

Circle of JOHANN MATTHIAS KAGER (Munich 1575 - Ausburg 1634)

A Bishop Saint (Augustine?) Seated Before a Hut

Pen and black ink and grey wash, with framing lines in black ink, squared for transfer in red chalk.

Laid down.

Inscribed Fr. Vanni on the backing sheet.

133 x 197 mm. (5 1/4 x 7 3/4 in.)

This drawing may be associated with a closely-related study, by the same hand, of a bishop saint distributing alms, also with an arched top and undoubtedly from the same series, with Monroe Warshaw in New York. Both drawings are squared for transfer, and are likely to have been intended as lunette decorations for a church.

Tilman Falk has suggested that these drawings may be the work of the Augsburg painter Caspar Strauss (c.1595-1663), who may be claimed as Johann Matthias Kager's only significant follower. Little is known of Strauss's training, but by 1620 he was working in Kager's studio, and he seems to have continued to assist him after gaining his independence as an artist. In the 1620s Strauss worked with Kager on the decoration of the monastery church in Zwiefalten, and around 1630 succeeded him as the city painter, or stadtmaler, of Augsburg.

Only a handful of paintings and less than twenty drawings by Caspar Strauss are known, including sheets in the Kunsthalle in Bremen, the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and elsewhere.

Artist description:

After completing his apprenticeships with the painter Jakob Jelle and the miniaturist Jörg Karl, between 1588 and 1598, Johann Matthias Kager began working for the ducal court at the Residenz in Munich, under the overall supervision of the painter Friedrich Sustris. He was active primarily as a miniaturist, while also painting a number of works for palaces and churches in the city. Kager's early works reveal the Italianizing influence of Sustris and Hans Rottenhammer, and while it has been suggested that he

may have travelled to Italy, possibly in the company of Rottenhammer, there is no firm evidence for this. (It is also only during his early period in Munich that mythological subjects appear in his oeuvre, and for most of his career he produced mainly religious works.) When Duke Maximilian I came to power in 1597, he dismissed many of the artists then working at the Bavarian court, and almost nothing is known of Kager's activity as a painter between 1597 and 1602, although some of his engravings bear dates in the first years of the 17th century.

By 1603 Kager had settled in Augsburg, where he was granted citizenship at the end of that year and also obtained the right to work as a painter and miniaturist. In May 1605 he received his first important public commission in Augsburg, for the façade decoration of a guild hall, completed in 1607. He soon earned further important public commissions, including the decoration of the city gates, completed in 1611, and altarpieces for churches in both Augsburg and Munich. He also designed engravings for Matthäus Rader's books Bavaria sancta and Bavaria pia, published between 1615 and 1628. In 1615 Kager was named town painter of Augsburg. In this capacity he provided designs for public ceremonies, and also received his most important commission from the city council, for the extensive decoration of the town hall. Although much of the work was done by other artists under his supervision, Kager himself painted the ceiling and mural paintings for the Goldener Saal, which are among his best-known works. Apart from paintings, frescoes and designs for engravings, Kager also painted miniatures for the Wittelsbach court in Munich, the wealthy Fugger banking family of Augsburg and the Prince-Bishop of Salzburg, as well as the Augsburg art dealer Philipp Hainhofer. A number of his frieze designs were engraved by Raphael Custodis and published in Augsburg from 1618 onwards. Kager also served as burgomaster of Augsburg between 1631 and 1632.

Drawings by Kager are today in the collections of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Städtische Kunstammlungen in Augsburg, the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, the Kunstmuseum in Bern, the Szépmüvészeti Múzeum in Budapest, the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich, the Louvre in Paris, the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, the Albertina in Vienna, and elsewhere.