile, by 1832 Salomon was already the proud possessor of the exceptional *Floril ge de Rothschild* – a compendium of Hebrew texts illuminated in 1479 by the same artists who had been in the service of Borso d'Este. When the manuscript went up for sale in 1855 the Rothschilds in Paris bought it. After escaping the Holocaust unscathed, the piece was eventually donated to the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, where it is to this day. It is by no means inconceivable that such a refined collector could have personally commissioned a cup of this kind, with his wife's portrait on it. The most likely possibility, however, is that – given his choice of a Habsburg ‘setting’ for his portrait – Isaak had wished to discreetly include an image of his sovereign in the picture: she who had visited Trieste alongside the emperor in 1844, Maria Anna Carolina of Savoy, whose long neck, pointed chin and thin lips appear just discernible amidst the gilt of the porcelain. It was customary at the time for Austrian emperors to circulate their informal effigies also on tasteful object of domestic use such as Viennese porcelain, as is amply documented by the many cups of this kind that still survive. Kaiser Franz and Kaiserin Maria Ludovika, for example, on two gilded cylindrical cups from 1806 (Folnesics, Braun 1907, pp. 140-141), are not wearing full imperial dress but the fashion of the time. Again, Kaiser Franz appears in civilian clothes on two other gilded, trumpet-shaped cups from 1830 (It is worthwhile noting that the shape of the cup, with its thick base and vaulted handle, is more akin to the Biedermeier series produced by the Königlich Porzellan Manufaktur of Berlin). It was not until Franz's successor, Franz Joseph and particularly his legendary consort Sissi – the media icon of the *finis austriae* par excellence, that the practice became commonplace to the point of pedestrian.

Patrizia Rosazza Ferraris



Miniature portrait of Regina Morpurgo Parente, 1835 ca, Trieste, Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte





## Francesco Monti

Bologna 1685 – 1768 Brescia

### 4. *Male Nude Study (bearded man covering backwards over a rock)*

classes of painting from life. Sought after by collectors at the time, this genre continues to enjoy a much-deserved popularity also among contemporary collectors.

### 5. *Male Nude Study (young man leaning on a rock clutching a cloth in his right hand)*

circa 1740

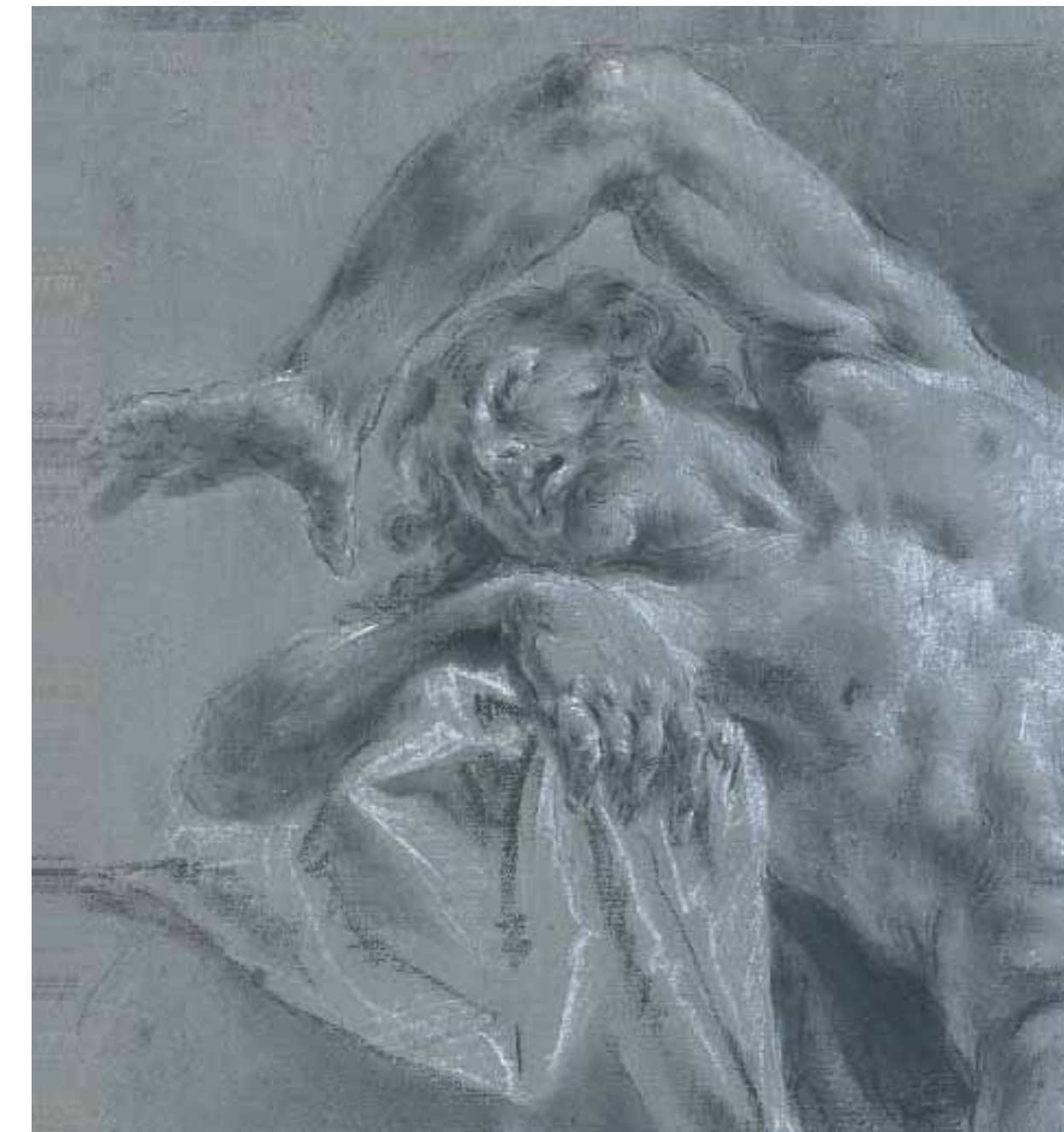
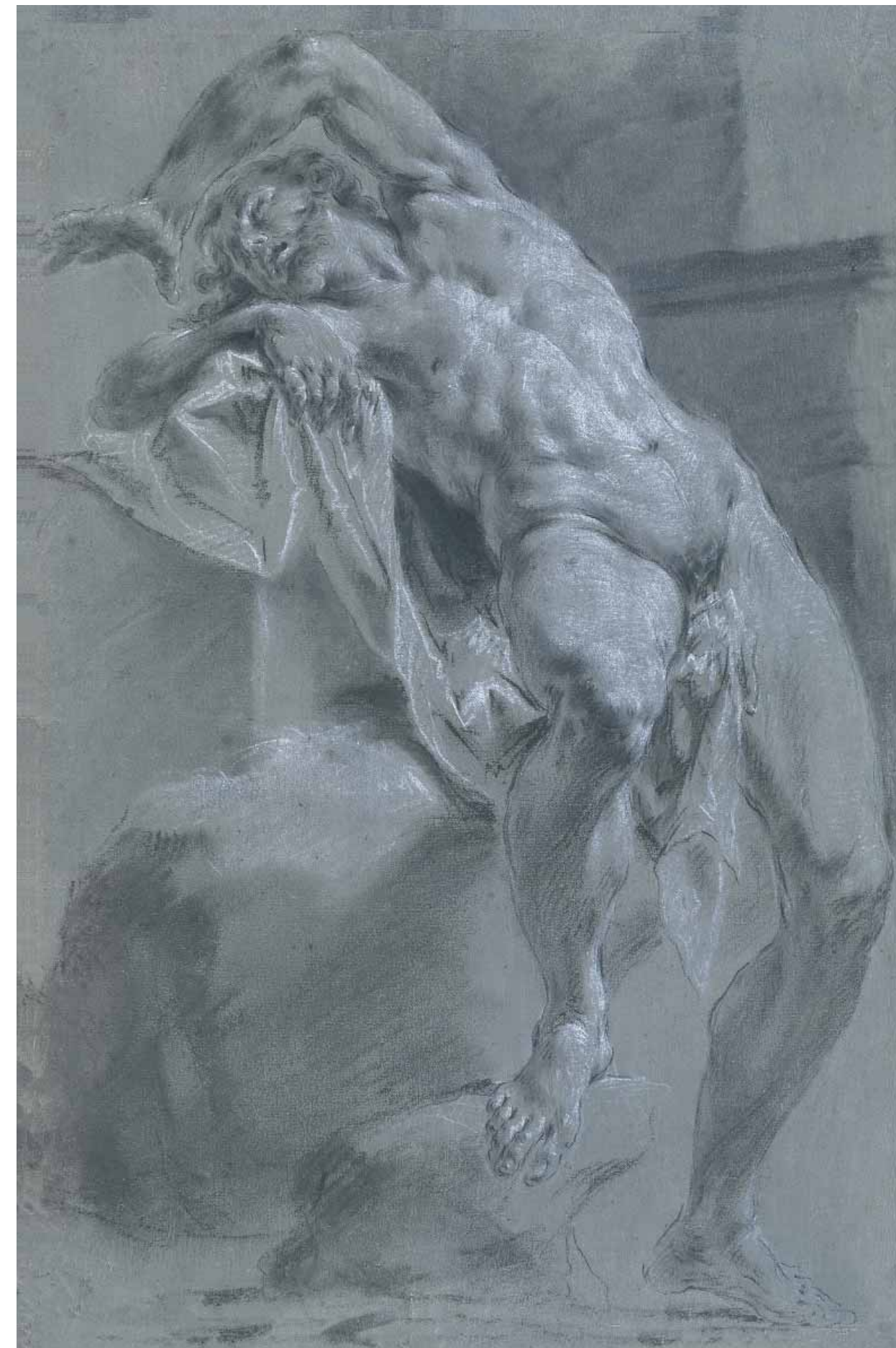
Pencil and white chalk on paper, 16 x 11 in (420 x 280 mm) each  
Provenance: the painter Carlo Ferrari, Rome

Donatella Biagi Maino

From the same collection, both these drawings were formerly attributed to Ubaldo Gandolfi, but have been unquestionably authenticated as part of the prolific graphic opus of Francesco Monti, largely reconstructed by Ugo Ruggeri back in 1968.

A comparison with works that are undisputedly by Monti, such as the *Male Nude With Child* in the Galleria degli Uffizi (Ruggeri 1968, p. 89, no. 114), the *Seated Male Nude With Staff* (no. 120 in the Ruggeri catalogue, p. 89), the *David and Study for the Martyrdom of Peter* (Ivi, p. 108, no. 444: painted in 1736/37 for the church of San Domenico in Modena, where it still hangs) or the *Study* in the Museo del Prado (Mena Marques 1990, p. 111, fig. 206.5) – all of which are in the same medium as the two drawings here – underlines also their shared stylistic quality. Their fluid trait, defined contours and use of white chalk to heighten certain areas, creating a vibrant play on light and shadow, are all typical characteristics of Monti. The compositional solution, in which the figures are perceived at an angle, corresponds to an aesthetic model that is still clearly rococo, the style under which the artist received his training. This began in Modena under Sigismondo Caula, who introduced Monti to the unfettered tempestuousness of Venetian art, and continued in his hometown of Bologna under Giovan Gioseffo Dal Sole, who steered the academy there away from its strongly Guido Reni imprinting into more open stylistic waters. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Monti was invited by Owen Mc Swiny to contribute to the well-known series of *Allegorical Tombs* (for more details see Haskell 1963, pp. 439 and succ), along with Donato Creti, Sebastiano Ricci, Giovan Battista Pittoni, Francesco Zuccarelli and Giovan Battista Piazzetta – all of whom were exponents of a painting manner that was graceful, exquisitely polished, cultivated and refined. It was Monti's adherence to this taste that eventually led him, in his late maturity, to withdraw to Brescia and work exclusively in Lombardy, at a time when in Bologna there was a marked tendency towards a classicizing style that emerged triumphant towards the middle of the century. With his undeniable talent, Monti continued to work with coherence and developed his style until the end.

The freedom and ethereal lightness of touch that characterize these two studies are simply fascinating, placing them among the highest points of Monti's graphic output. A highly proficient draughtsman, Monti had honed his skills in the academy (the prestigious Accademia Clementina di Pittura, Scultura e Architettura dell'Istituto delle Scienze in Bologna, of which he became principal in 1725), where the composition of figures and the study of the human body were perfected in regular





## Placido Fabris

Pieve d'Alpago/Belluno 1802 – 1852 Venice

### 6. *Academy Study of Two Male Nudes*

circa 1820-1824

Tempera and pencil on paper, applied to canvas, 25 x 19 in (65.5 x 48 cm)

Provenance: Paolo Fabris collection, Venice

Bibliography: Rollandini 2004, p. 30; E. Rollandini, catalogue entry in Conte, Rollandini 2004, pp. 82-83, cat. 8.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the study of the posed nude from life, either in a relaxed or tensely dramatic attitude, became – together with a detailed understanding of Classical statuary – the cornerstone in the training of any young artist intent on achieving artistic excellence in figure painting, which in those days was considered the most noble genre among those included in the classical academy tradition.

A large-scale and finely executed nude study used as a model for younger students was called an *accademia*. Fabris' one for the tempera on display here is in charcoal (fig. 1) and shows the two figures in exactly the same postures, one in a slouching position and the other standing in a defiant attitude, from a slightly more rotated angle. It is complete with the signature and approval stamp of the painting professor, Odorico Politi. The same session is documented also in the study of another student from Fabris' course in Venice, Gaspare Francesconi (Padua, Musei Civici agli Eremitani, publ. in *Da Giovanni De Min* 2005, cat. 159v, 161). Both of Placido Fabris' *accademie* therefore date from his lengthy training at the Venice Accademia di Belle Arti, from 1816 to 1824, when he quickly rose to a position of prominence among the other students thanks to a government pension obtained for him by Antonio Diedo. Antonio Canova subsequently raised the pension under the presidency of Count Leopoldo Cicognara and under the artistic guidance of the esteemed Teodoro Matteini, all of whom were impressed by young Fabris' extraordinary talent for drawing (Rollandini 2002).

In his *Memorie*, written later in life, Fabris remembers that during his eight years at the Venice academy, which ended in 1824 with his temporary move to Trieste (where he remained until 1832), he had tenaciously pursued his study of the nude on a daily basis, to the point that his fellow students recognized his primacy in the discipline. This is stridently apparent in these two studies, executed in the different mediums of drawing and painting as a means of practicing chiaroscuro shading in the drawing and the introduction of color in the painting. The 'unfinished' section is intentionally evocative of the extemporary nature of painting, of its quick application during the sitting from life.

Fabris' natural inclination towards academic studies from live models (but also from Classical statuary and plaster casts of works by Canova, which were already considered 'modern classics'), is amply documented in his *Memorie*, as well as in the words of praise offered by his teachers for his various assignments. Along with portraiture, for which he was highly admired, drawing in fact remained his preferred medium over the years. After collecting a number of prizes whilst still a student, as early as 1820 Fabris entered into competition even with a much elder Francesco Hayez on the theme of *Philoctetes Wounded*.

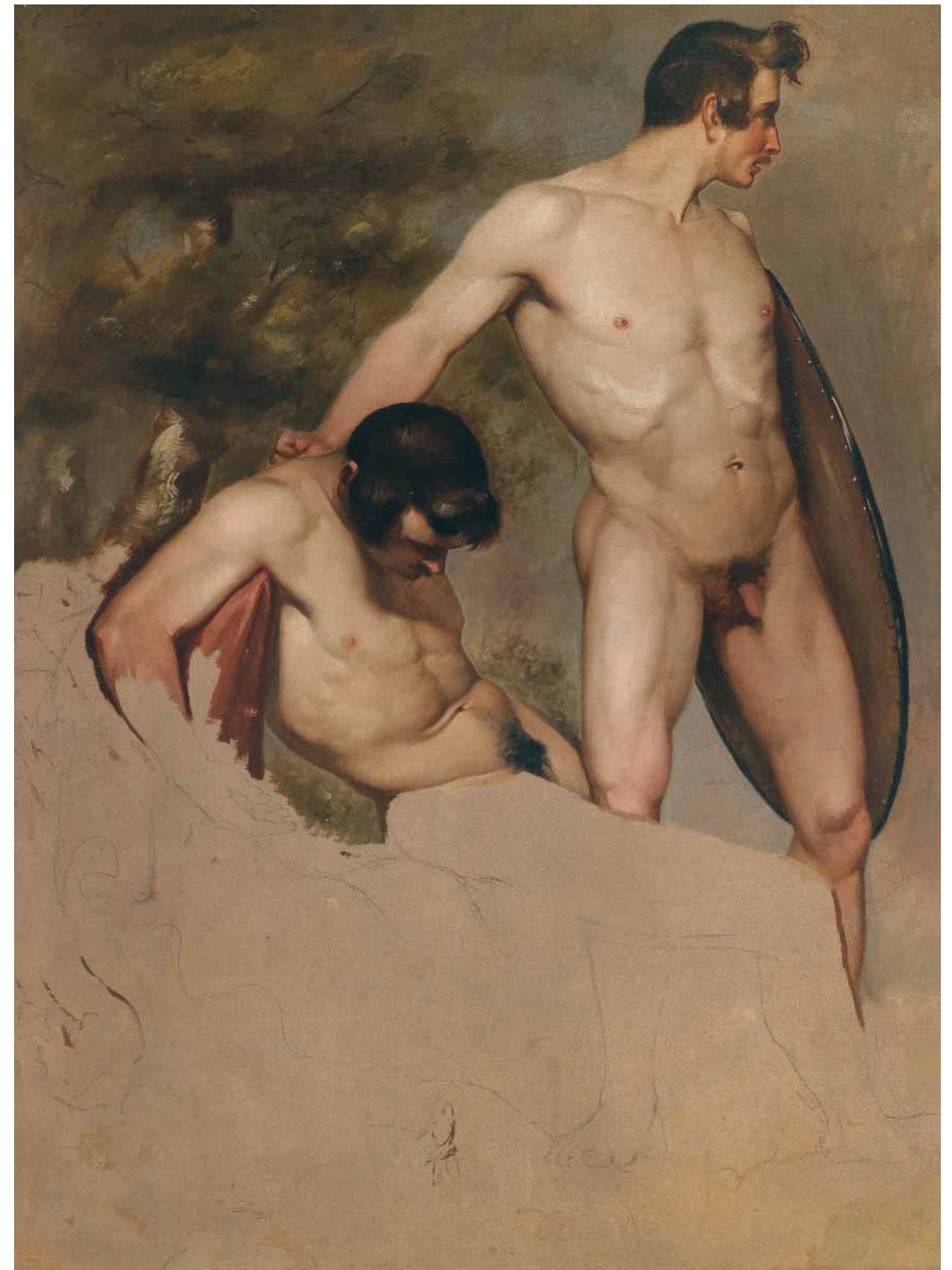
In the years that followed his return from Trieste in 1832 Fabris

established his reputation on the Venice art scene as one of the leading portrait painters of his day (Placido Fabris 2002; Conte, Rollandini 2004).

Stefano Grandesso



Placido Fabris, *Academy Study of Two Male Nudes*, Private collection





## Gaspare Landi

Piacenza 1754 - 1830 Rome

### 7. Alexander Defending His Father Philip in Battle Against the Triballi

circa 1797-1800

Oil on canvas, 78 x 93 in (195 x 236 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Turin

Bibliography: Grandesso 2008, pp. 20-21

This is almost certainly a depiction of Alexander in his youth, saving the life of his father Philip of Macedon during a battle against the Thracian tribe of the Triballi, which took place during Philip's homeward journey after an expedition against the Scythians. It has been possible to identify the subject by comparing it to the fresco with the same title that was painted later by Francesco Coghetti for the Sala di Alessandro in Villa Torlonia, Rome (cf. Giovanna Montani, in *Quadreria* 2009, cat. 29), as well as to other works inspired by episodes from the *Historia Alexandri Magni* by Curzio Rufo. Bertel Thorvaldsen used the same literary source for the well-known *Triumph of Alexander in Babylon* continuous frieze, completed in 1812 for the Palazzo del Quirinale, which at the time was destined to become a residence of Napoleon's.

