LOT 131
SOLD IN PART FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM, NEW YORK AND THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, DC
ATTRIBUTED TO GIROLAMO FRANCESCO MARIA MAZZOLA, CALLED PARMIGIANINO, AND STUDIO
PARMA 1503 - 1540 CASALMAGGIORE
THE EMPEROR CHARLES V RECEIVING THE WORLD
oil on canvas
68 by 47 in.; 172.7 by 119.4 cm.

ESTIMATE 800,000-1,200,000 USD

PROVENANCE
According to Vasari, presented to Charles V by Pope Clement VII, but taken back by Parmigianino on the pretext that it was not complete, after which point it passed to Cardinal Ippolito de Medici, who gave it to Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga of Mantua (see Literature and note below);
The Dukes of Mantua, until at least 1630;
With Samuel Woodburn (1786-1853), London, by 1840;
His deceased sale (The Highly Important and Very Valuable Collection of Pictures by Ancient and Modern Masters and Other Choice Works of Art, of that Highly-Esteeemed Judge of Art, Samuel Woodburn, Esq., Deceased), London, Christie's, 15 May 1854 (and following days), lot 188 (as Parmigianino);
William Angerstein, Esq. (1811-1897), London, before 1883;
His sale, London, Christie's, 23 February 1883, lot 245;
Where acquired for £49. 7s by Mr. Lesser;
Sir Francis Cook, 1st Bt. (1817-1901), Doughty House, Richmond, Surrey, and thence by descent to;
Sir Frederick Cook, 2nd Bt. (1844-1920), Richmond, and thence by descent to;
Sir Herbert Cook, 3rd Bt. (1868-1939), Richmond, and thence by descent to;
Sir Francis Cook, 4th Bt. (1907-1978), Richmond;
With Sestieri, Rome, by 1956;

EXHIBITED
Manchester, Art Treasures of the United Kingdom, 1857, no. 210;
Waltham, Massachusetts, Brandeis University, The Rose Art Museum, Major Masters of the Renaissance, 3 May - 9 June 1963, no. 14;
Poughkeepsie, New York, Vassar College Art Gallery, Sixteenth Century Paintings from American Collections: An Exhibition in honor of the Inauguration of Alan Simpson as the Seventh President of Vassar College, 16 October - 15 November 1964, no. 11;
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Oklahoma Museum of Art, Masters of the Portrait, 4 March - 29 April 1979, no. 1;
Bonn, Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kaiser Karl V (1500-1558): Macht und Ohnmacht Europas, 25 February - 10 September 2000, no. 79;
Parma, Galleria Nazionale; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Parmigianino e il manierismo europeo, 8 February - 14 September 2003, no. 2.2.23;

LITERATURE
G. Vasari, Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori, 1550, vol. II, p. 798;
G. Vasari, Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori, 1568, vol. V, p. 229;
Abridged Catalogue of the Pictures at Doughty House, Richmond. (Belonging to Sir Frederick Cook, Bart., Visconde de Monserrate), London 1907 & 1914, p. 19, no. 38 (as hanging in the Long Gallery);
T. Borenius, A Catalogue of the Paintings at Doughty House, Richmond and Elsewhere in the Collection of Sir Frederick Cook, vol I: The Italian Schools, London 1913, p. 113, no. 97 (as hanging in the Long Gallery);
L. Fröhlich-Bum, Parmigianino und der Manierismus, Vienna 1921, p. 39 (as a copy of a lost original);
L. Fröhlich-Bum, "Some Unpublished Portraits by Parmigianino," in The Burlington Magazine, vol. XLVI, 1925, p. 88 (as a contemporary copy by an artist close to Parmigianino);
Abridged Catalogue of the Pictures at Doughty House, Richmond, Surrey, in the Collection of Sir Herbert Cook, London 1932, p. 34, no. 97 (as hanging in the Long Gallery);
E. Arslan, "Contributioni a Ercole de Roberti, Parmigianino, Primaticcio," in Emporium, vol. 105, 1947, pp. 65-66 (as a copy of a lost original);
A.O. Quintavalle, Il Parmigianino, Milan 1948, pp. 96-97, 203, reproduced figs. 48, 49 (as a copy of a lost original);
CATALOGUE NOTE

In both the 1550 and 1568 editions of the Vite, Vasari discusses the visit that the Habsburg ruler Charles V made to Bologna in the late fall and winter of 1529-30, and describes in detail an allegorical portrait done by Parmigianino.
interpreting the political issue at the core of the event. The purpose of Charles's journey was to meet with Pope Clement VII and led to his coronation as Emperor. In the 1568 edition, which contains the more complete account of the genesis of the portrait, Vasari states:

Quando l'imperadore Carlo Quinto fu a Bologna perché l'incoronasse Clemente Settimo, Francesco, andando talora a vederlo mangiare, fece senza ritrarlo l'immagine di esso Cesare a olio in un quadro grandissimo, et in quello dipinse la Fama che lo coronava di lauro et un fanciullo in forma d'un Ercole piccolino che gli porgeva il mondo quasi dandogliene il dominio.¹

There can be little doubt that the present monumental canvas, well documented in the literature on the artist, is the picture that Vasari describes. The figure of the emperor, dressed in armor with a rich, jewel-encrusted gold cloak, is seen on the right against a backdrop of green velvet. To the left, winged Fame holds a laurel branch over the emperor's head in her left hand and with her right holds another over a model of the globe held by an infant Hercules. The globe the child holds is a symbol of Charles's rule of a truly global empire which included not only Austria, Burgundy, the Netherlands and Spain, but also vast territories in the New World. Parmigianino's imagery is rich with iconographic allusions. The emperor's armor, jeweled sword and lance all identify him as the "Sword of Christendom," the defender of the new, Christian globe being handed to him by the child Hercules. This boy demigod was an emblem of the Hapsburg dynasty; in uniting him with the figure of Fame, an allusion to the classical past of imperial Rome, Parmigianino is suggesting continuity between the greatness of the past and the promise heralded by Charles in the present.

