

**Tomasso (Maso) FINIGUERRA (Florence 1426 - Florence 1464)**

**A Man Carrying a Large Bunch of Grapes (The Return from Canaan?) [recto]; A Galloping Horse [verso]**

Pen and brown ink and brown wash.

182 x 122 mm. (7 1/8 x 4 3/4 in.)

This striking 15th century drawing may be included among a distinctive group of figure studies by Maso Finiguerra, which have generally been dated between the 1450s and the artist's death in 1464. As Hugo Chapman has pointed out, 'It is Finiguerra's skill as a designer of figures and small-scale figurative compositions that is reflected in his drawings, all of which are executed in pen and ink, often with wash. In [his drawings], the clear definition and crispness of the pen outlines over a black chalk underdrawing, with sparing use of wash…to indicate shading, correspond closely to the linear quality and limited tonal range of nielli…Drawings such as these served as a repository of figural ideas that could be used by Finiguerra to speed up the compositional process...In addition to the model-book function of such studies, the practice of drawing from life, which included making studies from nude models, was clearly important to Finiguerra in honing his artistic skills, both in the wielding of the engraving burin and to widen the repertoire of poses and gestures at his command.'

Vasari was familiar with Finiguerra's drawings, many of which may have been part of his famous libro de' disegni. As he wrote, 'This man drew very well and in abundance, and in our book are many of his drawings of figures, both draped and nude, and scenes done in water-colour.' At the time of Finiguerra's death in 1464, his studio inventory included fourteen books or albums of drawings bound in

parchment, as well as several loose sheets. These books of drawings - primarily studies of posed models, usually young workshop assistants, or garzoni - were valued greatly by the artist's descendants, and were retained first by his brother and fellow goldsmith Francesco (who, in the artist's will drawn up in 1464, was expressly forbidden from selling any of them) and later by Maso's son Pierantonio. Finiguerra had intended that these drawings should be kept together, for the benefit of whichever of his descendants might carry on his workshop. A large group of these figure drawings, amounting to almost a hundred sheets, is today in the Uffizi in Florence, while an album of twenty-three drawings is in the Louvre in Paris, and other studies are in the Szépmüvészeti Múzeum in Budapest, the British Museum and the Courtauld Gallery in London, the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana in Milan, the Pierpont Morgan Library and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Istituto Centrale per la Grafica in Rome, the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro, and elsewhere.

As John Marciari has noted of these figure studies, 'Most of these drawings presumably come from the fourteen books of drawings that were still held by Finiguerra's heirs at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and it was probably on this basis that Vasari was able to attribute the drawings to the artist. Yet by the nineteenth century, most of the drawings had been given instead to Antonio Pollaiuolo and his circle, due both to the connection of [some] sheets…to Pollaiuolo's prints and paintings and to the attributions inscribed in the Louvre album: Disegni di A. Pollaivolo (?) on the title page as well as Pollaiuolo's name (in both Italian and Greek) on the third page of the album. Degenhart and Schmitt returned the group to Finiguerra and his workshop, and more recent scholars, including Lorenza Melli, have argued that many of the drawings are by Finiguerra himself.'

While a large number of drawings in this so-called 'Finiguerra group' - including the present sheet - can be attributed to Maso Finiguerra himself, others have been given to artists in his circle. As has been noted of these studies, '[there is] among all the drawings a generic relationship which suggests that if they were not done by Maso himself they were at least done in his shop or under his influence.' As was noted by Marciari, some of the 'Finiguerra group' of drawings have previously born attributions to the contemporary Florentine painter, sculptor and engraver Antonio del Pollaiuolo (c.1432-1498). The two artists almost certainly knew each other and may have collaborated; indeed, Maso is thought to have used Pollaiuolo's designs for some of his silver work. Furthermore, the influence of the younger artist can be seen in Finiguerra's autograph drawings of his later years.

