

Koller Auktionen - Lot 3031

A194 Old Master & 19 c. Paintings - Friday 25 September 2020, 02.00 PM



GERARD VAN HONTHORST

(1592 Utrecht 1656)

Penitent Mary Magdalene. Circa 1625.

Oil on panel.

73.5 x 58 cm.

Provenance: - Sotheby's, London, 3.4.1985, Lot 124. - Private collection, Alex Wengraf, London. - Private collection, Switzerland. Exhibited: Bourg-en-Bresse 2016, Marie Madeleine, La Passion Révélée, Monastère royal de Brou à Bourg-en-Bresse, 29.10.2016–5.2.2017, Cat. No. 92. Literature: - Richard Judson: *New Light on Honthorst. Hendrick ter Brugghen und die Nachfolger Caravaggios in Holland*, Braunschweig 1988, pp. 113–114, ill. 149. - Benedict Nicolson: *Caravaggism in Europe*, Turin 1989-1990, revised and enlarged by Luisa Vertova, Vol.

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I, p. 123, Vol. III, ill. 1286 (as a better replica). - Rüdiger Klessmann: Johannes Hertz, ein Nachfolger Caravaggios in Nürnberg. Commemorative publication for Bruno Bushart, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1994, pp. 143–144, ill. 4. - Richard Judson and Rudolf E. O. Ekkart: Gerrit van Honthorst, Doornspijk 1999, Cat. No. 84, ill. XXIX (as a replica after the version in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Inv. No. 6060). This important work by Gerrit van Honthorst with the penitent Magdalene was not accessible on the art market for several decades and was last shown in the exhibition "Marie Madeleine, La Passion Révélée" in Bourg-en-Bresse. There is no doubt about Gerrit van Honthorst's authorship, as Richard Judson and Rudolf E. O. Ekkart point out in their catalogue raisonné, and Prof. Wayne Franits recently confirmed this on the basis of a photograph, for which we thank him. The catalogue raisonné mentions another version of the penitent Magdalene, which is in the Hermitage in St Petersburg (Judson/Ekkart 1999). Like ours, its painting support consists of three vertical wooden panels. Both pictures are characterised by an impressive interplay of softly and crisply rendered elements, particularly accented by the light. Benedict Nicolson and Luisa Vertova (see literature) describe our version as the qualitatively better one. Gerrit van Honthorst, who was born in Utrecht on 4 November 1592 as the son of Herman Gerritsz. van Honthorst (...) and his wife Maria Willemsdr. van der Halm, came from an artistically influenced family. His father and his grandfather were both painters. His brother Herman was trained as a sculptor, and his younger brother Willem also became a painter and probably trained with him. Honthorst probably learned painting under his father's influence, but above all under Abraham Bloemaert (1564–1651). Around 1610–15 he went on a study trip to Rome, where he was particularly influenced by Caravaggio's work. He specialized in nocturnal views and received the epithet "Gherardo delle Notti". Among his clients were the art lover and collector Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani and Cardinal Barberini, later Pope Urban VII. Gerrit van Honthorst returned from Rome in 1620, from where he brought the influences of Carravaggio (1571–1610) to Utrecht and, together with his contemporaries Hendrick ter Brugghen (1588–1629) and Dirck van Baburen (1595–1624), was an important proponent of northern Caravaggism.

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After his return from Rome, Honthorst also had a decisive influence on his teacher Abraham Bloemaert, who incorporated the artistic trends of the Holy City into his oeuvre. The penitent Magdalene offered here is dated around 1625. The theme is likely to have corresponded in particular to the ideologies of the Counter-Reformation of the Catholic Church, which strove for a new reflection and purification, for which Mary Magdalene stands symbolically. The viewer unites with the sitter and thus experiences a form of purification and contemplation. The impressive lighting lends the scene a dramatic aura and captivates the viewer in a moving way, then as now.

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