

Aurelio LUINI (Milan c.1530 - Milan 1593)

Sheet of Studies of Lower Torsos and Legs, Arms and a Shoulder

Pen and brown ink.

A faint study of a torso and legs drawn in pen and brown ink on the verso.

248 x 171 mm. (9 3/4 x 6 3/4 in.)

Aurelio Luini was an accomplished draughtsman, and among such contemporaries as Giovan Paolo Lomazzo was highly regarded in particular for his masterful anatomical studies and figure drawings. The artist's interest in anatomy was very likely the result of his close friendship with Carlo Urbino, who published a study of the principles of anatomy, perspective and proportion, inspired by the theories of Leonardo, which is known as the Codex Huygens and is today in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

The present sheet is highly characteristic of Luini's style as a draughtsman and, both in subject and in composition, reveals the particular influence of Leonardo's anatomical studies, which the artist would certainly have known. (According to a contemporary biographer, Luini owned a large drawn cartoon of The Holy Family with Saint Anne as well as a group of about fifty drawings - apparently mainly caricatures and grotesque heads - by Leonardo, to which Luini seems to have turned for inspiration in producing his own small-scale drawn studies of teste caricate.) As Lucia Tantardini has noted of Luini's abiding interest in Leonardo's drawings, 'Aurelio's intellectual, yet original, approach to the great Florentine makes him one of the late sixteenth-century Italian artists who most acutely attempted to grasp the range of Leonardo's draughtsmanship.'

Stylistically comparable drawings by Aurelio Luini include a sheet of studies of legs, arms, a torso and a head in profile at Christ Church in Oxford and a study of Neptune in the British Museum in London.

Exhibitions

Rome, Marcello Aldega, *Disegni italiani dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, 1980, no.1 (as Domenico Beccafumi).

Literature:

Rome, Marcello Aldega, *Disegni italiani dal XVI al XVIII secolo*, exhibition catalogue, 1980, p.7, no.1, illustrated p.57 (as Domenico Beccafumi).

Artist description:

The youngest son of the Milanese painter Bernardino Luini, who died when he was an infant, Aurelio Luini nevertheless worked in his father's tradition as a pupil and one of the most accomplished followers of Leonardo da Vinci. Like his father, Aurelio worked throughout his life in and around his native city of Milan, often in collaboration with other local artists. Together with his brother Giovan Pietro, he was tasked with completing some of the fresco decoration begun by their father Bernardino in the Milanese church of San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore. In this cycle of scenes from the life of Christ, his first major independent work, Aurelio's forms retain his father's characteristic softness and chiaroscuro. Many of the younger Luini's commissions came from religious societies, and his work can be found in several churches in Milan, including San Simpliciano and the Duomo. He also produced numerous fresco cycles in the city and throughout Lombardy and Piedmont, notably in the church of Santa Maria di Campagna in Pallanza, on Lake Maggiore, where he worked alongside the painter Carlo Urbino. Among Luini's final and most significant works were the now-lost frescoes of scenes from the life of Saint Ambrose for the vault of a chapel in the Tribunale di Provvisione in Milan, completed a few weeks before his death in 1593. As well as being a painter, Luini also composed music and poetry, and was himself the subject of a sonnet written by artist and theorist Giovan Paolo Lomazzo, who regarded him as the most gifted of Bernardino's Luini's three sons: 'Evangelista and [Giovan] Pietro [Luini] are equal in painting, but you are more worthy, Aurelio, whose mind has higher aspirations, as one can see and admire in your work. Besides, with the lyre singing sweetly you reveal your thoughts and your drawings in ornate and worthy verses.'

Aurelio Luini was a talented draughtsman, and the only one of the three Luini brothers to have a recognizable drawing style. One contemporary source, writing two years after Aurelio's death, noted of him that 'Il Louino fù gran disegnatore, & acurato pittore, e versato in molte altre honorate virtù, il che universalmete era amato da tutti, e nella pittura fù vero imitatore del padre.' He tended to work in pen and ink, sometimes with wash on blue paper, with a confident and nervous manner. Drawings by Luini are fairly rare, and only some two hundred are known.