



## Ferrarese School

late 15th Century

### **The Archangel Michael, in armour, vanquishing the devil, and weighing souls in the scales; in the background, a decorated wall supporting two vases of carnations**

Tempera on linen, 115 × 52 cm (laid down onto canvas)

#### STRETCHER AND LABELS

C.G.B.C. (burned in stretcher); *Raccolta del Conte* | *Giambattista Costabili* | *Di Ferrara N.* [313, 1835 inventory number, added in pen] (printed label transferred from previous lining canvas); miscellaneous printed labels: 56 (blue frame), 353 (red frame, cancelled in blue pencil: 20), 238 (red frame), 41 (yellow); *Esposizione della Pittura Ferrarese* | *del Rinascimento* | *sotto il Patrocinio della Reale Accademia d'Italia* | *Ferrara – Palazzo dei Diamanti* (printed label)

#### PROVENANCE

Marchese Giovanni Battista Costabili Containi (1756–1841), Palazzo Costabili, 11 via Volapaletto, Ferrara, by 1835 — by family descent to Marchese Giovanni Costabili Containi (1815–1882) and Marchese Alfonso Costabili Containi (1848–1913) — art market, Ferrara, September 1871 to May 1873<sup>1</sup> — with Giovanni Angelo Genolini, antique dealer of Milan, January 1884 — consigned by Genolini for sale at auction by Giulio Sambon, Milan, 27–29 April 1885, lot 35<sup>2</sup> — offered as the property of the Barbarigo family, by Genolini and Sambon, Milan, 4–5 April 1887, lot 50<sup>3</sup> — with

<sup>1</sup> [Gaetano Giordani], *Catalogo de' quadri di varie scuole pittoriche nella Galleria Costabili in Ferrara: collezione esposta in vendita* (Bologna 1871), no.6: 'Francesco Cossa, S. Michele Arcangelo, che rappresenta la Giustizia divina, mezzana figura su tela'. Giordani's catalogue was reprinted in 1872, extending the period of sale through 'Marzo, Aprile e Maggio del prossimo venturo anno 1873'.

<sup>2</sup> Giulio Sambon, 'Catalogue de tableaux formant la galerie de M.r le Marquis Costabili de Ferrare [catalogue by Giulio Carotti]', Milan, 27–29 April 1885, lot 35: 'Cossa (François). Saint Michel Archange représentant la Justice divine. Toile. Haut. 1 m. 10 cent., larg. 48 cent.'. (Lugt 44859).

<sup>3</sup> Giulio Sambon, 'Catalogue des tableaux de la ci-devant collection Barberigo [sic] de Venise: tableaux des écoles Flamande, Ollandaïse, Allemande, Française et Espagnole, tableaux des principaux artistes des écoles italiennes du XV, XVI et XVII siècle', Milan, 4–5 April 1887, lot 50. (Lugt 46435). On the dispersal of the Costabili pictures, see Laura Benini, 'Descrizione della quadreria Costabili' in *Musei ferraresi. Bollettino annuale* 7 (1977), pp.79–96; Luca Majoli and Oriana Orsi, 'La Collezione

Italico Brass (1870–1943), artist-dealer of Venice, by 1933<sup>4</sup> — sale by Sotheby's, Florence, 3 June 1977, lot 248<sup>5</sup> — sale by Finarte, Rome, 27 March 1980, lot 23<sup>6</sup> — collection Mario Lanfranchi, Santa Maria in Piano (Parma)<sup>7</sup> — his sale by Franco Semenzato, Venice, 15 December 1985, lot 41<sup>8</sup> — Christie's, 'Old Master & 19th century paintings, drawings & watercolours', 9 December 2009, lot 117

## EXHIBITED

Ferrara, Esposizione della Pittura Ferrarese del Rinascimento, 1933

## LITERATURE

Camillo Laderchi, *Descrizione della quadreria Costabili. Parte prima. L'antica scuola ferrarese* (Ferrara 1838), pp.29–30, no.31 (as Francesco del Cossa)

Girolamo Baruffaldi, *Vite de' pittori e scultori ferraresi*, edited by Giuseppe Boschini (Ferrara 1844), I, pp.10–11 note 2 (mentioned in the editor's note, as Cossa, locating the painting in the Costabili Collection on the authority of Laderchi)<sup>9</sup>

