BARTOLOMEO CASTELLI IL GIOVANE, CALLED SPADINO

(ROME, 1696 - 1738)

Still Life with Fruit and Roses

Oil on canvas, 27 3/16 x 37 in (69 x 94 cm).



LITERATURE

- Véronique Damian, *Catalogue Biennale des Antiquaires*, Paris, Grand Palais, september 2008, pp. 54-57

Archival research by Geneviève Michel has revealed the existence of three painters, all members of the Castelli family, who specialized in still life painting: two brothers, Bartolomeo (also called il Vecchio, the Elder) and Giovanni Paolo (called Spadino), and the latter's son, Bartolomeo (called il Giovane, the Younger, to distinguish him from his uncle). Like his father, Bartolomeo was also known as Spadino.[1]

If, as seems correct, our painting is part of this complex oeuvre, it is closest to the style of the youngest of the three artists, Bartolomeo, as recently defined by Gianluca and Ulisse Bocchi. Among the works reproduced by these scholars, a comparison between our painting and that in the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence is convincing.[2] Each of these canvases contains the same repertoire, gleaming with colour and liveliness: an assortment of fruits and roses on branches bristling with thorns, mingled together on the ground or on a rough-hewn rocky ledge. A typical element is the use of opposite colours on the same fruit: greens or violets with reds, and ubiquitous touches of white that make those in the foreground sparkle. Vine branches serve as a backdrop to this front-stage exhibition of fruit, while the background has a few glimpses of a dark blue sky.

As quite correctly noted by the Bocchi, this painter's compositions, which are more archaizing, are not so much inspired by the exuberant works of Abraham Brueghel (1631-1697) and Christian Berentz

(1658-1722) – both of whom influenced his father – as they are by the more restrained paintings of Michelangelo Pace, called Michelangelo del Campidoglio (1625-1669), although Bartolomeo exceeds these in his intensity of form, rendered especially through tangled or desiccated foliage, shrivelled edges and all.

Notes:

1- Geneviève Michel, "Notes biographiques sur Giovanni Spadino", in *Colloqui del Sodalizio*, s. 11, Rome, 1978-1980, pp. 19-34.

2- Gianlucca Bocchi and Ulisse Bocchi, *Pittori di natura morta a Roma. Artisti italiani 1630-1750*, Viadana, 2005, pp. 577-659, 656, fig. BSJ. 53.