

Alfred Boder

Alfred Boder Fine Arts - Painting Files

Dosso

[ca. 1925]

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES	
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FILE	5

Dr. Alfred Bader
Chairman



May 14, 1985

Mr. Malstrom
20 Boulevard Waterloo
Brussels, Belgium

Dear Mr. Malstrom:

I am a serious collector of old master paintings, and as you will see from the enclosed, I am interested both in Dutch and Italian, 16th and 17th century paintings.

My wife and I plan to be in Brussels during the last week of May, and I would appreciate it very much if you would allow me to look at your beautiful Portrait of a Man attributed to Dosso Dossi. It is really a most intriguing portrait and would give us such pleasure to be able to see it.

I will take the liberty of telephoning you when we arrive in Brussels.

Many thanks for all your help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alfred Bader". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alfred Bader
AB:mmh
Enclosure

SIGMA-ALDRICH

Preface

Since 1954 when two of my paintings were first shown in Milwaukee, many have been in exhibitions in the United States, for I love to share the excitement I feel when seeing good paintings. This is the first time, however, that any have been shown in Canada, and it is a particular pleasure for my wife and me to exhibit them here at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre. My heart has been at Queen's since 1941, and the fact that Isabel is Canadian with many family connections to this great university is an added incentive. No exhibition has presented such challenge and such pleasure-in-anticipation as this one, for several reasons. Firstly, we were delighted when Robert Swain suggested this presentation of a selection of my Dutch paintings, for Dutch paintings were my first love. Robert Swain's enthusiasm is infectious, and he and Dorothy Farr and their associates have done a splendid job. Secondly, we hope that many of these works will in time return to join the Old Masters which I have helped to select for Queen's. Thirdly, David McTavish has written a truly scholarly catalogue, and working with him on its preparation has given me great pleasure.

The main question of my life in art has been: what is true quality? Innumerable art historians, many of whom have become my good friends, have helped me find the answer. Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, Ellen and Walther Bernt, Anthony Clark, Ulrich Middeldorf, Benedict Nicolson, Konrad Oberhuber, William Robinson, Werner Sumowski, Astrid and Christian Tümpel and of course that human masterpiece, Wolfgang Stechow. No collector is an island unto himself; it is easy to distinguish a good from a bad painting, but much more difficult to distinguish a truly great from a fine painting. These friends and so many others have helped me to make this distinction and have

spent thousands of hours with me widening my knowledge of paintings and enriching my life.

I am convinced that the collection of Old Masters already permanently at Queen's is as good as it is because I found in David McTavish a friend whose eye, scholarship and judgment I value, and with whom I have discussed numerous possible acquisitions. In the field of art so many collectors and particularly museums are often influenced in their purchases by the name of the artist rather than the beauty of the work involved. So an ugly Renoir is worth many thousands of dollars; a beautiful unsigned and unattributed painting of the same period may be impossible to sell, at least to a museum. The signature of Renoir, one hopes, guarantees authenticity, and that may be more important to an acquisition committee and to many a collector than beauty which is so difficult to measure. That is where collectors like myself have a chance. I have always tried to buy on quality only, preferring unattributed paintings in the hope that in time art historians would discover the artist. I will die with many such puzzles in my estate — things of beauty that challenge and tantalize. And with many more paintings to which the right names have come during my ownership.

As you will see, puzzles abound in this exhibition. Who was the master who painted those two sad boys with a skull (Cat 24)? Or the man rising from a chair (Cat 28), one of the finest portraits I have ever seen. The previous owners, the Trafalgar Gallery, believed it to be by Philippe de Champaigne, and yet we have included it in this exhibition in the hope that it will be recognized as by a Dutch artist. And who painted those enchanting portraits of the two young women (Cats 27 and 23), the one mysterious yet almost mischievous from a distinguished Canadian collec-

penisive subjects, such as flower pieces and winter landscapes. What commercially attractive works I have, the simple Peter Claesz. Still life (Cat 12) or the *Comp de Salet* by Jacob Ruissael, (Cat 34) for instance, have come my way most inexpensively, often by accident. In the last fifteen years I have discovered the beauty of Italian paintings, and many of these have found their way into the Queen's Collection.

