LOT 156
THE PROPERTY OF THE HEINZ KISTERS FOUNDATION
TIZIANO VECCELLIO, CALLED TITIAN
PIEVE DI CADORE CIRCA 1485/90 (?) - 1576 VENICE
A SACRA CONVERSAZIONE: THE MADONNA AND CHILD WITH SAINTS LUKE AND CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA
oil on canvas
127.8 by 169.7 cm.; 50 1/4 by 66 3/4 in.

ESTIMATE 15,000,000-20,000,000 USD
Lot Sold: 16,882,500 USD

PROVENANCE
Traditionally said to have been painted for 'Titian's friend the Chevalier Orologi of Padua' and thence by descent in the Dondi dell'Orologio family, Padua (according to Sir Richard Worsley's 1797 inventory, the 1816 catalogue and Buchanan, under Literature, 1824);
From whom acquired by Sir Richard Worsley (1751-1805) during his time in Venice 1793-7 for 200 sequins and bound for England on a ship which was captured and taken to Malaga;
There acquired by Guillaume Guillon-Lethière on behalf of Lucien Bonaparte;
Lucien Bonaparte, Principe di Canino (1775-1840), Rome, by 1804 and still there in 1808 and 1812 (see Bozzani, Carloni and Guattani under Literature below);
His sale, London (29 St. James's Street), Mr. Stanley, 16 May 1816, lot 176 (unsold);
Sir John Rae Reid, 2nd Bt. (1781-1867), before 1829 (by whom lent to the British Institution in that year);
Charles Pascoe Grenfell (1790-1867), Taplow Court, Buckinghamshire, by 1857 (by whom exhibited in Manchester in that year);
Thence to his grandson, William Henry Grenfell (1855-1945), 1st and last Baron Desborough, Taplow Court, Buckinghamshire, and Panshanger, Hertfordshire;
Thence to his widow, Ethel (Ettie) Fane (1867-1952), niece of the seventh Earl Cowper, whom he had married in 1887, Taplow Court and Panshanger;
Lord Desborough collection sale, London, Christie's, 9 April 1954, lot 77, for 600 guineas to Skelton;
With Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc., New York, 1956, from which acquired by the late husband of the present owner.

EXHIBITED
London (60 Pall Mall), The New Gallery (Mr. Buchanan's), 6 February (and following days) 1815, no. 123;
London, British Institution, Catalogue of pictures by Italian, Spanish, Flemish, Dutch and English masters, 1829, no. 129 ('Holy Family, with St. Catherine'), lent by Sir J. Rae Reid;
Manchester, Manchester City Art Gallery, Catalogue of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom, 1857, no. 278 ('Marriage of St. Catherine'), lent by C.P. Grenfell;
London, Royal Academy, Exhibition of Works by Old Masters. Winter Exhibition, 1878, no. 141 ('Marriage of St. Catherine'), lent by W.H. Grenfell;
Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, Venetian Tradition, 9 November 1956 - 1 January 1957, no. 53;
Baden-Baden, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Von Bembo bis Guardi, 3 July - 14 September 1975, no. 80;

LITERATURE
Sir Richard Worsley, Inventory of Moveables taken at Venice, 1797, Worsely MSS 42;
C. Bozanni, Galleria Bonaparte, MS dated Rome, 13 June 1804, Archivio di Stato, Rome, Camerale II, Antichità e Belle Arti 7, fasciolo 204, f° 3, Room 3, no. 15;
Choix de gravures à l’eau forte, d’après les peintures originales et les marbres de la Galerie de Lucien Bonaparte, London 1812, p. 4, no. 70, reproduced (as an engraving) plate 115 ('Mariage de Ste. Catherine, grandeur de nature, sur toile - Le Titien');
Catalogue of the splendid collection of pictures belonging to Prince Lucien Bonaparte, which will be exhibited for sale by private contract, on Monday the sixth day of February, 1815, and following days, exhibition catalogue, London, The New Gallery, 1815, p. 34, no. 123 (a value of 3,000 guineas marked in the catalogue held at the National Art Library, V&A Museum, London);
L. Bonaparte, Collection de gravures choisis d'après les Peintures et Sculptures de la Galerie de Lucien Bonaparte, Prince de Canino, Rome 1822, p. VIII;
Sir J.A. Crowe & G.B, Cavalcaselle, Life and Times of Titian, London 1877, vol. II, p. 466 (as near Polidoro Lanzani);
H.S. Francis, Venetian Tradition, exhibition catalogue, Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art, 9 November 1956 - 1 January 1957, cat. no. 53, reproduced plate XIV (as Titian);


W. Suida, "Miscellanea Tizianesca, IV", in Arte Veneta, vol. 13-14, 1959-60, pp. 65-66, reproduced fig. 81 (as Titian and dated to circa 1540, tentatively identifying the male saint as Luke);

P. Grate ed., Konstens Venedigs: utställning anordnad med anledning av Konung Gustaf VI Adolfs åttioarsdag, exhibition catalogue, Stockholm, National Museum, 20 October 1962 - 10 February 1963, p. 93, cat. no. 91 (as by Titian);

