Alfred Bader fonds

Chemistry and Art
More Adventures of a Chemist Collector

Adventures II -
Other Paintings

£19m is price of cupboard love

Hundreds gather in London saleroom to see the world's most expensive piece of furniture knocked down to a Viennese museum

By Dalya Alberge
Arts Correspondent

AS A piece of furniture, the Badminton Cabinet is pretty impressive. At almost 12ft high, 6ft wide and 6ft deep, it would hold all the glasses and bottles you would ever need for a party — although you might not have enough space left in the living room for the guests.

Even more jawdropping, however, is the price — almost £20 million, making it the most expensive piece of furniture in the world.

Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein, one of Europe's wealthiest royals, was so determined to acquire a masterpiece once described as "the marvel of Europe" that he paid £19,045,250 for it at Christie's in London yesterday. Not only

'It is inset with amethyst and agate . . . but it could be an acquired taste in Britain'

is that rather more than most people would pay at Heal's, it is more than double the £8.5 million record price the cabinet set when it was sold 14 years ago by Barbara Johnson, a former chambermaid who inherited the Johnson and Johnson pharmaceutical empire.

Hundreds gathered for the historic auction of the magnificent ebony, gilt-bronze and pietra dura cabinet, which is elaborately decorated with exquisite images of birds and flowers.

It is inset with an astonishing flourish of agate, amethyst quartz and other brilliantly-coloured semi-precious stones. It is unsurpassed in its richness and splendour, although experts admit it is an acquired taste in Britain.

The cabinet has been described as the most important work of decorative arts to have been commissioned by a British patron in three centuries. It took 30 craftsmen in the Grand Ducal Workshops of Florence six years to make it for Henry Somerset, 3rd Duke of Beaufort, in 1726, for the family's grand home at Badminton, near Chipping Sodbury in Gloucestershire. Charles Cator, of Christie's, said the piece combined architecture, sculpture and painting, "resulting in a unique masterpiece".

Tim Knox, head curator of the National Trust and a scholar of English country houses and their collections, said that the piece was magisterial in its significance, "a monument of the late Baroque style".

The Beaufort family sold it to pay death duties in 1984 and it was bought at auction by Mrs Johnson after the Government spurned efforts to save it from leaving Britain.

The bidding started at £4 million and stalled at £4.8 million. As the seconds ticked by, it seemed unlikely to get beyond that point. The room fell silent. Suddenly, two telephone bidders and one in the room came alive and bidding rose by £500,000 every few seconds.

The bidders stopped for breath at £10 million, and again at £17 million, only to be coaxed on by the auctioneer, Dermot Chichester, Co-Chairman of Christie's UK. "You really won't get another opportunity," he told them.

As the hammer fell on the most expensive non-pictorial work of art ever sold at auction, the bidder in the room beamed. He was Hans Kraeftner, director of a museum in Vienna which the Prince of Liechtenstein opened in March.

"Yes, I had a limit," he said afterwards, suggesting that they would have gone way beyond £19 million. "We expected a high price."

So the next time you stare bewildered at a piece of flat pack furniture, a bag of screws and a tube of glue just rememember, all you really need is a team of 30 craftsmen, a title and almost £20 million.

DAVE BEBBER

In the cabinet: intricate detail — but set on a massive frame

THE BIGGEST SPENDERS

- The world's most expensive painting is probably Picasso's *Garçon à la Pipe* which was sold for £58 million in May
- The most expensive house went for £62,767,500 in Hong Kong to an anonymous buyer
- Manchester United paid £30 million for the footballer Rio Ferdinand
- The most expensive meal eaten at the London retaurant Petrus cost £44,007. Most of that went on five bottles of wine; the £300 food bill was deducted
- A jacket belonging to the late guitarist Jimi Hendrix sold for £35,000
- The most expensive item of pop memorabilia was John Lennon's Phantom V Rolls-Royce, which sold for £1,702,827

The prince of buyers

THE family fortune of Prince Hans-Adam II of Liechtenstein, 60, who heads one of Europe's oldest noble houses, is estimated at £3 billion (Dalya Alberge writes).

He has been buying works by Van Dyck, Mantegna and Rubens to replace those sold by his father in the 1960s from an important collection that was begun in the 17th century. The Prince had particularly set his heart on the Badminton Cabinet.

His museum is housed in one of two Baroque palaces owned by the family in Vienna. It does not receive any subsidy from either Austria or the Alpine principality of Liechtenstein, sandwiched between Switzerland and Austria. It relies on the €10 entry charge.

The Princely House of Liechtenstein, which was named after a castle south of Vienna, is one of Europe's oldest families of noble lineage. Today there are more than 100 members, of whom only a small number live in the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Prince Hans-Adam II is the sovereign of the Princely House of Liechtenstein, but like his father before him, he was educated in Vienna.

He later worked as a trainee at a bank in London. In 1967 he married Countess Marie Kinsky von Wchinitz und Tettau, with whom he has four children.

He takes his name from Prince Hans Adam Andreas, who reigned from 1699 to 1712, and founded the Principality of Liechtenstein thanks to his purchases of the Lordship of Schellenberg and the County of Vaduz.

'It is a particular pleasure to be in Sheffield with David'

By Helen Rumbelow
Political Correspondent

TONY BLAIR heaped praise on David Blunkett during an emotional mini-break the two men took to Sheffield yesterday to cement their relationship.

The Prime Minister was visiting the constituency of his embattled Home Secretary to announce plans to toughen penalties on bars serving underage customers. But as soon as Mr Blunkett introduced his guest it became apparent that Mr Blair was embracing more than just policies.

"I am very, very grateful to the Prime Minister for being here," Mr Blunkett said.

Mr Blair clasped Mr Blunkett's hand and responded: "It is a particular pleasure to be here with David."

When they arrived at the Purple Bar, the venue for their joint presentation, Mr Blair realised that Mr Blunkett was lagging behind because he had some problems with his guide dog.

The Prime Minister doubled back and led Mr Blunkett in by the hand. Never, it seemed, had two men been more happy to spend time with each other in a Sheffield nightspot. Without the aid of alcohol or football, they publicly declared their mutual admiration in a way rarely known elsewhere in England, let alone Yorkshire.

"I'd like to pay particular tribute to David," Mr Blair continued. "He's really handled this legislation over the past two or three years with immense skill and dedication and his instincts on this are exactly the same as mine," he said.

At this point Mr Blunkett, standing at Mr Blair's left side, said: "It's a good job really."

Mr Blair turned to him and said "It is a good job", and the pair warmly clasped each other's arms.

This was a more natural attempt at the hug that Mr Blunkett had inflicted on Gordon Brown during a difficult point at Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday.

Michael Howard had gone on the attack about damaging revelations in a new biography on Mr Blunkett, but the Prime Minister managed to laugh these off.

Yesterday neither man referred directly to the immense pressure Mr Blunkett is under from allegations that his affair with the publisher of the *Spectator* magazine compromised his public duties.

Mr Blair simply joked that he had "learnt a lot" about his Home Secretary in recent weeks, again using humour to deflect criticism from his Cabinet minister.

Later the pair moved on to open a new sixth-form college in Mr Blunkett's Brightside constituency, by which time Mr Blair's public displays of affection had become almost embarrassing. "I'm proud to stand beside him and I'm proud to call him my friend," Mr Blair said.

"I'd like to say what a particular pleasure it is to be with David here. He's been such an outstanding colleague in government and such a good friend for me," he said.

"He's done so much for this constituency and this country."

There was some good news for Mr Blunkett's camp yesterday when a columnist in *The Spectator* said that he had seen evidence to show that the Home Secretary had not leaked news of his affair.

Many accused Mr Blunkett of deliberately making his relationship with Mrs Quinn public to gain some advantage in his battle to get access to her child.

But *The Spectator* said it had obtained a transcript of an interview conducted by the *News of the World* with Mr Blunkett, which the Home Secretary had tape-recorded. A reporter from the paper told him they were about to reveal his affair and pushed him to confirm it, which he refused.

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BEN GURR

Follow my leader: David Blunkett gets a helping hand from the Prime Minister yesterday at the Purple Bar nightspot

Blair Cabinet is powerless, says former No 10 official

By Philip Webster
Political Editor

THE Government is too preoccupied with selling its policies and central control and insufficiently interested in reasoned debate, a former Cabinet Secretary said yesterday.

In a scathing attack on bad government, Lord Butler of Brockwell, who served three prime ministers, including Mr Blair, called for the restoration of open debate in government at all levels up to the Cabinet. "The Cabinet now, and I don't think there is any secret about this, does not make decisions." He said that the advice of civil servants was being excluded because of the growing influence of political appointees.

Lord Butler was the author of the report into intelligence failings before the Iraq war. In an interview in *The Spectator* he repeated his criticisms that doubts in the intelligence reports to ministers should have been repeated in the dossier presented to the public.

He said it was grave flaw that Parliament had too little control over the executive: "It isn't wise to listen only to special advisers, and not to listen to fuddy-duddy civil servants who may produce boringly inconvenient arguments. Good government, in my view, means bringing to bear all the knowledge and all the arguments you can from inside and outside, debating and arguing them as frankly as you can, and to try to reach a conclusion.

"I mean it is clear that politically appointed people carry great weight in the Government and there is nothing necessarily wrong with that, but if it is done to the exclusion of advice from civil servants, you tend to get into error, you make mistakes."When asked whether he thought that the country was well-governed on the whole, he replied: "Well, I think we are a country where we suffer very badly from Parliament not having sufficient control over the executive, and that is a very grave flaw.

"We should be breaking away from the party whip. The executive is much too free to bring in a huge number of extremely bad Bills, a huge amount of regulation and to do whatever it likes, and whatever it likes is what will get the best headlines tomorrow. All that is part of what is bad government in this country."

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said: "What the Prime Minister and the Government should be judged by is the results it has achieved across a wide range of subjects."

Bodies of Navy crew are found

The bodies of four Royal Navy helicopter crew have been found off the Cornish coast by an underwater search team using a minesweeper.

The Lynx helicopter in which they were travelling disappeared on Wednesday night while investigating reports of a man overboard from a warship exercise. It has emerged that the man overboard was a false alarm. The Navy has set up a board of inquiry.

Commander Mark Sheehan said: "Our thoughts are with the families of the missing crew". The names of the dead will be released when all the families have been informed.

Union donation to Labour fund

The Transport and General Workers' union has agreed a £500,000 donation to the Labour Party campaign fund.

The move symbolises the rapprochement between the party and the unions after employment rights pledges made by Labour last summer, known as the Warwick agreement. The union said that the donation was only slightly less than the amount Labour had asked for.

The GMB union has decided not to contribute to the election campaign, the Fire Brigades Union has left the party and the RMT has been expelled. Both their affiliation fees will be missed.

Real cost of the morning after

Office parties leave Britain's businesses with a "morning after" bill of £65 million because a million workers are too hung over to report for work the next day, according to a survey.

Norwich Union Healthcare polled nearly 600 workers and used industry figures on costs to extrapolate the estimated cost of over-indulgence at office functions When they wake with a sore head, half of all men and three fifths of women will be prepared to lie about it. Men predict that they will have an average of eight units of alcohol at a party. Women estimate that they will drink five units.

Teacher accused of sex with boy

Nicola Prentice, 25, a schoolteacher from Sheffield, has pleaded not guilty at Nottingham Crown Court to six charges of having sexual intercourse with a 15-year-old schoolboy and three of abusing her position of trust. The case relates to incidents alleged to have taken place in 2001 and 2002.

Judge Jonathan Teare granted her unconditional bail and fixed the trial date for April 25 next year. Tracey Kirwin, prosecuting, told the Judge "it was an unusual case." An order prevents the naming of the school or anything that could lead to the identification of the boy.

One of the most interesting auctions I ever attended was Christie's in London on December 13, 2000, where a genuine Rembrandt in wonderful condition, RRP A-63, an oval portrait of a sixty-two year old woman, , from the estate of Baroness Bathsheva de Rothschild in Israel was offered with a very low estimate, £ 4-6 million. Just before the sale, Rob Noortman, one of the world's most knowledgeable old master dealers asked me whether I liked this painting and I replied that I loved it and would bid on it! His greatest teacher, many years ago, had taught him two principles, was Rob's advice to me 'one, never buy an oval and two, never buy a portrait of an old woman'. But the painting is so beautiful and in such fine condition that I would try to buy it anyway. Otto Naumann, Johnny van Haeften and I had decided to bid together to £ 11 million. Johnny, sitting in the second row, was to bid for us, and Otto and I sitting right behind him, were surprised when Johnny got carried away and bid £ 12 million, but then at £ 13 million declined. I carried on, now alone with Otto, who told me later that he was worried when I bid £ 16 million. But that was my limit and the auctioneer, Lord Hinslip, knocked it down to Rob Noortman for £17 million, a world auction record for a work by Rembrandt. With commission the total cost was £19,803,750. After the sale, Rob came up to me and inquired whether I might like a share. Declining, I asked him about the two principles his master had taught him. "Ah, I forgot to tell you the third principle: times have changed".

Well, A63 is a beautiful painting, but Rob paid close to $30 million for it and has not yet been able to sell it. Perhaps I was lucky not to acquire it for a hammer price of £16 million.

My dealings with Rob Noortman have been varied, almost always pleasant and always instructive. He even came to my gallery in Milwaukee and purchased two paintings.