It is such joy to get to know an artistic personality – what fun Thoré-Bürger must have had discovering Vermeer! Jan van Noordt was almost unknown before Professor Sumowski's recent essay, yet his *Falckner* in the Wallace Collection, the *Jacob Selling Grain* in the Queen's Collection are masterpieces by any standards, foreshadowing art of the eighteenth and even the nineteenth century. And consider the Master 15 – waiting to be identified – who painted that hauntingly mysterious panel (Cat 14) – a puzzle within a puzzle – for what does it depict? I would love it to be a Biblical subject, and to know more about this Scandinavian or Eastern European Rembrandt student. We know only about a dozen of his works, all monogrammed and dated around 1650, all subtly finished challenges to the imagination. Surely it would be exciting to discover more about a man who could produce such intriguing works.

It has long been my hope that in art history and art conservation, Queen's may one day become the Oberlin of Canada, and that its students will share my excitement and discover answers to many of these fascinating puzzles.

Alfred Baker
Milwaukee, August 1984

from, the other which I had long thought to be a study of his wife by Jan de Bray, an attribution not accepted by Professor Sumowski. What difference does it make, other than to its commercial value – and it is not for sale. And who painted that masterpiece, *Susannah and the Elders* (Cat 1), surely Dutch yet strongly influenced by the Flemish, or my favorite in the collection, *Joseph and the Baker* (Cat 17)? The artist realized, as no other artist had done, that the presence of the butler would distract from the intensity of the drama. Rembrandt and his students depicted communication between people with such power – one shudders at the words Joseph is about to speak.

My main interest has been paintings of the School of Rembrandt, preferably of Biblical subjects. For many years hundreds of fine works had been attributed to Rembrandt (see Cat # 17) which are now recognized as being by his students. The corollary is often overlooked: many of Rembrandt's students were great artists – just look at Cats 19, 21 and 36. The pendulum has now swung the other way, and I believe that the Rembrandt Research Project team has wrongly denied Rembrandt's authorship of a number of his works. So Cats 7 and 8 are thus in the good company of the *Flight to Egypt* in Tours, the *Tribute Money* in Ottawa, the *Self-Portrait* in the Rijksmuseum and the *Polish Rider* in the Erick Drost collection. If Willem Drost who painted Cat 18 also painted the *Polish Rider*, then we had better look for more works by Drost for Queen's, for his best works equalled the best works by Rembrandt. The Rembrandt Research Project make me feel like Alice in Wonderland.

In the fifties and sixties I collected Dutch and Flemish paintings almost exclusively, and I avoided the most popular and ex-



105. Dosso, *Learned Man of Antiquity*.
Milwaukee, Bader Collection (Cat. No. 42)



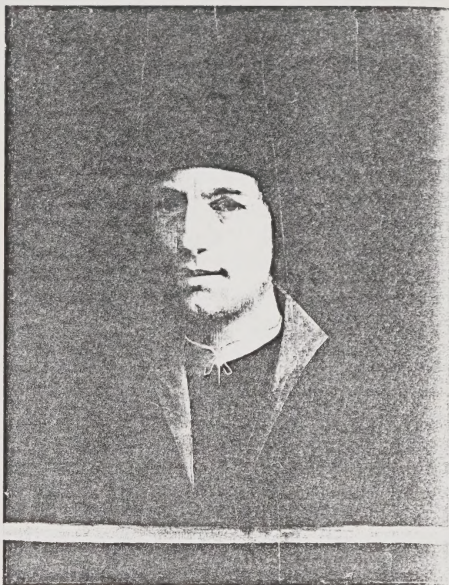
106. Dosso, *Learned Man of Antiquity*.
New York, Walter P. Chrysler Collection
(Cat. No. 49)



