

Study after the Farnese Hercules

Giovan Ambrogio Figino (1548-1608)

Black chalk on blue-prepared paper 33 x 23 cm

Provenance: Tajan, Drouot Paris, 23 November 2001, lot 11; Private collection, Paris.

The Farnese Hercules, a third century marble statue by Glycon (Naples, Museo Nazionale) was discovered in the Baths of Caracalla in the mid-16th century, and by 1556 on display in first courtyard of the Palazzo Farnese.¹ There it was studied by innumerable artists. The present sheet was executed by the Milanese artist Giovan Ambrogio Figino during a stay in Rome in the 1570s or 1580s.²

The drawing demonstrates close similarities to many of Figino's other studies of antiquities and contemporary art he studied in Rome. For example, some of the hatching describing the torso, and especially the lumpy area to the side of the man's rib cage is extremely close to that in a drawing by Figino in the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia (n. 984).³ The cross-hatching patterns which are then integrated with longer vertical lines drawn across them is seen in the thigh of the man in Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia (n. 993).⁴ A third drawing that is very close to the present sheet is another study from the Laocoon on blue paper in Royal Collections (RCIN 906921).⁵

¹ Franis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, New Haven and London Yale University Press, 1981, pp. 229-32, cat. no. 46.

² Although there is no documented trip to Rome, Figino's many drawings after antique sculptures and paintings by Raphael and Michelangelo unquestionably demonstrate his presence there. See Annalisa Perissa Torrini, *Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia: Disegni del Figino*, Milano: Electa, 1987, p. 17, where his stay is postulated to have occurred before 1577.

³ Ibid, *Study after the Laocoon*, p. 93, cat. no. 67

⁴ Ibid, *Study after the Antique of a Nude Figure*, p. 96, cat. no. 70.

⁵ For this drawing, see <https://www.rct.uk/sites/default/files/collection-online/3/2/572353-1448990078.jpg>. The dating of 1587-88 for this sheet could apply equally to the present copy after the Farnese Hercules, given the lack of precise information regarding Figino's trip or trips to Rome.