Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Baccio BANDINELLI (Gaiole 1488 - Florence 1560)

A Group of Eleven Putti at Play

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

Faintly numbered (by Crozat) *4* at the lower right.

Inscribed [*Bacc*]*hio Bandinelli* on the verso.

232 x 404 mm. (9 1/8 x 15 7/8 in.)

Watermark: A fruit(?) with two leaves below.

This fine sheet – aptly described by the late Bandinelli scholar Roger Ward as '*a large and exceptionally beautiful drawing*' – provides an example of Bandinelli finding inspiration in the work of one of his illustrious Florentine predecessors, the Renaissance sculptor Donatello (1386-1466). The central section of this drawing is based on a small part of Donatello's bronze reliefs on the two pulpits in the Florentine church of San Lorenzo, executed between c.1461 and 1466 and one of the Renaissance sculptor's final works, left unfinished at his death. The pulpits include a frieze of putti at play running above the main scenes, and Bandinelli has here freely adapted the central part of his composition from a section of Donatello's putto frieze – showing a putto standing on a small support (here a turtle), flanked by other putti – that appears twice, once above the relief of *The Resurrection of Christ* on the north pulpit and again above the scene of *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* on the south pulpit. It is interesting to note that, in some of Bandinelli's writings on art, he reserves particular praise for the beauty and grace of Donatello's depictions of putti and children.

Bandinelli made numerous copies after the works of Donatello, a practice in which he was apparently encouraged by Leonardo da Vinci, according to Giorgio Vasari. Although the Quattrocento sculptor's San Lorenzo pulpits provided a rich visual source of motifs for later artists, they were only first assembled and displayed, on wooden supports, in the church some fifty years after they were done, in time for the visit of Pope Leo X to Florence in November 1515, and it is likely that the young Bandinelli drew them at around this time. Bandinelli seems to have made several studies from the San Lorenzo pulpits, including drawings by or attributed to the artist in the British Museum in London, the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, the Musée Condé in Chantilly and the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf.

Similar studies of children at play appear in a drawing by Bandinelli of ten putti, arranged in two rows, in the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, as well as in a drawing of *Adam and Eve Beseeching God the Father* in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and on the recto of a drawing in the Fondazione Horne in Florence. Also closely comparable are the angels that appear in another early pen drawing by Bandinelli that is likewise freely based on an earlier sculpture; a *Virgin and Child with Three Angels* in the Louvre that is an adaptation of a small marble relief of the *Virgin and Child* (known as the *Dudley Madonna*) of c.1440 by Donatello, today in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Stylistically similar pen and ink drawings of single putti by Bandinelli are in the Louvre, the Uffizi and a private collection in Chicago. This type of playful putti is also found in Bandinelli's rare early painting of *Leda and the Swan* of c.1512 in the collection of the Sorbonne University in Paris.

The first recorded owner of this drawing was the German banker and collector Everhard Jabach IV (1618-1695), a native of Cologne who settled in Paris in 1638 and became a naturalized French citizen in 1647. It was in France that Jabach began to amass a formidable collection of paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints, creating arguably the greatest private collection in France in the 17th century. In 1662 Jabach sold most of his collection of paintings to King Louis XIV, followed in 1671 by the sale to the Crown of much of the rest of his collections, including 5,542 drawings. Jabach did not, however, sell all of his drawings, and chose to retain a number of significant works, including the present sheet. He also continued to collect drawings, so that by 1695, when a posthumous inventory of his collection was made, some 4,500 drawings, mostly by Italian artists, were listed.

This drawing by Bandinelli was among a group of more than four hundred drawings purchased from the Jabach heirs, at an unknown date, by the eminent collector Pierre Crozat (1665-1740), whose famous collection of drawings numbered 19,201 sheets. The Crozat collection was dispersed at auction in Paris in 1741, in a sale catalogued by Pierre-Jean Mariette and held over a period of more than a month, which included around 120 drawings by Bandinelli, divided into six lots. The present sheet was then acquired by Gilbert Paignon-Dijonval (1708-1792), whose collection included some six thousand drawings and around 60,000 prints. Paignon-Dijonval's collection was inherited by his grandson Charles-Gilbert Morel de Vindé (1759-1842), who had the collection catalogued in 1810 before selling it en bloc to the English art dealer and collector Samuel Woodburn (1753-1853). The present sheet later belonged to the American collector and museum curator David E. Rust (1930-2011), who worked at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. as Curator of European Art for over two decades.