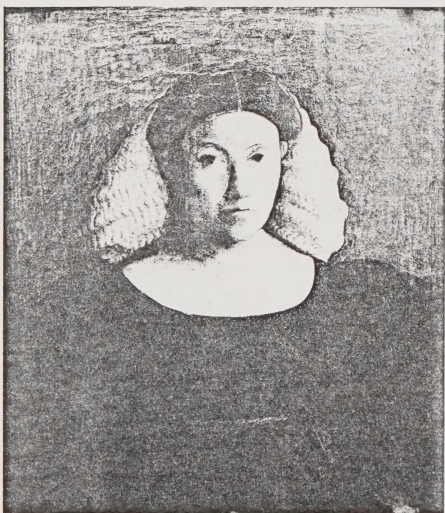
107. Dosso, *Learned Man of Antiquity*. Tel Aviv,
private collection (Cat. No. 73)



63. Dosso, *Portrait of a Man*. Stockholm, Bergsten Collection (Cat. No. 72)



64. Dosso, *Portrait of a Man*. Milford, Connecticut, Waterman-Bic Pen Corporation (Cat. No. 41)



65. Dosso, *Portrait of a Woman*. Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts (Cat. No. 4)



66. (After) Dosso, *Ceres*. The Hague, Dienst voor's-Rijks Verspreide Kunstvoorwerpen (Cat. No. 27)



van hand. Finely folded and rather decorative apery of this sort was used by Dosso in the mid-1520's in such a work as the Capitoline *Holy Family*, while the attenuated and fluid pose of the oto-Ribera saint in the Vitetti painting is similar to the treatment of the figures in the Della Sala tar in the Galleria Nazionale, Rome, a work of 27. On this basis the *St. Jerome* is datable in the middle to later 1520's and acceptable as a painting from Dosso's own hand.

70
 Rome, private collection
 LANDSCAPE
 Panel, 36 x 32 cm.
 5. 38

This painting is in poor condition, badly faded with its colors turned largely to brown. It is apparently a fragment of a larger composition which no longer exists, of which it once probably constituted the upper right-hand corner. The work has no known history and was only published in 1965 by Mezzetti and by Gibbons and Pippi.¹⁶⁷ As the latter noted, its loose, rough and slick style of execution brings it into relation with the New York *Three Ages of Man*, as well as the Besançon *Fable*, a parallel noted by Mezzetti, and with the landscape of the Vienna *Jerome*. In spite of the unfortunate condition of the fragment, its quality can still be discerned. Like them it is by Dosso and dates from the early 1520's.

71
 Formerly Rome, art market
 ORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS
 Canvas, 47 x 63.5 cm.
 18

The painting was published by Bologna in 1955 by Dosso about 1520.¹⁶⁸ It is strikingly similar in style to the two small predella panels in the cry at Ferrara, which once were part of an ensemble done by Garofalo in 1519. Related traits in all three works are the tree types, the silhouetting of the figures and their grouping in rather regular horizontal rhythms. The small paintings at Ferrara provide the date of this work, in which

Mezzetti, 1965, pp. 17, 116; Gibbons-Puppi, 1965, 915-16.
 Ferdinando Bologna, "Altobello Melone," *Burlington Magazine*, xcii, 1955, 245; Mezzetti, 1965, pp. 14.
 Mendelsohn, 1914, p. 130; Oswald Sirén, *Italienska*

Bologna has perceived influences of Aspertini and Melone. His attribution appears just to me, as far as one can judge from the reproduction.

