

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Federico ZUCCARO (Sant'Angelo in Vado c.1540/41 - Ancona 1609)

The Head of a Young Man [recto]; Two Heads of Bearded Men [verso]

Red and black chalk.

The verso an offset or counterproof in black and red chalk.

130 x 88 mm. (5 1/8 x 3 1/4 in.)

Watermark: Fragmentary shield?

Both sides of this drawing are studies for the heads of onlookers in Federico Zuccaro's large altarpiece of *The Raising of the Son of a Widow of Nain*, painted for the cathedral of Orvieto. This was one of two altarpieces commissioned from Zuccaro in November 1568 for the second chapel on the left in the Duomo in Orvieto, the other being *The Healing of the Blind Man*. Painted on slate, both works were completed in 1570 but were removed from the church in 1880 and are now in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Orvieto. Zuccaro produced a large number of preparatory drawings for each painting, both overall compositional studies and drawings for individual figures. Drawings by Zuccaro for the *Raising of the Son of a Widow of Nain* are in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, the British Museum in London, the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, the Louvre and the Fondation Custodia in Paris, the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, the Albertina in Vienna, and elsewhere.

The head of a young man on the recto of this sheet is found at the left edge of the composition of the

Orvieto altarpiece, while the two heads on the verso are in reverse to their counterparts among the spectators in the same painting. As the two studies on the verso of this sheet are offset from another drawing, it would appear that the artist was interested in seeing how these two heads would appear in reverse, although he decided against it in the final painting.

Among stylistically comparable drawings of heads by Federico Zuccaro is a portrait of a young boy, formerly in the collection of Richard and Trude Krautheimer and sold at auction in 1996. Other drawings of the same youth by Zuccaro are in the British Museum, the Louvre and the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle.

Artist description:

One of the most important and influential painters of the late 16th century in Italy, Federico Zuccaro was trained in the Roman workshop of his elder brother Taddeo from about the age of ten. Between 1560 and 1563 he assisted his brother on the decoration of the Casino of Pius IV and the Belvedere in the Vatican. He spent the next three years in Florence and Venice, where he painted the fresco decoration of the Grimani chapel in the church of San Francesco della Vigna, before returning to Rome. After

Taddeo's death in September 1566 Federico completed many of his brother's unfinished projects, including fresco cycles in the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola (where he served as capomaestro) and the Sala Regia of the Vatican and the Pucci Chapel in the Roman church of Santa Trinità dei Monti. He also worked on several commissions of his own, such as two altarpieces for the Duomo at Orvieto, painted in 1568, and the decoration of the vault of the Sala di Ercole in the Palazzo Farnese at Caprarola, a project from which he was, however, dismissed in 1569.

Federico Zuccaro was among the most well travelled artists of his day. Unlike Taddeo, he travelled throughout Italy, working in Venice, Florence, Orvieto, Bologna, Urbino, Pavia, Turin, Parma and Mantua, while also visiting France, the Netherlands and England between 1574 and 1575. On his return he received a commission to complete the decoration of the cupola of the Duomo in Florence, begun by

Vasari and completed by Zuccaro between 1576 and 1579. The next year he was back in Rome, contributing to the decoration of the Cappella Paolina of the Vatican, before departing for Venice, where he worked between 1582 and 1584. He established a particular practice of making drawings after works of art that he saw on his journeys; a sort of visual travel diary that attests to a broad and wide-ranging interest in the different schools of painting in Italy. (As the Zuccaro scholar James Mundy has noted, 'Federico was completely without prejudice in his omnivorous ingestion of the work of other artists, both past and present.') In 1585 he was summoned by Philip II to Spain, where he painted eight canvases for the retablo mayor, or high altar, of the Basilica of San Lorenzo at El Escorial, as well as cloister frescoes in the attached monastery. Elected the first principe of the reorganized Accademia di San Luca in 1593, Zuccaro continued to receive important commissions late into his career. He built a fine palace for himself in Rome, now the home of the Biblioteca Herziana. Near the end of his career he wrote an artistic treatise entitled *L'idea de' pittori, scultori et architetti*, published in 1607.

A gifted draughtsman, Federico Zuccaro was much influenced by the drawings of his elder brother, particularly early in his long career. However, as Julian Brooks has noted, 'Federico's style was less dramatic than Taddeo's, and he answered the demands of the Catholic Church for a clearer, more iconic art. His drawings and compositions are tidier than those of Taddeo, with less robust figures, a greater interest in decorative effects, and occasionally complex iconography.' Furthermore, Federico's peripatetic career, together with his inveterate copying of the work of other artists, exposed him to a wider range of artistic influences, which often found their way into his drawings and paintings. As Mundy has pointed out, 'Whereas it would be fair to say that Taddeo's style was invented in Rome, Federico's was forged in an international crucible... The wide stylistic range of drawings might be expected but it still, at times, surprises the viewer.'