

Federico ZUCCARO (Sant'Angelo in Vado 1543 - Ancona 1609)

A Design for a Wall Monument with a Papal Coat of Arms Flanked by Allegorical Figures

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, over an underdrawing in black chalk, laid down on a backing sheet extensively inscribed with a (library?) inventory and the code *S.B118* on the verso.

263 x 200 mm. (10 3/8 x 7 7/8 in.)

This drawing by Federico Zuccaro is probably a design for a funerary monument for a pope, although no finished work after this design is known to have survived. Cristina Acidini Luchinat has suggested that the two allegorical female figures – one joyful and the other melancholy – may represent Heaven on the left, who will receive the dead Pope, and Earth on the right, who mourns the loss of the Holy Father. The tomb is topped with a blank coat of arms surmounted by crossed keys and a papal tiara. This drawing has been dated by James Mundy on stylistic grounds to the end of the 1580s or the early 1590s, which would suggest that it may have been intended to commemorate one of the five Popes who died at around this time, namely Gregory XIII, who died in 1585, Sixtus V and Urban VII, who both died in 1590, or Gregory XIV and Innocent IX, who died within a few weeks of each other in 1591.

A similar composition is found in a drawing by Federico Zuccaro of a design for a wall monument to Ferdinando I de' Medici, in the collection of the Milwaukee Art Museum, in which a sculpted bust of the Medici cardinal and future Grand Duke is flanked by allegorical female figures representing Hope and Faith. In both pose and style, the two allegorical figures in the Milwaukee drawing are closely paralleled by those in the present sheet, even to the extent that, like both figures in the Milwaukee sheet, the left-hand figure in this drawing is shown with her foot resting on a sphere.

The handwriting on the verso of the present sheet does not appear to be that of Federico Zuccaro himself.

Literature:

Cristina Acidini Luchinat, *Taddeo e Federico Zuccari: fratelli pittori del Cinquecento*, Milan and Rome, 1999, Vol.II, pp.2-4, fig.5, note 7; Edward Olszewski, *A Corpus of Drawings in Midwestern Collections: Sixteenth-Century Italian Drawings*, Turnhout, 2008, Vol.II, pp.506-507, under no.402.

Artist description:

One of the most important and influential painters of the late 16th century in Italy, Federico Zuccaro was trained in the Roman workshop of his elder brother Taddeo from about the age of ten. Between 1560 and 1563 he assisted his brother on the decoration of the Casino of Pius IV and the Belvedere in the Vatican. He spent the next three years in Florence and Venice, where he painted the fresco decoration of the Grimani chapel in the church of San Francesco della Vigna, before returning to Rome. After Taddeo's death in September 1566 Federico completed many of his brother's unfinished projects, including fresco cycles in the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola (where he served as capomaestro) and the Sala Regia of the Vatican and the Pucci Chapel in the Roman church of Santa Trinità dei Monti. He also worked on several commissions of his own, such as two altarpieces for the Duomo at Orvieto, painted in 1568, and the decoration of the vault of the Sala di Ercole in the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola, a project from which he was, however, dismissed in 1569.

Federico Zuccaro was among the most well travelled artists of his day. Unlike Taddeo, he travelled throughout Italy, working in Venice, Florence, Orvieto, Bologna, Urbino, Pavia, Turin, Parma and Mantua, while also visiting France, the Netherlands and England between 1574 and 1575. On his return he received a commission to complete the decoration of the cupola of the Duomo in Florence, begun by Vasari and completed by Zuccaro between 1576 and 1579. The next year he was back in Rome, contributing to the decoration of the Cappella Paolina of the Vatican, before departing for Venice, where he worked between 1582 and 1584. He established a particular practice of making drawings after works of art that he saw on his journeys; a sort of visual travel diary that attests to a broad and wide-ranging interest in the different schools of painting in Italy. (As the Zuccaro scholar James Mundy has noted, 'Federico was completely without prejudice in his omnivorous ingestion of the work of other artists, both past and present.') In 1585 he was summoned by Philip II to Spain, where he painted eight canvases for the retablo mayor, or high altar, of the Basilica of San Lorenzo at El Escorial, as well as cloister frescoes in the attached monastery. Elected the first principe of the reorganized Accademia di San Luca in 1593, Zuccaro continued to receive important commissions late into his career. He built a fine palace for himself in Rome, now the home of the Biblioteca Hertziana. Near the end of his career he wrote an artistic treatise entitled L'idea de' pittori, scultori et architetti, published in 1607.

A gifted draughtsman, Federico Zuccaro was much influenced by the drawings of his elder brother, particularly early in his long career. However, as Julian Brooks has noted, 'Federico's style was less dramatic than Taddeo's, and he answered the demands of the Catholic Church for a clearer, more iconic art. His drawings and compositions are tidier than those of Taddeo, with less robust figures, a greater interest in decorative effects, and occasionally complex iconography.' Furthermore, Federico's peripatetic career, together with his inveterate copying of the work of other artists, exposed him to a wider range of artistic influences, which often found their way into his drawings and paintings. As Mundy has pointed out, 'Whereas it would be fair to say that Taddeo's style was invented in Rome, Federico's was forged in an international crucible…The wide stylistic range of drawings might be expected but it still, at times, surprises the viewer.'