

FRANCESCO GUARDI

(Venice, 1712 - Cannaregio, 1793)

A study of trees (recto); architectural studies (verso)

inscribed, lower centre (verso): *No 223/2*

pen and brown ink and brown wash over black chalk

394 x 248 mm

Provenance:

Dr Benno Geiger (1882–1965), Venice, 1936

Kurt Meissner (1909–2004), Zurich

Private collection, Zurich, until 2025

Literature:

Charlotte von Prybram-Gladona, *Unbekannte Zeichnungen alter Meister aus Europäischem Privatbesitz*, Munich, 1969, p. 56, no. 84 (as Giovanni Battista Tiepolo)

George Knox, 'Francesco Guardi in the Studio of Giambattista Tiepolo and a Note on the Dating of the 'Solennià Dogali'', in *I Guardi: vedute, capricci, feste, disegni e quadri turcheschi*, Venice, 2002, p. 89, no. 83

This double-sided sheet belongs to a small group of drawings made by Francesco Guardi during the 1730s and early 1740s, when the young artist was in the studio his brother-in-law, Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770). With a fluid and painterly use of wash which belies the artist's youth and the difficulty of the medium, Guardi conjures a receding, interwoven glade of luminous trees, guided by the artist's characteristically "edgy" pen lines and provisional traces in black chalk. As an isolated study of trees, the drawing is unique within Guardi's oeuvre; nevertheless, the challenging technique was one he employed throughout his career in more expansive landscapes characterised by deep contrasts of light and shadow and broadly defined foliage. This is particularly evident in *An Avenue of Trees* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and in three large hunting scenes: one at Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; one in the Crespi collection; and one formerly on the art market in 2016.

As a young artist, Guardi produced several accomplished copies after Tiepolo drawings, including two sheets in the Wallraf collection and a series of allegorical male figures at the Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Both the Berlin drawings and the present sheet relate to Tiepolo studies in the Civico Museo di Storia Patria in Trieste. The museum holds an exceptional group of eleven tree and woodland landscape studies. Once considered late works, these are now generally accepted as belonging to the artist's early maturity, around 1735–40. Although Charlotte von Prybram-Gladona regarded the present sheet as part of the Trieste group, George Knox later proposed that it is instead a copy by Guardi after a lost drawing from the series.

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