

ATTRIBUTED TO DISEGNATORE MISTERIOSO

The Entombment

Pen and brown ink

14,9 x 15,6 cm

Bears an inscription in pen and brown ink lower left « Bo...né »

Provenance:

Private collection, France



This sketchy sheet belongs to a very interesting group of pen and ink drawings, bearing common stylistic characteristics and drawn by one artist. Formerly attributed to Palma il Giovane, these drawings were attributed to the young El Greco by Nicholas Turner in his article of 2007¹. Conversely in the same year, Stefania Mason published an article proposing her complete different view of the same group of drawings, ascribing them to Alessandro Maganza (1556-1632).

¹ Master Drawings, Vol. 45, No. 3, Drawings in Spain and Portugal (Autumn, 2007), pp. 291-324 (34 pages)

A native Venetian, Stefania Mason formerly taught Art History at the University of Udine (Italy). Her own scholarly work focuses principally on Venetian painting and drawing, on the relationship between art, devotion, and patronage, and on collecting in Venice from the 1400s to the 1600s. She discussed the same « Mystery Master » making many stylistic observations similar to Turner's but concluding that the drawings should be attributed to Alessandro Maganza. She had encountered this distinctive draftsman, described by her as closer to Tintoretto than Palma, among the large corpus of drawings given o Palma il Giovane.

According to Maria Aresin, curator for prints and drawings at the Kunsthalle, Bremen, these drawings are by an artist from the Palma workshop, who is known for his expressive drawing style, but has not yet been identified.² Due to the recognizability and omnipresence of his works in graphic collections worldwide, he is currently listed under various not names (*Maître mystérieux, Disegnatore Misterioso*). Stylistically, the drawings seem to clearly refer to the period around and shortly after 1600 in Venice and can hardly be linked to the work of El Greco, who was already active in Spain around 1576. It remains to be assumed that drawing research that focuses purely on the names of the artists will not lead to an identification of this student of Palma il Giovane.

All the sheet share common technical and stylistic characteristics. Drawn quickly in pen and brown ink and heavy brown wash, with thick contour lines and blurred details, they present strong chiaroscuro effects and an emotional intensity.

On basis of photographs, Nicholas Turner orally suggested the attribution of our drawing to El Greco and thus attached this drawing to the group attributed to the *Disegnatore Misterioso*.

Among these drawings was an *Adoration of the Shepherds*, in the Louvre: pen and brown ink, brown wash heightened with white, 21,9 x 20,6 cm, Collections : Saint-Morys, INV 5156 (fig. 1); formerly attributed to Tintoretto and to Jacopo Palma il Giovane and currently attributed to Alessandro Maganza.

Clearly by the same hand, the *Adoration of the Shepherds* are closely linked in its figure arrangement to ours. The figures of the *Entombment* are very freely sketched and contain several « *pentimenti* ». Contour lines are created by thick pen strokes with quick gestures.

There are many stylistic comparisons to be made between the present *Study of Entombment* and the drawings of this *disegnatore misterioso* in the Collection of the Louvre Museum. Our drawing could be by the same hand than the two drawings attributed to Alessandro Maganza by Stefania Mason below:

- another *Adoration of the Shepherds*, pen and brown ink, brown wash heightened with white, 28,5 x 20,7 cm, Collections : Price - Richardson, Jonathan senior - Price, Uvedale - Saint-Morys; INV 5160, Louvre Museum (fig.2) ;
- the *Entombment*, pen and brown ink, brown wash heightened with white on beige paper, 16,6 x 20 cm, Collections : Saint-Morys, INV 5192, Louvre Museum (fig.3).

Our study has the same spontaneity of touch and energy in the line. Because of its similarity in handling to the Louvre studies, our compositional study for an *Entombment* is likely to be by the *disegnatore misterioso*. It reveals the frenetic quality of his creative process.

If we refer to the attributions of the Louvre drawings mentioned above, this sheet can be also attributed to Alessandro Maganza.

² Maria Aresin, *Die Münchener Palma-Alben*, catalogue of the exhibition *Venedig La Serenissima*, 2022

Maganza was the most prominent member of a large family workshop active in Vicenza for several generations over fifty years. Many of the works produced in the bottega were signed collectively by Alessandro and his four sons with the signature « *Alexander Maganza et filii fecerunt* »³, which can make it difficult to distinguish the different hands within the workshop. Alessandro was an extremely prolific draftsman and his drawings, many of them in private and public collections, express his artistic abilities better than his painted works. This outstanding example can be connected to a painting by the artist: *The Lamentation of Christ* by Alessandro Maganza depicting the same subject, oil on canvas, Chiesa di San Pietro Intrigogna, Vicenza (fig. 4). It was Maganza's predilection to choose his subjects from episodes in the Gospel.

The figures of the *Entombment* are very freely sketched and contain several « *pentimenti* ». Given connections, there is reason to consider the drawing as a study for the *Entombment* by Alessandro Maganza, oil on canvas, 135 x 99 cm, lot 155 (fig 5). This powerful sense of the line in the drawing is the direct equivalent of that in his painted work.

