

Pietro Antonio de PIETRI (Premia 1662 - Rome 1716)

The Miracle of the Santa Casa of Loreto [recto]; The Virgin and Child Carried by Angels [verso]

Pen and brown ink and brown wash.

The verso in pen and brown ink and brown wash, with touches of white heightening.

Signed and inscribed di Pietro de Pietri / No. 241 on the verso.

Further inscribed Pietro di Pietri and numbered N 4on the verso.

421 x 272 mm. (16 5/8 x 10 3/4 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ARTS, MINNEAPOLIS, MN.

This drawing depicts the Miracle of the Santa Casa of Loreto; a subject that was popular among Maratta's pupils. The Santa Casa (or Holy House) of Loreto was the house in Nazareth where the Virgin Mary lived, and where she received the Angel of the Annunciation. The little house was a place of pilgrimage from the earliest days of Christianity. According to legend, when Nazareth was threatened by Saracen armies in 1291, the entire house was miraculously raised from its foundations and transported by angels from Nazareth to the town of Tersatto in Dalmatia, in modern-day Croatia. In 1294, with Tersatto under threat from the Moorish advances into Albania, the house was again carried by angels across the Adriatic Sea, and eventually was deposited in the town of Loreto. A large basilica was built over the house by the architects Giuliano da Maiano, Giuliano da Sangallo and Bramante, with the

facade completed in the late 16th century under the patronage of Pope Sixtus V. The decoration of the interior of the basilica is the work of several generations of painters, sculptors and craftsmen. The Santa Casa at Loreto remains an important place of pilgrimage for Catholics today.

This large, double-sided drawing, which may be counted among the finest examples of Pietro de' Pietri's draughtsmnship, is a study for a now-lost painting of The Madonna of Loreto. Although the finished work no longer survives, a number of preparatory studies for the picture are known. An oil sketch is in the collection of the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, as is a preparatory study in pen and brown ink and wash, while further studies for The Madonna of Loreto are found on both sides of a double-sided sheet in the Louvre. As Dieter Graf has noted of these preparatory drawings by Pietro de' Pietri, to which the present sheet may now be added, 'Apparently, the artist drew the sheets in quick succession, deftly varying the poses of the figures and details of the building from one sketch to another.' The present sheet is the largest and most finished of the handful of extant pen studies for this lost painting by Pietro de' Pietri.

A similar arrangement of angels supporting the Santa Casa and the Virgin and Child is found in an altarpiece by Pietro de' Pietri of The Madonna of Loreto Appearing to Saint Christopher, datable to the first years of the 18th century, in the church of San Giovanni Battista in the coastal town of Civitanova Marche, west of Macerata. This was one of several commissions de' Pietri seems to have received from Marchigian patrons.

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 27 June 2001, lot 74
W. M. Brady and Co., New York, in 2003
Private collection.

Exhibitions

New York, W. M. Brady & Co., Master Drawings, 2003, no.11; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Splendor and Elegance: European Decorative Arts and Drawings from the Horace Wood Brock Collection, 2009, no.118.

Literature:

New York, W. M. Brady & Co., Master Drawings, exhibition catalogue, 2003, unpaginated, no.11; Carel van Tuyll van Serooskerken, The Italian Drawings of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in the Teyler Museum, Leiden and Haarlem, 2021, Vol.II, p.543, under no.695.

Artist description:

Born in the Piedmontese town of Premia, Pietro de' Pietri arrived in Rome as a youth, studying first with Giuseppe Ghezzi and then the little-known Cremonese painter Angelo Massarotti, before entering the studio of Carlo Maratta. In his biography of the artist, Lione Pascoli noted that de' Pietri remained a devoted admirer of Maratta's art throughout his career, and indeed his style as both painter and draughtsman was indebted to that of the elder artist. He was established as an independent artist by the end of the 1680's, and produced altarpieces and frescoes for several Roman churches, including San Clemente and Santa Maria in Via Lata. Elected to the Accademia di San Luca in 1711, Pietro de' Pietri received a number of important commissions from Pope Clement XI, as well as from members of such important Roman families as the Pallavicini, Ottoboni and Imperiali. He also executed several etchings and engravings, and provided designs for other printmakers.

Pietro de' Pietri is perhaps better known today as a draughtsman than as a painter. Many of his drawings are composition studies in pen and ink, while he also produced studies of heads and other details in black or red chalk, or a combination of the two, often drawn on blue paper. As Ann Percy has

noted of the artist's drawings, 'his style is clearly indebted to Maratta, although his manner, softer and more tentative, lacks Maratta's usual toughness and vigor in the handling of chalk or pen.' Like his master Maratta, de' Pietri often produced several preparatory studies for each of his paintings, and many of his drawings display an attractive, painterly technique. Large groups of drawings by Pietro de' Pietri are at the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf, the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, the Louvre and the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.