

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Isidoro BIANCHI (Campione 1581 - Campione 1662)

The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, extensively heightened with white, on blue-grey paper, backed with thin Japan paper.

Traces of squaring in black chalk.

A large made up area in the upper left quadrant, and two smaller made up areas at the lower right edge.

359 x 255 mm. (14 1/8 x 10 in.)

Only a very few drawings by Isidoro Bianchi have survived, most of which display the influence of Morazzone's style. A characteristic of the younger artist's work is a preference for drawing with pen and brown ink and brown wash, combined with a precise application of white heightening, and often on dark, prepared paper of a greenish or bluish tone. Drawings by Bianchi are today in the collections of the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, the Musei Civici in Venice, the Albertina in Vienna and the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle.

The composition of the present sheet is derived from a large canvas of the same subject by Morazzone, painted in 1612 for the Cappella della Cintura in the church of Sant'Agostino in Como. While the two compositions are very close, the present sheet differs from Morazzone's painting in a number of significant details, most notably the change of the figure at the extreme left from a man in the painting to a woman in the drawing. Bianchi's drawing is squared for transfer, and shows traces of pentimenti, such as in the legs of the beggar in the foreground.

A stylistically comparable drawing by Isidoro Bianchi of *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, preparatory for a fresco of c.1645 in the church of Santa Maria della Rovana at Cevio, is in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle. Also close to the present sheet in style and handling, as well as the physiognomy of the figures and the figural types themselves, is a drawing of *The Adoration of the Magi* in the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen, which is a study for a fresco in Santa Maria dei Ghirli in Campione.

Bianchi painted a fresco of *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* for the parish church of Santo Stefano in the Lombard town of Viggiù, near Varese.

Literature:

Jacopo Stoppa, *Il Morazzone*, Milan, 2003, pp.217-218, under no.39, fig.39f.

Artist description:

Born in the Lombard town of Campione (now named Campione d'Italia), on the border with Switzerland, Isidoro Bianchi has long been regarded as a pupil or follower of his fellow Lombard painter Pier Francesco Mazzuchelli, known as Morazzone (1573-1626). Yet they were only eight years apart in age, and it is perhaps more likely that the relationship was more of a general influence and sometime collaboration on the part of the younger artist. Little is actually known of Bianchi's artistic training. In 1605, at the age of twenty-four, he is recorded as working in Prague, but by 1614 was active in Turin, working as court painter to the Royal House of Savoy for Duke Charles Emmanuel I. He painted decorations, now lost, for the Palazzo Reale, and from 1623 worked alongside Morazzone on the decoration of the Castello di Rivoli; although Morazzone's frescoes were destroyed later in the 17th century, some of Bianchi's work there survives. He painted a vault fresco for a chapel in the church of San Fedele in Como, completed in 1623, and for several years in the 1630s he was engaged on the extensive decoration, in both fresco painting and stucco, of the church of Santa Maria dei Ghirli in Campione. Another Savoy commission in Turin was for the fresco decoration of several rooms in the Castello del Valentino, on which Bianchi worked in the 1630s. In 1642 Bianchi left the employ of the Savoy court and settled in his native Campione, while also working in Como, Cressogno, Monza and at the Sacro Monte at Varese. Sometime in the 1640s he painted an extensive fresco cycle in the small church of Santa Maria della Rovana in Cevio, in Canton Ticino in Switzerland. Bianchi was sometimes assisted by his sons Pompeo, an architect, Francesco, a painter, and Carlo, a sculptor.