



DIRCK VAN BABUREN

(1595 Utrecht 1624)

The Offering to Ceres. Circa 1621.

Oil on canvas.

137 x 186,7 cm.

Provenance: - Probably private collection of François Quesnel (1543–1619), Paris (as Bartolomeo Manfredi). - Private collection of Jean-François Séguier (1703–1784), Nîmes (as Valentin de Boulogne). - Private collection of Anthelme-Michel-Laurent de Migieu, Marquis de Savigny (1723–1788), Paris, 1751 (as Valentin de Boulogne). - By descent, private collection of René Gaspar Vicomte de Vaulchier, Savigny-lès-Beaune, Côte-d'Or, 1952. - Sale Sotheby's, London, 4.12.2013, Lot 18. - Private collection.
Exhibited: - Utrecht/Antwerp 1952,

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Caravaggio en de Nederlanden, Centraal Museum, Utrecht, 15.6–3.8.1952 / Koninklijk Museum voor schone Kunsten, Antwerp, 10.8.–28.9.1952, no. 91 (as attributed to Hendrick ter Brugghen, possibly Baburen). - Dijon 1958, Les plus belles œuvres de la Côte-d'Or, Musée de Dijon, Palais des Etats de Bourgogne, 1958, no. 32. Literature: - Probably Vicomte de Grouchy: Inventaire des tableaux de François Quesnel (1697), in: Nouvelles archives de l'art français, 8ème année, 1892, p. 93 (as Bartolomeo Manfredi: 'un sacrifice à Flore de Manfrede'). - Probably manuscript 130, fonds Séguier, Bibliothèque de Nîmes (as Valentin de Boulogne: 'des sacrificateurs, un soldat, mènent au dieu trois femmes portant des corbeilles de fleurs; for bon de dessin et de clair-obscur, par Valentin'). - Laurent de Migieu: Livre de Dépenses, Archives du Comte de Savigny, 1751, no. 9 in the list of works previously owned by M. Seguiet (as 'un sacrifice de Valentin'). - Exh. cat. Caravaggio en de Nederlanden, Utrecht/Antwerp 1952, p. 56, cat. no. 91, fig. 69. - Benedict Nicolson: Caravaggio and the Netherlands, review of Utrecht/Antwerp exhibition, in: The Burlington Magazine, vol. XCIV, no. 594, September 1952, p. 248 and footnote 13 (as Baburen). - Vitale Bloch: I Caravaggeschi a Utrecht e Anversa, in: Paragone, no. 33, September 1952, p. 18 (dated circa 1622–1624, from Baburen's period in Utrecht). - Exh. cat. Les plus belles œuvres des collections de la Côte-d'Or, Dijon 1958, p. 21, cat. no. 32, fig. VII. - Benedict Nicolson: Hendrick Terbrugghen, The Hague 1958, p. 53, mentioned under number A12, and p. 119 as 'works wrongly attributed to Terbrugghen' (as Baburen circa 1622). - Leonard J. Slatkes: Dirck van Baburen (c. 1595–1624): A Dutch Painter in Utrecht and Rome, Proefschrift, University of Utrecht 1962, Text pp. 54–55, cat. no. A8, p. 101. - Leonard J. Slatkes: Dirck van Baburen (c. 1595–1624): A Dutch Painter in Utrecht and Rome, Utrecht 1965, Text pp. 54–55, cat. no. A8, p. 112, fig. 12; also mentioned under cat. no. A19 and A22 (as a late work of the Rome period, or early work of the Utrecht period, circa 1620). - Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée: New Paintings by Bartolommeo Manfredi, in: The Burlington Magazine, vol. 121, no. 914, 1979, p. 310 ('un sacrifice à Flore de Manfrede' in the inventory as 1697 from the collection of François de Quesnel). - Benedict Nicolson: The International Caravaggesque Movement, Oxford 1979,

