

Giovanni Domenico TIEPOLO (Venice 1727 - Venice 1804)

Saint Anthony of Padua with the Christ Child in Glory with Angels

Pen and brown and grey ink and grey and black wash, over an underdrawing in black chalk.

Signed Dom.o Tiepolo f. at the lower left.

Numbered 101 at the upper left.

244 x 181 mm. (9 5/8 x 7 1/8 in.)

This drawing may be included among a large series of drawings by Domenico Tiepolo on the theme of Saint Anthony and the Christ Child, in all likelihood executed following his return to Venice from Spain in 1770. The artist drew several such series of drawings - depicting both religious and secular subjects – characterized by variations on a single theme. James Byam Shaw has noted of such drawings that, 'Sometimes the theme itself derives from some great work of Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, sometimes it is apparently Domenico's own. In either case, he takes an evident pride and pleasure in ringing the changes, devising new pictorial patterns, new relationships of figure to figure, while the essential material remains the same: and all within a limited scope – for, as always in Domenico's work, whether painting or drawing, there is little attempt at composition in depth; it is on one plane, in two dimensions, whether the scene is on terra ferma or in the clouds.' As Byam Shaw has further written, 'Perhaps the most charming of Domenico's religious series is that of St Anthony of Padua holding the infant Christ, sometimes standing at the steps of an altar, but more often floating in clouds, attended by angels or cherubs or winged cherubs' heads.'

It is thought that Domenico's series of drawings depicting variations on the theme of Saint Anthony of Padua with the Christ Child may have been inspired by his father Giambattista's late altarpiece of the

same subject, painted in 1769 for the church of the convent of San Pascual Baylon at Aranjuez and today in the Prado. The altarpece was part of a cycle of seven oval paintings commissioned from the elder Tiepolo at the very end of his career, and Domenico is thought to have assisted his father with the commission.

The popularity of the 13th century Saint Anthony of Padua was not confined to Spain, and depictions of the saint were common in the Veneto from the 16th century onwards. As another scholar has noted, 'The theme of Anthony in glory, assumed into heaven, had been central to the iconography of the saint since the seventeenth century...The Saint's popularity in Venice burgeoned in the second half of the seventeenth century: in 1651 one of his relics was translated from Padua to Santa Maria della Salute, and was thenceforth visited every year by the Doge on July 13th. During the period from which Domenico's drawings date, probably no other saint besides the Virgin was so popular in the Serenissima.' The subject also appears in one of the finished drawings of the so-called 'Large Biblical Series' by Domenico Tiepolo, which is now in a private collection in Texas.

The present sheet was at one time part of an album of more than 160 drawings by Domenico Tiepolo which was dispersed at auction in London in 1965. The cover of the album bore the title 'DISEGNI A PENA DA CUADRETTI GIO: DOMENICO FIGLIO DI GIO: BATA': TIEPOLO CON ALCUNI DISEGNI DEL SUDETTO', while the inside back cover was inscribed in an 18th century Italian hand - possibly that of the artist Francesco Guardi - 'Questi Disegni Sono no.160. tutti Originali Costa Cechini 15 da Lire 22 L'uno.' A very similar inscription is found on another album of drawings by Domenico Tiepolo, in the Museo Correr in Venice, and it has been suggested that both of these albums may have been in the possession of Francesco Guardi (1712-1793), Domenico's uncle, who was offering them for sale. The title page of the album was inscribed '162 Dessin de Dominique Tiepolo fils de Jean Baptiste Tiepolo Venetien' and bore the bookplate of Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Orford (1717-1797)4. The album, which included twenty drawings on the theme of Saint Anthony and the Christ Child, later entered the collections of the Earls Beauchamp, and was dispersed at auction in 1965.

Other drawings of this subject by Domenico Tiepolo are today in the collections of the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Besançon, the Kupferstichkabinett in Dresden, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, the Albertina in Vienna, the Martin von Wagner-Museum in Würzburg, and elsewhere.

