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FELIPE GÓMEZ DE VALENCIA (GRANADA, 1634-1679)

The Christ Child bearing the Cross

REED PEN AND GREY-BROWN INK ON LAID PAPER

120 X 100 MM

SIGNED: "PH^e GOMES" (IN PEN AND GREY-BROWN INK AT THE LOWER LEFT CORNER)

The gradual rediscovery of the surviving corpus of drawings by Felipe Gómez de Valencia has made considerable progress over the past few decades. The first known reference to his drawings dates to 1800, when Ceán Bermúdez published his celebrated *Dictionary* in which he included a biography of the artist. Ceán wrote on Gómez de Valencia that he "imitated [Alonso Cano] with the pen in his drawings."¹ Two more centuries had to pass, however, before the first studies appeared on the artist. Diego Angulo and Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez published a significant number of the artist's drawings that were housed in public and private collections in Spain and abroad. In 1968, for example, Pérez Sánchez published *Christ on the Route to Calvary*, at that date in the collection of the Count of Alcubierre,² while a few years later Diego Angulo published the first group of drawings by the artist. Among them were two more sheets from the Alcubierre Album, a *Saint Juan de Mata* and a *Saint Jerome*, as well as a drawing formerly in the Vasconcel collection, *Saint Mary Magdalen of Pazzis*, and *The Temptation of Christ* formerly in the Boix Collection and now in the National Gallery of Art, Washington.³ In 1986 Pérez Sánchez added two more drawings to this corpus, namely *Head of an old Man* and *Study of two Heads*, both in the Museo Nacional del Prado (D-5996 and D-3793, respectively), which had entered the Prado from the Zóbel donation.⁴

Over the past few years further new drawings by the artist have come to light, including *The kneeling Christ Child* and

Saint Agnes, both in the Biblioteca Nacional de España,⁵ and more recently *Dwarf with Bagpipes and Tambourine* and its pair, *Dwarf dressed as a Soldier* (Madrid, José de la Mano Galería de Arte).⁶ The present, unpublished drawing depicting *The Christ Child bearing the Cross* is thus the most recent contribution to the catalogue of known drawings by this artist from Granada.

In comparison to the large number of drawings by Gómez de Valencia that have survived, few paintings are known, a fact that may be associated with his relatively early death at the age of forty-five in 1679. Among the surviving paintings by Gómez de Valencia are *The Adoration of the Magi* in the Hospital Real (1677) and *The Lamentation over the dead Christ* in the Museo de Bellas Artes in Granada (1679), both works that reveal the artist's interest in Flemish models, with which he was familiar through prints and above all through Alonso Cano.⁷

Gómez de Valencia's drawings reveal a technical dependence on the work of the Cordoban artist Antonio del Castillo (1616-1668) from whom he derived both the use of a thick reed pen and above all the energetic type of stroke and way of creating shadow on the figures with diamond-shaped cross-hatching. Other characteristics of this artist's graphic style according to Angulo and Pérez Sánchez are the slight dryness of the forms, the limited use of washes and the fact that most of his drawings are signed and in some cases dedicated, suggesting that they were conceived as autonomous works to be given as gifts and not as preparatory studies for



Felipe Gómez de Valencia,
The kneeling Christ Child. Madrid,
Biblioteca Nacional



Felipe Gómez de Valencia,
Christ bearing the Cross. Florence,
Galleria degli Uffizi

canvases.⁸ Many of these features are clearly evident in this small *Christ bearing the Cross*.

In this sheet the Christ Child is depicted on a hill that is barely suggested by some thick strokes of the pen. He wears a tunic and holds up a long, slender cross with both hands that clearly refers to his future crucifixion. This drawing should be related to the *Kneeling Christ Child* in the Biblioteca Nacional de España (inv. Dib/18/1/857), in which the Child appears in front of the column on which he will one day be flagellated, holding the whip. Both drawings offer a placid, un-dramatic interpretation of Christ's future Passion through the figure of the Christ Child. Examples of this sensibility in the work of other artists of this period are to be found in *The Christ Child with the Cross* by Sánchez Cotán (c. 1600-1610. Toledo,

Convento de Santo Domingo el Antiguo), the sculpture by Alonso Cano of the same subject in San Fermín de los Navarros (c. 1657-1660), and *The Infant Christ asleep on the Cross* by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (c. 1670, Sheffield, City Art Museum). All depict the face of the Christ Child as serene with the aim of inspiring devotion on the part of the viewer. The tenderness and compassion expressed in these child figures is quite different to the pathos and drama to be found in Gómez de Valencia's scenes from the Passion of Christ such as *Christ bearing the Cross* in the Uffizi or *Christ on the Route to Calvary* in the Alcubierre Album. As a result, it is evident that the artist possessed a perfect knowledge of trends within Spanish Baroque art of the day, which ranged from dramatic pathos to a restrained presentation of the emotions.

1 Ceán Bermúdez (1800), vol. II, p. 205.
2 Pérez Sánchez (1968), p. 271, pl. III c, and more recently, Pérez Sánchez and Navarrete Prieto (2009), p. 162, cat. no. 64.
3 See Angulo (1969), pp. 249-256. The drawings in the Alcubierre Album were recently studied in Pérez Sánchez and Navarrete Prieto (2009), pp. 158-163, cat. nos. 62-64.
4 Pérez Sánchez (1986b), pp. 107-117.

5 Once again published by Pérez Sánchez (2002), pp. 398-399.
6 Fecit III (2011), pp. 21-25, cat. no. 5.
7 On the present artist see Castañeda Becerra (1989), pp. 179-187; Pérez Sánchez (1996), p. 387 and more recently, Calvo Castellón (2001), pp. 393-394 and Fecit III (2011), pp. 21-22.
8 Angulo (1969), pp. 249-256. On the latter see Pérez Sánchez (1986a), pp. 304-305, and more recently, Pérez Sánchez (2002), pp. 398-399.

