

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Orazio Fidani (Florence 1610 - Florence 1656)

A Young Boy with his Arm Raised

Black and red chalk, on blue paper.
Inscribed Di Orazio fidani at the lower right.
190 x 145 mm. (7 1/2 x 5 3/4 in.)

Only a handful of autograph drawings by Orazio Fidani are known, and just three may be securely related to extant paintings. Two of these are in the collection of the Biblioteca Marucelliana in Florence, which also houses three other drawings by the artist, and another is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Other drawings by Fidani are in the collections of the Uffizi and the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica in Rome.

Confidently drawn in red and black chalk on blue paper, the present sheet would appear to be a preparatory study for the angel at the top of Fidani's late altarpiece of Tobias Healing His Father's Blindness, painted in 1654. Commissioned from the artist by the Galli family for the confraternity of the Compagnia della Scala in Florence, the painting hung in the entrance hall of the confraternity, and was frequently praised by critics as one of the artist's finest works. With the suppression of the religious confraternities in the 19th century, the painting was transferred to the Uffizi in 1853, by which time it was in poor condition. Restored in 1984, the painting was sent on loan to NATO headquarters in Brussels in 1987.

An identical pen inscription 'Di Orazio fidani' appears on a study by Fidani of the head of a youth - also drawn in black and red chalk on blue paper - in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which is related to a painting of c.1645-1647.

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 21 November 1974, lot 80
Adolphe Stein, Paris, in 1977

Literature:

Christel Thiem, Florentiner Zeichner des Frühbarock, Munich, 1977, p.397, no.202, pl.202; Jacob Bean, 17th Century Italian Drawings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1979, p.140, under no.178; Marina Mojana, Orazio Fidani, Milan, 1996, pp.30-31, fig.25.

Artist description:

Among the most significant and talented of the many artists trained in the Florentine studio of Giovanni Bilivert, with whom he worked for around a dozen years, Orazio Fidani painted religious, allegorical and literary subjects. He painted works for churches in Florence and elsewhere in Tuscany, and the contemporary Florentine biographer Filippo Baldinucci also notes of Fidani that he painted numerous canvases for Florentine collectors ('infinite quadri in Firenze in casa di particolari cittadini'). Relatively few paintings by the artist survive today, however. Among his paintings in Tuscan churches are The Meeting at the Golden Gate of 1643 in the church of San Francesco in Cortona and a Miracle of San Frediano of 1645 in the parish church at Cascina. Among his other public works are several paintings and frescoes for the Certosa at Galluzzo, outside Florence. Fidani's oeuvre also includes several large easel pictures, often taking as his subject matter scenes from such popular works of literature as Virgil's 'Aeneid', Ovid's 'Metamorphoses', Tasso's 'Gerusalemme Liberata', Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso', and Guarini's 'Il Pastor Fido'. One of his earliest masterpieces in this genre is an Angelica and Medoro, signed and dated 1634, which is today in the Uffizi.