

# COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Dutch School, 17<sup>th</sup> Century  
*Study of Two Tulips*

Pencil on paper

16 x 20.5 cm (6 1/4 x 8 1/8 in.)

Inscribed (bottom centre) illegible and numbered (top right) 12

Provenance:  
Italian private collection.



This delicate graphite study can be associated with the Dutch tradition of single-specimen flower studies and tulip book imagery widely produced in the seventeenth century, during and after the so called *tulipomania*. Such sheets occupied a space between naturalistic description and connoisseurly collecting: tulips were particularly valued as motifs suited to compilation in albums and as models for translation into other media.

The composition presents two heads on a gently arcing stem, each observed from a different angle. At left, the bloom is shown in a compact configuration, its petals tightly cupped and edged by crisp contour. At right, a more open flower is rendered with softer strokes.

The draughtsman's method is notably analytical: contour establishes the principal volumes, while layers are articulated through soft shadings, conveying depth without recurring to heavier *chiaroscuro*. The typical "broken" patterning of the petals - dark striations over a pale ground - was caused by a virus in the bulb that made it especially valuable. A valid point of comparison, although coloured in bright washes, is a *Study of two tulips* by Jacob Marrel recently sold at Sotheby's London (fig. 1).

In our drawing, the stems are indicated with a light, searching line, suggesting a working study rather than a finished presentation drawing, and a faint inscription at the lower centre - now difficult to read with certainty - appears to have functioned as a brief note, likely indicating the typology of the represented tulips.



Fig. 1. Jacob Marrel, *Study of two tulips (unfinished)*, 36 x 24 cm, watercolour and black chalk on vellum.  
Sale, Sotheby's, London, 3 July 2024, lot 72.