

*Chris Fischer: A PARMIGIANINO DRAWING FROM THE COLLECTION OF
P.-J. MARIETTE REDISCOVERED*

In 1947 J. F. Willumsen, painter, sculptor and architect (Copenhagen 1863 — Le Cannet near Cannes 1958), presented to the Danish state a large selection of his own works as well as his collection of works of art by old masters on the condition that a museum be built to house both collections. This generous gift was presented to the public in two exhibitions during 1947 and the collection of old master works, consisting of about 2000 objects was severely criticised by art historians for its highly uneven quality. Mr. Willumsen's ambitious attributions were mocked rather than corrected, so that when the museum was built in Frederikssund, the "Old Collection" was relegated to the basement and practically forgotten.¹

The numerically largest group within the "Old Collection" is formed by the old master drawings. Around two hundred of them are Italian, many of high quality, attested to by distinguished provenances. Most of them were bought cheaply in London in the years 1919-28, when the English art market was undergoing its great boom.²

On the 11th of May 1921, Mr. Willumsen acquired at Meatyard's in London a drawing by Francesco Parmigianino showing the Christ Child and the Infant St. John the Baptist playing with a lamb in the presence of the Virgin and a small angel (Fig. 3).³ It is drawn on white paper with pen, brown ink and wash, and measures 155 × 145 mm., including a strip added along the top of the sheet. It has a blue mount and is surrounded by a wide gold border typical of drawings once belonging to Pierre-Jean Mariette, whose collector's mark appears in the lower left hand corner on the recto.⁴ The addition on the top of the drawing is also characteristic of Mariette, as testify many other such drawings from his collection, including several by Parmigianino.⁵

Parmigianino was one of the Italian artists that Mariette most admired. In the catalogue of the Crozat Sale, which Mariette organized in 1741, much to his own benefit, he says: "Le Parmesan est tout rempli de graces. Il a allié celle du Corrège a celles du Raphaël, il y a dans le maniement de sa plume un esprit et une touche légère, et dans les tours de ses figures une flexibilité qui font valoir ses dessins..."⁶

The fifteen Parmigianino drawings forming lot 356 of the Crozat Sale were acquired by Mariette, and later, in 1755, around fifty Parmigianino drawings were dispersed at the Mariette Sale.⁷ They were divided into seven lots most not specifically described, aside from the artist's name.⁸ The drawing now in Frederikssund, is however identifiable with one of the five drawings "a la plume & au bistre" comprising lot 508.⁹ The "sujet de trois chevreux" is now in Chantilly, Musée Condé¹⁰, whereas "un autre de trois Enfants qui jouent avec un mouton" must be the Willumsen drawing. According to a marginal note in the Louvre copy of the sale catalogue (Cabinet des Dessins) the lot was bought by the antiquarian Charles-Philippe Campion de Tersan.¹¹ From him it passed to the Marquis de Lagoy¹², who also owned Parmigianino's "Reclining nude with ornament" from the Mariette collection¹³, which is therefore very likely to be one of the "deux dessins de plusieurs Figures debout" from the same lot as the drawing in Frederikssund. Lagoy's mark is to be seen in the lower right hand corner on the recto. Subsequently the sheet passed to the Marquis de Chenevieres¹⁴, and then to Guichardot.¹⁵ In October 1912 it was among the drawings that Colnaghi bought from J. P. Hesseltine, for it carries the Hesseltine mark on the verso of the mount.¹⁶