Period references contain no specific mention of this painting among Landi's works. Some of his battle scenes were, however, known to his biographer Luciano Scarabelli, who in 1845 listed – together with his portraits and devotional subjects – those that Landi had completed as exercises prior to his departure for Rome in 1781 (Scarabelli 1845, p. 57). It is hard to imagine that such works could have possessed the maturity of style displayed in this complex painting. Without indicating either size or subject, Scarabelli did however specify that he was aware of two battle scenes in the ownership of Count Parma and a further two in possession of the musician Giuseppe Niccolini, all of them in Piacenza (Ibid. p. 117).

A canon named Parma, a member of the Piacenza cathedral chapter, does in fact feature in 1805 in the correspondence between Gaspare Landi and his patron, the Marchese Giambattista Landi delle Caselle, in relation to the shipment to Piacenza of the vast canvases for the Duomo (cf. Landi 2000, pp. 163, 165, 168). Giuseppe Niccolini was instead the brother of Mariano, a quadratura painter who had been a fellow student of Landi, with whom he had studied the traditional painting masters present in Piacenza (Portenone, Camillo Procaccini, Ludovico Carracci, Guercino). The musician was a protégé of the Marchese Ranuzio Anguissola da Grazzano, who commissioned Landi to paint a pair of pictures, one of *Hector Chiding Paris for His Slackness* and the other of *Hector Bids Farewell to Andromache* (1793-94, Piacenza, Istituto Gazzola). He also commissioned from Landi a portrait of himself and one of his wife, *Bianca Anguissola* (circa 1792, Piacenza, Museo Civico), in which there is a tribute to Niccolini in the form of a score of a *canzoncina* that the sitter is about to play on the spinet (Gian Lorenzo Mellini, in *Il palazzo Farnese* 1997, p. 215).

The correspondence between Landi painter and Landi patron (published in Arisi, 2004) stands as a key source of information for reconstructing the artist's catalogue of works. Giambattista Landi had pledged the funds for Gaspare Landi to complete his artistic training in Rome, which throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was considered the paramount destination for artists of every nationality to learn from the exceptional wealth of classical and modern figurative heritage safeguarded there. In order to continuously

refresh his inspiration from the source of his artistic models, and confident that he would be able to count on the international market guaranteed by Grand Tour travelers to the city, Landi decided to pursue the rest of his career in Rome. The correspondence runs from 1792 to the marchese's death in 1806. There is no mention of the battle scenes indicated by Scarabelli in this source, although from 1797 to 1800, when Landi stayed in Piacenza to avoid the political unrest in Rome that would culminate in the creation of the Roman Republic, the correspondence was far less intense. This and a number of formal elements in our *Alexander* could point to it having been painted precisely during Landi's sojourn in Piacenza.

The work in fact presents a number of iconographic and stylistic elements in common with *St. George and the Dragon*, completed during this period (Piacenza, Le Mose, San Giorgio, reproduced in Mellini 1992, fig. 138; *Gaspare Landi* 2005, p. 142). The manner in which the horses have been painted is similar in both works, as is the idealized portrayal of the faces of the saint and Alexander. There is also the same elegantly decorative rendering of the folds of the fabrics, ruffled by the movements of the figures and billowing in the breeze. Given that Landi was at this time in touch with those mentioned by Scarabelli, it is all the more likely that this piece was painted in the aforementioned period.

With its life-size figures, this work must therefore belong to the series of paintings that runs from the *Stories of Hector* mentioned earlier



Gaspare Landi, *St. George*, Piacenza, St. George Church.





– in which Landi chose to broaden his characteristic half-figure representations derived from Guercino, adapting them to the larger canvases he had available (Stefano Grandesso, in *Art in Rome 2000*, pp. 386-388) – and his monumental scale works for the Duomo: the *Transit of the Virgin to the Sepulcher* and *The Apostles Find the Sepulcher Empty* (1802-1804). Elements from this last work, such as the leg and foot of the apostle to the left, correspond to those of Alexander. Like the Apostles in the painting for the Duomo, Philip's facial features are clearly in the manner of the faces of Leonardo and Raphael.

*Alexander Defending His Father Philip in Battle Against the Triballi* is in every respect emblematic of Landi's style, which strove to combine the artistic excellence of the great Renaissance masters in terms of expression (Raphael), color (Titian), chiaroscuro (Correggio, Leonardo), with the ideals of Classical antiquity according to the eclecticism advocated by Anton Raphael Mengs in his works on art theory (cf. Grandesso 2002, p. 193 onwards). The idealized facial features of Alexander are, for example, clearly derived from Classical statues, while his attitude is that of the *Borghese Gladiator* statue in the Louvre. The grounded horse in the foreground is also clearly a variation on the theme of the statue of a lion biting a horse, in the Capitoline Museums.

The entire composition is conceived as a Classical bas-relief, with the figures in the foreground generating a kind of rotating drive encompassing also the figure on the ground, which appears to be in defiance of anatomical correctness. This is frequent in Landi's works, as well as in the paintings and drawings by his friend Antonio Canova, in which the parallel or perpendicular planes are given precedence over depth.

Landi's skill as a colorist emerges clearly in this work and was a renowned quality of his also among his contemporaries, who liked to hail him as the heir to the Venetian School as an antithesis to Camuccini, who instead was considered the chief exponent of the Tuscan and Roman School grounded on draftsmanship. Together with the emulation that ran between them, this academic conflict animated the commissions on which they both worked, from the Baglioni palazzi in Perugia to their projects for the Torlonia and Gabrielli families in Rome, the Napoleonic-era redecoration of the Quirinale or on the church of San Giovanni in Canale, in Piacenza. The brilliant transparency of the colors used for the foreground of the painting has been obtained with the *velatura* layering technique, which according to the great connoisseur Giovanni Gherardo De Rossi, enabled color to retain its tone even in areas of shadow. A quicker technique has been used for the background, where the dust beaten up in the fury of the battle calls for less detail and more muted colors, in line with the so-called "perspective of disappearance" and other teachings imparted by Leonardo in his *Trattato* on painting – one of Landi's preferred works on art theory.

Stefano Grandesso





## Giovan Battista Dell'Era

Treviglio 1765 – 1799 Florence

### 8. *A Roman Naumachia*

Circa 1795

China ink and watercolor on paper, 24 7/8 x 38 1/8 in (630 x 970 mm)

### 9. *Triumphal Procession in Ancient Rome*

Circa 1795

China ink and watercolor on paper, 24 7/8 x 38 1/8 in (630 x 970 mm)

Provenance: Private collection, Rome

Despite the existence of a conspicuous corpus of Giovan Battista Dell'Era's drawings at the Museo Civico Della Torre of Treviglio (Calbi, Frabbi 1993-1997) and several albeit infrequent records of his paintings and drawings in various private and public collections, there is still much work to be done before this artist's production is fully and completely documented. This task has been partially tackled in the crucial and specific research carried out by Emilia Calbi (*Giovan Battista Dell'Era* 2000) but further work is needed in terms of contextualizing Dell'Era's art within the highly active and cosmopolitan artistic panorama of Rome at the end of the eighteenth century and, where possible, to outline a number of this artist's stylistic traits that have hitherto remained somewhat nebulous. Within such a context, the discovery of these two works, which in my view are attributable to Dell'Era (I add that Emilia Calbi shares my attribution with conviction) and date from the final period of his long Roman sojourn that went from 1785 to 1798, is of particular interest.

By comparing the theatrical design, composition, graphic traits and stylistic common ground of these two works with others by Dell'Era, it is possible to establish, point by point, much more than a questionable attribution. Both pieces feature dizzying evocations of the Ancient world, whose visionary perspectives Dell'Era must have gleaned from his close friendship with Luigi Ademollo (also from Lombardy), who worked in Rome from 1785 to 1788. This is starkly apparent if one compares Dell'Era's two works with Ademollo's *Naumachie* (cfr. Leone 2008, pp. 15-17), in which the same meticulous care has been accorded to the reconstruction of the setting as would befit the set of a Hollywood colossal, the ingenious theatrical compositions of Antonio Basoli or the subsequent and extravagant reconstructions of Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Leo von Klenze. But there are assonances also in Dell'Era's own production: the *Departure* and *Arrival* of his Berber horse race views in Treviglio, and most of all in the large scale *Pardon of Trajan* (fig. 1) or the *Chariot Race* (fig.2), sold by Finarte in the 1970s, published by Calbi in 1997 (p. 16) and today untraceable. All these works attest to the considerable level of proficiency that Dell'Era attained in the maturity of his short life, as well as to his specialization in the composition of beguiling subjects from antiquity. The formal construction of his figures is instead distinctive for its clear outlines, a feature that Bartolomeo Pinelli was to incorporate into his drawings later on. Precise, firmly executed and circumscribed, Dell'Era's drawing style owes much to the outline drawing of John Flaxman or Bénigne Gagneraux and is of an eloquence that is nothing short of remarkable. His manner of outlining figures is starkly concise and intellectualistic, at times un-naturalistic even, be it in his anatomical traits, his volumes, attitudes, the tension with which he imbues movement and the accentuated expressivity of his characters. This particular

compositional expedient, system and style is clearly visible in the two historical subjects presented here – bristling with countless figures and artfully peppered with flecks of watercolor – as well as throughout Dell'Era's entire production, with which they share this artist's characteristic manner of conveying the musculature of the shoulders, arms and calves, his same rendering of facial features, his manner of depicting the hair of his human figures, the manes of his horses and his distinctive touch when including architectural detail. Dell'Era's broad gestures, the compositional eloquence of the movements of his figures, his depiction of limbs that are frequently elongated and oversized, his icastic penchant for frequently highlighting dramatic expressions – all these elements appear frequently in the drawings of his sympathetic friend Ademollo, albeit with subtle differences. They also shed light on the cultural climate within which these two sublime pieces were created, which was not the sentimental classicism of the German artistic sphere, kept alive in Rome by the set that gathered around the figure of Angelica Kauffmann and with whom Dell'Era incidentally entertained close ties throughout his period spent in the papal capital. The heroic tones and severe layout of these two works are, in my view, instead perfectly aligned with the intellectual and stylistic dispositions that matured within



Fig.1 Giovan Battista Dell'Era, *The Pardon of Trajan*, china ink and pencil on cardboard, 730 x 2050 cm; Treviglio, Museo Civico Della Torre (detail).



Fig.2: Giovan Battista Dell'Era, *The Chariot Race*, china ink and pencil on paper; whereabouts unknown.

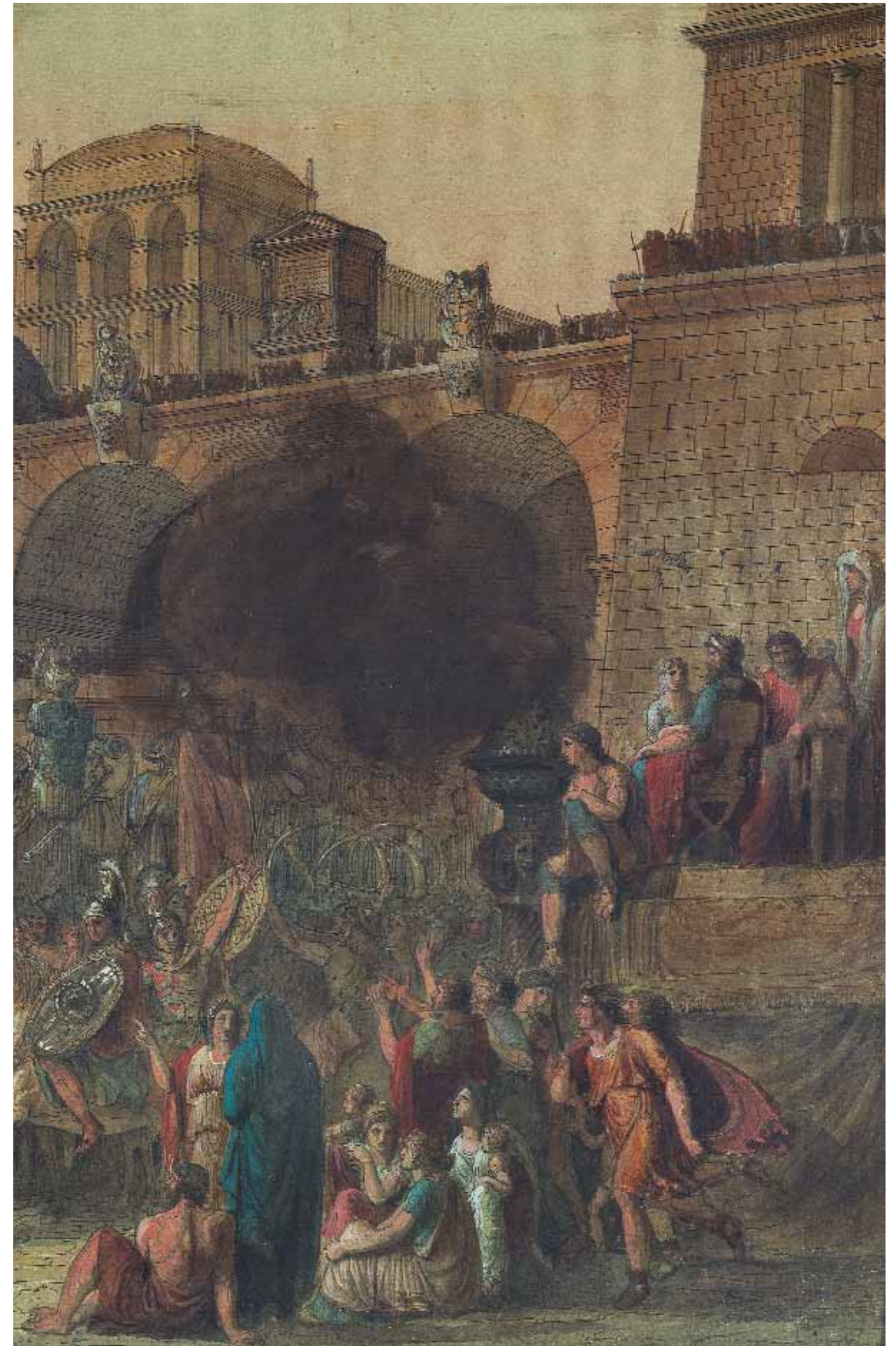




the set of young artists in Rome that revolved around the so-called Accademia de' Pensieri, founded by Felice Giani in his home in 1789-1790. Assuming the recollections of Tuscan painter Michelangelo Migliarini (Rudolph 1977) are correct, Dell'Era was part of this group along with a number of other foreign artists working in Rome at the time (François-Xavier Fabre, Humbert de Superville, the elusive Friedrich Müller – known as Maler Müller –, Bénigne Gagneraux, Jean-Baptiste Wicar and possibly even Girodet). Also members of the same group were those artists who were to become the leading exponents of Italian neoclassicism: Andrea Appiani, Vincenzo Camuccini, Pietro Benvenuti, Luigi Sabatelli, Giuseppe Bossi, Bartolomeo Pinelli (see *L'officina neoclassica* 2009; Leone 2009).

The lavish additions of watercolor in the two pieces, an unusual feature in this artist's graphic output, could be interpreted – as has been kindly suggested by Emilia Calbi – as an attempt to intercept the wealthy Grand Tour clientele, which in those years had a marked predilection for freehand watercolored drawings of Rome and the campagna, or genre scenes of Ancient Rome, produced in imitation of the fabulously successful initiators of this particular genre: Abraham-Louis-Rodolphe Ducros and Giovanni Volpato. Like many artists of the time, Dell'Era must have adopted the ingenious system perfected at the end of the century by the *vedutista* Franz Keiserman (Franz Keiserman 2007), also keeping a series of prototype drawings of his most popular compositions (such as the well-known Berber horserace down Via del Corso, or imaginary Ancient Roman details such as the two works presented here) in his studio. Probably drawn on tracing paper, the works were ready for a swift transposition into a large drawing format, on commission. From the 1790s onwards these large-scale drawings could be enriched with watercolor additions – in Dell'Era's case with the dark tonalities typical of his palette – to add a touch of glamour to these complex theatrical compositions. This sheds a new light on the many versions that exist – at times watercolored in shades of brown highlighted with white – of the Berber horse race captured at its beginning and end, as well as on the many pure and beguilingly accomplished drawings that make up this painter's opus.

Francesco Leone





## Pelagio Palagi

Bologna 1775 – 1806 Turin

### 10. *The Rape of the Sabine Women*

circa 1823 – 1824

Oil on canvas, 57 1/8 x 81 7/8 in (145 x 208 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

Exhibitions: *L'officina neoclassica* 2009

Bibliography: *L'officina neoclassica* 2009, pp. 51, 163, cat. VII.12;

Mazzetti D'Albertis 2011

This painting by Pelagio Palagi dates from a particularly fortunate and interesting time in this artist's career and is related to one of his most important commissions.

By 1822 Palagi had been living in Milan for seven years. After his supremely successful Roman sojourn, which had culminated in major commissions for the Quirinale and Palazzo Torlonia, he moved to Milan in order to follow up on a number of new and advantageous career prospects in various fields, from portraiture to historical painting, fresco, architecture and interior decoration. Although his ability to master so many different disciplines remained unequalled, Palagi's supremacy in the historical painting genre was beginning to be eroded by the younger Haysz, who he had employed as an assistant for the Theseus cycle in Palazzo Torlonia and who he himself had persuaded to move to Milan. Notwithstanding the inevitable rivalry, the two men remained friends and in 1821 they were jointly commissioned to complete the fresco cycle of Ancient Rome for the Sala della Lanterna of Palazzo Reale in Milan, left unfinished in 1813 by Andrea Appiani due to a sudden illness.

The commission in 1822 by Count Rasponi for a large painting to be placed on the ceiling of his town house in Ravenna came at a time when Palagi was overwhelmed with work. He had recently presented a second version of the monumental *Charles VIII King of France Visits Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza* to the Brera exhibition, completed for Count Gian Giacomo Mellerio (Lodi, Museo Civico), and he was in the process of painting another large-scale work taken from an episode of modern history, *Gustavus Adolphus Entrusting His Daughter Maria Christina to the Estates-General of Sweden Prior to Departing for the Thirty Years' War* (Milan, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna) commissioned by the German businessman Heinrich Mylius. Meanwhile another German collector, the Count of Schönborn, had entrusted him to paint *Pope Sixtus V Fails to Recognize His Own Sister* (cf. *Pelagio Palagi pittore* 1996).

Compared with the modern historical subjects he was working on, Rasponi's commission for *The Rape of the Sabine Women* was undeniably more in tune with Palagi's classicizing vein and with the frescoes he was completing for Palazzo Reale – a large rectangular composition of *Veturia and the Roman Matrons at the Feet of Coriolanus* and an octagon with two nude athletes representing *The Wrestling Match* (both works were lost in the bombing raids of 1943 but ample photographic documentation exists). Despite his busy schedule, Palagi must also have been intrigued at the chance to measure himself against one of the cult works of the neoclassical period, David's famous *The Sabine Women* (1799). The commission also provided him with the opportunity to pitch his talents against those of the various other reputed painters summoned by Rasponi for a complete makeover of the decorations of his *palazzo*. Mostly active in

Rome, these included Tommaso Minardi, Filippo Agricola, Jean Baptiste Wicar, Francesco Nenci and Giovanni Barbiani (Mazzetti D'Albertis 2008; Ead. 2009; Ead. 2010).

In a letter penned to the count on August 9<sup>th</sup>, Palagi wrote of how the commission for the painting “destined to adorn the vaulted ceiling of a chamber” had reminded him of a previous, similar assignment, a large painting of *Caesar Dictating to Four Secretaries* (Rome, in deposit at the Istituto Italo Americano), completed between 1812 and 1813 for the Gabinetto Topografico of the Quirinale, which had posed problems with the chromatic effects when viewed from below. Once in place on the ceiling, the work had in fact turned out to be too dark.