The decade's most important old master was offered at Sotheby's in London on Wednesday evening, July 10, 2002. The *Massacre of the Innocents* painted by Rubens around 1610, a time when Rubens still worked alone, without workshop, and was at the height of his power. For the previous three decades the 88 year old owner had loaned it to the Stift Reichersberg monastery in Upper Austria, where it hung in a covered courtyard. She had disliked the violent subject of the painting which she had inherited in 1923. Before that, in 1920, a small auction house in Vienna, Glückselig & Co., had sold it as a work by Jan van den Hoecke, a minor follower of Rubens. It had been so misattributed since 1780 when it belonged to the Princes of Liechtenstein who had acquired it as a Rubens in 1702. In October 2001 a relative of the owner had brought a photograph to Sotheby's in Amsterdam which passed it on to George Gordon, Sotheby's great old master expert. He immediately flew to Austria and what he saw with the aid of a flashlight was most exciting - he had seen only one similar painting, Rubens' *Samson and*

Delilah, now in the National Gallery in London. That painting had also belonged to the Princes of Liechtenstein.

George Gordon had shown me the *Massacre* a month before the sale, telling me that the estimate was £4-6 million. Of course my first question was whether I might be able to purchase it privately at a higher price. The answer was no.

Otto Naumann and I discussed buying it together. Knowing that Rob Noortman was also interested, we met with him at 4 PM that Wednesday afternoon and agreed that the three of us would bid together to £34 million, with Rob bidding for us. Rob and I were sitting in front, to the left of Henry Wyndham, the auctioneer, whom Rob had told minutes before the sale started at 7 PM that we would bid together. Bidding opened at £3 million with Ben Hall from Sotheby's New York shouting £6 million to which Wyndham replied coolly, "Now I'll take 12 million!" Bidding continued quickly, in million pound increments, from 7 million to 34 million, Rob bidding two or three times. At £34 million Rob turned to me and asked "One more?" I said "yes" but we were not the underbidder, that was a telephone bidder for the J. Paul Getty Museum. The climax came a minute later, with Wyndham calling "£45 million -- last chance at £45 million..." and down the hammer came amidst a burst of applause and Wyndham's reminding us that "we have many more pictures to sell" - this was only lot 6 of 83. The successful bidder was Sam Fogg, acting for David Thomson or his father Ken,

richest men in Canada. The total cost was £49,506,650, a world record for a Rubens and a world record for a painting sold at auction in London.

Three fine paintings in two days. But the best was yet to come.

Early in 2001 Otto and I had offered to buy a great early Rembrandt portrait of a woman from a very likeable elderly couple in New York whose family had owned it since 1954. The RRP had accepted this signed and dated portrait of 1633, A84, writing that it "shows an uncommonly subtle treatment of the face, which is modelled softly against a dark background, yet the execution and the handling of light and plasticity achieved are so characteristic of Rembrandt's style that there can be no doubt as to its authenticity."

We also had no doubt, though we thought that it needed a gentle cleaning. Our offer to the couple was fair, with payment at once. But Sotheby's suggested that the owners would do better selling it at auction and, indeed, tried very hard. The painting was on the catalogue cover of that great auction on the evening of July 10, 2002 which also included the magnificent Rubens which brought a hammer price of £ 45 Million. Thirteen pages in the catalogue dealt with lot 35, the Rembrandt. For comparison, five other Rembrandt portraits were illustrated, one of which Otto and I had purchased at Sotheby's and sold to the Rijksmuseum. Another was an oval of a 62 year old woman which was bought by Rob Noortman at a hammer price of £ 17 Million and on which I was the underbidder at Christie's.

Before the auction on July 10 I had a long discussion with George Gordon and Henry Wyndham, who conducted the sale. We talked mainly about the Rubens, but Wyndham asked me what I thought of A84 and why should it not bring as much as Noortman's

oval? The answer to that was simple: I had underbid the oval, from around £ 12 Million to £ 17 Million. We had already made an offer to the owners for A84 and would not bid again. The auction estimate of £ 10-15 Million, presumably with a reserve of £ 10 Million, well over $14 Million at the time, seemed high.

Perhaps some buyers were put off by the alleged similarity of the sitter's face with that of Dede Brooks, the dethroned head of Sotheby's New York. Newspapers like to stress such foolishness. But bottom line: there was no bid and the painting was returned to its owners.

Before our trip to New York I asked Otto whether we could talk to the owners and make a new offer without being hurtful. And so Otto called and we were invited to the couple's apartment on Friday, January 24, 2002. To my surprise the husband had been in the chemical industry and knew a fair amount about me, and to no surprise Isabel and Otto had a good rapport with the wife, whose father had bought the painting. I made my offer, again with immediate payment, and was told that they would think about it and let us know. The next day Isabel and I were invited to their apartment at 2 PM on Sunday– it had to be early because we were flying back to Milwaukee from LaGuardia at 5:30 PM. But of course we knew that the offer would be accepted – a phone call would have sufficed for a 'no'. As luck would have it, their lawyer, Ralph Lerner, knew about us as he had handled the Japanese owners' sale of the *Minerva*. There were no problems, the money was wire transferred on February 3rd, and that day Otto took the painting to Nancy Krieg for the gentle cleaning that would greatly improve that sensitive portrait.

One day shortly afterwards Otto called with the exciting news that cleaning revealed a line of painting on the edge conforming to the oval shape. This was very important information since there was much speculation about the original shape of the painting when it had been offered at Sotheby's. Like the *Man in a Red Doublet* that Otto and I purchased a few years ago, Rembrandt painted an oval-shaped painting on a rectangular panel that was subsequently cut down to the inner oval. Although the spandrels in the corners are missing, we are not missing much; witness Rembrandt's *Self-portrait* at Sotheby's London (July 10, 2003), where the spandrels are more or less roughly indicated. Clearly, Rembrandt meant them to be covered by a frame.

Just about a year later the museum in Houston, Texas decided to purchase this fine painting at a price considerably less than they would have had to pay to Sotheby's in London in July 2002. All's well that ends well.

I don't think I have ever acquired as many great paintings in a short period of time – 6 days – as I did between the 21st and 26th of January 2003. Isabel and I had flown to New York specifically to bid on two paintings at Sotheby's. One, lot 62, was the last Mantegna not in a museum. Eighteen pages in Sotheby's catalogue were devoted to the life and work of Mantegna, to the beautifully rendered ghastliness of the subject, Jesus descending into limbo, the waiting room at the entrance of hell, before his resurrection, and to Mantegna's sources and the history of this painting. It had been sent to auction by Mrs. Barbara Piasecka Johnson who had bought it in Paris in 1988. She was reported to have said, "It's my greatest painting and I'll never sell it!" The reserve now was $20 Million. Dr. Otto Naumann and I tried to persuade George Wachter, head of Sotheby's old masters, to lower the reserve. He assured us that this was unnecessary and bet me $100 that the hammer price would be $30 Million or more. It was $25.5 Million and George's $100 paid for many of the taxi rides around the city.

The second painting we bid on was a fine portrait of a man by Frans Hals on which Otto and I had been the underbidders at Christie's London in July 1999. The Nazis had stolen this painting, along with two other portraits by Hals, from the Austrian branch of the Rothschilds. It was recovered after the war and taken to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna but was not returned to the Rothschilds until 1998. The California collector who bought it at the Christie's auction in 1999 paid £ 2,201,500 for it. In January 2003 it had a reserve of only $ 2 Million and brought a hammer price of $ 2.6 Million, paid by the Prince of Liechtenstein. After the last war several great masterpieces were sold by the Prince, and in recent years he has been buying old masters. Otto and I were rather

concerned by the attribution – Claus Grimm had labeled it "workshop" – and even more concerned by the condition – the blacks in the lower left looked so flat, so although the face was beautiful, we were not disappointed at being unsuccessful.

After the Sotheby's sale Isabel and I visited several art dealers, one of whom, Salomon Lilian, had a very interesting Rembrandt school painting which I had seen at auctions over the years. It was said to be a self portrait as a shepherd painted by Barent Fabritius in 1660. My collection did not include a Barent Fabritius, but the $150,000 a New York collector had paid for it at a small auction in 1979 seemed outlandishly high. Yes, it was signed, dated and colorful, but unlike his brother Carel, Barent was a minor master.

Budi (as Salomon Lilian is called) offered me two other Rembrandt school paintings of great interest. One, now attributed to Willem Drost, but previously called Rembrandt, Bredius 260, is one of two versions; the other is at the National Gallery in Washington. The author of a forthcoming book on Drost, a Canadian, Jonathan Bikker, thinks both versions are by Drost, but was he really, I ask myself, an artist to repeat himself? Budi was asking $ 500,000, perhaps excessive for a work with a questionable attribution, with a superior version in Washington. Years ago it had belonged to a collector in Milwaukee, Harry John. Budi had acquired it at an auction in California and sold it, for $225,000 to the Marquette University Museum in Milwaukee. What is there about Milwaukee that attracts paintings by Rembrandt and his students? The other painting Budi was offering was of much greater interest to me. Bredius 112, a portrait said to be of Hendrickje Stoffels (fig.), had been accepted as a Rembrandt of the 1650s by all the Rembrandt

experts including the great nay-sayer Horst Gerson. Jakob Rosenberg, from whom I first learned about Rembrandt, had written glowingly about it. Norton Simon had purchased it from Duveen in 1957, of course as a Rembrandt, for $133,500. It was his wife, Lucille's favorite painting, hanging in their living room, and when they divorced, she took the painting. I had admired it in the great Rembrandt exhibition in Chicago in 1969, where it had been a frontispiece in color in the catalogue. Since then the experts of the Rembrandt Research Project must have turned it down. Lucille Simon's estate sent it to Christie's New York in June 2002, where it was sold with an estimate of $300,000-$400,000, but without a reserve and bought by a consortium of four dealers which included Budi and one of London's ablest dealers, Johnny van Haeften. The hammer price was only $130,000. Had I known of the 'no reserve' or been at the auction, I'd have bid higher. Since then I had seen it at Johnny van Haeften's gallery several times, really liked it, and countered Johnny's offer to sell it at $300,000 with my offer of $200,000, which was politely declined. Now Budi was offering me it and the Barent Fabritius at what I considered a reasonable price and I accepted without further bargaining. I am getting old. Isabel was with me and she has always looked askance at my bargaining. "You have enough money – take it or leave it." Perhaps Isabel doesn't realize that if I hadn't bargained hard years ago, I would have many fewer paintings.

Who painted Bredius 112? When I purchased *The Head of an Old Man*, perhaps Rembrandt's father, RRP C22, at an auction at Christie's London in 1979, I was convinced that the painting was by Rembrandt, but the RRP was not. Now it is universally accepted. With Bredius 112, I am not convinced but hopeful and, like the

four dealers who have owned it until ~~February~~ January 23rd, I have been searching for a name. It is certainly period. Drost has been suggested, but it is not like any of the 36 works accepted by Jonathan Bikker. David de Witt suggested Abraham van Dyck. That is close. But I have two of his signed works at home and the paint handling is not quite the same. We have to be patient – and in the meantime, I love the painting - it is truly beautiful.

Not any longer

Our first day in New York, January 22, 2003, we had viewed an enormous canvas without a stretcher at the home of a very likeable dealer, Larry Steigrad. This *Jacob Blessing His Grandchildren* by the Neapolitan, Mattia Preti, of about 1680, was too big to be taken to Larry's gallery! Clovis Whitfield who knows a great deal about such paintings liked it when he saw it and brought it to my attention. These days our worries are whether such paintings might have been stolen during the war, but this had come here from Cuba before the war and been in storage all these years. I liked the painting and loved the subject. Wolf Stechow had written a moving article, "Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph" from Rembrandt to Cornelius' in the Festschrift for Ulrich Middeldorf of 1968. Oberlin had loaned us its Adriaen van der Werff of that subject for *The Bible Through Dutch Eyes* exhibition which I curated in 1976. Rembrandt's painting in Kassel is one of my favorite Rembrandts and I had never owned a painting of that subject. But the asking price was high. I offered Larry a third less, plus his commission, and the offer was accepted. Clovis had come to New York with Edward Clark, his associate, and on Saturday they rolled it around a big tube to ship to London and then to Naples for restoration. When I saw it later in the year, carefully restored (Fig.) and well framed, I

realized how right I had been to acquire it. Clovis exhibited it in the 2004 Maastricht fair where it was one of the most eye-catching paintings, and not only because of its size!

As Stechow pointed out, the subject is rare and that is the main reason I bought that painting. Rembrandt, Jan Victors, Guercino and Johann Carl Loth were the only artists I knew who had painted this subject in the 17th century; van der Werff's work in Oberlin contains Prussian blue and so must be 18th century. And here was another quite unknown 17th century work! Art historians will always compare paintings of that subject with Rembrandt's masterpiece painted in 1656. As Stechow wrote, "Its beatific calm, its restraint in referring to the quarrel between Jacob and Joseph, its suggestion of a spirit of accord between the children, its emphasis upon their mother, Asenath – all these features are without parallel in seventeenth century painting." Now we have one more comparison.

2-2-04, rev. 4

The second week of July 2003 was another interesting auction week in London. On Wednesday the 9th Christie's had two paintings of great interest to me; lot 18 was a David Teniers interior of an inn which, but for its history, would have been fairly estimated at £150,000. Since about 1700 it had belonged to the Wittelsbach Princes and Electors of Bavaria, then by inheritance to the King of Bavaria. In 1836 King Ludwig I transferred it to the newly built (Alte) Pinakothek where it remained until August 1938. Perhaps directed by Hitler who preferred early German paintings, the museum decided to deaccession it. Fritz Nathan, a dealer in Zurich bought it directly from the Pinakothek and sold it to his friend, Walther Bernt in Munich. I first met Walther and Ellen Bernt in 1954 and have visited their home every June for almost 50 years. Year after year I looked at their fine collection, including this Teniers, so I knew the painting well. Ellen Bernt died in September 2002, and their two daughters decided to divide their beautiful home in the Mottlstrasse into two apartments, so that they and their families could live there in the house they love. Such renovations are costly, and both Walther and Ellen had recommended that if the daughters had to raise funds at any time they should first sell the Teniers. Isabel and I knew this because when we visited the daughters on June 19, 2003 they told us of their plans and hopes that the Teniers would do well at auction. I assured them that I would be bidding on that painting and believed that there would be a great deal of interest. We would do our best to make sure that it would do well.

