

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Giovanna Garzoni

(Ascoli Piceno 1600 - 1670 Rome)

Bowl of figs with a hazelnut

c. 1650 - 1670

tempera on vellum

25 x 32 cm.;

9 7/8 x 12 5/8 in.

Provenance

Private collection, Turin.

Literature

C. Arnaldi di Balme & M. Paola Ruffino (eds.), *Madame Reali: Cultura e Potere da Parigi a Torino: Cristina di Francia e Giovanna Battista di Savoia Nemours 1619 – 1724*, exh. cat., Genoa 2019, cat. no. 16, reproduced in colour on p. 268.

Exhibited

Turin, Palazzo Madama, *Madame Reali: Cultura e Potere da Parigi a Torino: Cristina di Francia e Giovanna Battista di Savoia Nemours 1619 – 1724*, 20 December 2018 – 6 May 2019.

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The following note by Federico Tognoni was printed in the 2018 catalogue, *Madame Reali: Cultura e Potere da Parigi a Torino: Cristina di Francia e Giovanna Battista di Savoia Nemours 1619 – 1724*, published on the occasion of the exhibition held at the Palazzo Madama in Turin. We are grateful to Tognoni for this research.

Due to its graphic arrangement and dimension, this opulent group of figs can be compared to the twenty miniatures representing fruit and flowers on various plates which were commissioned from Garzoni by the Grand Duke Ferdinand II for his wife Vittoria della Rovere. According to 17th-century inventories (ASFi, Guardaroba 992, c. 32v), this series, which is today conserved at the Galleria Palatina in the Pitti Palace, decorated the walls of the ‘Stanza dell’Aurora’ in the apartments of Vittoria della Rovere at the Medicean villa of Poggio Imperiale, which was completed in 1662 when Garzoni had already moved to Rome.¹ Specifically, the miniature finds a significant precedent (possibly its prototype) in four plates of figs: three conserved at the Galleria Palatina in Florence (see, for example, fig. 1) and one formerly in the Lodi Collection at Campione d’Italia (fig. 2). We can also add to these works the tempera on vellum of a similar subject, which is conserved at the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe of the Uffizi, Florence.²

However, the present miniature shall not be considered merely a passive replica. On quite the contrary, it is a real variation on a theme that Garzoni repeated various times with modifications. The artist had to meet the demands of numerous clients and thus often used to repeat models of sure success. Specifically, this miniature impresses the viewer due to its particular arrangement of the figs: they are gathered in a earthenware plate on a floor of rock, realised with the brushtroke-tip ‘*puntinato*’ technique. This was employed in most of Garzoni’s miniature paintings (it is also referred to as ‘*miniatura granita*’), and almost acts as a signature for the artist in her tactile rendering of fruits and flowers.

We should recall that Garzoni worked at the Turin court of Vittorio Amedeo I (1632-1637), where she encountered other artists such as Octavianus Monfort, who had been a miniaturist since 1646 at the service of the Duchess Madama Cristina of Savoy.³

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The consistency of the fruits here - as usual philologically truthful in the crack and the spots on the turgid skin as well as the withering of the figs' leaves - is striking. This technique had been pioneered by Jacopo Ligozzi, a painter from Verona who served at the court of Francesco I de Medici and then of his brother Ferdinando, to depict the vegetables in the ducal gardens and the animals in the greenhouses. Further inspiration was derived from the Lombard tradition spearheaded by Ambrogio Figino, Panfilo Nuvolone and Fede Galizia, all of whom enrich the reference system of the present work. Garzoni certainly had the opportunity to mediate on such artistic examples during her long stay in northern Italy.⁴

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Figure 1. Giovanna Garzoni, *Bowl of figs*, 1651-62, watercolour on parchment, 24.5 x 34.5 cm. Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence



Figure 2. Giovanna Garzoni, *A plate of figs*, 1655–1662, tempera on parchment. With Arader Galleries, New York, in 2020

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Footnotes

¹ Giovanna Garzoni died in Rome in 1670. See E. Fumagalli, in *Il seicento fiorentino: Arte a Firenze da Ferdinando I a Cosimo III. Pittura*, exh. cat., Florence 1986, factsheet no. I.262, pp. 178-179.

² L. Tongiorgi Tomasi, in *Immagini anatomiche e naturalistiche nei disegni degli Uffizi, sec. XVI e XVII : Firenze, Gabinetto disegni e stampe degli Uffizi*, (eds.) R. Paolo Ciardi & L. Tongiorgi Tomasi, Florence 1984, pp. 64-65.

³ G. Casale (ed.), *Gli incanti dell'iride: Giovanna Garzoni pittrice nel Seicento*, exh. cat., Milan 1996, pp. 46-47.

⁴ E. Fumagalli, in *Il seicento fiorentino: Arte a Firenze da Ferdinando I a Cosimo III. Pittura*, exh. cat., Florence 1986, factsheet no. I.262, p. 189.