

Jan van der Straet STRADANUS (Bruges 1523 - Florence 1604)

A Prophet or Apostle

Black and red chalk, pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with touches of white.
Signed, dated and inscribed ioannus stradanus Achademico / di fiorenza 159[0?] at the bottom.
180 x 128 mm. (7 1/8 x 5 in.)

The present sheet is closely related to a series of around thirty drawings of prophets and other Biblical figures by Stradanus, all of similar dimensions and technique, some of which were engraved by Cornelis Galle. The prints after Stradanus's drawings appeared in two different printed publications. In 1613, several years after the death of Stradanus, nineteen of the drawings, as well as a title page, were published as 'Icones Prophetarum Veteris Testamenti' by Theodoor Galle in Antwerp. A further seven prints were added to the series when it was republished, sometime after 1636, by Theodoor's son Johannes Galle, with the title 'Icones Prophetarum Veteris Testamenti à Ioanne Stradano delineatae, à Ioanne Gallaeo excusae, à Corn. Gallaeo sculptae. Antverpiae'. Like a handful of examples from this distinctive group of drawings, however, the present sheet does not seem to have been engraved for either of the known editions of the Icones Prophetarum Veteris Testamenti, and may have been intended for another series of prints of saints or figures from the New Testament that was never published.

Other drawings by Stradanus from this group are today in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh, the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool, the Courtauld Institute Gallery in London, the Morgan Library and Museum in New York, the Fondation Custodia (Frits Lugt Collection) in Paris and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC., as well as in several private collections. A few of these drawings, including the present sheet, bears dates in the 1590's, and the group as a whole may be dated to the last ten or fifteen years of the artist's life.

Provenance:

Possibly A. Mos, Arnhem, or Dr. J. Nieuwenhuizen Kruseman, Haarlem
Possibly their sale, Amsterdam, R. W. P. de Vries, 7-8 November 19281
Iohan Quirijn van Regteren Altena, Amsterdam (his posthumous sale stamp [Lugt 4617] on the verso)
Thence by descent until 2014.

Literature:

Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, Foreign Catalogue, 1977, Vol.I, p.277, note 7, under no.6312; Karel G. Boon, The Netherlandish and German Drawings of the XVth and XVIth Centuries of the Frits Lugt Collection, Paris, 1992, Vol.I, p.356, under no.201, note 24; Alessandra Baroni Vannucci, Jan Van Der Straet detto Giovanni Stradano: flandrus pictor et inventor, Milan, 1997, p.331, under no.656; Joaneath Spicer, Dutch and Flemish Drawings from the National Gallery of Canada, exhibition catalogue, Ottawa and elsewhere, 2004, p.42, under no.11, p.167, under no.11, note 2; Stefaan Hautekeete, ed., From Floris to Rubens: Master Drawings from a Belgian Private Collection, exhibition catalogue, Brussels and Maastricht, 2016, p.112, under nos.38-39.

Artist description:

A pupil of Peter Aertsen in Antwerp, Jan van der Straet became an independent master there in the early 1540's. Soon afterwards he travelled to Italy, and by 1545 had settled in Florence, where he worked for most of the remainder of his career. (Between 1550 and 1553 he worked in Rome, assisting Francesco Salviati on the decorations of the Vatican Belvedere.) Known in Italy as Giovanni Stradano, he joined the group of artists working on the extensive decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio under the supervision of Giorgio Vasari, whose principal assistant and collaborator he became. More than perhaps any other artist save Vasari, Stradanus's work dominated the decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio, and as well as contributing a large part of the fresco decoration of the apartments of Eleanora of Toledo and designing a number of tapestries, he also provided two paintings for the Studiolo of Francesco I de' Medici. He painted several altarpieces for Florentine churches remodelled by Vasari, notably at Santa Maria Novella, Santo Spirito and Santa Croce, where in 1564 he also contributed to the decoration of the tomb of Michelangelo.

Stradanus worked for the Medici throughout his career, creating over 130 cartoons for the Arazzeria Medicea, the tapestry factory founded by Duke Cosimo de' Medici in 1557. Among his most important tapestry commissions were a series of hunting scenes for the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano, executed in 1567. Following a visit to Antwerp around 1578, Stradanus began to design engravings, eventually producing a large number of drawings destined to be translated into prints. Many of his designs for prints were sent to Antwerp to be engraved, notably by the Galle family of printmakers and publishers. As one scholar has noted, 'It is as print designer and draftsman that he excelled...Hundreds of his designs – all engraved, published, and distributed throughout Europe by printmakers in Antwerp - attest to Stradanus's particular strength: his inventiveness in subject, composition, and disposition, all particularly well suited for the scale and scope of works on paper.' Significant groups of drawings by Stradanus are today in the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York (around 150 sheets, mainly designs for book illustrations) and the Uffizi, as well as the collection of the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, which contains a number of tapestry designs.