Exhibitions

New York and London, Colnaghi, Master Drawings, 1998, no.3.

Literature:

M. Bénard, Cabinet de M. Paignon Dijonval, Paris, 1810, p.10, no.32 ('*BANDINELLI (Baccio)…Des jeux d'enfans: composition de onze figures; celui qui est au milieu tient un corne d'abondance, et est monté sur une tortue: d. à la plume sur papier blanc; l. 15 po. sur 8 po.*'); Roger Ward, Baccio Bandinelli 1493-1560: Drawings from British Collections, exhibition catalogue, Cambridge, 1988, p.29, under no.10; Bernadette Py, Everhard Jabach collectionneur (1618-1695): Les dessins de l'inventaire de 1695, Paris, 2001, p.192, no.800; Roger Ward, 'Regesto dei disegni preparatori', in Detlef Heikamp and Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, ed., Baccio Bandinelli scultore e maestro (1493-1560), exhibition catalogue, Florence, 2014, p.612; Joachim Jacoby, ed., Raffael bis Tizian: Italienische Zeichnungen aus dem Städel Museum, exhibition catalogue, Frankfurt and Paris, 2014-2015, p.124, fig.23, under no.34; Bernadette Py, Les dessins italiens de Pierre Crozat (1665-1740). L'oeil de Mariette, online publication [https://mini-site.louvre.fr/trimestriel/2015/Catalogue_Crozat/index.html], n.d. [2015?], p.55.

Artist description:

One of the leading sculptors of the Cinquecento in Italy, Baccio Bandinelli was profoundly influenced by the work of Michelangelo, a lifelong rival whose fame he sought to emulate throughout his career. Although he received several important Roman commissions, he worked in Florence for much of his life, where he enjoyed the patronage of the Medici. There his major public sculptural commissions included a statue of Saint Peter for the facade of the Duomo, the Hercules and Cacus for the Piazza della Signoria and the monument to Giovanni delle Bande Nere outside the church of San Lorenzo. He also sculpted a figure of Orpheus for the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici, as well as sculptures for the Sala dei Cinquecento in the Palazzo Vecchio and the high altar of the Duomo. Bandinelli also worked occasionally as a painter, notably receiving a commission from Pope Clement VII for two frescoes for the Florentine church of San Lorenzo, though the project was eventually abandoned. In Rome, he designed and executed the tombs of the Medici popes Leo X and Clement VII. In 1546 he began work on an elaborate marble choir screen, ornamented by statues and reliefs, for the Duomo in Florence; an immense project that occupied him, on and off, for the remainder of his career. Like every sculptor of his age, however, Bandinelli remained in the lifelong shadow of Michelangelo, whose mastery of technique he was never quite able to equal.

Bandinelli's contemporary fame was based as much on his drawings as on his sculpture, and Vasari notes of him that he was 'allora disegnatore molto stimato'. He was a prolific draughtsman, and more studies by him survive than by any other 16th century sculptor save Michelangelo. (He is also known to have made drawn copies after the work of such earlier sculptors and painters as Giotto, Masaccio, Desiderio da Settignano, Donatello, Fra Bartolomeo and Leonardo, as well as Michelangelo.) Indeed, drawing was the foundation of Bandinelli's art, as was noted in the Memoriale – long thought to be the artist's autobiography but recently identified as having been composed by his grandson – where he is claimed to have stated that 'All my concentration was fixed on drawings...it is above all in that activity that I have prevailed.' Certainly, the artist valued his drawings highly, and he seems not to have parted with many of them, further insisting that his heirs retain them after his death; 'the drawings, of which I leave behind almost a full cassone, should be guarded like so many jewels; do not let them slip through your fingers, for there will come a time when they will be regarded as treasures.'

That Bandinelli's drawings continued to be admired by collectors long after the artist's death is seen in Pierre-Jean Mariette's comments in the 1741 sale catalogue of drawings from the Crozat collection; 'Baccio's style of drawing is very skillful, as one would expect from a master who had a profound knowledge of the structure of the human body and all its movements; but this style is also overly austere, even savage... I prefer the drawings this master made in pen to those he executed in red chalk; they appear less resolute, but they are closer to the truth.' Some five hundred drawings by Bandinelli are known today, the majority of which are in pen and ink, although some are in black or red chalk.