

Giovanni Baglione (Rome 1566 - Rome 1643)

Saint Paul

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, on blue-green paper washed brown.
Faintly squared for transfer in red chalk.
Laid down on an 18th century English mount.
271 x 108 mm. (10 5/8 x 4 1/4 in.) [sheet]
325 x 161 mm. (12 3/4 x 6 3/8 in.) [mount]

The attribution of this drawing is due to the late Philip Pouncey, who recognized it as a preparatory study for the standing figure of Saint Paul in Giovanni Baglione's altarpiece of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the Roman church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, completed by December 1600. Commissioned by Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato for his titular church in Rome, the altarpiece was one of a number of paintings ordered from Baglione for Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, but the only one that is still in its original location in the church. Cardinal Sfondrato owned several paintings by Baglione, and was among his most significant patrons.

This fine drawing is the only known preparatory study for Baglione's altarpiece of Saint Peter and Saint

Paul, and displays only minor differences with the final work. Maryvelma Smith O'Neil has noted of the present sheet that 'The emphatic chiaroscural effects [of the fresco] have been graphically simulated in a carefully finished chalk sketch for St. Paul that lays particular stress on the large unbroken areas of light and dark that structure voluminous draperies.' The pose of Saint Paul in both this drawing and the fresco was probably inspired by the similar figure of the saint in Raphael's famous Saint Cecilia altarpiece of c.1513-1516 in the church of San Giovanni a Monte in Bologna, of which Sfondrato had commissioned a copy from the young Guido Reni, probably also for Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, in 1600.

A counterproof of the present sheet, in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle6, shows the whole composition in reverse, and includes the corresponding figure of Saint Peter. That this drawing may have originally showed both saints is suggested by a hint of drapery at the extreme right edge of the sheet.

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, London, Christie's, 27 November 1973, lot 232 (as Milanese School, c.1560)
Kate de Rothschild, London, in 1975
Purchased from her by Ralph Holland, Newcastle
Thence by descent until 2013.

Exhibitions

London, Kate de Rothschild at William Darby Gallery, Exhibition of Old Master Drawings, 1975, no.22; Newcastle, Hatton Gallery, Italian Drawings 1525-1750 from the Collection of Ralph Holland, May-June 1982, no.40.

Literature:

London, Kate de Rothschild, Exhibition of Old Master Drawings, n.d. [1975], unpaginated, no.22; Ralph Holland, Italian Drawings 1525-1750, exhibition catalogue, Newcastle, 1982, p.11, no.40; Maryvelma O'Neil, 'Giovanni Baglione', in Jane Turner, ed., The Dictionary of Art, 1996, p.53; Maryvelma Smith O'Neil, Giovanni Baglione: Artistic reputation in Baroque Rome, Cambridge, 2002, p.79, pp.241-242, no.23, illustrated p.80, pl.40; Heiko Damm and Henning Hoesch, ed., galleria portatile: Old Master Drawings from the Hoesch Collection, Petersberg, 2017, pp.132-135, no.30.

Artist description:

Giovanni Baglione was, according to his autobiography, a pupil of the minor painter Francesco Morelli, before working as one of the artists entrusted with the fresco decoration of the Scala Santa and the Vatican Library between 1588 and 1590. His first major commission was for a series of frescoes of scenes from the life of the Virgin for the Roman church of Santa Maria dell'Orto, completed in 1598; a project that established his reputation. Around 1600 he painted a fresco for the transept of the church of San Giovanni in Laterano, and soon after fell under the influence of Caravaggio. As a result his style changed quite dramatically, as evidenced by a painting of Divine Love Overcoming the World, commissioned by Cardinal Benedetto Giustiniani and completed in 1603. In the same year, however, Baglione sued Caravaggio and several other artists of his circle, including Orazio Gentileschi, for libel, accusing them of publishing poetry that defamed him, and from this point onwards his work became less overtly Caravaggesque. He continued to enjoy a highly successful career, underlined by the commission for an altarpiece for Saint Peter's in 1604 and for frescoes in the Cappella Paolina at Santa Maria Maggiore, painted between 1610 and 1612. His lifelong Mannerist tendencies meant, however, that later in the 17th century his work was somewhat overshadowed by that of the younger generation of Bolognese artists arriving in Rome. The last years of Baglione's long career were largely

devoted to writing two major books; Le nove chiese di Roma, published in 1639, and the Le vite de pittori, scultori ed architetti, which appeared in 1642. The latter, a significant work of art history, contained over two hundred biographies of artists active in Rome between 1572 and 1642, and it is for this seminal work that Baglione is best known today.

In his lifetime, Giovanni Baglione was much admired as a draughtsman. His extant drawings vary according to their function, with pen and ink mostly used for preliminary compositional sketches, black or red chalk for studies of individual figures, and pen and wash with white heightening for more finished modelli. As Maryvelma Smith O'Neil has written, 'The most important trends in Baglione's draughtsmanship in his full maturity (ie. c.1600-30) are the broader, freer handling and the versatility with which he used the technical means at his disposal. Though he often crossed over the line into the Baroque, the idealism he inherited from his Tusco-Roman education and fondness for angular lines constrained him, in his drawings, as in his paintings, from fully yielding to a dynamic disposition of figures.'