R. Pallucchini, Tiziano, Florence 1969, p. 287 (as by Titian, dated to late 1540s, shortly after Titian's return from Rome);

F. Valcanover, Tiziano, Milan 1969, p. 110, no. 207 (as by Titian);


J. Shearman, The Early Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen, Cambridge 1983, p. 175, under cat. no. 176 (as attributed to Titian 'but it does not seem... that this attribution is beyond question');


B. Edelein-Badie, La Collection de Tableaux de Lucien Bonaparte, Prince de Canino, Paris 1997, pp. 278-79, no. 262, reproduced on p. 279 (as Titian);


R. Carloni, in M. Natoli ed., idem, p. 41, under Terzo Salone, no. 15 ('Il Matrimonio di S. Caterina, di Tiziano, gran quadro');

R. Bartoli Contini, in M. Natoli ed., idem, p. 330, no. 73;

F. Pedrocro, Titian. The Complete Paintings, London & New York 2001, p. 205, cat. no. 152 (as by Titian, dated between Titian's return from Rome in June 1547 and his first trip to Augsburg in January 1548; erroneously identified as 'The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine, with St. Luke');


P. Humfrey, Titian. The Complete Paintings, London 2007, p. 242, cat. no. 177, reproduced in colour (as by Titian, dated circa 1549-54);

G. Tagliaferro et al., eds., Le Botteghe di Tiziano, Florence 2009, pp. 97, 100, reproduced (as by Titian, dated circa 1550-1555).

ENGRAVED:
By Pietro Fontana (Galerie de Lucien Bonaparte catalogue, 1812 & 1822).

CATALOGUE NOTE
*A perfect work of the Venetian school*.1

This painting is one of the most important multi-figural compositions by the artist remaining in private hands and is the
finest work by the artist to come onto the open market for two decades. It is a mature work, painted circa 1560, when Titian was at the height of his powers and had established his reputation as the leading artist in Europe. It is a composition that is at once monumental but also extremely tender and as Titian's last known Sacra Conversazione it is the culmination of his lifelong exploration of this theme in Venetian art. The painting also has a remarkable provenance: during the almost half millennium since it was painted it has only changed hands six times, moving from one illustrious private European collection to another and rarely appearing in public at exhibition or at auction.

Titian and the Sacra Conversazione

Titian was a master of the compositional type that is known as the Sacra Conversazione; literally, a 'holy conversation' between the Madonna and Child and saints. In Venice the Sacra Conversazione format was devised by artists in the late fifteenth century as a device for structuring large altarpieces. In its earliest manifestation it was a highly formal way of depicting the Saviour based around a rigid hierarchy which saw the Madonna and Child enthroned at the top of the composition with saints ranged along either side of the throne. Artists such as Giovanni Bellini in his Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints and a Donor, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (Fig. 1), excelled in this format but by the turn of the century the formality of these compositions was starting to break down. A younger generation of artists such as Palma Vecchio abandoned the rigid settings and static figures that had gone before and by placing the Virgin and Child in a pastoral landscape strove towards the creation of a more informal and thus more accessible image. This process was to culminate in Titian's exploration of the theme of the Sacra Conversazione and ultimately find its apotheosis in his late examples such as the present work. Here Titian has built up the composition using pictorial space, medium, colour, gaze and gesture to ensure the focus of the painting is the central figure group and particularly the gesture from the Christ Child to Saint Catherine.

The date of execution of the present painting has been the subject of much debate: dating has spanned a twenty-year period, from between 1540 to 1560. Suida's dating of circa 1540 was not accepted by Wethey, who argued that the large imposing figures are comparable to those in other paintings by Titian which he dated circa 1560; such as the signed Annunciation in the church of San Salvatore, Venice and the Madonna and Child in the Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. Subsequent scholarship has tended towards a dating in the late 1540s, after Titian's return to Venice from Rome. Pedrocco follows this line and argued that the motif of strongly-defined figures set against a luminous background landscape is typical of works dating from the period between Titian's return from Rome in June 1547 and his first trip to Augsburg in January 1548. Humfrey lent support to a date in the late 1540s but has also suggested that a later dating is equally plausible. In the last six months the exciting opportunity for scholars to examine the painting at firsthand has led to a general consensus that the painting must date from circa 1560, rather than earlier as previously thought.

Titian started painting Sacre Conversazioni early in his career, experimenting with a variety of different formats. His most traditional interpretation of the type, inherited from Bellini, was the half length frieze of standing figures close to the pictorial plane, typified in the Virgin and Child with Saints Dorothy and George, in the Prado, Madrid (Fig. 2). However, even early on in his career Titian was pioneering a new format of Sacra Conversazione, clearly influenced by the older Palma Vecchio's pastoral settings but combined with a new physiological treatment of the Madonna and Child which was to revolutionise the genre. His first experiment with this format came circa 1513-14 with his Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine and Dominic and a Donor, in the Fondazione Magnani Rocca, Parma (Fig. 3). The Madonna and Child are seated in a rustic setting with saints and a donor in attendance. Whilst this informal setting was not entirely new, Titian was to explore it with a single minded intensity that set him apart from his predecessors. Titian's most important innovation was his relaxed presentation of mother and baby and the informal way in which the group of figures commune. This Sacra Conversazione is not a stiff, hierarchical depiction of Mother of God and Saviour flanked by adoring saints but a real conversation between tangible, human figures.

