

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Pietro Antonio de' Pietri (Premia 1662 - Rome 1716)

The Birth of the Virgin

Red chalk and red wash, extensively heightened with white, with framing lines in red chalk. Made up at the lower right corner.

Numbered 50 in the lower centre margin.

255 x 173 mm. (10 x 6 3/4 in)

The composition of this drawing is partly based, in reverse, on an etching of *The Birth of the Virgin* by Carlo Maratta, which, like most of the elder artist's prints, is thought to date from the beginning of his career, before 1660. In the present sheet, Pietro de' Pietri has made some significant changes to Maratta's composition, notably in the replacement of two women standing at the left edge of the print with the figure of Saint Joseph, and the addition of putti at the top of the composition.

Provenance:

Pandora Old Masters, New York, in 1999
Private collection, until 2011.

Artist description:

Born in the Piedmontese town of Premia, Pietro de' Pietri arrived in Rome as a youth, studying first with Giuseppe Ghezzi and then the little-known Cremonese painter Angelo Massarotti, before entering the studio of Carlo Maratta. In his biography of the artist, Lione Pascoli noted that de' Pietri remained a

devoted admirer of Maratta's art throughout his career, and indeed his style as both painter and draughtsman was indebted to that of the elder artist. He was established as an independent artist by the end of the 1680's, and produced altarpieces and frescoes for several Roman churches, including San Clemente and Santa Maria in Via Lata. Elected to the Accademia di San Luca in 1711, Pietro de' Pietri received a number of important commissions from Pope Clement XI, as well as from members of such important Roman families as the Pallavicini, Ottoboni and Imperiali. He also executed several etchings and engravings, and provided designs for other printmakers.

Pietro de' Pietri is perhaps better known today as a draughtsman than as a painter. Many of his drawings are composition studies in pen and ink, while he also produced studies of heads and other details in black or red chalk, or a combination of the two, often drawn on blue paper. As Ann Percy has noted of the artist's drawings, 'his style is clearly indebted to Maratta, although his manner, softer and more tentative, lacks Maratta's usual toughness and vigor in the handling of chalk or pen.' Like his master Maratta, de' Pietri often produced several preparatory studies for each of his paintings, and many of his drawings display an attractive, painterly technique. Large groups of drawings by Pietro de' Pietri are at the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf, the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, the Louvre and the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.