

## GIOVANNI BATTISTA TIEPOLO

(Venice 1699 - 1770 Madrid)

### ***Head of Giulio Contarini after Alessandro Vittoria***

Black chalk heightened with white on blue paper

27,6 x 35,8 cm

Watermark: coat of arms

Bears an Inscription: « *Italienische Meister des XVII Jahr. - zu vergleichen der ... kopf zu vergleichen der kopf in Handzeichnungen Alter Meister, Lief. 1, Nr. 16, edizione a cura di H. Helbing.... Verlag der Vereinigten Kunstanstalten, München. ... « Domenichino »...vielleicht Wagner-Würzburg* »

#### **Provenance:**

Probably collection Wagner-Würzburg, Germany;

Auction Munich, 2013;

Private collection, France

#### **Related work:**

Alessandro Vittoria, Giulio Contarini (detail), c. 1570-1576, painted terracotta, 74,3 x 61 x 30,7 cm with integral base. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

This drawing is part of a series of at least a dozen sheets by Giambattista after the bust of Giulio Contarini (circa 1500-1580) by Alessandro Vittoria (1525-1608). Giulio Contarini (1519–1575), procurator of San Marco, was both friend and patron of Vittoria, who made this bust as a preparatory study for a marble statue. Vittoria was born in Veneto and trained with Jacopo Sansovino. Tiepolo drew the bust from the front, right and left three quarter view or profile. These sheets are now located in Paris at the Fondation Custodia (Frits-Lugt collection), in Weimar at the Schlossmuseum, in Venice at the Museo Civico Correr, in Providence Rhode Island at the School of Design, but also in private hands.

All are executed in chalk, mainly in red chalk, but several are described more summarily than others. Some of these more quickly executed and more roughly sketched sketches were attributed to Domenico by Knox and Martin in their 1987 article Master Drawings (G. Knox and T. Martin, "*Giambattista Tiepolo: A series of chalk drawings after Alessandro Vittoria's bust of Giulio Contarini*", Master Drawings, 1987, III, p. 160, note 23, pl. 20., pp. 159-60). Our recently rediscovered drawing is added to the corpus of this prestigious series.

George Knox has convincingly shown that Giovanni Battista executed his drawings not from the marble but from a terracotta bust acquired by the National Gallery of Canada (see Salander-O'Reilly, 2000-1, pp. 12-28). The terracotta bears an inscription which incorrectly identified the sitter as Titian, an identification which Tiepolo most likely also assumed when he executed the drawings. Giambattista's drawings after Vittoria's sculptures are one of several examples of Tiepolo finding inspiration from earlier artists, both painters and sculptors. Tiepolo made drawings of another bust of Vittoria, this one of the artist Palma Giovane (a terracotta version of which is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna). There are also several drawings after Antique sculpture.

Knox and Martin date Contarini's drawings to around 1742-1743 based upon comparison with the Palma Giovane's sheets and similar heads found in Tiepolo's paintings of the 1740s.

Unquestionably the most outstanding representative of the 18th century Venetian painting, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770) was born in Venice into the family of shipping merchant. Tiepolo's exceptionally brilliant decorative designs earned him numerous commissions in Europe. Our black chalk drawing also demonstrates his remarkable draughtsmanship when it comes to

portraiture. Tiepolo drew the bust from the front, turned slightly to the left. The studies of heads are among his most expressive and accomplished graphic works.

Our drawing, as the *Head of a Young Woman, turned right*, black chalk heightened with white on blue paper, 32.4 x 20.3 cm from the Bossi-Beyerlen collection, Christie's New York, January 1, 1970, lot 124 ( G. Knox, *Giambattista and Domenico Tiepolo, A Study and Catalog Raisonné of the Chalk Drawings*, Oxford, 1980, M. 315) for comparison, is characteristic of Giambattista's draftsmanship and demonstrates an admirable technical mastery: volume, expression and light are developed there, with the help of a sustained line of black stone, both subtle and vigorous, more nervous than in red chalk, without omitting the heightenings of white which illuminate the face and catch the light.