LOT 198
PROPERTY FROM A DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE COLLECTION
ATTRIBUTED TO DOMENICO PARODI
GENOA 1672 - 1742
ARIADNE ON NAXOS
oil on copper
45.7 by 62.9 cm.; 18 by 24 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE £50,000-70,000 GBP

PROVENANCE
Anonymous sale, New York, Sotheby's, 28 January 2000, lot 62 (as Marcantonio Franceschini), where purchased by the present collector.

CATALOGUE NOTE
Formerly attributed to Marcantonio Franceschini and sold as such in 2000 (see Provenance), a secure attribution for this sensual depiction of Ariadne has thus far eluded scholars. While the composition and general idiom of the work appear indebted to Franceschini, the overall handling suggests a different hand. Originally from Bologna, Franceschini also worked for a while in Genoa where he was hugely successful, painting his masterpiece, the now-destroyed frescoes in the Palazzo Ducale from 1702-4, before returning to his native city. In fact, a drawing in brown ink and wash of Venus and Cupid which has been given to Franceschini in the past (an attribution which has been firmly rejected by Dwight Miller, author of the monograph on the artist) relates somewhat in composition to the present copper; the sheet shows the lithely posed Venus with her right elbow raised reclining on pillows in a landscape, much
in the same way.\(^1\) The figure of Ariadne itself, with its sharply-foreshortened facial features and pose, recalls that of the Armida Abandoned, painted by Franceschini in 1706 after leaving Genoa.

A likely candidate as the author of this work is Domenico Parodi, son of the sculptor Filippo, who was active in Genoa around 1700 and who would have come into close contact with Franceschini’s work. Though Domenico received his early training in Venice with the portraitist Sebastiano Bombelli, it was an apprenticeship in Rome in the bottega of Carlo Maratti which would be most formative for the young artist. From his Roman master he would derive a certain classicizing tendency which, when combined with his native Genoese sensibility, formed the basis of his style. Perhaps better known as a painter of grand, illusionistic frescoes and even as a sculptor, Parodi was also highly regarded in his own day as a painter of gallery and easel pictures. In his vita of the artist, Carlo Giuseppe Ratti mentions, in particular, Parodi’s success with a Death of Lucretia which the young artist, then living in Rome, had painted on copper:

*Aveva il Parodi, fin da quando era in Roma, espresso in una lastra di rame la morte di Lucrezia, ad imitazione del celebre quadro della morte di Germanico di mano del Pussino.... Questo quadro piacque tanto al Signor Santino De’ Ferrari; che a qualunque prezzo il volle per se: indi alcuni quadri gliene commise.*\(^2\)

Such a refined skill as painting on copper was a technique that Parodi likely learned in Maratti’s studio and, as Ratti’s observation confirms, would have impressed his audience upon his return to Genoa.\(^3\) The Death of Lucretia has been identified as the painting mentioned above, signed and dated 1703, formerly with Giulia Baldin, Turin, in which the artist included members of his own family as participants in the narrative. The artist appears to have continued to use copper as a support for several years afterwards; documents record a 1718 payment from the powerful Durazzo family for a copy on copper of a “Passion” after Carracci.

The present Ariadne on Naxos would appear to date to circa 1700, about the same time as the Lucretia copper, and must have been destined for a similar clientele, probably a private collector of sophisticated taste. The depiction of Ariadne certainly suggests this: she is elegantly erotic, reclining nude on a mound of white sheets and pillows. Asleep, she is blissfully unaware of her abandonment, and has not yet been awakened by the arrival of the bacchantes and satyrs whose approach in the distance signals the arrival of her new lover Dionysus. Her pose, with her arms spread wide, does nothing but accentuate her nudity, while her modesty is neatly covered by the white folds of the sheet. Its high finish, intimate format, and subject matter make it perfect for personal delectation. The theme of Ariadne is one Parodi would depict again, but in marble, for one of his great patrons, Prince Eugene of Savoy; sculpted for the Belvedere in Vienna, the carved Ariadne was praised in a sonnet by Giovanni Battista Riccheri.\(^4\)

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2. [Trans: “At the end of his time in Rome, Parodi had depicted on a sheet of copper the death of Lucretia, in imitation of that famous painting of the death of Germanicus from the hand of Pussino [i.e. Poussin]. This picture so pleased Signor Santino De’ Ferrari, that he wanted it for himself at any price; and thus ordered some others from him.”] R. Soprani, *Vite de’ Pittori, Scultori ed Architetti Genovesi*, (1674), C.G. Ratti, ed (1768-9), vol. II, p. 211.
3. Mary Newcome notes that Parodi may have been back in Genoa in 1700 where he is recorded as a contender for the commission for frescoes in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Palazzo Ducale, won by Francheschini. Ratti’s chronology of Parodi’s movements may be correct, and the artist may have returned to Rome for a brief stay after a trip to Genoa.