

Ubaldo GANDOLFI (San Matteo della Decima 1728 - Rome 1781)

Jupiter

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, squared in black chalk, with traces of framing lines in brown ink.
Faintly inscribed Gandolfi at the lower left, and inscribed Cartel(?) No.3./bis(?) 133 on the former backing sheet.
192 x 269 mm. (7 1/2 x 10 5/8 in.)

This drawing is a preparatory study, in reverse, for one of Ubaldo Gandolfi's first independent projects, the vault fresco of Jupiter in the Sala dello Zodiaco of the Palazzo Malvasia in Bologna, now part of the University of Bologna. In around 1758 Gandolfi received a commission from the Bolognese nobleman and historian Cesare Malvasia to decorate a number of rooms in his palace, purchased the previous year. The commission called for the decoration of at least four rooms with vault frescoes of Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, and Mercury. Only the frescoes of Jupiter, Mars and Apollo survive today, executed in collaboration with quadraturista Flaminio Minozzi, who was responsible for the architectural elements. The work must have been completed by 1760, when Ubaldo Gandolfi listed the frescoes among his accomplishments in his application for admission into the Accademia Clementina.

Two further related drawings for the fresco of Jupiter are known. The first of these, in the collection of the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, depicts an angry Jupiter in the act of hurling his thunderbolts, and must be an early idea for the project. The other drawing, formerly in a private Italian collection, retains much the same composition as the present sheet, although in reverse, and as such is closer to the reclining god depicted in the finished fresco. The present sheet must therefore represent an intermediate stage in the development of the composition.

Provenance:

Sir Robert Mond, London (Lugt 2813a), his mark on the former backing sheet
By descent to W. D. Austin
His sale, London, Christie's, 7 April 1970, lot 87
Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 18 April 1994, lot 1
P. & D. Colnaghi, London
Private collection.

Exhibitions

New York and London, Colnaghi, Master Drawings, 1995, no.31; 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.114.

Literature:

Tancred Borenius and Rudolf Wittkower, Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings by the Old Masters formed by Sir Robert Mond, London, n.d. (1937), p.61, no.249 (as school of G.B. Tiepolo); Renato Roli, Pittura Bolognese 1650-1800: Dal Cignani ai Gandolfi, Bologna, 1977, p.72, note 37 (incorrectly described as a study for the Palazzo Malvezzi frescoes); Donatella Biagi Maino, Ubaldo Gandolfi, Turin, 1990, p.31, note 15; Fiesole, Palazzo Mangani, Disegni italiani del sei-settecento, exhibition catalogue, 1991, p.52, under no.23 (entry by Maria Cecilia Fabbri); Prisco Bagni, I Gandolfi: affreschi dipinti bozzetti disegni, Bologna, 1992, p.629, under no.603; Bologna, San Giorgio in Poggiale, Disegni emiliani dei secoli XVII-XVIII della Pinacoteca di Brera, exhibition catalogue, 1995, p.206, under no.74 (entry by Prisco Bagni); Florence, Mattia & Maria Novella Romano, A Selection of Master Drawings, 2014, unpaginated, under no.10.

Artist description:

Ubaldo Gandolfi entered the Accademia Clementina in Bologna at an early age, and by 1745 had already won a prize for figure drawing, earning two more in the next four years. Between 1749 and 1759, however, he does not appear in any records of the Accademia, and it may be supposed that he spent some of this period travelling around Italy. (His biographer Marcello Oretti notes that the artist 'vidde Firenze, Venezia ed altre famose scuole.') One of his first independent projects was the decoration of several rooms in the Palazzo Malvasia in Bologna, commissioned around 1758 by the Bolognese nobleman and art historian Carlo Cesare Malvasia.

Together with his younger brother Gaetano, Ubaldo visited Venice in 1760; a trip that was to have a significant impact on the artist's later work, with its vigorous brushwork and expressive treatment of colour. Throughout much of his career Ubaldo maintained close contacts with the Accademia Clementina, where in 1761 he was appointed one of four direttori di figura, or professors of life drawing. One of his most important patrons was the Marchese Gregorio Casali, a fellow member of the Accademia Clementina, who commissioned several works from the artist, notably two large paintings of Perseus and Andromeda and Selene and Endymion for the Palazzo Pubblico in Bologna. Apart from an Apotheosis of Hercules in the Palazzo Malvezzi in Bologna, relatively little of his large-scale mural decorations survive today. Over a career of some thirty years, Ubaldo Gandolfi was active as a painter of frescoes, altarpieces and mythological scenes, as well as a charming series of small, informal portraits of women and children that have the appearance of character studies. He also worked as a sculptor, and a handful of terracotta sculptures of saints are known today. However, he seems to have struggled to win commissions for significant religious pictures, and never achieved the level of success enjoyed by his brother Gaetano.

Like his brother, Ubaldo Gandolfi was highly regarded as a draughtsman in his lifetime, as is noted by Oretti, who adds that the artist continued to attend life drawing classes at the Accademia Clementina well into his independent career. Many of Ubaldo's extant drawings remain unconnected to surviving paintings by the artist, and several have the appearance of being independent compositions. In fact, it has been suggested that, 'chronically lacking commissions, [he] often fulfilled his creative urges and "kept his hand in" by making drawings.'