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Bartolomeo Cavarozzi

(Viterbo 1578 – 1625 Rome)

*Still life with a basket of fruits
and pears, grapes, apples,
pomegranates, strawberries,
medlars, and figs*

1624 – 1625

oil on canvas

31 x 95 cm.;

12 1/4 x 37 3/8 in.

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This beautiful still life, rich in its variety and colours of the fruits, is a work by Bartolomeo Cavarozzi, whose activity as an autonomous painter of still lifes I have been strongly supporting for many years.¹ The present work is specifically of the finest quality and is in an incredible state of conservation.

Already back in 1996, I declared that the parts related to fruits and vegetables that one can find in his paintings were realised by him, and not by other hands. Even when depicting mere objects, as in the *Saint Jerome with Angels* in the Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti,² the painting of these elements is far too sublime.

Throughout the years my thesis has been proven to be correct and today Cavarozzi is recognised (also by the art market) as the most important author of still lifes among painters of the Caravaggesque school.³

I assigned to Cavarozzi various paintings which were attributed to the so-called Master of the Acquavella Still Life.⁴

The present work can be dated between 1624 and 1625 in consideration of its sumptuous and pre-Baroque tones, that are typical of the last production of the artist.

The fruits are characteristic of Cavarozzi's still lifes: vivaciously coloured pears can be seen on a stone shelf (even this element alone would be enough to certify the authenticity of the painting) and recalls the ones in the big basket of fruits in the so-called *Sangalli Still Life* (fig. 1). There are also open figs and grapes of various types, the latter realised through a much more dynamic and free brushstroke than the posed versions in the *Lamentation of Aminta* (fig. 2) or in *Still Life with a Basket Fruit* (TEFAF 2017; fig. 3),⁵ both instead realised between c. 1613 and 1616.

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The pomegranate is the distinctive trait of Cavarozzi's work and can be found in all of his autonomous still lifes. The fruit is sometimes cut, other times not; here it is both. Also characteristic are the grapes' leaves: they are agitated, crumpled and their veins are light yet very evident, bearing indeed similarities with those in the *Acquavella Still Life*.

That the work in question belongs to a very advanced time in Cavarozzi's career is also attested to above all by the rapid drafting, bordering on unfinished, of the sandstone shelf: a beautiful part that marks a further step forward, in terms of freedom of touch, when compared to the corresponding section (the foreground) in the *Acquavella Still Life*.

Gianni Papi, 28 February 2023, Florence

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Figure 1. Bartolomeo Cavarozzi, *Sangalli Still Life*, oil on canvas, 81.9 x 125.7 cm.
Private collection

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Figure 2. Bartolomeo Cavarozzi, *Lamentation of Aminta*, oil on canvas, 83 x 107 cm.
Private collection

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Figure 3. Bartolomeo Cavarozzi, *Still Life with a Basket Fruit*, oil on canvas, 87.5 x 117.6 cm. Sold by Colnaghi at TEFAF 2017 to a private European foundation

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Footnotes

¹ G. Papi, 'Riflessioni sul percorso caravaggesco di Bartolomeo Cavarozzi', *Paragone*, 5-6-7 (551-553-555), 1996, pp. 85-96; G. Papi, 'Pittori caravaggeschi a nature morte', *Paragone*, 65-66 (671-673), 2006, pp. 59-71 (the article is the publication of the lecture given during the symposium on still lifes held at Fondazione Roberto Longhi in Florence on 18 January 2003); G. Papi, *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi*, Soncino 2015.

² Papi 1996, pp. 85-96.

³ See, for instance, the immediate support in defence of my thesis by M. Gregori, 'Il Caravaggio e i suoi', in *Natura morta italiana tra Cinquecento e Settecento*, exh. cat., (eds.) M. Gregori & J. G. Prinz von Hohenzollern, Milan 2002, pp. 33-36; see also A. Pampoulides (ed.), *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi's Canestra*, Colnaghi, Lullo-Pampoulides, Benappi Fine Art, London 2017.

⁴ See the monograph that I dedicated to the painter: Papi 2015. This is also the reference for the images of the paintings which are mentioned in this text and for the essay "Essendo universale di tutte le cose et con tutti i modi di operare": grandezza e declino di Bartolomeo Cavarozzi', specifically on the topic of still lifes, see pp. 30-32.

⁵ See note n. 3.