

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



## GIOVANNI LANFRANCO

(Parma 1582-1647 Rome)

### NYMPH AND SATYR

1620 *circa*

oil on canvas

118 x 166 cm.; 46 1/2 x 65 1/3 in.

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#### Provenance

Jean-Baptiste Pierre Lebrun, ca. 1807-08 (as Ludovico Carracci);  
With William Harris, 1811;  
By whom sold to Sir George Boyer, ca. 1812-1840;  
James-Alexandre de Pourtalès, Comte de Pourtalès-Gorgier (1776-1855);  
His sale, M<sup>es</sup> Pillet et Escribe, 27 March 1865, lot 39 (as Ludovico Carracci);  
Where acquired by his son, Edmond de Pourtalès-Gorgier, Comte de Pourtalès (1828-1895);  
Maurice Druon (1918-2009);  
His sale, Millon, 18 May 2021, lot 62 (as Venetian School);  
Private Collection, United Kingdom.

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#### Literature

Lebrun, Jean-Baptiste Pierre. *Recueil de gravures au trait[...] recueillis dans un voyage fait en Espagne, au midi de la France, et en Italie, dans les années 1807 et 1808*. Paris 1809, plate 72 [reproduced].

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This incredible work, recently assigned to Giovanni Lanfranco by the late Erich Schleier<sup>1</sup>, comes to the market for the first time since its discovery.

In front of a dark, atmospheric landscape, an elegantly coiffed naked nymph plucks a piece of fruit from a basket offered to her by a rugged, grimacing satyr. Both figures are engaged in a deep, erotic gaze. To the right and in the background, we see the same figures: the satyr holds the nymph tightly as she raises her hands up in the air, a common pose used to signify an abduction (see **Figs 1-2** for contemporary examples),

The deep shade of blue employed in the work shows the clear influence of Ludovico Carracci. Having been educated by Agostino Carracci before going down to Rome to work with Annibale Carracci, Lanfranco never received direct tutelage from Ludovico, who stayed in Bologna to run the Accademia degli Incamminati. Nevertheless, Lanfranco's works show a clear debt to Ludovico's teachings; Erich Schleier has noted debts to Ludovico in Lanfranco's oeuvre from as early as 1611,<sup>2</sup> with perhaps its strongest inflexion being *Rinaldo's Farewell to Armida* (now in the Kunsthaus, Zurich, **Fig. 3**), which in its illustrative poetry is much like Ludovico's extraordinary *Return from the Flight into Egypt*, (**Fig. 4**, private collection).<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the deep blue sky so characteristic of Ludovico's oeuvre, the painting also clearly looks to the other two Carracci. Annibale's early *Venus with a Satyr and Two Cupids* (Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence, **Fig. 5**), bears a striking resemblance to the present work in its compositional style and rendering of flesh. Furthermore, the plumpness of both figures is reminiscent of the Annibale's designs for the Ceiling of the Galleria Farnese, the massive pictorial project on which Lanfranco worked as one of many assistants.

Agostino's influence can be deduced from the work's subject matter. A prolific engraver, he produced at least four different variations on Nymphs and Satyrs in his wildly popular series known as *Le lascivie* (e.g. **Fig. 6**).<sup>4</sup> Often thought to be the epitome of male and female libido, the creatures were often depicted in the throes of passion in Renaissance print culture. Agostino can be credited with bringing some of the more erudite and obscure facets of the graphic arts into painting, and the sexually charged thematic matter of the present work is likely one of his importations.

Though the Carraccesque debts of this painting cannot be overstated, certain details evidence a rupture with their manner and clearly evince Lanfranco's idiosyncrasies. From a technical standpoint, the cloth upon which the nymph rests, is of a chromatic intensity typical of the artist's work: a similar rendering (albeit in blue) can be seen in the *Ecstasy of St Margaret of Cortona* (**Fig. 7**). The physiognomy of the sitters is also characteristic of Lanfranco's manner. For instance, the Nymph's pointed knees and heels are articulated in a manner much like the *Magdalene Raised by Angels* in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples (**Fig. 8**).

In terms of a possible date for the work, the painting's compositional and volumetric resemblance to *Young Man with a Cat on a Bed* (**Fig. 9**) may suggest a date of 1620 or soon after.<sup>5</sup> At that point, he was counted among the city's leading artists,<sup>6</sup> having painted prestigious frescoes for Pope Paul V Borghese in the Palazzo del Quirinale. From 1621 to 25, he painted his seminal work, the of Sant'Andrea della Valle, Rome, a triumph of the mature Roman Baroque Classicism (**Fig. 10**)

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1 He thought it "remarkable" and approved of its reattribution to Lanfranco, adding that it "offers new sides of the artist, and widens his repertoire".

2 Schleier cited Lanfranco's altarpiece of St Luke, signed and dated 1611, which was painted for the Collegio dei Notai, Piacenza, but is now deposited in the Musei Civici di Palazzo Farnese, Piacenza. Ludovico himself had just been working in Piacenza in 1605-09, so upon arriving there the young Lanfranco would not have had to look far to find examples of his work. See *Giovanni Lanfranco: un pittore barocco tra Parma, Roma e Napoli*, Exh. cat. Rome, (Palazzo Venezia 2002), edited by Erich Schleier, 33, 104-105, cat. no. 5.

3 For the history of Ludovico's so-called *Barca* or *Barchetta* series, to which the *Return from the Flight into Egypt* belonged, see Alessandro Brogi, *Ludovico Carracci: Addenda*, Bologna 2016, pp. 120-121.