Throughout the second and third decades of the century Titian continued to develop this innovative idea of the Sacra Conversazione as a depiction of human interaction within an informal setting. In his Holy Family with Saint John the Baptist dated circa 1517-20 on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh from the Duke of Sutherland (Fig. 4) one can see how far these ideas had developed over just a few years. The seated Madonna and Child are
depicted as a loving mother with her wriggling, lively baby. Even Joseph and Saint John are depicted as truly human in the way the former reaches out to the playful Christ Child and the latter sits peacefully stroking his sheep. Titian painted Sacra Conversazione compositions throughout his career and continued to explore new ways to increase the accessibility and emotional impact of his images through the humanity of his protagonists at the same time as retaining the religious significance of the genre. The present painting demonstrates how his understanding of the genre continued to evolve; as Titian's last known example of this type, it can be considered the culmination of his exploration of this theme. It has many of the same characteristics as the earlier Sacre Conversazioni but here, more profoundly than in any previous work, Titian has ensured that the focus of the painting is the 'conversation' taking place between Christ and Saint Catherine. Christ, as in the Sutherland picture, is depicted as a playful baby, slightly off-balance as He tips forward with arms outstretched towards Catherine. Christ is held securely by His mother as she looks down tenderly stabilising Him, preventing Him from toppling forward with a hand under His chest. The main focus here is the central group of the Madonna and Child and Saint Catherine and as Christ reaches out to Catherine so she reaches back to Him with a gentle gesture and a gaze that is at once both that of a young woman playing with a small child and that of a Saint gazing in awe at her God incarnate. The sensitivity and humanity with which these figures are depicted is a natural evolution from Titian's earlier Sacre Conversazioni and the resultant image is both emotional and accessible. Titian has also increased the size of the figures relative to the background landscape in a way not found in his earlier work. He still uses a curtain on the right to balance the image but the central group has been brought much closer to the pictorial plane. In the background he paints a far distant landscape in which the looming clouds and deep colours of the sky create an intense atmosphere not present in his previous compositions. Titian uses the same technique of depicting large figures close to the pictorial plane set against a mysterious far distant background in other works from this period such as the Annunciation in the church of San Salvador, Venice, dated to the early 1560s (Fig. 5). In both compositions Titian's intent is to use the enlarged figures and receded backgrounds to create an intense focus on the individuals. The shifting shapes of the background cannot hold one's attention for long so the gaze is repeatedly drawn back to Titian's central figure group.

Titian's maturity

By the time the present painting was executed Titian's career was at its height: he was over 70 years of age; he had reached a remarkable point in his career; and his international reputation was unparalleled. As a result of this in circa 1551 he had entered into an agreement with Philip II of Spain which allowed him to live and work in Venice whilst producing commissions for the Spanish heir and later king. This gave him a certain amount of financial independence and left him relatively free to choose his own subject matter whilst also allowing him to continue to accept other foreign and domestic commissions. It was rare that patrons allowed artists so much liberty of person or subject as Philip granted Titian and it was a mark of his unique creative status. The paintings Titian produced for Philip dominated these years and thus it is important to understand the present work in this context.

During the 1550s Titian embarked on a series of large, multi figured poesies or mythological scenes for Philip which included the Diana and Actaeon (Fig. 6) belonging to the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh and the National Gallery, London and the Diana and Callisto on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh from the Duke of Sutherland. This series is widely regarded as amongst the greatest achievements of Titian's late career and the two aforementioned paintings were completed and ready to be shipped by September 1559. Despite this Titian did continue to take other commissions in these years, such as the present painting, and this escalating volume of work meant Titian increasingly relied on his studio for help in completing his paintings. Throughout his career Titian employed a large and highly sophisticated studio in which a number of assistants, often talented painters in their own right, helped him to varying degrees with his work. Identifiable hands within Titian's studio include his son Orazio Vecellio, relations Cesare and Marco Vecellio and Girolamo Denti. There has been much scholarly debate on the increasing extent of studio participation in Titian's late works from the 1550s until his death although actual intervention seems to have varied between individual compositions and was often dependent on Titian's perception of the importance of the patron.

It is however clear that in the great majority of his later works from the 1550s onwards Titian employed his trusted
assistants to work on peripheral areas of his compositions. Given that these assistants were taught to emulate their master's style and that the hand of Titian himself is often so inextricably interwoven with theirs, it is often extremely difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins. Titian's hand is most strikingly in evidence in the present picture in the figures of the Virgin and Child and in the atmospheric sky and background. He clearly experimented with the position of the figure of Saint Catherine but whether he himself worked up the figure to its final level of finish must remain a matter of debate. Whilst the positioning and design of the figure of Saint Luke and the curtain must be Titian's, it seems more likely that these peripheral areas were completed by an assistant working under his supervision, in accordance with his usual practice at this time.