In discussions before the sales in July, it became clear that many dealers were anxious to buy the Teniers. I believed that the dealer most likely to be able to sell it easily was

Konrad Bernheimer who owns Colnaghi's in London as well as a splendid gallery in Munich. When Otto Naumann and I discussed this with Konrad the day before the sale, he explained that he knew of several potential customers in Germany, and with its Bavarian provenance, it would be most fitting for the painting to return there. Otto often bids with his good friend Johnny van Haeften, one of London's most distinguished dealers. But we could not involve Johnny because he had agreed to bid with Richard Green, a very aggressive London dealer, who insisted on a half share. So the three of us, Otto, Konrad and I decided to bid jointly.

A delightful fight was in the offing, which would greatly help Walther Bernt's daughters. When you are hoping to buy a painting it is always good to be able to see the other bidders and our seating made it possible to do just that. It heightens the excitement. Otto and I were sitting two rows behind Konrad who was bidding for us. Johnny sat just behind Konrad and directly in front of us. Richard Green was across the aisle, also easily observed by us. We all knew the Teniers would go much higher than the estimate and we three knew how high we were prepared to go. When we reached our limit all our eyes were on Johnny and Richard Green. Would they bid one more? Richard Green did, and the successful bid of £460,000 was over three times the low estimate: a very good result. And I was so happy to be able to call one of Walther's daughters in Munich, and relate the details. She and her sister had hoped the painting would do really well and she was delighted with the outcome. They hoped that it would end up in a museum, and that may happen eventually.

The second painting of particular interest to me was lot 34 in Christie's sale, a splendid self-portrait by Willem Drost, one of Rembrandt's ablest students. Only some 30 of Drost's paintings are known, and Professor Sumowski had told me that this was one of Drost's two best paintings, the other being the magnificent *Bathsheba* in the Louvre. Well, that's a matter of taste. I also like Drost's portraits of women in the Wallace Collection and in Budapest, and I was concerned about how high this self-portrait would go. Not long ago a Drost portrait of a man, which I did not like as well, sold at Sotheby's in New York for over $2 million. Again, Johnny van Haeften was bidding with Richard Green, and I had to go to £400,000, over three times Christie's low estimate. A high price, but when again might I have a chance to acquire such a great Drost?

The next day, July 10, Sotheby's offered three paintings of interest to me. This was the same date on which I had failed, the year before, to acquire that great Rubens, *The Massacre of the Innocents* which was bought for Lord Thompson. The July 10, 2002 catalogue cover had featured the Rembrandt portrait of a girl which did not sell at auction but which Otto and I were able to buy in January 2003. This year's cover was of lot 19, a Rembrandt self-portrait, signed and dated 1634, with a most curious history, most of which I knew well before the sale. Shortly after Rembrandt finished this self-portrait, it was overpainted, perhaps by one of his students, with an imaginary portrait of a man with a high Russian hat, gold chains and pearl earrings. Around 1640 such a 'tronie' might have been easier to sell than a rather bland Rembrandt self-portrait of 1634. When a copy of this overpainted painting was shown to Professor Sumowski in 1955, he suggested to the German owner that it was likely based on an original overpainted

Rembrandt. And so it was. The original turned up at a sale in Paris in 1955 and since then has been cleaned in stages. The last restoration, by Martin Bijl, the chief restorer of the Rijksmuseum, took two years, as Bijl had to use a fine scalpel under strong magnification to remove the last of the overpaint: truly painstaking work.

George Gordon first showed me the partially cleaned painting at Sotheby's in 2001. I was struck by the quality of the lower half and what seemed to me an authentic signature and date in the lower right. Since then, Professor Ernst van de Wetering has written a long article about this restoration saga for the publication of the Rembrandthuis which exhibited the self-portrait early in 2003. I was able to examine it carefully several times in London at Sotheby's. It is undoubtedly a genuine Rembrandt, in remarkably good condition, yet one of Rembrandt's blandest self portraits – and that was probably the reason for the 'more exciting', though poorer, overpaint.

In December of 2002 Robert Noortman asked Otto and me whether we should bid on this Rembrandt together as we had tried to purchase the Rubens. But the more Otto and I thought about it, the less we liked it. The reserve was said to be £3 million, a high price it seemed, for Rembrandt's most boring self-portrait. Then, the day before the sale, Noortman again talked to Otto and me – with my son David listening carefully – and forcefully made the argument that this was likely to be quite easily sold – particularly if we just put it away for a year or so. We all knew that together we had four far better Rembrandts which have not been easy to sell, but Noortman is a superb salesman, and we agreed to go to a hammer price of £4.2 million, with Noortman bidding. Just before the

sale I wished him luck and he invited all of us for lunch, if he was successful. I wasn't certain whether or not to look forward to lunch. Noortman was sitting in the front row, close to Henry Wyndham, the auctioneer, whom he had advised that we would be bidding together. Next to Noortman were his two sons and close by were Isabel, David and Helena Bader, a serious eight year old interested in auctions. Otto and I were on the other side of the aisle, where we were able to watch Noortman and also the bank of Sotheby's staff – including George Gordon and George Wachter – taking telephone bids. At 10:56 Wyndham opened the bidding on lot 19 with $3 million. Noortman went on to £4.2 million as agreed, but bidding continued rapidly by telephone, ending at £6.2 million on a bid from Stephen Wynn, a casino operator in Las Vegas. Wynn has long been interested both in major old master and impressionist paintings, and in 1998 had purchased a Rembrandt portrait of a man in a red coat and a Rubens from Otto and me. He has sold both since then, and the man in a red coat now belongs to Noortman. Sadly, Wynn's eyesight is very poor and that may explain his buying this bland portrait for so high a price.

The only other paintings of real interest to me were a pair of great Vernets, sold together as lot 65, the last lot of the sale. Usually I am not interested in French paintings, but these are such beautiful works; a sunset and a shipwreck, ordered from the artist in the summer of 1772 by the King of Poland. When difficulties with payment arose, Lord Clive of India purchased the pair in the frames picked by Vernet, for 400 louis, the price quoted to the King of Poland. And the paintings remained in the possession of Clive's family until 12:15 that Thursday noon.

Naturally this magnificent pair should go to a museum, but who could sell it? Certainly not I, from Milwaukee, and probably not Otto in New York. Loathe not to have had any hand in the purchase of these beautiful paintings, I turned to Konrad Bernheimer and offered the same arrangement I have with Otto and two other dealers; if successful I would pay for them and Konrad would sell, with us splitting the profit. At first we agreed that Konrad would bid to £1.5 million, but when a higher bid was made I quickly asked Konrad, who was sitting across the aisle, to go to £2 million. But even that was not enough, and Konrad was the underbidder when the hammer fell at £2.2 million.

Noortman and sons had left, disappointed, right after the Rembrandt sale and so Isabel and I invited Hubert van Baarle, an old friend from Rotterdam, to a simple lunch at Debenham's: just soup and salad, certainly less expensive and perhaps healthier than lunch would have been if we bought the Rembrandt.

And so the week ended with my buying only one great painting: the Drost. But the silver lining was that I got to know Noortman and Bernheimer better, and we might collaborate even more closely in the future.

It doesn't happen very often that I am really happy that a painting at auction "got away". Not often, but sometimes. So it was at 4:30 in the morning on Wednesday, October 1, 2003 when a very pleasant lady from the Dorotheum in Vienna called me at home to bid on lot 85, a portrait of a man in profile, painted by Jan Lievens in Leiden around 1630. Isabel and I had examined the painting carefully at the Dorotheum in June and Dr. Wolf, the Director of the auction house, had explained that it came from an Austrian nobleman who had no idea what the painting was. But there was no question that it is a fine Lievens and in the catalog Dr. Wolf illustrated it with a photo of my painting of *Rembrandt's Mother* by Lievens, painted at about the same time.

The young lady on the telephone told me that there were no less than 13 bidders on the telephone. Bidding started modestly enough at 12,000 Euros and climbed very rapidly to 120,000 Euros where I stopped bidding, but then listened for what I thought was the final result which was 650,000 Euros, a result that was accompanied by applause. I told the young lady that I presumed that Richard Green was bidding and she replied that she could not tell me that, but that she could tell me that it was correct, Richard Green was bidding, and Johnny van Haeften was also.

Of course I was happy about the result because I have four works by Lievens at home which I like very much better and Queen's University has two better works that we have given them.

After the telephone call I was able to sleep soundly for another two hours after reflecting that this Lievens cost about as much as I had to pay for the wonderful Drost self-portrait at Christie's on July 9, 2003 and of course there is really no comparison.

The next day I learned about an amazing sequel to the bidding. Among the telephone bidders were Richard Green, Lucca Baroni and Johnny van Haeften and the hammer went down when Johnny bid 650,000 Euros. A few minutes later, unbeknownst to me at the time, the auctioneer re-opened the bid. Lucca Baroni had been bidding on his cell phone from Florence and the girl talking to him had misunderstood him, thinking that he would not go higher than Johnny's bid of 650,000 Euros. But Baroni called back and the Dorotheum called both Richard Green and Johnny van Haeften to tell them that the bidding was being re-opened and it was finally knocked down to Lucca Baroni for 760,000 Euros which means that Baroni has to pay a total of 912,000 Euros, about $1 million for this competent painting which is certainly not Lievens' best. Johnny was furious but I think that he should really be happy not to have to pay that amount for a painting which might not be all that easy to sell.

Gui Rochat, a dealer friend specializing in French paintings, drew my attention to an enormous canvas - 66" x 92" - lot 24 in Sotheby's New York sale on January 22, 2004. The painting of *Lot and His Daughters* (Fig.1), attributed to Hendrick Bloemaert, had been sent to the auction by a club in Des Moines, Iowa.

Although Isabel and I often go to New York auctions in January, we go only when there are paintings I feel I have to have, and there were none such that week. But the *Lot* intrigued me. The quality looked superb, not just the voluptuous daughters but also the wonderful still life with a large pitcher which reminded me of Adam Van Vianen and the fruit very much like Jan Davidsz. de Heem. The painting was very dirty and looked Flemish. I thought that it might be an early Johann Liss, an artist I like a lot. Years ago I had bought one of his greatest works at Christie's in London, but then was treated very unfairly by the British Heritage Committee (see chapter __) and could not get an export permit. Perhaps this was another opportunity to buy a beautiful Liss.

I knew that my good friend George Gordon was going to conduct the sale, and then visit us for a restful weekend in Milwaukee. I called Sotheby's in New York and arranged with Ben Hall that he would call me in Milwaukee the morning of the sale so that I could bid by phone. I had already talked to Otto Naumann and knew that the liked the image, but he had no room in his gallery for such a large painting and did not intend to bid. I had decided

that my limit would be $200,000 - but I was lucky. The size must have discouraged others also, for bidding was slow and I could hear George knocking it down to me for only $75,000, for a total cost of $90,000 after the buyer's premium was added.

I was delighted with my buy, but what was I going to do with it? Certainly not have it sent to my conservators. Charles Munch and Jane Furchgott, who have conserved most of the paintings in my collection, could not take it - their truck and their vacuum table are too small. Fortunately Gui suggested an able conservator in lower Manhattan, Michael Heidelberg, who gave me a not-to-exceed price of $40,000 for the conservation. Wow! More than twice what I had ever paid for any conservation - but then, think of the size! Richard Charlton-Jones and George Gordon suggested sending the canvas to London where conservation would cost about half as much. But there was such an advantage to having the work done in New York where Gui could keep a close eye on it and help with any problems as they came along.

The first problem came at once: the truck Gui first considered was too small. I asked Ben Hall how had this ever come from Holland to a club in Des Moines? He promised to try to find out and I hope he succeeds.

Gui kept trying and finally found a trucker who could help. Michael received the painting on a snowy Wednesday, January 28. Carrying such a behemoth up three flights to the conservator was not easy. Carrying a

Steinway would have been more difficult, but perhaps not much. Just two days later, on the Friday, Michael called Gui and me in great excitement. Under the later inscription P.P. Rubens, on the lower right, was the genuine two line inscription A. Bloemaert fe. 1624! And Michael was certain that the painting would clean beautifully.

At almost 80 I still have a lot to learn. I had thought the painting to be Flemish, perhaps an early Liss; instead it is the finest, most Rubensian Bloemaert I have ever seen.

More good news was on the way. An old friend in Rotterdam, Hubert van Baarle, is most interested in Abraham Bloemaert and was really excited when I told him about this painting. A few days later he wrote that on February 14, 1811 "A. Bloemart *Lot and His Daughters*, a grand gallery picture [formerly in the collection of Charles II] "was sold in London for £39.18, the highest price an Abraham Bloemaert fetched at the time. "A grand gallery picture" indeed!

Of course Abraham Bloemaert's work is well known to me - or at least I thought so, just not well enough to recognize the *Lot* as his work. I had bought a fine *St. Jerome Working by Candlelight*, described on p. 219 of my autobiography.

And then, in the preview of Christie's sale in South Kensington on December 7, 1995, I saw a dirty, unframed canvas described as "After Abraham Bloemaert *The Dream of Jacob*" and estimated at £2,000-3,000.

The original was thought to be with a dealer in London. I had seen it there and liked this "copy", dirt and all, much better. I was the only bidder in the room, but was bidding against someone on the telephone, who was almost as stubborn as I was - I had to go to a hammer price of £17,000!

My friends Jane Furchgott and Charles Munch did a fine job cleaning and relining my painting and I thought that this was the finest Abraham Bloemaert I could ever own(Fig. 2).

