

Edmé BOUCHARDON (Chaumont-en-Bassigny 1698 - Paris 1762)

A Seated Satyr, after Annibale Carracci

Red chalk, with framing lines in brown ink. Laid down.

Faintly inscribed Clodion in black chalk at the lower right.

405 x 226 mm. (16 x 8 7/8 in.)

During his long stay in Rome, between 1723 and 1732, Edmé Bouchardon produced over five hundred drawn copies in red chalk of paintings and sculptures to be found in the churches and palaces of the Eternal City. (The Louvre alone holds 261 drawings by the artist after Antique, Renaissance and Baroque paintings, sculptures and frescoes in Rome.) As Édouard Kopp has noted, 'Bouchardon's numerous copies after painting and sculpture were far from strictly reproductive, but rather generally prompted by personal selection and interpretation. They reveal that his motives were much more ambitious than those of a mere student in training, as he sought to gain recognition as a learned draftsman in artistic and antiquarian circles…His extreme dedication, however, also amounted to a voracious form of collecting. His copies were not a series of unrelated, discrete studies. Instead, they were conceived as a whole, a kind of personal "paper museum", as much as a repertoire of forms as a collection of artifacts.' Bouchardon's copy drawings, with their refined manner and elegant style, also greatly appealed to contemporary collectors such as Jean de Jullienne and the Comte de Caylus.

This large sheet is a copy after a seated satyr in Annibale Carracci's extensive fresco decoration on the vault of the galleria of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, executed between 1597 and 1601. The subject of the present sheet is one of two seated satyrs flanking a fresco of Hyacinth Born to the Heavens by Apollo, situated above a fictive canvas of Polyphemus and Galatea on the end wall of the room.

Bouchardon made a number of red chalk copies of paintings by Annibale Carracci and his studio, although these are relatively few in number in comparison to his more numerous drawings after works by Raphael and Domenichino. A smaller and less finished red chalk drawing of the same satyr in the Farnese Gallery, traditionally attributed to Bouchardon and showing more of the architectural elements surrounding the figure in the fresco, is in the Louvre. Annibale Carracci's own preparatory drawing for the same satyr, drawn in black chalk on blue paper and displaying a number of differences from the final fresco, particularly in the physiognomy of the figure, is also in the Louvre.

Artist description:

One of the most significant French sculptors of the 18th century, Edme Bouchardon was a pupil of Guillaume Coustou and won the Prix de Rome for sculpture in 1723. He spent the next nine years in Rome, receiving commissions for sculptures and portrait busts from British and French visitors to the city, and was admitted to the Roman Accademia di San Luca in 1723. He was also involved in several significant sculptural projects and competitions during his time in Rome, notably the design for the tomb of Pope Clement XI in St. Peter's and that of the Trevi Fountain. Bouchardon returned to Paris in 1732 and in 1736 was appointed draughtsman to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, with an annual income of 1,000 livres. Over the course of the next twenty-five years, from 1737 until a few months before his death, Bouchardon provided a large number of designs for both medals and tokens to be executed by various graveurs-médailleurs for the Royal Mint. Admitted into the Académie Royale in 1745, Bouchardon obtained prestigious Royal and public commissions throughout his later career - notably the Fountain of the Four Seasons on the rue de Grenelle in Paris and an equestrian monument to Louis XV, which stood on the Place de la Concorde until the Revolution - and his fame and reputation as a sculptor was unrivalled in the 18th century.

Bouchardon was regarded by connoisseurs, collectors and fellow artists as one of the finest draughtsmen of his day. He was as well known for his drawings as for his sculptural works and indeed chose to exhibit both sculptures and finished drawings (mainly historical and allegorical subjects, as well as portraits) at the Salons. Bouchardon worked almost exclusively in red chalk, and while many of his drawings were intended as preparatory studies for his sculptural projects, many more were done as independent works. That his drawings were greatly admired by his contemporaries is seen in the comments of the artist Charles-Nicolas Cochin, who described Bouchardon as 'certainly the greatest sculptor and the best draughtsman of his century.' The 18th century collector and connoisseur Pierre-Jean Mariette likewise rated Bouchardon very highly as a draughtsman and assembled the largest private collection of his drawings, including the present sheet. Similarly, artists as François Boucher, Jean-Baptiste Deshays, Charles-Joseph Natoire and Jean-François de Troy all owned drawings by Bouchardon. Around two thousand drawings by Bouchardon survive today, of which by far the single largest group – numbering around 1,300 sheets, mostly acquired by bequest from the artist's descendants – is today in the Louvre.