

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Francesco BRIZIO (Bologna c.1574 - Bologna 1623)**

**A Vision of the Virgin and Child with Angels Appearing to Saint Jerome**

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, on buff paper, laid down on an 18th century English mount.

Inscribed St Mathew, Julio Cesari(?) and Cosways stamp in pencil on the mount.

Further inscribed Lady Sidmouth / Presented to Eliza Hobhouse 1842 in brown ink formerly at the top of the mount and now cut out and attached to the reverse of the mount.

344 x 235 mm. (13 1/2 x 9 1/4 in.)

Francesco Brizio's drawings are, like his paintings, particularly indebted to the example of Ludovico Carracci. He had a distinctive manner of drawing, with an emphasis on the depiction of form through brown wash and white heightening to achieve a painterly effect, and the present sheet may be compared stylistically with such drawings by the artist as a Saint Benedict in Ecstasy in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm and a Saint James the Greater and a Hermit Saint Kneeling Before a Statue of the Virgin and Child in the Albertina in Vienna, as well as The Virgin and Child with Saints Francis of Assisi and Carlo Borromeo in the Hamburger Kunsthalle in Hamburg.

This drawing bears the distinctive collector's mark of the English portrait painter and miniaturist Richard Cosway RA (1742-1821), a leading artistic figure of the Georgian era. A noted connoisseur, collector and marchand-amateur, Cosway assembled fine collections of Old Master paintings, decorative arts, books, furniture, armour, sculpture and objects, as well as around 8,000 prints and some 2,700

drawings. Most of his drawings were acquired at auctions in London, and he had a particular penchant for Italian works of the 16th and 17th centuries and Flemish drawings of the 17th century. Cosway's collection of drawings - which included groups of works by Correggio, Giulio Romano, Jordaens, Parmigianino, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian and Van Dyck, among others - was much admired by such fellow collectors and connoisseurs as Sir Thomas Lawrence. (Despite himself assembling arguably the finest collection of Old Master drawings ever formed in England, Lawrence appears to have been quite envious of Cosway's collection, to judge from his comments in a letter from him to Joseph Farington of 1811: 'I have been out...to see Cosway's Drawings, and I am returned most heavily depressed in spirit from the strong impression of the past dreadful waste of time and improvidence of my Life and Talent...') Stored in portfolios and albums, Cosway's collection of prints and drawings were dispersed at auction over a period of eight days in February 1822, a few months after his death. Only a small percentage of Old Master drawings from Cosway's collection have been identified today, however.

The present sheet may have been acquired at the Cosway sale in 1822 by Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth (1757-1844). It is certainly known to have been in the possession of his second wife, the Hon. Marianne Townsend (d.1842), whom he married in 1823, the year after the Cosway sale. According to the inscription on the old mount, Lady Sidmouth in turn presented this drawing to her goddaughter Eliza Hobhouse in 1842, the year of the former's death. (Another Old Master drawing given by Lady Sidmouth to Eliza Hobhouse, also in 1842, is a large Portrait of Nicolas Trigault SJ in Chinese Costume by Peter Paul Rubens, which is today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.)

### **Artist description:**

Francesco Brizio was a pupil of Bartolomeo Passarotti in Bologna before transferring at the age of eighteen to the Accademia degli Incamminati, the Carracci academy in Bologna. He learned the art of engraving from Agostino Carracci and developed into a talented printmaker, producing a number of engravings after works by Ludovico and Agostino Carracci, Parmigianino and Correggio. Following Agostino's departure for Rome in 1597, Brizio seems to have taken over his printmaking business in Bologna. At the same time he began to work closely with Ludovico Carracci, whom he assisted on some major public commissions, notably the decoration of the Palazzo Fava in Bologna between 1598 and 1600 and the cloister of the monastery of San Michele in Bosco, completed in 1605. Brizio was given charge of the Carracci studio when Ludovico went to Rome in 1602, and among his earliest significant independent commissions was the fresco decoration of the Negri-Formagliari chapel in the Bolognese church of San Giacomo Maggiore, completed in 1602. Together with Leonello Spada and Lucio Massari, Brizio worked on the fresco decoration of the Palazzo Bonfioli Rossi in Bologna and the Oratorio della Santissima Trinità at Pieve di Cento. Other churches in Bologna decorated with frescoes, paintings or altarpieces by Brizio include San Colombano, San Domenico, San Martino Maggiore, San Michele in Bosco, San Petronio and San Salvatore. Brizio painted decorative frescoes for other villas and palaces in Bologna and the surrounding area, and also worked in Modena and Cento. Towards the end of his life he worked on an extensive cycle of fresco decorations in the Palazzo Orlandini-Marescalchi.

In his brief account of Brizio's career, the 17th century Bolognese biographer Carlo Cesare Malvasia noted the artist's small-scale works in particular, which he praised for their 'delicacy and grace' ('delicatezza e leggiadria'). By the end of the 18th century, however, Brizio had been almost forgotten as a painter, and when he was occasionally noted in documents it was mainly for his work as an engraver. It is only in the last two or three decades that Brizio's work as a painter and draughtsman has been the subject of renewed scholarly attention.

The largest extant group of drawings by Brizio, amounting to around nine or ten sheets, is today in the Koenig-Fachsenfeld collection at the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. Other drawings by the artist are in the collections of the Harvard University Art Museums in Cambridge (MA), the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, the National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh, the Uffizi in Florence, the British Museum, the Courtauld Galleries and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Staatliche Graphische

Sammlung in Munich, Christ Church in Oxford, the Louvre in Paris, the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice, the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, and elsewhere.