During these years to avoid overwork Titian was careful to accept other commissions only if they came from important religious or civic institutions or from important personages. The present painting is a rare exception. The Dondi dell'Orologio family were an important noble family in Padua but their influence did not extend throughout Italy. According to a tradition recorded by Sir Richard Worsley and later published by William Buchanan the present work was commissioned by 'Titian's friend the Chevalier Orologo of Padua'. Although this individual member of the Dondi dall'Orologio family has not been traced and there is no further evidence of this recorded friendship one can hypothesise that it was the personal connection between the artist and the 'Chevalier Orologo' which lead Titian to accept the commission and to execute so much of the canvas himself rather than handing it over to his studio.

Titian's late style
The fullest account of the artist's technique comes from Marco Boschini who recorded Palma il Giovane's observations on Titian's working method:

"[he] blocked in his pictures with a mass of colours, which served as a bed or foundation for what he wished to express, and upon which he would then build. I myself have seen such underpainting, vigorously applied with a loaded brush, of pure red ochre, which would then serve as a middle ground; then with a stroke of white lead, with the same brush then dipped in red, black or yellow, he created the light and dark areas of the relief effect. And in this way with four strokes of the brush he was able to suggest a magnificent figure... After having thus established this crucial foundation, he turned the pictures to the wall and left them there, without looking at them for several months. When he later returned to them, he scrutinized them as though they were his mortal enemies, in order to discover any faults; and if he did find anything that did not accord with his intentions, like a surgeon treating a patient, he would remove some swelling or excess flesh, set an arm if the bone were out of joint, or adjust a foot if it were misshapen, without the slightest pity for the victim. By thus operating on and re-forming these figures, he brought them to the highest degree of perfection... and then, while that picture was drying, he turned to another. And he gradually covered with living flesh those bare bones, going over them repeatedly until all they lacked was breath itself.... For the final touches he would blend the transitions from highlights to halftones with his fingers, blending one tint with another, or with a smear of his finger he would apply a dark accent in some corner to strengthen it, or with a dab of red, like a drop of blood, he would enliven some surface—in this way bringing his animated figures to completion. . . . In the final stages he painted more with his fingers than with the brush".

By this point in his career Titian had entirely mastered the medium of oil paint and perfected his subtle manipulation of colour. During the 1550s one can detect a notable change in his work as he moves towards a more painterly, freer way of expressing himself. When Vasari's described Titian's late style he spoke of the artist building up his canvases through a series of macchie (blots), touch and 'bold strokes...dashed off with a broad and even coarse sweep of the brush'.

The present work was executed during this exciting phase in Titian's career when he was developing his late style and moving away from the carefully delineated canvases of his youth. Here, as with many paintings from this decade, one can see Titian exploiting the versatility of his medium and moving towards a much looser application of paint. The macchie and blended halftones Boschini writes of are used by Titian in the present work particularly to build up the landscape and sky in the centre and left distance. He breaks down the outlines and in a series of brief, spontaneous brushstrokes creates an impression of form in the indistinct and tremulous shapes (see detail opposite). Titian experimented with this breaking down of the paint surface in his works of the 1550s and beyond. In backgrounds of
the Diana and Callisto and Diana and Actaeon one can find the same mysterious far distances, urgent colours and fragmentary shapes.

In the present work this summary use of paint and freeing up in application was used by Titian in a graduated fashion to organise the pictorial plane. The figures of the Madonna and Child and Saint Catherine are carefully defined through sculpturally modelled contours and precise highlights and thus clearly occupy the immediate foreground. The figure of Saint Luke and the curtain are executed with softer lines and a slight blurring of form that places them a register behind the front figures and the loose paint application and breakdown of lines in the landscape and sky puts it firmly in the far distance.

Throughout the 60s and 70s, until his death in 1576, Titian continued to explore the possibilities inherent in his new freer application of paint and by the end of his career his works were becoming increasingly sketchy and abstract not just in the backgrounds but also in the foreground figures. This has led critics to argue that some of his final works such as the Flaying of Marsyas, Archbishop's Palace, Kroměříž (Fig. 7) of circa 1570-6 are incomplete. However, the presence of his signature on the Kroměříž painting seems to suggest that Titian regarded it as finished and thus the sketchy quality of the work should be seen as the culmination of the breakdown of form and emphasis on the painted surface such as one starts to see in the background of the present work.

It is clear that Titian used both composition and medium to define the space within the present canvas however his use of colour also played an important part. Colour had always been of primary importance to Titian and throughout his career he continually experimented with different juxtapositions, shades and hues. One of the defining characteristics of his late style, and particularly evident in the present work, is the way he started to use colour no longer simply to animate the composition but rather as the defining agent to guide one through the narrative. Gone are the blockish brighter colours of his youthful works and in their place Titian has used a deeper, more muted palette in which closely interrelated hues of pink, orange, red and brown predominate. Both the deep pinkish mauve of the Virgin's dress and the peach like pink of Catherine's dress are echoed in the darker tones of Saint Luke garments. These different shades of pink are picked up in the individual skin tones and whilst the Madonna's cheeks are a cooler pink Saint Catherine's skin tones originate in a warmer, ruddier base. These tones are used in an extremely sophisticated way to define the composition and focus attention on the central figure of the Christ Child, who is wrapped in a white cloth with pearly pinkish white skin. In the sky all these different tones of pink, peach, mauve and white are synthesised to create a series of shimmering iridescent lines above the horizon. Titian's subtle differentiation between the skin tones of his protagonist means the nearly naked Christ naturally draws the eye and if one's gaze wanders upwards into the sky the looming clouds above with their pink highlights force the eye back down through the landscape to focus on Christ once more. This movement throughout the composition is not dependant on colour alone but is enforced by Titian's carefully constructed network of gaze and gesture: as Mary gazes at Christ so He reaches towards Catherine who by her kneeling position and outstretched arm firmly returns to focus to Christ. Saint Luke acts as a framing device on the left, as the curtain does on the right.

