THE LIMNER COMPANY



After RICHARD COSWAY (1742 - 1821)

A drawing of a seated winged Putto, or Cherub, playing the lute; circa 1790-1800

Circa: Circa 1790-1800

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19.5 x 15.5 cm (7 $^{5}/_{8}$ x 6 $^{1}/_{8}$ inches)

Pencil, chalk and brown ink on paper, set in a wash-lined mount

The present work is reminiscent of a sketch completed by Richard Cosway from the 'Lodi Albums', now held at the Fondazione Maria Cosway[1]. It also closely resembles the famous painting of a Cherub Playing the Lute by Rosso Fiorentino at the Uffizi, Florence[2]. Cosway has here depicted the cherub sitting slightly more upright and full-length. Though Richard Cosway never visited Italy, his wife Maria had been born there and trained at the Accademia in Florence. Furthermore, the Cosways owned an extensive collection of Old Master paintings, prints, and drawings, which could have inspired the original sketch.

These works of art were held in the Cosways' residences, including in their home on Pall Mall. Here, Richard was known to host many Salons and gatherings of members at the top of London's society. This was not only important for their social standing but also for their career, and these gatherings would be a place in which both Maria and Richard could meet new clients for their portraiture business.

Here, the Cherub has been more finely finished than Cosway had left his version in the Lodi Albums. Whoever the copyist was, it seems that they were keen to use numerous different techniques within the composition. Where the hair of the figure and the side of the lute have been highlighted with stronger brown ink, the rest of the figure remains faint and softer. Wash has been used to bring colour to the skin of the Cherub and the Lute, but again remains subtle.

[1] An image of this drawing can be found at the Paul Mellon Centre, Lodi Album IV.

[2] Uffizi, Florence, 1890 no. 1505.