

Clemente BOCCIARDO (1600 - 1658)

A Male Nude Kneeling on a Rock, His Arms Raised

Black chalk, heightened with touches of white chalk, on light brown paper, laid down on a 17th or 18th century Italian mount.
Inscribed di Clemente Bocciardi do il Clementone in brown ink in the lower margin of the mount.
400 x 276 mm. (15 3/4 x 10 7/8 in.)

Drawings by Clemente Bocciardo are extremely rare. A self-portrait in red and black chalk, part of an extensive series of drawn portraits and self-portraits of artists assembled by the 18th century Florentine collector and historian Niccolò Gabburri, is today in the British Museum. A pair of drawings of pastoral and mythological subjects in the Louvre, of a particularly Castiglionesque nature, have been tentatively attributed to Bocciardo.

This large drawing has the appearance of having been drawn from a posed model, and as such may be related to Bocciardo's establishment of a school of life drawing in his Genoese studio in the later 1630's. However, the way in which the figure is drawn, with its strong echoes of contemporary Florentine draughtsmanship of the period, would argue in favour of a later date in the 1640's or 1650's, when the artist was working in Tuscany. The distinctive 17th or 18th century Florentine mount that surrounds the sheet, and its likely provenance from a Florentine collection, would further suggest that the drawing may date from Bocciardo's later years.

Provenance:

An anonymous 17th or 18th century Florentine collection, possibly that of Giuseppe Santini, Florence
Comte Eugène d'Oultremont, Chateau de Presles, Aiseau-Presle, Belgium, and thence by descent until

1985
Anonymous sale (‘The Property of a Nobleman’), London, Christie’s, 12 December 1985, lot 217
Margot Gordon, New York, in 1990.

Artist description:

Nicknamed Il Clementone, apparently because of his large size, Clemente Bocciardo was trained in the studio of Bernardo Strozzi in Genoa. On the evidence of a signed painting of the Madonna and Child in Glory with Saints, dated 1623 and today in the Museo di Castelvecchio in Verona, the influence of Strozzi was apparent in Bocciardo’s earliest independent works. According to his biographers Raffaele Soprani and C. G. Ratti, Bocciardo joined Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione in Rome in the early 1630’s. After a few years of working in Rome, he returned to Genoa where, as Soprani and Ratti note, he painted ‘vari quadri di storie, e di capricci con si bella invenzione’. Among the handful of recorded works of this period in Genoa are a Last Supper painted for the Oratory of the Confraternity of San Germano and a Corpus Domini for the church of Sant’Andrea. Bocciardo also established an Accademia del Nudo, or school of life drawing, in his Genoese studio, where among the teachers was the painter Gioacchino Asseretto.

Much of the second half of Bocciardo’s career was spent in Tuscany. He worked for some time in Florence before settling around 1639 in Pisa, where he remained until his death in 1658. One of Bocciardo’s first works in Pisa was a canvas of Saint John the Baptist, dated 1639, painted for the church of Santa Croce in Fossabanda and today in the Palazzo della Prefettura in Pisa. Other significant works in Pisa include paintings of the Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian in the Certosa and The Virgin Appearing to Saint Charles Borromeo in the Duomo, as well as an Intercession of the Virgin in the church of San Matteo and a Madonna of the Rosary, completed in 1655 for a Pisan confraternity and today housed in the church of San Salvatore. Bocciardo also painted several easel pictures of both religious and secular subjects for private patrons, and produced a number of commissioned portraits.