Some twenty years earlier I had written about *Jacob's Dream* in the 1976 "Bible Through Dutch Eyes" exhibition at the Milwaukee Art Center: "The vision of a ladder with angels going up and down on it is unique in Biblical imagery, and so *Jacob's Dream* has aroused artists' imaginations for centuries.

The Bible is the book of dreams, par excellence: dreams of individuals, dreams of a people, dreams of all mankind. It is surely no accident that the very first well-known dream in the Bible is not that of a king or of a general but of a man at the lowest point in his life - homeless and hunted, yearning for God's promise that He would return him to his country." And how often had I thought of *Jacob's Dream* while in the prisoner of war camp in Canada.

The great expert on Bloemaert is Professor Marcel Roethlisberger at the University of Geneva, who has published the two volume catalogue raisonné on the artist. He is a most helpful scholar and so, naturally, I sent him photographs of my new acquisition and he replied, "I am much interested

to see how *Jacob's* Ladder has come out. I saw the painting at the sale viewing in London. As you know it was quite dirty, fine in some area and abraded in others; I felt it was difficult to know what was underneath, but it looked interesting and seemed worth a try. I mentioned it to nobody, nor did anybody ask me, to my surprise. I could not stay for the sale but it was indeed I who bid on the phone, not suspecting that it was against you, otherwise I would have abstained." In an article entitled "Abraham Bloemaert: Recent Additions to His Paintings", Professor Roethlisberger published my *Jacob's Dream* and I can hardly wait to learn of his comments about *Lot and His Daughters*. It is, I believe, in a class by itself - the best of Bloemaert's works I have ever seen.

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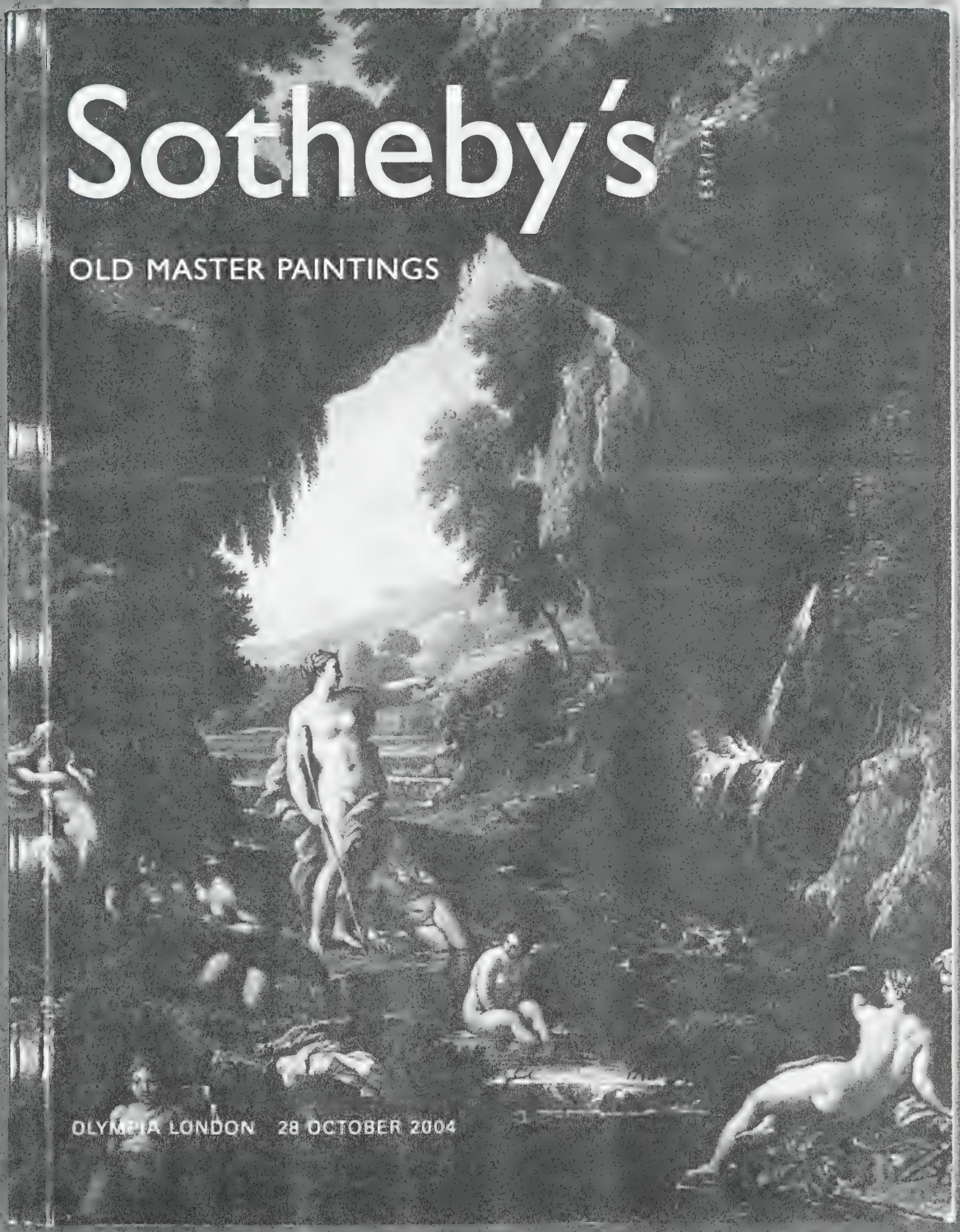

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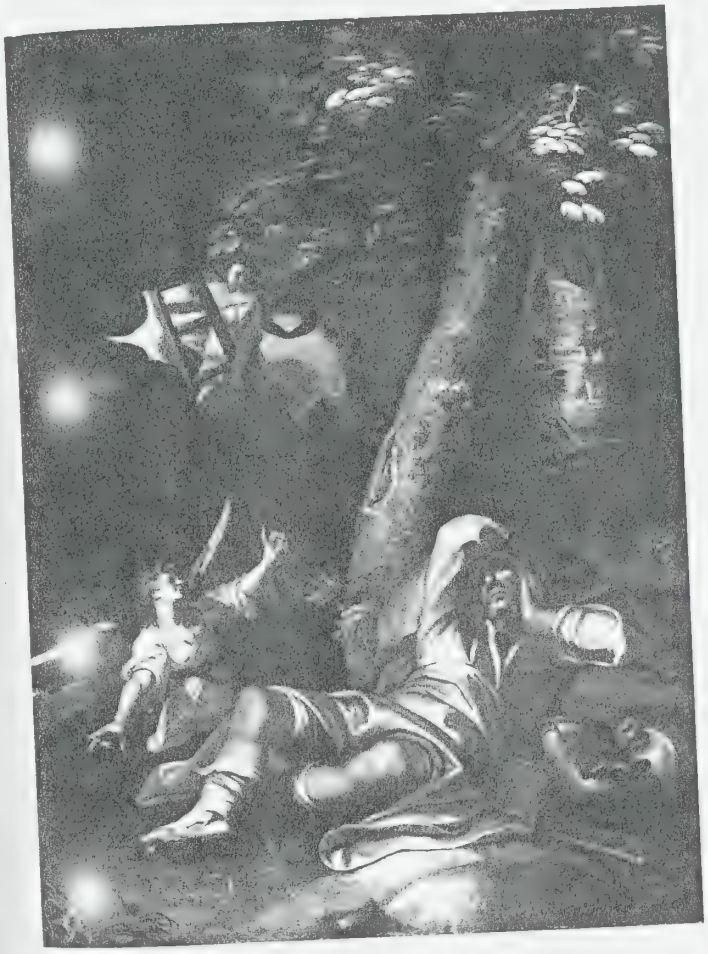

46

CIRCLE OF ABRAHAM BLOEMAERT

JACOB'S LADDER

oil on canvas
1175 by 95 5 cm ; 46 - by 33 - in

Roet berger believes this picture to have been completed by Bloemaert and his studio and suggests a possible dating from 1600-1605 (see *Literature*).

PROVENANCE
Possibly sold, The Hague, 13 April 1771, lot 45, as Bloemaert;
Possibly sold, Amsterdam, 29 January 1734, lot 70, as Bloemaert, to Fouquet;
Possibly sold, Amsterdam, 26 July 1810, lot 7, to Cassino;
Florence art market, 1989

LITERATURE
M. Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and his sons*, Ghent 1993, vol. I, p. 111, cat. no. 64, reproduced vol. II, fig 113)

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ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS

DR. ALFRED BADER www.alfredbader.com ESTABLISHED 1961

August 10, 2004

Mr. George Gordon, Senior Director
Old Master Paintings
Sotheby's London
34-35 New Bond Street
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ENGLAND

44 207 293 5943

Dear George,

Once again I have put down my thoughts about paintings in too opinionated a way. I'm sorry I dashed my remembrances and impressions off to you for you to correct obvious mistakes. Isabel feels I should get my thoughts down on paper so I don't forget details, but not send them to anyone else to see. Perhaps she is right.

You are quite correct when you criticize comments about the buyers. I so often take a strong dislike to a painting and find it hard to understand its good qualities and why other people like it.

You will see that I have already corrected my comments about lot 8. I don't like it, and I am not alone in doubting its authenticity, but clearly some people love it.

You will also see that I have left out the comments about the Rembrandt self-portrait, as I understand from you that Steven Wynn did not buy lot 8, as was rumored. I did bid on the self-portrait with Otto and Rob Noortman, but only to £4.2 million. You know of course that I was glad to buy RRP A-60 and the *Man in the Red Coat*, not because I was in love with the paintings but because I felt that at a reasonable purchase price, there was a good chance that they would sell, and so they did. When I feel a painting is not of top quality, I tend to call it a "selling potato" which is perhaps not wise, but an expression I often use. Clearly they are not potatoes.

Thanks in advance for letting me know when Sotheby's receives the export permit for the Rubens.

By Appointment Only
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Thank you also for your efforts re the owners of the painting in Liverpool. It would be interesting to find how it got from Milwaukee to Liverpool if, in fact, it is the same painting.

I hope I live long enough to collect a few more memoirs to put them together into a respectable, fun book, and I would be happy if you reviewed it.

With best wishes I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

As at the sale of the Massacre of the Innocents in 2002, Henry Wyndham was the auctioneer. Once again the room was packed, not in anticipation of the Rubens this time, but of lot 8, a small painting described as the last Vermeer not in a museum. I did not like the painting yet Rob Noortman told me on the day of the sale that he wanted to buy it. He was indeed the underbidder to a phone bidder who wanted to remain anonymous and who paid £16.2 million for it.

Of the first 29 paintings in the sale, ten were bought back, but that wasn't going to happen to lot 30, the Rubens. There was only one other bidder, on the telephone, and Henry Wyndham knocked the painting down to me at £2.2 million, much to my happy surprise. I was also interested in the lot that followed, a magnificent head of Jesus with the crown of thorns, by Lucas Cranach the Elder, estimated at £100,000-150,000. This is not a painting that either Otto or I could sell, but our friends, the Arnoldi-Livies in Munich, thought they might and I had agreed to bid to £200,000. But many others admired this wonderful head which soared to £600,000.

I also very much liked one other painting, the head of an old man by Jan Lievens, from the collection of the late D.G. van Beuningen in Rotterdam. It was estimated at £200,000-300,000, but there were many bidders, two of them particularly determined, with Johnny Van Haeften (bidding with Richard Green) succeeding at £1,650,000, a record price for a Jan Lievens. With commission the price was well over $3 million.

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4th August 2004

Dr Alfred Bader
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Dear Alfred,

Alas I cannot give you the name and address of the people in Liverpool without their permission, which I will seek on your behalf.

The Vermeer was bought by an anonymous buyer. Naturally, I am not at all happy about your proposed text. Lot 8 in our July 8 sale is not "said to be by Vermeer", it is by him. It is slanderous of you to suggest that the buyer bought it for the name rather than the quality. You do so on the sole basis that you happen not to like the picture, and you have no grounds for impugning the buyer's motifs for buying it. The buyer, who has in my opinion a very good eye and a deep understanding of pictures, adores the Vermeer, and like the rest of us, has no difficulty in recognising in it the heart and soul of this great master.

The Rembrandt self-portrait that we sold last July was not at all mediocre – indeed I distinctly recall that you were keen to buy it at an earlier stage. If your next volume of memoirs is going to be full of remarks like these, I will offer my services as a reviewer when it is published.

Yours sincerely,

George Gordon

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David Soul has finally laid his TV cop past to rest and transformed himself into the new Jerry Springer

THE ARTS

BY FIONA MADDOCKS

Chat-show host with the most

Role reversal: next week, Soul takes up the part in Jerry Springer — The Opera that he turned down two years ago

THE Jerry Springer Show? That was never my kind of TV, but I can tell you I now have a real new appreciation of it." chuckles David Hoyle Soul. Largely as a result that low brow fodder he once scorned could be his career boost.

On Monday, Soul replaces Michael Brandon in the title role of Jerry Springer — The Opera, the scurrilous send-up of the American TV chat show which had the National Theatre in stitches and moved on to become the West End surprise hit.

Soul had a previous encounter with the show. He turned down an invitation to play the lead role in Edinburgh two years ago. I said, 'Jerry Springer — the opera, sounds like a joke. I don't think I'd wanna do it. You remember Priscilla, Queen of the Desert? They asked me to do that. I said 'What, three homosexuals crossing the desert? You've got to be kidding. But it was a megahit and now it's my favourite film. I'm not going wrong a third time."

He happened to mention to Brandon, a close friend for nearly 40 years, that he would not mind having a go at Jerry. If Brandon ever wanted to step aside. That planted a seed, I guess. Then I got asked to audition."

By coincidence, both men had once been half of "TV cop duos". Brandon in Dempsey and Makepeace, Soul in Starsky and Hutch. The 1970s were golden years for Soul, who changed his name from the Swedish Solberg. Apart from being a TV heart-throb he was a successful singer-songwriter, with sweetly crooned chart toppers such as Don't Give Up On Us and Silver Lady.

