

## **Titian's Early Masterpiece *Rest on the Flight into Egypt***

**Leads Christie's *Old Masters Part I* sale in London on  
2 July 2024**

**~ Having been owned by Dukes, Archdukes and Holy Roman Emperors,  
it was looted by Napoleon and stolen in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century ~**

**Offered by Lord Bath and the Longleat Trustees  
as part of their long-term investment strategy**



Tiziano Vecellio, called Titian (Pieve di Cadore circa 1485/90-1576 Venice)  
*Rest on the Flight into Egypt*  
oil on canvas, laid on panel  
18.1/4 x 24.3/4 in. (46 x 62.9 cm.)  
Estimate: £15,000,000 - 25,000,000

**London** – Coming to the market for the first time in more than 145 years, Titian's early masterpiece *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* will headline Christie's *Old Masters Part I* sale on 2 July 2024, presenting a very rare opportunity for buyers to become part of the next chapter in this fabled picture's remarkable story (estimate: £15,000,000 – 25,000,000). One of the last religious works from the artist's celebrated early years to remain in private hands, the picture has passed through some of the greatest collections in Europe and was last auctioned by Christie's in 1878, before entering the collection at Longleat House.

**Orlando Rock, Chairman, Christie's UK** commented: *"This sublime early masterpiece by Titian is one of the most poetic products of Titian's youth. Of impeccable provenance and having passed through the hands of Dukes, Archdukes and Holy Roman Emperors, this magical devotional painting has the rare notoriety of having been stolen not once but twice – firstly by Napoleon and secondly in the mid-1990s. We are honoured to be entrusted with bringing this important and beautifully observed painting to the market in London this July."*

**Andrew Fletcher, Christie's Global Head of the Old Masters Department** commented: “*This is the most important work by Titian to come to the auction market in more than a generation and one of the very few masterpieces by the artist remaining in private hands. It is a picture that embodies the revolution in painting made by Titian at the start of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is a truly outstanding example of the artist's pioneering approach to both the use of colour and the representation of the human form in the natural world, the artistic vocabulary that secured his status as the first Venetian painter to achieve fame throughout Europe in his lifetime and his position as one of the greatest painters in the history of Western art.*”

## PROVENANCE

The roll call of illustrious provenance for this painting begins with it being first documented in the collection of the Venetian merchant, Bartolomeo della Nave (1571/79-1632), described in 1629 as a ‘mercante da droghe’, whose activities focused on the spice trade. Della Nave's inventory reveals an astonishing collection that is unlikely to have been equalled in Venice during his day and included no fewer than fifteen works by Titian, notably including *The Gypsy Madonna* of circa 1511; his *Violante* of circa 1510-15; the *Nymph and Shepherd* of circa 1570 (all in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum); and the artist's mature masterpiece of 1565-76, *The Death of Actaeon*, now in the National Gallery, London. In 1636, the Longleat picture was valued at £200 in della Nave's inventory, twice the amount for the *Death of Actaeon*, suggesting Titian's early works were more highly prized than their later counterparts.

Through Bartolomeo's brother, Andrea della Nave, and Basil Feilding, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Denbigh, King Charles I's ambassador to Venice, the majority of the collection was acquired *en bloc* by the latter's brother-in-law, James, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Hamilton and sent to England. Following Hamilton's execution by parliament in 1649, the collection was sold to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria, Governor of the Spanish Netherlands from 1647-1656. The picture appears in Teniers' copper panel depicting *The Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Picture Gallery in Brussels* (Madrid, Museo del Prado), where it is shown hanging alongside other works by Titian acquired from della Nave's collection, among which are the *Nymph and Shepherd*, *Violante*, and his *Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery*, circa 1511 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), an unfinished panel that the young Anthony van Dyck had made a sketch of during his visit to see the Venetian merchant's collection in 1622.