Provenance:

Part of album of drawings by Domenico Tiepolo with provenance as follows
Possibly Francesco Guardi, Venice
Horace Walpole, 4th Earl of Orford, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, Middlesex
The Earl of Beauchamp
His sale, London, Christie's, 15 June 1965, lot 21
Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 3 July 1996, lot 95
Flavia Ormond, London, in 1997
Private collection.

Exhibitions

New York, Flavia Ormond Fine Arts at Adelson Galleries, Italian Old Master Drawings 1500-1850, 1997, no.11; Stanford University, Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Classic Taste: Drawings and Decorative Arts from the Collection of Horace Brock, March-May, 2000; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts and Drawings from the Horace Wood Brock Collection, 2009, no.96.

Literature:

Wolfgang Schulz, 'Tiepolo-Probleme: Ein Antonius-Album von Giandomenico Tiepolo', in Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch, 1978, p.72; James Byam Shaw, 'Some Unpublished Drawings by Giandomenico Tiepolo' Master Drawings, Autumn 1979, p.240, under no.2.

Artist description:

Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo is assumed to have begun his career in the family studio by copying his father's drawings, although he also created his own drawings as designs for etchings, a practice which occupied much of his time in the 1740s and 1750s. His first independent drawings for paintings are those related to a series of fourteen paintings of the Stations of the Cross for the Venetian church of San Polo, completed when he was just twenty. Between 1750 and 1770, Domenico worked closely with his father as an assistant, notably in Würzburg, at the Villa Valmarana in Vicenza and the Villa Pisani at Strà, and in Madrid. From the late 1740s he also began to be entrusted with his own independent commissions, and the drawings for these display a manner somewhat different from that of his father, with a particular interest in lighthearted genre motifs.

Soon after Giambattista Tiepolo's sudden death in Madrid in 1770, Domenico returned to his native Venice, where he enjoyed much success as a decorative painter. He continued to expound the grand manner of history painting established by his father - the 'Tiepolo style', as it were – and by 1780 his reputation was such that he was named president of the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice. Within a few years, however, he seems to have largely abandoned painting. In his sixties and living effectively in retirement at the Tiepolo family villa at Zianigo, on the Venetian mainland, he produced a large number of pen and wash drawings that are a testament to his inexhaustible gift for compositional invention.

For much of the last twenty years of his career, Domenico Tiepolo seems to have painted only occasionally, and instead worked primarily as a draughtsman, producing a large number of pen and wash drawings that may collectively be regarded as perhaps his finest artistic legacy. These drawings were, for the most part, executed as a series of several dozen or more themed drawings, many of which were numbered. Among these are several series of drawings of religious and mythological subjects, as well as a varied group of genre scenes, numbering around a hundred sheets, generally referred to as the so-called 'Scenes of Contemporary Life', and a celebrated series of 104 drawings entitled the Divertimenti per li regazzi, illustrating scenes from the life of Punchinello, a popular character from the Commedia dell'Arte.

Domenico's highly finished late drawings, almost all of which were signed, were undoubtedly intended as fully realized, autonomous works of art. While it is certainly possible that they were produced as works of art to be offered for sale to collectors, almost none of the drawings appear to have been dispersed in Domenico's lifetime. The fact, too, that many of the drawings are numbered, possibly by the artist himself, and that most remained together in groups for many years after his death, would also suggest that they were retained in his studio throughout his life, as indeed he also kept numerous albums of drawings by his father. It is most likely, therefore, that these late drawings by Domenico were done simply for his own pleasure. Nevertheless, they have consistently enjoyed immense popularity since the artist's death, and continue to entice collectors today. As Catherine Whistler has noted, 'Domenico's spirited and inventive independent sheets have long been appreciated, particularly by French and American collectors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; his quirky sense of humor, acutely observant eye, and zestful approach to his subjects lend his drawings a peculiarly modern appeal.'

As Michael Levey has also noted of the artist, 'Domenico Tiepolo's drawings provide us with the more private side of him, but they also serve to represent his career at all stages. He drew continually: sometimes very closely in the manner of his father; at the opposite remove, in the late Punchinello drawings for example, his manner and matter could never be mistaken for anyone else's...The key to Domenico is in drawings: he began as a draughtsman and, one is tempted to say, all his paintings

betray the draughtsman.’