From his correspondence with Rasponi, it emerges that by January 1824 the commission was almost complete, missing only “those corrections and finishing touches” that “I always notice on observing a work as a whole”. After completing the major commission for the frescoes of Palazzo Reale, Palagi was clearly able to work extremely fast on the Ravenna work. After several months of silence, however, at the end of 1825 Palagi wrote a new and conclusive letter to Rasponi in which he explained the reasons for the delay. Although the painting had in fact been ready in early 1824, Palagi explained that when he had hung it from the ceiling to see the effect he had been so disappointed that he had decided to start from scratch: “I fear this will be the last time I agree to paint oil paintings for vaulted ceilings... while oil as a genre far outmatches decorations painted day-by-day on fresh plaster, in which the colors are light and by nature extremely brilliant, in oil it is completely the reverse, with weaker colors that make up a far more vigorous painting texture... however one tries to obtain the requisites mentioned above, the result is always less vivid”.

Still in place in Ravenna, the painting is therefore the final – chromatically lighter and more brilliant – version of the previous one we have here, which presumably remained behind in Palagi's Milan studio. There is a slight difference in measurements between the two works (the Ravenna canvas being 166 x 245 cm), as if the artist had deemed a marginally larger piece to be more suitable, while in terms of composition the two canvases are much the same. Clearly Palagi was satisfied with the concision of the scene, his masterly staging of the movements of the figures, the opulence of the draperies and the suggestion of the majestic architectural background. The second version differs in terms of chromatic intensity and in the brighter tones employed by Palagi to improve the effect of the work when viewed from below. In any case both works mark the end of a chapter in Palagi's career as a painter of great historical subjects from Antiquity, a genre whose demise was being hastened by the advance of Romanticism.

Fernando Mazzocca





## Friedrich Rehberg

Hannover 1758 – 1835 Munich

### 11. *Young Bacchus, Cupid and Batillus at the Grape Harvest*

circa 1795

Oil on canvas, 24.1 x 31 7/8 (61.5 x 81 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Germany

Exhibitions: *Quadriera* 2009; *Un museo tutto da bere* 2011

Bibliography: S. Grandesso, in *Quadriera* 2009, cat. 9; Grandesso 2010, p. 97, fig. 105; Maia Confalone in *Un museo tutto da bere*, 2011, p. 116

In the opening of his pivotal essay *La pittura a Roma nella prima metà dell'Ottocento*, Stefano Susinno identified an artistic current that had developed at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century around the figure of Angelika Kauffmann. It was antithetical to the heroic and doctrinal emulation of Antiquity in favour of a more sophisticated selection of motifs associated with grace and the cult of individual sentiment. As an emblematic example of that particular taste, which favoured the writings of Anacreon, Ovid, Virgil and Apuleius over those of Homer, Plutarch and Livy, Susinno published another version of the Rehberg painting on display here (Susinno 1991, p. 402, fig. 567; now Susinno 2009, p. 116).

Such aspects of figurative culture, which would appear to derive from the all-pervading Arcadian ideals of 18<sup>th</sup> century Rome, were likewise destined to resurface at the end of the conflicts that culminated in the European Restoration, favouring a new vein of intimist sensitivity and a tendency towards sentimentality that lent a Romantic tinge to classicism in Rome. According to Susinno and Elena di Majo (1989, p. 8), a case in point was the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, the great rival of Canova. After his memorable debut with *Jason* in 1802 over the following decades Thorvaldsen was drawn increasingly towards a more idyllic and anecdotal form of classicism, as in the series of bas-reliefs emblematically published by the Rieti-born academic Angelo Maria Ricci as *L'Anacreonte di Thorvaldsen* (1828). In 1809 Rehberg had exhibited at the Campidoglio a number of paintings including *Love Crying to Venus Over a Bee Sting* (I. Sattel, *Schede* 1985, pp. 18-22), *The Encounter Between Aeneas and Dido*, *The Death of Procris*. It would appear that precisely at this time, when he was conceiving the composition of his *Love, Bacchus and Batillus* for the 1810 relief depicting the same subject (Copenhagen, Thorvaldsen Museum), Thorvaldsen wished to evoke the 18<sup>th</sup> century legacy of his elder teacher.

Four years beforehand, Giuseppe Antonio Guattani had published his account of a visit he had paid to the painter at his home. At the time Rehberg was mid-way through his career as a figure painter, which had begun in Leipzig and Dresden as a pupil of Adam Friedrich Oeser and Giovanni Battista Casanova, to be continued in Rome – where he arrived in 1777 – under the tutelage of Anton Raphael Mengs. Ten years later he was to return to the city, entrusted with setting up and directing a Prussian art academy along the lines of the Accademia di Francia in Rome. Although the project never came into being, he nonetheless remained in the Eternal City until 1820 (I. Sattel, in *La pittura in Italia* 1991, p. 988). Of his visit to Rehberg, Guattani remembers, “In visiting the many rooms of his house, all of which had been transformed into galleries for his art, we encountered a number of subjects, fine and delicate in both their choice and execution”. Guattani continued to describe our Anacreontic *Love Crying to Venus Over a Bee Sting* as well as the *Orpheus Bringing Eurydice Back from the Underworld* and the *Sleeping Endymion*, after Ovid, but also the sublime version of *Cain Slaying Abel*. Also in the Anacreontic category was, according to Guattani,

the “theme of a youthful Bacchus, Love and Batillus during the grape harvest. Within an agreeable country setting the two youthful deities press the grapes with their feet in a fine marble trough, while the poor mortal Batillus is condemned to carry basketfuls of grapes on his back to fill the trough: a very delightful painting” (Guattani 1806, pp. 84-85).

Rehberg had exhibited the first preparatory sketches for this subject at the fine arts academy in Berlin, in 1795. That same year Giovanni Gherardo De Rossi, a key figure also in Rome’s artistic debates, published through the Bodoni press his *Scherzi poetici e pittorici*, in which an illustration by the Portuguese Jos Teixeira Barreto (*Autunno*) depicts a similarly erotic subject. A first version of the painting was acquired by Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia for the Königszimmer of the Schloss in Berlin, from which it was subsequently moved to the Marmorpalais in Potsdam (destroyed during the War). A second version illustrated by Susinno (Wrlitz, Oranienbaum, Luisium Schlossmuseum) was commissioned in 1798 by Prince Franz von Anhalt-Dessau, a patron of Rehberg’s and for whom the painter acted as agent in Rome entrusted with the acquisition of antiquities. At Wrlitz the work was hung between two paintings by Jacob Philipp Hackert, in the prince’s bedchamber, who commented in a letter to Carl August, Duke of Weimar: “What an elegant painting! The figures are gracious and the landscape of such beauty that at times I do not even glance at the Hackert paintings” (Pfeifer 2006, p. 98). The popularity enjoyed by this subject commanded a number of replicas, eight in total according to Thieme-Becker, who failed to quote either his source or mention the destinations of the pictures, however. To date, the existence of two has been ascertained. One is at the Landesgalerie in Hannover and the other appeared for sale on the German antique market.

In a letter to the Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, Rehberg tells how the inspiration for this work came from an episode that he had personally experienced in the Italian countryside. Like many artists and travellers to Italy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it would appear that Rehberg felt he was reliving the myth of Arcadia complete with its Arcadian inhabitants: “I gleaned the idea for that landscape from a drawing I made early one autumn morning in the Kingdom of Naples, in one of the most blissful locations near Vietri, where lush vines grow fastened together with poplar branches and the shepherds are like those of Theocritus, singing to the accompaniment of bagpipes. No other place in the world comes closer to the pleasures of life evoked by Anacreon” (Siebigk 1876, p. 293; cit. in Pfeifer 2006, p. 99). This was therefore an idyll (the wider angle of the version presented here, with variations in a horizontal format, differs from the other known versions that are in a vertical format) generated by a landscape that was both real and ideal, evoked by the Etruscan or Roman vine-growing techniques that were still widespread in Campania, as well as by the bucolic setting. In the foreground Batillus, the beautiful ephebe described by Anacreon with Cupid and Bacchus (*Odes*, XVII, XVIII) carries the grape basket, possibly a double allusion to the Classical theme associating wine with love and the hardships that accompany mankind’s quest for pleasure and happiness. The fine detail of the antique basin – adorned with a relief depicting the birth of Bacchus from a thigh of Jupiter and being entrusted to Mercury and the Mount Nysa nymphs in a panther skin – is a faithful rendition of a Classical relief that was placed in the Sala delle Muse of the Pio Clementino Museum in 1778 (Pfeifer 2006, p. 99; Spinola 1999, p. 191, 1).

Stefano Grandesso





## Henry Tresham

Dublin 1751 – 1814 London

### 12. *Sleeping Nymph and Cupid*

1797

Oil on canvas, 60 x 93 in (153 x 238 cm)

Provenance: Lord Talbot de Malahide, Malahide Castle, County Dublin, Ireland; Malahide Castle sale; Christie's, 10 May 1976, lot. 591; Private collection, England.

Exhibitions: Royal Academy, London, 1797; Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, 1853.

Bibliography: Crookshank and Glin 1978, pp. 96-97, no. 87; Crookshank and Glin 2002, p. 113.

On arriving to Italy to perfect his training as a historical genre painter, Henry Tresham quickly discovered a vocation for the art market and also began working as an agent and dealer of antiquities (cf. biographies in Pressly 1979, pp. 101-106; Ingamells 1997, pp. 952-953; Figgis, Rooney 2001, pp. 447-450; Bignamini, Hornsby 2010, I, pp. 332-333). Tresham had studied at the Dublin Society from 1767 to 1770, exhibiting regularly at the Society of Artists in the years that followed – oil and pastel portraits, as well as historical and Biblical subjects. During a brief sojourn in London, in 1775, he met Colonel John Campbell, who would later become the 1st Baron Cawdor and his patron. On an annual allowance conceded to him by an aunt, Tresham was able to travel to Italy, where he remained for thirteen years. After arriving in Florence, he proceeded to Rome in September 1775, where he rapidly found his place as a member of the city's cosmopolitan community of artists. With Thomas Jones, Thomas Hardwick and William Pars, Tresham made painting expeditions into the surrounding countryside. Subsequently he travelled to Naples with Thomas Banks, Alexander Day and other artists.

In 1777 Tresham managed to secure the purchase of frescoes from three rooms of a Roman villa, unearthed at Villa Negroni on the Esquiline Hill, as documented in the well-known painting by Thomas Jones at the Tate Gallery. As soon as they had been detached, the frescoes achieved widespread fame thanks to the prints that had been made of them and published by Camillo Buti to designs by Anton Raphael Mengs. The frescoes were then acquired by Frederick Hervey, the Earl-Bishop of Bristol, who began using Tresham as an intermediary for his commissions of artworks, as well as being his patron. In 1781 he was in fact working on two severe historical subjects for the earl, *Brutus Condemning His Children to Death* and *The Death of Julius Caesar*, probably taking his inspiration from the experimental series of Ancient Roman *exempla virtus* by Gavin Hamilton, another British historical painter and art dealer living in Rome.

From 1783 and into the following year Tresham accompanied Campbell to Sicily, documenting the ruins of Messina after the devastating earthquake there, the Greek remains at Agrigento and Segesta, and the theatres of Syracuse and Taormina (London, British Museum). The drawings formerly in the Cawdor collection instead feature views of Malta, Tunisia and Greece, to which the two also travelled on the same trip.

In Rome, Tresham acted as intermediary for Campbell in the commission from Antonio Canova of *Love and Psyche Embracing*, the group that was later acquired instead by Joachim Murat (Paris, Louvre). The completion of the plaster model for this piece is celebrated in the pastel by Hugh Douglas Hamilton, *Canova and*

*Tresham Before the Love and Psyche Group* (1788-89, Victoria & Albert Museum, London). In 1784 he published *Le Aventure di Saffo*, a volume of eighteen aquatints illustrating episodes from the novel by Alessandro Verri, whose dramatic emphasis could prompt a comparison with the work of Henry Fuseli, also in the city until 1778.

In 1788 Tresham left the Papal capital for London, where he exhibited his historical paintings regularly at the Royal Academy until 1806. He had been admitted to the institution as an associate member in 1791 and as a full member in 1799, when he presented as his diploma piece the *Death of Virginia* (London, RA collections). He also contributed to the John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery with three paintings from *Anthony and Cleopatra* and published several volumes of poetry illustrated with his drawings such as *Rome at the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (London 1799). Meanwhile he had opened a successful gallery that sold old masters and antiquities. In 1807 he was nominated Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy but soon had to renounce the post due to a deterioration in his health.

In 1797 Tresham exhibited three works at the Royal Academy, the *Death of Virginia* mentioned above, *The Earl of Warwick's Vow Before the Battle of Towton* for the Boydell's Gallery and a *Nymph and Cupid*, whose description published at the time in *The Monthly Mirror*, under the pseudonym Angelo, corresponds exactly with the painting we have here. "Painted with more ease than any other of Mr. Tresham's productions in this year's exhibition. Rich in colour, excepting the lights on the female, which have somewhat of chilliness; the drapery and bye works agreeably disposed to aid the effect of the figure; the landscape, partaking of the wildness of Salvator Rosa is painted with spirit. The figures are well imagined, and for the most part well drawn. As only part of the face is seen, and that not marked with precision, the subject loses in interest; but the most striking defect is in the proportion of the right arm, which from the shoulder to the elbow is deficient near a hand's breadth, without any foreshortening to plead in its excuse."

Due to its formal affinities with the Sappho aquatints, it was hitherto believed that this substantial, large format mythological painting – among Tresham's most important works and from another great Irish collection – had been painted while the artist was in Italy. This is however ruled out by the description quoted above, which pushes the date of completion forwards, to a time when Tresham had already returned to England, even though the work's richness and complexity is certainly a legacy of his Italian sojourn.

The Mediterranean landscape which in the eyes of *The Monthly Mirror* reviewer was evocative of the bitter grandeur of Salvator Rosa, animated by a Titianesque glow, resembles the shape of Monte Cavo above the lake of Albano. The spot could well have been included in one of the painting expeditions made into the Roman *campagna* by Tresham and his friend Thomas Jones. The figure of the reclining nymph follows an iconographic motif studied by Canova in many of his subsequent statues and could have been taken by Tresham from one of the sculptor's earliest experiments with painting, the *Venus with a Mirror* (circa 1785, Posagno, Gipsoteca), in which he measured himself against the reclining female figures of Titian and Reni. Enclosed within a lin-



ear abstraction that hearkens to Canova's readings of Homer, as well as to the outline designs of John Flaxman, the figure's organic deformation appears still tinged with the neo-mannerist formal expressive modes of the Fuseli Circle in Rome. The whole is enriched with references to Classical iconography, particularly in the detail of the arm curled behind the nymph's head, as in the *Sleeping Ariadne* in the Vatican or, even more so, in the *Adonis Sleeping on Mount Latmos*, discovered by Hamilton in 1774 and which was part of the Townley collection (London, British Museum). Canova himself would have adopted the same feature in his statue of the same name (Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection). The color tones, in particular those used by Tresham for the lavish drapes on which the two figures are slumbering, do however display stylistic elements from the work of Benjamin West, who at the time was director of the Royal Academy.

Stefano Grandesso



## Natale Carta

Messina 1800 – 1888 Montagnano, Arezzo

### 13. *Bacchus and Ariadne*

Circa 1840

Oil on canvas, 9 x 11 (23 x 30 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

The recent discovery of this previously unknown painting is indeed fortuitous in that it is without doubt a finely executed preparatory oil for the larger canvas by the Sicilian-born Natale Carta, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, currently in the collection of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (oil, cm 120 x 146, signed lower right: *Natale Carta*, inv. 2367, original frame and coat of arms; cf. di Majo, in *Civiltà dell'Ottocento. Le arti figurative* 1997-98, p. 483; di Majo-Lafranconi 2006, p. 81).

Prior to its inclusion into the 19<sup>th</sup> century art collection of the Galleria Nazionale in 1920 by bequest from Fabrizio Ruffo di Motta Bagnara, Carta's *Bacchus and Ariadne* was part of the prestigious collection of 'modern' art gathered from the early 1840s by Ruffo's father, Vincenzo Ruffo di Motta Bagnara Prince of Sant'Antimo, and housed in the family's 17<sup>th</sup> century *palazzo* in Via Pessina, Naples (or Largo Mercatello, then renamed Piazza Dante). An enthusiastic patron of the arts, the prince had established his main residence in Naples after his important marriage in 1838 to Sarah Louise Strachan, daughter of the English admiral Sir Richard John Strachan. Soon afterwards, in fact, he commissioned Francesco Hayez to paint the well-known portrait of her that currently hangs in the Museo di San Martino in Naples. Already by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Vincenzo Ruffo's magnificent town house was featured on the guides to Naples printed for Grand Tour travelers. In his *Descrizione della città di Napoli* (1855-57, vol. 3, part I, pp. 316-18), Gaetano Nobile offers a detailed description of the architecture and furnishings of the house, with particular attention devoted to the collection of antique art and a nucleus of contemporary paintings, clearly gathered with an eye directed specifically towards Italian painters: the "Hayez milanese", the "Podesti veneziano", the "Carta siciliano", the "Mancinelli napoletano", the "Morani e il Rocco, napoletani anch'essi". The paintings in question were Francesco Hayez's *Vespri Siciliani*, *Francis I in the Workshop of Benvenuto Cellini* by Francesco Podesti, *Bacchus and Ariadne* by Natale Carta, Giuseppe Mancinelli's *Rubens at Whitehall* and Vincenzo Morani's *Esther and Ahasuerus*. With the exception of the Luigi Rocco, all these works were bequeathed by Ruffo to the Galleria Nazionale in Rome in 1920, together with a painting by the Bergamo-born painter Francesco Coghetti that had not been listed by Nobili – *Ludovico Martelli Mortally Wounded*. Besides this group of mythological, historical or sentimental genre figure paintings, the collection also included a sizeable group of landscapes by *en plein air* painters (Giovambattista Bassi, Hendrik Voogd, Pierre-Athanase Chauvin, Wilhelm Huber, Anton Sminck Pitloo, Frans Vervloet, Gabriele Smargiassi), as well as sculptures by artists from across the various states that made up pre-Unification Italy (Pietro Tenerani, Luigi Bienaim, Carlo Finelli, Luigi Bartolini) (cf. di Majo 1997).

Sicilian like his high-born patron Vincenzo Ruffo, whose mother was Nicoletta Filangieri of the Princes of Cutò, Natale Carta had been a pupil of Giuseppe Patania and Giuseppe Velasco in Palermo before setting out for Rome, at the time an essential destination for any artist seeking to train in his craft. He eventually settled permanently in the Eternal City, while still keeping close ties both with Naples and Sicily. Working with Vincenzo Camuc-

cini in Rome, Carta's style acquired a marked neoclassical imprinting, with a purity reminiscent of Guido Reni that earned him a degree of success among local patrons. These included the wealthy Torlonia family, for whom Carta worked on decorations both for their city *palazzo* and their villa on the outskirts of Rome. He remains chiefly known for his religious paintings (in Rome: *Santa Rosalia* for Santa Maria dell'Itria, an *Immaculate Conception* for Santa Maria delle Fratte, two large canvases for the Basilica di San Paolo, rebuilt after the fire of 1823; in Naples, two more canvases for the Church of San Francesco di Paola), his historical and literary subjects (two paintings taken from *Atala* by Chateaubriand, shown in 1830 at the Real Museo Borbonico exhibition and acquired by Francis I for the Capodimonte picture gallery, a commission from Queen Maria Cristina of Savoy glorifying her dynasty with *Odoardo of Savoy at the Siege of Genoa*) and his portraiture (of the Bourbon sovereigns Francis I and Ferdinand II, of Carlo Filangieri with his family, of Nicola Santangelo with his wife and children).