In the public's estimation, Soul's life went wrong when Starsky and Hutch ended in 1978. His popular image fossilised around the age of 30. To, many, he remained forever the blond, flares-wearing vegetarian cop. But he lost his way drank too much and worked his way through four wives, by whom he has five children aged 16 to 40 as well as grandchildren.

Now 60, tall, benign and living alone in London, he has a slightly grizzled, capsized expression, but his manner is far from deflated. He settled here nine years ago, weary of what he calls his "excesses". LA existence and is applying for UK citizenship. Looking back, he appears at once photo-optical and modest with regret. Yet a list of his television albums, stage and film work in the past quarter of a century suggests something other than decline. What really happened?

"I always had work but I was in a mess. I hit emotional rock bottom. The marriages, or rather the divorces, certainly helped me get through my money. And yes I went into rehab, though I can drink moderately now. I also underwent a course in anger-management." When I raise a quizzical eyebrow at this hint of Californian psychobabble, he looks decidedly, well, angry. But then I recall having read of an uncontrolled outburst towards one of his wives.

"I was having to come to terms with fame," he says. "You see candy, you chase candy. What was it all about? The rage would build up and explode. How the hell can you ask me to put out the trash when I'm busy making a fortune? That kind of stuff. As my dad always told me, do something positive with your success but make good use of your anger, too. I had masses of money but I thought, 'Is that it?' I'd built a dream house, bought a home for my parents, paid for my sister to do her masters degree. I had donated money to the Native American movement..."

Just as he begins to sound self-justifying — and a certain defensiveness would be understandable — another side of Soul emerges.

He was one of five children, the son of a Lutheran pastor who took his family to Berlin after the Second World War to help refugees. I grew up partly in a ruined city. Eventually we came back to South Dakota, with a foster sister, an East German girl my parents had found. In a way, my dad helped mend broken families, maybe the opposite of what Jerry Springer is doing — tearing couples apart. But that's another matter."

He describes his family as "like the Von Trapps, always singing. Not just hymns, but Bach cantatas round the kitchen table. My mother was a lieder singer. She and her friends would sing Schumann, Brahms, Schubert — the pop music of the 19th century. So the musical world of Jerry Springer — The Opera, from the operatic to the churchy, is very familiar to me. It's what I grew up with."

Despite reservations about the religiosity of his upbringing, he still responds to the traditions of faith. "The Church should be there to address conflict, not merely for worship, or to have futile arguments over homosexuality. In towns around Britain when I'm on tour I see three or four spires and I ask myself, 'But where is the Church in the middle of all this mess?'"

His strange urgency suddenly becomes understandable. "My brother, like my dad, is a pastor. It's all he ever wanted to do. But he was defrocked." He pauses, as if asking leave to continue.

"It was Pittsburgh 1985. The steel industry was being shut down. A quarter of a million people were being spewed onto the streets. My brother took a stand to try to help them. The hierarchy took against him. He locked himself in his church and they sent in the sheriffs and arrested him. He was put in jail. The synod defrocked him. He lost his wife, family, livelihood. Only years later, after he'd apologised, was he allowed to become a pastor again."

SOUL made a documentary about the case which led to his own arrest. No one wanted to believe the lies I was exposing. I had three criminal charges against me. Eventually the case went to the US Supreme Court and two were overturned. I sued the city of Pittsburgh for $8 million. But my name had to be taken off the film credits."

As rehearsals draw to a close for Jerry Springer — The Opera, David Soul is trying to finish his autobiography. He is also making an album with the African musician Mory Kante.

Weird, isn't it, that Jerry is the only speaking part in the show. Soul shrugs. He still wants to make a "where are they now" Starsky and Hutch film with Paul Michael Glaser, an antidote to what he calls the "flatly remake in which they had cameo roles. We want closure on those guys," he says, as if he'd rather like to dissociate them.

Does the prospect of stepping into Brandon's shoes unnerve him? Well, yes. I couldn't sleep last night, now you mention it. But I'm busy finding new ideas, new values. I won't be a clone of Michael. I've only seen the show twice. And I've never met the real Jerry Springer."

What would Soul's parents, now in their eighties and living in California, think of the show which according to one calculation uses the F-word 3,168 times?

"I think my dad would really go for the Paradise Lost bit when Jerry ends up in Hell, even if it's border line blasphemy. Whereas my mother would probably say 'Oh dear.' She has a look when she wrinkles her nose as if something smells bad. But she'd love the music."

● *David Soul presents in Jerry Springer — The Opera from Monday at the Cambridge Theatre, 0870 7890 0600.*

This cannot be

BRIAN SEWELL
CRITIC OF THE YEAR

Sotheby's sold a newly attributed painting for £16.2 million this week, but, says our expert, the leaden picture of a young woman with pig's trotters for hands is not the work of the Dutch master

IF, AMONG Dutch painters of the 17th century, Rembrandt has a rival for the affections of the general public, he is Johannes Vermeer, the contrast quite extreme. On the one hand, we have a painter with a taste for the big, blowsy and baroque, a man who matched the fatness of his paint to the barmaid bulk of the female nudes who took his eye, and whose biblical dramas came straight from the theatre of his day, with lighting taken from a stage then technically far more advanced than we might think and the expansive gestures of Belshazzar and his silk borrowed from the actors.

On the other hand we have a man whose paintings we see as utterly still, the ordinary existence of the ordinary figures in them elevated into art by freezing all in the silent harmony of mathematics, their ordinary activities made mysterious by the passionate intensity with which they are observed. Nothing of Rembrandt's sound and fury echoes in Vermeer's silent rooms, nor in his street, nor in his city, and the whole of Delft is seized in mute tranquillity. We are excluded: Rembrandt invites us to his feast, but Vermeer turns us into peepers at the door.

Rembrandt was both heir to the then ancestral traditions of European painting as observer, theologian, classicist, philosopher and storyteller, and the innovator who, like Titian, made new ways of painting possible, his influence profound, immediate and lasting over centuries. With Vermeer, however, we are lost for words, can find few roots and, emphatically, no followers, fumbling, we match his mood to Leonardo's enigmatic Mona Lisa, or look still further back to the hushed composure of Piero della Francesca's sacred conversations, sensing the same enigma in artists far apart in time and place. To look forward for his influence is a pointless exercise, for, unlike Rembrandt, Vermeer had no pupils or acolytes to help unlock the still mysteries that still us too.

We know very little of the man: born in Delft in 1632, at 21 a master joining the Painter's Guild of St Luke, father of 15 children and dead at 43, deep in debt rather than poverty. A document of 1672 described him as an expert on Italian paintings and, from a posthumous petition, we know that he bought and sold them. We know that, as a painter, he had the respect of his peers, for, in four years, they appointed him head of their guild, the first time when he was only 30. From a working life of 22 years, only some 35 paintings survive that are signed or reasonably attributed to him, and on the two that are unarguably dated — 1656 and 1668 — art historians have constructed a dozen contentious chronologies.

With so few authentic paintings to his name, the addition of one more is far more important than, say, the discovery of yet another Rembrandt. One, which has been touted for sale by Sotheby's for the past three months, sold two days ago for £16.2 million. Many of us saw Young Woman Seated at the Virginals hanging in the National Gallery three summers past with a dozen indisputable Vermeers (and one disputed) in the exhibition Vermeer and the Delft School. It was there as an addendum, not catalogued, inviting comparison and comment; mine was that only a glance was required to identify it as an "irredeemable dud" and an outspoken Dutch art historian, thinking it a forgery, described it as a "tasteless mishmash" of the two paintings by Vermeer in the gallery's permanent collection. Since 2001, however, six Dutch "experts", one English and one from Sotheby's, have formed a research committee and given it their support; for the moment it is, perhaps, more Vermeer than not.

It has been "lightly cleaned". Records of this procedure suggest that what we could see in 2001 was a skin of dirt and distorting restoration virtually concealing what is, or may be, a worn and damaged painting of the 17th century. With this skin removed, the condition of the image was so ruinous that it required a "light" restoration sufficient to all but conceal the original once more. The claim now made by the research committee that this enables them to state, unanimously, that "the artist in question is Vermeer" and date the picture to *circa* 1670 is patently absurd, for what is visible on the surface of the canvas and what makes sense of the damaged image beneath, is entirely the intervention of a restorer in the infant years of this young century. An old restoration has been replaced by a new, and, if Vermeer ever had anything to do with the canvas, his contribution is sandwiched between it and the surface.

Nothing is known of the picture before 1904 — its earlier ownerships and whereabouts are matters of possibly, probably, if and but. Scientific analysis revealed that the painter made extravagant use of ultramarine (lapis lazuli), the most expensive pigment available to 17th century Dutch painters — but, as the painting is very small, this can hardly be a matter of phenomenal significance. Analysis also identified extensive use of lead-tin yellow, a pigment that the committee asserts was obsolete by the end of the 17th century, it was not — the recipe for making it was included in CF Prange's Farben Lexikon published in Germany in 1782.

The canvas, all 70 square inches of it, is, says the committee, "almost certain" to have been cut from the same bolt as the 80 square inches of The Lacemaker in the Louvre and must therefore have been painted at much the same time, *c.* 1670. But they do not ask themselves the dimensions of a bolt — many yards long and perhaps more than two in width, and canvas from it thus sold in shorter lengths to perhaps a dozen painters of the day. If Vermeer's lifetime's work on canvas were measured against a single bolt, I suspect that 90 per cent of it would not have to be unrolled — averaging one picture every eight months or so, Vermeer is unlikely ever to have bought a bolt.

THEN the costume expert on the committee had her say. The hairstyle was in fashion, it seems, only from 1669 until 1671. Good heavens, even the hideous wet-ringlet look of the 1990s stayed in fashion with the women of south Essex longer than that; were the women of 17th-century Delft faster off the mark than they? If they were, then surely four other paintings must be redated and much else of Vermeer's chronology recast.

As for the costume, is any other of Vermeer's players of musical instruments as hampered by a heavy wrap-round shawl? He was so extraordinarily scrupulous and delicate in his descriptions of shoulders, sleeves, forearms, jackets, ermine, lawn and lace, always communicating the physical forms within them, that the yellow blanket muffle about this girl's shoulders seems totally improbable, both as a gar-

'Above all, I must argue that the most profound difference between Young Woman Seated at the Virginals and genuine Vermeers lies in composition'

The real thing: Vermeer's Guitar Player in Kenwood House, usually dated to the late 1660s

a genuine Vermeer

Something amiss: Young Woman Seated at the Virginals (actual size) "entirely lacks the spirit of Vermeer's art"

ment and as an element of interest to Vermeer. It is as crude a nonsense as the pig's trotters with which she plays her instrument. It is on these and other half-truths and suppositions that the authenticity of this nasty little picture depends. Far from representing "an extremely important addition to our understanding of Vermeer's artistic development", this picture, if we accept it as genuine, distorts it. I must argue that in no genuine Vermeer are the fold-forms of the costume so unrelated to the figure within, that shadow is never so impenetrably deep and destructive of the field of colour, nor so heavy and unrelieved by reflected light as down the sitter's back, silhouetted against the wall behind

Above all, I must argue that the most profound difference between this picture and genuine Vermeers lies in its composition too facile and intellectually undemanding the figure posed too easily parallel to the picture plane, pictorial space too cursorily defined, the whole deprived of the tensions that Vermeer so skilfully introduces in other compositions. Unlike these, nothing is cut by or abuts the frame, no elbow is lost, no chair back chopped and there is no foreground clutter to act as a repoussoir and define the space. A moment's comparison with the Guitar Player in Kenwood, usually dated to the late 1660s and in remarkably good condition, demonstrates the complexity of Vermeer's pictorial construction even in small paintings,

'The history of Vermeer in the 20th century is littered with false attributions and downright forgeries'

and the fraudulent simplicity of the Sotheby picture

It entirely lacks the exceptional spirit of Vermeer's art, his ability to take a plain-faced serving wench, rotate her away from the spectator and then call her to respond with a turn of the head and casting of the eyes, and, from this very ordinary stock of features, make a masterpiece. This is the simplicity that sets Vermeer apart, yet it is not constant; the sequence of domestic interiors includes some of great complexity and detail, and it is broken by two pictures of operatic grandeur in which he proclaims his Catholic faith and his credo as a painter, staging his figures in set pieces rich with allegory

Such works, creaking under the weight of a significance that we now cannot fully understand, suggest that Vermeer was, as Gainsborough might have put it, more "various" than we suppose. Certainly his studio props seem to have been few in type and number, but they were as often palace-rich as kitchen-poor and far from mundane, the subtle marvels that he performed with them addressed to a more educated, more intuitive public than that satisfied with pictures of jolly peasants in a tavern with dogs defecating at the door Vermeer not only transcended the commonplace business of daily life, but ignored and evaded it. Nothing of this superiority is to be found in the Sotheby picture

SOTHEBY'S, to those who know how to recognise a caveat in an auctioneer's catalogue, has not been deceitful "Almost certain to some extent reworked by another hand . part of the picture was brought to completion after the rest of the composition, perhaps as much as a few years later" are phrases that suggest hesitation. But, advised by "experts" unanimous in their assertion that the picture is "unquestionably 17th century" and by Vermeer, Sotheby's could hardly refuse to catalogue it as genuine and sing its praises — and yet its estimated price when the sale was announced last April was a mere £3 million, far too little for the real thing and far too much for an uncomely dud

In the event it seems that two men, rich and credulous, were gulled by the committee of experts, one of them the winning bidder; the other the unsuccessful underbidder dropping out of competition at the bid below. For the moment, the enormous sum of £16.2 million for a painting so damaged and abraded that only modern restoration makes it fit to see, will be interpreted by ingenuous journalists as corroboration of the proofs offered by the experts. But the history of Vermeer In the 20th century is littered with false attributions and downright forgeries enthusiastically attested by the experts of the day, and I confidently predict that the Sotheby picture will join them as an object of derision — £16.2 million is monumental proof of folly, not authenticity

JAZZ

David Sánchez
Coral
[illegible]
★★★★★

RECRUITED for Dizzy Gillespie's World Jazz orchestra when still in his teens, the Puerto Rican tenor saxophonist David Sánchez po[illegible] one of the most [illegible] and [illegible] in jazz. [illegible] tenorist Gato Barbieri, he has a special affinity with Latin American themes, and [illegible] of passion and urgency into a ballad simply by playing the melody.

