

KLAAS MULLER

SCHUT CORNELIS

Study for a portrait of the Virgin and Child, supported by Cherubs with a Flower Garland

The drawing is part of a series of six that were bought together and come from a private French collection. Although different in style and techniques, they have been kept together for several generations.

This drawing was made towards the end of Schut's career, when he was active in Antwerp and received many religious commissions. It was also the period in which he worked intensively with the flower painter Gerard Seghers (a Jesuit).

Together they made several paintings in which Schut the figures and Seghers were responsible for the garlands. Indeed we find a mother with child in a comparable position in, for example, Schuts and Seghers "Sculpted cartouche decorated with flowers and Virgin and Christ" (Prado Museum, Madrid, see attachment). The drawing is very free, a so-called *Primo Pensiero*, a first thought or idea applied to and realised in an initial drawing or oil-sketch. The master puts his idea on paper with only black chalk and white elevations and a very loose framing.

There are some ambiguities about Schut's early career: it is likely that the young painter was apprenticed to Rubens, and Hendrick Van Balen and Jan Brueghel I are also mentioned as possible teachers. What is certain is that he is listed as a member of the Antwerp Guild of St Luke in 1618.

In 1623-24, Cornelis Schut travelled to Italy. In addition to Flemish influences, his oeuvre now underwent Italian influences. Especially painters such as Guido Reni, Pietro da Cortona and Guercino were quite influential in Schut's subsequent life. Moreover, his career seems to have taken a rather important flight forward: first, Schut spent most of his time in Rome: there, from 1627, he worked for Pietro Pescatore (alias Pieter de Vischere), an Italian banker and patron of Flemish origin, painting frescoes in his villa in Frascati, the so-called 'Casino Pescatore'. Very popular were Schut's paintings of larger sizes and with mythological themes.

In the same year, however, Schut ended up in prison on suspicion of murder. Through the intervention of the "Accademia de San Luca", he was released and went to Florence. There, among other things, he designed carpets for the Arazzeria Medicea, the most important carpet weaving factory in Italy that had been founded in Florence in 1546 by Grand Duke Cosimo I de' Medici.

By 1630, Schut was back in his native Antwerp. Several times he worked with Rubens and his studio, including on the porticoes made for the entry of Cardinal Infante Ferdinand. He also turned to creating large religious works commissioned by churches monasteries. Schut's artworks are characterised by a distinct mixture of Rubensian and Italian influences. He collaborated with other artists such as Gerard Seghers and Gaspar de Crayer.

Black cray heightened with white, 280 x 309mm

Provenance: Private collection, France.



Artist description:

Cornelis Schut was a Flemish painter, draughtsman, engraver and tapestry designer who specialized in religious and mythological scenes. Presumed to have trained under Rubens, he treated Counter-Reformation subjects in a High-Baroque style. After a stay in Italy, he worked mainly in Antwerp where he was one of the leading history painters in the first half of the 17th century.