

## *Odysseus and the Daughters of Lycomedes*, Baldassare Peruzzi

### Odysseus and the Daughters of Lycomedes

Baldassare Peruzzi

Italian, about 1520

Pen and brown ink and black chalk,  
heightened with white bodycolor,  
squared in black chalk

6 15/16 x 9 1/2 in.

85.GG.39



### Background Information

Knowing that her son would die if he fought in the **Trojan War**, **Achilles'** mother, Thetis, sent him to live with the daughters of King Lycomedes of Scyros disguised as a woman.

**Odysseus**, king of Ithaca, who wanted

Achilles to fight against Troy, went to Lycomedes' palace dressed as a merchant. He offered the daughters jewelry and clothing but also included a sword, spear, and shield. When a trumpet sounded, Achilles automatically grabbed the weapons, thus revealing his disguise. Here, Odysseus stands at the left, inviting the daughters into the palace.

Baldassare Peruzzi produced this drawing in preparation for one of four oval **frescoes** in a Roman villa. The drawing's high degree of finish, with no visible corrections made by the artist, indicates that it may have been used as a finished study for a larger work.

### About the Artist

Baldassare Peruzzi (Italian, born Siena 1481, died Rome 1536)

Baldassare Peruzzi was very successful as a draftsman and architect, although he also created paintings. He made much-admired studies of antique buildings during the **Renaissance**, a period of history that began in the fourteenth century and saw a renewed interest in the study of **classical antiquity**. Renaissance thinkers believed that the arts and humanities had declined during the **Middle Ages** and were fascinated by Greco-Roman literature, history, art, and philosophy. Many of Peruzzi's painted house facades, all now destroyed, included antique themes and were meant to look like grand "ancient" sculptural facades.

Upon arriving in Rome from Siena in 1502, Peruzzi used **perspective** to give his two-dimensional mural paintings a three-dimensional appearance. He also painted theater perspectives later used in a treatise on architecture. In 1515, he designed a new facade for Bologna Cathedral and later worked on a church, chapel, and palazzo in the town. When Raphael died in 1520, Peruzzi succeeded him as architect of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, using drawing as a tool to understand and further develop the existing plans.

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Following the Sack of Rome in 1527, Peruzzi retreated to Siena, where he became architect for the city. Here he improved fortifications, devised a minting machine, and constructed several villas. He also designed a dome and altar for the modernization of Siena Cathedral and reconstructed a dam.

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### **Questions for Teaching**

Take the time to look closely at the drawing and share your initial observations.

What do the columns in the background reveal about where the scene is happening? (*The columns may indicate a palace.*)

Look closely at the figure on the left. Based on his pose, what do you think he could be saying to the women on the right? (*He might be inviting them inside.*)

Look at the second figure from the right. Based on her pose, what do you think she is doing? (*Her raised arm is holding a piece of fabric as if she is hiding something, and her right hand is placed on the shoulder of the figure to her right, as if pushing the figure away. She looks like she may be hiding the figure.*)

This drawing depicts Odysseus, king of Ithaca, searching for Achilles. It had been foretold to Achilles' mother, Thetis, that her son would die in the Trojan War. To prevent this from occurring, Achilles had been dressed as a maiden and sent to live among the daughters of Lycomedes. Do you think Achilles is pictured in the drawing? What do you see in the drawing that makes you say so?

Based on the poses of the figures and what you know of the story of Achilles so far, what do you think happens next?