In 1834 Carta took part in the competition for the post of painting professor at the Reale Istituto di Belle Arti of Naples but lost to his rival Camillo Guerra. The painting he completed for the competition, *Adonis Taking Leave of Venus*, subsequently also entered the Ruffo Collection and from there in 1920 to the collection of the Galleria Nazionale in Rome (on loan since 1923 at the Italian Embassy in Tripoli, all traces of this work have been lost for some years now; cf. Archivio generale, G.N.A.M.). In 1838 he did manage to secure his nomination as honorary member of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, where in 1848 he was appointed professor of painting and in 1868 professor of drawing (on Carta, cf. Barbera 2008).

Carta's mythological subject *Bacchus and Ariadne* that belonged to Vincenzo Ruffo is outstanding for the pleasingly engaging quality of the two figures, with Bacchus positioned frontally towards the viewer and Ariadne in the foreground, in three quarter length from the side. The unusual composition has such a theatrical quality that one could almost imagine the painting to be of two opera singers performing an aria on stage.

Bacchus-Dionysus has saved and married Ariadne, daughter of



Natale Carta, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, Roma, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna



King Minos of Crete, after Theseus treacherously abandoned her on the island of Naxos. His good-looking figure half revealed by his short tunic and mantle, the god is holding in his hands the scroll of poetry from which the episode is drawn. His head is crowned with the customary vine leaves that identify him as Bacchus and his ecstatic gaze is turned up towards an unexpected opening in the clouds. Ariadne is addressing him up close, holding him in an embrace that appears designed to wake him, her right hand shaking the thyrsus of the maenads. The almost perfect match between painting and preparatory study, which lacks only the element of the thyrsus, testifies to the self-assuredness with which Carta approached a composition that was ultimately fairly straightforward, involving only two figures. The Winckelmann phrase "to sketch with fire and execute with phlegm" (cit. in Honour 1993, p. 70), referred to the relation between preparatory study and completed work in the sculpture, seems particularly apt in this case too. The polished perfection, both in formal and chromatic terms, brought into play by Carta in the large canvas painted for Vincenzo Ruffo, is matched in the preparatory study by his masterful use of quick brushstrokes that transmit the expressive immediacy of the figures, humanizing them and conveying the urgency of the feelings they have for one another.

Elena di Majo



## August Nicodemo

Rastatt 1763 – circa 1797 Naples (?)

### 14. *Minerva Greets Charles-Louis of Bourbon at the Tomb of His Father Louis XVI, in the Presence France and the Bourbon Hercules*

1793

Oil on canvas, 30 x 25 in (76 x 63 cm)

Signed and dated below centre, on the plinth: "August Nicodemo Roma 1793"

Provenance: Borromeo family, Italy

The few surviving examples of works by August Nicodemo, a refined Austrian-born painter of historical subjects and portraits who worked in Italy at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, nonetheless eloquently convey his relations with prominent artists of the time as well as the elevated social rank of his patrons.

Born in Rastatt where his father Jakob Philipp, originally from Salzburg, was court painter, Nicodemo's earliest known works include *Diana with Endymion and Cupid* (Karlsruhe, castle) and document his studies in painting figures and from the imagination, while his subsequent works attest to his success primarily as a portrait painter.

In 1793 Nicodemo was living in Rome, in Via di Porta Pinciana (Noack 1927, vol. 2 p. 424). His known works from this period include the allegorical painting presented here, the full length *Portrait of Monsignor Giuseppe Ciavoli* standing next to a bust of Pope Pius VI – to whom he was Secretary (Rome, Museo di Roma, cf. Giuntella 1971, fig. XXIX) – and the portrait of Alexander Trippel, the Swiss sculptor who ran his private nude study class in Rome known as the Trippeliana. A number of artists from Northern Europe would gather there, including Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein and Heinrich Friedrich F ger, whom Nicodemo would later meet in Naples. The original of this painting is lost and currently exists only in the print transposition made by Ernesto Morace in 1775 (cf. *Goethe e l'Italia* 1989, p. 76).

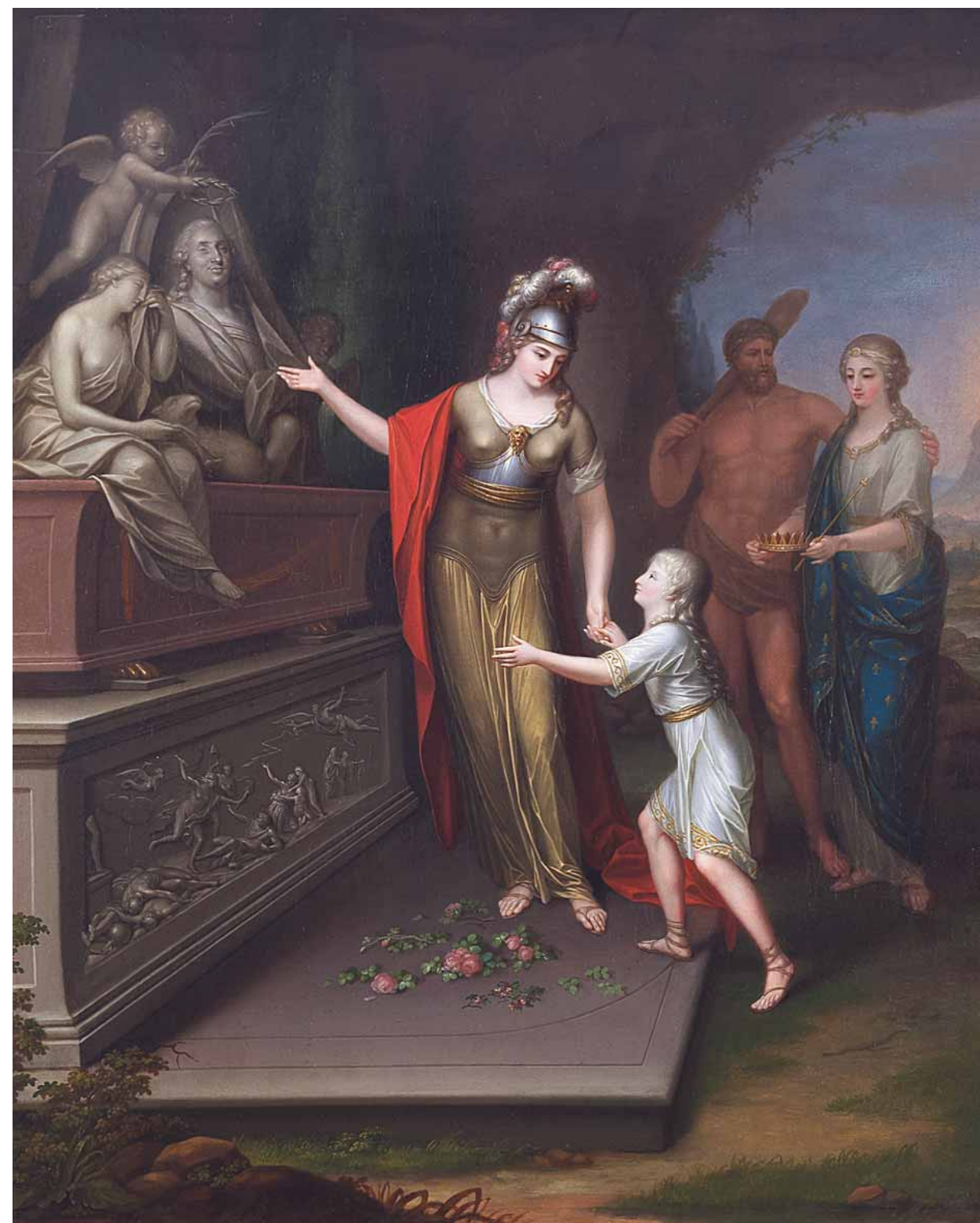
More of Nicodemo's works survive from his sojourn in Naples, where he went after Rome. There is the well known *Portrait of Jakob Philipp Hackert in His Studio*, completed in 1797 (Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Nationalgalerie) and which was also rendered as a print by Morace, the portrait of Tischbein formerly at the Gemälde Galerie of Berlin, the portraits of *Maria Cristina* and *Leopoldo, Prince of Salerno* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), originally part of a series of portraits of the various children of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon and Maria Carolina of Habsburg-Lorraine that the queen took with her in exile to Vienna during the years of Napoleonic rule in Naples (Schl 1987, pp. 329, 418). From the same period there is also the conversation piece of the *Lambton Family* in an interior with the Vesuvius in the background, completed in 1797, and the portrait of doctor and botanist *Domenico Cirillo* that was transposed into print form by Guglielmo Morghen.

The portraits of Trippel, Hackert and Tischbein can be read as a kind of map documenting Nicodemo's artistic contacts within the cosmopolitan circles of Rome and Naples. Besides these three who sat for Nicodemo, other members also included Angelika Kauffmann, with whom there are a number of common stylistic traits and who was the leading portraitist in Rome after Batoni

and Mengs. Kauffmann herself also enjoyed a number of important commissions from Naples. Another member of the group was F ger, the painter of historical subjects who was summoned to decorate the Royal Palace of Caserta. F ger's Austrian nationality, like portraitist and animal painter Martin Ferdinand Quadal, as well as Nicodemo himself, placed him in an advantageous position at the Neapolitan court, under Queen Maria Carolina of Austria.

In terms of influences, Nicodemo's work clearly contains elements of Hackert's illuminist dedication to conveying detail, while the classical taste and neo-mannerist traits of Kauffmann and F ger are visible in his elongated figures. The painting presented here, with Charles-Louis of France – Louis XVII – at the allegorical tomb of his father Louis XVI, is already pervaded with the new form of international classicism that developed in Rome. Its royalist and anti-Jacobin iconography, which flourished as propaganda art during the Revolution and which was rather more unusual than the iconography associated with the prevailing opposite political currents of the time, makes it of particular interest. Minerva, the goddess of reason, is in the act of leading Charles-Louis – whose features were well known after the portrait painted by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, widely copied and circulated as a miniature – to the sepulcher of his father. A clipeated bust of Louis XVI is unveiled by two supporting putti, one holding a laurel crown above the king's head and the other displaying the palm of his martyrdom. Beside them, completing the group of statues surmounting the sarcophagus, a mourning figure – probably intended as a personification of Meekness, given the lamb next to her, as in Canova's *Monument to Clement XIV* (Rome, SS. Apostoli) – holds a wilting lily of France. The front of the sarcophagus is adorned with a relief showing the destructive force of the Revolution, personified by blind Furies spreading fire and devastation, annihilating the royal family as well as the people and the arts. In the background Justice has fled while Time, flying overhead, promises revenge. Although in a more pondered declination, the iconography of the sarcophagus echoes many of the symbolical elements included by Rubens in his well known painting *The Consequences of War*, at Palazzo Pitti in Florence. Charles-Louis is accompanied by a personification of France, presenting him with the scepter and the crown, and Hercules, the mythical founder of the House of Bourbon, an allusion to the historical and divine legitimization of the monarchy. Behind them, outside the dark cavern embodying the revolutionary present, a shining temple of glory stands for what the future holds in store and as a reward for virtue, in line with the neo-Arcadian allegorical iconography revived in 18<sup>th</sup> century Rome.

The date of the picture, 1794, is also significant in that it is one year after the execution of the King and Queen of France and one year prior to the death of the Dauphin as a result of the appalling conditions of his imprisonment within the Tour du Temple. The fact that this politically allegorical painting was completed in Rome can be associated with a series of events and figurative accounts that took place in the city between 1793 and 1794. At least four funeral masses were dedicated to Louis XVI in the Papal capital during this period, complete with vast temporary structures in the French congregation churches of San Luigi dei Francesi and San Claudio dei Borgognoni, as well as in





Rome's cathedral, St John in the Lateran, where a large bier designed by Giovanni Battista Ceccarelli was installed (M. Gori Sassoli, in Fagiolo 1997, p. 250). Although no direct accounts of these structures has reached us, there is a series of designs by Giuseppe Barberi – which were to include sculptures by Vincenzo Pacetti – for a colossal temporary mausoleum destined for San Luigi dei Francesi (Pace 1997, pp. 236-238). A function was even held in the chapel of the Quirinal Palace, in the presence of Pius VI and the Daughters of France, Madame Marie-Adélaïde and Madame Victoire-Marie. The funeral oration was delivered by Monsignor Paolo Leardi and published in 1793 with allegorical illustrations by Francesco Morro, Carlo Antonini and Luigi Sabatelli, which were etched Francesco Mochetti and by Antonini himself. Morro's *Revolutionary Hydra* devours wealth, destroys the symbols of the arts and sciences and the shield bearing the lilies of France, while the Heavenly Eye welcomes the butterfly-soul of the king and threatens retribution in the form of Jupiter-like lightning bolts. Sabatelli instead portrayed *Pius VI Between Allegories of Religion and Hope*, the *Allegorical Monument to Louis XVI*, among personifications of *Prosperity*, or *Loyalty*, *Justice*, *Fortitude* and a more generic veiled mourning figure in the same attitude as *Temperance* in the monument by Canova quoted above. Lastly, a *Funerary Spirit* with its face thrown backwards embraces the sovereign urn.

Such allegorical and iconographic themes were all employed by Nicodemo and appear also in the plates by Pietro Leone Bombelli that were published in the official records of the secret consistory held by Pius VI on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1793 (*Acta Sanctissimi* 1793): a *Mourning Figure at the Urn of Louis XVI* under a stormy sky and *Fame* in flight above the symbols of the crown, to designs by Giuseppe Cades. It is therefore quite likely that the allegorical painting here was commissioned to coincide with one of these events. The work is also an indication of young Nicodemo's degree of proximity to the set that gathered around Felice Giani's Accademia dei Pensieri, which at the time was attended also by Luigi Sabatelli, a key figure in the development of the Classical and sublime mode in Rome around lofty historical or allegorical subjects.

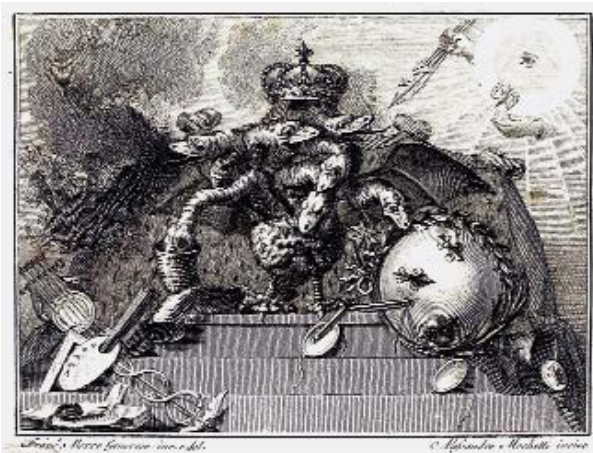
The presence of the Bourbon Hercules in the painting, combined with the ties that Nicodemo is known to have had with the Neapolitan court, prompt a parallel with the masterpiece of heroic sculpture *Hercules and Lichas* by Antonio Canova, who began working on the group a year later in 1795 (Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna). Originally commissioned by Duke Onorato Gaetani di Miranda, it was destined for the Real Museo Borbonico in Naples, where the message of the Bourbon Hercules avenging the regicidal revolution would have been plain (Susinno, Barroero 1999, pp. 103, 138-139, no. 95; Grandesso 2006, pp. 346-349). The fondness of the Bourbons for this iconography further manifested itself when, during his Sicilian exile, Ferdinand III of Sicily commissioned Giuseppe Velasco to complete the fresco decoration of the *Triumph and Labours of Hercules* for the Palazzo dei Normanni in Palermo.

It would not be unthinkable, therefore, that the Neapolitan court could have commissioned this painting. Its successive inclusion in the Borromeo collection is documented, but if it were possible to establish such an original commission this work would stand

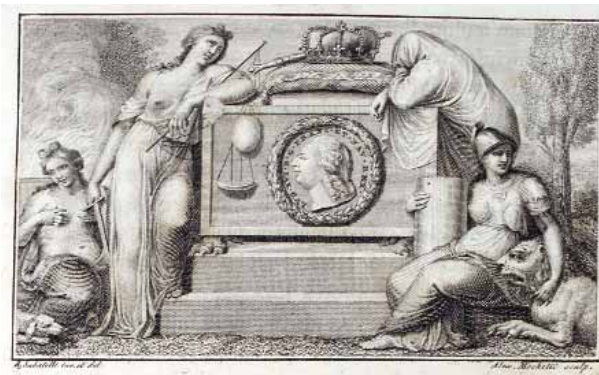
as both a significant precursor of the Canova *Hercules* and as an important testimony showing how the allusive power of mythology was harnessed in the neoclassical age, even in relation to grave historical and political events.

To conclude with an amusing anecdote taken from the biography of the architect Giuseppe Valadier: during a visit paid in 1793 by the royal princesses of France to Valadier's studio, which had formerly belonged to his father Luigi, the princesses were so moved by his striking resemblance to Louis XVI that Valadier later sat as a model for Louis in the painting by Carlo Maria Viganoni of Pius VII and the French king in adoration of the Redeemer (Servi 1840, pp. 6-7; Ciampi 1870, pp. 73-74). A comparison with Valadier's features immortalized by Jean-Baptiste Wicar (Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca) indicates the likelihood that the young architect posed as the King of France also for this painting.

Stefano Grandesso



Francesco Morro, draughtsman, Alessandro Mochetti, printer, *The Revolutionary Hydra*, from Leardi 1793



Luigi Sabatelli, draughtsman, Alessandro Mochetti, printer, *Monument to Louis XVI Flanked by Prosperity, Justice, a Mourning Figure and Fortitude*, from Leardi 1793





## Francesco Caucig

Gorizia 1755 – 1825 Vienna

### 15. Allegory: Reflection on the Transience of Human Happiness. Francesco Serafino Prince of Porcia in Meditation

Circa 1815 (prior to 1825, after 1810)

oil on canvas, 64 x 113 in (163 x 287 cm)

Provenance: Prince Francesco Serafino di Porcia, castle of Porcia, or Spittal, Carinthia, Castle of Porcia; Private collection, Carinthia.

A number of elements permit the attribution of this hitherto unknown painting to Caucig, including the distinctive style, mentions of the work in period sources and the existence of preparatory sketches of two feet and a female head (Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, Kupferstichkabinett of Vienna, inv. no. 1456; publ. in Rozman 1978, ca. 144). The balanced composition of the piece, with the figures central on the narrative placed in the foreground, is closed in to the left by a tree and an upright cypress – a feature that was particularly dear to Caucig. At the right hand extremity of the picture a fashionably dressed gentleman draped in an Empire style mantle languidly sits on a rock in a semi-reclined position, lost in thought beneath a great oak tree. Typical elements of Caucig's work are the attention to botanical detail, the rosy Mediterranean sky at sunset, the style of the landscape and – most of all – the type and poses of the figures. The modest female figure with her head propped up on her hand, barefoot and with a saddlebag containing loaves of bread, reappears also in other oil paintings and drawings by Caucig, and is an element taken from Classical art. The painter had certainly assimilated such figures during his time spent drawing the Classical sculptures and reliefs present in collections in Rome. The Classical facial features of the attractive, elegant guitar player dressed in a heavy white gown, are taken from the faces and hairdos of ancient beauties such as Venus and other female figures present in works in the Capitoline Museums, in Villa Albani and elsewhere. Caucig redeveloped them and included them in a number of his compositions. The winged putto holding a cup of wine in one hand and a lit torch pointing towards the ground in the other, has the face and curly hair typical of Caucig's children or youthful subjects (*Narcissus*, *Semiramis Fed by the Doves*, *The Infant Cypselus*). These too were derived from Classical art, as we can surmise from the painter's drawings of *Eros Stringing His Bow* in the Capitoline Museums or of other statues at Palazzo Mattei, the Vatican Museums and in Villa Albani. The pose of the prince absorbed in his thoughts, wrapped in his mantle and with his left leg outstretched, is reminiscent of J. H. W. Tischbein's *Goethe in the Campagna*, which was painted in 1787 in Rome and subsequently reproduced in print form. It is not inconceivable, therefore, that Caucig also drew on this work for inspiration.

The clear, almost harsh outlines, the cool color palette, the brilliant, almost glazed quality of the painting surface, together with the characteristic scarlet details of the clothes, are all fully in line with the neoclassical painting manner of the time, which Caucig embraced and pursued for his entire career.