Nino Barbantini, *Catalogo della esposizione della pittura ferrarese del Rinascimento* (Ferrara 1933), p.79, no.88 (as 'Seguace de Cossa')

Roberto Longhi, *Officina ferrarese* (reprint of 1934 edition with additions, Florence 1968), pp.99, 114 (as 'Tardo ferrarese senza rapporti col Cossa')

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Costabili: formazione, vendita e dispersione' in Emanuele Mattaliano, *La collezione Costabili*, edited by Grazia Agostini (Venice 1998), pp.17–29.

<sup>4</sup> See, generally, Maddalena Malni Pascoletti, "'Una delle gallerie private più interessanti del mondo intero": note su Italico Brass collezionista d'arte' in *Italico Brass*, catalogue of an exhibition held in the Civico museo del castello, Gorizia, 6 July–22 September 1991, edited by Maria Masau Dan (Milano 1991), pp.43–52; Alessandro Morandotti, 'Italico Brass, pittore, conoscitore e mercante nell'età di Giuseppe Fiocco' in *Genova e il collezionismo nel Novecento: studi nel centenario di Angelo Costa (1901–1976)*, edited by Anna Orlando (Torino 2001), pp.241–250.

<sup>5</sup> Sotheby Parke Bernet Italia, 'Catalogo di disegni antichi, disegni e dipinti del secolo XIX, dipinti antichi', Florence, 3 June 1977, lot 248 reproduced (attributed to Bernardino Zenale).

<sup>6</sup> Finarte, Istituto Finanziario per l'arte, 'Asta di dipinti dal XV al XIX secolo', Rome, 27 March 1980, lot 23.

<sup>7</sup> Vittorio Sgarbi, 'I Collezionisti: Prima del Barocco. L'incanto dei "grandi minori" della pittura italiana dal '400 al '600' in *AD: Architectural Digest. Le più belle case del mondo* 81 (February 1988), p.81 illustrated (attributed to Francesco dai Libri).

<sup>8</sup> Franco Semenzato & C., 'Asta di importanti dipinti antichi', Venice, 15 December 1985, lot 41 reproduced (attributed to Francesco dai Libri).

<sup>9</sup> Amalia Mezzetti and Emanuele Mattaliano, *Indice ragionato delle Vite de' pittori e scultori ferraresi di Gerolamo Baruffaldi: artisti, opere, luoghi* ([s.n.] 1980), I, p.96.

Vittorio Sgarbi, 'Ai margini dell' Officina' in *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense*, edited by Giuseppe Papagno and Amedeo Quondam (Rome 1982), pp.593–604 reproduced Tav.224 (as Francesco dai Libri)

Vittorio Sgarbi, 'Restituzioni a Francesco dai Libri' in *Notizie da Palazzo Albani: Rivista semestrale di Storia dell'Arte, Università degli Studi di Urbino*, 12 (1983), nos.1–2, pp.64–69 reproduced Fig.2 (as Francesco dai Libri)

Sergio Marinelli, 'Verona' in *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Quattrocento*, edited by Mauro Lucco (Milan 1990), II, p.652, note 27 (not by Francesco dai Libri, no alternative attribution proposed)

Andrea Ugolini, 'Rivedendo la collezione Costabili di Ferrara' in *Paragone / Arte* 41, no.489 (November 1990), pp.55–56, no.L31 ('attribuito alla "Bottega del cespo di garofano": ubicazione ignota')

Emanuele Mattaliano, *La collezione Costabili*, edited by Grazia Agostini (Venice 1998), p.42, no.31 reproduced p.197 (as 'Bottega del cespo di garofano?', 'ubicazione ignota')

**T**HE size, shape and medium of this painting indicate that it is a fragment of a banner or *telero ritagliato* which would have been carried in procession on certain feast days.<sup>10</sup> Originally a triptych, with a representation of the Virgin in the centre (the fabric of her cloak is visible along the left edge of our painting), the banner was cut at an early date and two pieces of almost equal size (115 × 52 cm, 113.5 × 47 cm) are known to survive. Our fragment shows Saint Michael standing over the devil and in the act of weighing souls; the other depicts Saint John the Baptist (Pinacoteca di Ferrara, deposited by Fondazione Carife – Cassa di Risparmio di Ferrara).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See generally, Michael Bury, 'Documentary evidence for the materials and handling of banners, principally in Umbria, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries' in *The fabric of images: European paintings on textile supports in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*, edited by Caroline Villers (London 2000), pp.19–30.

