

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Romano Dazzi (Rome 1905 - 1976 Florence)

A Camelryman, c. 1923

Black conté crayon on ivory paper.

31 x 21 cm (12 1/4 x 8 1/4 in.)

47 x 37 cm (18 1/2 x 14 1/2 in.) framed in a German 19th century silver-lacquered moulding frame, floated on a hand-washed backboard.

Provenance

Studio of the artist;

With Antonacci Lapicciarella, Rome.

Reference Literature

G. de Lorenzi, *Disegni di Romano Dazzi*, Gabinetto Disegno e Stampe degli Uffizi LXVII, Florence 1987.





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Romano Dazzi's *A Camelryman* belongs to the compact but crucial corpus of Libyan drawings produced in 1923, when the artist - still only eighteen - travelled to North Africa in the wake of his precocious Roman debut. Executed in black conté crayon on ivory paper, the present sheet articulates the "illustrative and descriptive skill" for which Dazzi was already celebrated, showcasing both the intensity that the Libyan experience imparted to his draughtsmanship and his fascination with scenes of conflict.

The composition is built on a forceful interlocking of masses: the camel has collapsed in a resting posture, while above it, the camelryman, turbaned, wrapped in voluminous drapery, leans forward on his raised rifle. Dazzi's sophisticated use of conté exploits the medium's capacity of rendering both linear description and more painterly modelling. Long, looping contour lines map the rider's drapery in rhythmic bands, guiding the eye across the figure's torso and down to the legs. Deep black passages set up a sharp tonal counterpoint to the soldier's candid vest, throwing the foreground group into emphatic relief as it fills almost the entire sheet against a sun-flooded, unarticulated background.

The present sheet is inseparable from Dazzi's Libyan mission. Born in Rome in 1905 to the sculptor Arturo Dazzi and Lia Scopsi, he displayed prodigious talent early, holding his first solo exhibition at Anton Giulio Bragaglia's gallery in 1919, where he presented a remarkable 140 drawings - animals, portraits, and war scenes - introduced in the catalogue by Ojetti.¹ After his father abandoned the family, Ojetti assumed a formative role in shaping the young artist's trajectory. In January 1923 Dazzi departed for Libya, commissioned by Luigi Federzoni (then Minister of the Colonies) to produce colonial-subject drawings; hosted in Tripoli by the governor Count Giuseppe Volpi, he nevertheless left to follow the military expedition of Colonel Rodolfo Graziani in the reconquest of internal regions still held by tribes resisting Italian rule.² A first group of these expedition drawings was published in *L'Illustrazione Italiana* (March 1923). Their success prompted Ojetti to organise, the following year, a focused exhibition of Libyan



Fig. 1. Romano Dazzi, *Il Compagno Ferito*, 1923, black conté on paper. Florence, Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe.

¹ See N. Galmarini, *Romano Dazzi. Disegnatore, affreschista, ceramista*, Roma 2025.

² G. de Lorenzi, *Disegni di Romano Dazzi*, Gabinetto Disegno e Stampe degli Uffizi LXVII, Florence 1987, pp. 36-37.

drawings at the Galleria Pesaro in Milan, selecting from the substantial material Dazzi brought back.

Within that Libyan production - predominantly in conté and focused on the figure of man, especially the warrior, heroic even (and sometimes more so) when rebel or enemy - *A Camelryman* emerges as one of Dazzi's most emblematic motifs. In this respect it is closely comparable to *Il Compagno Ferito* (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, inv. 113248, fig. 1), and *Bivacco Notturno* (Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, inv. 113247, fig. 2) likewise in black conté and dated 1923 by the artist.



Fig. 2. Romano Dazzi, *Bivacco Notturno*, 1923, black conté on paper. Florence, Uffizi, Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe.