

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Ludovico Carracci

The Head of a Sleeping Boy

Red chalk.

A study of a neck and chin (a fragment of a larger drawing) in red chalk on the verso.
111 x 121 mm. (4 3/8 x 4 3/4 in.)

On the basis of a close inspection of the drawing, Babette Bohn has attributed the present sheet to Ludovico Carracci. She points out that that stylistic comparisons may be made with a handful of chalk drawings of the late 1580's by Ludovico, including a study of a nude boy asleep in the British Museum, a sheet of studies of heads in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and a red chalk study of the head of a sleeping boy in a private collection. Each of these drawings has previously borne attributions to Annibale Carracci and, like the present sheet, underlines the difficulty of separating the early chalk drawings of Annibale and Ludovico Carracci.

The present sheet was once part of an album of drawings compiled by the 18th century French collector François Desmarais (or Des Marais), the contents of which were dispersed at auction in 1984. The title page of the album bore the inscription 'Dessins origin:x / des plus fameux / Peintres, Rassemblez / Par M. Des Marais: / 1729:'.

Provenance:

François Desmarais, Nantes, part of an album assembled before 1729
The album broken up and sold, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 2 March 1984, the present sheet as lot 99 (as School of Veronese, 16th Century), with the sale stamp D (Lugt 3358)
Anonymous sale, New York, Sotheby's, 12 January 1990, lot 12 (as School of the Carracci).

Artist description:

The oldest member of the Carracci dynasty, Ludovico Carracci trained in the studio of Prospero Fontana in Bologna before undertaking a trip to Florence, Parma, Mantua and Venice to complete his artistic education. He was back in Bologna by 1578, when he joined the painter's guild, the Compagnia dei Pittori. Throughout the 1580's Ludovico worked closely with his cousins Annibale and Agostino Carracci, with whom he shared a workshop. All three artists collaborated on the series of frescoes

illustrating the Story of Jason in the Palazzo Fava in Bologna, executed between 1583 and 1584. The three Carracci also established a private academy, whose teachings were to become a dominant influence on Bolognese painters of the succeeding generation.

Among Ludovico's early independent works are the large altarpiece known as the Madonna dei Bargellini of 1588, now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna, and the Cento altarpiece of The Holy Family with Saint Francis of 1591. The three Carracci continued to work together on the further decoration of the Palazzo Fava in the late 1580's and the Palazzo Magnani, completed in 1592. Following Annibale's departure for Rome in 1595, closely followed by Agostino, Ludovico took over the Carracci academy and workshop. He worked on numerous decorative projects in and around Bologna, culminating in the frescoes at San Michele in Bosco of 1605-1606. Apart from a brief trip to Rome in 1602 and a stay in Piacenza between 1605 and 1609, when he collaborated with Camillo Procaccini on the decoration of the nave and apse of the Duomo, Ludovico Carracci remained in Bologna throughout his career. He continued to oversee the Carracci academy, known as the Accademia degli Incamminati, until his death.