<sup>11</sup> 'Saint John the Baptist' shared the same history as our fragment (Inventory 1835 no.312, Laderchi 1838 no.30, Giordani 1871 no.8, sale 1885 lot 36, sale 1887 lot 49, sale 1977 lot 248, sale 1980 lot 23) until 1985, when the two paintings were offered at auction as separate lots (41–42). 'Saint John the Baptist' was resold by Semenzato, 'Asta di importanti dipinti di antichi maestri', Venice, 3 May 1987, lot 31a. The painting reappeared at Sotheby's, 'Dipinti antichi', Milan, 29 May 2007, lot 158, where it was purchased by Fondazione Carife; see Luisa Ciammitti, "'Un non so che di particolare e di nuovo": Cenni sulla storiografia della scuola ferrarese' in *Cosmè Tura e Francesco del Cossa: l'arte a Ferrara nell'età di Borso d'Este*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Palazzo dei Diamanti and at the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara, 23 September 2007–6 January 2008, edited by Mauro Natale (Ferrara 2007), pp.95–96 (reproduced Fig.44). (Image: <http://www.fondazione-carife.it/OPQ/Pittore-veronese-della-fine-del-XV-sec.html>)



**The Archangel Michael — Saint John the Baptist  
(reproduction from Sotheby's sale catalogue, 1977)**

The two canvases entered the Costabili collection together at the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century. Although descended from a family that patronised Garofalo and the brothers Dossi, the Marchese Giovanni Battista Costabili Containini (1756–1841) acquired his entire collection of some 600 paintings within a few decades, from unknown sources, with the help of the *marchand-amateur* Ubaldo Sgherbi.<sup>12</sup> The two fragments of this banner are first documented in an inventory of 1835, as works of Francesco del Cossa (1435/6–*circa* 1477),<sup>13</sup> an attribution accepted by Camillo Laderchi (1801–1867) in his catalogue of the Costabili collection published in 1836–1841.<sup>14</sup>

The first to express doubts was Nino Barbantini, in 1933, followed by Roberto Longhi, in 1934, who sustained the Ferrarese origins of the artist while discounting any relation to Cossa. The question of authorship continues to attract a variety of suggestions.

In two publications of 1982 and 1983, Vittorio Sgarbi attributed our painting to the Master of the Cespo di Garofano, the name given by Giuseppe Gerola to an anonymous painter of the School of Verona, active between 1487 and 1500, whose works usually include an ornamental vase filled with carnations (many of these are triptychs, featuring the Madonna and two Saints).<sup>15</sup> Berenson had listed the fifteen paintings grouped by Gerola under the name Francesco dai Libri, a Veronese artist (1452–1502/14), and Sgarbi adopted this iden-

<sup>12</sup> Jaynie Anderson, 'The rediscovery of Ferrarese renaissance painting in the Risorgimento' in *The Burlington Magazine* 135 (1993), p.543: 'The precise circumstances in which Costabili made his acquisitions may never be known, which leaves difficult problems for those studying Ferrarese renaissance art today'. On Sgherbi's activities, see *La Leggenda del collezionismo: le quadrerie storiche ferraresi*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Pinacoteca nazionale, Ferrara, Palazzo dei Diamanti, 25 February–26 May 1996, edited by Grazia Agostini, Jadranka Bentini, Andrea Emiliani ([Ferrara] 1996), pp.98–99.

<sup>13</sup> Manuscript inventory 'Pitture della Raccolta del Co.te Gio. Batta. Costabili di Ferrara', folio 28 verso, no.313: 'Altri due quadri, un San Giovanni Battista, l'altro S. Michele che pesa le anime. Tele mezzane bislunghe a tempera di Francesco Cossa'. (Majoli and Orsi, *op. cit.*, p.42 no.31). The inventory was donated by Giovanni Battista Costabili in 1835 to Gaetano Giordani, director of the Pinacoteca di Bologna, and is now Biblioteca Comunale dell'Archiginnasio di Bologna, MS A 1324.

