



JACOB JORDAENS

(1593 Antwerp 1678)

Venus and Adonis. Circa 1615.

Oil on canvas.

119 × 152.5 cm.

Certificate: Michael Jaffé, 8.2.1995 (available as a copy). Provenance: - Probably auction, Amsterdam, 16.5.1696. - Probably private collection, Wigmore Street, London, since the 18th century. - Private collection, London, until 1989. - Alex Wengraf collection, London, 1995. - Private collection, Switzerland. Literature: - Probably Max Rooses: Jordaens' Leben und Werke, Stuttgart 1890, p. 282 (as Venus and Adonis, auction 16.5.1696, Amsterdam). - Probably Max Rooses: Jordaens sa vie et ses œuvres, Paris 1906, p. 278. This depiction of Venus and

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Adonis, recently discovered in a private collection that has been in existence for many years, represents a significant addition to the previously known early work of Jacob Jordaens, one of the most important Flemish Baroque painters who, together with Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) and Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), had a significant influence on the Antwerp School of the 17th century. The work depicts a scene from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Adonis was a beautiful young man and royal orphan who spent his time hunting. Venus, the goddess of love, fell in love with him after she was accidentally hit by one of Cupid's arrows. One day, when Adonis went hunting alone, his dogs woke up a wild boar that attacked him, and although Venus came to his aid, she was too late and could not save him. From the blood of her lover, Venus creates a fragile flower called anemone, whose petals she scatters in the wind. Already in the early 1990s, Jordaens expert Roger-Adolf d'Hulst confirmed the authenticity of our painting and considered it a valuable addition to his early work. Furthermore, in his 1995 expert opinion, Michael Jaffé compared our painting stylistically with the "Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs", painted around 1615, which is one of Jordaens' earliest known works (see Roger-Adolf d'Hulst: *Jacob Jordaens*, Stuttgart 1982, p. 46, ill. 14). Prof. Dr. Hans Vlieghe and Brecht Vanoppen of the Rubenianum also confirm the authenticity of the painting on the basis of a photograph, for which we thank them, and they also date the painting around 1615. Prof. Vlieghe recognizes the similarity with other early works by Jordaens during this period, among other things in the folds of the garments, the shortening of the figures and the depiction of the dogs, and in this context he cites as a stylistic comparison the painting "Entführung der Europa" ("Abduction of Europa"), which was created around 1615–1616 and is now in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (inv. no. 81.2, oil on canvas, 172.6 × 236.2 cm). In our painting, however, Brecht Vanoppen refers to the clearly visible influence of Jordaens' teacher, Adam van Noort (1562–1641). Like Rubens, Jordaens studied with Adam van Noort and joined the Saint Lucas Guild as a master in 1615. Only a few years later, around 1616–1617, Jordaens' style already came closer to that of Peter Paul Rubens. In 1621 Jordaens became the dean of the Luke's Guild and by the end of the 1630s he already

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had sixteen students and assistants under him. During this time Jordaens made a name for himself as a "waterschilder" (watercolour painter), as he created numerous designs for tapestries and etchings. Later, however, he concentrated on painting with oil paints, which was more profitable, and specialized in the depiction of genre scenes, proverbs and mythological scenes. Religious subjects were also part of his repertoire and Jordaens, who had publicly converted to Protestantism, took on several commissions to decorate Catholic churches in Spanish-occupied Antwerp. After Rubens' death in 1640, Jordaens completed many of his works and established himself as Antwerp's most important artist, receiving numerous commissions from the church as well as princes and kings beyond the city's borders. Jordaens came from a wealthy background and his family prospered through the cloth trade, which increased for Jordaens through his marriage to the wealthy daughter of his master, Catharina van Noort (1589–1659). He owned several houses in Antwerp, which he decorated with his own wall and ceiling paintings. The painting offered here could originally have been painted as a ceiling decoration. According to Michael Jaffé, it was located in the Wigmore Street in London until 1989 as the ceiling decoration of an 18th century townhouse, which has not been preserved today. In general, mythological scenes during Jacob Jordaens' lifetime often served as decoration for official buildings, guild chambers or splendid apartments of higher estates (see d'Hulst 1982, p. 52).

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