

**Attributed to Quentin Massys**

Flemish, b. Louvain, c.1465 d. Antwerp, 1530

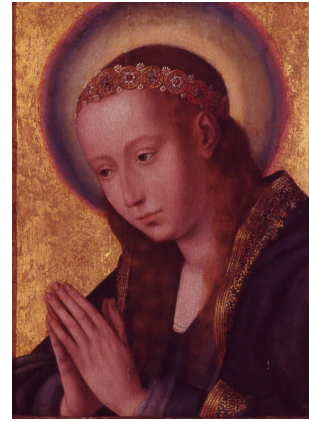
***The Virgin in Prayer, c.1500***

oil on panel

16 x 12 inches

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**The Hon. Hereward T. Watlington Bequest**



This painting of *The Virgin in Prayer* has been attributed to a follower of Quentin Massys (c.1465 -1530), the father of the 'Antwerp School' of painters. The image bears a striking resemblance to Massys' painting of *The Virgin Crowned in Prayer*, currently in the Koninklijk museum in Antwerp.

Like his contemporary, the German Master painter Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Massys' work combined Northern techniques and traditions with the new ideas of the Italian Renaissance. At the beginning of the sixteenth century Italian influences were making themselves felt everywhere. This was largely due to the dissemination of ideas through printmaking, and the increasing tendency for young artists to travel as part of their artistic training. Massys may have visited Italy between 1514 and 1519. He produced images in which a perfect agreement, or harmony, between sentiment (a Northern ideal) and beauty (an Italian ideal) is achieved. His painting style is sensitive, simple and poetic.

Traces of Gothic style remain in the flat gold background of this work. However, the Virgin has been skillfully modelled in chiaroscuro (light and shade), a revolutionary innovation of the Italian Renaissance. As a result, she appears convincingly human: weighty and three dimensional, as opposed to a typically flat and weightless Gothic figure. The gold background, halo and crown indicate to the viewer that this is the mother of God and Queen of Heaven. In her celestial realm, Mary is portrayed in a humble position of prayer. She is presented as a role model whose behaviour the viewer should strive to emulate. The Virgin Mary was also called upon in prayer in her role as an intercessor to Christ (God).

**Andrea Schiavone (Andrea Meldolla)**

Italian (Venetian), b.Zara, Dalmatia c.1510 d. Venice,1563

***Dismissal of Queen Vashti, c.1560***

oil on panel

12 x 38 inches

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Andrea Meldolla was born in Zara, Dalmatia, c.1510, which was at this time under Venetian jurisdiction. Although he was of Italian descent, the nickname 'Schiavone' refers to Andrea's Slavic origins. Schiavone was living in Venice by the late 1530s. However, facts about the artist, and documented works by him, are scant. Schiavone is best known for his mythological and pastoral subjects. He generally worked on small-scale works for private patrons, in a colourful, painterly style. Connoisseurs especially admired Schiavone for his lively handling of paint, speed of execution, and lack of finish.

This pair of paintings was intended to decorate a *cassone* (wedding chest). Decorated wedding chests, which were used to hold the bride's trousseau, were popular in Italy from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Together, the two panels form a continuous narrative. The subject matter is taken from the Old Testament book of Esther. The panels detail the story of Ahasuerus, King of Persia (d. 465 B.C.), and his struggle to find the perfect wife. They emphasise the importance of traditional gender roles within marital relationships.

In the third year of his reign, King Ahaseurus held numerous celebrations for the nobility of his kingdom, at his palace in Shusan. The celebrations culminated with an elaborate banquet for all the inhabitants of Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire. On the night of the feast, the King sent for his Queen, Vashti, to appear in her regal attire before his guests and to display her beauty to them. The possession of a beautiful wife would further enhance the king's glory. But Vashti refused to appear. The King was furious with Vashti's disregard for his authority. Her disobedient behaviour was humiliating and offensive to Ahaseurus, and set a bad example to other Persian women. Such conduct was unheard of amongst wives at this time. Ahaseurus sought counsel from the wisest of his princes who all agreed that Vashti should be banished from the kingdom, and that a new queen should be chosen to replace her.