The Evolution of the Composition

X-radiographs of the painting reveal numerous changes and pentimenti to the composition, notably in an area on and around Saint Catherine in the centre of the painting (Figs. 8 and 9). Catherine's positioning appears to have shifted upwards slightly and a profile is faintly visible beneath her gently turned face. Considerable pentimenti and scuffling can be seen in the X-ray and there appear to be some unresolved areas to the left and right of Catherine's raised hand, visible to the naked eye. It is clear that Titian was experimenting with different solutions for this 'conversation' between Catherine and Christ, intended as the focal point of the picture. The male saint to the left seems to have been painted before Saint Catherine; his sleeve clearly passes through her head in the X-ray. The identity of this figure has been the subject of much debate: he has been variously identified as Saint Paul, Saint Luke and Joseph. The X-rays reveal the head of a bull in the lower left corner; a symbol normally associated with Saint Luke. However, by the time the painting entered the collection of Sir Richard Worsley the bull was not longer evident. It was however clearly intended to be visible in the 16th century for a near-contemporary variant of the composition possibly originating in Titian's studio, in the Royal Collection at Hampton Court includes the same bull's head. The figure of
Saint Catherine has been replaced with that of a male donor in the Hampton Court picture and it is quite possible that the present work was also originally intended to include a donor portrait, which was changed to Catherine at a later stage. The painting has always been described as 'The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine' but as the Christ Child does not hold a ring and if the male figure is indeed Saint Luke the painting's subject lies within the more traditional representation of a Sacra Conversazione.

Colour, gesture, gaze, composition, paint application and manipulation of pictorial space were all used by Titian to ensure the central focus of the painting remained the gesture between Christ and Saint Catherine, and on a wider level the central group of the Madonna and Child and Saint. This particularly distinctive central group caught the eye of Sir Anthony van Dyck who saw the painting during his travels through Italy in the 1620s and made a sketch of it in his 'Italian Sketchbook' formerly at Chatsworth and today in the British Museum, London (Fig. 10). The sketchbook was compiled between the autumn of 1622 and that of 1627 and is a 'precious, scarcely matched record of Van Dyck's travels in his 20s, as well as of intimations of lost works in painting or drawing, highlighting his tastes and the range of his interests developed South of the Alps'. He left Antwerp and travelled first to Genoa, where he stayed with the Flemish artist brothers Lucas and Cornelis de Wael, making a second stop in Padua, where he is likely to have seen the present picture. He also travelled to Venice, Rome, Florence, Bologna and Palermo, noting sketches, ricordi, annotating names of artists as well as lists of owners and locations, many of which were from the Veneto. Indeed the sketchbook testifies to Van Dyck's predilection for 16th-century Venetian art and, in particular, for Titian whose name appears almost sixty times alongside various sketches. The drawings in the sketchbook are not sequential so reconstructing Van Dyck's route through Italy based on the whereabouts at that time of the works he copied is extremely problematic. The present painting was almost certainly in Padua when Van Dyck saw and copied it but the figure of Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness that appears further up on the same sheet, taken from Titian's painting in the National Gallery, London, was copied when that picture hung in the Aldobrandini collection in Rome (where it was from 1603). The figure of Saint John was clearly drawn first, not only because of its positioning further up on the page but more importantly because Saint Catherine's head is drawn around John's right foot rather than beneath or over it. This would suggest that Van Dyck travelled first to Rome and then to Padua but this is not thought to be the case. In any event, the interaction between the three figures in Titian's painting inspired Van Dyck enough for him to make a copy after it in his precious sketchbook.

Provenance

According to tradition, as specified by its former owners Sir Richard Worsley, Lucien Bonaparte and later reported by William Buchanan in the early 19th century (1824), this picture was painted for 'Titian's friend the Chevalier Orologi of Padua'; that is the Dondi dell'Orologio family. The painting presumably passed by inheritance through the generations until the last decade of the 18th century when it was acquired directly from the family by Worsley. The Dondi dell'Orologio family were important members of the Paduan nobility dating back to at least the fourteenth century when a Giovanni Dondi dell'Orologio, professor at Padua's world-renowned university, created one of Italy's first astrological clocks; something which led to him and his descendants being called 'dell'Orologio'. A full-length statue of Giovanni Dondi by the Paduan sculptor Francesco Rizzi was erected in Prato della Valle in 1778, upon the instigation of the Marchesi Giovanni, Antonio and Francesco Dondi dell'Orologio. Dondi is shown full-length, in 14th-century costume, holding a compass in his right hand and a sphere with signs of the zodiac in his left (an obvious reference to his astrological clock).

