

TRINITY FINE ART

Giovanni da Asola

(Brescia, c. 1480 – Venice 1531)

Christ the Redeemer

Oil on panel, 27.4 x 22.3 cm, 10¾ x 8¾ in



This small panel with the head of the *Redeemer* – known to scholarship since the 19th century, when it belonged to the Cook Collection in Richmond (London) – aroused the interest of the greatest art historians of the last century, who sought to resolve the riddle of the work’s obvious stylistic features, i.e. the clear influence of Dürer interpreted by a painter from the Veneto working, like Lorenzo Lotto, in Bergamo and Brescia, in other words on the western edges of what constituted the Republic of Venice at the time.

While Cook aired the name of Jacopo de’ Barbari¹ and Berenson spoke of a “Flemish master working in Venice at the turn of the 15th century”², the painting was labelled as being by Lotto in an exhibition

¹ Cook 1906, see literature

² Berenson 1901, see literature

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in London in 1915³. Doubts in that connection, however, were voiced both by Bianconi⁴ and by Berenson himself who, though he did not rule out the possibility that the picture might fall within a moment in the painter's career between 1505 and 1510 in the Italian edition of his monographic work on Lotto⁵, in the English and German editions and in his *Indices* published in 1958⁶ he was inclined to favour an attribution to Cima da Conegliano, a name previously put forward by Borenius⁷. While Heinemann⁸, for his part, thought that it might be by the hand of Benedetto Diana.

Enrico Dal Pozzolo, in his recent monographic work on Lorenzo Lotto⁹, argues that it is by Giovanni Da Asola, whose style was heavily influenced by Dürer, and he draws convincing parallels with Giovanni's altarpiece in the Basilica of St. Anthony in Padua¹⁰.

Probably born c. 1480 and often mentioned in documents as "Giovanni da Asola" or "da Bressa", by 1512 Giovanni may already have been in Venice, where he was a member of the Scuola Grande di San Marco. As Lucco also points out, it is possible that by the 1510s he was alternating his time in the city with journeys to the Venetian hinterland to bolster his ties with his patrons.

A number of official notaries' documents confirm that Giovanni Da Asola hobnobbed with master engravers, a fact borne out by his landscapes inspired by prints of paintings by Dürer and Titian.

A document dated 6 April 1526, signed by Giovanni's son Bernardino Da Asola, relates to a contract associating the two painters with the production of the organ doors for the church of San Michele in Isola (now in the Museo Correr in Venice). It has often - primarily in the last century - been difficult to distinguish the hands of the two painters from one another, and indeed it is still very much a problem for scholars today.

While Giovanni displays a greater proximity with the manner of Giorgione and with the earlier careers of Titian and Dürer, thanks also to his familiarity with prints, Bernardino reveals a closer bond with the later work of Palma il Vecchio and Titian, and with Bonifacio Veronese.

Starting with the two painters' presence on the Venetian scene in 1515, it is possible to attempt a reconstruction of their catalogue. An altarpiece with the *Virgin Enthroned with St. Anthony, St. Bernardino, St. Peter and St. Paul* painted for the altar dedicated to St. Bernardino in the Basilica of St. Anthony in Padua, which clearly reveals the influence of Dürer's print of *The Promise of Love*,

³ *Burlington Fine Arts*, 1915 see literature

⁴ Bianconi 1955, see literature

⁵ Berenson 1955, see literature

⁶ Berenson 1958, see literature

⁷ Borenius 1913, see literature

⁸ Heinemann 1962, see literature

⁹ Dal Pozzolo 2021, see literature

¹⁰ Berenson 1958, see literature, p. 90

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particularly in the landscape, appears to have been painted in 1515. Two other paintings chronologically close to the Padua altarpiece are a *Virgin Enthroned with St. Louis of France and St. Elisabeth of Hungary* now in the Musée des Beaux Arts in Nancy, which is also likely to have been painted in 1515, and a *Resurrection of Christ* from the church of San Francesco della Vigna in Venice, painted the year after. A panel with *Christ among the Doctors in the Temple* now in the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia and a *Last Supper* now in the Fondazione Querini Stampalia may, on the other hand, be dated to the 1520s.

Giovanni died on 13 November 1531 and was buried in the common vault of the brothers of the Scuola Grande di San Marco housed in the church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice.

Provenance:

Rome, Monte di Pietà (until 1860);
Sir John Charles Robinson (from 1860);
Cook Collection, Richmond, Doughty House (from 1880);
Agnew's, London, (from May 1950 until 26th April 1951);
Norman D. Newhall, Newbrough Lodge, Hexam (Northumberland);
Christie's, London, 14th December 1979, lot 96 (as Andrea Previtali);
Vittorio Fiorazzo, Milan (from 1979 [?] to 1993).

Exhibited:

British Institution, London, 1863, n. 51;
'National Exhibition of Works of Art', Leeds, 1868, n. 41;
'Venetian Art', New Gallery, London, 1864, n. 135;
'Winter Exhibition', Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, 1902, n. 9;
'Coronation Exhibition of Thirty-Five Masterpieces of Venetian Painting', London, 1953, Agnew's, n. 24

Literature:

J. C. Robinson, *Memoranda of Fifty Pictures selected from coll. of Works of the ancient Masters*, London, 1868, p. 17, n. 15;
B. Berenson, *The study and criticism of Italian Art*, vol. I, London 1901, pp. 108;
H. Cook, *L'esposizione del Burlington 'Fine Arts Club'*, in "L'Arte", IX, 1906;
T. Borenius, *A catalogue of the Painting at Doughty House, Richmond*, I, Italian Schools, London, 1913, n. 148;
M. W. Brockewell, *Abridged Catalogue of the Pictures at Doughty House Richmond Surrey in the Collection of Sir Herbert Cook*, London 1932, p. 26, n. 148;
A. Banti, A. Boschetto, *Lorenzo Lotto*, Florence, s. d. (1953), p. 110;
B. Berenson, *Lorenzo Lotto*, Milan 1955, p. 29, plate 39;
B. Berenson, *Lorenzo Lotto*, London 1956, pp. 12-13, fig. 39;
F. Heinemann, *Giovanni Bellini e i Belliniani*, Venice 1962, vol. I, n. 188b, p. 56;
B. Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance. Venetian School*, London 1957, p. 67;
B. Berenson, *Pitture italiane del Rinascimento. La Scuola Veneta*, London-Florence 1958, I, p. 69, n. 148;
E.M. Dal Pozzolo, *Lorenzo Lotto. Catalogo generale dei dipinti*, Milan 2021, cat. n. V.93, p. 497.