

LEONARDO DI BERNARDINO DEL SIGNORACCIO called LEONARDO DI BERNARDINO DA PISTOIA

(Baptized in 1491 in Pistoia)

The Annunciation.

Oil and gold ground on panel.

Signed lower centre: LEONARDVS F. BERNARDINI DEPiSTORio P.

177.7 x 148.5 cm.

Provenance: - Private collection, Genoa, 1878. - Auction market, London, 1890s. - Collection of Tomás Harris, London. - Collection of Otto Froehlich, Vienna. - Private collection, Spain, 1927 (acquired for 425,000 pesetas). - By inheritance, European private collection. - Swiss private collection. Literature: - Capponi, V.: Biografia Pistoiese, Pistoia 1878, p. 421. - Nerucci, G.: Bollettino storico pistoiese,

I, 1899, p. 160. - Gronau, G. D.: Una tavola di scuola pistoiese, in: Rivista d'Arte, Jahr XI, no. 2, April - June 1929, pp. 214-219, fig. 1. - D'Afflito, C., Falletti, F., Muzzi, A.: L'Età di Savonarola: Fra' Paolino e la Pittura a Pistoia nel primo '500, exh. cat. Pistoia, Palazzo Comunale, 24.4.- 31.7.1996, pp. 141 and 143. The painting offered here, which was in a Spanish private collection for the longest time of the 20th century, is the only known signed work of the Tuscan master Leonardo di Bernardino da Pistoia and thus of extraordinary art historical significance for the reconstruction of his oeuvre. A recent, thorough conservation has also brought the excellent preservation of this panel to light. Leonardo di Bernadino da Pistoia was the brother of the famous painter Fra'Paolino da Pistoia (1490-1547). Both were trained by their father Bernardino del Signoraccio. The influence of the father is evident not least in the signature of our painting, embedded cleverly as a nested calligraphy in the architecture. This unusual feature can be found frequently in the works of Bernardino del Signoraccio, as well as the detailed architectural elements and finely executed figures, as seen in his Sacra Conversazione in the Church of San Vitale in Pistoia, which was probably created shortly before our painting (see D'Afflito, et al. 1996, cat. no. 11, pp. 138-140). Leonardo di Bernardino's work would not be possible without the painting of the Florentine master Fra Bartolomeo (1472-1517). The influence of the Tuscan master is noticeable in our painting in several respects, especially when compared with his Annunciation executed in 1497 in the Cathedral of Volterra (see Padovani, S.: Fra Bartolomeo e la Scuola di San Marco, exh. cat. Florence 1996, cat. no. 6, pp. 57-60, with fig.). In our composition the Archangel is kneeling in the same position as in Fra Bartolomeo's model; also the blessing figure of God and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove in the top left corner can be found in both compositions. By contrast, the interior in which our scene is situated differs greatly from Fra Bartolomeo's open background with a view of an Italian landscape. The architectural background here chosen by Leonardo di Bernardino gives the scene a markedly more contemplative and devotional character, which is enhanced by the symmetry of the arches and the elegant gold embellishments. The body language of Maria

also shows Leonardo di Bernardino's artistic independence. The influence of both compositions makes itself felt finally in the Annunciation datable to ca. 1520, which is now attributed to Giovanni Antonio Sogliani (see Padovani 1996 cat. no. 89, pp. 266-268). In it are found again both the position of the figures from Leonardo di Bernardino's composition, as well as the open background of Fra Bartolomeo's painting. Overall, very few other works by Leonardo di Bernardino da Pistoia are known: A Saint Irene was auctioned at Christie's London in 1899 (see Gronau 1929, p. 5, fn. 1); a Sacra Conversazione, whose attribution intermittently fluctuated between Fra 'Paolino and Bernardino del Signoraccio, located in the Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta in Lizzano (see D'Afflito et al., 1996, cat. no. 13, p. 141, fig. p. 142); and finally a fresco in the Chiesa di Santa Maria a Ripalta in Pistoia (see ibid., cat. no. 14, p. 143). The attributions of these works to Leonardo di Bernardino del Signoraccio are based without exception upon stylistic comparison with the work offered here, the only one signed, which was known until its rediscovery only through black and white photographs. However, none of his works previously discovered is comparable in terms of quality and level of detail to the major work by the artist offered here, which is a prime example of Tuscan Renaissance painting.

CHF 100 000 / 150 000
€ 103 090 / 154 640

