Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Vittorio Maria BIGARI (Bologna 1692 - Bologna 1776)

Design for the Decoration of a Wall and Ceiling

Pen and brown ink and brown and grey washes, over an underdrawing in black chalk.
A ceiling study in pen and brown ink and wash on a separate sheet of paper laid down and inserted by the artist into the design at the top.
Ruled in pen and brown ink and numbered from 1 to 27 at the left edge.
Further numbered 7(?)010 at the upper left.
395 x 515 mm. (15 5/8 x 20 1/4 in.)

The extensive architectural elements found in this large and impressive sheet would suggest that it is a mature work by Vittorio Maria Bigari. The wall scheme depicts two putti supporting a cartouche with a figure of Minerva as the personification of Wisdom, while above a separate sheet has been inserted into the composition, showing an allegorical female figure crowned by an angel. While it has not been possible to connect this drawing with any extant mural or ceiling decoration by the artist, the scale and complexity of the design suggests that it was an important commission.

A close comparison may be made with a drawing by Bigari of similar dimensions, now in a private Bolognese collection, which is a study for the quadratura design and fresco of Apollo Crowning the Muse of Painting on the vault of the Palazzo Bovi-Tacconi in Bologna, painted in around 1761.

Provenance:

P. & D. Colnaghi, London
Acquired from them in 1995 by a private collection, New York.

Artist description:

The leading decorative painter in Bologna in the middle of the 18th century, Vittorio Maria Bigari began his career as a scenographic painter and stuccatore. He soon developed a particular reputation, however, as a master of large-scale mural and ceiling frescoes, often working as a figure painter in collaboration with designers of elaborate illusionistic architectural decorations, such as Stefano Orlandi. Among Bigari and Orlandi's most important commissions in Bologna was the decoration of the Palazzo Aldrovrandi-Montanari; a project begun in 1722 and continued, off and on, for some thirty years. Bigari travelled extensively throughout Northern Italy, fulfilling commissions in Faenza, Milan, Ferrara and Turin,

where he and Orlandi painted frescoes for the Palazzo Reale between 1738 and 1740. Although never enrolled in the Accademia Clementina in Bologna (indeed, he may have been largely self-taught), Bigari was four times elected principe of the institution between 1734 and 1773.