

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Maerten de Vos (1532 - 1603)

The Death of Lucretia

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, with touches of white heightening.

The outlines partially indented for transfer.

Inscribed Mart de Vos / fec. on the verso.

133 x 110 mm. (5 1/4 x 4 3/8 in.)

a preparatory drawing, in reverse, for an engraving of Lucretia by Raphael Sadeler I. The print, signed Raphael Sadeler fec and M. de vos invent., is inscribed Nec caste, nec Christiane in the top margin and Tarquiniij...pudor in the bottom margin. The engraving was one of a series of three prints depicting women as examples of chastity - the others being Susanna and Sophronia - designed by the artist and executed by Sadeler. The present sheet can be dated to 1590, the date on the engraving of Susanna.

De Vos also designed another engraving of the The Death of Lucretia, different in composition, which was executed by Hieronymus Wierix and intended as a companion to two other prints of Cleopatra and Sophonisba, designed by Philips Galle.

The popularity of Marten de Vos's designs, and the prints made after them, among other contemporary printmakers is shown by an engraved design for the metal tip of a dagger sheath by Theodor de Bry (1528-1598), which incorporates at its centre the identical figure of Lucretia.

Provenance:

An unidentified collector's mark indistinctly stamped in purple ink on the verso

Jacob H. Wiegiersma, Utrecht (Lugt 1552b), his mark at the lower left

Anonymous sale, Amsterdam, Sotheby's, 10 November 1998, lot 29 (as Flemish School, 17th Century)

P. & D. Colnaghi, London, in 1999

Private collection, Spain.

Artist description:

After first studying with his father, the painter Pieter de Vos, the young Marten de Vos completed his training in the studio of Frans Floris. Around 1551 he traveled to Rome, and later to Venice, where he worked as an assistant to Tintoretto for several years. Soon after his return to his native Antwerp in c.1558, de Vos was established as one of the leading painters in the city. He produced altarpieces for many churches in Antwerp in the 1590's, most commissioned by the various guilds in the city. Many of his religious and history paintings were later engraved, and this served to spread his reputation throughout Flanders. Indeed, Marten de Vos may be regarded as arguably the most influential Flemish painter of the generation before Rubens.

A highly productive draughtsman, Marten de Vos was very active as a designer for print publishers such as Adriaen Collaert and Philips Galle, although he was not a printmaker himself. While most of the five hundred or so drawings by de Vos that survive are preparatory studies for prints, he is known to have designed many more, as a total of some 1,600 original engravings after his designs exist. Many of these date from the early 1580's, when fewer commissions for religious paintings were available in Antwerp. His drawings were also sought after in their own right by collectors and fellow artists.