The infant Christ caressing a sacrificial lamb, signifying the Passion predicted by the Baptist, was a popular subject in Renaissance art. Leonardo had depicted it in the St. Anne cartoon, exhibited for enthusiastic crowds at the Ss. Annunziata in 1501¹⁷, and known to us through a drawing in Venice.¹⁸ Three years later Raphael painted his small "Holy Family with a Lamb", now in the Prado museum in Madrid¹⁹, and Parmigianino drew the subject again in three later studies. One, showing the Holy Children playing with the lamb at the Virgin's feet, is in Paris (École des Beaux Arts).²⁰ A copy in pen and ink by A. M. Zanetti is in the printroom in Budapest²¹ and served to make a reversed chiaroscuro woodcut.²² The second drawing shows the Virgin enthroned, trying to keep the obstinate Child away from St. John and the lamb. This sheet, in the Louvre, must be dated around 1525.²³ Parmigianino's latest adaptation of the theme is his Michelangelesque drawing in the Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam, datable to 1527 owing to its close relationship to the "Vision of St. Jerome" in the London National Gallery.²⁴

Stylistically our sheet fits easily into Parmigianino's early works, those executed before his journey to Rome in Autumn 1524. The compositional density and the close physical relationship of the figures connect the drawing to his lost painting of the Virgin and Child, St. Jerome and Bernardino da Feltré known from both a copy in the Pinacoteca of Parma and an etching by Bonasone.²⁵ From Vasari we know that this painting was executed early in 1522, before Parmigianino was nineteen years old.²⁶ A contemporary drawing, representing the Virgin and Child with the Infant St. John and, possibly, St. Elizabeth, executed in red chalk, and now in the British Museum²⁷, radiates the same intimate affection as the drawing in the Willumsen Museum.



1 Parmigianino, Studies for a child's head and his right hand. Florence, Uff. 739 E. recto.



2 Parmigianino, Studies for an angel playing the violin and for a child with a lamb. Florence, Uff. 741 E. recto.



3 Parmigianino, *The Virgin and Child with the Infant St. John the Baptist, an angel and a lamb*. Frederikssund, Willumsens Museum, inv. G. S. 531.

The figures in the drawing in Frederikssund are constituted by a network of longer or shorter curved lines, often ending in light hooks. This feature is particularly clear in the left putto. Later the artist emphasized these lines in order to give stronger definition to the forms, as can also be seen in the Christ and in the left leg of the Infant St. John. Before finishing Parmigianino put in the shadows with light cross hatching and wash. These graphic peculiarities are typical of drawings by the young Parmigianino, and they are also present in two sheets now at the Uffizi (figs. 1 & 2).²⁸ These two sheets are related by the drawings found on their versos, which are studies for the same bishop or abbot.²⁹ The



4 After Correggio, Detail of a drawing showing the Coronation of the Virgin formerly in the apse of San Giovanni, Parma. Florence, Uff. 14714 F.

relation to the drawing in Frederikssund is constituted, however, by the subjects on their rectos. One of them shows four studies of a child's head and one of his hand (fig. 1).³⁰ The study at the top centre corresponds roughly to the Infant Christ in the Willumsen composition with the cheek and eyebrow rendered by one uninterrupted line being characteristic. The head on the top left of the Uffizi sheet is also highly reminiscent of the putto in the Willumsen drawing. The other Uffizi sheet shows a child angel playing the violin and a putto with a lamb (fig. 2).³¹ While the movement is more forced and the lamb more erect in the Uffizi study, the resemblance is so strong that it must be a study for the same figure. Both children recall the child with the lamb behind the Baptist in the far right hand side of Correggio's decoration of the apse of San Giovanni in Parma. This fresco of the Coronation of the Virgin was partly destroyed during the extension of the choir in 1587, but it has been transmitted in copies for example, in a drawing in the Uffizi (fig. 4).³² The music-playing angel next to the study for the Infant St. John in the Uffizi drawing is probably also inspired by one of the similar angels in the heavenly orchestra of Correggio's lost fresco.

These correspondences strongly suggest a dating for the drawings to a period when Parmigianino was working at the same place as Correggio. This happened on two occasions between 1522 and 1524.