On this beautiful album, his quintet meets the City of Prague Symphony Orchestra in music by Brazil's Heitor Villa-Lobos and Argentina's Alberto Ginastera. Rarely have sophisticated strings, lyrical improvisation and authentic Latin percussion blended so effectively.

Jack Massarik

WORLD

Sékou Bembeya Diabaté
[illegible]
[illegible] Village, WW[illegible]
★★★★★

SÉKOU Diabaté from Guinea in West Africa, has been known for more than [illegible] Diamond Fingers. He is one of [illegible] great guitarists, and this solo album is a rare thing — he usually plays lead guitar with Bembeya Jazz. Without the full [illegible] wonderful thing here is the sense of space.

There is a light backing of rhythm guitar, bass and percussion with Sékou's silky guitar style skimming over the top. The title track is a virtuoso piece with spiralling flourishes and cascades of notes that owe much to Congolese music.

The playing is entrancing and continuously [illegible]ntuitive. But the mark of a great guitarist is not [illegible] check and awe, but poetry and peace, as in the delicate improvisations of Bala Koura that have a gorgeous West African lilt. And he can sing too! Perfect music for warm summer evenings.

Simon Broughton

ROCK&POP

CD OF THE WEEK

Shystie
Diamond in the Dirt
[illegible]
★★★★☆

REMEMBER Shystie's name, because this hackney-based female rapper could well be the next star to come out of London's urban scene.

Fizzing with the same raw street energy that So Solid Crew displayed before they started making rubbishy records and disappeared into well-deserved obscurity, her corker of a debut sets a new standard.

Clearly an undefeated veteran of hundreds of brutal teenage slanging matches on the top decks of buses, Shystie has a compelling, quickfire delivery rooted in the unmistakably rowdy dialect of London council estates.

Her subject matter, though, is heavily influenced by American hip hop, seldom straying beyond the ground that has already been trodden by US female rappers — blokes being useless, "the ladies" taking control, and a spot of gangster chat.

But there are nice touches of humour, such as a reference on Woman's World to "girls walking around with moustaches".

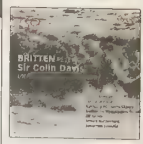
The production really allows the album to stand out. More polished and sophisticated than most comparable music, it retains the menacing, synthetic bass rumbles that characterise the new-ish urban genre known as "grime".

Here, though, they have been cleverly fused with retro electro sounds that have less in common with Dizzee Rascal and more resemblance to Giorgio Moroder's Eighties noodlings. Step Back, for example, has a grimy, head-nodding beat that will go down well on "the street", but is also cool and accessible enough to get trendy Hoxton dancefloors rocking.

Shystie has the beats, the rhymes and the personality to achieve great things, and unless something goes horribly wrong, you will be hearing a lot from her.

Chris Elwell-Sutton

CLASSICAL



Britten: Peter Grimes
LSO/Davis
LSO Live LSO0054
★★[illegible]

IT is difficult to understand the general enthusiasm for Colin Davis's January concert performances of Peter Grimes, at which this set was recorded.

It is strongly cast and there are some effective moments, but the gripping theatricality of the work that a fine production, such as Willy Decker's at the Royal Opera House, can offer is entirely missing.

Davis's very traditional conducting is one-dimensional compared with Antonio Pappano's bracingly European approach at Covent Garden, while Glenn Winslade is disappointing as the chief protagonist (he has the dreamy, poetic quality that is part of Grimes's make-up, but none of the roughness and potential for aggression).

The London Symphony Chorus is well drilled but it could just as well be singing Mendelssohn's Elijah.

Save your money and get a ticket for Decker's enthralling production at the Royal Opera House.

The Roots
The Tipping Point
(Geffen)
★★★★☆

PHILADELPHIA'S Roots have been subverting rap's rules for more than a decade, eschewing sampling in favour of real instruments, and distinguishing themselves live, the field in which most of their peers stumble.

Their seventh album begins in spectacular fashion, with the eight-minute Star, a sweeping, quietly militant dissection of America 2004 — a theme expanded upon in Why??? (What's Going On???). These tracks feature lyricist Tariq "Black Thought" Trotter at his most loquacious and musical leader Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson at his most inventive.

Those widescreen opuses are the peaks. The hidden track, In Love with the Mic, with its talk of "whores" and "bitches", is a foolish misstep and the 11-minute closing instrumental Melting Pot is hopelessly dull jazz-funk.

Elsewhere The Roots blossom. The reggaefied Guns Are Drawn is simultaneously summery and threatening, while Stay Cool dips into Seventies funk, Indian tablas and what sounds like a Stylophone. Truly, nothing fazes The Roots.

John Aizlewood

The Futureheads
The Futureheads
(Nul Records)
★★★★☆

AN unfortunate side-effect of the invention of the CD has been the arrival of the filler-heavy 70 minute album. Be thankful, then, for Sunderland quartet the Futureheads who, like The Strokes and The Libertines, have produced a debut that lasts barely half an hour, and which leaves the listener pressing "Play" once in the second it stops.

Its brevity by no means signals a lack of ideas. Over 15 tracks, including an alien cover of Kate Bush's Hounds of Love, rapidfire melodic hooks and complex four-part vocal harmonies tumble from the speakers at speed. Songs such as the heavy-riffing Decent Days and Nights and the fabulous Meantime change direction endlessly, concluding with scarcely a pause before the next two-minute wonder starts to whizz past. The success of Franz Ferdinand has opened British ears to an artier strain of rock. This breathlessly brilliant album richly deserves to follow them into the charts.

David Smyth

Barry Millington
Handel: Gideon
Soloists/Frankfurt Baroque Orchestra/Martini
(Two discs, Naxos, 8.557312-13)
★★★☆☆

THIS work, first given in 1747, is the product of Handel's assistant, John Christopher Smith. Shamelessly trading on Handel's posthumous popularity, Smith commissioned a libretto from Handel's librettist, Thomas Morell, chose some of the best numbers from Handel's work and added some of his own music.

This is a robust, rather than polished performance sometimes there's some obvious scratching about in the strings — from the Frankfurt Baroque Orchestra and the Jungo Kantorei under Joachim Carlos Martini. The solo singers — Barbara Hannigan, Linda Perillo, Nicola Wemyss, David Cordier, Knut Schoch and Stephan MacLeod — are all very acceptable.

Stephen Pettitt

R

Dr. Alfred Bader
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February 3, 2004

Ms. Maria L. Gilbert
Provenance Index
The Getty Research Institute
1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 1100
Los Angeles, CA 90049-1688

Dear Ms. Gilbert,

Thank you so much for that most interesting material on Bredius 112 which you sent me yesterday. Today I am enclosing the following:

1. A color transparency
2. A copy of Budi Lillian's invoice from which you will see that I paid $225,000 for this painting and
3. A draft of an essay which (if I live long enough) will be in a second autobiography to be entitled *More Adventures of a Chemist Collector*.
   By all means feel free to use some of that material if you wish.

I would appreciate your sending me Xerox copies of newspaper articles about Bredius 112 that appear.

With all good wishes I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc. - 3
Also by e-mail

Museums often deaccession paintings, sometimes carefully, sometimes – to put it mildly – without care. None with less care than the Milwaukee Art Museum.

Over the years, beginning in the 1950's, we have given some forty paintings to the Milwaukee Art Museum. Some of these are masterpieces; some are not so good. It took me years to be able to tell the difference. Until May 29, 2001 none ~~were~~ was deaccessioned. A month before that date, on April 30, Russell Bowman, then the Director of the Milwaukee Art Museum sent me a letter with a list of ten of my gifts to be deaccessioned. I replied on May 4,

". . . I can understand the need for deaccessioning, but would it not make sense to discuss with living donors what their thoughts are, before the decision is made?

There is one decision that I really question and that is the one regarding the Berchem. Dr. Winters questioned whether this painting is really by Berchem, but I have no doubt whatsoever, as explained in entry 4 of *The Detective's Eye* catalogue. I don't know of any art historian anywhere ~~that~~ who knows as much about just such paintings as Professor Stechow at Oberlin knew. And he didn't just decide on the basis of a photograph, but had the original painting there for study.

If you have sent that painting for auction then at least I hope that the auction house will have the good sense of referring to *The Detective's Eye* entry and Professor Stechow's clear opinion.

The Art Museum has no work by Berchem, so the first question in my mind was: why do you deaccession it?. . ."

Sadly, Mr. Bowman did not discuss the matter with me and on May 29th Christie's East offered the Berchem without any reference to the Milwaukee Art Museum's *Detective's Eye* catalogue, where there is a detailed two page description of the painting, with signature and date, 1650, reproduced. Christie's offered it as lot 108, by C. Iwry, an unrecorded artist. A perceptive buyer paid $3760. Sadly, I was leaving for England on the day of the sale and didn't have the good sense to bid on this and other paintings.

One other painting which was deaccessioned was Christie's lot 114, a fine portrait of a Flemish officer, circa 1635, so thickly painted that I thought it might have been painted for a blind person. It was deaccessioned simply because there was as yet no attribution, although it was in mint condition, and it was acquired for $4113 by a knowledgeable young collector, Avram Saban, in Florida.

Sometimes there were really happy endings to these. Lot 119, by Jan van der Venne, also known as the Pseudo van der Venne, had also been described in *The Detective's Eye* exhibition catalogue. Christie's stated that this artist was Dutch rather than Flemish and it was bought by the H.F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University for $4700. The Museum's Director, Frank Robinson, an old friend, wrote to me in July 2001:

"Just a note to say that this museum just bought your beautiful Jan van de Venne, A Family Making Music. We are delighted with it; it is full of the tenderness and realism of this exceptional artist."

Perhaps we should have given the painting to Cornell in the first place.

These deaccessions – ten of my gifts and others from some of the Milwaukee Art Museum's major donors, for instance Mr. & Mrs. William D. Vogel, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Flagg and Mrs. Catherine Jean Quirk, were unimportant compared to a painting deaccessioned in October 2001. This was, I believe, *The Battle of Gibraltar* for which the artist, Joseph Wright of Derby, was paid £420 in 1786, the largest sum he ever received for one of his paintings. It was bought by John Milnes of Wakefield, who had amassed one of the largest Wright of Derby collections over a period of some twenty years.

The great art historian and editor of the Burlington Magazine, Benedict Nicolson, was the expert of the works of Wright of Derby. In his book on the artist, published in 1968, he discussed the lost painting on pp. 159 and 160:

"We know more about the genesis of the *View of Gibraltar during the destruction of the Spanish Floating Batteries* (Cat No 245) than about any other picture except the *Corinthian Maid* and his scene from *The Tempest*, but in its absence it would be depressing to enter into too many details. One is not grateful to, but curses, the guide

who points at the blank walls of the Palais des Papes at Avignon and goes into raptures about frescoes that are no longer there. A few facts only need be recorded. On 13th September 1782 the British garrison at Gibraltar decisively defeated the Spanish floating batteries, thereby restoring some of that British prestige which had been shaken by the loss of the American colonies. The news had the same effect on public opinion in England as the Suez operation of 1956 would have had, if it had proved a triumph instead of a dismal failure. The subject was an obvious one for any history painter following in the footsteps of Benjamin West, and most of all for Wright whose specialty was fire, and who could visualize the contribution he alone could make to the events of that memorable day: the firing of red-hot missiles at the Spanish ships; the ensuing conflagration in the harbour; the dramatic feature of the Mole; the proud garrison standing back to survey the blaze. . .He worked hard on the picture during 1784, as far as failing health and torpor would permit, finishing it on 17th February of the following year. . .Wright had the idea of painting two pictures as companions: in the first (the only one executed) 'to represent an extensive view of the scenery combined with the action'; in the second 'to make the action his principal object'. He also thought of raffling the picture, but was relieved of this necessity by the appearance of Maecenas in the guise of John Milnes who carted the vast canvas off to Yorkshire, paying him a more handsome sum for it than he had received for any other work"

I believe that through a real bit of luck I had found that lost masterpiece in 1967, although at the time I did not realize it. A Milwaukee dealer, Tom Lenz, and I purchased some eighty paintings from the Laura Davidson Sears Academy of Fine Arts in Elgin, Illinois.

Among these was an enormous *Battle of Gibraltar*, attributed to John Singleton Copley. The students in the Academy had not treated it kindly; all sorts of things, from arrows to balls, had been thrown at it. I believe it had been mistreated even before that with a great deal of overpaint, and when Judge Nathaniel C. Sears bought it from the well known Ehrich gallery in New York, it was re-lined with sailcloth at a cost of $72.

Tom Lenz prepared a handsome catalogue of the Elgin Academy paintings which he offered in the Lenz Art Gallery between 1968 and 1970. Many of the paintings were photographed, but the *Siege of Gibraltar,* oil on canvas, 61" x 93-1/2", attributed to Copley, was too big to be photographed and did not sell, probably because it was so large.

After two years with the Lenz Art Gallery, the few unsold paintings came to me – the Gibraltar among them.

