

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Lorenzo Baldissera TIEPOLO (Venice 1736 - Humera, nr. Madrid 1776)

The Head of Saint Agatha, after Giambattista Tiepolo

Black chalk, with stumping and touches of blue chalk.

Made up at the upper left corner.

Numbered and inscribed G.B. Tiepolo O.f.1.G. M No 2978. and 700 on the verso.

Further inscribed HM516 / 212 (in a modern hand) on the verso, and with the signature of a Bernasconi heir, dated 1977, on the verso.

355 x 273 mm. (14 x 10 3/4 in.)

As the Tiepoloscholar George Knox has noted of Lorenzo Tiepolo, 'One receives the impression from the authenticated works of later years of an artist who was above all interested in the human head...all his early work consists of studies of heads, and the later works which are inscribed with his name are also studies of heads.' Lorenzo's independent chalk studies of heads are usually drawn in black chalk, sometimes with accents in blue or green chalk, or else in black or red chalk alone, on white paper. Most of these drawings have been dated by Knox to the second half of the 1750s.

The head in the present sheet is derived from that of Saint Agatha from Giambattista Tiepolo's altarpiece of The Martyrdom of Saint Agatha of c.1755, painted for the Benedictine convent church of Sant'Agata in Lendinara, near Rovigo, and now in the collection of the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin. (The painting was originally considerably taller, with an arched top, as can be seen in a reproductive etching by Domenico Tiepolo.) The intense facial expression of the dying saint was developed in a number of preparatory chalk drawings by Giambattista Tiepolo, and it is perhaps unsurprising that Lorenzo chose to study the same head in a free copy drawing of his own.

This large sheet was once part of a significant group of Tiepolo drawings in the Bossi-Beyerlen collection in Munich, formed by the painter Johann Dominik Bossi (1767-1853), who may have been a student of Domenico Tiepolo in Venice. Bossi worked primarily as a miniaturist in Germany, Austria, Sweden and Russia before settling in Munich, where he was appointed a court painter. Bossi owned some eight hundred and fifty drawings by Giambattista, Domenico and Lorenzo Tiepolo, of which about six hundred and thirty were studies in black or red chalk on blue paper – including nearly three hundred studies of character heads - and the remainder in pen and grey or brown ink. At his death, Bossi's collection of drawings passed to his daughter Maria Theresa Caroline Bossi (1825-1881) and her husband Carl Christian Friedrich Beyerlen (1826-1881). In March 1882, six months after the death of Maria Theresa Bossi, the drawings were sold at auction in Stuttgart and dispersed. A large number of the Bossi-Beyerlen drawings (although none of the studies of heads) were acquired at the 1882 sale by the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, where they remain today. Another one hundred and twenty of the drawings, including the present sheet, passed through several German collections in the early 20th century. The present sheet eventually entered the collection of the brothers Juan (d.1920) and Felix Bernasconi (d.1914), prominent Milanese industrialists who formed an impressive collection of paintings and drawings, mainly by contemporary Italian painters of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Among other chalk drawings of heads by Lorenzo Tiepolo with a Bossi-Beyerlen provenance is a Head of an Oriental once in the Ratjen collection and now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., a Head of an Old Woman (Saint Anne?) Looking Upwards in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, and a Head of a Youth Turned to the Left, formerly in the collection of Alfred Taubman and today in the Marco Brunelli collection in Milan, as well as a putative self-portrait drawing in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin.

The numeric code on the verso of this sheet is found on many drawings with a Bossi-Beyerlen provenance. The serial number 2978, it has been suggested, may have been a code devised by either Domenico Tiepolo or Johann Dominik Bossi while in the process of preparing an inventory of the family studio. Some of the drawings, including the present sheet, have a second set of numbers in pencil. This may refer to the Bossi-Beyerlen inventory, the order of which was loosely followed when the drawings were divided into groups and sold at auction in Stuttgart in 1882.

Literature:

Mario di Giampaolo, ed., *Disegno italiano antico: Artisti e opere dal Quattrocento al Settecento*, Milan, 1994, illustrated p.215 (as Domenico Tiepolo).

Artist description:

Like his brother Domenico, who was nine years older, Lorenzo Tiepolo was trained in his father Giambattista's workshop and accompanied him to Würzburg, working as his assistant on the frescoes of the Residenz between 1751 and 1753. In 1761 he was admitted into the *Fraglia*, the Venetian painter's guild, and the following year went with his father and brother to Madrid. Although he had tried and failed to enter the service of King Charles III of Spain in 1768, he chose to stay in Spain after Giambattista Tiepolo's death in 1770. While Lorenzo's style remained indebted to that of his illustrious father, during his time in Spain he was also particularly influenced by the work of the German painter Anton Raphael Mengs, who was active at the Spanish court at around the same period. Lorenzo made

his name as a draughtsman and pastellist, and painted a number of fine pastel portraits of the children of Charles III which reflect something of the sophisticated portraits of Rosalba Carriera. It was also in Madrid that he produced his most original works; a series of vibrant half-length pastels of contemporary Spanish characters and types. These distinctive genre subjects, perhaps his finest independent works, give a glimpse of what the artist might have accomplished, freed from his father's overwhelming influence, had he not died prematurely, after a long illness, in 1776.

Relatively few drawings by Lorenzo Tiepolo are known, certainly in comparison with the much more extensive drawn oeuvre of Giambattista and Domenico. Unlike them, he seems to have worked mainly in chalk or pastel rather than in pen and ink, and he evinced a particular penchant for portraiture, producing drawn portraits of such Venetian contemporaries as the art critic and collector Francesco Algarotti and the playwright Carlo Goldoni. Drawings by or convincingly attributed to Lorenzo - some of which are copies after the work of his father and older brother, produced during his period of apprenticeship in the family studio - are today in the collections of the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, the Harvard University Art Museums in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Museo Bardini in Florence, the Museo del Prado in Madrid, the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the Museo Civico in Pavia, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Martin von Wagner-Museum in Würzburg, and elsewhere.