

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Giuseppe PASSERI (Rome 1654 - Rome 1714)

The Virgin and Child with Saints

Red chalk, pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, with framing lines in brown ink.

A study of a mounted (female?) warrior in brown ink over red chalk, and a pair(?) of figures in red chalk, on the verso, backed.

The sheet extended at the bottom edge, and made up at the lower right corner.

Laid down.

230 x 226 mm. (9 1/8 x 8 7/8 in.)

This is a fine example of Giuseppe Passeri's highly pictorial manner of draughtsmanship, displaying the artist's characteristic use of red chalk combined with an extensive application of white heightening. (As one recent scholar has noted, 'Bordering on the confectionary in their profuse use of white gouache, these [drawings] attain an unusually rich tonal and chromatic range close to that of an oil sketch.')

Although Passeri's preparatory drawings tend to be very close to the paintings for which they are studies, the present sheet remains unrelated to any surviving work by the artist, although a red chalk drawing in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, showing the Virgin and Child with a kneeling male saint, may perhaps be related to the same composition. Among stylistically comparable drawings by Passeri is a Virgin and Child with Saints Theresa and Cajetan(?), also in the collection of the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.

The pen study of a mounted warrior on the verso of this drawing, now partly obscured by the backing of the sheet, may be tentatively related to a similar figure in a drawing of A King Before a Walled Town in the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf. The Düsseldorf drawing, which may represent a scene from Torquato Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme Liberata*, is itself related to two drawings in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle. A similar mounted figure also appears in a drawing of Clorinda Frees Sophronia and Olindo at Holkham Hall in Norfolk.

Provenance:

An unidentified collector's mark R (similar to Lugt 2170; Jonathan Richardson, Junior) stamped at the lower right

An unidentified collector's mark OE (in ligature) stamped on the reverse of the old backing sheet
Yvonne French, London, in 1961

Burnett Pavitt, London

Bequeathed by him to the Royal College of Music, London

Their sale, London, Christie's, 8 July 2003, lot 39

Jean-Luc Baroni Ltd., London

Private collection.

Exhibitions

London, Yvonne French at the Alpine Club Gallery, Old Master Drawings and Early English Drawings, 1961, no.39; New York and London, Jean-Luc Baroni Ltd., Master Drawings and Oil Sketches, 2004, no.35.

Artist description:

Giuseppe Passeri studied with his uncle, the painter and biographer Giovanni Battista Passeri, before entering the studio of Carlo Maratta in Rome. He soon became one of Maratta's favorite students, working with him on a number of significant projects. His style, however, was less indebted to the master than most of Maratta's followers. Passeri's earliest known dated paintings were executed for the Palazzo Barberini in Rome in 1678, and he was to work in the city for almost his entire career. Elected to the Accademia di San Luca in 1693, he received numerous commissions for religious pictures, such as a Baptism of Constantine painted for the Albani chapel in the church of San Sebastiano fuori le Mura. Other Roman churches for which Passeri painted altarpieces include Saint Peter's, Santa Maria in Vallicella, San Francesco a Ripa, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, Santa Caterina a Monte Magnanapoli and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, while he also painted an important large altarpiece of Christ in Glory with Saints for the Duomo in Fermo, as well as elaborate ceiling frescoes for the presbytery of the Duomo at Viterbo, completed in 1699 but destroyed during the Second World War.

Passeri worked for Pope Clement VII, who in 1700 appointed him 'pittore della camera apostolica', and also received commissions for mural projects to decorate the palaces and villas of a number of Roman families. In addition to his large-scale work, he produced cabinet pictures, and was active as a portrait painter. A very large collection of drawings by Passeri, numbering over 1,100 sheets and representing some two-thirds of his extant oeuvre as a draughtsman, is in the collection of the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf, while other significant groups of drawings by the artist are in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle and the Albertina in Vienna.