



DOMENICO GARGIULO, called MICCO SPADARO

(Naples 1609/10 - 1675)

Gargiulo, whose sobriquet Spadaro derived from his father's trade as a swordsmith, began his artistic career around 1628 when he entered the workshop of Aniello Falcone. It was here that in collaboration with Salvator Rosa he began to paint landscapes from nature, and as a result of the influence of Filippo Napoletano, who had arrived in Naples in 1627-8, he adopted the technique of executing coastal and landscape views in the open air. Affinities between the figures in Gargiulo's paintings and those by the Roman Bamboccianti suggest that he may have visited Rome in the mid-1630s and from 1635 until 1647 he was frequently employed painting the figures in the architectural views of the Bergamasque painter, Viviano Codazzi. In 1638 he was commissioned by the Certosa di S. Martino to fresco the choir of the Frati Conversi and the biblical scenes which he executed here, together with similar scenes which he painted in the 1640s, reflect the influence of the German painter, J. H. Schönfeld, who had just arrived in Naples. From the years 1642 until 1647 he was engaged on a further commission for the Carthusians of S. Martino frescoing the prior's apartment and his work there displays an awareness of the northern landscape painters. By the late 1640s the influence of Cavallino also becomes apparent in Gargiulo's style in such works as the Madonna and Child with SS. John and Paul (S. Maria Donnaromita, Naples), one of his rare large-scale figure compositions. During the second half of the 1650s he was active as a pictorial chronicler of Neapolitan history, but after the plague of 1656 he left the Certosa di S. Martino. He was still working in 1670 when there is a documented payment to him for a painting of St. Gennaro. According to De Dominici, during the latter part of his life, Gargiulo continued to execute small paintings for private clients which were much sought-after.

Abraham and the Three Angels

Oil on canvas

65 x 50 cm.

This small easel painting, likely to have been destined for a private client, is characteristic of Gargiulo's handling of landscape. The twisted and broken tree-trunks, lush vegetation and the feathery foliage are distinctive features of Gargiulo's style, and are clearly drawn from early seventeenth-century northern landscapes. The gnarled trees are reminiscent of those which occur in landscapes by Salvator Rosa, but in contrast Gargiulo uses a much lighter palette of pastel shades. The slightly elongated figures in this composition not only display a knowledge of the prints of Callot and Stefano della Bella, but particularly in their grouping, reflect the influence of Cavallino. Dr. Nicola Spinosa dates this painting to the years 1650-5.

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