



AGOSTINO BUONAMICO, CALLED AGOSTINO TASSI

(Borgo, 1578 - Rome, 1644)

A young boy playing, sketches for a royal crown (recto); Frontispiece for a member of the Barberini Family (verso)

inscribed, upper centre: 44; inscribed, lower right: 08

pen and brown ink with brown wash, over black chalk (recto); pen and brown ink with brown wash, over red chalk (verso)

210 x 148 mm

Provenance:

Leonardo Scaglia (fl. 1636–59), Perugia

Sibilla Bartolini (née Angeli)

Sotheby's, London: 8 July 1964, lot 40 (as part of the 'Tassi album')

John (1931–2022) and Eileen Harris (b. 1932), London, until 2024

Literature:

P. Cavazzini, 'Agostino Tassi reassessed: a newly discovered album of drawings', *Paragone*, July 2000, p. 22, no. 20.

This study originates from the so-called 'Tassi album', which was dispersed at Sotheby's in July 1964. The album, which consisted chiefly of decorative and landscape drawings, was initially attributed to an artist working in Tassi's orbit. In 2000, however, Patrizia Cavazzini reassessed the album and attributed the majority of the sheets to Tassi himself, identifying Leonardo Scaglia as the album's original owner.

Cavazzini suggested that the few sheets which are not by Tassi's own hand were either drawn in his workshop or by Scaglia himself, who was a stucco-worker and pupil of Tassi's. Like most sheets from the album, the present drawing is numbered on the recto in the upper centre, denoting its original placement within the album. A smaller number, in the lower corner of the recto, suggests that the drawing, and others with the same numbering, also belonged to an earlier album.

Cavazzini dates the present drawing to the mid-or late 1620s. The immediacy with which the young boy with a flag is depicted suggests that he was likely a workshop assistant and that he was drawn from life. On the wall behind the boy is a framed landscape painting, likely one of Tassi's own creations, providing further evidence not only for Tassi's authorship but for the notion that the drawing was made in Tassi's own studio. Cavazzini suggests that the large royal crown in the foreground could relate to the works executed for Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia on the occasion of the beatification of Saint Elizabeth from Portugal in 1625. The frontispiece design on the verso is one of five such drawings from the album, and although it bears the three bees of the Barberini coat-of-arms, the drawing cannot be connected to any finished work, as is the case for most of Tassi's studies for decorative projects.

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