Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Early 17th century Northern School (1600 - 1650)

The Martyrdom of Saint Paul

Gouache on vellum, with framing lines in brown ink, laid down on wood.
Inscribed Callot / 1592 + 1635 / martyre de St. Pa- / -t Paul on the backing board
75 x 96 mm. (3 x 3 3/4 in.)

Despite their evident high quality, the authorship of this finely executed pair of gouache drawings on vellum has thus far proved difficult to establish. Their traditional attribution to the 17th century French draughtsman and printmaker Jacques Callot is untenable, nor are they copies of any etchings by the artist. A more recent attribution to the Strasburg artist Johann Wilhelm Baur (1607-1642), who developed a particular specialty of small gouache drawings on vellum depicting landscapes, battle scenes and allegorical subjects, is more plausible, yet the present pair would appear to be somewhat earlier in date.

The artist responsible for this pair of Biblical scenes must have been inspired by the paintings of Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610), and in particular the small-scale religious scenes on copper painted by the artist in the first decade of the 17th century in Rome. Elsheimer's small paintings, often crowded with figures and full of detail, were highly influential on the succeeding generation of Dutch, Flemish and German artists working in Rome. It is likely, therefore, that the author of the present pair of gouaches, each characterized by a dynamic composition and highly refined technique, may be found among the Northern artists active in Rome in the first quarter of the 17th century.

Provenance:

André Novak(?), according to a label on the old backing board.

Literature:

Joachim Jacoby, Die Zeichnungen von Adam Elsheimer: Kritischer Katalog, Frankfurt am Main, 2008, p.343, note 262.