

Galerie Canesso

Tableaux anciens

BERNARDINO DI BOSIO ZAGANELLI

(1495 - 1519)

Christ on the Cross with Saint Jerome and an Augustinian Saint

Oil on wood panel, 13 3/8 x 10 13/16 In (34 x 27.5 cm).



PROVENANCE

Germany, private collection.

LITERATURE

- Véronique Damian, *Un modello inédit de Tanzio da Varallo. Acquisitions récentes*, Galerie Canesso, Parigi, 2003, pp.16-17;
- Andrea Donati, *Girolamo Marchesi da Cotignola, Repubblica di San Marino*, 2007, p. 44, fig. 8; p. 138, all'interno della scheda n° 9.

This rare *tavoletta* is in a perfect state of preservation and clearly conveys the stylistic traits of Bernardino Zaganelli. The artist was a native of Romagna and his career developed independently from that of his brother Francesco - as current scholarship has demonstrated - who outlived him, dying in

The composition is as pure as can be, and its diminutive format certainly indicates its use for private devotion. While it is easy to recognise the penitent Saint Jerome on the right, even in the absence of his habitual attributes, the second saint kneeling before the Cross is harder to identify. His black habit would suggest an Augustinian saint, and the cardinal's *capa magna* over this might lead us to believe that this is Saint Bonaventure. But there are two reasons to object, to this identification: Bonaventure should be wearing the brown habit of the Franciscan order, and it would be hard to explain the wound in his right side. Saint Jerome is represented in an identical manner in a more complex and monumental work, the altarpiece of the *Conception of the Virgin* (Forlì, Pinacoteca Civica), signed, however, by Francesco Zaganelli and dated 1513. This larger work includes the figure of Saint Bonaventure, depicted, in a manner very similar to that in our panel.² While one can trace various instances of mutual influence, contribution, and re-use of motifs between one artist and the other, the expressive devotional mood displayed here by Bernardino distinguishes his approach from that of his brother Francesco. An awareness of Perugino (c. 1450-1524) is an enduring element in the artist's training. The figure of Christ on the Cross is set against a landscape background that blends the real and imaginary worlds. The distant, dissolving atmosphere contains a surreal city that is only hinted at, and the mountainous landscape recalls the steep crags of San Leo and San Marino in the artist's homeland. The refined technique bears the influence of Northern art, and in particular that of Durer, as regards the strongly expressive figure of Christ. The whiteness of his emaciated, exaggeratedly attenuated body almost suggests a lack of material substance. The figure of Saint Jerome is equally impressive, and we are far from the earlier, more realistic approach of the *Deposition* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). The taste for naturalistic details such as the small flowers and grass that run across the foreground area is also very Northern, and one can sense how far Bernardino Zaganelli has emerged from his own world, that of Boccaccio Boccaccino (before 1466-1525) and Ercole de Roberti (c. 1450-1496).

Considering these stylistic qualities, this panel can be placed within the artist's maturity. The insistence on white tonalities makes it very much part of his pictorial language at that time, and a notable comparison here would be the *Baptism of Christ* (London, National Gallery), painted around 1505/1506, which offers a number of parallels with our painting.

Notes:

1- See the monograph by Raffaella Zama, *Gli Zaganelli (Francesco e Bernardino) pittori*, Rimini, 1994. For a critical review of this catalogue raisonné, which mingles the work of the two brothers, see Andrea De Marchi, *Ioanes Ispanus. La pala di Viadana. Tracce di Classicismo precoce lungo la valle del Po*, exh. cat., Comune di Viadana, Galleria Civica « G. Bedoli », 19 November - 31 December 2000, p. 149. For Bernardino's own *corpus*, see Andrea De Marchi, « Bernardino Zaganelli inedito: due "fades Christi" », *Prospettiva*, nos. 75-76, July-October 1994, pp. 124-135.

2- Raffaella Zama, as cited in note 1, 1994, pp. 168-170, no. 58.