

Marcantonio Raimondi (Sant'Andrea in Argine 1480 - Bologna 1534)

A Male Nude Holding a Trophy Standard, Seen from Behind

Pen and brown ink.
Inscribed Mantegn- at the lower right.
Illegibly inscribed (Raffaelle?) at the lower left.
244 x 100 mm. (9 5/8 x 3 7/8 in.)

The present sheet is likely to be an early Bolognese work by Marcantonio Raimondi, whose youthful draughtsmanship was strongly influenced by that of his teacher Francesco Francia. As Babette Bohn

has noted, ‘Raimondi was exposed early to antique art, mythology and history in the rich intellectual life of Bologna. A body of drawings ascribed to him, probably dating from the beginning of his career, testifies to his early responsiveness to antique and 15th-century models, and his sensitivity to light, volume and Classical grace.’

This drawing can be grouped with such early, Francia-inspired works by Raimondi as a study of a Standing Halberdier Seen from Behind, formerly in the Gathorne-Hardy collection and now in the Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The Chapel Hill Halberdier was, like the present sheet, once attributed to Mantegna, and shares with it a very similar treatment of the figure - in particular the legs, buttocks and feet - which is also akin to that found in Raimondi’s earliest prints. The pose of the figure in this drawing would appear to be derived from an almost identically posed figure of Minerva in a highly finished pen drawing by Francia of The Judgement of Paris, today in the Albertina in Vienna4.

Provenance:

Victor Koch, London
By descent to his wife, Flora Koch
Her posthumous sale, London, Christie’s, 18 April 1967, lot 132 (as School of Mantegna), bt. ‘Holton’ for 120 gns
Anonymous sale, London, Christie’s, 10 December 1991, lot 103.

Artist description:

Among the most important printmakers of the Renaissance, Marcantonio Raimondi was born near Bologna and studied there with Francesco Raibolini, known as Il Francia. His first engravings date from around 1500-1505, and reveal the figural influence of Francia, Lorenzo Costa and Andrea Mantegna. Raimondi’s early career was spent in Bologna, Venice and Florence, but from c.1510 onwards he was in Rome, where he worked for much of the remainder of his career. Working in collaboration with Raphael’s studio, he produced numerous engravings after the work of the master. Many of his engravings appear to have been made from Raphael’s preparatory drawings rather than the finished paintings, and the resulting prints found a ready market among collectors and connoisseurs, both in Italy and abroad. Indeed, it is largely through the dissemination of Raimondi’s prints that Raphael’s paintings and frescoes became widely known throughout Europe. After Raphael’s death in 1520 Raimondi continued to publish reproductive engravings after Giulio Romano and other members of Raphael’s workshop. His output seems to have declined drastically following the Sack of Rome in 1527, however, and it is thought that he must have been ruined by the collapse of the highly profitable market he had developed for his prints.

Although he is very well known as a printmaker, only relatively recently has Raimondi been properly studied as a draughtsman, largely due the efforts of the late Konrad Oberhuber. His work is characterized by pen drawings, usually finely and delicately drawn but also, at times, more freely and vigorously executed.