Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Daniele Da Volterra (1509 - 1566)

A Striding Figure, after Francesco Salviati

Black chalk.
Made up at the top edge with another strip of paper.
432 x 255 mm. (17 x 10 in.) [sheet, including made-up area]

This large drawing is a copy after a figure of an apostle in the fresco of The Pentecost painted by Francesco Salviati (1510-1563) on the apsidal vault of the Margrave chapel in the church of Santa Maria dell'Anima in Rome. (The fresco is today in a poor state of conversation, and this apostle – which appears at the right-hand edge of the composition – is very difficult to see clearly today, apart from the head, bent right arm and torso of the figure.) Previously thought to be a preparatory drawing by Salviati himself, the present sheet has only recently been attributed to Daniele da Volterra, here copying the work of one of his artistic contemporaries in Rome.

Salviati worked on the Pentecost fresco between 1541 and 1543, after which he returned to Florence for a brief period before completing the project in 1550. Daniele was working at Santa Trinità at the same time, and may easily have studied Salviati's vault fresco in Santa Maria dell'Anima soon after it was finished. It is perhaps more likely, however, that Daniele was here copying a now-lost drawing by Salviati, rather than the fresco itself.

The precise technique of this drawing, with fine and delicate strokes of black chalk applied with a precision that allows for subtle tonal effects, is typical of Daniele da Volterra's refined draughtsmanship.

Daniele was particularly influenced by the robust chalk drawings of Perino del Vaga and, in particular, Michelangelo, several of whose drawings he is thought to have owned. The drawings of Daniele da Volterra, which are almost always in black chalk, are characterized by a solidity of form and a certain emotional restraint; as Paul Joannides has noted, 'That Daniele produced some of the most beautiful drawings of the mid-Cinquecento can hardly be doubted, but they strike the viewer, as Daniele's art in general struck Vasari, as the product of effort and labor rather than inspiration. But if they lack vivacity and sprezzatura, they possess, in compensation, a density which is as much that of thought as of technique, and a clarity and precision so far transcending craftsmanly care to suggest emotion regulated.'

Although the careers of Daniele da Volterra and Francesco Salviati were closely intertwined, in later years the relationship came to be particularly strained. The two artists were in competition for a number of important Roman commissions, notably the decoration of the Sala Regia in the Vatican. Daniele had originally won the commission from Pope Paul III to complete the work left unfinished by Perino del Vaga at his death in 1547. He started working on the room around 1549, but the death of the Pope led to a renewed rivalry for the commission, and after a delay of ten years Salviati was eventually awarded the project. His decision to destroy part of the decoration earlier painted by Daniele only intensified the animosity between the two artists.

Provenance:

Francis Abbott, Edinburgh (Lugt 970), his drystamp at the lower right
Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 9 April 1981, lot 76 (as Francesco Salviati)
Yvonne Tan Bunzl, London, in 1984
Acquired from her in 1984 by Jeffrey Horvitz, Beverly Farms, Massachusetts (his collector's mark, not in Lugt, stamped on the verso).

Exhibitions

London, Yvonne Tan Bunzl, Old Master Drawings, 1984, no.9 (as Francesco Salviati); Gainesville, FL, Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, and elsewhere, Italian Old Master Drawings from the Collection of Jeffrey E. Horvitz, 1991-1993, no.4 (as Francesco Salviati).

Literature:

Linda Wolk-Simon, Italian Old Master Drawings from the Collection of Jeffrey E. Horvitz, exhibition catalogue, Gainesville and elsewhere, 1991-1993, pp.14-17, no.4 (as Francesco Salviati); Luisa Mortari, Francesco Salviati, Rome, 1992, p.225-226, no.322 (as a fine copy after Francesco Salviati: 'un bel disegno, di grande vigore…con ogni probabilità una copia di buona mano da un disegno del Salviati.'); Alessandro Nova, 'Santa Maria dell'Anima: Cappella dei Margravi', in Anna Coliva, ed., Francesco Salviati: Affreschi romani, Milan, 1998, p.45.

Artist description:

Daniele da Volterra was trained in Siena and arrived in Rome in the mid-1530's, working as an assistant to Perino del Vaga. He was to have a career of nearly thirty years in Rome, and soon began receiving significant independent commissions from such noble patrons as the Massimi and Orsini families. Around 1543 he painted a Deposition for the Orsini chapel in the church of Santa Trinità dei Monti, which is today his best-known work; other frescoes by the artist for the same chapel are now lost. In the 1540's Daniele became a friend and protégé of Michelangelo, and towards the end of the decade had begun to work in collaboration with the master, using the latter's drawings for his own compositions. Later commissions included a fresco for the Palazzo Farnese, completed by 1548, and an Assumption of the Virgin for the Della Rovere chapel, also in Santa Trinità dei Monti, which was completed in the

early 1550's. In the later part of his career Daniele was more active as a sculptor and stuccatore than as a painter, although in 1564 he was tasked with the commission to overpaint the genitalia of the figures in Michelangelo's fresco of The Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel.