



LOT AND HIS DAUGHTERS

High on the wall, close to the ceiling, hangs a remarkable painting. Its large size (153 x 213 cm / 60 x 83 inches) incorporates a group of three life-size figures that leap out at the viewer, intensified by the flow of wine poured by the woman sitting in the back into the bowl held up by the sensuous woman in the foreground who reclines against the bearded man at the center. The scene depicts Lot and his Daughters, a biblical tale recounted in Genesis. Fleeing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife disobeys the divine will, looks back, and is turned into a pillar of salt. Taking refuge in a cave and setting up house, Lot's daughters fear that they will remain childless. To secure the future of the family line, therefore, they get their father drunk and seduce him. The theme was very popular with Baroque artists to legitimize nudity and sensuality. The painting presented here serves as a prime example of this period.

Lot and his Daughters was acquired by the current owner in 1978 and was restored in 1985 by the Chief Conservator of the Benaki Museum in Athens for the wear and tear suffered by Old Master Paintings: filling and fixing of holes, tears, flakes, relining of the back, re-stretching onto a Swiss wooden adjustable frame. Chemical analysis of color pigments dates the canvas between 1600 and 1750. Pigments include lapis lazuli, cinnabar, hematite, white and red lead, calcite, among others. During the research and analysis, no signature or monogram were discovered. Stylistically and thematically the work strongly points to the 17th century Italian baroque as agreed upon by a number of distinguished art historians (Rubens House, Dulwich Picture Gallery, The Frick Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

In 2008-2009, the J. Paul Getty Museum in collaboration with the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, organized the exhibition 'Captured Emotions: Baroque Painting in

Bologna, 1575-1725', underlining the importance of the School of Bologna in the wake of the Renaissance. Marcantonio Franceschini (1648-1729), representative of the school, seems to be the most likely candidate for the current version of Lot and his Daughters. Dr. Dwight Miller, Professor Emeritus in Art History at Stanford University (now retired), authority on the artist and the author of various publications such as *Marcantonio Franceschini And The Liechtensteins: Prince Adam Andreas and the Decoration of the Liechtenstein Garden Palace at Rossau-Vienna (1991)* and *Marcantonio Franceschini (2001)* mentions in his correspondence to the Dulwich Picture Gallery in South London the existence of a second earlier (1675/7) version of the Lot and his Daughters owned by the gallery. Presumably, this earlier work was acquired by the renowned Italian antique dealer Pietro Accorsi and shipped from England to Italy in 1955 where, in 1956, it was sold to the Bologna based Motta Collection.

The presence in England of a picture with the theme of Lot and his Daughters as painted by the Bolognese artist, Marcantonio Franceschini, was confirmed by C. Gambarini of Lucca in his account *A Description of the Earl of Pembroke's Pictures*, printed in 1731. On page 49, an entry situates 'In the King's Bed-Chamber' a 'Franceschini. Lot with his two Daughters, as big as the Life.'

Research into the vast archives of the holdings at Wilton House, seat of the Earls of Pembroke, has not yet produced any results on the whereabouts and fate of the fore-mentioned painting.

Attributed to Marcantonio Franceschini Lot and his Daughters, 1675/7? Oil on canvas, 153 x 213 cm Unsigned, Private Collection

*For information on these and other works, please contact:
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