

BARTOLOMEO PASSAROTTI

(Bologna 1529 - 1592)

Study of two legs

Pen and brown ink, over black chalk

34,5 x 21,5 cm

Bears lower left the collector mark of Maurice Marignane (L. 1872) and the collector mark of Luigi Grassi (L. 4465)

Provenance:

Collection Maurice Marignane (Born in 1879) (L. 1872);

Collection Luigi Grassi (Rome 1913-1994) (L. 4465);

Private collection, France.



This marvelously striking drawing is linked with other anatomical studies, which may have been related to an anatomy book by Bartolomeo Passarotti. Passarotti lived in Bologna where the University was a renowned medical centre. It was there that the first Chair of Anatomy was established in 1570. The general interest in science which pervaded most of the artistic community led Passarotti to embark on a book on muscle structure. If his admiration for Michelangelo inspired him to explore the potential of strength in the human body, his submission to a scientific discipline allowed him to give a more realistic rendering of muscular structure. In this, the artist opened the way to a new criterion of classical beauty, which the Carracci would exploit. The book is mentioned by several of the contemporary biographers of Passarotti's life. The book, which is now lost, dealt mainly with human anatomy. He may have been aware of a famous anatomy lesson given at the University of Bologna in January 1540 by Andreas Versalius, a 25 years old teacher

from Padua. Versalius dissected a corpse before an enthusiastic and lively audience of 200 Students and faculty.

An interesting aspect of Bartolomeo Passarotti's drawn oeuvre are his boldly drawn nude and anatomical studies, in which the influence of the pen drawings of the Florentine sculptors Michelangelo and Baccio Bandinelli, with their strong crosshatching to denote musculature, is evident. The present sheet is a particularly fine and fresh example of the artist's drawings of this type. Passarotti probably had direct access to drawings by Bandinelli: the two artist's pen drawings have often been confused. Passarotti became a virtuoso in pen. The 16th century Florentine playwright, poet and art critic Raffaello Borghini noted that Passarotti compiled a now-lost album of his anatomical drawings, which were intended both as exercises and as studies for paintings. As Borghini wrote, « *He has made a book of anatomies, of bones and flesh, in which he wants to show how one must learn the art of drawing in order to master it, and we can be sure that it will be a beautiful thing; because he draws very well.* »

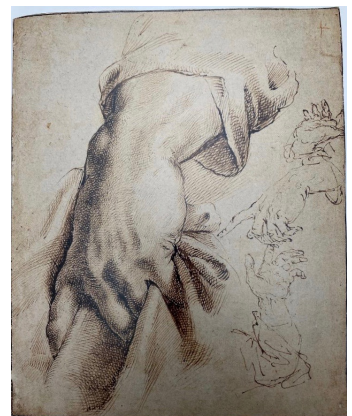
This sensitive study by Passarotti is somewhat softer and less systematic than some studies by the artist. It can, however, be compared with drawings by Passarotti. On this large sheet, the artist executed two studies of the same leg. A drawing kept in the Royal Collection in Warsaw shows a self-portrait of the artist in the role of Professor of Anatomy, pointing to a sequence of four figures holding the same pose, ranging from that of a skeleton to that of an « écorché » and then to that of nude figures. The same sense of rhythm is found in the penmanship which defines the arrangement of the present study.

Stylistically comparable drawings by the artist, with vigorous but delicate strokes of pen and ink hatching used to delineate the muscles of the body, include a drawing of the Louvre collection: *Study of a bent leg*, pen and brown ink, 26,2 x 14 cm, collections : Saint-Morys, INV 2790.



An analogous treatment of nude musculature is likewise found in a pen and ink drawing by Passarotti depicting a *Hand Study holding drapery with three secondary hand and arm studies*, pen and brown ink over faint traces of black chalk, 26 x 21 cm, with David Jones Gallery, 1995.

Our study, quite loose in its handling, is close to these meticulously cross-hatched studies by him, especially in the hatching that materializes the shadow cast by the hand of David Jones Gallery or as in our sheet of the leg.





Our *Study of legs* bears witness to his interest in the anatomy discipline and his affiliation with the great artists of the Renaissance. Like the latter, Passerotti studied the human body, its proportions and joints from different points of view.

The present sheet is stylistically close to the *Naked man pulling on his hose*, after Marcantonio Raimondi and Michelangelo Buonarroti, pen & brown ink on paper, the Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth; and to *Three studies of arms: a bent, a pendant and a stretched*, pen and brown ink, 26,3 x 19,3 cm, inscription in pen and brown ink upper left: « *del rosso pittore* », collections : Maratta, INV 2726, Louvre Museum, Paris.



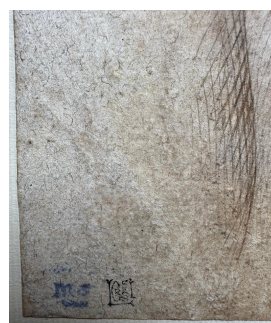
Last example: Bartolomeo Passarotti retouched later by Peter Paul Rubens, *Two studies of an outstretched right arm*, red chalk, before 1592, Rubens (red wash) before 1640, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



All sheets related to Passerotti's anatomy book are dated to the early 1580s. At that time, Passerotti had a privileged social position, he was an important workshop master, a teacher of art and anatomy. Scholarly artist, he thus fits completely into the scientific environment of his time and participates, with the elaboration of his collection, in the development of anatomical science which becomes fundamental in 1570.

