

c.1600 FLEMISH SCHOOL

Christ before Pontius Pilate, after Raffaellino da Reggio

Pen and brown ink and grey wash, heightened with white, with partial framing lines in brown ink, on blue paper.

Some of the figures numbered *1*, *2*, *3*, *4* and *5*, and the verso inscribed with corresponding colour notes: 1. *gialo* / 2. *torigno*(?) / 3. *rossi* / 4 …*one*(?) / 5 *bianco*.

Numbered 18 on the verso.

Inscribed with an old attribution *Cagniassi*(?) on a tab of paper attached to the verso.

368 x 256 mm. (14 1/2 x 10 1/8 in.)

This large drawing is a copy after a fresco of *Christ before Pilate* by Raffaellino Motta da Reggio (1550-1578) in the Oratorio del Gonfalone in Rome. The Oratorio del Gonfalone was decorated between 1569 and 1576 with a cycle of frescoes of scenes from the Passion executed by a team of Mannerist painters including Livio Agresti, Jacopo Bertoia, Cesare Nebbia, Marco Pino, Raffaellino da Reggio and Federico Zuccaro. Raffaellino's fresco of Christ before Pilate, described by the painter and biographer Giovanni Baglione as a '*pittura di gran maniera*', may be dated to around 1572-1574. As one modern scholar has described the scene, '*Amid a crowd, the humble Christ is brought before Pilate, who with flamboyant gesture demands what fault can be found in him. The focused attention of the arresting soldiers contrasts, on the one hand, with the bored and elegantly posed one who ceremonially holds the fasces, symbol of Roman authority, and on the other, with the friends of Jesus*

at the lower left. A young man with long hair, perhaps the Apostle John, looks solicitously to the woman who clasps her hands in fervent prayer. Perhaps she is Mary Magdalene. In sharp contrast again are the half-naked men next to them, soon to be called to perform their job as flagellants, who muse sadistically, one chewing on his instrument of torture, the other gesturing toward the next scene [ie. Federico Zuccaro's neighbouring fresco of the Flagellation] with a grotesque enthusiasm of anticipation.'

Another drawing by the same hand - a copy after a fresco of *Moses and the Brazen Serpent* by Ferraù Fenzoni (1562-1645) in the Scala Santa in Rome - shared the same provenance as the present sheet until recently. That drawing is dated 1591, only a few years after the date of Fenzoni's fresco, which was completed in 1587.

The author of these two fine copy drawings remains unknown, although the old attribution to the 16th century Genoese artist Luca Cambiaso (1527-1585) is certainly untenable. It has been noted that the draughtsmanship is similar to that of the Flemish painter Hans Speckaert (c.1540-c.1577), who worked for much of his brief career in Rome.

The present sheet once belonged to the German-born writer, art historian and publisher Walter L. Strauss (1922-1988), who emigrated to America in 1938. Apart from writing a catalogue of the drawings of Albrecht Dürer, Strauss's publishing company also issued The Illustrated Bartsch series of print catalogues.