Vasari tells us that Parmigianino painted frescoes in the first and second chapels on the left in San Giovanni Evangelista shortly after his return to Parma from Viadana, where he had been sent by his uncles in August 1521 to avoid the war threatening Parma, i.e., after April the 27th 1522.³³ It will be remembered that Correggio was at work on the cupola, apse and frieze in the same church, beginning in July 1520, and that he received his last payment in 1524. Hence Parmigianino must have been working in the side chapels at the same time.³⁴ Indeed copies by Parmigianino made from Correggio's frescoes and from his drawings seem to confirm direct contact.³⁵ Parmigianino may also have worked in the cathedral of Parma while Correggio was working there. On November 21st 1522 Parmigianino was commissioned to decorate the south transept of the cathedral together with Rondani.³⁶ Although this decoration does not seem to have been carried out, only a few days earlier, on November 3rd, Correggio had contracted to decorate the cupola, apse, vaults and pilasters of the same building.³⁷

The drawing in the Willumsen Museum has a very finished quality, and thus it was probably intended for a devotional painting on wood or canvas. Although such a painting is not presently known, a poor copy in the form of a drawing, after the same composition lends support to the hypothesis that a paint-



5 After Parmigianino, *The Virgin and Child with the Infant St. John the Baptist, an angel and a lamb*. Rome, Gab. Naz. delle Stampe, inv. FN. 162 (10700).

ing based on the Willumsen drawing was actually executed. This drawing on the recto of a sheet, now at the Farnesina in Rome (Fig. 5)³⁸, (pen and brown ink on white paper; mm. 151 × 155), was donated by Dr. Federico Hermanin in 1908 with an attribution to Rubens, which is just as erroneous as the attribution to Lambert Lombart under whose name I found it. In fact there are some generic similarities with Cristofano Gherardi's drawing style, as pointed out to me by Mme. Catherine Monbeig-Goguel, so the drawing may be Italian and date from the second half of the sixteenth century.

The copyist has, however, misunderstood the composition, mistaking the skin on which St. John sits for the lamb's tail, and he has turned the animal completely around, thereby causing some uncertainty with regard to the disposition of the Virgin's limbs. While such a misunderstanding would seem impossible had the copyist worked from the drawing in the Willumsen Museum, where everything is quite explicit, it becomes understandable if he has drawn from a darkened or partly damaged painting. Furthermore, the architectural or rocky details sketched in behind the group in the Farnesina drawing, and missing in the Willumsen drawing, point to a painted, or at least a more finished prototype.

Vasari relates that when Parmigianino went to Rome in the autumn of 1524 he had four paintings in his baggage. One was the famous Self portrait now in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum. Of the remaining three, two were small and one "assai grande". The last mentioned is the Holy Family now in the Prado, Madrid; the two small ones are not further described.³⁹

These paintings created a sensation in the papal city and the young artist obtained an audience with Clement VII. The pope was so enchanted by the excellence of these works that he immediately commissioned Parmigianino to decorate the Sala de' Pontefici in the Vatican Palace. Although this commission came to nothing⁴⁰, we may ask if the drawing in the Willumsen Museum reflects one of these small paintings.

Several points merit consideration. First the Willumsen drawing is one of the most characteristic of the finished compositions from the hand of the young Parmigianino. Moreover, with its Correggiasque elements, it clearly reflects Parmigianino's artistic heritage, and in equal measure, it heralds the splendid, original compositions of Parmigianino's maturity. Thus it seems not unlikely that Clement VII, nephew of Lorenzo il Magnifico and by birthright a discerning patron of the arts, would have recognized young Parmigianino's promise in compositions just such as ours, a drawing which alone would have been well-suited to project him into the front ranks of the painters then working in Clementine Rome.

NOTES

This article originates in preparations for an exhibition catalogue of a selection of the Italian drawings in the Willumsens Museum, Frederikssund, Denmark. The exhibition is planned for Spring 1984. I am much indebted to Mrs. Leila Krogh, director of the museum, for having entrusted me with this task as well as for her ever encouraging and enthusiastic support. I thank Mme Catherine Monbeig-Goguel, Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, for discussing problems concerning the Parmigianino drawing and Mrs. Margaret Daly-Davis and Mr. Charles Davis for bringing my English into shape.

