

PAN

AMSTERDAM

LAWRENCE STEIGRAD FINE ARTS



The Madonna and Child in a Floral Garland

inscribed on the reverse 6598,9...D...
oil on copper
16 ½ x 12 ¾ inches (41.8 x 32.4 cm.)

PROVENANCE

Reputedly Prince Vladislaus Sigismundus Vasa, Warsaw, 1626

B & S Auction Services, Portland, Connecticut, July 25, 1976

Private Collection, Massachusetts, 1976 – 2007 from whom acquired by

Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts, New York, 2007, where purchased by

Private Collection, New Jersey, 2007 – until the present time

LITERATURE

James A. Welu, "Hendrik van Balen (1575 - 1632) Jan Brueghel the Younger (1601- 1678)", exhibition catalogue Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts, The Collector's Cabinet, Flemish Paintings from New England Private Collections, 1983, pp. 9, 12 - 15, no. 1, illustrated

Portraits and Other Recent Acquisitions, Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts, New York, 2007, no. 6, illustrated

Lawrence Steigrad Fine Arts in The European Fine Art Fair Maastricht 07 handbook, March 2007, pp. 142-143, illustrated

Pippa Mason, "Jan Brueghel the Elder & Hendrick van Balen" in Dutch and Flemish Old Master Paintings, Johnny van Haefen, London, 2007, unpaginated, fn. 6

EXHIBITED

Worcester, Massachusetts, Worcester Art Museum, The Collector's Cabinet, Flemish Paintings from New England Collections, November 6, 1983 - January 29, 1984, no. 1

Upon the death of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568 - 1625), Jan Brueghel the Younger took over his father's studio and continued the collaborative practices he had established with artists such as Hendrick van Balen the Elder. By 1604 the elder Brueghel and Van Balen had moved to the Lange Nieuwstraat in Antwerp, which must have simplified and aided their joint efforts. When both worked on the same composition, Van Balen would paint most of the figures and Brueghel the Elder the backgrounds, flowers, fruit, animals and precious objects, and his son followed suit.[1] About 1607 Brueghel the Elder executed his first floral garland surrounding a Virgin and Child painted by Van Balen (Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan, Inventory no 71).[2] The format proved extremely popular; a fact reflected by the exorbitant prices paid by his primarily aristocratic clientele.[3]

In this copper Van Balen's figures appear on both sides of the garland and are believed to have been painted first, with the flowers added later. Golden rays spill from above creating a subtle hued mandorla of light that encircle the pair, while Christ displays a bunch of grapes, symbolic of the Eucharist, and the Madonna's feet rest on a crescent moon. Four putti hover above holding a crown topped with stars. This type of devotional image of the Madonna and Child was popular at the time and relates to an apocalyptic vision found in the Book of Revelations (12:1), "A woman robed with the sun, beneath her feet the moon, and on her head a crown of twelve stars".[4]

Clearly identifiable as the work of Jan Brueghel the Younger due to differences in style, technique and notably the use of glazes, the artist has characteristically included floral species that never appear in the work of his father. Depicting more than 130 types of flowers including at least thirteen varieties of tulip, eleven of iris, and ten of anemone,[5] the painting's garland glorifies the abundance of nature. The lilies to the Madonna's right are emblematic of her chastity and purity.[6]

It is thought that our painting was commissioned from Brueghel the Elder and Van Balen by Prince Vladislaus Sigismundus Vasa (the future King Vladislaus IV of Poland 1595- 1648) when he visited Antwerp in the autumn of 1624. At this time Brueghel the Younger was in Italy. Upon his return to Antwerp, after his father's death a few months later on January 12, 1625, he probably inherited the project. The ownership of this painting by the Prince is believed to be confirmed by a panel painting done by Etienne de la Hyre (1583 - 1643) in Warsaw. Entitled The Kunstkammer of Prince Vladislaus Sigismundus Vasa and dated 1626 (reproduced Welu, op. cit., p. 14, no. 1a), it depicts fourteen Flemish paintings as well as drawings and other precious objects on a cloth covered table. The paintings are believed to have been purchased during the Prince's extended travels throughout Europe from 1624 - 1625, which included his visit to Antwerp. The right side of our painting,

showing the garland and putti, is clearly visible in the mid-right section of the composition. [7]

Notably in 1983 Dr. Sam Segal was asked to do a detailed report identifying all of the species in this painting (available upon request) prior to its exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum. Confirming the floral wreath to have been painted by Jan Brueghel the Younger as well as what is believed to be the painting's earliest provenance, Segal stated, "The flower wreath by Jan Brueghel II cannot have been painted by either Jan Brueghel I or Osias Beert, it differs in technics. Specific for Jan Brueghel II are, a.o., several wild species, and Barberry and Small Garden Nasturtium. I do not expect to be it a copy after Jan Brueghel I for the same reasons. The 'Kunstkammer' by Etienne de la Hyre is very interesting, also because it dates the Brueghel painting." [8]

[1] Ariane van Suchtelen, "Jan Brueghel the Elder and Hendrick van Balen, Garland of Fruit around a Depiction of Ceres Receiving Gifts from the Four Seasons", exhibition catalogue The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Rubens and Brueghel, A Working Friendship, July 5 - September 24, 2006, p. 10.

[2] Ariane van Suchtelen, "Jan Brueghel the Elder and Hendrick van Balen, Fruit Garland with Angels", op. cit., p. 152.

[3] Ariane van Suchtelen, "Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, Madonna and Child in a Garland of Fruit and Flowers", op. cit., p. 119.

[4] Welu, op. cit., p. 12.

[5] Ibid, pp. 12, 15.

[6] Suchtelen, op. cit., p. 119.

[7] Welu, op. cit., pp. 12, 14.

[8] Written communication from Dr. Sam Segal, Amsterdam to Dr. James A. Welu, Worcester Art Museum dated May 4, 1983.