As well as the common stylistic traits with the work of Caucig, it has been possible to confirm the attribution to this artist thanks

to the existing preparatory sketches of the feet of the modest woman and – at the centre of the same sheet – one of the head of the woman at the centre of the painting. A third element of proof is in an article published in the magazine *Archiv* in 1825, according to which Caucig had completed "two allegorical paintings" for Prince Serafino di Porcia (Boeck 1825). A series of elements point to this very painting being one of the two mentioned in the article. One element is that Ignaz Kolmann, who for many years was the prince's secretary, was also a collaborator for *Archiv*. It would appear that he was responsible for providing F. H. Boeck with the news of Caucig's *Allegories*, which was first reported in the magazine.

Writer, painter and, as has emerged recently, also a documented connoisseur of Caucig's work, Kollmann gives an account of a visit to Francesco Serafino di Porcia in his castle at Porcia, in Friuli, in his volume *Triest und seine Umgebung* (1807, pp. 137–140). Kollmann writes that the walls of the residence were adorned with paintings, including "a magnificent painting by Signor Caucig of Vienna, *Portia, Wife of Brutus, Prior to Swallowing Burning Coals*", which was completed by the artist in Venice in 1794 and later donated by the prince in 1812 to the newly founded Joanneum museum of Graz (where there is currently also the *Orpheus Mourning Eurydice*, donated at the same time by Caucig himself). There is no mention of the canvas we have here, so presumably it had not yet been painted. At the time the castle was also adorned with a series of allegorical images, prints and inscriptions with a moral and philosophical message.

Prince Francesco Serafino of Porcia (Porzia), Brugnera and Ortenburg (Konjice/Gonobitz, today Slovenske Konjice at Celje 1755–1827 Venice) came from an ancient noble family with estates in Friuli, Trieste, Gorizia, Carinthia, Carniola (today part of Slovenia), Styria and Bavaria. A humanist and philanthropist, his interests ranged from medicine to philosophy, literature, painting and botany. He published several editions of his personal philosophical, moral and religious reflections on mankind, translated into Italian from German (Porcia 1814; 1815; 1820), and was known as an eccentric and a wit (*Neue Annalen* 1807; Wurzbach 1872, pp. 117–120; Benedetti 1963). A dilettante draughtsman and painter, the prince also produced a number of allegorical compositions of his own conjecture. On one occasion he caused a scandal by disguising himself as a street peddler at a dance at La Scala, where he handed out a print he had designed of a macabre ball. At a later date he commissioned a portrait of himself in the company of a skeleton, surrounded by allusive inscriptions. Eventually he had the same subject of the Caucig painting transposed into print form by the Viennese Johann Böhmer, to a design by Kollmann. It has not yet been possible to trace the print but the description of it in the 1807 *Neue Annalen* says that it showed the melancholy prince in an allegorical portrait, seated in a thoughtful attitude by a young woman playing a guitar, with a playing card between her breasts and a mask attached to her sleeve. Her long train is described as being held by an unpleasant looking woman and by a skeleton, holding up a cup to her from behind from which issues forth the sentence "ludic, post mortem nulla" (enjoy yourself, for there is nothing after death). Above the group an inscription reads "In casa della Tristezza la Verità"





(truth abides with sadness), while below, divided by the Porcia coat of arms, “Madama Allegría – Il principe Francesco Serafino Porcia in Ipocondria” (Madame Happiness – the Prince Francesco Serafino Porcia in Hypochondria).

The description corresponds exactly to a small, unsigned painting still in the hands of the prince’s descendants at the castle of Porcia. Compared with that grotesque image, somewhat Nordic and Germanic in taste, Caucig’s large scale rendition has acquired a composed solemnity that is decidedly more classical, enabling the work to imbue the philosophical ideas behind the allegory with a more universal significance.

Fastened onto the left breast of his topcoat, the seated and thoughtful prince is wearing the grand cross of the Bavarian Order of St. Hubert, along with its green-bordered red band (Leist 1892, p. 51; Henning, Hertfurth 2010, p. 17), which the King of Bavaria granted for loyalty to his person or for charitable deeds towards the poor (Ackermann 1855, p. 35). The fact that Porcia was granted this decoration in 1805 is a *post quem* reference for the dating of this picture. “The temptress with the guitar, her chest in evidence and the mask on her sleeve, represents ostentation, lust, gambling and art” – was the description reserved for the central female figure in the 1807 *Neue Annalen*. The serene beauty of the same figure in this painting is however lent an additional, affectionate air of participation in the feelings of the protagonist. She is the personification of the beauty and amusement offered by gambling, music and theatre. In Caucig’s painting the skeleton with the cup has been replaced by a nude young boy bearing a torch pointed downwards, in reference to the Classical iconography for representing death. The wine he is in the act of offering symbolizes ecstasy but also abandonment and death. The poor, barefoot woman holding the train of the expensively dressed lady represents regret and nostalgia, but also the vanity inherent to material riches. Her misery recalls the condition of many, while the bread in her saddlebag could be an allusion to the prince’s generosity, given that he was universally remembered as a philanthropist. The landscape in the background is similar to the drawings made by Caucig on his peregrinations into the hinterland during his Venetian sojourn, and represents the Friuli Prealps, with the castle of Porcia just recognizable in the distance.

This erudite image therefore translates into a meditation on the remedies for hypochondria, considered one of the symptoms of melancholy from Hippocrates right through to the medicine of the time – one need only read the works of the Padua-born doctor Giuseppe Antonio Pujati on the subject, published in Venice in 1762 (cf. Riva 1992, p. 52 and onwards). Hence the open air, beauty, love, pleasure, the distraction of the arts, harmony, gambling, rest, wine and – in the attitude of the prince – philosophy itself. By placing all these elements on a par with vanity for honors and riches, the work is also a reflection on the human condition in general, and probably on how different social ranks ultimately share a common destiny. This is indeed more than a depiction of the bizarre imaginings of a saturnine prince; this is a visual rendition of that albeit universal sentiment that broke onto the scene in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the malady of the century afflicting intelligent human being – with a precise literary equivalent in the works of Vittorio Alfieri and an evolution of sensitivity that anticipated the birth of the Modern Man (on this subject cf. Riva 1992).

The exhaustive catalogue of Caucig’s works, *Annalen der Literatur*, published in Vienna in 1810, does not list this work, while the quotation mentioned earlier from 1825 marks the date prior to which it must have been executed. Its affinity with the 1807 print and its conceptual proximity with a painting commissioned by Porcia (although it is not known whether it was executed) in 1809 would point to the likelihood of a date closer to 1810. In a letter to the architect Pietro Nobile dated Vienna, April 5<sup>th</sup> 1809 (cit. in Benedetti 1963, p. 27) the painter informed him that the Prince of Porcia had commissioned another allegory, *Alexander the Great Resting on Ruins After His Many Conquests* – a philosophical theme dear to the prince.

Of Slovene origins, Franz Kavčič – or Caucig – was born in Gorizia but studied in Vienna, Bologna and Rome in the 1780s, at the same time that J. L. David was living and exhibiting in the city (cf. Rozman 2007; Ead. 2010, with prec. bibl.). In Rome he lived in the same house as Felice Giani and Joseph Bergler, the first director of the Prague Academy. Together with Bergler and his other colleagues, Caucig drew Rome and its surrounding *campagna*, developing a style that was in line with the classicism of the Rome school, which at the time was undergoing a rapid transformation within the city’s cosmopolitan community of artists. He met Antonio Canova, with whom he entertained a cordial and respectful correspondence for many years. In 1791 his patron and protector, Count Filippo Cobenzl, sent Caucig to study in Mantua for five months, with the task of procuring several plaster casts for the academy in Vienna and copying the reliefs of Palazzo T. Subsequently Caucig was sent to study in Venice. As Napoleon’s troops advanced through Italy, in 1797 he returned to Vienna where he embarked on a teaching career. For a time he directed the Vienna porcelain manufacture and, from 1820 until his death, Caucig occupied the post of director of the painting and sculpture school in the city’s applied arts academy. In 1795 he became an honorary member of the Accademia di Venezia and in 1823 of Rome’s Accademia di San Luca. Along with his patron, Count Filippo Cobenzl, Caucig’s clients were learned appreciators of the arts, nature, philosophy and linguistics, as well as followers of Illuminism and – in some cases – of freemasonry. They included the Auersperg princes, Count Colloredo, Count Mansfeld, Count Czernin, Count Fries and Count Sch nborn, Prince Liechtenstein, the Prince of Porcia and the Duke von Sachsen-Teschen. Today most of Caucig’s works are to be found in Austria (including some 2000 of his drawings), in the Czech Republic, in Italy (Gorizia, Imola), Hungary, Germany, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and in the United States.

One of Caucig’s largest paintings, the work we have here commands a position of respect within the panorama of European painting in the 1820s. It is a testimony to this artist’s talent and to the studies he pursued in the international arts centre that was Rome in the 1780s, as well as to his long tenure of the professorship at the academy in Vienna. The subject and execution of this painting are a historical and spiritual document of the art, life and thinking of certain European personalities who did not surrender to those aspects of a world that were already declining into conventionality and violence.

Ksenija Rozman, Stefano Grandesso





## Francesco Podesti

Ancona 1800 – 1895 Rome

### 16. Study for the Head of Eleonora d'Este

circa 1834-38

Oil on canvas, 11...x 13 in (28.5 x 34 cm)

Provenance: private collection, Rome

This is a study for the head of Eleonora D'Este in one of Podesti's most significant and emblematic works, *Torquato Tasso Reading the Gerusalemme Liberata at the Ferrara Court*. Whilst working on the *Myth of Bacchus* cycle of frescoes at Villa Torlonia, from 1832 to 1834 Podesti had also developed this painting – probably without any specific commission – to try his hand at producing a Romantic subject within a Renaissance setting. The following year Prince Alessandro Torlonia acquired the work (Rome, Luisa Briganti collection, cf. M. T. Barolo, in *Francesco Podesti* 1996, pp. 140-147), which had come to be regarded almost as a manifesto of Podesti's painting. It was in fact hailed as such by Giuseppe Mazzini in his influential essay *Pittura moderna in Italia*, which sanctioned the inclusion of Podesti within the "pittura nuova" group of artists responsible for reinvigorating Romantic painting with subjects taken from Italian history. Among the other leading exponents of the group were Francesco Hayez in Milan and Giuseppe Bezzuoli in Florence. Mazzini noted that Podesti did retain his specifically personal characteristics by "re-embracing" – particularly in his religious subjects – "the great masters of the sixteenth century" (Mazzini 1993, p. 105). In this sense he was interpreting that "neo-Renaissance purism" (Mazzocca 1991, p. 619, cf. also Mazzocca 2005) in a Raphaellesque key that would have conducted him along his personal "third path" formula, between academic classicism and Romanticism, which was to prove so hugely successful and influential in the Italian artistic panorama of the time.

Mellini has underlined Podesti's ability in this painting to reconcile the tradition of the old masters, from Raphael's *School of Athens* to Carracci, with recent artistic currents up to Palagi and Canova, as is visible in the poses of the "Eleonore" that echo those of the famous Canova *Dancers* (Mellini 1996, pp. 19-20). Maria Teresa Barolo has instead noted a similarity of psychological attitude in the expression of Eleonora, whose head is at an angle and her gaze askance, with that of the mature courtesan in Mantegna's *Camera degli Sposi*.

The popularity of Tasso during the Romantic period as the prototype of the hero tormented by love, madness and adverse destiny, was at the time reflected also in literature (Giovanni Rosini, *Saggio sugli amori del Tasso*, 1832) and music (Gaetano Donizetti, *Torquato Tasso*, taken from Rosini, 1833). Following the success of his painting, Podesti was immediately prompted to make two replicas. The first, currently untraceable, was destined for the Russian prince Theodore Galitzin and differed from the original version both in the arrangement and identities of the figures, as well as in its more Renaissance rather than Gothic architectural construction. The second version, completed in 1838, was probably similar to the Galitzin version and was bought by Count Paolo Tosio, a cultivated collector from Lombardy with a predilection for the great figures and glories of the Italian nation (Brescia, Musei Civici d'Arte e di Storia; M.T. Barolo, in *Francesco Podesti* 1996, p. 170).

Despite considerable differences in terms of dress and hairstyle,

the study presented here would appear to have more in common with the Galitzin or Tosio paintings than with the Torlonia work. It is probably the same work that Podesti mentions in his autobiographical memoirs when he says, "I then painted a small canvas bust of Eleonora from my Tasso" (Podesti 1982, p. 215). While the autobiography description would seem to indicate that the small canvas was painted after the main work had been completed, the unfinished paintwork and expressive details of the figure are typical of a preparatory model, as with the *Cardinal Head* (Florence, private collection), which is considered a study from life for the Galitzin version of the painting (M. T. Barolo, in *Francesco Podesti* 1996, p. 174).

Stefano Grandesso



Francesco Podesti, *Torquato Tasso reading the Gerusalemme Liberata at the Ferrara Court*, Brescia, Civici Musei d'Arte e Storia



## Bernardino Nocchi, attributed

Lucca 1741 – 1812 Rome

### 17. *Lamentation of Christ (after the relief by Canova)*

1800

Oil on canvas, 34 x 25 in (88 x 65.5 cm)

Provenance: private collection, Milan

Bibliography: Mellini 1997, p. 323, fig. 5; Id. 1999, pp. 16, 239.

Almost fifteen years have passed since Gian Lorenzo Mellini showed me a photograph of a chiaroscuro painting of a *Lamentation of Christ*, which besides a few variations was similar to a gesso model of similar size (92 x 73 cm) made by Antonio Canova after his return to Rome from Possagno in 1799. G. Pavanello has listed a corresponding print by Pietro Vitali (Pavanello 1976, no. 115), of which there exists another linear print (436 x 304 mm) by Antonio Banzo after a drawing by Giovanni De Min (*Canova e l'incisione* 1993, XXIX, p. 135).

Mellini had sought my advice on the paternity of the canvas in question, which was up for sale on the Milan antique market as an Appiani, on the basis of our many conversations regarding the models used by Canova, as well as on the possible purpose of the meticulous painting transpositions that the sculptor commissioned of his works by artists such as Bernardino Nocchi, Stefano Tofanelli and Pierre-Paul Prud'hon. It is worth noting that these transpositions were not simply destined to be used as models for printmaking or for a sophisticated clientele; they were also valuable instruments for Canova's personal reflections on theory.

Having excluded a convincing attribution to Appiani, I suggested that the prime quality of that work could be the hand of Bernardino Nocchi. I assumed that we had discovered one of those works that Nocchi painted for Canova and which he generally wrote of to his son Pietro in Lucca. For Nocchi these interpretations and pictorial transpositions had their roots in his study of glyptic art and bas-reliefs from Antiquity, which he elaborated into cameo and chiaroscuro decorations for the Apostolic Palace where, from 1780 and for the following ten years, he had occupied the position of official painter. For examples of his work there, one need only think of the two octagons painted for the apartment of the Secretary of Briefs to the Pontifical Tribunal.

Some of Nocchi's comments in his letters over the years now spring to mind: "I have suffered a rheumatism to the head though my study of Canova, for whom I have completed a four-handbreadth painting for the work destined for Count Alfieri in Florence, a surround to the statue of the Emperor of the French and now a further four-handbreadth of the work destined for the Marquise de St. Crux – with the urn and all the surrounding architecture" (November 20<sup>th</sup> 1807). Then there are the letters in which Nocchi is concerned with the "haste of Canova to have a small picture of the statue of the wife of Lucien Bonaparte seen from the front and from the rear" (July 9<sup>th</sup> 1808) – this painting only came to light again recently (Lucca, Museo Nazionale di Palazzo Mansi, cf. S. Grandesso, in *Canova e l'ideale classico* cat. VI.11). And again, "yesterday Canova sent me a bas-relief of a figure and a portrait bust for a funerary monument in the manner of Volpato, for me to paint" (December 30<sup>th</sup> 1809). Several months later, Nocchi again writes of "a little monument for Canova on a head-sized canvas, of which he sent me the great plaster to my house. And now I am to do one directly at his home, very ornate and consequently very laborious (April 13<sup>th</sup> 1810). There is no mention of the precise subject for any of these works, however (cf. Giovannelli 1985; Id. 1998). A generic mention of some of Nocchi's works in the Canova collection does appear in 1829, in the export request from Rome submitted by Canova's heir and

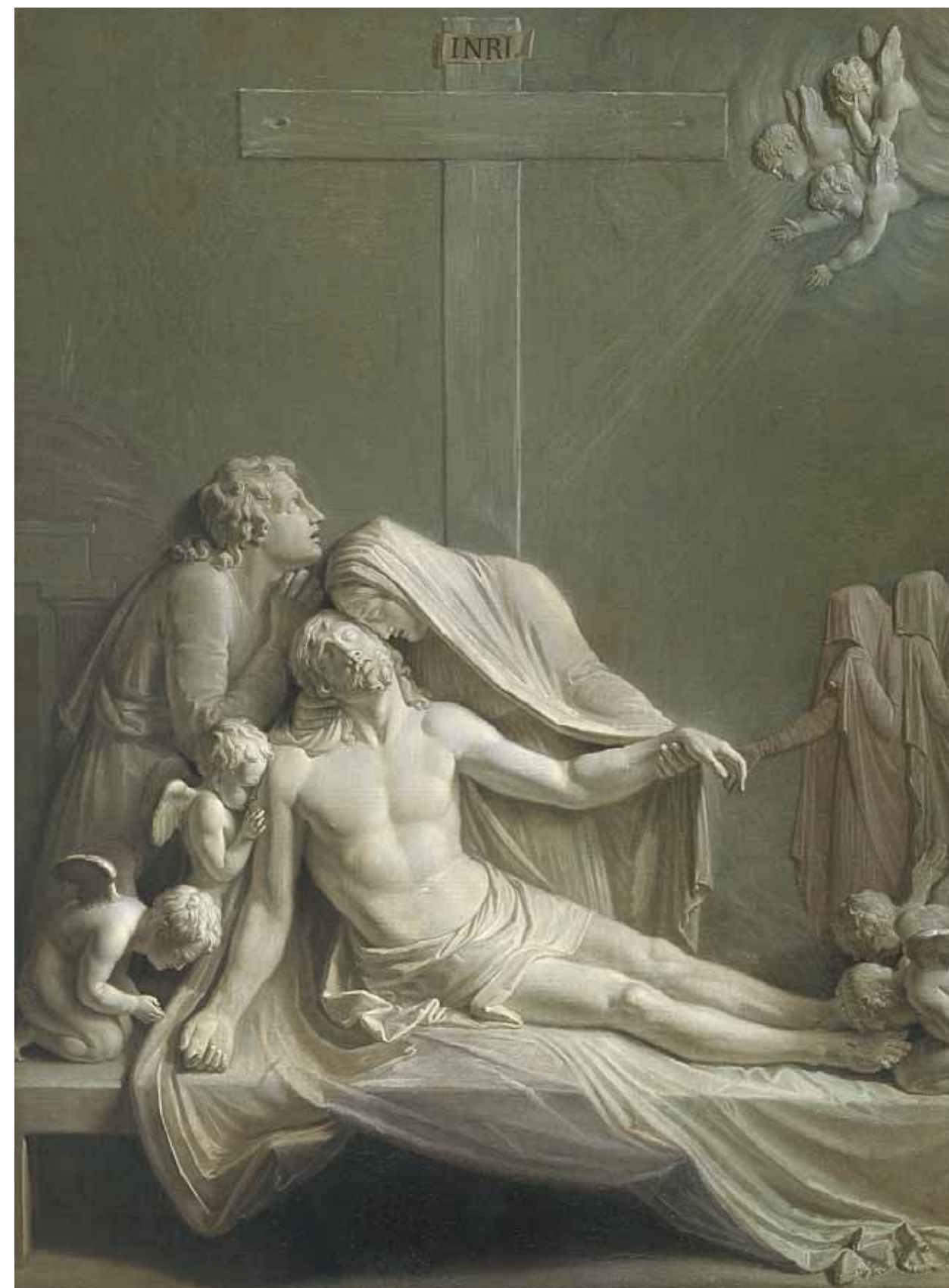
half-brother Giambattista Sartori Canova for three "Nocchi chiaroscuro depicting works by Canova" (cf. Pavanello 2001).

