

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 large and impressive sheet by Baccio Bandinelli provides an interesting example of the 16th century Florentine sculptor finding inspiration in the work of one of his illustrious predecessors. The central section of this drawing is based on part of Donatello's bronze reliefs on the two pulpits in the Florentine church of San Lorenzo, executed in the early 1460s and one of the Renaissance sculptor's final works. The pulpits include a frieze of putti at play running above the main scenes, and Bandinelli has here adapted the central part of his composition from a section of Donatello's putto frieze that appears twice, once above the relief of The Resurrection of Christ on the north pulpit and again above the Lamentation over the Dead Christ on the south pulpit.

Donatello's San Lorenzo pulpits provided a rich visual source of motifs for later artists, and Bandinelli seems to have made several drawings from them. (Bandinelli made numerous copies after the works of Donatello, a practice in which he was apparently encouraged by Leonardo.) As the Bandinelli scholar Roger Ward has noted, however, the present sheet is not necessarily a direct copy of Donatello's frieze and may instead return to the source of the Renaissance sculptor's inspiration; an antique sarcophagus formerly in the Strozzi collection in Florence and now in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.

Similar studies of putti at play by Bandinelli appear on the recto of a drawing in the Fondazione Horne in Florence, while another example is in the Städelisches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt.

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 retained a number of significant works, including the present sheet. He also continued to collect drawings, and 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. This drawing 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 to the English art dealer and collector Samuel Woodburn (1753-1853).

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; 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 for 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 an apparent forgery 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, insisting that his heirs retain them after his death. Bandinelli's drawings continued to be admired by collectors long after the artist's death, as evidenced by a comment in the 1775 sale catalogue of drawings from the collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette; 'Baccio's manner of drawing is very erudite: he understood perfectly the structure of the human body as well as all its movements...' Over 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. The largest single collection of drawings by the artist is today in the Uffizi, and other significant groups are in the Louvre and the British Museum.