



IL GUERCINO

(Cento, 1591 - Bologna, 1666)

Putto holding up a drapery over his head
executed c. 1620 - 1625

red chalk

170 x 134 mm

Provenance:

Earl Spencer, Althorp [L. 2341A]

acquired from the Spencer family by Richard Day

with Baskett and Day, London

where acquired by the present owner in May 1983

During the 1620s and early 1630s Guercino reworked the motif of putti playing with draperies on a number of occasions. Nicholas Turner has suggested that the present example, laconically drawn in red chalk, can be linked to a second drawing in the Royal Collection, Windsor, (Mahon and Turner 1989, 164) which depicts five putti, one of whom plays with a drapery (letter dated 29.11.1999). Although omitted from his original catalogue entry on the Windsor drawing, Turner suggested that the sheet is related to a painting, *Venus Attiring from the Bath*, or the *Toilet of Venus*, c. 1622-23, which is on deposit at Oregon House, Goethe Academy, Renaissance, California (Turner 2017, 118.11) [Fig. 2]. The tumbling treatment of the putti in these works and in others from the 1620s was evidently influenced by Titian's *Worship of Venus* which had passed into the Ludovisi collection by 1621 and would have been well known to Guercino.

Another project to which this drawing can possibly be linked is the decoration of the Villa Giovannina in Cento, executed by Guercino c. 1630. One drawing which is thought to relate to the project, depicting a seated putto playing with a drapery, appeared on the Paris art market in 2024 (Marty de Cambiaire 2024, 14). The so-called 'Putti Playing' room of the Villa Giovannina contains a frieze which runs along the top of the walls and depicts putti mischievously playing on an illusionistic parapet. In the right-hand section of the frieze on the fourth wall of the room: each of the putti at the end of this section pulls on a drapery as if it were blown by the wind.

Please contact us for a full catalogue entry.