



GIOVANNA GARZONI
ASCOLI PICENO - 1600 - ROME - 1670

THE VIRGIN OF THE CHAIR

Tempera and gold on velum

Signed lower left (on the chair): Giovanna Garzoni F
Torn upper and lower right corners

Height : 23,5 cm

Length : 23,5 cm

Provenance: commissioned by Ferdinand II de' Medici, then in his widow's (Vittoria della Rovere) collection in the Poggio Imperiale villa, where the work is documented until the 1784 inventory.

Bibliography: Elena Fumagalli, « Giovanna Garzoni davanti a Raffaello », *Paragone*, 147.385, 2019, pp.45-50, fig. 33.

Exhibition: « *The immensity of the universe* » in *the art of Giovanna Garzoni*, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi Palazzo Pitti, Andito degli Angiolini, 2020, n° 10.

Born into a family of craftsmen and artists, Giovanna deliberately turned towards an artistic career, probably starting her apprenticeship with her uncle Pietro Gaia, then in Venice, probably with Palma Giovane who had been her uncle's master (her family was of Venetian origin). Her first (and unique) painting painted circa 1620 for the Ospedale degli Incurabili reveals Palma's influence (this painting, *S. Andrew*, is now in the Accademia). In 1630, Giovanna and her brother Matteo leave for Naples, and she works for the Spanish viceroy, the

duke of Alcalà, and stays there till 1632, but don't know any picture from this period. In 1632, she goes to Torino, entering the service of Christine de France, duchess of Savoy (wife of duke Victor Amedeo the 1st), and stays there five years, painting court portraits, sacred and profane subjects, and her first still lifes. From 1638 to 1641, she is not documented, but one suspects a travel to France and England, where the King and Queen are brother and sister of the duchess of Savoy. She is documented in Rome on August the 1st 1642, with her brother, and in 1646 she is in Florence, where she starts an account book which today permits us to document her work ("Fatture che io Giovanna Garzoni presentai al S.mo Gran Duca"). 1651 sees her back in Rome, where she will stay until her death in 1670, rich and famous. She will leave to the St Luke Academy, of which she was a member, her archives, a book of drawings, and some works.

It is during her Florentine stay, between 1646 and 1651 that she painted for Ferdinando II the picture here presented, reproducing the famous Raphael tondo, (now in Palazzo Pitti). The Florentine archives tell us that the painting was taken from the "Tribuna" in the Uffizi, and delivered to the artist on January the 26th 1649, and that she returned it worn ("riavuto ma guasto", A.G.F., *Giornaletto delle Gallerie 1646-1688*, ms.62,c.10). The artist reproduces not only the painting, but also the sixteenth-century (documented since 1589) square frame with the corners « in pietra di broccatello con adornamento di noce filettato d'oro », frame that was removed in late seventeenth-century, when the painting was transferred from the *Tribuna* to the apartments of Gran Principe Ferdinando de' Medici (it is the frame that we see nowadays). The work passed to Poggio Imperiale, villa of Vittoria della Rovere, Ferdinand II's widow, who gathered in the « stanza detta dell'Aurora » a collection of paintings on vellum (the first inventory listing our work is dated 1692), many by Garzoni herself, and remained there until 1784 (last appearance in a Medici inventory). If Giovanna Garzoni is today famous for her still lifes, we know from the Florentine archives that she made other copies of famous works (Raphael, Reni) following a frequent use at the Medici court: it is not servile copies, but interpretations in another medium of a masterpiece.