

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



Pietro da CORTONA (Cortona 1596 - Rome 1669)

Two Angels

Black chalk, with touches of white heightening, on blue-grey paper.

Laid down on a large album page, numbered 54. and illegibly inscribed in black ink at the top.

201 x 194 mm. (7 7/8 x 7 5/8 in.) [sheet]

This drawing is likely to be a late work by Pietro da Cortona, and it has been suggested that it may be related to the artist's frescoes in the Chiesa Nuova in Rome, one of the masterpieces of Baroque fresco decoration. Indeed, the present sheet could be a first idea for the angels in the apse fresco of *The Assumption of the Virgin*, executed between 1655 and 1659, or in the *quadro riportato* depicting *Saint Phillip Neri and the Miracle of the Madonna of Vallicella*, painted by Cortona on the ceiling of the nave of the church between 1664 and 1665.

The present sheet was once part of an album of drawings belonging to the Spanish Royal collection, the binding of which bore the royal coat of arms used in Spain between 1700 and 1714. It may therefore be assumed that the collection of drawings contained within the album, of which the present sheet was numbered 54, was assembled in the early 18th century. The album may have passed through the Orléans collection in France before coming to England sometime in the early 19th century. Last seen when sold at auction in London in 1966, the present sheet was acquired by the current owner in the mid 1970s from the widow of Lester Francis Avnet (1913-1970), a noted American collector of Old Master and modern drawings.

Exhibitions

West Palm Beach, Norton Gallery and School of Art, and elsewhere, *Old Master Drawings from the Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Lester Francis Avnet*, 1969-1970, no.15.

Literature:

Artist description:

Active as both painter and architect, Pietro da Cortona may be counted, together with Gianlorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini, as one of the principal artists of the Roman Baroque. He arrived in Rome in 1612 and his first important patrons were the Sacchetti family, for whom he painted several large paintings for the family palace in Rome. The Sacchetti were also the source of the most important secular commission of Cortona's early career; the decoration of the Villa Sacchetti at Castelfusano, completed in 1629. The success of this project brought the painter to the attention of Pope Urban VIII Barberini and his family. Between 1632 and 1639 Cortona painted several frescoes in the Palazzo Barberini in Rome, culminating in the great Glorification of the Reign of Urban VIII. In addition, beginning in 1637 and continuing off and on until 1648, Cortona worked on the extensive decorative program of the Medici granducal apartments in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence. On his return to Rome in 1647 he began a long period of work in the Oratorian church of Santa Maria in Vallicella (also known as the Chiesa Nuova), painting frescoes on the dome, apse and vault of the nave; a project that was only completed in 1665. Between 1651 and 1654 he also took charge of the redecoration of the long gallery of the Palazzo Pamphili in Rome for Pope Innocent X.