On the left hand side of the panel, Schiavone has painted King Ahaseurus seated on his throne, and surrounded by his counsellors. All the men appear to be engaged in discussion, as they decide the fate of Queen Vashti. Vashti is shown standing on the right hand side of the panel, surrounded by three attendant maids. She stands proudly, upright with her arms outstretched, as if she is ready to embrace her new life beyond the palace walls. Interestingly, all the women appear sympathetic to Queen Vashti. One of the maids weeps at her departure, whilst another attends to the train of her dress, as if trying to preserve her mistresses' sense of dignity.

**Andrea Schiavone (Andrea Meldolla)**

Italian (Venetian), b.Zara, Dalmatia c.1510 d. Venice,1563

***Crowning of Esther, c.1560***

oil on panel

12 x 38 inches

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Among the candidates competing to become the new Queen of Persia was a young Jewess named Esther, whose beauty and gentleness stood out from the rest. Ahasuerus fell immediately in love with Esther and made her his new Queen. Schiavone depicts Esther kneeling at the king's feet to receive her crown. It is a humble position, indicating Esther's willingness to serve her husband (and the Crown). The story of Esther conveys the message that an attitude of respect and reverence is the appropriate attitude of a bride towards her husband.

**Circle of Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (“Il Sodoma”)**

Italian, b. Vercelli 1477, d. Siena 1549

***Saint Sebastian, c. 1530***

oil on canvas

18<sup>1/4</sup> x 13<sup>3/4</sup> inches

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According to his legend, Sebastian was a Christian who entered the Imperial Roman army in order to defend the confessors and martyrs of his day. During Emperor Diocletian's persecution of the Christians, Sebastian secretly carried out acts of love and charity for his brethren in faith, and converted many of his fellow soldiers to Christianity. When Sebastian's faith was discovered, in AD 286, the Emperor ordered his execution. Sebastian was tied to a tree and shot with arrows. However, he miraculously survived this attack and returned to preach to Diocletian, denouncing him for his cruelty to Christians. The Emperor then ordered that Sebastian should be beaten to death, and this time he perished.

During the Renaissance, St. Sebastian emerged as a very popular subject for painters. Artists approached the young saint as a figure of Hellenic loveliness, an androgynous and idealized example of young male beauty. He was cast as a martyr, beatifically receptive to his fate. In this work Sebastian's head and eyes are downcast, but the saint does not appear to be in pain. Like Christ on the cross, he bears his torture with stoicism and dignity. The mood of the picture is one of romantic melancholy. The artist has also painted a turbulent sky, to suggest the tragic death that awaits Sebastian.

This painting of St. Sebastian is by an unknown follower of Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (better known as “Sodoma”). It was originally used as a church or processional banner. Sodoma was one of the best-known Sienese painters of the early sixteenth century, and the master of the Italian mannerist painter Domenico Beccafumi (c.1486-1551). Sodoma's own version of St. Sebastian (1525, Galleria Palatina, Palazzo Pitti, Florence) is one of the artist's most celebrated works

**Jacopo Palma, II Vecchio (Jacomo Negretti)**

Italian, b. Serimalta (nr. Bergamo) 1480 d. Venice, 1528

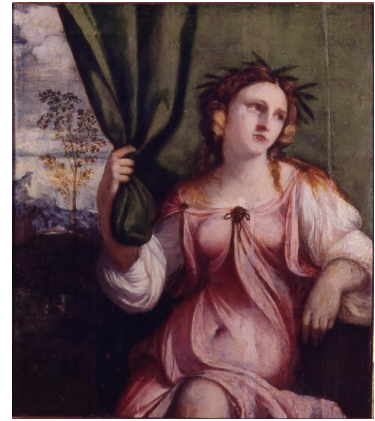
***Chastity*, c.1515**

oil on panel

36 x 30<sup>1/2</sup> inches

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Palma Vecchio was active for his entire career in Venice, during a period now known as the 'Golden Age' or 'High Renaissance' of Venetian art. Palma Vecchio was a pupil of Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), the founding father of the 'Venetian School' of painting. He was strongly influenced by his contemporaries, most notably Giorgione (1478-1510), Titian (c. 1485-1576) and Lorenzo Lotto (c. 1480-1556).

Palma Vecchio produced strong and broad rather than graceful works, famous for their sensual appeal and limpid, transparent colouring. Palma is chiefly remembered for his portraits of a particularly splendid and voluptuous type of blonde-haired woman, considered to be characteristically Venetian because of her opulence, sensuality and beauty.

