

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Jacopo Confortini (1602 - 1672)

Studies of a Seated Beggar and a Standing Figure Holding a Purse

Red chalk.

Traces of an oil stain across the beggar's abdomen.

Made up at the upper left corner.

226 x 307 mm. (8 7/8 x 12 1/8 in.)

The present sheet contains studies for the beggar in the left foreground and the saint at the centre of a larger composition by Jacopo Confortini of *A Saint Distributing Alms Among the Poor*, recorded in a black chalk drawing in the Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest. No finished painting by Confortini of this subject survives, although, as Christel Thiem has noted, the artist must have been inspired by Domenico Passignano's painting of *Saint Lawrence Distributing the Riches of the Church to the Poor*, painted between 1620 and 1621 for the Calderini chapel of Santa Croce in Florence, since a black chalk drawing by the young Confortini after Passignano's altarpiece is known. This would indicate a terminus post quem of 1621 for the Budapest drawing, as well as the drawings related to it.

Three further studies by Confortini for the figure of the beggar are known. Two of these are in black chalk; a drawing at Christ Church in Oxford and another on the London art market in 1934 and now in the British Museum. The British Museum drawing shows the beggar with his right arm raised, while the Christ Church study, like the present sheet, depicts the figure with a raised left arm. (The position of the legs of the beggar in the present sheet, however, differ from that shown in the other two studies.) A third, more sketchy study of the same figure, drawn in red chalk, is in the Biblioteca Marucelliana in Florence. All of these drawings by Confortini may be dated to around 1631, as they are stylistically comparable with his drawings for the lunettes painted that year for the refectory of Santa Trinità.

Provenance:

Hugh and April Squire, London
Alister Mathews, Bournemouth, in 1973
Timothy Clifford, Manchester and Edinburgh, by 1976
P. & D. Colnaghi, London, in 1987.

Literature:

James Byam Shaw, *Drawings by Old Masters at Christ Church, Oxford*, Oxford, 1976, Vol.I, p.101, under no.292, and fig.26; Christel and Gunther Thiem, 'Der Zeichner Jacopo Confortini. II', in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 1980, p.92, fig.18; Andrea Czére, *L'eredità Esterházy: Disegni italiani del Seicento dal Museo di Belle Arti di Budapest*, exhibition catalogue, Rome, Palazzo di Fontana di Trevi, 2002, p.170, under no.73, illustrated; Andrea Czére, *17th Century Italian Drawings in the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts: A Complete Catalogue*, Budapest, 2004, p.130, under no.120, fig.120a; Alberto Craievich, ed., *Una passione discreta: La collezione Paolo Galli*, exhibition catalogue, Venice, 2024-2025, pp.83-84, no.11.15.

Artist description:

The son and brother of painters, Jacopo Confortini is only rarely mentioned in contemporary sources, and has until recently remained a shadowy figure in the history of Florentine Seicento art. (The 17th century Florentine biographer Filippo Baldinucci, for example, did not include the artist in his *Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*.) Confortini was a pupil of Giovanni da San Giovanni, and participated in the decoration of the Casino Mediceo at San Marco between 1621 and 1624 before his admission to the Accademia del Disegno in 1628, at the fairly late age of twenty-six. A year later he completed one of his first independent works, a *Madonna of the Rosary with Saints Dominic and Francis* for the church of San Michele in the town of Santa Maria a Piazza.

Most of Confortini's surviving paintings are signed and dated, allowing the development of his style to be traced, and for several of these works preparatory drawings are known. In 1631 he completed two of his finest works; the lunette frescoes of *The Wedding Feast at Cana* and *Christ in the House of Simon* in the refectory of the Florentine convent of Santa Trinità. (The documents related to this commission refer to the artist as the 'Frate Confortini', which would suggest that he had taken religious orders as a monk.) Confortini produced mainly religious works, intended for provincial churches throughout Tuscany. These include an altarpiece for San Egidio at Poggio di Croce, near Perugia, painted in 1640, as well as a *Flight into Egypt* of 1648 for the Confraternity of the Misericordia in Fiesole and a *Glory of the Holy Sacrament*, painted for the monastery of San Vincenzo in Prato in 1656. One of his last known works is a *Baptism of Christ*, dated 1667, in the church of Santo Stefano al Ponte in Florence.

Jacopo Confortini is much better known today as a draughtsman than as a painter, although his drawings have only recently been the subject of scholarly study. The artist's distinctive draughtsmanship was first examined and codified by Christel and Gunther Thiem and Philip Pouncey in their studies of the artist's work, and it has only been over the past forty years that a small corpus of drawings has been established. Confortini's extant drawings are all in black or red chalk, and many are preparatory for his paintings. Thus far no pen drawing has been securely attributed to the artist.