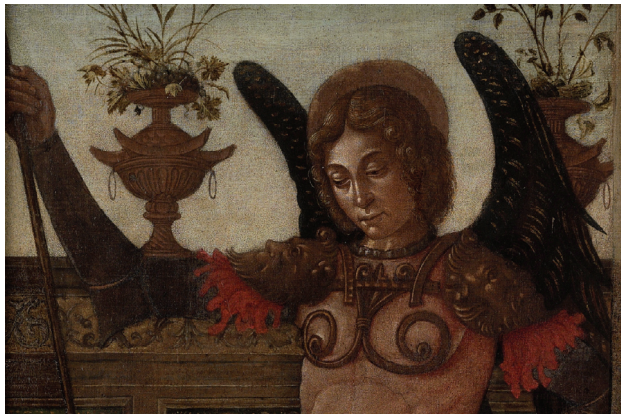
<sup>14</sup> Camillo Laderchi, *Descrizione della quadreria Costabili. Parte prima. L'antica scuola ferrarese* (Ferrara 1838), pp.29–30: 'Francesco Cossa o del Cossa – Quattro tele di carattere religioso rappresentanti – [no.28] S. Francesco, S. Chiara e due Monache in ginocchio adoranti la Santissima Eucarestia – [no.29] Gesù che comparisce alla Maddalena sotto forma d' ortolano in bellissimo paese. – [no.30] S. Gio. Battista: – e [no.31] S. Michele in atto di pesare le anime sur una bilancia. Presentano lo stesso fare di quella della Pinacoteca di Bologna'.

<sup>15</sup> Giuseppe Gerola, 'Questioni storiche d'arte Veronese' in *Madonna Verona* 2 (1908), pp.173–182; and 'I Bauli e i pittori del Cespo di garofano' *ibidem* 5 (1911), pp.193–196. Compare *Proposte e restauri: i musei d' arte negli anni ottanta*, catalogue of an exhibition in the Museo di Castelvecchio, edited by Sergio Marinelli (Verona 1987), pp.86–99.

tification.<sup>16</sup> Federico Zeri, although in oral agreement with Sgarbi about the Veronese origins of the painting,<sup>17</sup> was unconvinced by Berenson's identification of the Maestro del Cespo di Garofano with Francesco dai Libri.<sup>18</sup> Zeri subsequently attributed our painting to the Ferrarese painter Domenico Panetti (c. 1460–before 1513).<sup>19</sup>

A specialist in the Veronese artistic environment of the fifteenth century, Sergio Marinelli, also rejected Sgarbi's attribution of our painting to Francesco dai Libri. Basing his opinion on published reproductions, Marinelli doubted the painting was even Veronese ('probabilmente neppure all'area veronese').<sup>20</sup>

We share Marinelli's doubts and revive Longhi's attribution, positioning the painting in Ferrara, toward the end of the fifteenth century.



**Detail (original 115 × 52 cm)**

<sup>16</sup> Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: Central and North Italian Schools* (London 1968), pp.142–143.

<sup>17</sup> Sgarbi, *op. cit.* (1982), p.596 note 7; Sgarbi, *op. cit.* (1983), p.64 note 1.

<sup>18</sup> Federico Zeri, *Italian paintings in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore 1976), I, pp.280–281 no.189.

<sup>19</sup> Università di Bologna, Fondazione Zeri, Fototeca, scheda 38391.

<sup>20</sup> S. Marinelli, 'Verona' in *La Pittura nel Veneto: Il Quattrocento*, edited by Mauro Lucco (Milan 1990), II, p.652, note 27. Marinelli subsequently identified the principal master of the 'Cespo di Garofano' workshop as Antonio Badile II (1424/5–1507/12): *Mantegna e le arti a Verona 1450–1500*, catalogue of the exhibition held at the Palazzo della Gran Guardia, Verona, 16 September 2006–14 January 2007, edited by Sergio Marinelli and Paola Marini (Venice 2006), p.259 and nos.39–42.

