

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Agostino CARRACCI (Bologna 1557 - Parma 1602)**

**A Wooded Landscape with a Man Resting by a Path [recto]; Nine Studies of Pendants and a Sketch of a Spider [verso]**

Pen and brown ink and brown wash.

Inscribed Titiaen on the verso.

213 x 287 mm. (8 3/8 x 11 1/4 in.)

According to early sources, both Annibale and Agostino Carracci drew landscapes outdoors, although very few drawings can be specifically related to landscape paintings by either artist. The practice of landscape painting and drawing was a significant part of the work of the Carracci studio and was carried through to the teachings of the Accademia degli Incamminati, the academy that the three Carracci established in Bologna in the early 1580s. As Clare Robertson has noted of the Carracci, 'They seemed to have made numerous drawings for landscapes from the very beginning of their careers. This activity must be seen in the wider context of their general interest in drawing from nature, and their interest in Venetian forms of art...part of the curriculum of the Carracci Academy was to go out into the country and make landscapes.' Landscape paintings and drawings by Agostino Carracci are mentioned in many Seicento inventories, and a volume of landscape studies by both Agostino and Annibale was part of a very large group of some six hundred drawings by the Carracci assembled by the 17th century Roman antiquarian Francesco Angeloni. Although numerous landscape studies have been attributed to each artist, it seems that, of the two brothers, Agostino was in his day regarded as more dedicated to the practice of landscape drawing. In a 1603 funeral oration for Agostino, Luca Faberio noted of the artist and fellow members of the Carracci academy that 'they drew hills, fields, lakes, rivers, and anything else that was beautiful or arresting in sight.'

As Clovis Whitfield has pointed out, 'In contrast with Annibale, Agostino in his landscape drawings reveals a concern with a careful definition of space and perspective; in many ways his brother's manner was more direct, looking at individual planes and single motifs.' Agostino's landscape studies owe much to the example of drawings and prints by such 16th century Venetian artists as Titian and Domenico Campagnola, and several of his drawings of this type have long been attributed to the latter in particular. The present sheet, which bears an old attribution to Titian, exemplifies the influence of the Venetian landscape tradition on Agostino, whose drawings were in turn influential on the succeeding generation of painters such as Domenichino and Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi. Among stylistically comparable pen drawings by Agostino Carracci is a Landscape with the Flight into Egypt(?) in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and a Rocky Landscape with Figures in the collection of the Dukes of

Devonshire at Chatsworth, as well as a Landscape with Saint Francis in the Städelsches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt.

A number of Agostino's prints from the early 1580s are of decorative designs for friezes or coats of arms, and several of his drawings include quick sketches of decorative ornaments akin to the studies of what appears to be jewellery on the verso of the present sheet. The schematic study of a spider on the verso is also echoed in a handful of drawings by the artist, such as a sheet of studies in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, which includes a sketch of a crab.

The present sheet once belonged to the film and stage costume designer Anthony Powell (1935-2021), who won three Academy Awards for costume design, in 1973, 1979 and 1981.

### **Artist description:**

Arguably the least well known of the three Carracci, Agostino Carracci has long been overshadowed by his more famous younger brother Annibale and cousin Ludovico. As a painter, Agostino Carracci studied with Prospero Fontana and Bartolomeo Passarotti, and was also trained as an engraver in the studio of Domenico Tibaldi, producing his first engravings in the early 1580's. Agostino worked alongside Annibale and Ludovico on the frescoed friezes of the Palazzo Fava in Bologna, completed in 1584. By now firmly established as a successful printmaker, Agostino also received a handful of commissions for church altarpieces. Following a stay to Venice, he again collaborated with his brother and cousin, this time on the decoration of the Palazzo Magnani in Bologna around 1590. In the mid 1590's he joined Annibale in Rome, where the latter was engaged on the decoration of the galleria of the Palazzo Farnese. While the bulk of the decorative scheme of the Farnese Gallery was the work of Annibale, Agostino was responsible for the design and execution of two prominent frescoes on the long walls of the room; the Cephalus and Aurora and the so-called Galatea. After an argument with his brother, however, Agostino left Rome in 1599 for Parma. There he was commissioned by Duke Ranuccio Farnese to paint frescoes for the Palazzo del Giardino, but died before the project was completed.