

KLAAS MULLER

J A C O B J O R D A E N S

Head study of a crying girl, with a separate study of her mouth

Crying children appear frequently in the work of Jacob Jordaens, notably in compositions such as *The King Drinks* (KMSK, Brussels). The motif clearly held the artist's interest, and he explored it in several paintings and drawings throughout the 1630s.

The present drawing is highly characteristic of Jordaens' style in this period (see R.A. d'Hulst, *Jordaens Drawings*, Arcade Brussels, vol. 1, p. 255, no. 1166). With only a few precise, energetic lines, Jordaens succeeds in conveying a striking emotional intensity. The immediacy of the expression and the confident handling of chalk reveal the hand of a master deeply attuned to the nuances of human emotion.

Jordaens frequently produced studies from life, using them as a visual reservoir for figures and facial types that would later appear in his larger compositions. Particularly intriguing in this sheet is the presence of a second, lightly sketched mouth, suggesting that the artist was experimenting with alternative expressions or refining the emotional register of the figure. This small but telling detail offers a rare glimpse into Jordaens' working process and his search for expressive precision.

Black Chalk heightened with White, 14 x 11.5 cm (5 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches)

17th century



Exhibitions

Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, Jacob Jordaens, 1593-1678. An Exhibition, 1968-1969, no. 157, ill. (catalogue by Michael Jaffé).

Literature

R.-A. d'Hulst, Jordaens Drawings, London and New York, 1974, I, no. A166, III, fig. 176.

Artist description:

Jacob (Jacques) Jordaens was a Flemish painter, draughtsman and a designer of tapestries and prints. He was a prolific artist who created biblical, mythological, and allegorical compositions, genre scenes, landscapes, illustrations of Flemish sayings and portraits. After the death of Rubens and Anthony van Dyck, he became the leading Flemish Baroque painter of his time. Unlike those illustrious contemporaries he never travelled abroad to study the Antique and Italian painting and, except for a few short trips to locations elsewhere in the Low Countries, he resided in Antwerp his entire life. He also remained largely indifferent to Rubens and van Dyck's intellectual and courtly aspirations. This attitude was expressed in his art through a lack of idealistic treatment which contrasted with that of these contemporaries.