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Pricked Lines, Repetition and the Art Market

The *Stoning of Saint Stephen* by Luca Cambiaso's Workshop

The iconography of *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* spread out in Genoa since 1521, when Giulio Romano (around 1499–1546) painted an important version for the church of Santo Stefano. The panel painting, still *in situ* today, became a model for generations of local artists until the end of the 17th-century.

Luca Cambiaso (1527–1585), one of the greatest Genoese masters, drew many sketches on this subject, although no painting is known. Three of them will be considered here: the one belonging to the Graphische Sammlung in Munich (fig. 1), the one held at the Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden (fig. 2, 3)¹ and the one of the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam (fig. 4). There are multiple reasons to explain why Cambiaso's body of work often includes many versions of the same subject. The main one is that his apprentices trained as draftsmen by copying their master's inventions accurately. These ones were then considered to be produced by Cambiaso himself. In addition, many copies of Cambiaso's originals were still produced throughout the 17th century to satisfy the requests of the art market. As a matter of fact, for centuries almost every work that closely resembled Cambiaso's style has systematically been considered as an original by this same artist. The number of drawings attributed to Cambiaso has increased to such a degree that it would be futile to further attempt to continue the complete study on his graphic works ever since the valuable, pioneering research by William and Bertina Suida back in 1958. However, researchers have widely developed a method that could point out Cambiaso's genuine graphic works and those from his workshop and his followers in the past two decades. This method is based on the analysis of style, on the use of techniques and on the structure of the compositions. All have led to a better understanding of Cambiaso's draftsmanship. Thanks to this approach, his graphic body of work has been drastically reduced. It has given insight into significant aspects both of Cambiaso's artistic-educational training and of the artists belonging to the generation

1 A special thanks to Gudula Metze and to Angela Rietschel for providing the image and all the details concerning the drawing, with their usual warm kindness.



Fig. 1 Workshop of Luca Cambiaso, *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* (between 1585–1600), graphite, pen and ink, brown watercolor, on paper, pricked contours for transfer, 230 × 322 mm, Munich, Graphische Sammlung, inv. no. 2775 Z r



Fig. 4 Workshop of Luca Cambiaso, *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* (between 1585–1600), pen and brown ink, brown watercolor, on paper, 203 × 297 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, inv. no. RP-T-1957-336



Fig. 2 Workshop of Luca Cambiaso, *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* (between 1585–1600), pen and brown ink, on paper, 223 × 324 mm, Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett, inv. no. C 424 r



Fig. 3 Workshop of Luca Cambiaso, *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* (between 1585–1600), pen and brown ink, on paper, 223 × 324 mm, Dresden, Kupferstich-Kabinett, inv. no. C 424 v

after him (like Giovanni Battista Paggi, Giulio Benso and Andrea Ansaldo). The relevant number of sheets close to Cambiaso's style that can be now dated to the 17th-century show the high and strong interest of the art market toward this artist even after his death.

The Munich drawing representing *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* is classified as an original by Cambiaso in the Munich collection. The systematic use of cubic forms for the figures clarifies that the sketch belongs to the Genoese artist's later period, similar to the famous stereometric drawing of the Uffizi, *The Study of Figures*.² Looking carefully, many details convey to reconsider this traditional attribution and to regard it instead as workshop version. The composition is drawn with two different kinds of lines: the heads are sharply shaped in cubic volumes and the bodies are smoothly rounded. These two Cambiaso-styles refer to precisely different periods of his activity: the coherent hatchings of the beginning of his career, when he sketched with a sinuous line to start, and the cubic shapes developed from the 1560s onwards.

Another element that sets this drawing apart from the originals is the barren quotation of some of Cambiaso's typical silhouettes, like the one sitting on the far left in the foreground or the one bending close to the previous one, seen from behind.³ These positions are barely taken from other graphic or painted works by the artist. They show a good knowledge of Cambiaso's art, but they look more like repetitions than genuine figures. The third element suggesting that the Munich drawing is more an exercise carried out by the workshop rather than an original sheet by the artist is the unfamiliar use of the diluted ink. If the combination of Cambiaso's favorite technique, pen and ink with wash to stress the shadow effects,⁴ became frequent since the 1570s, the application of the liquid ink lines on the Munich sheet resemble rather brown smudges than the delicate and proportioned position of the shadows.