In any case these references date from after the presumed completion date of the work we have here, for which I have been unable to find any mention in Nocchi's extensive correspondence. The correspondence does however reveal that Canova and Nocchi must have been friends prior to 1805, since in mid-September of that year Nocchi's 22-year-old son Pietro was already employed in the sculptor's workshop, "toiling most hard" in exchange for a meager pay.

As well as the fascination for the subject matter and my epistolary research, my suggestion for the attribution of this work was also shared. In 1997, Mellini in fact published it, albeit with a problematic attribution to Nocchi, noting how the canvas was "clearly destined to function as an altarpiece for a domestic shrine". In his volume dedicated to Canova, Mellini later confirmed the attribution, along with that of a preliminary drawing of the same subject by Canova himself (noted by G. Pavanello, Cagli, Biblioteca Civica). Now that so many years have elapsed, I will make a few annotations concerning this magnificent monochrome, which shimmers with a tender, musky light so finely shed on the various figures that it is not hard to imagine the sculptor himself attending to the careful lighting of the piece. Although unconfirmed by precise documentary evidence, in view of the fine quality of the painting I would like to begin by confirming my original attribution to Bernardino Nocchi, adding that it would be extremely useful to know the details of the five drawings he made for a *Via Crucis* procession mentioned in the family papers (taken from a manuscript written by Pietro Nocchi, Arch. "Scrapts", Nocchi 5). A comparison between these and the canvas we have here would offer insight into those subtly hidden forces that, at such supreme levels of pictorial accomplishment, enter into play as a kind of magnetic interchange between the real work and its 'interpreter'. I do indeed see the inspired strokes of Bernardino's brush in this *Lamentation of Christ*, which in certain areas is charged with the same emotivity that can be found in some of his models for altarpieces. A case in point is the *Transit of St. Joseph*, painted in the mid-1790s for the altarpiece in the church of San Secondo in Gubbio, where among the heads of the angels in the composition I discern the features of a young Pietro, the same features that appear with a latent familiarity in one of the heads of the angels included in the Canova bas-relief. Other than these intangible sensations and, as I have already mentioned, a convincing stylistic similarity with Nocchi's work, we are however lacking in concrete elements with which to confirm our attribution.

In the painting on display here it would appear that part of a kind of coffin is protruding from beneath the pallet onto which the body of Christ is being laid, with the fabric of the sheet creasing over its corners. In the final plaster bas-relief version and in the corresponding etching by Banzo this element is developed in volume to such an extent that it modifies the overall composition. This could indicate that the painting here was directly in the sculptor's workshop, from the clay model that was either still fresh or being completed, prior to inserting the cumbersome coffin that in the final version is slotted with precision at the centre of the scene, as if not to upset the folds of the already modeled shroud.

I would like to conclude these temporary annotations with a reminder that, among the works completed by Canova in 1800 and listed in Antonio D'Este's *Memorie* (1864, p. 317), there features a "small model of a bas-relief representing the Deposition of the Cross". D'Este himself later produced a version in marble for Count



Widmann in Venice, which later passed into the Loonis Collection in Chicago (Pavanello 1976, no. 115). Both the Canova bas-relief and our monochrome – which stands as a fine analysis of it – offer an enriching comparison with the large canvas of the *Lamentation of Christ* that Canova began in 1799 during his painful retreat back to his hometown, and which he would resume again in 1810 and in the summer of the following year. The same comparison is still

valid also for the circular *Deposition* in plaster that Canova completed in November that same year. Bartolomeo Ferrari made a bronze version of it in 1826 for the Canova Temple at Possagno, while a marble copy was later sculpted by Cincinnato Baruzzi and bought by Pope Gregory XVI in 1832 for the church of the SS Salvatore in Terracina.

Roberto Giovannelli



## François Pascal Simon Gérard

Rome 1770 – 1837 Paris

### 18. *Conjured by the Witch of Endor, the Spirit of Samuel Appears to Saul*

1801

Oil on canvas, 11 1/3 x 8 2/3 in (28.6 x 22 cm)

Signed and dated, lower right: F. Gérard 1801

Provenance: Private collection, Florence

“Comme peintre d’histoire, il a pu être égalé, surpassé même par quelques uns de ses successeurs; comme peintre de portrait, je veux dire de portrait *historié*, pour employer un terme autrefois en usage, il n’a pas laissé d’héritiers.” Thus Henri Delaborde in 1864 summed up the career of the artist François Pascal Gérard, to whom he had devoted a long chapter in the second volume of his *études sur les beaux-arts en France et en Italie*. Twenty years previously Charles Lenormant had consecrated his Gérard, *peintre d’histoire. Essai de biographie et de critique* to the painter, attempting towards the end of his text to compile a list of Gérard’s most important works subdivided by genre. Only three religious paintings, included in the historical paintings section and one of them incomplete, featured in this list. In the tenth and final chapter of his treatise, Lenormant describes Gérard’s working method, claiming that the artist was in the habit of having a good deal of texts read to him. According to Lenormant Gérard had a predilection for history and memoirs, while in poetry his tastes spanned from Homer to the Bible, Dante and Petrarch.

The subject for this small oil study is taken from the Book of Samuel (I, 28:3-24). Gérard has placed the three characters within a confined space, lit from several angles – through a small window high to the right filters pale moonlight, then there is the brazier placed before the Witch of Endor and the figure of Samuel, which glows to underline its supernatural status. A bone on the floor at the base of the vase to lower left of the composition alludes to the fact that Samuel has emerged from the world of the dead. The Old Testament tells how, following the death of Samuel, King Saul is concerned at the advance of the Philistines and gathers an army of Israelites to meet them in battle. After receiving no answer from the Lord on how to best proceed against the enemy, either in a dream or through the prophets, Saul resolves to consult a medium and arrives in the city of Endor. At Saul’s request the medium conjures up the spirit of Samuel, who emerges from the ground as an old man, draped in a cloak (Samuel I, 28:13-15). Gérard’s painting faithfully captures the moment in which the biblical text reads “And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and prostrated himself” (Ibid, v. 15).

Equally respectful of the original source is Benjamin West’s *Saul and the Witch of Endor* (oil on canvas h. 52.1; w. 68.6 cm, Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum), painted in 1777 (Dillenberger 1977, p. 30; Erffa-Staley 1986, pp. 311-312, n. 275) at the same time as another version of the same subject (London, Victoria and Albert Museum). In West’s version the witch is depicted with more monstrous features and Samuel’s face is partially covered by a white cloak, while two terrified secondary figures witness the scene. Both Gérard’s and West’s versions show Saul in exactly the same manner of prostration and share the same arrangement of the biblical characters within the composition.

The episode of Samuel, Saul and the Witch of Endor enjoyed re-

newed popularity as a subject towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, following the illustrious precedent painted a century before by Salvator Rosa (1668), at the Louvre. From the Rosa version Gérard has borrowed the element of the lit brazier used by the necromancer, to whom he has conferred a terrified expression rather than the terrifying features painted by Rosa. The biblical text contains no reference whatsoever to the process by which Samuel’s shade is conjured up (Schmitt 1987, p. 42). In his canvas, Gérard has transferred onto the witch the same expression of stupefied terror at perceiving Samuel that West employed for his two secondary characters – a means to convey in visual terms that element of the Sublime of which Edmund Burke had written earlier in the century (Staley 1988, p. 85) and which in the 1770s and 1780s had been rendered in ink and watercolor also by Johann Heinrich Füssli (1777) and William Blake (1783).

Through the medium of Endor, Samuel prophesizes to Saul the imminent defeat and loss of his kingdom. It is arguable that Benjamin West’s work contains a political allusion to the defeat of King George III at the Battle of Saratoga (1777) – the event that was decisive in the involvement of France in the American War of Independence – or at any rate a warning reference to times when both kings and their realms could fall foul of a monarch’s hybris (Staley 1989, p. 86; Marks 1997, p. 131). The image certainly received a wide circulation when from 1797 it was included as an illustration plate etched by William Sharp within the Holy Bible printed by Thomas Macklin, an editorial project that involved a number of artists, including the English naturalized French painter Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg.

Given that this edition of the Holy Bible was published also in an apocryphal version in 1800, it is likely that François Gérard would have been familiar with West’s painting, if only in its illustration form. Following the failed assassination attempt on Napoleon’s life in rue Nicaise, Paris, on December 24<sup>th</sup> 1800 and the end of the campaign in Egypt on September 27<sup>th</sup> 1801, it is not unthinkable that Gérard’s painting also contains a hint of political allegory.

This small oil was not among the works that Gérard presented at the Paris Salon from 1808 and 1827, a period in which he exhibited almost exclusively portraits. Neither can this painting be considered a preparatory work for a larger format piece, despite its loose, vibrant brushstrokes. The fact that it is signed and dated points rather to it being a *d’après* study of a completed canvas of which the artist wished to keep a reminder, probably for the purpose of composition. A theory that is further corroborated by the measurements of the picture, exactly the same as the series of 84 *tableautines* produced by the artist – reproductions of works in the collections of Versailles and referred to by Madame Gérard in a document dated 1837 as *esquisses d’après les portraits en pied*. All measuring 20x30 centimeters, the *tableautines* are of life-size portraits completed by Gérard between 1796 and 1836 (Ziesenis 1961, p. 171).

Given the unusual subject and this painting’s documentary relevance, this is therefore both a valuable addition to the *corpus* of works by Gérard and an important element within the painting context of early northern European Romanticism.

Chiara Stefani





## Hubert Robert

Paris 1733 – 1808 Paris

### 19. *The spiraling staircase of the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola*

1764

Oil on canvas, 9 x 12 in (24, 5 x 31, 7 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, England

Born in Paris in 1733, Hubert Robert went to Rome in 1754 where he spent the next eleven years, beginning his stay a *pensionnaire* at the French Académie, under the directorship of Charles-Joseph Natoire (1700 – 1777). Later, as a freelance artist, he developed his natural talent for painting antiquities as well as for creating architectural fantasies, the genre for which, after his return to France in 1765, Robert achieve international fame.

The date of Hubert Robert's visit to Caprarola is not documented, but several drawings executed during Robert's visit bear the date 1764. These include in particular a view of the Palace's courtyard inscribed and dated 1764, *Caprarola* from the Pierre-Adrien Paris collection at the Bibliothèque de Besançon (Album 453, no.37), and in the same collection a counterproof view of a ramp leading to the Palace (Album 451, no. 27), also inscribed *Caprarola 1764* (on the subject of Robert's visit to Caprarola, see Victor Carlson 1968). There is no reason to believe that this small painting was not executed at the same time.

The small town of Caprarola was known then as now for its imposing Palazzo originally designed by Antonio da Sangallo (1484 – 1546) for Alessandro Farnese, later Pope Paul III (1468 – 1549) but considerably remodeled by Giacomo da Vignola (1507 – 1573) from 1546 until his death in 1573, for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese "il Giovane" (1520 -1589), the Pope's grandson. Vignola bestowed upon the building some of its most distinctive mannerist features, notably the spectacular sweeping staircase leading to the upper floor. Robert's repertoire of antique buildings and fantastic architecture could easily accommodate Caprarola's spiraling staircase, an extraordinary architectural feat that must have made a lasting impression on the young artist. Typically, Robert did not paint a straightforward view of the staircase but considerably altered its architecture: most notably he replaced the frescoed walls attributed to Antonio Tempesta (1555 – 1630) with sculptures set in niches and openings, thus adding light to the stairwell as well as an almost vertiginous illusion of depth to his composition.

Robert painted another version of this composition now in the Musée du Louvre (25 x 34 cm, coll. La Caze, M.I. 1108). The almost similar dimensions of both paintings exclude the possibility of considering the slightly smaller one a study for the other, although the one exhibited here is more sketchily executed. Rather, both should be considered original, perhaps painted for different amateurs. In painting another version of this image Robert could also have used a drawing possibly executed *in situ* (but already showing some of the alterations brought by the artist to his subject), now in the Musée de Valence (Musée de Valence, Inv. D. 61, see de Cayeux 1985, pp. 190 – 192, no. 46). As often the case with Robert, the artist revisited the subject later in his career, incorporating some elements of the Caprarola staircase in fantasy compositions (Cayeux mentions a painting executed c. 1793 -94 at the time in a French private collection, using the motif of the spiraling staircase – obviously derived from Caprarola's – but inserted in a different context).

J. Patrice Marandel





## Carlo Bonavia

Naples or Rome, documented information from between 1751 and 1788

### 20. *Imaginary Landscape with the Temple of Diana at Baia*

circa 1770

Oil on canvas, 51 . . . x 76 in (130 x 195 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, France

Never previously displayed in public, this painting is an 'imaginary' depiction of a rocky landscape featuring a small waterfall and a pond, on the banks of which several young women are undressing before bathing. Presumably this is an intended reference to the mythological episode of Diana bathing, particularly given that the centre of this fantastical landscape is occupied by a depiction of the ruined Temple of Diana that still stands – within a group of other Roman era ruins including the Temple of Venus – on the coast at Baia, near Pozzuoli.

The composition is almost identical to the 80 x 122 cm picture that, along with its pair, *Coastal Landscape with the Villa delle Cannonate at Posillipo*, went up for sale in London some time back. Both works were correctly attributed to Bonavia by W. G. Constable (1960, pp. 371-374, fig. 4, written in collaboration with T. McCormick and with a reproduction of the *Coastal Landscape*). The pair was also published by N. Spinosa (1987, no. 277, p. 157, and 1989, second edition 1993, no. 65, p. 192, figs. 61-62). Given the remarkable quality of the paintwork, the version we have here was in all likelihood painted around 1770. It is also in excellent condition and within a fine period frame. The London version differs both in its reduced size and, most importantly, by the inclusion to the left-hand side of several male figures together with peasant women instead of the female bathers. To the bottom right-hand side of the picture there is also a young man and woman seated on a rock, with a dog next to them, engrossed in amiable conversation.

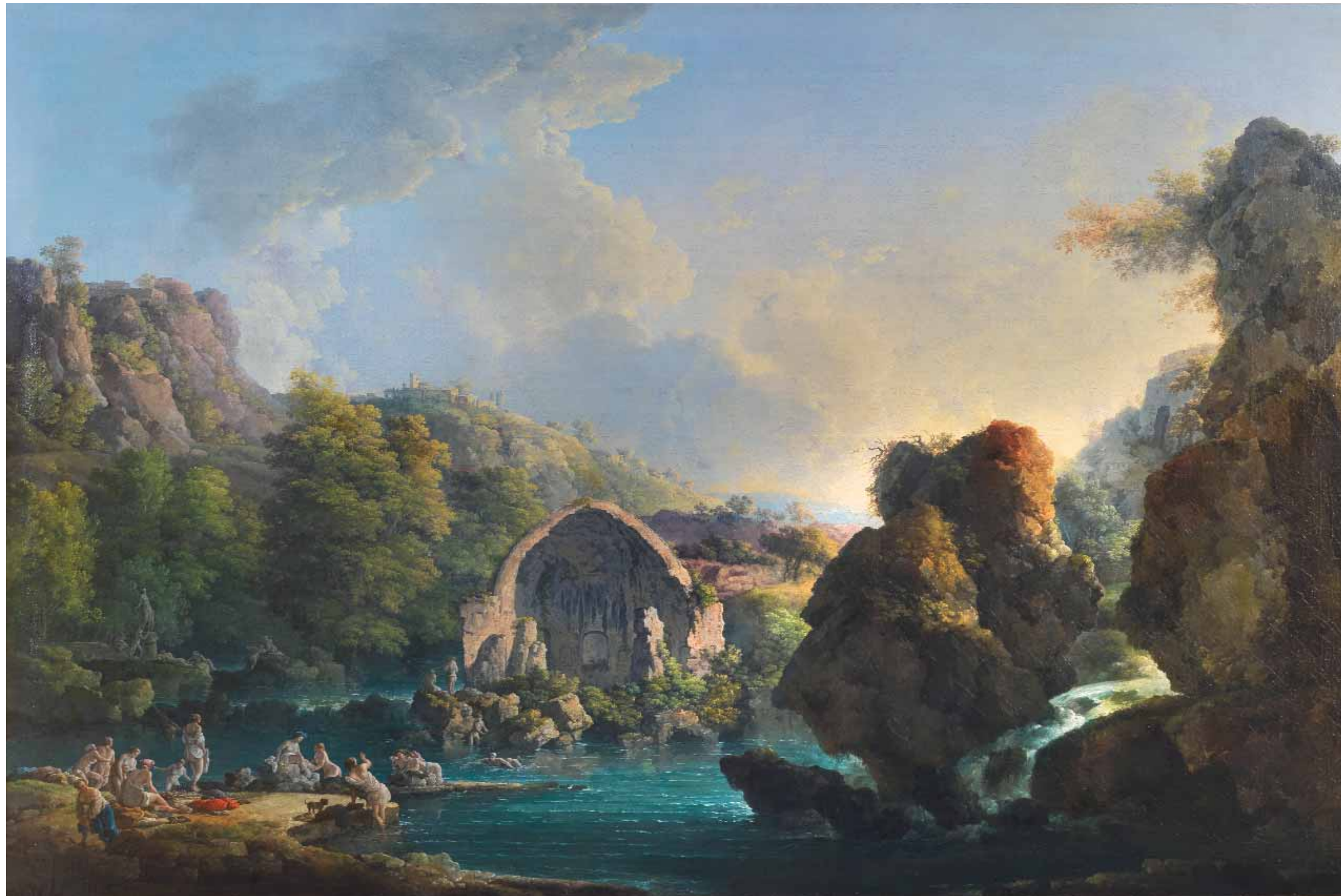
Although the precise location and date of his birth are unknown (either Rome or Naples, probably the latter), Carlo Bonavia's existence is amply documented by his prolific output of landscapes. Largely imaginary 'views', these works do however feature an arbitrary and effective inclusion of existing natural features. This combination of imaginary and real elements derives from a long-standing tradition in Neapolitan art circles, with important examples already in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in the works of Domenico Gargiulo, known as Micco Spadaro. Most of these existing natural features are sections of the coastline around Naples or in the immediate countryside inland, with Roman ruins such as the Temple of Diana at Baia or the Temple of Venus, or more recent – and still existing – constructions such as Castel dell'Ovo in Naples, Castelnuovo, the Villa delle Cannonate or the Aragonese Castle of Ischia. Other works feature buildings that were demolished towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Lanterna in the port of Naples. There are also a number of depictions of unremarkable houses in the countryside or by the sea, most of which have since vanished.

In purely stylistic terms, experts have already established a close connection (particularly Constable in 1960 and Spinosa in 1987, also on pp. 21-22) between Bonavia and the French artist Claude-Joseph Vernet. During his sojourn in Rome, Vernet travelled to Naples in 1737 and 1746, where he completed a number of drawings from life and several conventional views of the city that

stand out for their theatrical and visual modernity. These include Naples seen from the Marinella with the Torrione del Carmine, or from the beach at Mergellina with the city spread out as if in a great, open-air theatre (Paris, Musée du Louvre; United Kingdom, collection of the Duke of Northumberland). He also completed some finely detailed depictions of life at the Court of Charles de Bourbon (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte). At times, the solutions adopted by Bonavia in his works were so similar to Vernet's in dramatic and pictorial terms, particularly his use of light and lavish chromaticism, that until recently the two artists were sometimes confused. In relation to Vernet's production from his time in Rome and Naples, Bonavia's 'imaginary' landscapes stand out for his masterful inclusion of Roman ruins, as well as for his refined accomplishment in depicting human figures of varied extraction, from peasants to travellers, fishermen, gentlemen and ladies. A case in point is the canvas we have here, where the figures captured in normal, everyday poses enliven the landscape by lending it greater credibility and informality. Interestingly, Bonavia also completed a number of noteworthy night scenes of the Vesuvius erupting (Naples, Museo di San Martino, Alisio collection), some of which predate the vaster production in this genre of another French artist working in Naples at the time – Jean-Jacques Volaire.

