

COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Cornelis de Vos
(Hulst 1584 - Antwerp 1651)

Head of a bearded man in profile to the right, with a subsidiary study of another head

with inscription 'Van Dyck 1599-1641' (verso)
black, red and white chalk, on buff paper

22.8 x 19.7 cm (9 x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.)

Provenance:

Jean F. Gigoux (L. 1164, 1806-1894);

His Sale, Maurice Delestre, Hotel Drouot, Paris, 20-23 March 1882, part of lot 295 (as school of Van Dyck, for 28 Francs);

G.A. Barrion (L. 76, 1842-1903);

Antonio Barboza (1842-1889);

Marie Marignane (L. 1848);

With Galerie Balzac, Paris, 1923 (as school of Van Dyck);

Anonymous sale, Me René Hémard, Hotel Drouot, Paris, 25 February 1924, lot 64 (as Van Dyck);

Dr. A. Welcker, Amsterdam;

Anonymous sale ('The Property of a Lady'), Christie's, London, 30 March 1971, lot 138 (as attributed to Jan Cossiers);

Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 8 July 2008, lot 83 (as de Vos);

With Jean-Luc Baroni Ltd, London, from whom acquired by the current owner.

Literature:

K. Van der Stighelen, 'Cornelis de Vos as a Draughtsman', *Master Drawings*, 27, 1989, p. 336 (as Cornelis de Vos ?).

Exhibited:

Paris, Galerie Balzac, *Exposition de dessins anciens XVe, XVIe et XVIIe siècles*, 1923, no. 271 (as school of Van Dyck).

Amsterdam, *De verzameling van Dr. A. Welcker, 1. Nederlandse tekeningen der zestiende en zeventiende eeuw*, 1956, no. 138 (as de Vos).



We are grateful to Katlijne Van der Stighelen for having confirmed the attribution to Cornelis de Vos.

This fine head study is by the hand of Cornelis de Vos, one of Antwerp's finest draughtsmen active from the late sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century.

Working through thick strokes of black chalk, followed by lighter touches of red chalk and white heightening, de Vos captures the likeness of a man in a state of quiet contemplation. His delicate features -- especially his delicately rendered eyelashes -- give the entire sheet a sense of quiet.

As Katlijne Van der Stighelen has remarked, these head studies by de Vos were used to hone in on the precise disposition of his sitters once the overall composition of the picture had been determined. In the case of the present sheet, the presence of a partial face study could indicate that de Vos was deciding between a depiction of the young man in strict profile or in a slight three-quarter view -- this latter option being the artist's final choice due to its more complete state.¹

This sheet can be compared to three different head studies in the Louvre, all executed using hatched black chalk and embellished with red chalk and white heightening (Figs 1-3). Like the present sheet, these drawings pay special attention to the expressions and delicate features of their young sitters and were likely used to fix their expressions in preparation for a painting.



Fig. 1. Cornelis de Vos, *Study of two children's heads*, black, red and white chalk, on buff paper, 18.9 x 24.2 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris (INV 20200)

¹ K. Van der Stighelen, 'Cornelis de Vos as a Draughtsman', *Master Drawings*, 27, 1989, p. 323.



Fig. 2. Cornelis de Vos, *Head of a sleeping child*, black, red and white chalk, on buff paper, 23.5 x 18.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris (INV 21441)



Fig. 3. Cornelis de Vos, *Study of a child, three-quarter length, facing left*, black, red and white chalk, on buff paper, 24.6 x 19 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris (INV 19917)

de Vos' careful attention to facial expression and his talent for depicting delicate features made him one of the most sought-after portraitists in Antwerp, most especially for images containing children. Amongst his most noted paintings are the *Portrait of a young woman* now at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 4) and the double portrait of the artist's children, now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. Cornelis de Vos, *Portrait of a Young Woman*, oil on canvas, 118.1 x 94.6 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 5. Cornelis de Vos, *Magdalena and Jan-Baptist de Vos*, c. 1621. Oil on canvas, 78 x 92 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.