



FRANCISCO DE GOYA

(Fuendetodos 1746–1828 Bordeaux)

Lot and his daughters.

Oil on canvas.

91 x 125 cm.

Provenance: - Linker collection, Bilbao, 1930. - Swiss private collection. Literature: - August L. Mayer: Francisco de Goya, London 1924; Barcelona 1925, no. 14a. - F.J. Sanchez Canton: Goya, Paris 1930, fig. 7 (erroneously entitled as 'Noah and his daughters'). - F.J. Sanchez Canton: Vida y obras de Goya, Madrid 1951, p. 31. - José Gudiol Ricart: Goya, biographie, analyse critique et catalogue des peintures, Paris 1970, 4 vols, vol. 1, p. 238, no. 108, fig. vol. 2, no. 184 (dated here circa 1775-1780). - Pierre Gassier / Juliet Wilson:

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Vie et oeuvre de Francisco Goya, Office du Livre, 1970, no. 168, p. 77, fig. p. 91. - Rita De Angelis: Das gemalte Gesamtwerk von Goya, Milan 1974, no. 182., p. 101, fig. p. 99 (here dated circa 1780-1790). - José Camon Aznar: Francisco José de Goya, 4 vols, Saragossa 1980-1982, vol. 1, p. 68, fig. p. 253. With copy of a letter from August L. Mayer to the collector Linker, Bilbao, dated 12. 11. 1923, in which he confirms the artist and the inclusion of the work in his publication (see literature). This painting of Lot and his Daughters from the early period of the work of the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya was recently rediscovered in a Swiss private collection, where it had remained for several generations since the 1930s unseen by the public. Up to now the painting has only been available in the literature on Goya as a black and white photograph. With the re-emergence of the work, researchers on Goya now have the possibility of viewing this painting anew and of placing it in relation to the artist's wider oeuvre. Francisco de Goya is probably the most important Spanish painter of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, who stood at the dawn of the modern period in art and in his early work masterfully brought together the luminous colours of the Enlightenment with the classical formal language of the Baroque. The subject of the painting draws from the Old Testament story told in the First Book of Moses (Chapter 19) which describes the fall of the two cities of Sodom and Gomorra, which had succumbed to the ways of sin. The account states that Lot hosted in his house in Sodom two angels sent by God. The people of the city demanded that Lot surrender the two strangers to them, at which Lot offered his virgin daughters, in order to protect the guests. Thereupon the angels rescued Lot, punished the crowd with blindness and urged Lot and his family to flee. After Lot, with his wife and daughters, had left the city, God rained brimstone and fire from Heaven on Sodom and Gomorra. Lot's wife, however, failed to obey the command of the angels not to look back at the city, and she was turned into a column of salt. Goya captures the moment when the two daughters make their father drunk in order to seduce him, since there was no other man far and wide who could provide offspring. Lot's wife, who has been turned to salt, can be seen in the left of the picture, and the sky, immersed in blistering red tones,

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indicates the burning city in the valley behind the rocks. The exact dating of this work has hitherto never been resolved with certainty: some authors see the production of the work around 1775-80 (Guidol 1970; Gassier Wilson 1970), while Rita de Agelis assumes a later date of circa 1780-90, since for her it stands in relation to the cartoons for the royal tapestry factory which Goya was working on from 1775. The large scale composition of figures with expansive gestures, as well as the narrative dynamic, reminiscent of monumental wall paintings, is very striking. Consequently, it seems more likely, as Camó Aznar (1980/82) also assumes, that the painting is close in date to the wall paintings at the Church of the Carthusian monastery Aula Dei near Zaragoza. These were produced in 1774 and show eleven scenes from the life of Mary. Here, as in our painting, the artistic influences of classical antiquity and the Italian artists of the 16th and 17th centuries, which Goya had studied during his Italian journey and from where he had returned in 1771, can be clearly seen. Also certainly playing a role in Goya's artistic development was the work of the Neapolitan Conrado Giaquinto (1703- 1765), active in Madrid between 1753 and 1761, whose use of colour and formal language can be observed in Goya's early work and in this painting. The dynamism of the figures and the lively use of colour also add gravitas to the Biblical subject matter. In style and composition, particularly with the pyramid arrangement, as well as the classical figures and the landscape, parallels can be seen with Goya's painting "Sacrifice of Iphigenia" from the Varez collection in Madrid (97 x 72 cm, oil on canvas, Camó Aznar 1980/82, p. 68, fig. p. 252) in which a woman viewed from the back with outstretched arms is shown, her dark hair tied in a bun at the nape of her neck. Goya appears to have had a fondness for this motif, since it turns up in the wall painting of the spandrel in the church of El Pilar in Saragossa (ibid., p. 57), which Goya produced in 1771-1772 after his return from Italy. This Repoussoir motif, which draws the observer into the action of the painting, is repeated yet again in the Bible scene "Moses striking water from the rock", which Gudiol and also Gassier-Wilson date circa 1775-80 (illustrated in: Rita De Agelis, 1974, No. 61, p. 93). Only a small number of paintings by the Spanish artist Francisco de Goya

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have been offered for sale in recent years. With the re-emergence of this painting of Lot and his Daughters, a work from Goya's early period fully demonstrating his creative powers finally comes to the market.

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