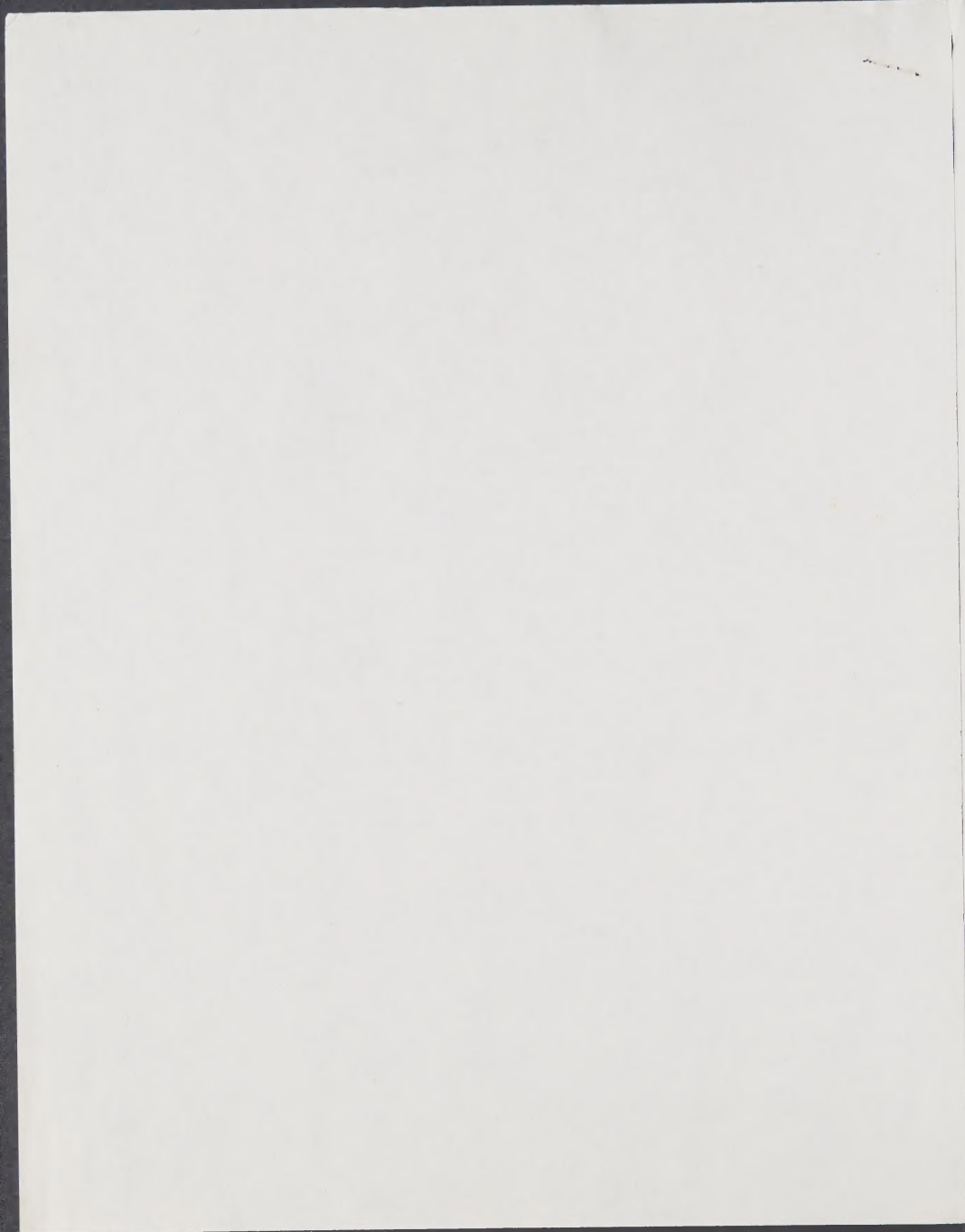
72
 Stockholm, Bergsten Collection
 PORTRAIT OF A MAN
 Panel, 75 x 58 cm.
 Fig. 63

This striking portrait was bought at Julius Böhler in Munich in 1917 and came from the Fairfax Murray Collection in Florence. It was exhibited at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm in March and April, 1918, but is otherwise little known.¹⁶⁹

Although the attribution has been questioned by Mendelsohn and Mezzetti, the almost brutal economy of design here, the strong brooding moodiness of the man, with his dark shadows and simple costume, the evident brilliance of the brief landscape beyond make the attribution of this portrait to Dosso himself convincing. Even within the limitations of portraiture his morphology asserts itself in the crimping of the mouth at the corners, the fat hands, and the slightly irregular alignment of nose and mouth. Other portraits by Dosso available for comparison are those in the Louvre and at Cambridge and the man formerly at Ashby St. Ledgers. The first two are more complex spatially, involving a degree of *contrapposto* not present in the Ashby and Bergsten portraits but closer to the *Man with Five Rings* at Hampton Court. Their greater simplicity points to an earlier date, though certainly the aggressive modeling and penetrating psychology of this portrait shows the hand of a fully mature artist. Speculatively, then, the Bergsten portrait may be dated in the middle 1520's or soon thereafter.

