



FRANS FLORIS

(Antwerp, 1519/20 - Antwerp, 1570)

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

inscribed lower right: *Franciscus Floris*; inscribed upper right: 55[?]; traces of collector's mark lower left: L.1223

pen and brown ink and brown wash, squared in black chalk

265 x 327 mm

Provenance:

Giuseppe Vallardi (1784-1861), Milan [L.1223]

Private collection, France

In the decade following Frans Floris's return from Italy to Antwerp around 1546, the artist produced an important series of religious works depicting episodes from the History of Solomon. These early works include a cycle of paintings for a town hall or courtroom, just two of which survive today: *The Judgment of Solomon* (c. 1547), now in the KMSKA, Antwerp, and *Solomon and the Queen of Sheba*, at the Groninger Museum, Groningen. Additionally, there is a series of four related engravings made after Floris's designs — two by Dirck Volckertsz Coornhert and two by Philips Galle. These works date to the mid-1550s and demonstrate that Floris revised his original compositions in order to create fresh designs. Two works from this Solomonic series, namely the painting in Groningen and the later of the two Coornhert engravings, depict the same subject represented here: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Highly finished and squared for transfer, this drawing does not correspond exactly with either of Floris's known designs, although compositional parallels and stylistic similarities clearly indicate a common origin. It is not a preparatory study for either existing work; rather, it is most likely a *videmus*, or presentation drawing for the Groninger painting, made to indicate to a prospective patron exactly how a finished painting might appear, and to demonstrate that it could be efficiently transferred according to the proportional grid indicated by the squaring.

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