

# Galerie Canesso

Tableaux anciens

PARIS BORDON

(1500 - 1571)

*Portrait of a Young Woman*

Oil on canvas 42 x 32 1/2 in (106,8 x 82,5 cm) Signed in background at right: « .O.PARIS.B »



## PROVENANCE

Collection of Mrs James Watney, before 1957; by descent to Oliver Vernon Watney, Cornbury Park, Oxfordshire; his sale, Christie's, London, 23 June 1967, lot 51, acquired by J. Paul Getty, Sutton Place, Guildford, Surrey, and bequeathed by him to the Getty Museum in 1978; sold by the museum with twenty nine other paintings at Christie's, New York, 21 May 1992, lot 37; New York, private collection.

## LITERATURE

- Bernard Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance. Venetian School*, 2 vols., London, 1957, vol. 1, p. 45 (Paris Bordon, *Portrait of a Courtesan*, not reproduced);
- Véronique Damian, in *Autour de Titien. Tableaux d'Italie du Nord au XVIe siècle*, Paris, Galerie Canesso, September 2005, pp. 28 -31;
- Maia Confalone, in *Tiziano e il ritratto di corte da Raffaello ai Carracci*, exh. cat., Naples, Museo di

- Capodimonte, 25 March – 4 June 2006, pp. 190-191, no. C8; Paris, Musée du Luxembourg, 13 September 2006 – 21 January 2007, pp. 204 -205, no. 54;
- Roberto Contini, “Die künstlerische Entwicklung eines internationalen Manieristen”, in *Un San Bastiano che par non li manchi se non il solo respire. Paris Bordons Berliner Altarbild im Kontext*, cat. exh. Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 5 April – 8 July 2007, p. 35, fig. 46;
  - Enrico Maria Dal Pozzolo, *Colori d’amore. Parole, gesti e carezze nella pittura veneziana del Cinquecento*, Treviso, 2008, p. 109, fig. 88;
  - Véronique Damian, *De Paris Bordon à Pompeo Batoni. Un parcours dans la peinture italienne*, Paris, Galerie Canesso, 2011, pp. 8-13;
  - Véronique Damian in *Cinquecento sacro e profano. Una selezione di dipinti italiani del XVI secolo*, Chiara Naldi (dir.), Lugano, Galleria Canesso, 2013, pp. 24-29;
  - Andrea Donati, *Paris Bordon. La Vita e le Opere*, Soncino, 2014, pp. 335-336, no. 124, ill. LXXVI; - Axel Hémary, in *Ceci n'est pas un portrait. Figures de fantaisie de Murillo, Fragonard, Tiepolo...*, exh. cat., Toulouse, Musée des Augustins, 21 November 2015 - 6 March 2016, pp. 94-95, no. 1;
  - Désirée de Chair, in *Die poesie der venezianischen malerei. Paris Bordone, Palma il Vecchio, Lorenzo Lotto, Tizian, Sandra Pisot* (ed.), exh. cat., Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle, 24 February – 21 May 2017, p. 202, no. 52.

## EXHIBITIONS

Tiziano e il ritratto di corte da Raffaello ai Carracci, Naples, Museo di Capodimonte, 25 March – 4 June 2006, no. C8; Paris, Musée du Luxembourg, 13 September 2006 – 21 January 2007, no. 54. - *Ceci n'est pas un portrait. Figures de fantaisie de Murillo, Fragonard, Tiepolo...*, Toulouse, Musée des Augustins, 21 November 2015 - 6 March 2016, no. 1. - *Die poesie der venezianischen malerei. Paris Bordone, Palma il Vecchio, Lorenzo Lotto, Tizian, Sandra Pisot* (ed.), Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle, 24 February- 21 May 2017, no. 52.

