



JAN VAN NOORDT

(1623 Amsterdam 1681)

The meeting of Preziosa and Don Juan – an amorous scene.

Oil on canvas.

131.5 x 172.5 cm.

Provenance: - Collection of T. Ockley. - Auction of C. Fairfax Murray and others, Christie's, London, 20.1.1920, Lot 353 (as Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Vertumnus and Pomona). - A. Tooth & Sons, art trade, London. - Christie's, London, 15.2.1929, Lot 81 (as J. van Noordt, Cavalier and a Young Lady, with sporting figures and gypsies). - Private collection J. Leger & Son, London, 1930/31. - Sotheby's, London, 15.12.1976, Lot 17. - Boetto auction, Genua, 23. – 24.2.1998 (as French school, 17th century, Scène allégorique). -

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Adam Williams Fine Art, New York, 1999. - European private collection Literature: - Staring, Adolph: Weinig bekende portrettisten. III. Joannes van Noordt, Oud Holland, Vol. 61, 1946, p. 74. - Bénézit, Emmanuel: Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs de tous les temps et de tous les pays par un groupe d'écrivains spécialistes français et étrangers, Paris 1956, vol. 6, p. 381. - Gudlaugsson, Sturla Jonasson: The Comedians in the Work of Jan Steen and his contemporaries, Soest 1975, pp. 29-33, fig. 25. - Schatborn, Peter: Tekeningen van Jan van Noordt, Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum, year 27, No. 3, 1979, p. 119 – 120, fig. 3. - Gaskell, Ivan: Transformations of Cervantes "La Gitanilla", in: Dutch Art, Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 45, 1982, pp. 263, 267, fig. 46 A. - Sumowski, Werner: Gemälde der Rembrandt – Schüler, 1983 – 1996, vol VI, pp. 3534 – 3535, Anm. 88. - Exh. Cat. Het Gedroomde Land. Pastorale schilderkunst in de Gouden Eeuw, hrsg. von Peter van den Brink (et al), Utrecht 1993, pp.22, 235 – 238. - Sumowski, Werner: Remarks on Jacob Adriaensz. Backer and Jan van Noordt, in: Master Drawings 36, 1998, p. 79, Anm. 15. - Witt, David de: Jan van Noordt. Painter of History and Portraits, London u.a. 2007, Cat No. 31, pp. 146 – 149, fig. 147. This imposing and well-preserved painting, which was recently discovered in a European private collection, bears witness to Noordt's extraordinary and highly expressive oeuvre. With a thrilling composition and extraordinary use of colour, this work deals with the first encounter between Preziosa and Don Juan. The artist has situated Don Juan to the right, leaning against a large rock. He turns to the left and looks towards Preziosa, who, seated on a stony outcrop to the left of centre and wearing a splendid satin dress, returns his gaze. Behind her is an old witch, wrapped in a brown cloak with a hood. In the background further figures can be seen, including a young man holding a falcon. Dr. David de Witt, who carried out a comprehensive compilation and analysis of Jan van Noordt's oeuvre for the first time in 2007, points to the history of this painting, according to which, at the beginning of the 20th century the work was initially entitled "Cavalier et une Jeune Femme" or identified with the classical story of "Vertumnus und Pomona". According to de Witt, Noordt's portrayal is close to

Mattheus Gansneb Tegnagel's play "De Spaensche Heidin" from 1643 (Mattheus Gansneb Tegnagel. *Het leven van Konstance: Waer af volgt het Toneelspel, De Spaensche Heidin*, Amsterdam 1643). That work is itself a Dutch adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes' (1547 – 1616) play "La Gitanilla", which was first published in 1610. There in Don Juan's monologue, which reflects upon the first encounter with Preziosa, the roses in her hair and hands, as well as her lavish dress, are explicitly mentioned. Thus, our painting depicts the moment featured in Tegnagel's work, in which Don Juan, recently stricken by the loss of his mother, is out hunting, and takes the splendidly dressed Preziosa to be the helpless goddess Diana, who has been captured by devils deep in the forest, and, not least because of her supposed helplessness, falls in love with her. (Tegnagel 1643, pp. 74 – 75). In this way, Noordt developed a gesture for the figure of Don Juan, which expresses his emotional state, characterised by shock and fascination simultaneously. The artist's preparatory drawings, which are in the British Museum in London (three chalk drawings on grey paper, ca. 1660, Inv. No. 1852.5.19.6, Sumowski 1983 – 1996, Vol. VI, p.3535 and Schatborn 1979, p. 121, fig. 4, De Witt 2007, p. 300) are witness to the lavish and painstaking invention of Noordt's Don Juan. This Don Juan stands in contrast to the typical associations of the character as an overweening subversive and womaniser. Jan van Noordt, who taught Johannes Voorhout (1647 – 1723) and for his own part was taught by Jacob Adraensz Backer (1609 – 1651) (De Witt 2007, pp. 3, 16ff.) painted this picture in around 1660. The composition is unique and does not refer to earlier depictions by other artists. Rather, the composition resembles his "Triumph of David" (135 x 176 cm, barely legibly signed and dated: JvanNoo...(ligature) 166(x), private collection, De Witt 2007; p. 96, Cat No. 4), which was probably produced some years before. Here too Noordt arranged the protagonists at some distance from one another in the foreground, thereby producing a heightened atmosphere. The painting presented here takes on a special significance in Jan van Noordt's work. It is the only piece known in his oeuvre, which served as prototype for a further version of the same motif by the artist himself, and of which there are also two further copies in existence. It proves the artist's fascination

**Koller Auktionen - Lot 3049\*****A188 Old Master Paintings - Friday 29 March 2019, 02.00 PM**

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with this subject and the demand for it on the part of his clients. Also of note is the imposing and lavishly carved frame with hunting motifs, which is probably the original frame. On the one hand, it picks up on the circumstances which lead Don Juan to Preziosa, namely his activity as hunter in the forest, and, on the other hand, it reflects – in the figurative sense – his characterisation as a womaniser.

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