The present sheet has a long and fascinating provenance. It has recently been noted that this drawing was once part of an album of forty-six drawings by Finiguerra and his school that were formerly in the Medici collections, possibly since the time of Christina of Lorraine, Grand Duchess of Tuscany (1565-1637). The album was acquired, sometime between the 1730s and 1770s, by the Anglo-Florentine painter, critic and art agent Ignazio Enrico Hugford (1703-1778). The year after Hugford's death, over 3,100 drawings from his collection, including the album containing the present sheet, were purchased for the Uffizi collections by the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Leopold II. In July 1793, however, this album of Finiguerra drawings, its contents then attributed to Pollaiuolo, was recorded as having been stolen from the Uffizi. Interestingly, it seems to have then been in the possession of Giuseppe Pelli Bencivenni (1729-1808), who served as Director of the Uffizi between 1775 and 1793.

At some point in the late 18th or early 19th century the album was broken up and divided into two separate volumes. One of these, bearing the coat of arms of Christina of Lorraine on the cover and containing around twenty-three drawings, was acquired by the French painter and collector Léon Bonnat (1833-1922) and is now in the Louvre. The other album, containing eighteen or nineteen drawings, including this double-sided sheet, remained in the possession of the Pelli (Bencivenni) Fabbroni family in Florence, and are recorded in photographs taken in 1946. The same year, this album of drawings by Finiguerra and his studio was acquired from the Pelli Fabbroni family by the Austrian museum curator

and art historian Leo Planiscig (1887-1952), a specialist in Italian Renaissance sculpture who lived in Florence from 1938 until his death. After passing through the De Sanctis collection, the album was sold at auction in Geneva in 1947 and acquired by the Libreria Ulrico Hoepli in Milan, by whom the drawings were removed from the album and dispersed. Seven drawings by Finiguerra sharing the same provenance as the present sheet until 1947 are now in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, while two others are in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Courtauld Gallery in London. Another drawing by Finiguerra, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, also shared the same provenance as the present sheet until 2002.

**Literature:**

Bernhard Degenhart and Annegrit Schmitt, Corpus der Italienischen Zeichnungen 1300-1450: Sud- und Mittelitalien, Berlin, 1968, Vol.II, p.612, figs.951-952, p.617, p.621, note 62; Lorenza Melli, Maso Finiguerra: I disegni, Florence, 1995, pp.95-96, nos.131-132, pp.194-195, figs.147-148; Francesco Grisolia, 'Per Maso Finiguerra: Sulle trace di un "libretto in quarto di disegni"', Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, 2018, pp.301-303, note 34, figs.20-21; Rhoda Eitel-Porter and John Marciari, Italian Renaissance Drawings at the Morgan Library and Museum, New York, 2019, p.118, note 1, under no.18 (entry by John Marciari).

**Artist description:**

The Florentine draughtsman, goldsmith and engraver Maso Finiguerra was the son and grandson of goldsmiths. He trained with his father until around 1457, and as an independent artist gained a number of important commissions and enjoyed the patronage of such Florentine collectors as Giovanni Rucellai. He was best known as a maker of nielli; a kind of engraving on small silver plates or objects, in which the incised lines were filled with a black mixture of sulphur, silver and lead, creating an image that contrasted with the polished silver surround, and which could also be recorded as printed impressions. During his lifetime, the artist was praised in Antonio Filarete's Trattato dell'architettura, written between 1457 and 1464, as one of the finest goldsmiths in Italy, while also excelling in the niello technique. Finiguerra is also mentioned by Giorgio Vasari, writing a century later, who notes that he 'had an extraordinary fame, and deservedly, since there had never been seen any master of engraving and of niello who could make so great a number of figures as he could, whether in a small or in a large space.' Finiguerra is also known to have provided designs for wooden intarsia panels, notably for the sacristy of the Duomo in Florence. Although he died in his late thirties, his influence is evident in the work of later Florentine draughtsmen and engravers.