

Bernardino Gatti, called Il Sojaro (1495 - 1575)

Study of Legs [recto]; Study for a Saint Sebastian [verso]

Red chalk, heightened with white, on buff paper, the lower left corner cut. Squared for transfer in red chalk.
The verso in red chalk.
Numbered 182 at the upper right.
110 x 197 mm. (4 3/8 x 7 3/4 in.)

The recto of this drawing would appear to be a study for one of Gatti's earliest and best-known works; the large painting of The Virgin Mourning the Dead Christ (or The Lamentation) of c.1528-1530, painted for the church of San Domenico in Cremona and now in the Louvre.

As Giulio Bora has noted of the artist, with particular reference to the Louvre painting, 'Because of his early training in the Po Valley…and his later association with Correggio, Gatti was deeply rooted in the Leonardesque tradition…This aspect of Gatti's work also informs the dramatic Lamentation, once in San Domenico, Cremona, and now in the Louvre. The artist's impressive ability to realistically portray anatomy anticipated the realism of later painters by several decades. Longhi, for example, named the Lamentation one of the important influences on Caravaggio. Gatti's accomplishment is especially extraordinary because, as the same time and in the same city, other artists were painting in the refined language of Mannerism, which enjoyed widespread popularity in the Po Vallery.'

Among stylistically comparable drawings by Gatti is a red chalk study of a standing male nude in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rennes.

The small sketch on the verso of the present sheet would appear to be a study, in reverse, for a more finished drawing of Saint Sebastian in the Uffizi, which remains unrelated to any surviving painting or fresco by Gatti.

Provenance:

Mia Weiner, New York, in 2003.

Literature:

Éric Pagliano, Disegno 2: Retour sur le catalogue des dessins italiens du musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes, exhibition catalogue, Rennes, 2015, p.91, under no.16.

Artist description:

Bernardino Gatti worked for much of his career in Cremona, Parma and Piacenza. Throughout his life he was particularly inspired by the art of Correggio, as can be seen in his earliest altarpiece, a Resurrection painted in 1529 for the Duomo in Cremona. In 1543 he was working in the church of Santa Maria in Campagna in Piacenza, where he was tasked with the completion of a series of frescoes of the Life of the Virgin in the cupola, which had been begun by Pordenone. The late 1540's found Gatti working on several projects in Cremona, notably an Assumption of Christ painted in 1549 for the church of San Sigismondo and a Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in the refectory of the convent of San Pietro al Po, completed in 1552.

In 1560 the artist settled in Parma, where he frescoed an Assumption of the Virgin for the dome of Santa Maria della Steccata, completed in 1572; a work that reveals the influence of Correggio's cupola fresco in the nearby church of San Giovanni Evangelista. Gatti was back in Cremona by 1573, where he began an Assumption of the Virgin for the Duomo, left unfinished at his death.

Long thought to be a pupil of Correggio, which he was not, Gatti as a draughtsman has often been confused with an artist who was in fact apprenticed to Correggio, Giorgio Gandini del Grano (1490-1538).