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pp. 19, 220, 248. - Rüdiger Klessmann: Utrechter Caravaggisten zwischen Manierismus und Klassizismus, in: Hendrick ter Brugghen und die Nachfolger Caravaggios in Holland: Beiträge eines Symposium im Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, 23.–25.3.1987, Braunschweig 1988, p. 60, fig. 68 and p. 64, footnote 5. - Benedict Nicolson and Luisa Vertova: Caravaggism in Europe, Turin 1989, vol. I, p. 56 and vol. III, plate 1045. - R. Morselli: Baburen, Dirck (Jaspersz) van, in: Saur Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon. Die bildenden aller Künstler Zeiten und Völker, vol. VI, Munich and Leipzig 1992, p. 110. - M. Giulia Aurigemma: Gherardo, Enrico, Teodoro ed altri simili, in: L'asino iconoclasta. Seicento Olandese: proposte di lettura, problemi di metodo e di interpretazione, Rome 1993, p. 42. - Valentina White: Il soggiorno romano di Dirck van Baburen. La committenza e le opere, in: Irene Baldriga und Silvia Danesi Squarzina (ed.): Fiaminghi che vanno e vengono no li si puol dar regola. Paesi Bassi e Italia fra Cinquecento e seicento: pittura, storia e cultura degli emblemi, Rome 1995, pp. 185–88, fig. 8 (as a scene from the play 'Granida' by Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft, 1615). - Leonard J. Slatkes: Bringing Ter Brugghen and Baburen Up-to-Date, in: Bulletin du Musée national de Varsovie, vol. XXXVII, 1996, p. 206, footnote 35 and p. 207, fig. 4 (dated 1621). - Joaneath Spicer et al.: Masters of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht during the Golden Age, exh. cat. San Francisco/Baltimore/London 1997, p. 423, footnote 5 under cat. no. 41, pp. 254–256 (as an early work of the Utrecht period). - Leonard J. Slatkes und Wayne Franits: The Paintings of Hendrick ter Brugghen 1588–1629. Catalogue Raisonné, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2007, pp. 19–20, fig. 14; also mentioned under cat. no. A32, pp. 121–122 (footnote 4) and A62, pp. 176 and 178 (footnote 11). - Wayne Franits: The Paintings of Dirck van Baburen ca. 1592/93–1624. Catalogue Raisonné, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2013, pp. 109–110, cat. no. A15, also mentioned p. 44, footnote 240, pp. 46, 107, 111, 115, 141, 161, ill p. 260, colour ill. VIII and p. 289, plate 15. By virtue of both its size and the bold and experimental nature of its composition, the painting offered here constitutes one of the most ambitious and imaginative works by the Utrecht master Dirck van Baburen. Painted immediately after Baburen's return to the Netherlands from Rome around 1620/21, this work is still

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entirely influenced by Caravaggio's genius. The motif, rare in terms of its iconography, depicts the offering to Ceres, in which an assembly of mortals make offerings to the deity of the harvest, shown as a statue in the background on the left. Leonard J. Slatkes (1962) originally assumed that the work was created in the final years of Baburen's time in Rome, where he had resided for eight years. However, given its affinity with the similarly sized 'The Taking of Christ' in the Borghese Gallery (inv. no. 28; see Franits 2013, cat. no. A13), painted around 1619 – shortly before Baburen's departure from Rome – both Slatkes and Wayne Franits have, in more recent publications, agreed on a date of around 1621. This places the present painting at the forefront of the much-vaunted Utrecht period, during which Baburen, together with Gerrit van Honthorst (1592–1656) and Hendrick Ter Brugghen (1588–1629), led the group of painters known as the Utrecht Caravaggists until Baburen's early death in 1624. The relationship between these artists and their studios was so close that motifs and designs were often shared: the same figure of a soldier seen in the earlier work 'The Taking of Christ', was placed by Baburen at the centre of the composition presented here and was also used by Ter Brugghen for both his 'Beheading of St John the Baptist' (Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; see Slatkes/Franits 2007, cat. no. A32) and his 'Piper' (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel, inv. no. GK179; see Slatkes/Franits 2007, cat. no. A62). Baburen's use of this dominant figure for both 'The Taking of Christ' and 'Offering to Ceres', is a quotation from Caravaggio's own 'The Taking of Christ' (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, inv. no. L.14702), though here the figure of the soldier is clearly more dominant. A somewhat later date of 1622 was suggested by Dr Fred. G. Meijer (see RKD archive no. 107755), who believes that the small floral wreath on the right was painted by Balthasar van der Ast (1593–1657). This would be an unusual example of a collaboration between Baburen and another artist, although not entirely surprising given Baburen's willingness to exchange motifs with other potential rivals. The sharp contours, bright tonality and colourful palette clearly situate this 'Offering to Ceres' in the artist's ultimately brief Utrecht period. Franits (2013) lists only thirty-six paintings by Baburen's own hand,

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fourteen of which were painted in Rome and twenty-two in Utrecht.

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