

STUDIO OF RAFFAELLO SANZIO called RAPHAEL (Urbino 1483 -1520 Rome)

The Holy Family with the infant Saint John the Baptist

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, over black chalk

Bears an inscription lower left: « *del Sarto* »

19.2 x 27.5cm

Related work:

Tondo Cava dei Tirreni, after drawings by Raphael and probably executed by Gian Francesco Penni, pupil of Raphael.

The technique and style of this sheet, drawn in pen and partially shaded in brown wash, are characteristic of the draftsmanship of artists working in Raphaël's studio. It testifies to the importance of drawing work in the studio of the Master, but also to the constitution of repertoires of motifs used in painted works and to the continual reference in painting to a form previously elaborated by drawing. It illustrates how the use of pen and brown ink, which allowed to combine flexibility and precision, led to seek a certain realism in the representation of the human figure under drapery. The regularity of the pen outlines, the sparing application of the wash applied with delicacy, are typical of the graphic style in the circle of Raphaël.

Our drawing is a precious witness to the creative process in the workshop of the Master of Urbino: it is executed after a design by Raphaël through Penni's prism. One of Raphael's first pupils was Gianfrancesco Penni, whose role in the industrious workshop was primarily that of executant of the master's designs, both frescoes and panel paintings. He entered the workshop in 1511 and received the nickname *Il Fattore*. His nickname suggests an administrative role in Raphael's workshop. Vasari reports that Penni's specialty consisted in the production of finished drawings after Raphael's creations, not facilitating the reconstruction of his work which remains hypothetical. However, a group of drawings produced in the Master's workshop has enough common points to attribute them to his hand and define the characteristics of his draughtsmanship. They also tell us about his role within the studio, as well as his degree of assimilation of the graphic precepts of Raphaël.

The situation is further complicated by the existence of what might be called retrospective *modelli*. Our sheet is an example of this, since it is related to the drawing in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (inv. no.WA1940.68; see RCIN 851309, reproduced opposite) generally attributed to Gian Francesco Penni and considered as a preliminary study for a tondo traditionally attributed to him, in the Museo della Badia di Cava dei Tirreni, Salerno.

Another copy of the drawing is in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence (inv. no. 10899F; see RCIN 851311). A vertical painted version of this composition, generally attributed to the school of Raphael (Gianfrancesco Penni or Perino del Vaga?), is in the Galleria Borghese, Rome (inv. no.464).

A drawing representing the main group but with a variation in the pose of Saint Joseph and the addition of numerous figures on either side was listed by Ruland (1876) as being then in the possession of the late Major Kühlen, Rome, possibly be the one that appeared on the market in 1991 (Lempertz, Köln; December 12, 1991, lot 483) - (See RCIN 851308, Royal Collection Trust, Windsor).

Differences, both obvious and subtle, between the *modello* and the painting might be taken as evidence that Raphael cannot have prepared drawings, but only studies. Foreground figures are worked up in the drawing in pen and ink over initial black chalk sketches. What distinguishes our sheet, however, is the way in which the soft outlines, shifting *contraposti* and interactive gestures of the figures bind both the individuals and the frieze arrangement of the Holy Family. The theme of

mother and child takes on an earthly tone under the influence of Raffaello. The artist captured a moment of tenderness. The ease and grace of the Virgin evoke the spirit of Raphael, although she is less robust than most of his female figures; Penni's interpretations invariably affirm his master's forms. The influence of Raphael and Penni, which had always been strong, became even more pronounced here and infused a more marked balance.

Without being a servile copy, the pose of our characters is inspired by Raffaello's models. The theme of the composition itself is of the same line. The same stylistic purity and the same physical types of the Virgin, Saint Joseph, the Child and Saint John the Baptist appear here.