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UNSEEN FOR ALMOST A CENTURY

Sir Anthony van Dyck's *Portrait of Hendrick Liberti*

Leads

Christie's *Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale* In London, 2 December 2014



London – Christie's *Old Master & British Paintings Evening Sale* in London on Tuesday 2 December 2014 is led by a remarkable portrait by **Sir Anthony van Dyck** of the musician Hendrick Liberti, which was in the collection of King Charles I at Whitehall by 1639 and has been unseen for almost a century, since its sale at Christie's by the 8th Duke of Grafton in 1923 (estimate: £2.5-3.5 million, *illustrated above*). The auction presents a carefully curated selection of 36 high quality works that are fresh to the market and attractively priced. Other highlights include a beautifully preserved and little known masterpiece of **Willem van de Velde the Younger's** early maturity, *A kaag and other vessels off an inlet on the Dutch coast*, 1661 (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million); a shimmering depiction of *Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi* on the Grand Canal by **Giovanni Antonio Canal, il Canaletto** (estimate: £800,000-1.2 million); two superb and rarely treated subjects by **Pieter Brueghel the Younger**: *A country brawl*, 1610 and *The Good Shepherd* (estimate: £700,000-1 million and £800,000-1.2 million respectively); a classic and previously unpublished view of *The Molo, Venice* by **Michele Giovanni Marieschi** (estimate: £500,000-800,000); and an important selection of early Flemish works including a *Portrait of a young nobleman* by **Joos van Cleve** (estimate: £400,000-600,000) and a *Holy Family* by **Jan Provoost** (estimate: £250,000-350,000). This season also includes property from Petworth House with pictures in the Evening and also the Day sales, on 3 December.

VAN DYCK

Portrait of Hendrick Liberti (circa 1600-1669), half-length, in black with three gold chains, holding a sheet of music, by a column by Sir Anthony van Dyck was owned by the artist's greatest single patron, King Charles I, who formed what was, until its dispersal in 1650, one of the most outstanding collections of pictures in northern Europe (estimate: £2.5-3.5 million, *illustrated page 1*). One of the most arresting portraits of van Dyck's second Antwerp period, this portrait was at Whitehall by 1639, and was subsequently acquired by the statesman, Henry Bennet, 1st Earl of Arlington, remaining in the possession of his descendants, the Dukes of Grafton, until its sale at Christie's in 1923. Included in major exhibitions in 1899 and 1900, and detailed in leading 20th century literature on the artist by Lionel Cust and Gustav Glück among others, this painting has not been seen, even by scholars in the field, for almost a century.

Liberti, the sitter, was a chorister who became a singer in the cathedral choir at Antwerp, in 1617; a composer and highly successful organist, he was appointed organist to the cathedral in March 1628, retaining the position for over 40 years until 1669. He also worked for the court at Brussels. Van Dyck was eighteen when Liberti moved to Antwerp, and had already established a position as the most gifted of the younger artists trained under Rubens. As the artistic and musical worlds were closely linked, it is very possible that the two had met before 3 October 1621, when van Dyck left for Italy. From the outset of van Dyck's career it must have been clear to his contemporaries that he was a portraitist of remarkable perception and acuity; but it was in Italy, where he worked in Rome, in Palermo and, above all, in Genoa, that van Dyck came of age as a portraitist, paying particular attention to the work of Titian. When van Dyck returned to Antwerp in the summer of 1627, aged 28, he could claim a European reputation. Lanier was in Antwerp in the summer of 1628, and the portrait of the musician now in Vienna is dated to the same year by authorities including Millar, Vey, Vlieghe and Wheelock. A similar dating seems very plausible for the present portrait in which van Dyck, as so often, echoes Titian, not least in the shimmering brilliance of the silk costume, which is handled with a consistent delicacy.

WILLEM VAN DE VELDE II



Considered to be one of the most serenely poetic 'calms' in the *oeuvre* of van de Velde the Younger, *A kaag and other vessels off an inlet on the Dutch coast*, 1661, is a beautifully preserved masterpiece of the artist's early maturity (estimate: £1.2-1.8 million). The painting is little known having remained in the same collection for over sixty years and having not been seen in public since it was exhibited in 1954. It was last offered for sale at auction over a century ago in 1890, at Christie's. It belongs with a small group of paintings on this theme from the early 1660s in which, as the critic George Keyes attested: 'Van de Velde brings his concept of the calm to perfection'. It is closely comparable with the celebrated picture in the National Gallery, London, also dated 1661. Van de Velde began to paint calms in the early 1650s, inspired by both Simon de Vlieger (1600/01-1653), under whom the artist is thought to have trained in around 1648, and Jan van de Capelle (1626-1679), who was also active in de Vlieger's studio in Weesp at that time. As van de Velde developed the theme, his depiction of light became increasingly subtle, revealing greater contrast between light and shadow, more intense hues, and an unsurpassed skill at rendering skies and reflection on water. The present painting displays many of the qualities for which the artist is most celebrated, notably in its finely-crafted and harmonious composition, its exquisitely-drawn ships, and in its serene atmosphere.

