LOT 21
PROPERTY OF THE LISE HAAS TRUST
BERNARDINO LICINIO
POSCANTE CIRCA 1490 - CIRCA 1565
WOMAN VISITED BY HER LOVER
oil on panel
32 by 45 in.; 81.3 by 114.3 cm.

ESTIMATE 300,000-500,000 USD
Lot Sold: 362,500 USD

PROVENANCE
Pourtales collection;
From whom acquired by Ivor Churchill Guest, 1st Viscount Wimborne, Canford Manor, Dorset;
His sale, London, Christie's, 9 March 1923, lot 4, as by Paris Bordone, to Buttery;
With Goudstikker, Amsterdam, November 1924;
Dr. Gustav Arens, Vienna;
Lise Haas (née Arens), Vienna;
Confiscated and allocated to the Fuehrermuseum in Linz (as by Palma Vecchio);
Restituted May 1948 (MCCP inventory no. 9029);
Thence by descent to the present owner.
EXHIBITED
The Hague, Pulchri Studio, Schilderkundig Genootschap, November 1924, no. 91 (as by Palma Vecchio);

LITERATURE
J. Goudstikker, Schilderkundig Genootschap, exhibition catalogue, The Hague 1924, cat. no. 91, reproduced no. 91
(as by Palma Vecchio);
L. Vertova, "Bernardo Licinio," in I Pittori Bergamaschi: il Cinquecento I, Bergamo 1975, pp. 414-5, cat. no. 24,
reproduced p. 467, plate 2;
S. Lillie, Was einmal war: Handbuch der enteigneten Kunstsammlungen Wiens, Vienna 2003, p. 93, inv. no. 8 (as by
Palma Vecchio).

CATALOGUE NOTE
This large and impressive panel exemplifies a genre of painting prevalent in Venice in the first half of the 16th
century; portraits of Belle Donne, young and usually fair-haired women in various states of dress and undress, were
meant as erotic ideals of female beauty, and were painted by artists as important as Titian, Giorgione and Palma
Vecchio. Before these, such a direct approach to the female body, particularly when nude or semi-nude, was possible
only through the context of an established narrative, for example the myths of Venus. Traditionally it was thought that
the emergence of these Belle Donne coincided in Venice with the rise of the courtesan class who, unbound by the
moral constraints of society, enjoyed a freedom denied other women. Recent scholarship, however, challenges this
discourse, arguing instead that these paintings were commissioned as wedding presents for the initiation and
instruction of a bride.1 Sylvia Ferino-Pagden writes that the Belle Donne, echoing the canonised beauty of Titian's
Flora, in the Uffizi, Florence and Palma Vecchio's Young Woman in Profile, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
present perfected, poetical beauty, not only charming to the viewer but conveying also a sensuality now expected of
the modern wife.2 According to Ferino-Pagden, the provocative glance and bared breast are not the brazen gestures
of a courtesan but the coquettish self-offering of a demure and virtuous young bride.3 Whatever the general intention of the genre, the scene depicted here is clearly one of seduction. The woman turns
her face away while glancing back with a coy expression to her suitor. He, in response, places his right hand on her
wrist and his left on his chest in gesture of imploring passion. The beguiling woman is placed before a sumptuous,
dep deep red drapery, highlighting the pink hues in her cheek and décolletage. Her rich green robe and fine white
undershirt fall back to reveal her shoulders and breast, her waving hair flowing across the bare flesh, all an allusion to
her invitation. The indulgence of the lady surrounded by luxurious fabrics is contrasted beautifully with the freshness
of the landscape behind her lover and the tender touch linking the two figures, conveying the pair's delight in
courtship.

The treatment of the young woman shows the distinct influence of Palma Vecchio, bearing strong resemblance to his
Flora, in the National Gallery, London, with the open shift with blue ribbon, the green robe and the golden curls about
her bare shoulders.4 It is also strikingly similar to Licinio's Courtesan with a Mirror, now in the Salamon collection,
Pavia; the poses in the two works are almost identical, the raised right arm, resting on an object, the left arm crooked
with fingers intertwined in the folds of the robe, the head tilting down and to her right with a side glance to her left.5 In
addition, their undershirts with the gathered border in a plunging "v," the consecutively undulating waves of the hair
and the choice of colors are each remarkably similar, signaling the authorship of Bernadino Licinio and a dating not
later than 1520. The features of her male lover, however, are more naturalistic, the eyebrows, eyelids and nose being less stylized and the tight auburn curls more convincing. The slight shift in treatment of the male betrays the influence of Titian which pervaded Licinio’s work from the 1520s to 1530s.

The present painting once formed part of the famed collection at Canford Manor, Dorset, home of Ivor Churchill Guest, the second Baron Wimborne, until it was sold at Christie's, London in 1923 as by Paris Bordone.  

7. Ibid.