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VICENTE CARDUCHO (FLORENCE, 1576/1578—MADRID, 1638)

*Prophet or Father of the Church (?)*

C. 1607–1614

BLACK CHALK, SEPIA INK AND BROWN WASH, WITH TOUCHES OF LEAD WHITE ON BLUE PAPER

188 × 126 MM

INSCRIBED: "BIZÉN/ZIO CAR./DUCHI.FEC" IN CHALK AT THE LOWER LEFT EDGE

Vicente Carducho was born in Florence around 1576. He arrived in Spain in 1585 in the company of his brother Bartolomé (c.1560–1608) who moved there to take part in work on the decoration of the monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial. Vicente essentially learned his art from his brother and the other Italian painters employed at the monastery. His first documented work dates from 1599 when he was involved in the temporary decorations for the entry into Madrid of Margarita de Austria, wife of the heir to the throne, the future Philip III. In 1601 Carducho moved to Valladolid where, together with his brother, he executed various decorative works for the palace of the Duke of Lerma and for the Palacio Real de la Ribera. Having returned to Madrid, in 1607 he was commissioned to execute the frescoes of *The Triumph of the Eucharist* for the ceiling of the chapel in the Royal Palace at El Pardo, together with Patricio and Eugenio Cajés, Julio César Semini, Castello and Carvajal. For the same palace he subsequently painted an *Episode from the Life of Achilles* for the Galería del Mediodía, a work now known from two preparatory drawings in the Biblioteca Nacional and the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid.

In 1609 Carducho was appointed Court Painter, securing more important commissions from that date onwards. In 1614, for example, he was commissioned by the monarch to execute the main altarpiece and the lateral altarpieces for the

Royal Monastery of the Encarnación in Madrid. Working with Eugenio Cajés, he executed the paintings for the dome of the chapel of the Holy Sacrament in Toledo Cathedral, which was the most elaborate and important work produced for the interior of the cathedral in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The most important commission of Carducho's career came in 1626 and comprised the series of large-format paintings for the cloister of the Charterhouse of El Paular. The 1630s were also a prolific and successful decade: he was entrusted with the restoration of the canvases and frescos in the Alcázar, while in 1634 he took part in the most important artistic project of the day, executing three canvases for the Salón de Reinos in the Buen Retiro palace in Madrid<sup>1</sup>. In addition to his activities as a painter, Vicente Carducho was also one of the leading art theoreticians of 17<sup>th</sup>-century Spain and his *Diálogos de la Pintura* were published in 1633.

The present, previously unpublished drawing depicts a figure within a niche-like oval surround. The clothing, hairstyle and large tablet or book that he holds enables him to be identified as a Prophet. The drawing is executed in black chalk, sepia ink and brown wash, the latter applied with great skill to produce the effect of shadows. Carducho also used strokes of white lead to create the highlights on the most important elements, achieving a marked sense of volume with this technique. From a technical viewpoint, the present drawing relates to others by the artist, including *The Penitent*



Vicente Carducho,  
a *Father of the Church*.  
Florence, Galleria degli  
Uffizi. Black chalk, sepia  
ink and brown wash with  
touches of lead white



Vicente Carducho, *Saint  
Julian and the Prophet Ezekiel*,  
1614. Toledo Cathedral,  
chapel of the Holy  
Sacrament (detail of a  
pendentive)

*Saint Jerome and Saint Luke painting the Virgin*<sup>2</sup>, in which the figures' volumes are created from rapid strokes of chalk with angular outlines that are then softened and graduated through the application of wash with a brush.

The arrangement of the figure within a niche suggests two possible intended locations. In 1607 Carducho painted the ceiling of the chapel in the Royal Palace at El Pardo, a now lost work but one whose composition is known from a very detailed preparatory drawing in the Biblioteca Nacional<sup>3</sup>. The central lunette depicts *The Triumph of the Eucharist* while the eight lunettes contain "four Doctors of the Holy Roman Church, and four of the Greek", as the artist himself recorded in his *Diálogos de la Pintura*<sup>4</sup>. The oval format of the present drawing is comparable to the lunettes visible in the drawing in the Biblioteca Nacional, which are derived from Italian fresco painting of the type that arrived in Spain in the reign of Philip II. In this sense the figures of the Prophets and Church Fathers can be related to those painted by Francisco de Urbina in the Salas Capitulares in El Escorial around 1581–1582.

It is also possible that this drawing is a preparatory study for one of the figures painted with Eugenio Cajés for the dome of the chapel of the Holy Sacrament in Toledo Cathedral in the commission of 1614. The pendentives are painted with prophets and saints, the lunettes with the Fathers of the Greek and Roman Church, and the tondos on a level with the lunettes with the Four Evangelists. The *Prophet* in the present drawing does not correspond to any of the figures depicted in Toledo, although his gestures are very similar to those of *Ezekiel* in the pendentives or to *Saint John the Evangelist* in the tondos. It might be suggested that this is a preliminary design for one of these figures that was ultimately modified, as was the case with another drawing by Carducho, a *Father of the Church*, now in the Uffizi, that was clearly intended for a lunette given the arrangement of the figure.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the case, this is a drawing of outstanding quality that can be classed as among the finest within Vicente Carducho's graphic oeuvre.

1 For Carducho's biography, see Angulo and Pérez Sánchez (1969), pp. 86–103, and more recently Enciclopedia (2006), Vol. II, pp. 631–635.

2 Reproduced in Angulo and Pérez Sánchez (1977), pp. 39 and 40, nos. 190 and 194, pl. LII.

3 Reproduced and discussed in Angulo and Pérez Sánchez (1977), p. 31, no. 134, pl. XXXVIII. See also Angulo and Pérez Sánchez (1969), pp. 186–187, nos. 495–508.

4 Carducho (1633/1979), pp. 330–331.

5 See Angulo and Pérez Sánchez (1979), p. 41, no. 202, pl. LV.

