

LEONAERT BRAMER

Delft 1596 – 1674 Delft

The Prediction of Judas' Betrayal

Pen and brush in gray ink and watercolor, heightened in white, on vellum

12.2 x 9.5 cm

Provenance: The Netherlands, Private Collection

Literature: Michiel Plomp, "Leonaert Bramer the Draughtsman" in: Jane ten Brink Goldsmith *et al.*, *Leonaert Bramer 1596-1674: ingenious painter and draughtsman in Rome and Delft*, Uitgeverij Waanders, Zwolle 1994, pp. 183–208.

With around 1,300 drawings known today, Leonaert Bramer was among the most productive Dutch draughtsmen of his time. Appreciated for his draughtsmanship, his works were highly valued and in demand with collectors and fellow artists. A large part of his drawn oeuvre consisted of illustrations of biblical and classical writings, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The present two works belong to this category of drawings, which were originally kept in albums or bound together in book form.

The sheet reflects Bramers late, meticulous drawing style which has been praised for its compelling rhythm and humor, and which together with the coloring suggest a date after 1660. The scene derives from *The Life of Christ*, of which Bramer made at least thirteen drawing sets. In the earliest example of these series known to us today, Bramer had already drawn *The Prediction of Judas' Betrayal* (Bremen, Kunsthalle). Apparently pleased with the composition, he returned to it thirty years later as a reference point. Besides our drawing of the subject, at least two contemporary sheets exist that date to circa 1660–70, in which several picture elements recur, slightly rearranged and sometimes reversed, such as the bent over figure handling the wine cooler, Judas holding the money bag, and the disciples seated around the table (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, and the Netherlands, Private Collection).

Whereas the earliest sets might have been designed to be reproduced in paintings, prints, drawings and other types of artworks, the ones created at the end of his life were widely collected and considered to be unique works of art. This might explain why some of the drawings from *The Life of Christ*, including both of our sheets, were executed on vellum, which was far more expensive than ordinary paper. Vellum was probably only used for drawings that were created for the market or on commission, creating a more exclusive artwork.