

CLAUDIO FRANCESCO BEAUMONT
(Turin 1694 - 1766)

The most celebrated of the native painters employed to decorate the palaces of Vittorio Amedeo II and Carlo Emanuele III of Savoy, Beaumont even gave his name to the Gallery (now the Armeria) of the Palazzo Reale, whose vault he painted with the story of Aeneas. His family was not French but came from Moncalieri, and it was probably the painter himself who frenchified the name from Bomone. He received an obscure initial training locally, before going to Rome between 1714 and 1718. There, despising the "fare fiacco e troppo tenero" of the Roman painters, he attached himself to Trevisani, and wanted to go to Venice. Forced to return home via Bologna instead because of a lack of funds, he began his life's work of decorating the Palazzo Reale with ceilings in the Appartamento del Terrazzo (1721 ff.) before returning to Rome with Juvarra in 1723. He continued to send paintings back to Turin, and on the accession of Carlo Emanuele III he was appointed primo pittore di gabinetto in 1731 and returned home. For the rest of his life he was involved in the enormous task of decorating the Palazzo Reale - the Gabinetto di Toeletta (1731-33), the Gabinetto Cinese (1735/6), the Galleria Beaumont (1738-43) and the Galleria delle Bataglie (f. 1748), whilst supplying numerous altarpieces to churches in Turin and the rest of Piedmont. He was involved in the founding of a tapestry-works, supplying the designs for the first set of the History of Alexander in 1731, and for subsequent sets of the History of Caesar and Cleopatra (1741), the History of Cyrus (1750), and the History of Hannibal (1751). His first biographer attributed to this activity a loosening of his style. In 1737 he went to Venice to buy pictures for the King. In his later years he seems to have turned more to painting altarpieces, as little remained to be painted in the Palazzo Reale but the two remaining vaults of the Camere degli Archivi, which were frescoed by Guglielmi (1765) and Mariano Rossi (1771).

Genius urging on the Virtuous Prince

Oil on canvas laid down on panel
64 x 57 cm.

Fame proclaiming the glory of Princes

Oil on canvas laid down on panel
64 x 57 cm.

These two paintings, which have long been convincingly attributed to Beaumont are evidently modelli. They could have been sketches for overdoors (cf. the paired allegorical figures by Natóire, cat. no. 10), but the treatment of the landscape

backgrounds suggests segments of a continuum, so that they could equally well have been studies for groups in a vault-fresco.

The combination of Italianate drapery and anatomy with a free French treatment of landscape in these paintings would suggest that they date from the mid-1730s when Beaumont came under the influence of Carle Van Loo, during the latter's return passage through Turin (1732-34). In this they compare most closely with Beaumont's frescoes in the Gabinetto Cinese of 1735/6 (cf. exh. cat. Mostra del Barocco Piemontese, Turin, 1963, p. 83, pl. 92 and colour pl. VII). It is possible however, to see some influence from Francesco De Mura in the figures, and if this is so, these two paintings would not have antedated the latter's stay in Turin to decorate the Palazzo Reale between 1741 and 1743.

The combined themes of the two allegories would suggest that they were intended as decorations of a royal palace. The Glory of Princes is an allegory found in Ripa's Iconologia, which stipulates a woman with a golden crown and a pyramid, and it is likewise the Iconologia that describes Ingegno as a naked young man with a bow and arrow wearing an eagle-topped helmet, and that describes the attributes of Virtù as a spear, a laurel wreath, and a sun on the breast - here applied to a young ruler (symbolised by the globe he sits on) rather than to an allegory of Virtù itself (he lacks the wings).

Exh.: Heim Gallery, Summer 1981, nos. 5 and 6