Attributed to Annibale CARRACCI (Bologna 1560 - Rome 1609)

The Head of a Young Child

Red chalk.

A small made-up area on the upper forehead of the child and another above the child's proper right eyebrow and the upper left side of his head.

Laid down on an 18th century English (Richardson) mount, inscribed Annibale. in brown ink in the lower margin.

The reverse of the mount inscribed with Richardson's shelfmarks B.10. / AA.60. / 61. / A.22. / f in brown ink, and, in a different hand, the Saint-Morys sale code 41 and 1D. L. 64 (Lugt 3510) in brown ink.

137 x 118 mm. (5 3/8 x 4 5/8 in.) [sheet]

As Daniele Benati has pointed out, although he never married or had children of his own, 'Annibale was the author of several enchanting and extraordinarily tender images of children.' The present sheet would appear to be a study for the head of the Christ Child in Annibale Carracci's devotional canvas of The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine, a youthful work painted in c.1585-1587 and today in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte in Naples. Commissioned by Duke Ranuccio Farnese in Parma and then sent by him to Rome for his younger brother Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, the painting was for many years kept in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome but by 1680 is recorded in the Palazzo del Giardino in Parma. However, it had lost its attribution to Annibale Carracci by the time it entered the collections at Capodimonte at the beginning of the 19th century, and was only identified as an early work by him, by the art historian Ferdinando Bologna, in 1956. The painting reveals the particular influence of Correggio on Annibale; as has been noted, 'At this age the young artist admired Correggio's work over anything else, even Raphael's, and his drawings and paintings of the mid-1580s attest to this devotion.' As Donald Posner has described the Capodimonte Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine, '[it] is perhaps Annibale's purest re-creation of Correggio's visual poetry. The intimacy and melodious flow of the forms, the touchingly sweet, gentle types, and the sfumato, creating a unifying, all-enveloping, warm and

golden atmosphere, amount to a kind of Correggesque tour de force.'

A very similar head is also found in the Christ Child in another early painting by Annibale Carracci, a Holy Family in the collection of the National Trust at Tatton Park in Cheshire that is likewise datable to c.1585. Among stylistically and thematically comparable drawings by Annibale is a small red chalk study of A Child Held in the Arms of its Mother in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

The earliest known owner of this drawing was the English portrait painter, author and connoisseur Jonathan Richardson the Elder (1667-1745), whose mark is found at the lower left corner of the sheet. The drawing is also laid down on a typical Richardson mount, with the collector's handwritten attribution 'Annibale' at the bottom. Richardson's remarkable collection of nearly five thousand drawings, mostly Italian works of the 16th and 17th centuries, was assembled over a period of some fifty years, and included around four dozen drawings by or attributed to the Carracci. The scholar Catherine Loisel, who has accepted the attribution of this drawing to Annibale Carracci, has suggested that the two small made up and restored areas on the present sheet were done by Richardson when the drawing was mounted for him.

This drawing also bears the distinctive collector's mark (Lugt 474) that has been recently identified as that of Charles Paul Jean-Baptiste de Bourgevin Vialart, Comte de Saint-Morys (1743-1795), and which was applied on drawings acquired by him after he went into exile in England in September 1790 and until his death five years later. After Saint-Morys's death, the collection of drawings, numbering over three thousand sheets, was inherited by his only son, Charles Étienne Bourgevin Vialart de Saint-Morys, Comte de Carrière and later Comte de Saint-Morys (1772-1817), who sold them at auction in two sales held in London in 1797 and 1799. It is thought that the Lugt 474 stamp was applied to the drawings in the Saint-Morys collection before the 1797 sale, at which time a code written in ink was also added to the versos of the drawings or their mounts. On the present sheet, the code '1D. L. 64' indicates that this drawing was sold on the first day of the auction (10 June 1797), as part of lot 64. That particular lot contained fifteen drawings by different artists, including, apart from the present sheet, two sheets of studies by Jacques de Gheyn III that are now in the collection of the Harvard University Art Museums.

The unidentified collector's mark C.D.C. (Lugt 525) stamped on the present sheet is also found on a very small number of Italian and Netherlandish drawings, all of which also bear the Lugt 474 mark. Interestingly, each of the nine known drawings that have both the Lugt 474 (floral 'C') and Lugt 525 ('C.D.C.') marks were sold as part of lots 63 (containing twelve drawings) and 64 (fifteen drawings, including the present sheet) on the first day of the 1797 sale of the Comte de Carrière's collection in London. It has been suggested that the C.D.C. stamp may have been a proposed collector's mark applied to some of the drawings at the time of the sale. As Julian Brooks and Casey Lee have pointed out, in the present sheet 'the floral "C" mark was stamped haphazardly no fewer than three times, twice without ink. What could be the purpose of this, and what could be the intention of the "C.D.C" mark?...Is it possible that these lots [ie. lots 63 and 64 of the 1797 sale] were "guinea pigs" for testing how the mark would look, both as a dry stamp and an inked stamp, and that the "C.D.C" mark was presented as an alternative, subsequently rejected option? It seems unlikely that a French aristocrat would propose a "C.D.C" mark for the Comte de Carrière, but might an English auction house employee have done so? At least part of the mystery continues.'

Literature:

Julian Brooks and Casey Lee, 'The Identification of the "Pseudo-Crozat" Mark (Lugt 474)', Master Drawings, Autumn 2021, pp.404-405, figs.20-21 (as Italian School Seventeenth-Century, location unknown); Transcription of Auctioneer Henry Phillips's Annotated Catalogues of the 1797 and 1799

Sales of the Drawings of the Comte de Carrière [https://masterdrawings.org/content/digital-resources/], p.7, fig.11 (as Anonymous Seventeenth-Century Italian School, location unknown).