

MARCO DA FAENZA (Faenza (?) 1528 - Faenza 1588)

The Virgin and Child

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, with touches of white heightening.
A study of lips in brown ink on the verso.
Numbered 94(?) at the upper right and inscribed G. F M on the verso.
Further inscribed R and e catti(?) la on the verso.
Inscribed (by a previous owner) charmant dessin / (plume et lavis) / de Federigo Baroccio / peintre et graveur, né / à Urbino au 1526 ou 1528 / mort ds la meme ville / en 1612 / Paris, le 30 novembre 45 / Fleur(?) de Menthon(?) on the old backing board.
121 x 78 mm. (4 3/4 x 3 1/8 in.)

The present sheet is a typical example of Marco da Faenza's animated draughtsmanship, which is characterized by fluid penwork and areas of soft brown wash. Like many of his drawings, it shows something of the influence of the artists with whom he worked in Rome during the 1570's and 1580's, notably Raffaellino da Reggio and Cesare Nebbia. Drawings by Marchetti are relatively scarce and, as they can only rarely be connected with known works, are often difficult to date. The largest number of drawings by the artist is in the collection of the Uffizi in Florence, while a small but significant group is in the Louvre.

An autograph variant of this drawing, of similar dimensions, was in a Swiss private collection in 1967.

The inscription G.F.M. on the verso of the backing sheet would appear to be the initials of an as-yet unidentified 17th or early 18th century collector of drawings. The same inscription is found on the backing sheet of a drawing by Giulio Romano which was on the art market in 2003, as well as on two

other drawings, both by Nicolas Poussin of a dancing Bacchus; one in the Krugier-Poniatowski collection and the other in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. All three drawings are numbered in a similar manner to the present sheet; the Giulio Romano is numbered 94, the Krugier Poussin 93 and the Getty Poussin 109. Two further drawings with the G.F.M. inscription, both anonymous sheets of the 16th century and numbered 108 and 125, are in a French private collection. The numbering of these drawings would suggest that the collector assembled his drawings in albums.

Provenance:

An unidentified collector's monogram G F M in brown ink on the verso of the backing sheet
Private collection, Paris, in 1945
Anonymous sale ('Collection du Comte de M***'), Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 12 April 2008, lot 15.

Artist description:

Marco Marchetti, known as Marco da Faenza after his birthplace, is best known as a designer and painter of grotesque decorations. The early years of his career were spent mainly in Rome, where around 1553 he decorated some of the rooms of the Palazzo Ricci Sacchetti. Giorgio Vasari writes that he was in great demand as a painter of grottesche, and praises his work very highly, as did the later biographer Giovanni Baglione, who described the artist as a 'gran maestro' in the field of decorative painting. By the mid-1550s Marchetti was working in Florence, where he executed an extensive series of grotesque decorations and ceiling paintings in the rooms of the Palazzo Vecchio, under the supervision of Vasari. The decorative grottesche of the rooms of the Quartiere degli Elementi in the Palazzo Vecchio are perhaps the finest manifestation of Marchetti's work in this field. After a period in Rome, the artist returned to Florence to work with Vasari between 1564 and 1566 on the apparati to celebrate the marriage of Francesco de' Medici, and was elected to the Florentine Accademia in October 1565. After some time working in Faenza and Rimini, Marchetti spent the latter part of his career in Rome, where one of his most important commissions was for the grottesche decoration of the Vatican Logge of Pope Gregory XIII, which he took over after the death of Lorenzo Sabatini in 1576. He was also active as a painter of religious subjects, including a series of paintings in the cloister of SS. Trinità dei Monti in Rome. Near the end of his life Marchetti seems to have settled in his native town of Faenza, where he worked on the decoration of the palace of the Cardinal Legate and in 1585 painted scenes from the life of Saint Francis for the monastery of the Osservanti.

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