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**BENEDETTO CALIARI**

(Verone 1538 - 1598 Venice)

***Portrait of woman***

Pen and brown ink, brown wash heightened with white on brown-prepared paper  
22,4 x 30 cm

**Provenance:**

Private collection, France

The *chiaroscuro* drawings (in *chiaroscuro* or in *grisaille*) take a preponderant place in the drawn work of Benedetto Caliari, younger brother of Paolo Caliari known as Veronese. This charming portrait of a woman in *chiaroscuro*, unpublished until now, is careful rendering by the artist and displays an exacting finesse in the modeling of the face and details.

Benedetto took over the manner of *chiaroscuro* from his older brother: the image is composed using light values (most often white highlights), which stand out against a background prepared in a dark tone. Veronese is certainly not its inventor, other artists, both Italian and Nordic, have explored its pictorial qualities - but the thirty or so sheets by his hand produced in this technique have always aroused the admiration of amateurs, especially because of their delicate and finished appearance. They are the only ones mentioned by his first biographer Ridolfi in 1648. Ridolfi's enthusiasm is understandable, for they were planned as independent works and executed with a brilliance and fluidity in the white heightening that was copied but never equalled. Veronese here turned to an older tradition of Venetian drawing with a sense of invention in conventional subjects, both religious and allegorical and in unusual variations on well-established themes.

However, several questions remain open about their function by the master: David Rosand (*Véronèse*, Citadelles 2012) believes that it is most often a question of *modelli*, the final stage in the preparation of a painted work, which can be used as presentation drawings to a potential patron, or even *ricordi*, namely sheets intended to preserve the memory of an invention. Richard Cocke, author of *Veronese's drawings, a catalog raisonné*, Sotheby Publications, rejecting the idea of *modelli*, whether they are of presentation or that they correspond to a final stage of elaboration of a composition, leans for independent works. The dating of Veronese's *chiaroscuro* is not without its problems either: for W.R. Rearick (*The Art of Paolo Veronese 1528-1588*, Cambridge University Press, 1988) from the mid-1540s until the end of his career, or on the contrary for Cocke, in a restricted period between 1550 and 1560. Beyond the disagreements of dating,

Benedetto made this technique his own. Of the series of female allegories that Paolo Veronese drew a *chiaroscuro*, six sheets remain in Frankfurt (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Inv. 457), Vienna (Albertina, Inv. 1636 and 1640), Paris (Louvre, RF 600), Norfolk Holkham Hall, coll. Leicester; Cocke, 1984, n°17, 22-23, 39-40) and in Zurich (Dencker-Winckler collection (Cocke, 1988, pl. 19; Rearick, 1988, n° 30). A seventh, at the Louvre (Inv. 4682) should probably be considered a copy of a lost drawing.

Benedetto also made three copies on blue paper of *La Fortuna* by Paolo, nowadays in the collection of the Louvre : *The Allegory of Wealth*, Inv. RF 41299, pen and brown ink, brown wash, white highlights on blue paper, 30 x 20 cm; *La Fortune Maritime*, Inv. RF 41300, pen and brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white on blue paper, 30 x 21 cm, annotated lower left, in pen: "da Paolo"; *La Fortune Terrestre*, Inv. RF 41301, pen and brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white on blue paper, 30 x 20 cm, annotated lower left, in pen: "da Paolo". Drawn in brown ink, these monumental figures of Fortuna are largely taken up with small tight lines of white left, highlights that contrast with the architectural elements sketched in the background to produce the characteristic chromatic effect of *chiaroscuro*. The old annotation "da Paolo" on two sheets means that these are drawings after Paolo. They refer stylistically and technically to our portrait.

The quality of our sheet and the particular technique, of strict Veronese obedience, reveal that it is the work of an artist close to Veronese, his own younger brother and collaborator Benedetto Caliari. It is executed with brilliance and fluidity in the white highlights. The sense of volume and the physical specificities such as the dysmorphism of the hands, which contrasts with the small face, are specific to Benedetto. The meticulous use of white gouache highlights allows the artist to define the silks and pearls as well as to delicately suggest the light that illuminates the face of the model. The latter belongs to the courtly figures depicted in luxurious and contemporary clothing and jewelry characteristic of Veronese.

Additional supporting evidence in favor of Benedetto Cagliari's authorship of this portrait is found in comparison with two drawings of the Museum of Grenoble, pen and brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white on brown paper, from the bequest of Mr. Léonce Mesnard in 1890, which entered the museum in 1902: *Head of a Woman* 10 x 7 cm; and *Head of a Young Girl*, 9,9 x 6,9 cm. Their hairstyles and facial features resemble those of our sitter; likewise the execution is comparable.

Last additional relevant comparison is the painted work of Benedetto in the same style as our sheet. For example, *The Finding of Moses* by Benedetto Caliari, inscribed with the inventory number at the bottom left: "59", oil on canvas, 148 x 239,5 cm, provenance: private collection, Germany, circa 1830-

1840, purchased in Southern Europe or Germany; then by descent to anonymous sale ("*Property of a Nobleman*"), London, Christie's, July 7, 2017, lot 115, where purchased; London, Sotheby's April 28, 202, lot 316.

Benedetto Caliari was the younger brother of Paolo Caliari, better known as Paolo Veronese. In 1556, at the age of 18, Benedetto was recorded as already working in his elder brother's workshop, and he seems to have remained there most of his career, taking over management of the workshop after Veronese's death in 1588, together with his nephews Carlo and Gabriele, who often signed collaborative works under the name "*Haeredes Pauli*" ("*the heirs of Paolo*").