

FEDERICO BAROCCI
(Urbino 1526-35 - 1612)

Study of bearded man

Black and red chalk, stumping, pastel heightened with white on brown-prepared paper
39 x 27,5 cm

Bears an inscription in pen and brown ink « *Federico Barocci* »

Provenance:

Private collection, France

Bibliography:

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*, J.127.203

A well admired and highly sought-after and artist, Federico Barocci was a prolific draughtsman, especially for his use of colour, rarely used by his contemporaries.

According to Babette Bohn, approximately fifteen hundred drawings are now attributable to Barocci («*Drawing as artistic invention: Federico Barocci and the Art of Design*», *Federico Barocci Renaissance Master of Color and Line*, exhibition catalog Saint Louis Art Museum, 2012, p. 33), while Nicholas Turner has about two thousand (*Federico Barocci*, Paris, 2000, p. 150), making him one of the most prolific artists of the Italian Renaissance: an exceptional number in term of preservation of the graphic work of a 16th century artist. His very slow creative process was notorious; he produced numerous drawings which he used to prepare each of the figures for his paintings, as well as more finished *modelli*.

Not limiting himself to the use of a single medium, Barocci often associates chalks with different colored pencils and pastels, always starting in sketching with black chalk, as in our drawing. There is no doubt that Barocci took a major step in the development of the medium, not just employing colours that were not hitherto available in natural chalk but also using the materials that were sold enough to colour areas rather than draw lines. Only Jacopo Bassano working in Venice at the same time, offers any real parallel with these developments.

Our sheet is one of his studies of figures that display stunning realism with a melancholic aesthetic so characteristic of the artist. However, this does not seem to correspond to a specific painting. The composition of our study is also reminiscent of countless Barocci studies of head. The face takes up almost the entire sheet, standing out from a background quickly sketched in black chalk with large parallel oblique hatchings, as in a drawing located in the Louvre Museum, depicting a *Young naked man leaning forward to take a vase*, black and red chalk heightened with white, pastel on grey-green paper, squared, 38,3 x 24,2 cm, collections: Saint-Morys, INV 2860.

This drawing concentrates the graphic writing and the symptomatic features of Barocci's style: the almond-shaped eyes with an outline traced in black chalk heightened with red chalk, shadows indicated by stumping or fine hatching in black chalk. Similarly, the artist often makes use of faded red chalk at the level of the eyelids outlined in red, the ears and the lips, which are all pink nimbus treated in subtle sfumato like the beard and mustache of the model. This technique allows Barocci to focus on the eyes. In full mastery of his art here, Federico manages to model the face with refinement with highlights of white chalk. In the collection of the Louvre Museum, a perfect example: *Head of a woman, three-quarters and leaning to the right, eyes lowered*, black chalk, red chalk, white chalk and pastel, on brown paper, 23,7 x 21,2 cm, collections: Conti, prince de - Mariette, Pierre-Jean - Crozat, Pierre (1665-1740) - Desmarests - Saint-Morys, Charles-Paul-J.-B. by Bourgevin Vialart de (1743-1795) - Paillet, Alexandre Joseph (1743-1814) - Ménageot, Augustin, INV 2866. Finally, the handling of the hair in our study refers to that of the *Head of a young boy, with shaved hair, in profile to the right*, black and red chalk, pastel heightened with

white on gray paper, 33 x 24,7 cm, Collections: Cabinet du Roi, INV 2871, also in the Louvre. Thus in both cases, the artist uses pastel in a flat tint then faded then heightened with a few fine hatchings quickly sketched in black chalk, the skull surrounded by a contour line.

As in many of the artist's works, our drawing testifies to his ability in studying and rendering the psychology of the characters. Here he captures the gaze of this man lost in thought with great psychological finesse. The theatricality is underlined by the colors and the effects of chiaroscuro.

Federico Fiori He was born at Urbino, Duchy of Urbino, and received his earliest apprenticeship with his father, Ambrogio Barocci, a sculptor of some local eminence. He was then apprenticed with the painter Battista Franco in Urbino and studied the paintings of the genius of his city, Raphael, as well as Titian, then later took Daniele da Volterra, the Venetians and Correggio as models. He accompanied his uncle, Bartolomeo Genga to Pesaro, then in 1548 to Rome, where he was worked in the pre-eminent studio of the day, that of the Mannerist painters, Taddeo and Federico Zuccari. After passing four years at Rome, he returned to his native city, where his first work of art was a *St. Margaret* executed for the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament. He was invited back to Rome by Pope Pius IV to assist in the decoration of the Vatican Belvedere Palace at Rome, where he painted the *Virgin Mary and infant, with several Saints* and a ceiling in fresco, representing the *Annunciation*. During this second sojourn, while completing the decorations for the Vatican, Barocci fell ill with intestinal complaints. He suspected that a salad which he had eaten had been poisoned by jealous rivals. Fearing his illness was terminal, he left Rome in 1563.

While Barocci was removed from Rome, the fulcrum of artistic fame and influence, he continued to innovate in his style. At some point he may have seen colored chalk-pastel drawings by Correggio, but Barocci's remarkable pastel studies are the earliest examples of the technique to survive. In pastels and in oil sketches (another technique he pioneered) Barocci's soft, opalescent renderings evoke the ethereal. Such studies were part of a complex process Barocci used to complete his altarpieces. He died in Urbino in 1612, aged 84.

The artist biographer Giovanni Bellori, the Baroque equivalent of Giorgio Vasari, considered Barocci to be among the finest painters of his time. In the Marche area, his personal interpretation of Mannerism had immediate success. In the other areas, on the other hand, his art knew a slower diffusion. Younger artists understood his importance: influenced by Barocci, Carracci and the Bolognese painters (Guido Reni in particular) developed their own innovations.

We are grateful to Andrea Emiliani and Nicholas Turner for confirming the attribution to Barocci.