



**Carlo Maratti (1625–1713)**

*The Head of Holofernes*, c.1675

Red and white chalks on blue paper

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This work is a study for *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, one of a cycle of Old Testament mosaics executed to Maratti designs in the lunettes of the Cappella Della Presentazione, in St Peter's, Rome. Maratti's involvement with the scheme seems to date from about 1669.

The grisly subject portrayed in this scene was one of the most frequently painted by Italian Renaissance and Baroque artists.

Taken from the apocryphal Book of Judith, the story describes a wise and attractive Jewish widow who contrives a plan to save her besieged city from the Assyrians. With her maid, Judith pretends to desert her town and visits the general Holofernes in his encampment. Invited to spend the night, Judith instead takes advantage of Holofernes' drunkenness and, while he sleeps, cuts off his head.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Maratti was the leading painter in Rome in the latter part of the seventeenth century. He was a pupil of Andrea Sacchi and he continued the tradition of the classical Grand Manner, based on Raphael. He also gained an international reputation for his paintings of the Madonna and Child, which are reworkings of types established during the High Renaissance.

Maratti was an accomplished fresco painter, and the finest portraitist of the day in Rome. He had a large studio, but after his death his reputation suffered because many works by his pupils and copiers were confused with his. Maratti restored Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican and was appointed curator of the Vatican paintings.

## STUDENT FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What influence can you see of Raphael and the classical tradition?
- Do you think this is an observed artwork? Discuss.

- How does Marratti use white chalk to his advantage in this work?

## **SUGGESTED RESOURCES**

<http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/a316-1.html>

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/m/maratti/>

[http://www.malaspina.com/site/person\\_808.asp](http://www.malaspina.com/site/person_808.asp)