Although it had previously been thought that the painting was probably acquired directly from the Dondi dell'Orologio family by Napoleon's brother, Lucien Bonaparte, in whose collection it was by 1804, recent research by Mr Jonathan Yarker has proven otherwise and we are grateful to Mr Yarker for sharing his, as yet, unpublished research with us. Mr. Yarker has shown that the painting was actually acquired from the Dondi dell'Orologio family by the English politician, diplomat and antiquary Sir Richard Worsley (1751-1805) during his time in Venice as the last British Resident (Fig. 11). After the very public breakdown of his marriage in England, Worsley withdrew from political life and travelled extensively during the 1780's through Europe and the Levant visiting Greece, Egypt, Turkey, and the Crimea. He amassed a fine collection of ancient Greek sculpture, ancient Roman marbles and other antiquities for his
house Appuldurcombe on the Isle of White. He returned to England in 1790 and re-entered politics, entering Venice in the same period and held until Venice's annexation by France in 1797. During his time in Venice he was an avid collector of paintings and took advantage of the unstable political situation to acquire some magnificent works at depressed wartime prices. The 1797 inventory of 'movables' he made on his departure includes works by Paris Bordone, Tintoretto, Veronese, Palma Giovane, Giovanni Bellini and Canaletto and well as six Titians. In the same inventory Worsley was effusive in his praise of Titian: "The works of this sublime master are so numerous and many of them so beautiful that no Panegyric whatsoever can give them additional merit. When Titian chose to show the greatest of his genius and the wonderful perfection of his art he painted half figures, generally choosing Religious subjects." The present painting is listed as having been purchased directly from the family of the "Cavaler Dondi d'Oralegio of Padua" for 200 sequins (almost double the price paid for any other painting in the entire list). Worsley also acquired Titian's Supper at Emmaus (Fig. 12) during his period in Venice and it still in the hand of his descendants, the Earls of Yarbrough. However The Supper at Emmaus must have been shipped back to England separately as it does not feature on the list of 'movables' and we know it was safely hanging in Worlsey's London house by 1803. When Worsley returned to England in 1797 he left the inventoried items, including the present painting, behind in Venice to be shipped at a later date. However in September 1801 Worsley received word from an Edward Bodingfeld in Malaga lamenting the fact that "as a fatal consequence of the present war" a French privateer had captured the ship transporting the rest of his collection to England and had brought it into port where he had put the contents up for sale. The entire collection, including the present painting, was purchased "on very moderate terms" by the painter Guillaume Guillon-Lethière on behalf of Lucien Bonaparte and Worlsey was only able to reclaim the antiquities by paying the French bounty on them. Lucien Bonaparte (Fig. 13) was an avid collector and his central involvement in the political upheavals of the Peninsular Wars afforded him ample opportunity to build up one of the most prestigious collections of the 19th century. He was Minister for the Arts under the Napoleonic regime, priding himself on his connoisseurship, and in 1800 he was appointed Ambassador to Madrid. There he began to form a collection, with the help of Guillon Lethière, and famously acquired Velázquez's Lady with the Fan (now in the Wallace Collection, London). He patronised contemporary French artists, owning works by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, François-Xavier Fabre, Antonio Canova, Jacques-Louis David, Jean-Dominique Ingres and Pierre-Narcisse Guérin among others. There were numerous Italian paintings in his collection including works by Lorenzo Lotto (Portrait of Giovanni della Volta and his Family in the National Gallery, London); Raphael (The Madonna of the Candelabra in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore); Annibale Carracci (The Three Mariæ at the Tomb in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg); Bronzino (thought at the time to be by Sebastiano del Piombo) and Bernardo Luini (thought at the time to be by Leonardo da Vinci). Titian, however, seems to have been a particular favourite of the Prince's for he owned no fewer than nine paintings attributed to the artist, including the present work. Titian's Madonna and Child with Saints Catherine and Luke (known at the time as The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine) was considered a masterpiece and undoubtedly one of the highlights of his collection: in 1812 and 1822 Lucien published an engraving of the painting by Pietro Fontana. By 1804 the Prince was living in self-imposed exile in Rome and the painting is listed in an inventory of his collection drawn up in June of the same year. He was living in the Palazzo Lancellotti at via dei Coronari, a guest of his maternal uncle Cardinal Joseph Fesch; also an avid collector. Fesch was always criticised by his nephew for buying large quantities of pictures disparagingly referred to by Bonaparte as his 'tableaumanie' - whilst the latter prided himself on being more selective than his uncle. In 1806 Bonaparte bought the Palazzo Nuñez at via Bocca di Leone and moved there with his family and collection. It was largely between 1804 and 1810 that Bonaparte put his collection together in Rome with the help of Vincenzo Pacetti, an artist-dealer-restorer who acted as mediator for him during this period. He acquired paintings from private aristocratic collections and was able to purchase masterpieces from Prince Vincenzo Giustiniani: among them Poussin's Massacre of the Innocents (Musée Condé, Chantilly), Sofonisba Anguissola's Game of Chess (Museum Narodowe, Poznán) and Gerrit van Honthorst's Christ before the High Priest (National Gallery, London), all of which are mentioned in a letter from James Irvine to William Buchanan, dated 30 June 1804.
In 1810 Bonaparte was exiled to England where he remained for another four years, before returning to France and Italy. Around this time he started to face growing financial difficulties and in 1814, 198 pictures from his collection, including the present painting, were sent to London to be exhibited and sold privately by William Buchanan. The exhibition took place at Buchanan’s gallery, The New Gallery, at 60 Pall Mall, with a catalogue published to accompany it in which the Titian was described in glowing terms: “This chef-d’œuvre of fine colouring was painted for his friend the Chevalier Orologi of Padua. In it is to be found all that can be desired of the master, while it seems to possess not only those qualities inherent in Titian, but also those which are attributable to the best works of Correggio. – As a perfect work of the Venetian School, it demands the most attentive examination”. The exhibition was apparently greeted with disappointment by connoisseurs and public alike; something Buchanan himself attributed to Bonaparte’s having withdrawn twenty of the most famous paintings from his collection. A book on Bonaparte’s collection, published in 1812 in London, was clearly produced to publicise his collection prior to the exhibition: this is further confirmed by the fact that the book was for sale at Buchanan’s exhibition for the price of 6 guineas. When the exhibition proved unsuccessful the group of pictures was offered at auction the following year at Mr. Stanley’s, 29 St. James’s Street. The Titian was the final lot (lot 176) and was the most highly-valued item in the three-day sale (750 guineas), being valued at three times more than Titian’s The Allegory of Prudence in the National Gallery, London, and 50 guineas more than Raphael’s Madonna of the Candelabra in the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. It was described as: “The Marriage of St. Catharine... The landscape, forming the Back-ground, is in perfect unison both for Design and Effect, and is illuminated by splendid Clouds, that serve to connect all the Lights into one grand and powerful mass... This inestimable Chef-d’œuvre was painted expressly for the Artist’s friend, Chevalier Orologi, and is a superb Specimen of the powers of the Prince of the Venetian School: on Canvass, 4 feet 10 by 5 feet 6.”

