

Giovanni Battista RICCI (Novara c.1537 - Rome 1627)

Study of a Seated Saint or Prophet

Black chalk, heightened with touches of white chalk, on blue paper.
Squared for transfer in black chalk.
272 x 205 mm. (10 3/4 x 8 1/8 in.)

Although the bulk of G. B. Ricci's extant drawings are in pen and ink, a handful of chalk drawings by the artist are known. This drawing – a design for figure to be placed in a spandrel or lunette – may be likened to several drawings by Ricci in black chalk on blue paper, some of which, like the present sheet, have previously borne attributions to the Ricci's contemporary in Rome, Girolamo Muziano (1532-1592).

Among such comparable drawings is a chalk study of Saint Matthew and the Angel in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, which is a study for one of the pendentives supporting the dome of the Roman church of Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini, painted by Ricci around 1612-1613. Also stylistically comparable are two preparatory drawings by Ricci, both in the Louvre, for his lunette frescoes in the Cerasi chapel of Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, as well as a study of a Seated Evangelist, also in the Louvre. A double-sided drawing on blue paper, formerly in the collection of the late Alfred Moir, may also be by the same hand as the present sheet.

The attribution of the present sheet to Giovanni Battista Ricci is due to John Marciari.

Provenance:

Jonathan Richardson, Junior, London (with a faint trace of his collector's mark [Lugt 2170] stamped at the lower right corner)
Two indistinct collector's marks, one in red (possibly Charles Gasc, Paris [Lugt 543]) and the other in

black, stamped at the lower right corner of the sheet
Albert Finot, Troyes (Lugt 3627)
His posthumous sale, Paris, Hôtel Drouot, 6 December 1982, lot 23 (as attributed to Lorenzo Lotto), sold for 12,000 francs; Anonymous sale, London, Christie's, 10 December 1991, lot 119 (as attributed to Girolamo Muziano)
Anonymous sale, London, Christie's South Kensington, 7 December 1993, lot 12 (as attributed to Girolamo Muziano)
Private collection, London.

Artist description:

Very little is known of the early career of the Lombard painter and draughtsman Giovanni Battista Ricci before his arrival in Rome at the beginning of the 1580's. Mainly active as a fresco painter during the pontificates of Sixtus V, Clement VIII and Paul V, Ricci was one of the busiest painters in Rome during this period, and was elected to the Virtuosi al Pantheon in 1583 and, five years later, to the Accademia di San Luca. He was awarded a number of prestigious ecclesiastical commissions in Rome, notably at the Vatican, where he worked on the Scala Santa and the Sistine Library in collaboration with Cesare Nebbia and Giovanni Guerra, as well as at St. Peter's (where he designed the stucco decoration of the ceiling of the portico) and San Giovanni Laterano. He was also named soprintendente of painting at the Papal palace on the Quirinale between 1591 and 1593, working alongside Guerra and Nebbia. Much of Ricci's work survives in Rome today, mainly in the form of fresco cycles in the Vatican and in such Roman churches as San Marcello al Corso, Sant'Agostino, Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini, San Francesco a Ripa and Santa Maria Traspontina.