Benedict Nicolson had become a good friend whom I visited when I was in England. I have referred to our friendship in my autobiography, *Adventures of a Chemist Collector*, "We spent only one or two evenings a year together, meeting at his home, and then having supper at a simple Italian restaurant nearby and talking about my recent acquisitions. He was interested in art in all its forms, and had written the definitive books on Terbrugghen, Georges de La Tour, the followers of Caravaggio and Wright of Derby. He was a great wordsmith, and many of his editorials in *The Burlington* still echo in my mind. I always looked forward to his help, which was given with such enthusiasm and

bolstered by his encyclopedic knowledge." And of course I ordered his two volume work on Joseph Wright of Derby when it was published in 1968. As I read his discussion of the missing *Siege of Gibraltar*, the penny dropped: could that be the "Copley" in my basement?

Keeping the period frame at home, I shipped the canvas to Ms. Mary D. Randall, a conservator in London, asking her to reline it and to remove the large amounts of overpaint. She put a great deal of work into it over many months. When Benedict Nicolson looked at the stripped canvas he realized it was in very poor condition but believed that it was the missing Wright of Derby.

Once it was returned to Milwaukee, I offered it to the Milwaukee Art Center (as our museum was then known), and in January 1973 our Art Center acquired it with funds given by the Charleston Foundation in memory of Miss Paula Uihlein. The ~~daughter~~ sister of Erwin Uihlein, the long-time president of Milwaukee's best known company, Schlitz Brewing, Paula Uihlein, had created the Charleston Foundation.

Professor Damie Stillman, the chairman of the Art History Department of the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, became very interested in the *Gibraltar* and directed one of his students, Biruta Erdmann, to mount an exhibition and to submit a paper to the Burlington Magazine which Nicolson, the editor, accepted [vol. 116, 1974, pp. 270-272].

2/5/04 Corrected copy sent for approval to:

777 Wm E Wilson
Sale 1920

Daniel T. McKeithan
776 03011

Ms. Erdmann began her paper "This painting (lent by the Milwaukee Art Center) and Wright's two drawings the *Sea Battle* and *British Gunboat in Action* (lent by the Derby Museum and Art Gallery), were exhibited at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Art History Gallery, from 27th February through 27th March 1973. Included in the exhibition were photographs of other artists' works (West, Copley, and Trumbull), maps, engravings of the battle and the topographical scene, and comparative photographs of other works by Wright. This exhibition was designed to clarify the authorship of the painting, which was previously listed as attributed to Copley. The exhibition was organized by the author for the Department of Art History, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee."

This paper clarified everything – or so I thought, Until I looked at Christie's East Old Master Paintings catalog of October 10, 2001. There, as lot 46 (from the Milwaukee Art Museum, 1973 to present) was *The Siege of Gibraltar* by a Follower of Joseph Wright of Derby, with an estimate of $8,000-$12,000. There was no provenance of any kind, not even a mention of its being a gift from the Charleston Foundation in memory of Paula Uihlein; nothing about Benedict Nicolson's opinion; no reference to the seminal paper in the Burlington Magazine. Wow! How not to deaccession paintings.

Years ago I had helped my alma mater, Queen's University, to purchase a collection of seven smaller landscapes by Wright of Derby. Wouldn't it be great if I could acquire Wright's most ambitious work for Queen's? But would either the Getty or the Yale Center for British Art connect Christie's entry with the Burlington Magazine paper of

1974? If so, I had no chance. Hope springs eternal, however, and I asked my old friend, Dr. Otto Naumann, to send his secretary to bid for Queen's up to $100,000. There was only one other bidder and it was knocked down to her for $10,000.

The Milwaukee Art Museum had decided to ship the painting unframed. To send it with the period frame, perhaps picked by the artist himself, would have cost more. Fortunately, I was able to acquire it from the Museum for $6,000, and it was delivered to Queen's.

After the sale, the Milwaukee Art Museum gave me its files on the *Gibraltar* and there I saw correspondence with a very able art historian and collector in London, Dr. Gert-Rudolf Flick. I called him to inquire why he had written to our Museum in 1996 and he told me that he was working on a book, Missing Masterpieces, Lost Works of Art 1450-1900, and had planned to include *The Battle of Gibraltar*, until he studied the material sent by the Museum.

In the introduction to this fascinating book, which he published in 2002, Dr. Flick wrote, "As I began to research the subject, it soon became clear that many works of art which were listed as missing had either been destroyed or were in fact extant. For example, a painting of *The siege of Gibraltar* in the Milwaukee Art Museum (U.S.A.) was sold recently as by a 'Follower of Joseph Wright of Derby', but has now been firmly identified as the original by Wright of Derby – the very painting that was always thought to be missing. In this case the difficulty in making the correct identification arose from

the ruinous state of preservation of the painting, which made a comparison with preparatory drawings hazardous, although not impossible."

How could such deaccessions take place? It was the confluence of a director who was just not knowledgeable about older paintings, a hard-working and ambitious curator, Laurie Winters, who was not experienced in deaccessioning, and inadequate oversight from the Board of Trustees. Laurie Winters has good reason to be self-confident: she succeeded brilliantly in bringing a wonderful collection of art – including a Leonardo – from Poland and that, and the new Calatrava wing, really put our Museum on the map. But she was not guided in getting more advice. When I asked her why she did not send literature references to the Berchem and the Wright of Derby to Christie's, she told me that such references might have undermined her research. It would almost certainly have increased the prices realized. And she had indeed studied the problem of the *Gibraltar*. Mrs. Judy Egerton at the Tate Gallery in London had looked at the *Gibraltar* very carefully in 1986 and had written, ". . . I cannot believe that it is by Joseph Wright of Derby, even though Benedict Nicolson came to think so. There is a lumpishness about the figures, and a failure to extract maximum light and shade effects from the burning ships, that would never have suggested Wright's name to me, though I agree that now we have to find the missing Wright." She had written in a 1990 Wright of Derby catalogue that it "is now widely thought not to be by Wright." Other art historians concurred, some suggesting Loutherbourg. One of the guiding spirits of our Museum is Dr. Myron (Ronnie) Laskin whose parents had left our Museum a large legacy for acquisitions. Dr. Laskin has great knowledge, particularly about Italian art, and he has a wonderful visual

memory. He also has the ability to express himself so strongly that he tends to be believed, even when he is mistaken. He has told me that he does not believe Benedict Nicolson could possibly have accepted the *Gibraltar* and yet he did, both verbally and in writing, and he was the editor of the Burlington Magazine when the article was published in 1974. It is possible to be convinced and mistaken.

Of course, to be convinced and mistaken could apply also to me. What if Benedict Nicolson and I were mistaken about the attribution of the *Gibraltar* to Wright of Derby? No matter who is mistaken, giving the literature references and Nicolson's opinion to Christie's would have aroused more interest.

The Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University has now sent the *Gibraltar* to a Canadian government laboratory in Ottawa for extensive tests, X-ray, UV and IR images and paint sampling to decide how to improve the painting. I hope that the "lumpishness about the figures, and a failure to extract maximum light and shade effects from the burning ships", which Ms. Judy Egertson wrote about, is due to extensive restoration which can be much improved. I am always an optimist.

The basic problem was Russell Bowman's lack of interest in older paintings. Many other paintings were also deaccessioned. Our museum has perhaps this country's finest collection of German and Austrian paintings of the 19th century, the gift of René von Schleinitz. René, the treasurer of the Harnischfeger Corporation, loved paintings by artists like Spitzweg and Waldmüller and the works he acquired are among the best by

these artists. René and I were good friends. We met regularly and alerted each other to possible acquisitions – he pointing to Dutch old masters and I to works by his favorite artists. Russell Bowman did not like these at all, and eighty of René's paintings were sent to auction in Munich. The funds were used to buy a very expensive and beautiful landscape with Ruth and Boaz, by the Austrian, Joseph Anton Koch. René would never have considered such an Italianate Biblical subject – there was nothing like it in his collection.

Recently there was a beautiful Spitzweg exhibition near Zürich and in Munich and twelve works were borrowed from Milwaukee. Six of these were René's gifts; five to the Milwaukee Art Museum, one to our Public Library. The other six came from a distinguished Milwaukee collector. It would have made good sense to bring the exhibition to Milwaukee, but Spitzweg must have seemed too minor a figure to Russell Bowman. If René knew, he would turn over in his grave.

Of course I am really familiar only with the details of the Milwaukee Art Museum's deaccessioning of some paintings, but I understand that the sale of some Chinese works was even worse. Sotheby's in Chicago put on ridiculously low estimates and, as I understand it, a dealer from London bought many of them and promptly sold them at auction, described properly, at many times the prices he paid in Chicago. It is truly sad that the Milwaukee Art Museum lost a great deal of potential income.

Russell Bowman left the museum in 2002, to do consulting – surely in modern paintings – in Chicago. Our new director, David Gordon, is totally different, probably the ablest, most caring director we have had since Edward Dwight who was forced to leave in 1962. I cannot help thinking what my life would have been like if Ed Dwight had stayed or if David Gordon had been his successor.

Directors and curators have many functions, one of which is to guide local collectors. These then reciprocate by giving or leaving their masterpieces to the museums. But if there is little interest and help, then there are few gifts.

David Gordon knows a great deal about finances – he had been the chief executive of *The Economist* and of the Independent Television News and was on the board of the Financial Times. And he knows so much about museums, having been the secretary (i.e. the director) of the Royal Academy of Arts in London from 1996 to 2002 and a trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1993 to 1998. I think of him as David Tobias Gordon. Tobias was the most courageous man in the Bible. He proposed to a girl whose previous suitors had been killed by a demon. And it takes true courage to become the director of an art museum with an enormous debt. David has reduced this to $25 million and I am confident that he will succeed in wiping it out altogether. But, most important, he does not disdain old master paintings, listens carefully and expresses himself well, with a great sense of humor. It took the Art Museum's Board of Trustees 40 years to choose a great director.

Dr. Alfred Bader
2961 North Shepard Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

(414) 962-5169

February 26, 2004

Dr. Rüdiger Klessmann
Völkstraße 25
Augsburg D-86150
GERMANY

Dear Dr. Klessmann,

You may recall that I wrote to you on January 29th about an enormous painting of *Lot and His Daughters* which I had purchased at Sotheby's in New York.

This is a wonderful painting and the conservator has found that it is fully signed A. Bloemaert fe and dated 1624.

I enclose a rough draft of an essay about this painting, for my next book.

With all good wishes I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

Ve · Gu Ty E

Dr. Alfred Bader
2961 North Shepard Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

(414) 962-5169

January 29, 2004

Dr. Rüdiger Klessmann
Völkstraße 25
Augsburg D-86150
GERMANY

Dear Dr. Klessmann,

Last Thursday, on January 22nd, I bought a very large painting (167 x 233 cms) of *Lot and His Daughters* at Sotheby's New York, their lot 24. It came from a club in Des Moines, IA and Professor Marcel Roethlisberger had suggested Henrick Bloemaert while others had considered this a work by the father.

To me this very beautiful painting does not really look like an Utrecht work but rather Flemish. The figures remind me of the early works of Johann Liss but I have never seen a still life like that by Liss.

The painting has to be relined and cleaned and it is already with a good conservator in New York.

In the meantime I would very much appreciate your help with the correct attribution.

With best personal regards I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS

March 9, 2004

Mr. George Gordon, Senior Director
Old Master Paintings
Sotheby's London
34-35 New Bond Street
London W1A 2AA
ENGLAND

Dear George,

I am sorry that Michael Heidelberg collared you about your kind advice to me and that you concluded that you should be more careful about what you told me. Actually, George, I did not tell Heidelberg, but I did write a rough draft for my next autobiography and sent that to Gui Rochat who then mentioned the lower cost in England to Michael Heidelberg. I enclose copy of that rough draft.

You were of course correct in attributing the painting to Abraham Bloemaert and I do hope that Ben Hall will be able to help us by persuading the club in Des Moines to find out just how that enormous machine came to Iowa.

I much look forward to seeing you on Friday, March 19th, and bringing the Van Goyen with me.

You will have seen my fax of yesterday to Ben Hall and hope that he will approve sending the Berckheyde and the Lievens to New York.

With many thanks for all your help I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

By Appointment Only

The second week of July 2003 was one of the most interesting auction weeks in London. On Wednesday the 9th Christie's had two paintings of great interest to me; lot 18 was a David Teniers interior of an inn which, but for its history, would have been fairly estimated at £150,000. Since about 1700 it had belonged to the Wittelsbach Princes and Electors of Bavaria, then by inheritance to the King of Bavaria. In 1836 King Ludwig I transferred it to the newly built (Alte) Pinakothek where it remained until August 1938. Perhaps directed by Hitler who preferred early German paintings, the museum decided to deaccession it. Fritz Nathan, a dealer in Zurich bought it directly from the Pinakothek and sold it to his friend, Walther Bernt in Munich. I first met Walther and Ellen Bernt in 1954 and have visited their home every June for almost 50 years. Year after year I looked at their fine collection, including this Teniers, so I knew the painting well. Ellen Bernt died in September 2002, and their two daughters decided to divide their beautiful home in the Mottlstrasse into two apartments, so that they and their families could live there comfortably. Such renovations are costly, and both Walther and Ellen had recommended that if the daughters had to raise funds at any time they should first sell the Teniers. Isabel and I knew this because when we visited the daughters on June 19, 2003 they told us of their plans and hopes that the Teniers would do well at auction. I assured them that I would be bidding on that painting and believed that there would be a great deal of interest. We would do our best to make sure that it would do well.

In discussions before the sales in July, it became clear that many dealers were anxious to buy the Teniers. I believed that the dealer most likely to be able to sell it easily was Konrad Bernheimer who owns Colnaghi's in London as well as a splendid gallery in Munich. When Otto Naumann and I discussed this with Konrad the day before the sale, he explained that he knew of several potential customers in Germany, and with its Bavarian provenance, it would be most fitting for the painting to return there. Otto often bids with his good friend Johnny van Haeften, one of London's most distinguished dealers. But we could not involve Johnny because he had agreed to bid with Richard Green, a very aggressive London dealer, who insisted on a half share. So the three of us, Otto, Konrad and I decided to bid jointly.