The Temple of Diana and the nearby Temple of Venus were frequently painted, both from life and in imaginary compositions, from as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the protracted period known as the *Grand Tour d'Italie*, by Italian and international painters. The great apse featured in our painting still stands today and is all that remains of a Roman era building believed to be a temple dedicated to Diana, the goddess of the hunt, on account of a series of marble bas-reliefs with animals and various references to hunting that were unearthed in its vicinity. Subsequent research has revealed that the structure is in fact probably all that is left of a circular plan *palazzo* erected by order of Emperor Alexander Severus (222-235 AD) as a commemorative sanctuary for the imperial family.

Nicola Spinosa





## Andrea Appiani

Milan 1754 – 1817 Milan

### 21. *Bathing Figures Among Classical Ruins*

### 22. *A Couple Dressed in the Modern Style*

#### *Visiting Classical Ruins*

circa 1795-1800

Tempera on canvas, 19 x 25...each (50 x 64 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

These two extraordinary temperas, which have never been on public display before, are a significant addition to the catalogue of works produced by Andrea Appiani who (as indicated by his Monza-born biographer, the etcher Pietro Beretta), had found in tempera his preferred expressive medium – the best suited to his individual sensitivity. His earliest and most accomplished efforts in this medium were, according to Beretta, the four large temperas completed around 1775 for a commission by one of Lombardy's most prominent exponents of Illuminism, Count Ercole Silva, the author of a successful treatise on gardens – *Dell'arte dei giardini inglesi* – which came out in Milan in 1803 and was reprinted in 1813. Beretta indicates that these works “were completed for a chamber in the house in Lauro [the ancient, centrally located district of Milan that today corresponds to Via Lauro] where for a long while they were in fixed frames arranged around the room... In recent years they have passed by inheritance to the noble Signor Girolamo Ghirlanda, who carefully transferred them to his villa at Cinisello, which he had also inherited from Silva. These four temperas represent the Rape of Europa in four pieces. The compositions are rational and joyful, with generally well crafted figure groups.” (Beretta 1848, ed. 1999, p. 96). Still much appreciated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they were published as prints in 1827-1828 by Paolo Caronni (*Canova e Appiani* 1999, p. 172), their current whereabouts is unknown, although they are well documented also by period photographs (Mazzocca, Morandotti, Colle 2001, p. 446).

The works should probably be dated later than the date indicated by Beretta, more towards the early 1780s. The finely crafted landscapes in the backgrounds of the four scenes, distinctly reminiscent of Albani and in general of the classicism prevalent in Emilia, would appear to predate the landscapes of our temperas, as does the skillful transparency in rendering the water in which putti and other mythological figures are playing. The figures in the Silva temperas still appear somewhat wooden, an early characteristic of Appiani's work that earned him the nickname *seccone*. Through feverish practice in drawing, over the years his figures assumed softer, more blurred contours that prompted the appellation *pittore delle Grazie*, which would be associated with Appiani into posterity. The bathing figures in the two temperas we have here have been executed with the same softness of touch as those in the small but brilliant oils on wood *Mars and Venus* and *Diana and Actaeon*, in the Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna of Milan (*La Milano del Giovine Signore* 1999, pp. 144-145, 235). Dated at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and plausibly completed at the same time that Appiani was working on the fresco cycle for Palazzo Sanzaro in Milan (these have since been detached and are in the Pinacoteca di Brera), these two works also underline the artist's inclination towards the landscape genre, which he nonetheless appears to have practiced little, although Beretta does assure us

that “...neither was landscape overlooked by him, with many finely executed studies from life found in his home after his death” (Beretta 1848, p. 73). The figures of the three bathers in the foreground have the same soft-contoured anatomies and sensual movements as the group of nymphs in *Diana and Actaeon*, while the tree that concludes the composition to the right has the same meticulously painted foliage as the one that appears in the same position in *Mars and Venus*.

The blend of nature and ruins, which has been employed to great effect in these works, was highly popular at the time. Appiani would certainly have been able to appreciate examples during his sojourn in Rome in 1791, where he may well have seen the watercolors of Charles-Louis Clérisseau and Abraham Louis Rodolphe Ducros. One should also bear in mind that there was an established fashion for ruins as garden features at the time – elements that were studied and designed by Appiani's patron Ercole Silva.

Fernando Mazzocca



Andrea Appiani, *Diana and Actaeon*, Milano, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna





## Pierre-Jacques Volaire, known as “Chevalier Volaire”

Toulon 1729 - 1799 Naples

### 23. *Eruption of the Vesuvius in 1771*

1789

Oil on canvas, 39 x 60 .in (101 x 153 cm)

Signed below left: *le Chevr<sup>r</sup> Volaire. f.*

Provenance: private collection, Rome

Exhibitions: *Napoli e Ercolano* 2006

Bibliography: Gonzalez-Palacios 2001, pp. 46, 219, fig. 4 (specular reproduction), p. 221; Beck Saitello 2004, p. 103, note 288; *Napoli-Ercolano* 2006, p. 142; Beck Saitello 2010, pp. 251-252, no. p. 112

The beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Italy – forever considered the cradle of the arts and *bon goût* in general – became also the prime destination for the Grand Tour. Towards the second half of the century a combination of factors – the return to activity of Vesuvius in 1737, the discovery of Herculaneum in 1738 and of Pompeii in 1748, as well as the arrival in the city of the Farnese Collection during the reign of Charles of Bourbon (1734-1759) – transformed Naples into the final destination for this kind of journey. Besides offering everything the grand tourist desired – the ruins, palazzi and collections were part of a well-trodden itinerary – Naples had the additional allure of its magnificent concerts and receptions. The city’s flourishing trade in medals, cameos and sculpture also provided visitors with objects to take home with them, in memory of their sojourn to the area and as symbols of the cultural status they had attained during their formative journey. Painters living in the city at the time were able to profit from the lucrative market that developed when visitors began requesting their portraits to be painted, either in front of a famous monument or with one of the views of the places they had visited in the background. More than any other Italian region they had visited, the mild climate and picturesque landscapes of Campania offered travelers unparalleled serenity, to which there was the added thrill of witnessing the ‘anger’ of the erupting Vesuvius, whose spectacular ‘fireworks’ became an unmissable event for any visitor to the region at this time.

Within such a context, Volaire had the intelligence to quickly grasp – as did Canaletto with his views of the Canal Grande in Venice or Pannini with his depictions of the ruins of Ancient Rome – the key role played by the eruptions of the Vesuvius in shaping the *genius loci* of Naples, promptly specializing in depictions of this particular subject.

“Monsieur de Voltaire [...] a native of France, long resident in this city, has obtained by perpetual observation, a power of representing Vesuvius without black shadow, which others have thought necessary to increase the contrast, by which greatly takes away all resemblance of its original” (Lynch Piozzi, 1789, 2, p. 5). Thus wrote Hester Lynch Piozzi (1741-1821) during her visit to Naples in the winter of 1785. The English lady was so stricken with the eruption she had witnessed, that she acquired a view of the Vesuvius from Volaire. Her account underlines the considerable evocative power of Volaire’s works, obtained through lengthy observations of the various eruptions and his particular talent for capturing their effects with color. Although not directly referring to the work we have here, this passage from Hester Lynch Piozzi’s diary describes it to perfection. The work dates from the artist’s final period of activity, when many years of experience had crys-

tallized into a remarkable precision in representing the phenomenon and his color palette had taken on a lighter tonal range.

Born in Toulon in 1729 into a family of artists (his father Jacques was the city’s official painter), Pierre-Jacques Volaire was the assistant to Joseph Vernet from 1754 to 1762 on the *Seaports of France* series. In 1763 he moved to Rome and then to Naples in 1768, where he forged his personal style, independent from that of his master, by specializing in depictions of the erupting Vesuvius. Besides his many depictions of the volcano, Volaire’s Neapolitan production – which includes signed works from 1767 to 1784 – included also a number of delicately executed country views and a sizeable corpus of drawings, (cf. the two *Eruptions of the Vesuvius*, one in the Louvre and the other in the Museo di Capodimonte (inv. D’AV 22), signed and dated). Some thirty works (*Eruption of the Vesuvius*, Paris, Galerie Heim; *Marina*, Paris, private collection; *Eruption of the Vesuvius by Day* and *Eruption of the Vesuvius by Night*, Naples, private collection) certainly date from after 1784, however.

Voltaire’s depictions of Vesuvius fall into three distinct types, or formulae, designed to suit the range of his clients’ financial resources, their personal tastes, the eruption they had witnessed and whether or not they had climbed the mountain itself. Painted from three different angles, the volcano appears from the eastern part of the city of Naples with the Ponte della Maddalena (cf. the painting from the D’Avalos collection in the Museo di Capodimonte), from Atrio del Cavallo (cf. the version in the Art Institute of Chicago) or from the beach at Chiaia (cf. the picture in the museum of Brest). For this last formula Volaire adopted a vertical format.

The view we have here belongs to the second formula, Volaire’s most popular, and shows the eruption that lasted from May 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> 1771, whose effects lasted for some time, with lava accumulating at Atrio del Cavallo and a series of Strombolian eruptions. During this activity a fracture appeared in the great cone of the volcano, causing a river of lava to flow down the mountainside, forming a tunnel that eventually split into three parts at Atrio del Cavallo. Later, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, a vast lava flow passed beneath the Crocelle promontory and reached the Collina del Salvatore. It was not until the end of the month that the flow finally exhausted itself.

Voltaire chose to depict the lava flow from Atrio del Cavallo, from where – according to the inscription that features on several paintings – he was able to observe it personally. Literally “atrium of the horse”, the Atrio, which occupies the western section of the Valle del Gigante around the crater, probably took its name from its horseshoe shape (some instead believe it derives from the fact that this was the spot where horses were stationed before visitors made their ascent on foot). This formula, of which Volaire is the inventor, was probably destined to those clients who had mustered the strength and courage required to brave the difficult ascent up the volcano. The route taken by the travelers, their stops at the little church of the Salvatore and at Colo delle Crocelle (the cemetery of the hermits), the horses, the guides (simple farmers or cicerones), are all depicted with clarity. In every respect, as an account of an experience, these works even dwell on the reactions of the travelers to this exceptional phenomenon – at times fearful but mostly in admiration and full of scientific curiosity. This for-



mula would be the most painted by Volaire and the most in demand from his clients: more spectacular, more original than the views painted by his colleagues, and more effective both pictorially and anecdotally.

The view presented here, in particular, is taken from the Crocelle promontory, with the Salvatore hermitage in the middle plain and the city of Naples in the background, with the outline of the Castel dell’Ovo just visible. It presents a number of differences from the other version of the same formula – the number of figures, the presence of the horses and the blue-gray tones used for the sky. Alvar Gonzalez-Palacios in fact noted that the chromatic range used in this work is particularly seductive. Together with the red and black plumes of the eruption, the mountains and figures are silhouetted against the silvery-blue waters of the Gulf of Naples, under a pale sky enlivened by a few white clouds. Volaire has chosen to employ a delicate range of tones and contrasts in this work, rather than overwhelm the picture with the red and orange tones of the eruption. Clearly this is a late work, as confirmed in the partially preserved inscription that reads “le chevalier Volaire fecit 1789”. Other elements that point to this are the desire to enrich his consolidated repertoire with new solutions, the bright chromatic range Volaire has employed and his spidery handwriting in the inscription.

Emilie Beck Saitello



## Beniamino de Francesco

Barletta 1807- 1869 Saint Enogat (Dinard/  
Saint Malo)

### 24. *Landscape with Uprooted Tree*

circa 1838

Oil on canvas, 19 1/3 x 19 1/3 (49 x 49 cm)

Signed lower left: "De Francesco"

Provenance: Private collection, Italy

This landscape depicts part of the Roman *campagna* with the ruins of an aqueduct in the background. The task of identifying the location as somewhere in the countryside around Rome is rendered somewhat easier by the presence of a half-shadowed male figure, dressed in the traditional garb of the Ciociaria, a prevalent rural area south of the city. With the aid of a stick, the man is negotiating his way through the undergrowth, clambering over rocks towards the overturned stump of a great oak tree in the foreground. The bizarre and picturesque form of the broken trunk occupies the centre of the composition. A multitude of spontaneous plants and flowers rendered by de Francesco in the minutest detail and bathed in the stark light typical of a spring morning, have sprung up all around. Amidst the vast array of wild plants growing around the broken tree, prime position is occupied by a vigorous strawberry tree, with its orange and red fruits and its spatula-shaped leaves. An almost palpable array of flowering bushes occupies the ground level of the picture, some grey-violet in color, others – such as the poppy and garden rose – providing a touch of more intense red. A little to the right, the broad leaves of an acanthus, curled at the edges, complete the picture of luxuriant Mediterranean flora.

With his definition of Beniamino de Francesco as "(...) romantic he began and romantic he ended" (cf. Ortolani 2009, p. 165; for the artist cf. also: Causa 1967; M. Picone Petrusa, biography in, Greco, Picone Petrusa, Valente 1993, p. 117; V. Carotenuto, catalogue entry in *Civiltà dell'Ottocento a Napoli* 1997, p. 167; Ead., catalogue entry in *Dal vero* 2002, p. 177), Ortolani identified a degree of common ground with those non-Italian artists who settled in Italy and followed Franz Vervloet and Felice Cottrau, rather than with the group of Neapolitan painters known as the Posillipo School.

After an early "troubadour" phase with which he distinguished himself on his arrival in Naples (winning a gold medal at the Bourbon exhibition in 1833 with *Moonlit Landscape with Figures* – Naples, Palazzo Reale – and in 1835 with *View of the Catacombs of San Gennaro de' Poveri* and *Torquato Tasso in Sorrento*. *Moonlit Landscape* – Naples, Palazzo Reale), de Francesco developed a romantic but classically inspired vision of the landscape into a highly personal and original style. His concept of the landscape appears distant from the atmospherically charged views that Pitloo had produced in Naples in the 1830s and 40s. The paintings of Gabriele Smargiassi, weaker in all respects and weighed down by conventionality, cannot compare to the landscapes by de Francesco, who was a refined and cultivated elaborator of classical form. This is conspicuous in *Countryside with Woman and Girl Startled by a Snake* (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte, inv. O. A. 111/1907), which was awarded a gold medal at the 1837 Bourbon exhibition.

A certain amount of influence by Carlo Mark cannot be ruled out in de Francesco's painting. The two men had met in 1838, at the beginning of de Francesco's four-year sojourn in Florence, during which he incorporated into his work a number of the most recently developed techniques in classical landscape painting. His *Roman Landscape* (Florence, Galleria d'Arte Moderna of Palazzo Pitti)

Painted for the Grand Duke of Tuscany dates from this period, as does our *Landscape with an Uprooted Tree*.

De Francesco had managed to secure a privileged position at court thanks to the intercession of Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, whose collection included two works by de Francesco dated 1838: *Landscape with Aeneas and the Sybil* and *Landscape with Mule Track* (Copenhagen, Thorvaldsen Museum). In a letter to Thorvaldsen – then a prominent figure on the international art scene – dated that same year, de Francesco is quick to explain the reasons for the delayed missive, which he ascribes to both a busy work schedule and to the difficulties he encountered in settling into a new city. De Francesco prepares to offer all his gratitude for the encouragement that Thorvaldsen has given him:

"(...) I have no words to explain away my silence to you, illustrious Commendatore, if not through the pressing business of my new living quarters and work, which I hope you will soon inspect. I must regard your person as one of the chief instruments of my advancement, for which I am all the more touched! The generous soul which you possess, along with all those merits and virtues that render you an oracle of the arts and earn you the admiration of all of Europe, make the constantly germinating benefits that you impart an honor to all your beneficiaries; and because no such favor will be considered by me equal, my gratitude and pleasant pride shall not be diminished for any reason other than the knowledge that such encouragement is undeserved by me and comes from your kindness (...)" (cf. Copenhagen, The Thorvaldsen Museum Letter Archive, m. 22 1838, no. 46).

In Florence, de Francesco took part in the activities organized by the city's academy, exhibiting his work locally from 1839 to 1842. He moved to France in 1842 and settled definitively in Dinard, Brittany, from where he maintained his contacts with the Kingdom of Naples whilst exhibiting at the Paris Salon from 1843 to 1849, in 1853, 1866 and 1867. In 1845 the painting *Courtyard with a Rural Home* (Rome, on permanent loan to Montecitorio) was awarded a gold medal. His works were also featured at the Bourbon exhibitions of 1851 and 1855. The work listed in the catalogue for the 1855 exhibition, *Harvest Scene in Brittany-France* (Naples, Museo di Capodimonte inv. O. A. 7266/1907), was presented by the House of Savoy to the 1861 national exposition in Florence (cf. Napoli 2009).

Beniamino de Francesco was widely recognized at an international level. Besides Thorvaldsen, one of his more famous collectors was the old Camille Corot, who bought *A View of Mergellina*, discovered by Jacques Thuiller in 1988 (p. 401, fig. 1), at the auction of works by the artist held at the Hotel Drouot in 1870 (cf. *Catalogue des tableaux et des études provenant de la succession de Beniamin de Francesco, dont la vente aura lieu H tel Drouot, Salle n. 8, le samedi 26 mars 1870*, in Thuiller 1988, p. 407, note 1). The same French expert has identified a number of other works by de Francesco in Corot's personal collection (cf. *Catalogue des tableaux, études, esquisses, dessins et eaux-fortes par Corot (...) et des tableaux, dessins, curiosités diverses composant sa collection particulièr. Vente par suite de la collection de Corot. H tel Drouot. Le mercredi 26 mai 1875 et jours suivants...* de Francesco's works are market at nos. 696-698, in Thuiller 1988, p. 407, note 2), although these have yet to be listed individually.

Further proof of the high esteem in which de Francesco was held by collectors outside Italy can be found in the catalogue to the 1870 auction of his works, with a preface by Théophile Gauthier, in which the acclaimed writer expressed great admiration for the painter's work, venturing even a comparison with Bonington in terms of his



chromatic *stesura* and radiant atmospheres:

"(...) these lively sketches by M. De Francesco, displaying a remarkable confidence and steadiness of hand. What virginal clarity of tone, what freshness of touch! All is right at the first try. Under this artist's brush, oil painting preserves the glistening quality of when it has been freshly applied (...) This Neapolitan artist, it must be said over again, because it is true, has something of the stately effortless of Bonington, particularly in his skies, his water, his seaside beaches (...) M. B. de Francesco has the indispensable gift it takes to paint this radiant climate (that of Naples): the gift of light. His palette has a range of light tonalities, soft blues, amethyst violets, sun-drenched whites, pearly grays and a particular shady green like cactus or aloe. He requires no recourse to brash exaggeration to obtain results that are arresting for their clarity. He truly conveys the flavor of hot climes, with their intense white light, their sapphire-blue seas, their clear blue skies, their grey earth, their golden dust, their chalk-white or ochre buildings (...)" (cf. Théophile Gauthier, in *Catalogue des tableaux...* cit., 1870, p. VII, p. IV, in Thuiller 1988, pp. 405-406, note 35, p. 408).