Alessandro Maganza (1556–1630) was an Italian painter of the Mannerist style, born and active in Vicenza, as well as in Venice. He was influenced by Veronese and Paolo Farinati.

He likely trained with his father, Giovanni Battista Maganza, also a painter; as well as by Giovanni Antonio Fasolo. Between 1572 and 1576, he spent a stay in Venice, studying the works of Veronese and Zelotti. This trip was crucial in shaping his drawing style as it transformed under the influence of Venetian Mannerist painters, especially Palma il Giovane.

The strong outlines emphasizing the dramatic tension emanating from this *Deposition* characterize the style of this Vicentine artist, influenced by the Mannerist art of Tintoretto and Palma il Giovane. The manner of accentuating the muscles of Christ's body with quick pen strokes is typical. The dynamic action, conveyed by the ample strokes repeatedly outlining the figures, is evident in several of the artist's works.

The artist spent most of his career in his native Vicenza, where his workshop came to dominate the artistic scene in the late 16th century, producing paintings for numerous churches and palaces in the city. Maganza's first documented work, *Virgin and Child with Four Evangelists* (1580) was painted for the monastery built around the basilica and sanctuary of Monte Berico in Vicenza. Maganza also frescoed the inner cupola of Palladio's famous Villa Rotonda located near Vicenza, with allegorical figures in colour, again recalling the Paolo Veronese; he also executed large ceiling canvases in tempera for the South and West rooms. His style is described as derivative of Palma il Giovane. He had three sons who became painters: Giovanni Battista the younger, Marcantonio, and Girolamo.

Maganza is better known today for his drawings than for his paintings.

In its rapid but assured handling of pen and the use of areas of dark brown wash to create effects of chiaroscuro, the present sheet is typical of the draughtsmanship of the artist. The drawings attributed to the *Disegnatore Misterioso*, possibly identified with Alessandro Maganza, seem especially remarkable in demonstrating the Master's use of drawing as a means of experimenting with a design before translating it into paint.

³ S. Mason, 'Per la grafica dei Maganza', *Arte e Documento*, XIII, 1999, p. 211

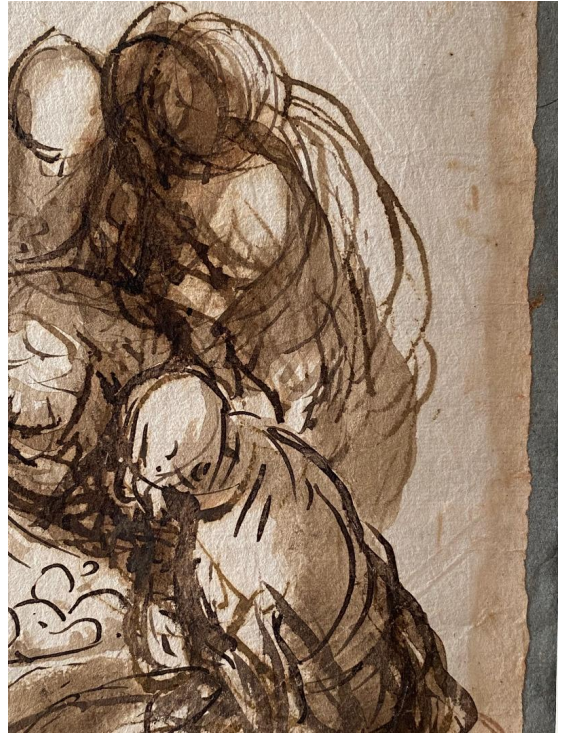


Fig.1





Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4

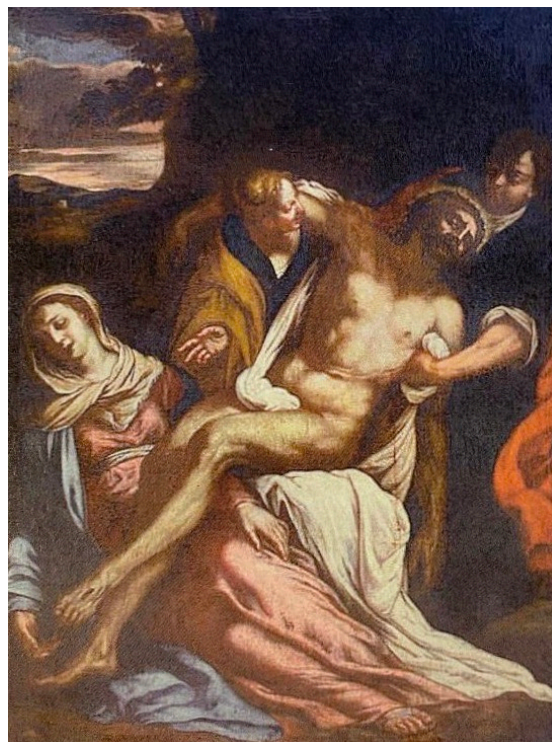


Fig. 5