CANALETTO & MARIESCHI: VENICE

Executed on Canaletto's return from England to Venice after 1755, *Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi, on the Grand Canal, Venice* is one of a group of views of individual *palazzi* that the artist painted around this date (estimate: £800,000-1.2 million, *illustrated right*). On a similarly small scale, the majority of these works are of English provenance, including that of *Palazzo Grimani* at the National Gallery, London. Less dependent on assistants during this phase of his career, Canaletto's touch became lighter and freer. The figures in this canvas, which are brilliantly rendered by controlled dots and dabs of paint, make one wonder if Canaletto had studied Vermeer's *Lady and Gentleman at the Virginals*, then in the possession of Consul Joseph Smith, banker to the British community at Venice. Ca' Vendramin-Calergi was one of the outstanding palaces of Renaissance Venice, and remains a notable landmark on the Grand Canal in the parish of San Marcuola. Exhibiting the artist's sparkling technique, the smaller scale of this work was perhaps influenced by the demands of those who bought his pictures. This work comes to auction for the first time in almost 150 years, having last been exhibited just less than 40 years ago.



A fine addition to the *oeuvre* of Michele Giovanni Marieschi, *The Bacino di San Marco, Venice, with the Piazzetta and the Doge's Palace* is a previously unpublished view of the Molo (estimate: £500,000-800,000, *illustrated left*). Taken from a viewpoint opposite St. Mark's Campanile and showing the Bacino di San Marco on a receding diagonal perspective it is the most enduring and popular of all Venetian *vedute*. Marieschi treated this precise view on at least seven occasions between 1736 and 1741, with the recorded

variants differing in both size and incidental detail, allowing for the spirit and mood of the picture to change by varying the number and position of the boats, together with the cast of figures. The present example is a serene staging of an iconic view. Undoubtedly a highly desirable picture for a grand tourist, the work formed part of the collection of General Sir George Cockburn (1763-1847) and was hung at his home in Shanganagh Castle, near Bray.

PIETER BRUEGHEL THE YOUNGER



Long believed by many scholars to be a work in whole or in part by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Good Shepherd* is one of the rarest subjects in the *oeuvre* of his son, Pieter Bruegel the Younger (estimate: £800,000-1.2 million, *illustrated left*). No drawn or painted prototype for the composition by the Elder exists, suggesting that this is an original invention by Pieter the Younger, doubtless conceived in relation to *The Bad Shepherd*, which exists in a unique version by Pieter the Younger. Together the two compositions can be considered one of the personal masterpieces of

Pieter Bruegel the Younger's art; their outstanding compositional and philosophical excellence eloquently accounts for the desire of so many past experts to see in them the authorship of the artist's illustrious father. *The Good Shepherd* exists in only three versions, making it a great rarity in a body of work which often comprises prolific repetition of 'iconic' compositions. Of the two other versions of *The Good Shepherd*, one work, signed and

dated 1616, is in the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique in Brussels; the other, restituted to the heirs of Ernst and Gisella Pollack of Vienna in 2001, is now in a private collection.

Dated 1610, this exceptionally well-preserved work is the earliest version of one of the rarest and most dynamic of Pieter Brueghel the Younger's subjects: *The Country Brawl*, known in French as *La Rixe* (estimate: £700,000-1 million, *illustrated right*). This painting comes to the market for the first time since 1928 when it was acquired by Baron Evence III Coppée (1882-1945) of Brussels, having since passed by descent to the present owner. Described by Dr. Klaus Ertz as 'une merveilleuse version de 1610', he places it within his *catalogue raisonné* at the head of ten autograph versions of the composition, four of which are in museums: Montpellier, Musée Fabre; Prague, Národní galerie, Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie; and Philadelphia, Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection. Only eight of these works are dated and only five are signed and dated. All of the dated versions were painted in the same four-year period, 1619-1622, with the exception of the present work. The form of the signature, using the spelling 'BRVEGHEL', is unique amongst the various versions, the other signed ones using the spelling 'BREVGHEL', which seems to have been adopted by Pieter Brueghel the Younger only after *circa* 1616. The date of 1610 gives the present work a special status within the context of the known versions of this subject. Executed during this earlier period of Brueghel's activity, the Coppée picture is distinguished by its highly elaborate under-drawing (visible in infrared reflectography), its extraordinary attention to detail and the high quality of its execution. These factors combine to make this not only the earliest, but also the finest of all the known versions of this extraordinarily powerful composition.



EARLY FLEMISH PAINTINGS



Portrait of a young nobleman, half-length, in a crimson doublet, wearing a plumed beret, holding a daisy by Joos van Cleve is the only recorded portrait of a child by the artist, and possibly the only example of an aristocratic portrait dating from van Cleve's time at the French court (estimate: £400,000-600,000, *illustrated left*). This work demonstrates the artist's remarkable ability to capture the likeness of his sitters and convey status in his portraits. Dubbed the 'Leonardo of the North' in a recent exhibition, van Cleve was, along with Jan Gossaert and Bernard van Orley, the foremost Northern painter of his day. He developed a distinctive and highly successful style, combining technical accomplishment in oil, inherited from the

early Netherlandish painting tradition, with Italian motifs inspired by Leonardo da Vinci, as well as a rich palette indebted to Northern Italian, especially Venetian models. *The Virgin and Child with angels, in a landscape* by Jan Provoost is a remarkable discovery and a significant addition to the relatively small *oeuvre* of Provoost, the most important artist active in Bruges in the generation after Hans Memling and Gerard David, and heir to the great Northern Renaissance tradition they initiated (estimate: £250,000-350,000, *illustrated right*). This work will be included in the forthcoming *catalogue raisonné* of Jan Provoost's work, currently in preparation by Professor Ron Spronk.



Please click [here](#) to view the full e-catalogue online.

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Images available on request

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