The painting is next recorded in the collection of the Conservative politician and financier Sir John Rae Reid (1781-1867). Reid was the son of Elizabeth Goodfellow and Sir Thomas Reid of Ewell Grove, Surrey, whom he succeeded in the baronetcy in 1824. Reid was the MP for Dover, Kent, from 1830 to 1831 and again from 1832 to 1847. He later became a Director and Governor of the Bank of England. Though it is not known how or when he acquired the picture it was certainly in his possession by 1829; the year in which he lent it to the British Institution (Fig. 14).

The painting subsequently entered the illustrious Desborough collection, having been acquired by Charles Pascoe Grenfell some time before 1857; the year in which he lent it to an exhibition in Manchester (see under Exhibited). Charles Pascoe bought Taplow Court in 1852 and commissioned the architect William Burn to remodel it in its present early-Tudor style. The estate, dominated by the red-brick Victorian mansion, is located on the river Thames near Maidenhead and has been home to a lay Buddhist society since 1988 (Fig. 15). In 1867 the estate was inherited by Charles Pascoe’s grandson William Henry, whose father Charles William had died in 1861. William Henry Grenfell was raised to peerage as the first (and last) Baron Desborough in 1905; the same year in which his wife Ethel (Ettie) née Fane was bequeathed the Panshanger Estate in Hertfordshire from her childless uncle, the seventh and last Earl Cowper.

The seventh (and last) Earl Cowper, Francis Thomas de Grey’s (1834-1905) marriage to Katrine Cecilia (1845-1913) was happy but childless and so they virtually adopted the Earl’s niece, Ethel (Ettie) Fane, following the death of his sister and brother-in-law in 1870. It was to Ettie to whom he left Panshanger and its magnificent collections. The main gallery at Panshanger, as it stood in 1936, was hung with some of the notable pictures from the collection: masterpieces by Rembrandt, Frans Hals, Van Dyck, Panini, Velázquez, Fra Bartolommeo, Carlo Dolci, Stubbs and Zoffany were among them. However Baron and Lady Desborough continued to live at Taplow Court and only visited Panshanger two or three times a year. Ettie Desborough was the most famous society hostess of her age. She frequently hosted meetings of the celebrated aristocratic, political and literary figures known as “The Souls” at the Desborough residence of Taplow Court, with visitors including Henry Irving, Vita Sackville-West, Edward VII, H.G. Wells, Edith Wharton and Oscar Wilde. Lady Desborough had three sons and a daughter and although the succession and survival of Taplow Court and Panshanger with their grand collection of art seemed secure, it was not to be: two of her sons were killed in the First World War and the third in a car accident in 1926, leaving no obvious heir.
to the estate. The sale of Lady Desborough's estates followed shortly after her death in May 1952. Taplow Court was bought by Plessey Electronics and Panshanger was sold, along with 89 acres of the park, to a demolition contractor for £17,750 and was subsequently destroyed in 1953-54. A portion of the art collection passed to Lady Desborough's daughter, Alexandra Imogen Clair Grenfell (known as Lady Imogen), who married the 6th Viscount Gage in 1931 and lived at his seat, Firle Place in Sussex. Her share of the art, consisting mainly of French furniture and important Dutch and English pictures, arrived in 1954 and the rest of Panshanger's contents were sold at Christie's in the same year (see provenance).