4 See Diane DeGrazia Bohn, *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family: A Catalogue Raisonné*. Washington 1979, 289-90, and cat. nos 184-87.

5 Rome 2002, 216, cat. no. 55.

6 E. Schleier (ed.), exh Giovanni Lanfranco: un pittore barocco tra Parma, Roma e Napoli Exh. cat. Rome, (Palazzo Venezia), 2001-2, pp. 38-40.

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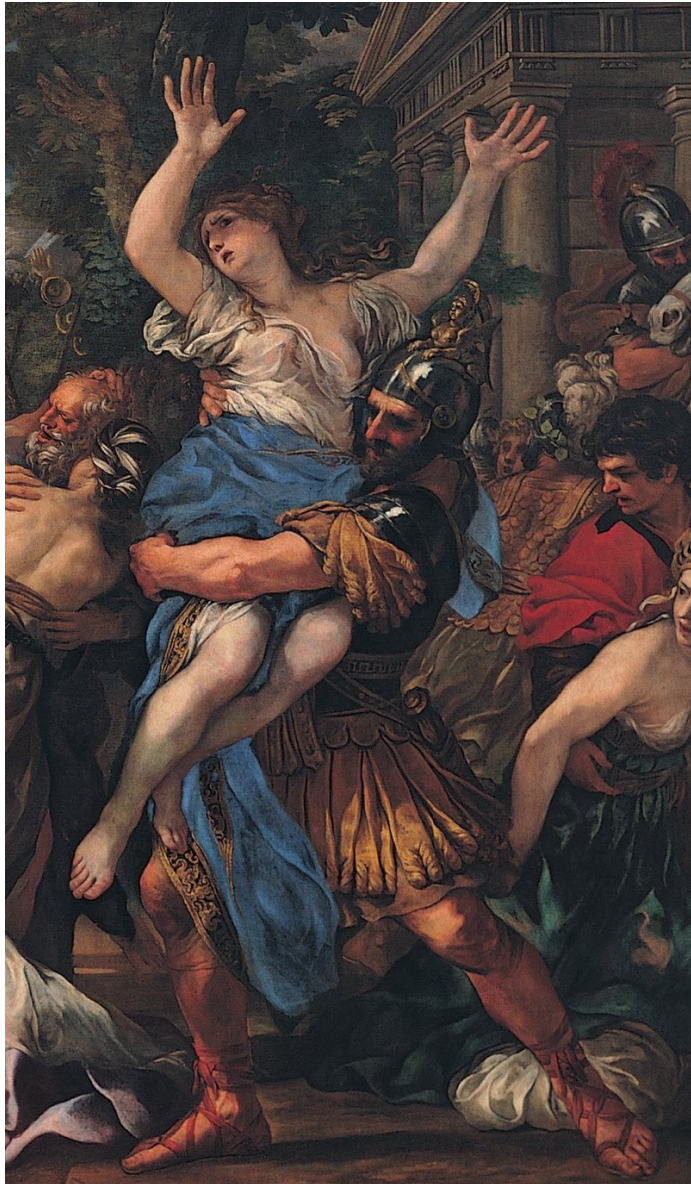
Though little is known about the painting's original patronage or its early owners, its nineteenth and twentieth century provenance is impressive. It was reproduced in an 1809 illustrated catalogue as being the collection of the artist Jean-Baptiste Pierre Lebrun, alongside works by Correggio, Guido Reni, and Pietro da Cortona (**Fig. 11**). After a brief stint in England, the artwork returned to France, where it came into the possession of the prolific collector James-Alexandre de Pourtalès, then passing to his son Edmond. More recently, the work was owned by Maurice Druon, culture Secretary under French President Georges Pompidou from 1973 to 1974 and Perpetual Secretary of the Académie française from 1985 to 1999.

The work will be studied in a forthcoming article.



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**Fig. 1.** Pietro da Cortona, *Rape of the Sabine Women* (detail), Rome, Capitoline Museums.

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Fig. 2. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Rape of Proserpina*, Rome, Galleria Borghese.

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Fig. 3. Giovanni Lanfranco, *Rinaldo's Farewell to Arminda*, Zurich, Kunsthhaus.



Fig. 4. Ludovico Carracci, *Return from the Flight to Egypt*, private collection.

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**Fig. 5.** Annibale Carracci, *Venus with a Satyr and Two Cupids*, Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi.



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Fig. 6. Agostino Carracci, *A Satyr Whipping a Nymph*, from *Le lascivie*, engraving.

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**Fig. 7.** Giovanni Lanfranco, *The Ecstasy of Saint Margaret of Cortona* (detail), Florence, Palazzo Pitti.

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**Fig. 8.** Giovanni Lanfranco, *Magdalene Raised by Angels*, Naples, Museo di Capodimonte.

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Fig. 9. Giovanni Lanfranco, *Young Man with a Cat on a Bed*, private collection.

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**Fig. 10.** Giovanni Lanfranco, Cupola od Sant'Andrea della Valle, Rome (pendentives by Domenico Zampieri, called Domenichino), 1621-25.

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**Fig. 11.** Reproduction of the painting in Jean-Baptiste Pierre Lebrun, *Recueil de gravures au trait[...] recueillis dans un voyage fait en Espagne, au midi de la France, et en Italie, dans les années 1807 et 1808*, plate 72.