- ¹ L. Krogh and P. M. Hornung, J. F. Willumsens Museum "Gamle Samling" udvalgte malerier. Katalog. 1. juni - 30. oktober 1975. I.e. exhibition catalogue of 50 paintings from J. F. Willumsen's "Old Collection".
- ² A detailed history of J. F. Willumsen's collection of Italian drawings will be published in my forthcoming catalogue.
- ³ Inv. G. S. 531. Date and place of acquisition according to J. F. Willumsen's draft for an inventory of the "Old Collection", kept in the archive of the museum.
- ⁴ F. Lugt, *Le Marques de Collections des dessins et d'estampes*, Amsterdam 1921, no. 1852.
- ⁵ A. E. Popham, *Catalogue of Drawings of Parmigianino*, I-III, New Haven and London 1971, nos. 53, 86, 91, 256, 285, 307, 322, 366, 429, 510, 617. For other drawings with added strips from the collection of Mariette see Cat.: *Le Cabinet d'un Grand Amateur P.-J. Mariette 1694-1774. Dessins du XVe Siecle au XVIIIe Siecle*, Musée du Louvre, Gallerie Mollien, Paris 1967, nos. 28, 29, 108, 122, 126.
- ⁶ Description sommaire des dessins des grands maîtres d'Italie, des Pays-Bas et de France du cabinet de feu M. Crozat, avec des réflexions sur la manière de dessiner des principaux peintres. A Paris par P.-J. Mariette. Chez Pierre-Jean Mariette, rue S. Jacques aux Colonnes d'Hercule, MDCCXLI, pp. 37-38.
- ⁷ R. Bacou in Cat.: *Le Cabinet d'un Grand Amateur* (note 5), no. 93.
- ⁸ Catalogue raisonné des différents objets de curiosités dans les Sciences et les Arts qui composaient le Cabinet de feu M. Mariette Controleur Général de la Grande Chancellerie de France, Honoraire Amateur de l'Académie Rle de Peinture et de celle de Florence, par F. Basan, graveur et chez G. Desprez Imprimeur du Roi, et du Clergé de France, rue St. Jacques, 1775, lots 503-509.
- ⁹ "508. Une Etude d'arbres, un Sujet de trois Chevreux, un autre de trois Enfants qui jouent avec un mouton, & deux de plusieurs Figures debout, ces cinq Dessins sont faits a la plume & au bistre.
- ¹⁰ Popham (note 5), no. 53.
- ¹¹ Lugt (note 4), no. 1038.
- ¹² Lugt (note 4), no. 1710.
- ¹³ New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Fairfax Murray Collection I 46 d; Popham (note 5), no. 308.
- ¹⁴ Collector's mark on back of the mount, Lugt (note 4), nos. 2072-73.
- ¹⁵ Old inscription on back of the mount: "Guichardot 264".
- ¹⁶ Collector's mark on back of the mount, Lugt (note 4), no. 1507, placed by Colnaghi on the drawings acquired from J. P. Hesseltine in October 1912.
- ¹⁷ Vasari-Milanesi IV, p. 38.
- ¹⁸ A. E. Popham, *The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci*, London 1946, no. 174 A. Connected with the cartoon mentioned by Vasari by Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci*, Harmondsworth 1973, p. 104.
- ¹⁹ Nothing is known about the history of the Prado painting previous to 1830 and old etchings reproduce it with certain deviations. This has led several scholars (see Dussler, Raphael, pp. 11-13) to consider a version in a private collection in Vaduz to be the original. Since the Madrid Holy Family has been shown, however, to correspond precisely to the cartoon in Oxford (K. T. Parker, *Catalogue of the Collection of Drawings in the Ashmolean Museum*, vol. II, Italian Schools, Oxford 1956, no. 520) it is certainly the original. Partially repainted later (J. P. Cuzin, in cat.: *Raphael dans les Collections Françaises*, Paris, Grand Palais 1983-84, pp. 114-117) the Madrid work is furnished with Raphael's signature and an indistinct date which has been read as 1507. Since the Vaduz copy has a clear date of 1504, the authenticity of the Madrid date is questionable. K. Oberhuber, *Raffaello*, Milano 1982, p. 54, finds the date 1504 "assurda" whereas the date 1507 "concorda perfettamente con l'evoluzione dell'arte raffaellesca quale si esprime nella Madonna Canigiani" of about 1507-08 with strong influence from Michelangelo's Doni Holy Family. Raphael does not seem to have absorbed Michelangelesque elements before 1507, but his Holy Family with the