A delightful fight was in the offing, which would greatly help Walther Bernt's daughters. When you are hoping to buy a painting it is always good to be able to see the other bidders and our seating made it possible to do just that. It heightens the excitement. Otto and I were sitting two rows behind Konrad who was bidding for us. Johnny, bidding for himself and Green, sat just behind Konrad and directly in front of us. We all knew the Teniers would go much higher than the estimate and we three knew how high we were prepared to go. When we reached our limit all our eyes were on Johnny. Would he bid one more? He did, and his successful bid of £460,000 was over three times the low estimate, a very good result. And I was so happy to be able to call Ilsebill Gangkofner, one of Walther's daughters in Munich, and relate the details. She and her sister had hoped the painting would do really well and she was delighted with the outcome. They hoped that it would end up in a museum, and that may happen eventually.

The second painting of particular interest to me was lot 34 in Christie's sale, a splendid self-portrait by Willem Drost, one of Rembrandt's ablest students. Only some 30 of Drost's paintings are known, and Professor Sumowski had told me that this was one of Drost's two best paintings, the other being the magnificent *Bathsheba* in the Louvre. Well, that's a matter of taste. I also like Drost's portraits of women in the Wallace Collection and in Budapest, and I was concerned about how high this self-portrait would go. Not long ago a Drost portrait of a man, which I did not like as well, sold at Sotheby's in New York for over $2 million. Again, Johnny van Haeften was bidding with Richard Green, and I had to go to £400,000, over three times Christie's low estimate. A high price, but when again might I have a chance to acquire such a great Drost?

The next day, July 10, Sotheby's offered three paintings of interest to me. This was the same date that I had failed the year before to acquire that great Rubens, *The Massacre of the Innocents* which was bought for Lord Thompson. The July 10, 2002 catalogue cover had featured the Rembrandt portrait of a girl which did not sell at auction but which Otto and I were able to buy in January 2003. This year's cover was of lot 19, a Rembrandt self-portrait, signed and dated 1634, with a most curious history, most of which I knew well before the sale. Shortly after Rembrandt finished this self-portrait, it was overpainted, perhaps by one of his students, with an imaginary portrait of a man with a high Russian hat, gold chains and pearl earrings. Around 1640 such a 'tronie' might have been easier to sell than a rather bland Rembrandt self-portrait of 1634. When a copy of this overpainted painting was shown to Professor Sumowski in 1955, he suggested to the German owner that it was likely based on an original overpainted Rembrandt. And so it was. The original turned up at a sale in Paris in 1955 and since then has been cleaned in stages. The last restoration, by Martin Bijl, the chief restorer of the Rijksmuseum, took two years, as Bijl had to use a fine scalpel under strong magnification to remove the last of the overpaint, truly painstaking work.

George Gordon first showed me the partially cleaned painting at Sotheby's in 2001. I was struck by the quality of the lower half and what seemed to me an authentic signature and date in the lower right. Since then Professor Ernst van de Wetering has written a long article about this restoration saga for the publication of the Rembrandthuis which exhibited the self-portrait early this year. I was able to examine it carefully several times in London at Sotheby's. It is undoubtedly a genuine Rembrandt, in remarkably good condition, yet one of Rembrandt's blandest self portraits – and that was probably the reason for the 'more exciting' though poorer overpaint.

In December of 2002 Robert Noortman asked Otto and me whether we should bid on this Rembrandt together as we had tried to purchase the Rubens. But the more Otto and I thought about it, the less we liked it. The reserve was said to be £3 million, a high price it seemed, for Rembrandt's most boring self-portrait. Then, the day before the sale Noortman again talked to Otto and me – with my son David listening carefully – and forcefully made the argument that this was likely to be quite easily sold – particularly if we just put it away for a year or so. We all knew that together we had four far better Rembrandts which have not been easy to sell, but Noortman is a superb salesman, and we agreed to go to a hammer price of £4.2 million, with Noortman bidding. Just before the

sale I wished him luck and he invited all of us for lunch, if he was successful. I wasn't certain whether or not to look forward to lunch. Noortman was sitting in the front row, close to Henry Wyndham, the auctioneer, whom he had advised that we would be bidding together. Next to Noortman were his two sons and close by were Isabel, David and Helena Bader, a serious eight year old interested in auctions. Otto and I were on the other side of the aisle, where we were able to watch Noortman and also the bank of Sotheby's staff – including George Gordon and George Wachter – taking telephone bids. At 10:56 Wyndham opened the bidding on lot 19 with $3 million, Noortman went on to £4.2 million as agreed, but bidding continued rapidly by telephone, ending at £6.2 million, a bid from Stephen Wynn, a casino operator in Las Vegas. Wynn has long been interested both in major old master and impressionist paintings, and in 1998 had purchased a Rembrandt portrait of a man in a red coat and a Rubens from Otto and me. He has sold both since then, and the man in a red coat now belongs to Noortman. Sadly, Wynn's eyesight is very poor and that may explain his buying this bland portrait for so high a price.

The only other paintings of real interest to me were a pair or great Vernets, sold together as lot 65, the last lot of the sale. Usually I am not interested in French paintings, but these are such beautiful works, a sunset and a shipwreck, ordered from the artist in the summer of 1772 by the King of Poland. When difficulties with payment arose, Lord Clive of India purchased the pair in the frames picked by Vernet, for 400 louis, the price quoted to the King of Poland. And the paintings remained in the possession of Clive's family until 12:15 that Thursday noon.

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Dr. Alfred Bader
2961 North Shepard Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211

414-962-5169

August 11, 2003

Mrs. Ilsebill Gangkofner
Steirerstrasse 8
81247 Munich
GERMANY

Dear Mrs. Gangkofner,

You will have realized what pleasure the sale of your Teniers gave to Isabel and me.

If I live long enough, another book of mine may appear and for that I am wiriting essays about my adventures, along the lines of the book which you have.

Enclosed please find such an essay describing the events of the week of the major sales.

With all good wishes to you and your sister I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS

August 11, 2003

Johnny van Haeften
13 Duke Street, St. James's
London SW1Y 6DB
ENGLAND

Dear Johnny,

Thank you for your help in including the Drost in your next shipment to Otto. I have of course made payment to Christie's on the first third as arranged and I hope that they have turned the painting over to you for export.

If I live long enough I may finish another book with various adventures. From time to time I am writing essays to be included in that book and an essay describing the events of the week of the sales in London is enclosed.

With all good wishes I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS

August 11, 2003

Mr. Rob Noortman
Noortman (Maastricht) BV
Vrijthof 49
6211 LE Maastricht
HOLLAND

Dear Rob,

If I live long enough I may finish another book with various adventures. From time to time I am writing essays to be included in that book and an essay describing the events of the week of the sales in London is enclosed.

With all good wishes I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS

August 11, 2003

Mr. Konrad O. Bernheimer
Brienner Strasse 7
1.Etage
D-80333 Munich
GERMANY

Dear Konrad,

If I live long enough I may finish another book with various adventures. From time to time I am writing essays to be included in that book and an essay describing the events of the week of the sales in London is enclosed.

With all good wishes I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

Dr. Alfred Bader
2961 North Shepard Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53211

(414) 962-5169

August 14, 2003

Dr. Klaus Eisele
Albrecht Dürerweg 52
70192 Stuttgart
GERMANY

Dear Dr. Eisele,

You know how sorry Isabel and I were that we could not meet you during our last trip to Stuttgart in June.

On May 23rd you sent me a letter with a wonderful art historical essay, but this arrived at my home in Milwaukee after we had left for Europe and so I have had a chance to read and enjoy this only now.

That essay is of course of immense interest. It covers the entire Netherlands of the 17th century; the only comparable material I have read dealt only with Delft.

There are few essays which I like to re-read several times a year. One of these is Julius Held's essay on Rembrandt and Tobias. Another is Gary Schwartz' essay on the Rembrandt Research Project. Now your essay joins these to be re-read carefully.

Some 40 years ago I asked Walther Bernt, who had become my good friend, how many artists there were in Holland in the 17th century. He thought that there might have been as many as 3,000 of whom we know only about 900 by name and work.

If I live long enough I may be able to publish an addition to my autobiography, perhaps to be entitled "More Adventures of a Chemist Collector". I enclose a short essay describing the auction week in London last month.

Next year we plan to give you a good deal more notice of our trip to Germany, in the hope that we can spend some time together. But in the meantime it may be that you will have to take a trip to the United States and might be able to visit us.

With all good wishes from house to house I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc.

ALFRED BADER FINE ARTS

DR. ALFRED BADER

ESTABLISHED 1961

August 20, 2003

Mr. Hans Ellermann
Gesellschaft der Edelsteinfreunde
Postfach 2721
65183 Wiesbaden
GERMANY

Dear Mr. Ellermann,

I enjoyed my telephone conversation with you today.

Enclosed as promised is a copy of my last letter to Professor Ernst van de Wetering together with a copy of a most interesting letter which I received from my good friend Professor Werner Sumowski quite a few years ago.

I do like your sketch and would like to think about it for a few days.

It would be great if we could meet in London during the week of the old master sales in December.

I always enjoy the weeks in London and enclose an essay about the last auctions in July, written for another book. It may be years before that comes out.

With best wishes I remain

Yours sincerely,

Alfred Bader
AB/az
Enc. - 3

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Andrea Mantegna's masterpiece *Descent into Limbo* (est. $20-30 million), consigned by collector Barbara Johnson, sold for a superb $28,568,000 at Sotheby's.

NEW YORK—As the hammer fell at $28,568,000 for Andrea Mantegna's *Descent into Limbo,* the star of Sotheby's January 23 Old Masters sale, all eyes were on Scott Schaefer, curator of paintings at L.A.'s Getty Museum, ruefully shaking his head. Not only did the Getty decline to buy the Mantegna, it didn't even bid. Although Schaefer wanted it, his superiors—director Deborah Gribbon and Barry Munitz, president of the Getty Trust—thought otherwise. Consigned to Sotheby's by the capricious Barbara Piasecka Johnson (who has been known to inform inquiring dealers, "It's my greatest painting and I'll never sell it!"), the circa 1490 work, which carried a $20–30 million estimate, had been on and off the market for over a decade. Ironically, the Getty very nearly acquired it in the early 1990s, but both parties were unwilling to budge on the price. (The museum's best offer was $24 million; Johnson wanted $28 million.)

Now the Getty is in a dither over the temporary export ban Great Britain has placed on Raphael's *Madonna of the Pinks,* for which the museum agreed to pay the Duke of Northumberland $57.7 million. Yet the Mantegna is the far greater work of art. For the world's wealthiest museum to refuse to bid on the last available narrative painting of the Renaissance and a masterpiece by one of the greatest Italian painters shows that the Getty is now adrift and irrelevant. Foolish museum, lucky bidder: The picture was bought by a private collector, who Sotheby's Old Masters expert George Gordon says "is not Lord Thomson," the buyer of the $77 million Peter Paul Rubens, *Massacre of the Innocents,* last July. "I've never even heard of this person before," Gordon adds.

Another clever buyer was the Prince of Liechtenstein. After World War II, several masterpieces were sold from the Liechtenstein collection. To make up for these losses, the current prince has been quietly buying over the past few years. At Sotheby's, he purchased a fine Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Gentleman,* from 1650–52 (est. $2–3 million), for $2,920,000.

Sotheby's had less luck with two paintings by Rubens. The good *Fisherman and Peasant Woman Embracing,* circa 1613–14 (est. $2–3 million), stalled at $1.7 million while an overly familiar Holy Family from around 1630 (est. $4–6 million)—very recently offered by the London Old Masters dealership Agnew's—failed to sell at $3.7 million. Though big and colorful, it is also a fairly generic composition that Rubens and his shop reused on many occasions. A superior variation is on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

While it's a common practice for dealers to toss pictures into auction, one doesn't expect Alec Wildenstein to be one of those doing so. Yet not so discreetly folded into Christie's January 24 sale were a handful of pictures that many identified to be fresh from the dealer's vaults, including a pair of Nicolas Lancret oils and Jacques-Louis David's excellent *Portrait of François Mellinet* (est. $1–1.5 million), which was unsold at $800,000.

The Wildenstein cache had just one painting that elicited any real enthusiasm—*Still Life of Dead Hares,* an unusual and rare masterpiece by Francisco de Goya. One of a series of 12 still lifes painted circa 1808–12, the picture had been with the Wildenstein Gallery for over 50 years. Though always technically "for sale," its unsentimental, unsparing subject matter and most recent asking price of $12 million proved a double deterrent. At Christie's it bore a far more tantalizing estimate of $2 million to $3 million, arousing the desires of several collectors and museums, including the National Gallery in London and the Metropolitan Museum. Unfortunately, neither museum was able to act, as the National Gallery is still obsessed with keeping the Northumberland Raphael away from the Getty, and the Met is currently denuded of funds, having just spent $9 million on a fine 14th-century Crucifixion by Pietro Lorenzetti it bought from Wildenstein.

The only serious bidders were three dealers—New Yorker Martin Zimet of French & Company and Londoners Simon Dickinson and Jean-Luc Baroni, the last winning it for $5,069,500. Acting for a private client, Baroni reportedly went slightly over his limit. (If so, I can't blame him.) Happily, the client decided to buy it anyway. He'll never regret it. But the Getty will. It didn't bid on this picture either.

PAUL JEROMACK

SOTHEBY'S

249 lots offered;
$47,918,400 sold total;
25 percent unsold by value;
34 percent unsold by lot

CHRISTIE'S

169 lots offered;
$22,062,800 sold total;
36 percent unsold by value;
45 percent unsold by lot