This portrait is thought to represent the allegorical figure of *Chastity*. Typically, Palma chose to paint Chastity as a curvaceous blonde, with very pale and luminous skin. The whiteness of both her flesh and the sleeves of her robe suggest her purity. *Chastity* clutches the green velvet curtain that frames her, and leans against a parapet. Both of these gestures are symbolic of her steadfastness.

A white animal, thought to be a unicorn, can just be made out in the background landscape. According to the biblical book of Genesis, the unicorn was the first beast to be seen and named by Adam in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise, the unicorn went with them, and thus became an earthly symbol of purity and chastity.

**Cornelis de Vos**

Flemish, b. Hulst, 1585 d. Antwerp, 1651

***Portrait of a Lady, c. 1610 - 40***

oil on panel

47<sup>3/4</sup> x 36 inches

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**George Morland, R.A.**

British, b. London, 1763 d. London, 1804

***Gypsies in a Landscape, c. 1790***

oil on canvas

19<sup>1/2</sup> x 25<sup>1/2</sup> inches

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George Morland was the most prolific British painter of rural life during the second half of the eighteenth century. He produced around 4,000 paintings and drawings, many of which were reproduced as engravings. Morland's first oil painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1781, and by the late 1780s his reputation was well established. In the 1790s, he began producing the picturesque, rustic genre scenes and rich English landscapes for which he is famous. These images were usually peopled with rural workers seen tending to, or surrounded by animals. Morland often included an interesting narrative element in his paintings, which made them even more accessible and appealing.

Morland was chiefly influenced by the work of seventeenth century Dutch and Flemish peasant painters, such as Adriaen Brouwer (1605-38). The landscape works of Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88) also inspired him.

Morland was an alcoholic and was often in debt. From the early 1780s onwards he lived wildly and acquired a reputation for reckless behaviour. By 1789, he was seriously in debt and had to avoid his creditors. In 1799, still on the run from his creditors, he was arrested at his lodgings in Vauxhall. Morland was sentenced to three years at the King's Bench Prison. He was released in 1802, and spent his last years with his brother Henry, who had a picture shop on Dean Street in London's Soho. However, Morland's work and his health deteriorated, and he died of brain fever on 29th October 1804.

**John Crome**

English, 1768 - 1821

***Squall off Yarmouth, c. 1810***

oil on canvas

21<sup>1/4</sup> x 33 inches

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## **Richard Wilson**

British (Welsh), b. Penegoes, Powys 1714 d. Mold Clwyd, 1782

***Classical Landscape with Diana and Actaeon, c.1760***

oil on canvas

40<sup>1/2</sup> x 54 inches

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Richard Wilson was the first major British artist to specialize in landscape painting. Born in 1714 in rural North Wales, Wilson moved to London in 1729, where he initially achieved success as a portraitist.

This picture tells the story of Diana and Actaeon. According to legend, the goddess Diana was bathing with three of her maidens when she noticed Actaeon spying on them from behind the trees. Outraged, Diana turned Actaeon into a stag, and set her hounds on him. Wilson chose to paint very small figures, with the result that the drama of their actions is absorbed into the immensity of the landscape.

**follower of John Constable**

, 1778-1837

***A Wooded Landscape,***

oil on paper

11<sup>1/2</sup> x 12<sup>1/2</sup> inches

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**After Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R .A.**

English, b. Plympton, Devon 1723 , d. London, 1792

***Madame Blanckart, 1761***

oil on canvas

23<sup>1/4</sup> x 19 inches

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Sir Joshua Reynolds was convinced of the dignity of the artists calling, and promoted a cult of learning amongst young British artists. He did more than any other man to raise the prestige of art and the status of the artist to a new level of dignity in England. Reynolds was knighted in 1769, and in 1773 was made an honorary DCL (Doctor of Laws) at Oxford. Reynolds was a cultured man-about-town and frequenter of society, and possessed an acute understanding of the social world in which his sitters lived. He was also genuinely sensitive to the personality of his subjects.