Vasari is careful to point out that this was not a commissioned portrait, stating that Parmigianino captured the Emperor's likeness by little more than observing him a few times at public dinners (see quote above and footnote 1). This may be Vasari's way of emphasizing Parmigianino's innovative allegory while excusing what has long troubled scholars and connoisseurs of the artist's work ? the cursory rendering of the face of Charles V, which is hard to reconcile with his other known works. Although not a commission, Vasari goes on to say that Parmigianino presented his work to Pope Clement VII, who thought so highly of it that he sent it to Charles for his review:

La quale opera finita che fu, la fece vedere a papa Clemente, al quale piacque tanto che mandò quella e Francesco insieme, accompagnati dal vescovo di Vasona, allora datario, all'imperadore; onde essendo molto piaciuta a Sua Maestà, fece intendere che si lasciasse: ma Francesco, come mal consigliato da un suo poco fedele o poco saputo amico, dicendo che non era finita, non la volle lasciare; e così Sua Maestà non l'ebbe, et egli non fu, come sarebbe stato senza dubbio, premiato. Questo quadro, essendo poi capitato alle mani del cardinale Ipolito de' Medici, fu donato da lui al cardinale di Mantova, et oggi è in guardaroba di quel duca, con molte altre belle e nobilissime pitture.²

Although it would seem strange for an artist to refuse the wishes of the Hapsburg Emperor, what is known of Parmigianino's eccentric and often difficult and self-defeating personality gives some credence to Vasari's account. Additionally, it does appear that in some ways this work is unfinished ? for example, a number of the rubies that line the bottom edge of Charles's cloak have been left blank ? which also supports Vasari's chronology of events.

Modern scholars have been divided in their opinions of the painting (see Literature). In written correspondence with the present owner, Nicolas Penny has proposed yet another explanation for the appearance of the present work.³ He confirms that this is in fact the painting discussed by Vasari, but contends that it was never the work of Parmigianino himself. Rather, Penny believes that the present work was the result of a studio assistant using a small scale sketch or study by his master and blowing it up on a grand scale, without resolving any of the resulting spatial and stylistic anomalies. Penny finds details such as the continuation of the line of Hercules's fur into the Emperor's knee armor; the collision of the hand of Fame and the arm of the Emperor in space; and the parallel alignment of Hercules's arm
and the fold of Charles's cloak to be visually problematic on the grand scale of the painting. They are, however, completely typical of the rhyming and spatial play seen in Parmigianino's drawing, where forms grow out of other forms and are woven together as surface design rather than conceived spatially. Although the artist would then resolve these issues in working up his painted compositions, Penny argues that the assistant responsible for the work was unable to adjust on such a large scale. The existence of at least one preparatory drawing by Parmigianino (Morgan Library, New York, see Popham, no. 318) for the present work would seem to support such a hypothesis (fig. 1).

In spite of the speculation over the attribution of this work, its modern provenance is extremely distinguished. Disappearing from the Gonzaga collections at some point after the 1630s, the picture is first securely recorded with the distinguished London dealer and connoisseur, Samuel Woodburn. Letters indicate that Woodburn offered the picture to King Willem II of The Netherlands in 1840, stating that it had come from the Gonzaga collections in Mantua and that his brothers had recently acquired it on a trip to Italy. Willem declined the picture and it was still with Woodburn at the time of his death, when it was a part of the posthumous sale of his estate in London in 1854. After that sale, it is recorded in the collection of William Angerstein (1811-1897), a British Liberal Party politician and the grandson of the distinguished collector, John Julius Angerstein (1732-1823), many of whose paintings were purchased by the British government after his death and formed the core of the collection of the nascent National Gallery. Shortly after being sold by Angerstein in 1883, the present work was acquired by Sir Francis Cook, 1st Bt., of Doughty House in Richmond and remained in the Cook Collection until the mid-twentieth century (fig. 2).

We are grateful to John Somerville, Keeper of the Cook Collection Archive, for his help in cataloguing this lot.

1. Op. cit. "When Emperor Charles V was at Bologna to be crowned by Clement VII, Francesco [Parmigianino], who went several times to see him at table, but without drawing his portrait, made a likeness of that Emperor in a very large picture in oils, wherein he painted Fame crowning him with laurel, and a boy in the form of a little Hercules offering him a globe of the world, giving him as it were, dominion over it."
2. Ibid. "When finished he showed this work to Pope Clement, who was so pleased with it that he sent it and Francesco together, accompanied by the Bishop of Vasona, then Datary, to the Emperor; at which his Majesty, to whom it gave much satisfaction, hinted that it should be left with him. But Francesco, being ill advised by an insincere or injudicious friend, refused to leave it, saying that it was not finished; and so his Majesty did not have it, and Francesco was not rewarded for it, as he certainly would have been. This picture, having afterwards fallen into the hands of Cardinal Ippolito de'Medici, was presented by him to the Cardinal of Mantua; and it is now in the wardrobe of the Duke of that city, with many other most noble and beautiful pictures."
3. A copy of this letter is available from the department upon request.
Fig. 2

Photograph of the painting hanging on the far wall of The Long Gallery, Doughty House, circa 1925. Reproduced by permission of John Somerville & the Cook Collection Archive