Half-length figures of young women – reputed to be courtesans, with an iconography initially adopted by Titian (1488/1489-1576), Palma Vecchio (c. 1480-1528) and then Bordon – were very much in vogue in Venetian art of the sixteenth century. While the prototype can of course be found in Titian’s *Flora* (Florence, Uffizi Gallery), or among the varied depictions of *A Woman at Her Toilet* (Paris, Musée du Louvre), also by Titian, our composition appears to stand midway between these two extremes, and might well correspond to the sorts of pictures which could be defined as either portraits or figures *fatte a capriccio*, as cited by the biographer Carlo Ridolfi. The revival and development of this type are hardly surprising for an artist trained in the workshop of the great Titian, yet who began to find his own language early on, when he was about eighteen. With this buxom maiden the artist sought to suggest a sort of intellectualized (and in a sense ideal) beauty, and had no hesitation in exaggerating certain physical characteristics, in this case the powerful musculature of the right arm. The tilt of the head, with its gaze directed decisively towards an object beyond our view, indicates an imposing presence, supported by descriptive details such as jewellery and the decorative drapery of which Bordon was so fond. The loose, nonchalantly fingered blond hair, the open-breasted white shirt and sumptuous coral-red cloth – perhaps cashmere – all glorify the figure and convey this young woman’s sensuality. The sitter is caught in an intimate moment, unveiling her charms with assurance. The symbolism of the long blond tresses cannot escape us: like ornamental chains or a fine mesh, they attract the heart of the poet or lover, and their fiery colour suggests the incandescence of the sentiment she arouses. We may add that the physical type, especially the head, is almost identical to that of the *Portrait of a Young Woman with a Mirror* (United States, private collection). Often, as in this case, Bordon would add an architectural background to define an interior setting. The colonnade with a relief of acanthus leaves and a small window recur in similar manner in the *Portrait of a Lady* (Augsburg, Kunstsammlungen und

Museen) and, albeit without window and relief, in the *Flora* in the Musée du Louvre. Paris Bordon excelled in painting particularly ambitious and detailed architectural settings for the backgrounds of some of his compositions, such as the *Annunciation* in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen, or *Augustus and the Sibyl* (Moscow, Pushkin Museum), to cite but two examples. Here, the architectural passage is simple and rather rigid in its alignment of columns, suggesting that the artist's workshop was involved, as noted by Sylvie Béguin (1). Our painting can be dated to the artist's maturity, between 1540 and 1550, the period suggested by Giordana Canova for the *Flora* in the Louvre, which offers a number of parallels with our canvas (2). The artist's style during this decade is defined by figures almost embedded within the architecture; the differing approaches to the compositions cited above attest to their success among private collectors. According to the celebrated and indispensable biographer Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), who visited the ageing artist during a Venetian sojourn in 1566, writing a *Vita* that remains fundamental, Paris Bordon – Bordone for Vasari – was apprenticed in Titian's workshop. This invaluable information is likely to be accurate since the influence of the great Venetian master is vital for his early style. During the 1520s, Bordon was drawn to the work of Giorgione (ca. 1477/78-1510), assimilating it to such an extent that his own paintings were considered by early scholars to be by the older artist. Towards 1530, his style evolved in varied ways, with a consistent focus on landscape and architecture. He carefully studied the drawings of Sebastiano Serlio (1475-1554), which he reinterpreted with a refined Mannerist touch. In the years that followed, his career took a decisive turn, and he began a series of journeys, first and foremost to France, where he worked for François Ier and the Guise family. According to Vasari this took place in 1538, a date much debated by scholars, some of whom prefer to consider 1559, under François II; others have suggested two separate trips to France. In any case, Bordon was active in Augsburg in 1540, painting mythological and allegorical canvases for the Fuggers and other notable families; the subjects are imbued with latent, exquisite eroticism, and were highly successful. Between 1548 and 1550, Bordon was in Milan, where he painted portraits and mythological works for Carlo da Rho. In the period 1557-1559 his art began to decline; he lived in Treviso before returning to Venice, where he died.

#### Notes:

1. The large painting of *The Annunciation* was discovered by Sylvie Béguin, who brought it to the attention of the museum in Caen: see Sylvie Béguin, "Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen. Une *Annonciation* de Paris Bordon", *La Revue du Louvre et des musées de France*, nos. 4-5, 1968, pp. 195-204; and, more recently, Françoise Debaisieux, *Caen, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Peintures des écoles étrangères* (Inventaire des collections publiques françaises, no. 36), Paris, 1994, pp. 72-73, with earlier literature. For the painting in Moscow, see David Ekserdjian, "Paris Bordone and the Aedes Walpolianae", *Apollo*, June 1999, no. 448, pp. 51-52.
2. Giordana Canova, *Paris Bordon*, Venice, 1963, p. 85, fig. 89.