Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Bernardo Castello (1557 - 1627)

Perseus and Andromeda

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, on blue-green paper.

Squared in black chalk for transfer, and with framing lines in brown ink.

171 x 213 mm. (6 3/4 x 8 3/8 in.) [image]

202 x 258 mm. (8 x 10 1/8 in.) [sheet]

Most of Bernardo Castello's drawings are executed in pen and brown ink, often on blue paper, and the present sheet is a fine and typical example of his draughtsmanship. Drawings such as these seem to have been popular with collectors and friends of the artist. In September 1591, for example, one of the Castello's close friends, the poet Gabriele Chiabrera, wrote to him requesting a selection of his drawings on blue paper: 'queste cose io le voglio in penna sopra carta azzurra e con tutta quella vostra minore fatica di mano e d'ingegno che sia possibile.'

This drawing has been dated by Mary Newcome Schleier to the 1590's. Although squared for transfer, it remains unrelated to any surviving painting or fresco by Castello. It may be noted that the theme of Perseus and Andromeda is rare in Genoese art of the late 16th century, and Castello may have been inspired by his teacher Andrea Semino's fresco of the subject, painted in the mid-1560's for Palazzo Doria in Genoa which, however, differs in composition.

A stylistically comparable drawing by Bernardo Castello of The Abduction of Oreithyia by Boreas in the collection of the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Orléans.

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, New York, Sotheby's, 20 January 1982, lot 56 (as Giovanni Battista Castello)
Mia Weiner, New York, in 1984
Stuart Denenberg, San Francisco, in 1989.

Exhibitions

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Sixteenth-Century Italian Drawings in New York Collections,

1994, no.44.

Literature:

William M. Griswold and Linda Wolk-Simon, Sixteenth-Century Italian Drawings in New York Collections, exhibition catalogue, New York, 1994, p.49, no.44; Eric Pagliano, de Venise à Palerme: Dessins italiens du musée des beaux-arts d'Orléans XVe-XVIIIe siècle, Paris, 2003, p.264, under no.157; Federica Mancini, Musée du Louvre: Département des arts graphiques. Inventaire général des dessins italiens XI: Dessins génois, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle, Paris and Milan, 2017, p.176, under no.273.

Artist description:

A pupil of Andrea Semino, Bernardo Castello was also influenced by the work of Luca Cambiaso, Returning to Genoa after a trip to Ferrara in 1575, he executed a number of paintings for local churches and palaces; his earliest dated work is an altarpiece for a church outside Genoa, dated 1580. Among his important decorative projects were the frescoes in the Villa Spinola and the Villa Centurione in Sampierdarena and a ceiling in the Palazzo de Franchi e Castello in Genoa. In 1586, Castello designed a frontispiece and twenty illustrations for an edition of Torquato Tasso's epic poem Gerusalemme Liberata, published in Genoa in 1590 with great success. The illustrations established Castello's reputation, and pleased Tasso so much that he wrote a sonnet in honour of the artist. Three further editions of the poem, again accompanied by Castello's illustrations, were published in 1604, 1615 and 1617, and these served to secure the artist's contemporary fame.

Castello also frescoed scenes from the Gerusalemme Liberata in several Genoese palaces, including the Palazzo de Franchi and Villa Centurione mentioned above, as well as the Palazzo Imperiale di Campetto and the Villa Imperiale Scassi at Sampierdarena. Among his more important paintings for Genoese churches are a Saint Ursula of 1590 in Santa Maria della Vigne and a Martyrdom of Saint Peter for Santa Maria di Castello, executed in 1597. Castello made a number of trips to Rome, beginning in 1604, when he was commissioned to paint an altarpiece of The Calling of Saint Peter for the basilica of St. Peter's. He also painted an altarpiece in Santa Maria sopra Minerva for Cardinal Giustiniani, the success of which led in 1605 to a commission to decorate part of the Palazzo Giustiniani at Bassani di Sutri, outside Rome. During a later trip to Rome, in 1616, Castello painted frescoes for the Palazzo Rospigliosi Pallavicino and the Palazzo del Quirinale.