73
 Tel Aviv, private collection
 LEARNED MAN OF ANTIQUITY
 Canvas, 154 x 121 cm.
 Fig. 107

The prophet wears a bright red tunic and the *Taylor och Techingar I*, Stockholm, 1933, 170; Mezzetti, 1965, pp. 117-18; Sten Karling, "Girolamo Manetti barettsmycke," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, xxiv, 1965, 42-50, identifying the sitter. I am grateful to Mr. Pontus Gröte for supplying me with a photograph of this work.



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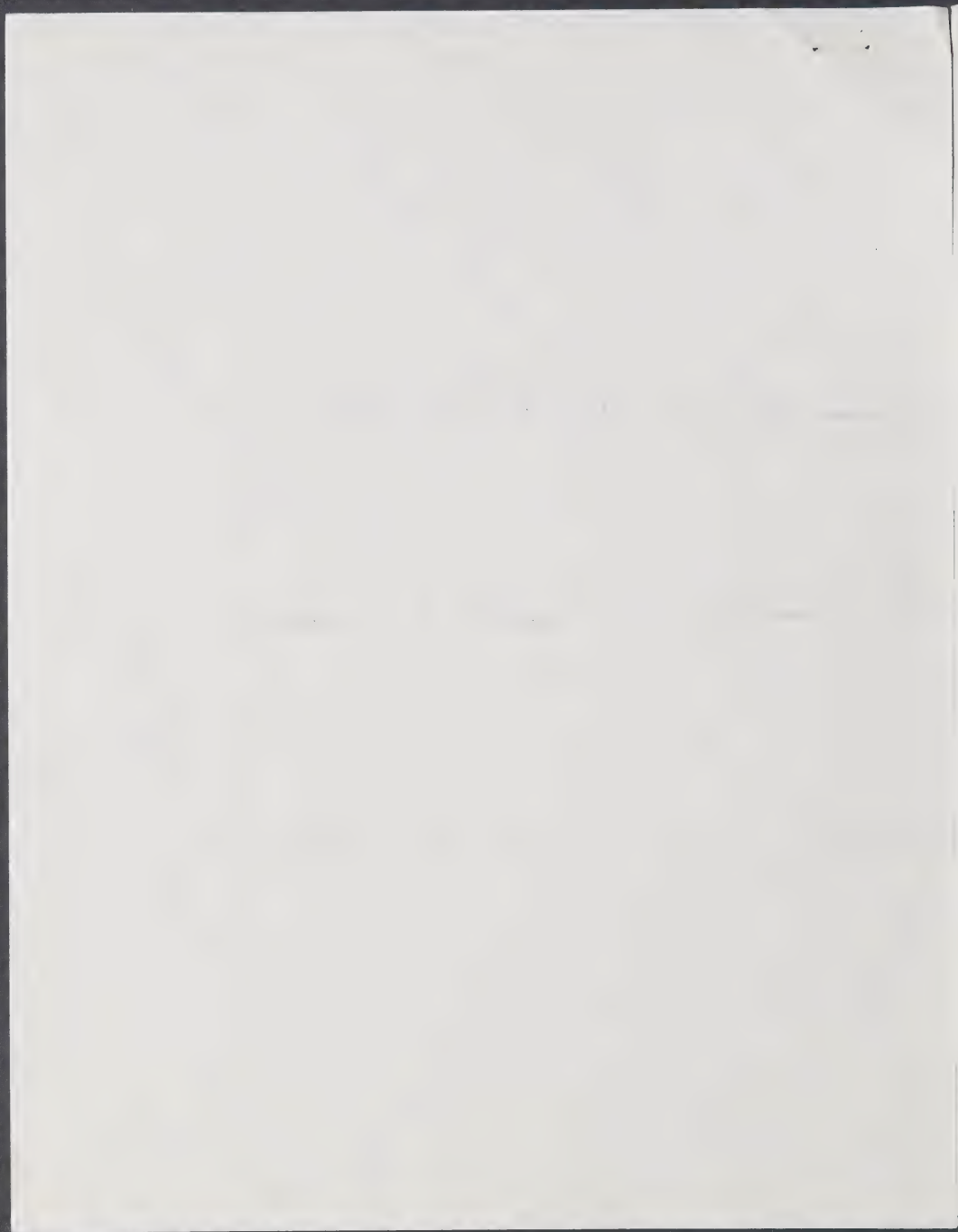
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Plat. 19





