



SIMON DE VOS

(1603 Antwerp 1676)

The Visitation. Circa 1639.

Oil on panel.

23 x 17.3 cm.

Provenance: Swiss private collection for circa 40 years. This wooden panel, recently discovered in a Swiss private collection, is a remarkable addition to the hitherto known oeuvre of the Antwerp artist Simon de Vos. It depicts The Visitation, the meeting of Mary and her sister Elisabeth, pregnant with Jesus and John the Baptist, in Elisabeth's house. The composition is known from an altarpiece in Saint Jacob's church in Antwerp, which until now was considered to be a work by Victor Wolfvoet (1612-1652) (see Martin, Gregory / Schepers, Bert: Two Antwerp

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cabinets decorated by Victor Wolfvoet II, in: The Burlington Magazine, CLVII, October 2016, pp. 793-802, Checklist "Antwerp, St. James's Church", p. 802, under "rejected attributions"). In light of the latest art historical research, however, Dr Bert Schepers of the Rubenianum recognizes without a doubt the hand of Simon de Vos and has identified this work as a study for the altarpiece. The altarpiece in question with the same composition (oil on canvas, 268 x 192 cm; see ill. 1) was painted in 1639 for the private chapel of the family of the Portuguese consul Franco Lopez Franco, which was constructed between 1636 and 1640. From the 16th to 18th centuries, Saint James's church was the parish church of Antwerp's prominent citizens, who had private chapels erected for their tombs, including Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and his wife Helena Fourment. The painters Jan van Balen (1611-1654) and Jan Boeckhorst (1604-1668) also chose Saint James's as their last resting place. Simon de Vos was active as both a painter and art collector, specialising early on in his career in cabinet and genre paintings in the style of the Utrecht Caravaggisti. From circa 1640 on, he increasingly painted large-format religious, allegorical or historical scenes in the style of Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641). Among his pupils was Jan van Kessel the Elder (1626-1679). Dr Bert Schepers, to whom we are grateful for his assistance in the cataloguing of this work, will include this work in a forthcoming lecture on Victor Wolfvoet at the Rubenianum in December 2018.

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