

17th Century FLORENTINE SCHOOL

Design for Two Spandrels, with Allegorical Figures of Faith and the Church

Red chalk and red wash, over an underdrawing in pen and brown ink, on two joined sheets of paper, laid down.

Inscribed *Dom. Maria Canuti* at the lower right centre and numbered *N1524* in the centre of the sheet.

Inscribed *Vignali*(?) at the lower right centre.

Further inscribed (in a modern hand) *Domenico Maria Canuti* / V*ery similar figures occur in fresco S.S. Domenico e Sisto, Rome.* / *One with book + one with cup, but more foreshortened and divided* / *from each other by decorative frame.* in pencil on the old mount.

Also inscribed (by Philip Pouncey) *Giovanni da san Giovanni? P.P.* in pencil on the old mount.

232 x 448 mm. (9 1/8 x 17 5/8 in.)

The author of this interesting and spirited drawing has thus far resisted a firm identification. The sheet bears a traditional attribution to the 17th century Bolognese painter Domenico Maria Canuti (1620-1684). As noted in the modern inscription on the former mount, similar allegorical female figures appear above an arch in Canuti's extensive fresco decoration of the dome and apse of the Roman church of Santi Domenico e Sisto, a project begun in 1673 and completed in 1675. Although he painted altarpieces and easel pictures throughout his career, it was as a fresco painter of such grand ceiling decorations that Canuti came to be best known.

However, this energetic drawing seems, on balance, more likely to be the work of a Florentine artist. The scholar and connoisseur Philip Pouncey had proposed a tentative attribution to Giovanni Mannozzi, known as Giovanni da San Giovanni (1592-1636), the leading fresco painter in Florence in the second quarter of the 17th century. Pouncey's attribution would appear to have some merit, by a stylistic comparison with such vigorously-executed drawings by Giovanni da San Giovanni as an early red chalk study for a mural fresco composition in the Uffizi in Florence, or with the figure types in a finished drawing of an allegorical subject of Peace, executed in red, black and white chalk, also in the Uffizi.

More recently, an attribution to another Florentine artist of the Seicento, Giovanni Maria Morandi (1622-1717) has been put forward. Although Florentine by birth, Giovanni Maria Morandi is unusual among his artistic compatriots in spending most of his career away from his home city, and his style reflects a combination of both Tuscan and Roman elements. Many of Morandi's few surviving drawings are

related to his religious commissions, although several remain unconnected to extant works. His draughtsmanship is characterized by a preference for a combination of red chalk with red wash and white heightening, as seen in the present sheet. As Erich Schleier has noted, '*This technique, which the artist adopted from his teacher Giovanni Bilivert, is typical of many, indeed most, of Morandi's composition drawings. He applies the red chalk with great delicacy, softness and looseness for transparent shadings. At the same time, with the combination of the red chalk with the white highlights, he achieves painterly effects similar to those he obtains in other drawings by the more extensive use of red wash.*'

It may be noted that a very similar treatment of hands is found on the verso of a drawing depicting a man holding a violin, executed in red chalk and red wash, in the Louvre. Formerly attributed to both Morandi and Canuti, the Louvre sheet is now given to the Florentine painter Pier Dandini (1646-1712).