... soldier would appear to anticipate a
... used in the *St. Sebastian* in the altar-piece in
... Ferrara. An analogous subject by Dosso is
... the *Berra*, Milan. According to Varesi, the
... be compared with a *Scene from Classical*
... was once attributed to Garofalo, from the
... vaults of the Treasury Room of the
... Palace in Ferrara, executed towards 1512.
... *Classical History* is tentatively considered
... closer to Mazzolino than to Ortolano,
... No. 34, both the man who is putting on

his glasses and the seated figure with his markedly hooked nose, while strongly reminiscent of Mazzolino, equally call to mind the work of Amico Aspertini.

This latter artist had considerable influence on Mazzolino's style while he was in Ferrara. Nevertheless, when one considers the young man's face to the left of Christ and the brilliant green background landscape, one can once again see the stamp of Garofalo, who was to be so influential on Ortolano's style.

Lent by the Courtauld Galleries, London.

BATTISTA LUTERI called BATTISTA DOSSO
GIOVANNI LUTERI called DOSSO DOSSI

Documented from 1517 – Ferrara 1548 and c. 1489 – Ferrara 1542

Battista de Lutero, alias de Costantino, from the Trentino, who died as burser in the service of Ercole I of Ferrara, Giovanni and his younger brother and collaborator Battista were taken from a family property owned by their father, the Villa Dossi Vicariatus which was in the Duchy of Mantua. His teacher is unknown, although Vasari's states that he was a pupil of Lorenzo Costa despite the fact that it is hard to see Costa's influence in their work. Battista Dosso visited Venice, where he formed his style in the entourage of Giorgione and Titian. Dosso is first recorded working for Federigo Gonzaga in Mantua in 1512, which supports the theory that he may have been born there. Testimony of a visit to Rome and the influence of Raphael is given greater credence when one considers the highly Dossesque style of the landscape background in the *Madonna da Foligno* as well as the strong Raphael influences present in a series of *Prophets* (or *Learned Men of Antiquity*) executed on his return from Rome, as well as in the *God the Father*, which forms the basis of a Ferrarese ceiling executed in the early 1530s depicting the Sign of the Zodiac, published by Mezzetti and which is based upon a Raphael design which was executed in the centre of the Chigi Chapel in S. Maria del Popolo. It is thought that he was already working for Alfonso I of Ferrara, in whose service, and that of his heir Ercole II, he not only supplied designs for tapestries and festal decorations, in particular for the castle of Alfonso I, where Dosso executed a *Male Bacchanal* (now in Castel Gandolfo) and other panels which were subsequently dismantled and dispersed. Other important decorations by the brothers survive in the Duke of Urbino's Villa Imperiale outside Pesaro (1530) and in the Cles's Castello del Buon Consiglio in Trent (1531–32). Dosso's favourite subjects were mythologies, many of which (cf. *Apollo and Melissa*, Galleria Borghese, Rome, *Jove*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) are based on subject matter derived from the writings of Ovid. Some of these mysterious paintings, where the iconography is frequently so bizarre as to require explanation (see no. 40) that have made Dosso internationally famous.



39 *Portrait of a man*

Panel 75x58 cm.

- PROVENANCE: Fairfax Murray, Florence.
Julius Böhrer, Munich 1914-17.
Bergsten Collection from 1927.
Private collection.
- EXHIBITED: Stockholm National Museum, March/April 1918.
- LITERATURE: H. Mendelsohn, *Das Werk der Dosso*, Munich 1914, p. 130.
A. Mezzetti, *Il Dosso e Battista ferraresi*, Milan, 1965, pp. 117-18.
F. Gibbons, *Dosso and Battista Dosso Court Painters at Ferrara*, Princeton, 1968, p. 209, f. 63.
C. Volpe, 'Il Naturalismo di Giorgione e la tradizione critica: i rapporti con l'Emilia e con Raffaello', *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi, Castelfranco Veneto*, 1978, p. 224, fig. 180. (as by Raphael).