## Sir Joshua Reynolds

British, b. Plympton, Devon 1723 , d. London, 1792

***Lady Monnoux, nee Elizabeth Riddell, 1761***

oil on canvas

29<sup>1/2</sup> x 24 inches

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In historical terms, Sir Joshua Reynolds is perhaps the most important figure in British painting. He was profoundly convinced of the dignity of the artists calling, and promoted a cult of learning amongst young British artists. At a time when most English painters were ill-educated tradesmen, Reynolds stood apart as an erudite and exemplary figure. He did more than any other man to raise the prestige of art and the status of the artist to a new level of dignity in England. Reynolds was knighted in 1769, and in 1773 was made an honorary DCL (Doctor of Laws) at Oxford, an award that would have been unthinkable for a painter of a previous generation. When the Royal Academy was established in 1768, Reynolds was elected president, a position that he held for twenty-three years. By the end of his career, Reynolds had gained the respect of the British social and political establishment, and this respect rubbed off on the artistic profession as a whole. When he died in 1792, he was given a lavish and imposing funeral ceremony at St Paul's Cathedral, London.

Reynolds' art satisfied the elegant society of eighteenth century England. Working in London, he rapidly achieved great fame and reputation as a high-society portraitist. Reynolds was a cultured man-about-town and frequenter of society, and possessed an acute understanding of the social world in which his sitters lived. He was also genuinely sensitive to the personality of his subjects. Portraiture was the only kind of painting in great demand in England at this time, and was therefore the only certain way for an artist to make a living. The overwhelming majority of Reynolds' vast output consists of portraits.

This portrait of Lady Monnoux, nee Elizabeth Riddell, was made in 1761. Reynolds' pocket book records that "Miss Reddell" [sic] attended five sittings within a period of sixteen days (April 18-May 4). On June 22nd 1762, just over a year after the portrait was painted, Elizabeth Riddell married Sir Phillip Monnoux, Fifth Baronet, of Sandy Place, Bedfordshire. The proximity of the marriage to the date that the portrait was made suggests that it was probably intended as an engagement portrait.

## **Thomas Gainsborough**

British, b. Sudbury, Suffolk 1727, d. London, 1788

### ***Thomas John Medlycott, c. 1763***

oil on canvas

87 x 57 inches

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Thomas Gainsborough was one of the most famous British portrait and landscape painters of the eighteenth century. With Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), he was the dominant British portraitist of the mid-late eighteenth century, and with Richard Wilson (1714-82) he was one of the originators of the eighteenth century British Landscape School.

Gainsborough did not achieve success as an artist until 1759, when he moved to the fashionable spa town of Bath. In Bath, he was able to attract a high-society clientele who paid him generously for painting their portraits. Gainsborough quickly became the most sought after portraitist in the city. He generally produced full-length, life-size portraits of his patrons, set before imaginary landscape backgrounds. Whilst in Bath, Gainsborough sent examples of his work to be exhibited at the Society of Arts and the Royal Academy in London. His paintings attracted considerable attention and praise, and his fame soon spread nation-wide. When Gainsborough moved to London in 1774, a rivalry with Sir Joshua Reynolds was established immediately, and was relished by the British public. The two artists competed as purveyors of portraits to the fashionable and elegant world of London's upper classes.

This portrait of Thomas Medlycott is a charming and lively painting from Gainsborough's early Bath period. Gainsborough frequently painted the theme of the sportsman at ease in a landscape, and often included a dog in the scene. The Medlycotts were landed gentry in Ireland. Thomas Medlycott's father first went to Ireland to serve as Chief Revenue Commissioner for King William III and Queen Mary, and later became M.P. for County Kildare. Until it was sold in 1914, this portrait was hung in the Medlycotts' ancestral home in Ireland- Rochetts Castle, Portlaw.