Bartolomeo Passarotti was one of the most influential artists working in Bologna in the second half of the 16th century. He spent his early years in Rome where he is documented as staying with Taddeo Zuccaro in 1551. By 1560 he was back in Bologna, where he established a thriving workshop and joined the guild, the Compagnia delle Quattro Arti. Passarotti worked mainly as a portrait painter and soon established a reputation as the pre-eminent artist in this field in Bologna. He was awarded several important public commissions, including the altarpieces for the churches of San Petronio and San Giacomo Maggiore. By the 1570s he was recognized as the leading painter in Bologna, although he never seems to have worked in fresco. His painting style reflected a mixture of influences from his native Emilia (Correggio and Parmigianino), Bologna (Pellegrino Tibaldi) and northern artists such as Denys Calvaert, Bartholomeus Spranger and Marten de Vos. Passarotti supervised a large and active studio, and his students included not only his four children, but also Agostino Carracci, who studied with him in the 1570s.

This drawing bears lower left the mark of the French collector Maurice Marignane (L. 1872) and the collector mark of Luigi Grassi (Rome 1913-1994) (L. 4465).



Maurice Marignane (1879-1956) was drawings, prints and paintings dealer in partnership with his sister (L.1848), 70 Rue de Rennes, Paris. He owned since 1912 a private collection of old drawings from various schools, mainly from the Italian Renaissance. A significant number of drawings have passed into the collection of his son, Hubert Marignane, and some also bear their two collector marks together.

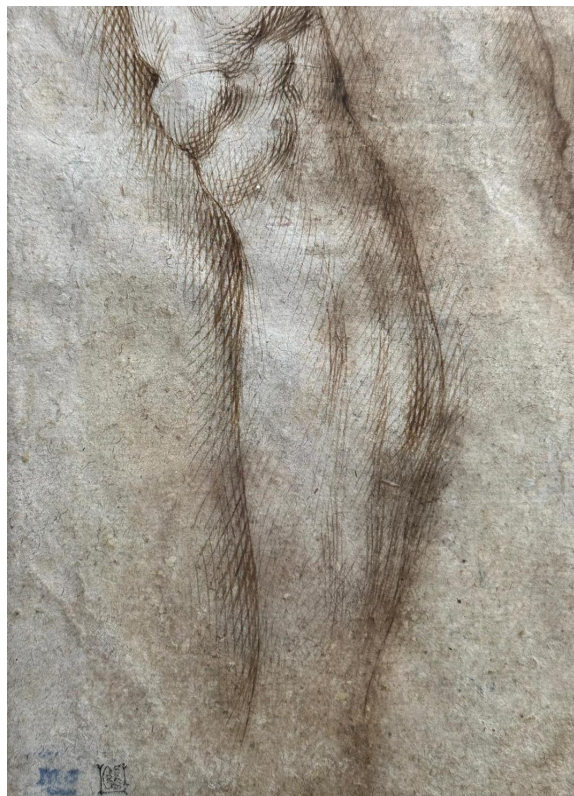
The stamp of Luigi Grassi is entirely composed of the initial of the first name and all the letters of the name Luigi Grassi. The first letter of the first name L and the last of the name, I, frame the other letters. This stamp is usually found at the bottom left, but sometimes also at the bottom right.

Luigi Grassi is the son of Giuseppe, antique dealer and restorer, and Edvige Bartoli. The collector is sometimes confused with his homonymous uncle, Luigi Grassi (1858-1937), restorer, art dealer and collector of drawings established in Florence (L.1171b). He studied art history and, in 1937, wrote a thesis on Velázquez in Italy under the supervision of Pietro Toesca. In 1949 he took charge of teaching the history of medieval and modern art at the University of Rome *La Sapienza* and, in 1959, became professor of art history, a position he held until 1988. From 1941, he published numerous articles and books on drawing, « *Gaudenzio Ferrari e i suoi disegni* » (L'Arte, XLIV, 1941, pp. 182-205), *Il disegno italiano dal Trecento al Seicento* (Rome 1956; review Rome 1993), launching a series of volumes devoted to Italian drawing *Il disegno italiano* (9 vols., 1959-1982), as well as a *Dizionario della critica d'arte* (2 vol., Turin 1978).

In 1969, he married Luciana Ferrara, director of the Galleria Borghese, then superintendent for Cultural Heritage in Bologna. In 1998, thanks to the generosity of Luciana Ferrara Grassi, the department of historical and artistic studies of the University of Rome was able to acquire a significant part of the library of Luigi Grassi - approximately 2,000 titles.

As a collector, Grassi had acquired the habit of inscribing notes or attributions on the passe-partout of his drawings.

It is difficult to get a precise idea of all drawings brought together by Grassi since there is no book on the collection or sales catalog. However, it seems that the collection was dispersed after his death in 1994. Since then, the stamp has been reported on several drawings coming up in the art market.



This drawing is a good example of his powerful drawings with their subtil cross-hatching and Mannerist interest in the anatomical details of musculature. He was greatly admired; his bold draughtsmanship was praised by such connoisseurs as the 17th century art historian Carlo Cesare Malvasia. The latter in Felsina Pittrice, Bologna 1678, said « his pen was the best ever seen ».

We are grateful to Dr. Corinna Höper, curator at the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and expert on Bartolomeo Passarotti's works, for confirming the authorship of Passarotti on basis of photographs (Communication of Dr. Corinna Höper dated 24 May 2023).