The two other versions of *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* held at the Kupferstich-Kabinett in Dresden and at the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam are completely identical. Another similar composition held at the Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe at the Uffizi has the same subject but the characters are displayed differently.⁵

- 2 Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe, inv. no. 13736 F. See Lauro Magnani, entry in: *Luca Cambiaso, un maestro del Cinquecento europeo*, Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, 2007, p. 404, n°47. Jonathan Bober attributed the drawing to Cambiaso's workshop. See Bober, in: *Luca Cambiaso, un maestro del Cinquecento europeo*, Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, 2007, p. 78, fig. 16.
- 3 See for comparison the *Study for a man, seen from behind, one knee to the ground*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, inv. no. 9381 published in: Federica Mancini, *Italian drawings in the Musée du Louvre, Genoese drawings 16th – 18th Centuries*, Paris 2017, p. 153, n°234.
- 4 The contrast of light and shadow on the drawings respect Cambiaso's conception of the *Notturmi* paintings developed in the 1570s. The abundance of watercolor is visible in the *Conversion of Saint Paul* by Cambiaso's workshop held in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Dyce 337.
- 5 Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe, inv. no. 13788 F, pen and brown ink with brown wash over traces of black chalk, 211 x 302 mm. See Jonathan Bober, entry in: *Luca Cambiaso, 1527–1585*, Austin, Blanton Museum of Art, 2006, p. 362, n°75.



Fig. 5 Workshop of Luca Cambiaso, *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* (between 1585–1600), graphite, pen and ink, brown watercolor, on paper, pricked contours for transfer, 230 × 322 mm, Munich, Graphische Sammlung, inv. no. 2775 Z v

Compared to the other versions, the Munich drawing is markedly interesting for a technical detail: the pricking of the lines (fig. 5). This is a transferring technique used to repeat a composition onto another support, but it is unusual in Cambiaso's graphic production. Thus far, there are just two other examples known, both of which are held at the Département des Arts graphiques at the Louvre Museum. The first represents *Two Nude Children Playing, heading rightward*, a drawing that can now be attributed to Cambiaso's favorite assistant, Lazzaro Tavarone (1556–1641), after having been considered to be an original by the master since it entered the collection.⁶ The second sheet, *Venus mourning Adonis*, belongs to Cambiaso's workshop.⁷

6 Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, inv. no. 9373, pen and brown ink, pricked for transfer, watermark, 263 × 413 mm. Mancini 2017 (as fn. 3), pp. 103–104, n° 105. The writer has found the corresponding painted decoration in the Villa Borsotto in Genoa by Lazzaro Tavarone. The article is about to be published in the *Revue des Musées de France* 3, 2022.

7 Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques, inv. no. 9326, pen and brown ink, pricked for transfer along the outlines and pounced with chalk, laid down on an 18th-century mount, 340 × 243 mm. See Mancini 2017 (as fn. 3), p. 99, n°95.

A presence of powder would suggest that the transfer was eventually done, but neither the Munich sheet nor the Dresden version, both of which I was able to study in the original, show any traces of any pencil powder on the paper. However, the powder may have occurred on some other versions, which are lost today. Furthermore, a final assumption on the use of this transferring technique can be added. At the end of the discussion during the conference on November 10th, 2018,⁸ one participant suggested that the pricking might have been done some time later after the composition was made. Interestingly enough, the three pricked sheets known by Cambiaso's workshop, the one in Munich and the two at the Louvre, can be all dated stylistically to the end of the 16th-century. We can assume that the use of pricking, either contemporary or posterior to the Munich drawing, shows the clear intention of repeating in a rapid and precise way a successful iconography, maybe for the art market. The interest in collecting Cambiaso's drawings and prints began when he was still alive. His apprentices went on practicing his vivid and synthetic style even after his death and, to respond to the growing requests of the collectors, the introduction of the pricking technique might be the proof of the necessity to draw good graphic works in a convenient way and in a short amount of time.

8 About the concept see Iris Brahms' introduction of this volume.