

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Giovanni Baglione (Rome, 1566 - 1643)

Saint Peter Resurrecting Tabita, c. 1604

Black chalk, pen, brown ink, and brown wash.

27.5 x 17.2 cm (10 7/8 x 6 3/4 in.)

Provenance:

In the collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (Lugt 1852);

His sale, Paris, 15 November 1775 - 30 January 1776, no. 129¹;

Galerie Terrades, Paris.

Literature :

Eric Pagliano, "Dispositions en disponibilité. Quatre dessins de confrontation par Giovanni Baglione pour une Resurrection de Tabithe" in *La Scintilla Divina. Il Disegno a Roma tra Cinque e Seicento*, Roma 2020, p. 168 (ill.)

¹ As S. Paul resurrecting Eutychus: "belle composition en hauteur, à la plume et à l'encre de la Chine. Et quatre autres Sujets de martyres, à la plume & à la sanguine".



After training with the Florentine painter Francesco Morelli, Baglione received his first commissions from Pope Sixtus V, who entrusted him with frescoes for the Scala Santa, San Giovanni in Laterano, and the Vatican Library. After spending two years in Naples - working for Cardinal Sfondrato shortly after 1600 - Baglione, drawn to Caravaggio's art, abandoned Mannerism and produced works under his influence, such as the *Resurrection* painted for the Gesù (lost; known through a sketch in the Louvre). He later distanced himself from Caravaggio to develop a more eclectic *maniera propria*. Until his death in 1644, he executed important commissions for Roman churches, including the frescoes in the Paolina Chapel at Santa Maria Maggiore, while also receiving private orders, such as the series *Apollo and the Muses* (Arras, Musée des Beaux-Arts). Baglione was also a leading figure in artistic historiography through two publications: *Le Nove Chiese di Roma* (Rome, 1639), whose precision remains extremely valuable, and *Le Vite de pittori...* (ibid., 1642), in which he announces his intention to complete Vasari's *Vite*.

Thanks to the intervention of his protector, Cardinal Paolo Emilio Sfondrato, Giovanni Baglione obtained in 1604 the commission for an important altarpiece, part of a group intended to decorate the *navicelle* and adjoining chapels of St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. The programme had been entrusted by Pope Clement VIII Aldobrandini to Cardinal Cesare Baronio - author of the celebrated *Annales Ecclesiastici* and a major historian of the Church. From 1599, six large paintings had been commissioned from leading Roman, Tuscan, and Genoese artists - Cristoforo Roncalli, Tommaso Laurenti, Domenico Passignano, Francesco Vanni, Ludovico Cigoli, and Bernardo Castello - depicting the *misteri* (primarily miracles) from the life of Saint Peter, reaffirming the legitimacy of the papacy. Baglione was commissioned to paint the *Resurrection of Tabitha*, the last commission in the series. He completed it in January 1606, executing the subject not on slate panels - as in the other works - but on *stucco a olio*. The painting quickly deteriorated due to humidity and draughts, and Baglione restored it in 1628. Today it survives only in fragments in the reserves of the Reverenda Fabbrica di San Pietro, Vatican City. An early eighteenth-century copy by Emanuele Alfani is preserved in the Roman Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Emanuele Alfani, *Resurrection of Tabitha*, 18th century, oil on canvas. Rome, Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli.

Securing this commission was a major consecration for Baglione. He had already painted at San Giovanni in Laterano an ambitious fresco rich in figures and skilfully arranged, *The Gifts of Constantine*. Yet, in the eyes of Giulio Mancini - who wrote about the painting of his time in the years 1610–1620 - it was with the St Peter commission that “Cavalier Baglione [...] who partly followed the manner of Cavalier Giuseppe Arpino [...], and who seemed to have applied himself to follow that of Caravaggio, [...] found himself in a clear manner, as is seen on the altar of St

Peter.” Shortly afterwards, the artist received, as a reward, the title of *cavaliere di Cristo* from Pope Paul V. The subject is taken from the *Acts of the Apostles* (IX, 40–42): “[...] Peter, kneeling down, prayed; and turning to the body he said: Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up; and he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and calling the saints and the widows, he presented her to them alive.”