Luisa Martorelli



## Antonio Basoli

Castelguelfo/Bologna 1774 – 1848 Bologna

### 25. *The Fire of Madeira in 1512*

1842

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 18 x 24 in (46,7 x 62,4 cm)

Signed below left: "Basoli inv. t e fece 1842"

Inscribed along the upper margin: "Madera nella Lusitania, tutta coperta di boschi, incendiata dai portoghesi per ordine di Enrico nel 1512, incendio che dicesi dur 7 anni"

### 26. *Flood with Monks, a Castle and Imaginary Buildings*

1839

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 18 7/8 x 25 in (47,7 x 63,7 cm)

Signed below left: "Antonio Basoli inv. t e fece 1839"

Partially legible inscription above left: "[...] degli Ellenici" (of the Hellenics)

### 27. *Imaginary Landscape with Buildings and Knights in the Foreground*

circa 1840

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 18 7/8 x 24 2/3 in (47,7 x 62,6 cm)

### 28. *The Interior of Noah's Arc*

circa 1833-39

Oil and India ink on cardboard, 20 2/3 x 30 2/3 in (52,3 x 77,7 cm)

Provenance: Private collection, Rome

As was clearly illustrated by the fine exhibition devoted to him in 2008, Antonio Basoli was a great 'traveller' despite hardly ever having left Bologna – an apparent paradox that dissolves on closer examination of this artist's work (*Antonio Basoli* 2008; cf. also Masini 1848; *Antonio Basoli* 1993). Despite ranking as the most international artist working in Bologna in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Basoli was also by far the least mobile, leaving his city only in his youth for brief trips to Rome, Trieste and Milan. This was a condition shared by a number of his contemporaries who, like Basoli, chose – at times with a degree of tenacity – to favour the journey of the intellect over that of the body, entrusting themselves to the mythic and poetic significance of their imagination and the unparalleled fascination generated by the great heritage of texts at their disposal. To cite two other prominent examples of artists from Bologna and Emilia to follow in this tradition, one need only think of Guercino and Giorgio Morandi.

But Basoli, who was largely self-taught and who circumnavigated the globe much in the manner of Salgari, is a case apart. It would be unthinkable even to attempt to trace the confines of the culture and erudition that this multi-faceted artist accumulated during his lifetime. A voracious, bulimic reader since childhood, Basoli had been attracted to the world of the imaginary and the unknown while studying at the Accademia Clementina with his lifelong friend Pelagio Palagi. In a sense, also because he stands in the middle of the aesthetic period of which they are the grand opening and the grand conclusion, Basoli is reminiscent of the visionary excursus of Louis-Jean Desprez (1743-1804) and even more so of the Englishman John Martin (1789-1854). A profound connoisseur of Martin's graphic works and audacious for-

ays into the 'panoramic' genre, Basoli, his strong contender for the primacy in Europe of that very particular imaginary landscape genre that straddles the visionary and the antiquarian, evoking far-flung, uncharted worlds through a kaleidoscopic assemblage of monuments representing archetype locations, be they from mythology such as Rhodes or Babylon, or Biblical and exotic such as Delhi, Moscow or Mexico City.

In the *Alfabeto pittorico*, published in 1839 (Basoli 1987; Borgogelli 2004), Basoli himself uses the term *cosmogramma* to explain his particular frame of mind that spans time and space, creating unexpected space-time crases worthy of Hollywood. It is no coincidence that, just like Basoli, both Desprez and Martin were all-around artists, working as etchers and designers of temporary structures and sets. For artists throughout neoclassical and romantic Europe, the craft of set designing functioned as the formal and creative gymnasium for their fantastical, unreal compositions. It should be noted that Basoli, having grown up in a land that had given birth to the Bibiena dynasty, was a master in this genre for over half a century, on a par with greats such as Karl Friedrich Schinkel or the extraordinary Alessandro Sanquirico. Basoli developed a burning passion for books and literature during his adolescence, from the moment when in 1788, aged just fourteen, he was admitted into the circle of one of Bologna's grandest families, the Conti Aldrovandi, who were great collectors and art patrons. As Basoli himself recalls in his precious autobiography (a compendium of notes kept at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna and published for the first time in 2006) he began exploring the pages of wondrous volumes and recent publications, largely in English or French, "having had the opportunity to immerse myself in the library and picture gallery of the counts". This thirst for literature was to accompany Basoli for his entire life. Until the end of his days he acquired and read books of all kinds, even copying out sections, commenting, filling them with annotations and footnotes that served as material for the subjects, themes and models of his tireless and precious creations. It was on these volumes that Basoli drew for his dazzling artistic inventions, from his many designs for interiors to his set designs, etchings or canvases. His extraordinary talent for visual and mental re-assemblage, the fecundity of his genial ability to break up and recompose, brings to mind his contemporary and near-compatriot Felice Giani. Together these two men stand firmly within the firmament of Italian and European neoclassical art.

Basoli, whose boundless graphic material (drawings, manuscripts, notebooks of all kinds) passed in 1857 to the Bologna Accademia di Belle Arti, where he had taught – tends with surprising consistency towards a certain monumentality in his work, at least in part derived – by his own admission in his autobiography – from his early studies in the Aldrovandi home together with Palagi. "I studied together with Palagi and Corsini in the evenings in casa Aldrovandi, having at our disposal their library. I traced the fireplaces of Piranesi and copied some works by Mauro Tesi [...] and in that library I studied many of the volumes of Piranesi, the decorations of Albertolli, the architecture of the Englishman Inigo Jones, the buildings of Palladio". The inspiration for Basoli's depictions of far flung worlds instead derived from his – as always – highly informed study of the works of the milestones of West-





ern Illuminist culture (Milizia, Durand, Fischer von Erlach, Rollin, Sismondi), from the contemporary developments of Romanticism (Walter Scott, Manzoni, Byron, Cooper, etc.) and from an attentive reading of accounts of adventurous expeditions to distant lands. And this is precisely the reason why today Basoli is regarded with great appreciation on an international level, as though if he were a truly international artist. His work is a concentrate of modern European culture.

One remarkable section of his *Lezioni di paesaggio*, written in 1845-46 and kept among the 104 volumes and manuscripts at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna, clarifies with disarming lucidity, more than any other, the working method of this brilliant artist. The passage refers to a painting, *The Delights of the Garden of Eden*, which he completed in 1828 and for which he lists all the literary sources that contributed towards his creative process. "First of all we read and consulted the sacred history of the Old Testament, by Calmet. For the location of Eden we turned to the customs of Doctor Giulio Ferrario and also the geography of Buffier, noting also what Salmon recounted of his journey around the world [...]. For the various plant species of those places we consulted the Durante herbarium [...] and to fire our imagination we read Milton's *Paradise Lost* and other relevant writers. The above-listed observations point towards a general opinion that Eden was in Asia, among the mountains of Armenia [...]. In all likelihood the Great Flood destroyed much of the original semblance of those lands, so a great measure of imagination was necessary to comprehend with certainty". Basoli brings into play stories and subjects that are so cultured and eccentric that it would have been impossible to decipher them without his explanations.

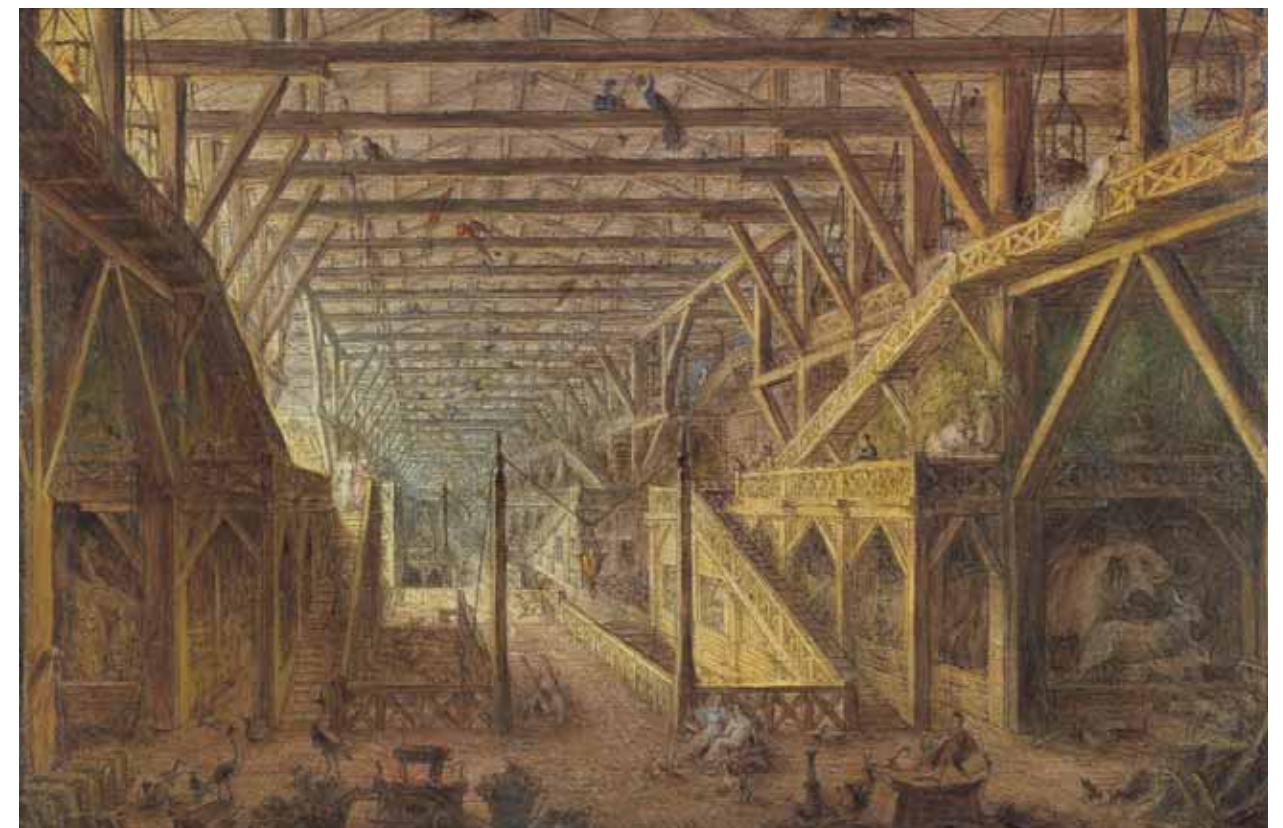
The four recently discovered paintings illustrated here are emblematic of this particular cultural waywardness, representing both the climax and maturity of that extraordinary fusion of literature and art reminiscent of the *ut pictura p oiesis* of Horace and which, if one excludes De Chirico in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, finds in Basoli the last exponent in the visual arts. Shortly after, in fact, the same aesthetic of the fantastical and the imaginary would have slipped from the neoclassical world into Romanticism, with unprecedented results that can be admired in the canvases of Turner.

The three paintings of landscapes are the quintessence of the idea of tempestuous nature in movement so typical of Romantic culture, particularly in its English declination. In his natural settings Basoli tends towards a representation of natural elements in a cosmogonical and Biblical key, where the subjects are purely literary pretexts used to describe nature in its becoming and in which the figures are reminiscent of those in the paintings of Massimo d'Azeglio. Without Basoli's own notes it would be impossible to decipher the subject. Clearly Basoli was well aware of this when he added a lengthy note along the upper border of the support explaining that the Portuguese had unleashed a fire that raged from 1512 to 1519 on the island of Madeira, the largest of the islands in the archipelago that bears the same name, situated off the coast of Africa, north of the Canaries, believed to have once been part of the legendary civilisation of Atlantis. The precise sources for the other two landscapes instead remain obscure. In the painting of the Great Flood Basoli has included monks, a castle and some imaginary buildings in the gothic style – a playful 'modern' twist on the familiar theme of the Great Flood, which along with all Biblical themes was particularly dear to Basoli.

The extraordinary painting of the interior of Noah's Arc is instead worthy of a few additional annotations. In this work Basoli has drawn on his vast experience and skills as a painter of stage sets. To my knowledge the only work of its kind in Basoli's prolific output, this large painting dates from between 1833 and 1839, when Basoli was working on a series of watercolour draw-

ings that he entitled *Hebrew History of the Old Testament*. Along with the other paintings illustrated here, in terms of style this one clearly belongs to the same mature stage of Basoli's career, in which he favoured this particular technique of combining clearly visible India ink with densely applied oils.

Francesco Leone





## Carlo de Paris

Barcelona 1800 - 1861 Rome

### 29. View of Pico de Orizaba or Citlaltépetl in Mexico 1853

Oil on canvas, 49 x 69 7/8 in (124.5 x 175 cm)  
Signed and dated: "C. de Paris 1853"  
Provenance: private collection, Rome

Despite some important recent re-evaluations (R. Leone, entry in *Il Risorgimento* 2011, pp. 132-133; Capitelli 2011, pp. 44, 60-62), and an overdue biography (S. Gnisci, in *La pittura in Italia* 1991, II, p. 801), the reconstruction of Carlo de Paris' singular artistic career still mainly relies on contemporary literary sources, due to the fact that most of the works documented there still cannot be located.

The recent recovery of this extraordinary exotic view finally enables us to re-examine from the point of view of the Roman context the most original and perhaps most significant aspect of his work. I refer to his paintings of Mexican subjects during and after his long stay in that Central American state, which had only just gained independence from Spain. De Paris was in fact one of the first students of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome who chose to explore the potential of the Americas from 1828, after the fundamental experience of the sculptor Giuseppe Ceracchi, who had made the portraits of the founding fathers of the USA, and considerably earlier than the famous allegorical fresco decoration done by Costantini Brumidi in the Washington Capitol. At that time, Mexico was considered to be a practically unexplored destination; de Paris went there with his brother, a theatre impresario. Later this brother brought over there a company of singers from Italy, to be directed by Filippo Galli, a highly-appreciated Rossini performer, at the Coliseo de México, whose decoration he himself contributed to (Galí Boadella 2002, pp. 301-302).

On his arrival in Mexico City, de Paris was submitted to an impromptu painting test with a live model by the members of the Academia of San Carlos, to prove that he really was the author of the sample paintings he had brought with him from Europe. It may well be that his experience as an historical painter, portraitist and view painter contributed to reinforcing the classicist orientation the academy had adopted since its foundation under Charles III of Bourbon. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this tradition became more and more pro-Roman: young art scholars were sent to Rome; the works of the teachers of the Accademia di San Luca (G. Silvagni, F. Podesti, F. Cogheti, N. Consoni, A. Solà, P. Tenarani) were regularly purchased as teaching models, and teachers were recruited from Rome (cf. Sartor 1997). Moreover, de Paris's activity as a view-painter must have predated that of the Piedmontese artist Eugenio Landeso, who took up a teaching post at the Accademia in 1855 (Sartor 2006, p. 429).

De Paris was born into a well-to-do family in Barcelona, of an Aragonese father and Roman mother, but after just a few months the family moved to Rome, where he lived until 1825. Having lost his parents at a very young age, he was put under the care of the famous tutor Giovan Francesco Masdeu, who intuited his artistic bent and sent him to study under the Spanish painter José Aparicio; from there he passed into the atelier of Luigi Agricola. From 1817 he attended Gaspare Landi's painting course at the Accademia di San Luca, taking part in the Canova competition in which he came second to Luigi Cochetti with the *Continence of*

*Scipio*. Before leaving for Provence then Barcelona, de Paris specialized in the historical genre, making both classical and literary/Romantic paintings. Finally, in 1828 he arrived in Mexico City where, after being received into the academy, he immediately made his name with a picture on a Roman subject, an interior probably in the style of the genre introduced by Francois-Marius Granet, showing *The Pontifical Chapel in the Quirinal Palace During a Papal Function*, followed by the commission from the Philippine fathers for a large apse tempera of *Calvary*.

In a curious, spirited first draft of an autobiography, published posthumously by Francesco Gasparoni in 1863, de Paris described the success of the portraits and historical paintings, which generated numerous commissions. In these works he deliberately tried to adapt to the taste of the country, especially in the modern history painting showing the *Surrender of the Spanish Division Commanded by General Barradas in the Province of Tampico* (Mexico City, Museo Nacional de Historia del Castillo de Chapultepec), painted under the iconographical supervision of the adjutants of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna (whose portrait is in the Museo de la Ciudad de Mexico) and hung in the general congress chamber. Then the portraits of all the presidents of the republic – Victoria, Guerrero, Pedrasa, of the vice-president Gomez Farias and of Agostino Turbide, which all had the honor of being hung in the city hall (Mazio 1845, p. 163; Acevedo 2000, pp. 128-129). Writing in his memoirs about the style adopted in the portraits, de Paris admitted something which was to shed light on the technical choices of much Spanish-American art of the period, saying he had painted them "almost without shadows, because some clients complained they did not have dirty faces" (Paris 1863, p. 336).

In those years de Paris travelled widely around that vast country, "drawing the varied clothing of those natives, and painting many views of those regions which were extremely interesting from the landscape point of view, the nature of the places and the vegetation always varying according to how high above sea level the land was, thus dividing the country into three parts, i.e. the so-called hot, temperate and cold lands" (de Paris 1863, p. 336). These wanderings produced, not only a natural history and archaeology museum, but also an album of 100 drawings of Mexican figures and landscapes and others of Mexican customs, which he took back to Rome in 1836. These drawings were to form the



José Maria Velasco, *The Pico de Orizaba or Citlaltépetl from the San Miguelito Farm*



basis for the Mexican paintings done in the following years, such as for example the "historical landscapes", a genre in which his friend Massimo D'Azeglio excelled, described in the newspaper *Il Saggiatore* as grandiose views where he set the historical events of the Spanish conquest (Mazio 1844). De Paris alternated these works with Roman views, Romantic historical subjects (*Cecilia da Romano*, *Dante in Exile*, *Tasso Fighting the Brigand Mattero Sciarra*) and subjects from contemporary history, ranging from the series dedicated to the 1848-49 revolutionary vicissitudes (*Civilian Volunteers Enter the Northern European Wars, Artillery Exchange Between San Pietro Montorio and Villa Spada*, *Prospero Colonna Defeating the French Militia at the Garigliano Bridge*), to the *Return of Pius IX to Rome on April 12<sup>th</sup> 1850* (Rome, Museo di Roma and Museo Storico Vaticano) and the *Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* (Rome, Pinacoteca Vaticana).

The large landscape with a volcano painted in Rome in 1853, one of the rare Mexican views to have been published to date (for example the *Vista de la cattedral metropolitana*, Museo Franz Mayer, cf. *Mexico* 1994, pp. 40, 116-17), echoes the memorable descriptions of the Mexican volcanoes in de Paris' autobiography. He had twice attempted the ascent of the Popocatepetl, a mountain the natives believed to be forbidden to human beings, eventually reaching the summit in 1835 after thirteen hours of walking at night, in the light of the full moon. Another excursion, to the inland "great mountain ranges", is directly related to this view: "there we see landscapes which are imposing for their grandiose lines and immense gorges and valleys, as well as for the magical effects of the clouds which gather continuously above and between those immense mountains".

Here he observed the volcano of Orizaba, impregnable and permanently covered with ice, noting the surrounding "deepest gorges with crystal-clear streams running beneath" (de Paris 1863, pp. 398-399). Through a comparison with the morphol-

ogy of the mountain, as well as with its pictorial iconography – for example with the later painting by José Maria Velasco – it is possible to identify the mountain at the centre of the painting on show here as the Pico de Orizaba, which was completed in the studio on the basis of drawings from life. It was common practice among the Northern European landscape painters working in Rome at the time – N. D. Boguet and P. A. Chauvin, H. Voogd, M. Verstappen and F. Catel, or Italians such as G. B. Bassi and D'Azeglio – to use rapid sketches made from the life and recompose them into large painted versions in a classical manner back in the studio.

The insertion in the foreground – against the sublime majesty of the natural background – of a clearing populated by felines, a jaguar threateningly observing a family of pumas, a brightly-colored parrot, and by exotic presences like the papaya tree, had another scope other than meeting the classical requirement of a theatrical-type lateral wing. It also reflected one of the more profound drives behind Mexican painting, which was to represent the unspoiled, wild environment of the continent prior to the arrival of civilization as a kind of exotic but truly existing Eden. A commentator of the time wrote that de Paris had "studied the history of the conquest, the domestic, funeral, rural customs of the Mexican peasantry which had not yet been destroyed or deformed by our civilization. He studied that teeming, towering nature which presented so many new objects for a foreign artist's brush and eyes. That place of pyramidal or conical basalt rocks, mountains with their summits hidden in the clouds, volcanoes so high and so active they seem fantastical; that place of dense, lush, rich vegetation which shows the fecundity of a wild nature" (Mazio 1844, p. 211).



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