LOT 218
PROPERTY FROM THE ESTATE OF LUCILLE KAYE
BENEDETTI GENNARI
CENTO 1633 - 1715 BOLOGNA
PORTRAIT OF MARCHESE FRANCESCO FIASCHI
signed: Benedetto Gennari, and dated in the body the letter: 1655
oil on canvas
42 7/8 by 37 in.; 109 by 94 cm.

ESTIMATE 100,000-150,000 USD

PROVENANCE
Listed in the inventory of the sitter's family, 18 January 1697 (as by Gennari; see footnote 1);
Mrs. Baillie Hamilton, Langton;
Anonymous sale, London, Christie's, 6 July 1917, lot 52;
Anonymous sale, London, Sotheby's, 28 May 1941, lot 111;
There purchased by the present owners.
LITERATURE
L’Arte degli Estensi, 1986, p. 188;
P. Bagni, Benedetto Gennari e La Bottega del Guercino, Bologna 1986, pp. 20-1, cat. no. 3, reproduced;
L’Arte degli Estensi: la pittura del Seicento e del Settecento a Modena e Reggio: catalogo critico, Modena 1986, p. 188;
N. Bagozzi, “GENNARI, Benedetto, il Giovane”, in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, Vol. 53, 2000;
N. Roio in, La Scuola del Guercino, Modena 2004, pp. 136, 163, reproduced, fig. 250 (as location unknown).

CATALOGUE NOTE
This dashing and bold portrait of the Marchese Francesco Fiaschi is Benedetto Gennari’s earliest recorded portrait, and is one of the most important pictures by him to come to market in years. Signed and dated 1655, the picture was painted when Gennari was only twenty-two, a full eleven years before he and his brother Cesare took over Guercino’s studio in 1666.

Gennari’s early training in Guercino’s studio served him well throughout his entire career. In 1672 he travelled to Paris where he enjoyed great success as a portraitist in the French court where for sixteen months he executed multiple portraits, religious and mythological compositions. He later moved to London where he worked in the court of Charles II, taking on many of the commissions previously given to the aging Peter Lely. Gennari worked in London from 1674-1688, which was an extremely productive period; among his finest portraits from his time there is that of James II (see Literature, Bagni 1986, cat. no. 71, where listed as “Private Collection, New York), though he also showed great skill in his religious works; among the notable examples is his Annunciation, now in the Ringling Museum, Sarasota, Florida (inv. no. SN 131).

This Portrait of Francesco Fiaschi, however, was executed well before Gennari’s successful travels to the courts of Europe, and is a classic example of the Bolognese tradition from which he emerged. As a youthful work, it is fully indebted to Guercino’s aesthetic sensibility, and dynamically illustrates Gennari’s keen skills as a faithful student to his uncle and mentor. Fiaschi is displayed in a large black broad brimmed hat, which is complemented by his silk jacket and elaborately embroidered stola. Gennari seamlessly varies his use of black in both the drapery and hat of the Marchese; the subtle gradations of black are interspersed with quick flecks of white, thus creating a highly refined and shimmering surface quality. Gennari quite confidently signs the picture at the bottom of a letter, which Fiaschi openly displays to the viewer in his right hand. Though the main body of the letter is now mostly illegible, the envelope is elegantly inscribed with Fiaschi’s name and title, leaving little mystery as to the identity of this important elder statesman. The portrait was apparently well received by the Fiaschi family, as it remained in the possession of the family until at least 1697, when it was recorded in the inventory of the Palazzo Fiaschi in Ferrara.¹

Francesco Fiaschi (1605-1658) acquired the title Marchese in 1636, and two years later in Ferrara became a member of the Legato di Ferrara e del Giudice dei Savi (Cardinal Legate of Ferrara and the judge of the Elders). By 1644 he had become an advisor and ambassador to Pope Innocent X.² He was also one of Guercino’s earliest patrons; he is recorded as commissing Guercino’s Cleopatra (private collection, Ferrara). According to Guercino’s Libro dei Conti, Fiaschi paid Guercino 40.5 scudi on 21 December 1639 for the Cleopatra.³ That picture is also mentioned by Malvasia, who records the commission of the painting and erroneously cites Fiaschi’s name as “Fiacchi”.⁴

¹. “Un quadro sopra il scrigno col ritratto del Sig. Marchese Francesco Fiaschi di mano del Sig. Benedetto Genari con
cornice intagliata e non dorata” (p. 14 of the Fiaschi private archives, see Literature, Bagni 1986, p. 20).
2. According to a family genealogy drawn up by Lodovico Fiaschi in 1795; see Literature, Bagni 1986, p. 20