

Sigismondo COCCAPANI (Florence 1583 - Florence 1643)

The Holy Family in the Carpenter's Shop, with an Angel

Pen and brown ink and blue wash, over an underdrawing in black chalk.

Squared for transfer in black chalk, and with double framing lines in brown ink.

Inscribed b[racci]a. 2 2/3 at the lower left and b[racci]a. 3 1/3 at the lower right.

Further inscribed IvB (in ligature) l:o LXXV in the bottom margin of the sheet.

Inscribed by the artist 'levar via quel cappanello di legnietto e in quell'ca[m]bio farvi che il cristo abbia cavato da u[n] / paniere de ferri il martello, le tanaglie, e de chiodi' in brown ink on the verso.

213 x 171 mm. (8 3/8 6 3/4 in.) [image]

264 x 214 mm. (10 3/8 x 8 3/8 in.) [sheet]

This fine drawing by Sigismondo Coccapani is closely related to a less-finished version of a nearly identical composition by the artist, drawn in pen and brown ink, in the collection of the Uffizi in Florence. As the scholar Miles Chappell has noted of these two drawings, 'The [Uffizi] sketch depicts Mary, Joseph, a youthful assistant, and the Christ Child in a somewhat open composition. Joseph and the youth concentrate on their work while Mary looks with dismay as the young Christ, seated on the ground, forms a cross with some sticks…This composition in brown pen is a preparatory study for the more finished drawing in pen and brown and blue washes over black chalk of Mary, Joseph, the Christ child, and an angel in the workshop…The composition is now more compact and centralized. While the figures of Mary and Joseph retain their poses, the youth has been transformed into an angel…This definitive composition drawing seems to have had some importance for Coccapani, and he preserved it in his collection and identified it with his mark. The degree of finish, the size…the squaring in black

chalk, and the inscriptions giving the projected measurements of 3 1/3 x 2 2/3 braccia…suggest that the drawing had a specific purpose, perhaps as a presentation drawing or model, and is documentation for a hitherto unknown painting.' Given the dimensions in braccia noted on the present sheet, the lost painting for which both this and the Uffizi drawing must have been preparatory would have had dimensions of approximately 195 x 155 cm.

The artist's notes on the verso of the sheet may be approximately translated as 'take out the little wooden house, and in its place have Christ take the hammer, tongs, and nails out of an iron chest.'

The present sheet may be compared stylistically with such drawings by Coccapani as a Rest on the Flight into Egypt in the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Rome and a Susanna and the Elders in the collection of the Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York.

This drawing twice bears a drystamp (Lugt 2729), which denotes it as being part of a collection of 17th century Florentine drawings assembled by Sigismondo Coccapani, possibly with the aid of his younger brother and fellow painter Giovanni Coccapani. (It has been suggested that some of the drawings bearing the stamp may have been acquired earlier by Sigismondo and Giovanni's father, Regolo Coccapani.) The stamp, which reproduces the coat of arms of the Coccapani family, is found on over a hundred extant drawings, most of which are by Cigoli, with the bulk of the remainder by the Coccapani brothers and their contemporaries within Cigoli's studio and circle6. Most of the drawings with this mark are today in the Uffizi in Florence and must have entered the collection as part of the Fondo Mediceo-Lorenese in the second half of the 17th century. Other drawings with the Coccapani stamp are in the National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the Louvre, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Fondation Custodia in Paris, and the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Rome.

Exhibitions

London, Jean-Luc Baroni Ltd./Colnaghi, Old Master and Nineteenth Century Drawings, 2001, no.14.

Literature:

Miles Chappell, 'The Assumption of the Virgin and the Holy Family in Joseph's Workshop by Sigismondo Coccapani', Source: Notes in the History of Art, Summer 2004, pp.22-23, fig.3; Elisa Acanfora, Sigismondo Coccapani. Ricomposizione del catalogo, Florence, 2017, p.212, no.D144, p.193, under no.D75, p.209, under no.D131, illustrated p.76, fig.131 and p.234, fig.156.

Artist description:

The son of a goldsmith, Sigismondo Coccapani studied with the architect Bernardo Buontalenti and the painter Ludovico Cardi, known as Cigoli. He was one of Cigoli's last pupils, and was the only Florentine apprentice working closely with the master on his late Roman commissions. Indeed, as Miles Chappell has noted, Coccapani 'could be described as the most dedicated and also the most dependent of Cigoli's disciples.' Between 1610 and 1612 he assisted Cigoli on the fresco decoration of the dome of the Cappella Paolina in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. On his return to Florence, Coccapani began his independent practice and in fact seems to have worked almost exclusively in and around the city for the remainder of his career, painting frescoes, devotional works and mythological pictures. His earliest known independent commission was for a lunette fresco in the large cloister (the chiostro dei morti) of the church of Santissima Annunziata in Florence, painted in 1613. Four years later he completed a painting of Michelangelo Crowned by the Arts for the Casa Buonarroti in Florence, soon followed by an Adoration of the Magi for the church of Santa Maria in Castello in Signa, outside the city. His last known work is the decoration of the Cappella Martelli in the Florentine church of Santi Michele e

Gaetano, completed in 1642.

Coccapani's paintings show his debt to the manner of his master Cigoli, an influence that may also be seen in the relatively few surviving drawings by the younger artist that are known, of which the largest group, numbering around ninety sheets, is today in the Uffizi in Florence. That many more drawings by Coccapani must once have existed, however, is shown by the comments of the Florentine collector and biographer Francesco Maria Niccolò Gabburri, who knew of an album of drawings by the artist that had been sold abroad: 'un grosso libro, nel quale disegnò ogni sorta di animali, che riuscì cosa di gran pregio, il quale poi fù mandato oltre ai monti.' The use of blue wash in many of his drawings is a characteristic feature of Coccapani's draughtsmanship which he adopted from the late compositional studies of Cigoli. Indeed, many of his drawings were once attributed to the elder artist, and many of the most Cigolesque drawings by Coccapani date from the early part of his career, when he was working with his master in Rome, and again at the start of his independent career in Florence.