Copies

Copies after the composition in the collection of the Duke of Northumberland, Syon House, Brentford, and with a Mr. Hope are recorded, by Collins Baker as after the Hampton Court picture, and by Wethey as after the present painting. Other versions of the Hampton Court picture include that sold, London, Christie's, 3 July 1953, lot 26 (125 by 168 cm.), and another in the Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas (129.5 by 170 cm.). A copy of the Hampton Court painting by Peter Oliver, signed and dated 1639, is in the Royal Library at Windsor.

7. Ibid., p. 95, no. 54 reproduced.
8. Ibid., p. 76, no. 36 reproduced.
11. Ibid., p. 128 reproduced fig. 65.
16. Inv. 1271, 121.5 by 171 cm.; see The Early Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen, Cambridge 1983, p. 175, under cat. no. 176, reproduced plate 156, as 'Attributed to Palma Giovane', following a suggestion by Philip Pouncey. Acquired by Charles I in 1637 as a Titian and recorded by Van der Doort in the Square Table Room at Whitehall as such; Van der Doort, 1639, Millar ed., 1960, p. 21, no. 8. The picture was previously considered by Berenson as a product of Titian's workshop (though he had initially thought it might be a ruined but autograph picture), and by Suida as an autograph work by Titian dating from circa 1550, about a decade after the present painting.
17. Inv. no. BM 1957-12-14-207, fol. 12 recto; 205 by 165 mm., pen and brown ink on vellum. See G. Adriani, Anton van Dyck. Italienisches Skizzenbuch, Vienna 1965, p. 13, reproduced plate 12 (where the sketch is described as after a 'lost' painting by Titian). The drawing was more recently published in M. Jaffé, The Devonshire Collection of North European Drawings, vol. I, Turin 2002, p. 80, under no. 1008 12 b.
18. Ibid., p. 71.
19. Van Dyck labelled his sketch after the present painting 'titian', as he did the figure of St. John the Baptist on the
same sheet.


21. A full-length effigy of Giovanni Dondi is among the 78 statues in the square of Prato della Valle in Padua. The clock was destroyed by fire in 1344 and a reconstruction of it now dominates the Piazza dei Signori in Padua.

22. Mr. Yarker will be publishing his research in an article entitled 'The last Resident: Richard Worsley, Lucien Bonaparte and his collection of Venetian Paintings' in the Burlington Magazine next year.


25. Worsley MSS. 42.


27. Worsley MSS. 42, p. 40.


29. Worsley MSS. 55/18.

30. Also in Lucien Bonaparte's collection was the enigmatic Allegory of Prudence today in the National Gallery, London.


34. The growing financial pressure led Lucien Bonaparte to dispose of Villa Rufinella at Frascati in 1820 (he had acquired it in 1804) and Palazzo Nuñez in 1823.

35. Amongst the paintings visible in the photograph: Van Dyck's Portrait of Count Johannes of Nassau-Siegen and his family passed to Lady Desborough's daughter, Lady Imogen, and today hangs at Firle Place in Sussex (see E. Larsen, The Paintings of Anthony van Dyck, Düsseldorf, 1988, p. 339, cat. no. 915); Gian Paolo Panini's Interior of St. Peter's in Rome was sold at Christie's, London, 2 December 1977, lot 89 (see F. Arisi, Gian Paolo Panini, Rome 1986, p. 339, cat. no. 217, reproduced in colour plate 113); Fra Bartolommeo's Rest on the Flight into Egypt with St. John the Baptist is in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Carlo Dolci's Saint Joseph and the Christ Child was sold and was with Whitfield Gallery Ltd., London, in 1995 (see F. Baldassari, Carlo Dolci, Turin 1995, p. 59, cat. no. 27, reproduced in color plate IX).

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Fig. 1

Giovanni Bellinis Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints and a Donor
Fig. 2
Sir Anthony van Dyck, folio 12 recto from his Italian Sketchbook

Fig. 3
Sir Joshua Reynolds, Portrait of Sir Richard Worsley 1755-76, from a Private Collection

Fig. 4
Titian, The Supper at Emmaus

Fig. 5
Fran?ois-Xavier Fabre, Portrait of Lucien Bonaparte

Fig. 6
John Scarlett Davis, The interior of the British Institution Gallery, 1829, oil on canvas

Fig. 7
Taplow Court

Fig. 8
Titian, Virgin and Child with Saints Dorothy and George
Fig. 9  
Titian, Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine and Dominic and a Donor

Fig. 10  
Titian, The Virgin and Child with Saint John the Baptist and an Unidentified Saint

Fig. 11  
Titian, The Annunciation

Fig. 12  
Titian, Diana and Actaeon

Fig. 13  
Titian, The Flaying of Marsyas

Fig. 14  
X-radiographs of the painting (detail)

Fig. 15  
X-radiographs of the painting