

AGNOLO BRONZINO

Florentine school, 1503-1572

This artist, whose true name was Agnolo di Cosimo di Mariano, customarily signed documents "Il Bronzino", and on one occasion specifically referred to himself as "Agnolo di Cosimo, called Bronzino". He was born at Monticelli, near Florence. According to Vasari, he was a pupil of Raffaellino del Garbo and subsequently of Pontormo. He did his first independent work around 1528, and in 1530-32 worked as an assistant on the decoration of the Villa Imperiale at Fesaro. Subsequently he worked with Pontormo ~~at~~ for some years -- assisting him in decorating the Medici villas at Careggi and Castello between 1535 and 1543 -- and was directly affected in his own work by this association. At the same time, from 1532 on, he became increasingly involved with portraiture. He became in effect, around 1540, official painter to the Florentine ducal court. He visited Rome in 1546-47, but ^{otherwise} spent almost the whole of his life in Florence. Besides making tapestry designs and writing verses, he did paintings of many different kinds, but his fame rests primarily on his portraits.

Portrait of a Lady

oil on canvas, 48 x 37 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins.

Provenance

Acquired by Dr Clowes in 19 .

Acquired as a Bronzino. The identity of the sitter is unknown. P. Pouncey made the attractive suggestion (1966) ⁽¹⁾ that this portrait may rather be the work of Jacopo Zucchi (ca. 1541 -- 1589/90). According to Baglione, Zucchi did portraits for Ferdinand de' Medici in Rome ⁽³⁾ -- i.e. between 1572 and his

(cont.)

death. None of these portraits has been identified, and the attribution must therefore remain tentative. At the same time, comparison can be made⁽⁴⁾ with the ladies of the court portrayed in Zucchi's Fishing for Coral (Borghese Gallery, Rome⁽⁵⁾; another version in Borletti colln., Milan), ~~and~~ with the portrait of Ferdinand in the foreground of his Mass of Gregory X (S.Trinita dei Pellegrini, Rome) and with the facial type of the Madonna in the Madonna and Child in San Clemente, Rome (upper church)⁽⁶⁾. The patterning of the drapery also closely resembles that found in Zucchi's Amor and Psyche, dated 1589 (Borghese Gallery)⁽⁷⁾. The portrait certainly appears Roman rather than Florentine in character.

Notes.

1. Eleanor of Toledo was suggested at the time of acquisition (note in Clowes archives), by analogy with Bronzino's Uffizi portrait of her (A. McComb, Agnolo Bronzino, His Life and Works, Cambridge, Mass., 1928, pl.39) ; but this is quite unconvincing.
2. Orally, to the compiler, ~~Summer~~ 1966.
3. G. Baglione, Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori, Architetti.... (1642), Naples, 1733 ed., p.42.
4. The first of the comparisons that follow was made by Pouncey, the remainder by E. Pillsbury, who is strongly inclined to accept Pouncey's attribution for the Clowes painting (letters to the compiler, Jan.-Feb.1967).
5. H. Voss, Die Malerei der Spätrenaissance in Rom und Florenz, 2 vols., Berlin, 1920, II, pl.112.
6. Oil on canvas, ca. 6 X 3½ ft. Attributed to Zucchi by Pouncey (1966)
7. Voss, op. cit., pl. 114