

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Jacopo CONFORTINI (Florence 1602 - Florence 1672)

A Standing Cavalier, Seen from Behind

Red chalk.

204 x 147 mm. (8 x 5 3/4 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE CROCKER ART MUSEUM, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA.

The present sheet may be related to an important group of six drawings by Jacopo Confortini, all of which are studies for a composition of Musicians Playing to a Dining Couple. A highly finished watercolour drawing in the Uffizi represents the final stage of the composition, dominated by a seated musician playing a large stringed instrument known as a chittarone.

Although the cavalier in this study does not appear in the Uffizi drawing, the same figure can be seen at the right edge of an earlier compositional drawing for the Musicians Playing to a Dining Couple, where the scene is placed outdoors, in the collection of the Klassik Stiftung in Weimar. In a second compositional study, formerly in the Benno Geiger collection in Venice, Confortini discarded the figure of the cavalier and placed the scene in an interior. Another composition drawing, close to the ex-Geiger sheet, was on the London art market in 1978, while a red chalk drawing of three musicians, apparently a first idea for these figures in the composition, is in a private collection in New York.

The number of surviving studies for this composition suggests that Confortini may have been working towards a finished canvas, although no such painting survives. Displaying the influence of Jacques Callot, this group of drawings has been dated to around 1630, at the onset of the artist's independent career.

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 6 July 1978, lot 75
Anonymous sale, London, Christie's, 1 July 1986, lot 76
P. & D. Colnaghi, London, in 1991.

Exhibitions

Sacramento, California, Crocker Art Museum, *Drawn to Beauty: Fifteen Years of Acquisitions for the Crocker Art Museum*, 2023-2024, no.5.

Literature:

Nigel McKinley, 'Mnemonics & The Complete Artistic Statement', *The Magazine for the International Collector of Watercolours, Drawings and Prints*, Summer 1991, p.11, fig.1 New York, Christie's, *Old Master & Early British Drawings & Watercolors*, 26 January 2012, p.50, under lot 60; William Breazeale, *Drawn to Beauty: Fifteen Years of Acquisitions for the Crocker Art Museum*, exhibition catalogue, Sacramento, 2023-2024, pp.24-27, no.5.

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.