



FRANCISCO DE HERRERA THE ELDER

(Seville, c. 1590 - Seville, 1654)

Head of a Bearded Man in Ecstasy (Possibly a Saint)

inscribed on verso of card: Herrera

pen and brown ink on paper laid on brown card

185 x 140 mm (irregular size)

This arresting drawing depicts the head of a man (possibly a saint) in ecstasy. His eyes are turned heavenward and his head cast back. There is a force to the drawing that is underscored by the immediacy of the close-cropped nature of the page, the flurry of rapid hatchings that make up the figure's shoulder and tousled hair, and the emotional depth captured in the man's expression.

The drawing's piercing eyes, idiosyncratically formed with hatchings over the darkened pupils, can be seen across Herrera the Elder's numerous head studies at the Uffizi. In many of these sketches we see the same lively curls reproduced with the same rapid brown swirls. In terms of emotional depth, the *Head of a Man with a Plumed Hat* [fig. 1] is perhaps the closest to our drawing as the sitter gazes intensely back at the viewer in a haunted state of apprehension. A second comparable drawing, *Head of a Youth*, can be seen at the Prado. This sheet has recently been re-attributed to Herrera the Elder by the Metropolitan Museum's Carmen Bambach.