Lamb does not necessarily have to be interpreted as a Michelangelesque painting. It could just as well reflect influence from Fra Bartolommeo whom Raphael knew in 1504 at the beginning of his Florentine sojourn (cf. eg. ex Fra Bartolommeo's drawing of The Holy Family and an Angel (Uffizi 452E.)) which would allow an early dating for Raphael's painting.

²⁰ Popham (note 5), no. 526, pl. 257.

²¹ L. Fröhlich-Bum, *Parmigianino und der Manierismus*, Wien 1921, p. 90, fig. 92, as "Parmigianino".

²² *Bartsch* XII, p. 163, no. 3.

²³ Popham, (note 5), no. 367, Pl. 86. R. Bacou, *Dessins de l'École de Parme*, Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, Paris 1964, no. 65.

²⁴ Popham (note 5), no. 4, pl. 118.

²⁵ P. Rossi, *L'opera completa del Parmigianino*, Milano 1980, no. 64.

²⁶ *Vasari-Milanesi* V, p. 221.

²⁷ Popham (note 5), no. 169, pl. 69.

²⁸ Popham (note 5), nos. 69 & 70.

²⁹ Popham (note 5), pls. 53 & 54.

³⁰ Uffizi, 739 E. Pen and brown ink. m. 142 × 190.

³¹ Uffizi, 741 E. Pen, brown ink and brown wash, partly over red chalk. mm. 155 × 198.

³² Uffizi, 14714 F. A. E. Popham, *Correggio's Drawings*, Oxford 1957, p. 42 note 2, pl. XXVI.

³³ *Vasari-Milanesi* V, p. 221.

³⁴ P. L. Pungileoni, *Memorie storiche di Antonio Allegri detto il Correggio*, I-III, Parma 1817-1821, II, pp. 169-171.

³⁵ Popham (note 32), pp. 33-35; Popham (note 5), I, p. 5.

³⁶ Rossi (note 25), p. 83.

³⁷ C. Gould, *The Paintings of Correggio*, London 1976, pp. 183-184.

³⁸ Inv. no. FN. 162 (10700). The verso presents the Virgin of an Annunciation.

³⁹ *Vasari-Milanesi* V, pp. 221-222. Sydney J. Freedberg, *Parmigianino, His Works in Painting*, Cambridge Mass. 1950, p. 238, suggests that the "due piccoli" are "possibly identifiable with the two small pictures now in the Doria Gallery, which however I have assigned to early in the Roman period" i.e. The Nativity and Madonna and Child, *Freedberg* op. cit., figs. 46 and 49. Freedberg does not mention this identification in the catalogue pp. 170-172.

⁴⁰ Popham (note 5), p. 9, connects this commission with "St. Paul and St. Peter being led away to Martyrdom", known from an engraving by Caraglio (*Bartsch* XV, p. 71, no. 8) for which the original cartoon exists in the British Museum (Popham [note 5], no. 190, pl. 135) and the two drawings in the Louvre (Popham, op. cit. no. 379, pl. 136 and no. 380, pl. 137).

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