**George Romney**

English, 1734 - 1802

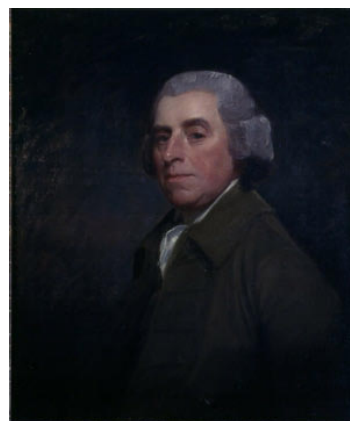
***Thomas Paine, c. 1780***

oil on canvas

24<sup>1/4</sup> x 29 inches

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**manner of Pieter de Hooch**

Dutch, 1629 - 1683

***Cavalier with Wine Glass, c. 1655***

oil on panel

18 x 13 inches

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**Giovanni Donducci Donducci (“Il Mastellata”)**

Italian (Bolognese), b. Bologna 1575, d. Bologna 1655

***Rachel at the Well, c. 1620***

oil on canvas

36 x 48<sup>1/2</sup> inches

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Donducci has painted this biblical subject within a dramatically illuminated classical landscape featuring classical urns, decorative antique-style swags and a Roman Triumphal Arch. Jacob and Rachel are the central figures in the painting, standing on opposite sides of the central well. The fiery red of Jacob's cloak symbolizes his passion for Rachel.

**Bartolome Esteban Murillo**

Spanish, b. Seville 1617, d. Seville 1682

***Study for the Prodigal Son, c. 1670***

oil on canvas

14<sup>1/2</sup> x 10<sup>1/4</sup> inches

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Bartolome Esteban Murillo is generally placed at the head of the Andalusian School of painters, the chief patron of which was the Catholic Church. Murillo strove to capture feelings of religious fervour in his art, and his quest to convey emotions often resulted as works verging on over-sentimentality. As well as religious paintings, Murillo painted genre scenes of Seville's lower classes and beggar boys, using local peasants as his models.

Murillo was acquainted with the Spanish Baroque artist Diego Velazquez (1599-1660). Velazquez worked at the Spanish Royal Court in Madrid from 1623, where he was employed as Court Painter. When Murillo travelled to Madrid in 1648 Velazquez granted him access to all of the Royal galleries, where studied works by Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, Rubens and Van Dyck, as well as numerous masterpieces by Velazquez himself. He was profoundly influenced by the work of these Baroque masters.

This painting is a life study for the head of the prodigal Son, made in preparation for the finished work *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1670-74, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.) In the seven-teenth century, the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) was commonly cited as a narrative that focused on the themes of repentance, forgiveness and resurrection. Having squandered his wealth with sinful living, the Prodigal Son repents and returns to his father's household. He returns expecting to work, without expectations that his father will grant him privileges. However, moved to compassion, the father embraced his son, forgave him and welcomed him home. In this oil sketch, the penitent son is shown clenching his fists in a desperate plea for forgiveness. The rough, rapidly painted brushwork effectively heightens the emotional impact of the work. It is the humanity of this image that appeals.

**Bartolomeo di Giovanni**

Italian (Florentine), active 1465-1511

***Saint Michael Slaying the Dragon, c. 1500***

tempera on wood

panel

8<sup>1/2</sup> x 5<sup>1/2</sup> inches

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Bartolomeo di Giovanni was pupil, then assistant to Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-94), one of the leading Master painters of late quattrocento Florence. Bartolomeo assimilated the principal traits of Ghirlandaio's style as his own. Like his master, he produced gentle, somewhat prosaic, archaizing paintings and had an eye for naturalistic detail. Bartolomeo's works also demonstrate the influence of Sandro Botticelli (c. 1450-1516), Filippo Lippi (c. 1404-69) and Pietro Perugino (c. 1445-1523). Bartolomeo was a substantial artist in his own time. He was commissioned to paint the predella panels for Ghirlandaio's *Adoration of the Magi* (1488) in the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* (Foundling Hospital) in Florence. He also assisted his master with a fresco painting for the walls of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

The archangel St. Michael is one of three angels mentioned by name in the scriptures. The most dramatic reference to the soldier-saint is found in the book of Revelation (12:7 to 9): "Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels waged war upon the dragon... and the great dragon was thrown down, that serpent of old called the devil and Satan". Because of this victory, St. Michael is revered in Roman Catholic tradition and liturgy as the protector of the church. During prayers after low mass, he is accordingly invoked to be "our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil".

In *St. Michael Slaying the Dragon*, Bartolomeo depicts the archangel Michael standing in a triumphant pose on the back of the dragon (Satan) that he has slain. He wears full body armor and carries a sword and the church orb. St. Michael's wings distinguish him as an angel, and prevent confusion with the other dragon-slayer, St. George. The sacred narrative is told with beauty, humility and simplicity.