

Filippo PEDRINI (Bologna 1763 - Bologna 1856)

Study for a Ceiling Decoration, with Juno and her Nymphs

Pen and brown ink and watercolour, over traces of an underdrawing in black chalk, with framing lines in brown ink.

The sheet extended at the left and right edges, probably by the artist, and laid down.

267 mm. (10 1/2 in.) diameter.

The 18th century Bolognese writer and biographer Marcello Oretti noted that Filippo Pedrini had a particular talent for drawing, and that he often copied the paintings of the Gandolfi: 'dalla natura ha sortito un bello ingegno per il disegno…si diede à copiare delle pitture delli Gandolfi e tanto bene le imitò.' This may explain why his drawings, like those of his father, have often been mistaken for the work of the brothers Gandolfi, particularly Ubaldo. Pedrini's later drawings, however, show a trend towards Neoclassicism, and display an awareness of the work of his slightly older contemporary, Felice Giani.

The present sheet would appear to be a study for a now-lost ceiling painting or fresco for one of the various palaces in Bologna that Filippo Pedrini decorated, and for which he was best known. It may be dated to approximately the same time as Pedrini's mythological ceiling frescoes in the Palazzo Hercolani in Bologna, where he worked alongside Flaminio Minozzi in the early years of the 19th century.

In medium, technique and handling, this drawing may be likened to a study of The Apotheosis of Venus(?), which was on the art market in 2001 and was in a private collection in Venice before recently being presented to the Musei Civici in Venice; that drawing is in turn a preparatory study for an easel painting by Pedrini in a private collection. Another stylistically comparable drawing is an ink and watercolour study of Venus and the Hours in the Museo Davia Bargellini in Bologna. A winged figure similar to that seen at the top of the present composition appears in a drawing by Pedrini of The Apotheosis of Hercules, formerly in the collection of the late John O'Brien and recently sold at auction,

as well as in a study of The Muse Clio Crowned by Fame in the Schloss Fachsenfeld collection in Stuttgart.

Exhibitions

London, Trinity Fine Art and Compagnie des Beaux-Arts at Harari and Johns, An Exhibition of Italian Old Master Drawings 1500-1800, 1990, no.46.

Literature:

London, Trinity Fine Art and Lugano, Compagnie des Beaux-Arts Ltd., Italian Old Master Drawings, 1990, pp.108-109, no.46.

Artist description:

The son and pupil of the painter Domenico Pedrini, Filippo Pedrini studied at the Accademia Clementina in Bologna, where he was taught by both Ubaldo and Gaetano Gandolfi, and where among his fellow pupils was Gaetano's son Mauro and Felice Giani. Pedrini's own style as both a painter and draughtsman remained indebted to the example of the Gandolfi throughout his career, and he was to carry the Bolognese late Baroque manner well into the 19th century. Pedrini was, in effect, the last of the 'Gandolfiani'; those Bolognese artists who, like his father Domenico, were taught and influenced by the Gandolfi brothers. Filippo's first works were two paintings of Saint Barbara and Saint Thomas Aquinas for the Bolognese church of San Bartolomeo, executed in 1779, possibly in collaboration with his father. He continued to be active in Bologna for the remainder of his career, establishing a particular reputation as a fresco painter, and in 1790 was admitted into the Accademia Clementina.

The last decade of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century found Pedrini painting a series of important mural cycles for private aristocratic palaces in Bologna, including the palazzi Pallavicini and Tanari and the Villa Aldovrandi Mazzacurati, although his most important work in this vein was arguably the decoration of the Palazzo Hercolani, frescoed with mythological subjects of gods and nymphs. Pedrini also worked in the Palazzo Comunale in Bologna, where he completed frescoes of An Allegory of Victory and The Muses, while in 1802 he painted a Christ Nailed to the Cross as part of a cycle of the Stations of the Cross – alongside works by Gaetano Gandolfi, Pietro Fancelli, Jacopo Alessandro Calvi and others - for the parish church of Santo Stefano in Bazzano, west of the city. Other paintings by Pedrini are to be found today in several Bolognese churches, including San Pietro Capofiume and San Paolo in Monte, as well as in the cemetery of the Certosa of Bologna. Admitted into the Accademia Pontifica in Rome in 1821, Pedrini enjoyed an unusually long career, dying at the age of ninety-three.