

# LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

## KUNST



BALDASSARE FRANCESCHINI, CALLED IL VOLTERRANO

1611 Volterra - Florence 1689

*Study of Heads, Hands and Drapery* [recto]; *Study of Arms and a Hand* [verso]

Red chalk, heightened with white on blue paper (recto and verso).

Inscribed in black chalk on the verso: *Franceschini*.

270 x 378 mm

PROVENANCE: Private collection, France

Baldassare Franceschini studied under Matteo Rosselli and Giovanni da San Giovanni. He is regarded as the pre-eminent fresco painter active in Florence in the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1636 he attracted the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici, who commissioned him to paint a cycle of frescoes on the history of the Medici family for the courtyard of the Villa Petraia near Florence.

Franceschini, who came to be known under the name Il Volterrano, produced frescoes and altarpieces for numerous churches and palaces in Florence, Volterra and Rome. Some of his most important works are in the Basilica della Santissima Annunziata in Florence. In 1643 he painted the *Glory of St. Cecilia* – a cycle of exceptional baroque artistry – in the chapel at one time dedicated to St. Ansano (now the chapel of St. Biagio). Between 1664 and 1683, he executed ceiling decorations for the nave of the Basilica and an altarpiece depicting *St. Filippo Benizzi in Glory*. His extensive work in the Basilica ended with the cupola fresco representing the *Coronation of the Virgin*, commissioned by Grand Duke Cosimo III.

Volterrano was one of the finest draughtsmen of the Florentine seicento. His drawings were much in demand with collectors. He executed numerous studies of figures, studies of anatomical details and studies of draperies which served him as preparatory drawings for paintings. The studies on the recto and verso of the present sheet are preparatory for Franceschini's famous altarpiece *Christ on the Road to Calvary*, now in the Marchesi Gerini collection in Florence [fig. 1].<sup>1</sup> The main figure on the recto is a study for the head of St. Veronica. In the finished painting the Saint is depicted lifting the *sudarium*, or cloth, from the face of Christ. This act of devotion, although entirely apocryphal, is an incident associated with the Road to Calvary. Tradition has it that the *sudarium* was imprinted with the image of Christ's face. The four drawings of hands at the right of the sheet are preparatory for the same figure. Two drapery studies immediately beneath St. Veronica are studies for the cloak of the Virgin who is depicted at the lower right of the painting.

On the verso are two studies of an arm, both of which correspond to the left arm of the swooning Virgin, whose head and shoulders are indistinctly shown at the lower left of the sheet. At the lower right is a preparatory drawing for the hand of a figure depicted supporting the Cross at the upper left corner of the painting.

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<sup>1</sup> See M. Privatera, *Considerazioni su alcuni disegni del Volterrano*, in *Paragone*, 1991, p.497, fig. 10. – *Gli ultimi Medici. Il tardo barocco a Firenze 1670-1743*, exhib. cat., The Detroit Institute of Arts, and Palazzo Pitti, Florence 1974, no. 188 b, repr.

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Fig. 1: *Christ on the Road to Calvary*; oil on canvas;  
Marchesi Gerini Collection, Florence