Attributed with reservations to Dosso by Mendelsohn, Mezzetti also doubted whether this portrait could be the work of Dosso having only seen a photograph of it. Some of the Dosso elements can, however, be detected, according to Mezzetti, 'not only in the pitiless realism of the picture, which may be likened to the bitter image of the frustrated old man in the "sfondato" for the ceiling of Alfonso I, but also in the tempestuous landscape appearing under a stormy sky in the opening in the background'. Mezzetti suggests therefore that the person portrayed may be the same (though burdened by old age and disfigured by illness) as that painted by Parmigianino in the Wrotham Park picture. This would help to explain why some art historians, who have recently seen this portrait before cleaning, have suggested attributions either closer to the Parma School, or even to Florentine mannerists such as Rosso Fiorentino.

This painting, on the other hand, is seen by Gibbons as a secure work by Dosso. According to Gibbons, it can be dated to 1520 or immediately after. Carlo Volpe (*op. cit.*) put forward the tantalizing hypothesis that this portrait may not be by Dosso at all, but instead by Raphael. Perhaps the problem may find a satisfactory resolution in the date suggested by Gibbons, 1528, the year in which Dosso visited Rome and was in close touch with Raphael. This may explain the deep psychological affinity this portrait clearly has with Raphael.

Lent by the Bergsten Collection.

40 *Venus Awakened by Cupid*

Canvas 120.5x157 cm.

- EXHIBITED: London, Heim, *From Tuscany to Italy*, No. 1. Plate 2 (on loan). Copenhagen, Laing.

Both Gibbons and Dreyer considered this painting to be an autograph work by Dosso. Gibbons, on the basis of an analysis of the landscape background, suggested that the painting can be dated in the 1570s, on the basis of the *ante-quem* and the *post-quem* for its execution. Dreyer, respectively, the *Circe* (Borghese Gallery, Rome) and the frescoes for the Villa Imperiale in Pienza. Dreyer suggested that No. 40 may have been the pendant to the *Hercules Assaulted by the Daktyloi* (Jussieu, Paris). As regards this latter painting, Mezzetti has suggested a date in the late 1530s, and if, as Gibbons suggested, *Hercules* is by Battista, or as other scholars have proposed a collaboration by the two brothers, Dreyer's dating seems more acceptable. Dreyer also accepted Laing's suggestion (*op. cit.*) that No. 40 and the *Hercules*, were not conceived together. 'The *Hercules* was only subsequently painted as a complementary, but not thematic, pendant' would appear to be a reasonable deduction.

However, the subject of Venus languidly reclining in her garden bower where she is dramatized by Cupid's arrival occurs at the beginning of a number of Latin marriage poems or *epithalamia* (Statius, *Silvae*, ii, 51-60; Claudian, *Carmina minora*, XXX; Sidonius Apollinarius, *Carmina*, XI, 47-48; Propertius, *Carmina*, I, iv, 29-52). The import of Cupid's tempestuous arrival is to inform his mother of an impending wedding, at which she will act as the patroness of the marriage. This antique subject was first revived in the Renaissance by Giorgione in his celebrated *Sleeping Venus*, for the wedding of his patron, Castiglione's cello (see J. Anderson, 'Giorgione, *Tempesta* and *Sleeping Venus*', *Tiziano e Venezia 1978*, Venice, pp. 337-342). Among the many variants of Giorgione's masterpiece - a series of nymphs and young women - Palma Vecchio, Savoldo and Titian, Dosso's version is unique; for he alone has revived the motif of Cupid awakening Venus within the context of marriage.

In the left background, the happy encounter is indicated by the presence of a youthful couple, the bride with marriage crowns, and already playing with heavily laden apple branches suggest that the union will be fruitful. In all probability Dosso's painting may have been commissioned in celebration of the marriage of d'Este's marriage to Princess Renée, daughter of Henry XII, King of France. Their union was solemnized in