This important commission was prepared by a group of drawings, which comprised a series of compositional studies in the Louvre (fig. 2), the Musée Fabre, Montpellier (fig. 3), and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon (figs. 4–5) - a sequence recently studied with great care by Éric Pagliano.² Thanks to his more recent research, our drawing can be securely added to the above studies for the *Resurrection*.³



Figs. 2-5. Giovanni Baglione, *Saint Peter Raising Tabitha* (various compositional studies), black chalk, pen, ink and brown wash with occasional white heightening. Respectively in the collections of: Paris, Musée du Louvre, Montpellier, Musée Fabre and Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon for the latter two.

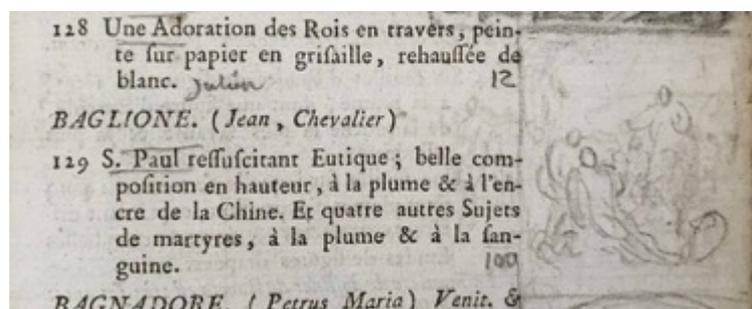
² See Eric Pagliano, *L'atelier de l'oeuvre Dessins Italiens du Musée Fabre*, Montpellier 2013, pp. 229-234, no. 57.

³ Eric Pagliano, “Dispositions en disponibilité. Quatre dessins de confrontation par Giovanni Baglione pour une Resurrection de Tabithe” in *La Scintilla Divina. Il Disegno a Roma tra Cinque e Seicento*, Roma 2020, p. 168 (ill.)

All these drawings share striking similarities: their dimensions are very close; the media are virtually identical; and each frames the subject within a rectangular format topped by an arched *attic* (or “hanger”), prefiguring the shape of the altarpiece. Nonetheless, each study arranges the scene with notable variations. According to Pagliano, the earliest would be the Louvre drawing, still close to Barocci’s constructions - such as the famous *Madonna del Popolo* - with Peter kneeling in elevation atop a podium and the crowd gathered below. In a second stage, Baglione produced the Montpellier drawing, reversing the scheme by placing Tabitha in the foreground and the crowd behind, with Saint Peter kneeling in an intermediate space. Finally, in the Dijon drawing Saint Peter stands and performs the miracle, raising his right hand. The composition on the verso of the Dijon sheet shows a further adjustment: Saint Peter turns towards the crowd and points to the woman brought back to life - the miracle has just taken place.

Our drawing is closest to the verso of the Dijon sheet: Saint Peter stands; Tabitha’s body lies to the right in the foreground; and the crowd gathers around. The only essential difference lies in the raised hand, whose pointing finger indicates the Holy Spirit in the arched upper field: here Peter appears to invoke divine aid to perform the miracle, whereas in the Dijon drawing he is already in the act of accomplishing it. Our sheet may therefore belong towards the end of Baglione’s process of compositional development, either before or after the Dijon study. As Pagliano suggests, the unusually large number of preparatory works for this major commission may reflect a collective thinking process between the artist and the members charged with overseeing the project, including Cardinals Cesare Baronio, Paolo Emilio Sfondrato, and Giacomo Sannesio. One element, however, still seems to be missing: none of the known drawings comes close to the composition finally painted, in which Tabitha appears on the right - suggesting that a further drawing, ultimately selected by the patrons, remains to be identified.

The present sheet comes from the collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette and bears his stamp (Lugt 1852); it also retains part of Mariette’s mount. It is securely identifiable in the sketch made by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin during his visit to the Mariette sale of 1775–76 (fig. 6).



Figs. 6. Pencil sketch made by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin directly on the catalogue of Mariette sale (1775–76).

It should be noted, however, that in the auction catalogue our sheet is described, under lot 129, as *St Paul resurrecting Eutychus* - a “beautiful vertical composition, in pen and India ink”. Baglione does not, however, seem to have treated the theme of the resurrection of Eutychus, the young

man of Troas who died after falling from a window and was restored to life by Paul (*Acts*, XX, 7–12). It is also worth noting that the same lot 129 included “four” (in fact five) further subjects of martyrs in pen and red chalk which, after passing through the collection of the Comte de Saint-Morys, are now preserved in the Louvre.