

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Daniel DUMONSTIER (Paris 1574 - Paris 1646)**

**Portrait of Cardinal Jacques Davy du Perron**

Red and black chalk.

Inscribed LE CARDINAL DU PERRON and dated 1613 at the top of the sheet.

Traces of an erased inscription and date in black chalk near the centre right edge.

Further inscribed J. Niel (Lugt 1944) in brown ink on the verso.

441 x 343 mm. (17 3/8 x 13 1/2 in.)

The present sheet can be situated within a long artistic tradition of portrait drawings executed in black, red and white chalks by French artists extending from Jean Clouet around 1500 through François Quesnel to Daniel Dumontier and Nicolas Lagneau in the first half of the 17th century. Dumontier's portrait drawings were generally larger in scale than those of earlier artists, at about half life-size and usually in three-quarter profile, and display a more pronounced interest in physiognomy and somewhat less of a focus on costume. The artist often dated his drawings; the earliest was done in 1600 and the latest are dated 1642 and 1644. The most important groups of drawings by Dumontier are today in the Louvre and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the Musée Condé in Chantilly, the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and the James A. de Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor in Aylesbury, Berkshire.

The sitter of this portrait drawing, the French politician and Catholic cardinal Jacques Davy du Perron

(1556-1618), was born to a noble family in Saint-Lô in Normandy. The son of a Protestant minister, he was raised and educated in Bern in Switzerland, where his family had fled to escape religious persecution. By 1578, however, du Perron seems to have renounced his Protestant upbringing and had entered royal service at the court of King Henri III, by whom he was appointed *lecteur de la chambre du Roy*, and also served as a royal scholar of languages, philosophy and mathematics. He took religious orders in the late 1580s, and in 1591 was appointed Bishop of Évreux by the new King Henri IV, whom he instructed in the Catholic faith. In 1604 du Perron was created a cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, and served in Rome between 1605 and 1607, participating in two papal conclaves in quick succession and serving as cardinal priest of the church of Sant'Agnese in Agone. Du Perron sent many letters to Henri IV reporting on events at the papal court, and acted for the King as a mediator between the Republic of Venice and Pope Paul V. In 1606 the King named him Archbishop of Sens, although he did not take up the position until October 1608, a year after he had left Rome and returned to France. Du Perron died in 1618, at the age of sixty-three.

This fine sheet was part of a large group of portrait drawings by Daniel Dumonstier assembled by the diplomat and ambassador Philippe de Béthune (1561-1649), the younger brother of the Duc de Sully, minister to King Henry IV. Béthune was a noted collector, and during the period of his appointment as the French ambassador in Rome between 1601 and 1605 he acquired a number of important Italian paintings. He is thought to have purchased several hundred drawings by Dumonstier from his family, shortly after the death of the artist. At his own death in 1649 these passed to his son, Comte Hippolyte de Béthune (1603-1665), along with a library of manuscripts, letters and documents assembled in some 1,500 volumes. (As Daniel Lecoer has pointed out, the signatures and dates on many of the drawings by Dumonstier that he owned were scraped off by Hippolyte de Béthune in the middle of the 17th century, as is evident in the present sheet.) Having turned down an offer of 300,000 livres from Queen Christina of Sweden in 1652, Hippolyte de Béthune bequeathed the entire collection to King Louis XIV for the *Bibliothèque du Roi*. However, the drawings by Dumonstier were soon dispersed, and only fourteen portrait drawings by the artist from the Béthune collection are still today in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris. Other Dumonstier drawings with the same provenance are in the Louvre, the *Musée Condé* at Chantilly, the *Hermitage* in St. Petersburg and at Waddesdon Manor in Berkshire.

The present sheet was among a group of very fine portrait drawings belonging to Jules Niel (1800-1872), the librarian at the Ministry of the Interior and a collector of prints and drawings. As Frits Lugt has noted, 'at a time when they were still little appreciated, [Niel] was one of the first to collect excellent portraits drawn by the schools of Clouet and Dumonstier. Several were later bought from him by the Louvre, others are now in Bonnat's collection.' In 1849 Niel sold three drawings by Dumonstier to the Louvre, while in 1848 and 1856 he published two volumes entitled *Portraits de personnages français les plus illustrées*, containing facsimile reproductions of some of the finest 16th century portrait drawings in French public collections. This portrait of Cardinal du Perron does not appear in the posthumous sale of Niel's collection in Paris in March 1873, and may have been acquired directly from Niel or his heirs by the French diplomat Comte Alfred-Louis Lebeuf de Montgermont (1841-1918), from whose estate it was sold at auction in 1919.

A copy of this drawing is at Waddesdon Manor, while a related engraving by Michel Lasne, shows the sitter in reverse, wearing different vestments and with the order of Saint-Esprit.

#### **Literature:**

Daniel Lecoer, *Daniel Dumonstier 1574-1646*, Paris, 2006, p.96, no.27 (as location unknown).

#### **Artist description:**

The son of the portraitist Cosme Dumonstier and nephew of the artists Pierre and Etienne Dumonstier,

Daniel Dumonstier worked mainly in Paris and enjoyed a long and successful career as a court painter and valet de chambre to King Henri IV and his successor, Louis XIII. Given lodgings in the Louvre, he made portrait drawings of both male and female members of the French royal family, the aristocracy and nobility, as well as prominent civil servants and many members of the upper classes. Dumonstier was friendly with such writers as François de Malherbe, Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc and Gédéon

Tallemant des Réaux, who described the artist as well-read and noted that he wrote poetry, spoke Italian and Spanish as well as French, and had a wicked sense of humour. Tallemant des Réaux added that, 'When he painted people, he let them do whatever they wanted; sometimes he would just say to them, "Turn around". He made them more beautiful than they were, and for this reason he said: "They are so foolish that they think they are like I make them, and pay me better for it."' In 1626 Dumonstier

was named peintre et valet de chambre to Gaston d'Orléans, the King's younger brother. He assembled a fine library of books and manuscripts, part of which was acquired after his death by Cardinal Mazarin.