

Circle of Giuseppe CADES (Rome 1750 - Rome 1799)

The Struggle of Hercules and Apollo over the Tripod of Delphi, with Artemis, Leto and Athena [recto]; Prometheus Shaping a Man from Clay [verso]

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, over traces of an underdrawing in black chalk.

Inscribed *Gius. Cades.* and *Joseph Cadese. Col de Spengler 1839 No. 76.* on the old mount.

212 x 319 mm. (8 3/8 x 12 1/2 in.)

The obscure subject of the recto of this double-sided drawing is the struggle between Hercules and Apollo over the Delphic tripod, a popular theme in ancient Greek vase painting. Hercules had journeyed to the oracle at Delphi to ask the priestesses there to help cure him of a painful disease. But when he was denied an oracle because he had recently committed a murder and was considered impure, in his anger he decided to steal the sacred tripod in order to use it to establish his own oracle elsewhere. Apollo, as patron and protector of the sacred oracle at Delphi, intervened to prevent Hercules from stealing the tripod. The two began to wrestle over it, with Apollo aided by his twin sister Artemis and mother Leto and Hercules by his patron Athena. The struggle over the tripod became so violent that it had to be ended by Zeus, who threw a thunderbolt to separate the warring gods and demigods.

The verso of the present sheet depicts the Titan Prometheus shaping mankind out of mud and water and molding them in the form of the gods. The goddess Athena then breathed life into the clay figures, bringing the first humans to life.

Although this fascinating double-sided drawing has long been attributed to the 18th century Roman painter Giuseppe Cades, Maria Teresa Carracciolo has rejected this attribution. An attribution to the obscure Bolognese painter Giuseppe Santi (1729-1825), who worked in Bologna and Ferrara, has recently been suggested.

The present sheet bears the collector's marks - both in form of drystamps - of two eminent Danish collectors of drawings. The curator and art historian Johan Conrad Spengler (1767-1839) succeeded his father as the director of the Kunstkammer, the Royal Collection in Copenhagen, which, under his supervision, was divided into a picture gallery and a museum in 1820. Spengler began buying drawings in 1819 and continued to do so until not long before his death, eventually assembling one of the largest

private collections in Denmark. While his Danish drawings were left to the state, the rest of the collection, amounting to around 1,640 works by Italian, French, Dutch, German and English artists, was sold at auction a few months after his death.

This drawing was acquired at the 1839 sale of Spengler's collection by the collector Benjamin Wolff (1790-1866). Wolff studied law in Copenhagen before settling in Calcutta, where he worked for an English trading house, of which he eventually became a partner. He returned to Denmark a wealthy man in 1829, and the following year purchased the large manor home and estate of Engelholm, about sixty kilometres southwest of Copenhagen. Over the course of some thirty years, Wolff assembled a collection of over two thousand drawings by Danish and European artists ranging in date from the 16th century to the 19th century. Following the collector's death in 1866, the drawings remained with his descendants for over 150 years. Apart from a modest bequest to the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen in 1915 and two small exhibitions in a town in Denmark in the early 1980s, Wolff's collection of drawings was largely unpublished and remained little known to scholars.