The Longleat picture remained in the Imperial collection – passing by descent from Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor (1685-1740), Vienna, to Maria Theresa (1717-1780), Holy Roman Empress, Archduchess of Austria and Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, to Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor (1741-1790) – and was transferred to the Belvedere Palace in Vienna by 1781, where it was looted by French troops in 1809 for the Musée Napoléon. It was subsequently owned by Hugh Andrew Johnstone Munro of Novar (1797-1864), a Scottish landowner, amateur artist and one of the most important patrons of Turner. Munro formed a celebrated collection that included Rembrandt's *Lucretia* (Washington, National Gallery of Art), Veronese's *Vision of St. Helena* (London, National Gallery), and at least ten pictures by Bonington, of which the finest was *A fishmarket near Boulogne* (New Haven, Yale Centre for British Art).

## LONGLEAT – MAKING THE HEADLINES

Titian's early masterpiece *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* was acquired by the 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Bath in 1878, more than 145 years ago. Enjoyed by multiple generations, the painting made the headlines in 1995 when it was stolen from Longleat. Seven years later, following a £100,000 reward being announced for

information leading to the picture's safe return, it was found in 2002 in a carrier bag in Greater London, minus the frame, by a leading art detective of the time – the late Charles Hill, a former Scotland Yard officer.

## THE DATE OF THE PAINTING

Always regarded as a youthful masterpiece by Titian and generally dated *circa* 1510, there are however some inevitable variations on the precise dating. In his 2012 exhibition at the National Gallery in London: *Titian, A fresh look at nature*, Antonio Mazzotta, who dates the picture to *circa* 1508-9, observed that the monumental figure of the Virgin 'prefigures other Titian heroines' from the period, notably that of Judith as Justice in the detached fresco fragment from the Merceria entrance to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, *circa* 1508 (Venice, Ca d'Oro), a key early commission, and that of the *Magdalen* in the artist's slightly later *Noli me Tangere*, 1511-12 (London, National Gallery). In his review of the 2012 National Gallery exhibition, the centrepiece of which was Titian's Flight into Egypt of 1506-7 (St. Petersburg, Hermitage), Paul Hills singled out the Longleat picture for particular praise and the artist's masterful use of colour: '*The red of the Virgin's dress, offset by the [white] napkin, is treated with marvellous breadth, and the ultramarine of her cloak is spread across the bank to meet the strong amber of Joseph's mantle, which in turn contrasts with the violet of his robe. The solicitous movement of the figures, counterpoised by the tilt of tree-trunks, is underscored by this drama of colour.*'

**For images please see visit the press centre, detailed below:**

[CHRISTIE'S NEW PRESS CENTRE IS NOW ONLINE](#)

**SUBSCRIBE TO DOWNLOAD IMAGES + RECEIVE OUR NEWS**

**PRESS CONTACTS:**

Hannah Schweiger | +44 (0) 207 389 2964 | [hschweiger@christies.com](mailto:hschweiger@christies.com)

### NOTES EDITORS:

#### About Christie's

Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business with a physical presence in 46 countries throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, and flagship international sales hubs in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. Renowned and trusted for our expert live and online-only auctions, as well as bespoke Private Sales, Christie's unparalleled network of specialists offers our clients a full portfolio of global services, including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's auctions span more than 70 art and luxury categories, at price points ranging from \$500 to over \$100 million. Christie's has sold 7 of the 10 most important single-owner collections in history, achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction, launched the first fully on-chain auction platform dedicated to exceptional NFT art and manages [an investment fund](#) to support innovative startups in the art market. Christie's is also committed to advancing responsible culture throughout its business and communities worldwide. To learn more, browse, bid, discover, and join us for the best of art and luxury at [christies.com](https://christies.com) or by downloading Christie's apps.

\* Please note when quoting estimates above that other fees will apply in addition to the hammer price - see Section D of the Conditions of Sale at the back of the sale catalogue. \*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium.

###

FOLLOW CHRISTIE'S ON

