COLNAGHI

Jan Van Bijlert

The Five Senses, ca. 1630s

JAN VAN BIJLERT
(Utrecht, 1597/1598 – 1671)

THE FIVE SENSES, early 1630s

Oil on canvas
146 x 197.5 cm.; 57 1/2 x 77 3/4 in.

Provenance
Baron Michele Angelo Lazzaroni (1863 – 1934), Villa Madeleine, Nice; and by inheritance to his brother
Baron Edgardo Lazzaroni (b. 1892), Palazzo Lazzaroni, Rome;
His Sale; Maître J.J. Terris, Nice, 16-21 June 1952, lot 125 (as 'école flamande XVIIe');
Anon. Sale; Palais des Congrès, Versailles, 27 May 1979, lot 40 (as 'École Flamande du XVIIe Siècle');
Private Collection, Paris, acquired from the above sale;
Private Collection, San Francisco, by descent from the above;
Private Collection, UK.

Literature
G.J. Hoogewerff, 'Jan van Bijlert: Schilder van Utrecht (1598 – 1671)', *Oud Holland*, Amsterdam, vol. LXXX, 1965, p. 26, no. 29b (as a replica);
P. Huys Janssen, in A. Blankert & L. J. Skates (eds.), *Holländische Malerei in neuem Licht*, exh. cat., Centraal Museum, Utrecht & Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Brunswick, 1986-87, p. 204, no. 42.1 (as another version of no. 42);
P.H. Janssen, *Jan van Bijlert, 1597/98 – 1671*, Amsterdam, 1998, p. 127, no. 68.1 (as a replica);
The work is recorded on the RKD database as by van Bijlert: https://rkd.nl/images/202111

Exhibited
On loan to the Legion of Honor Fine Arts Museums, San Francisco, 2021.

COLNAGHI

This work, which counts among the artist's masterpieces, had previously been considered, on the basis on black-and-white photographs, to be a workshop version of the painting in the Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hannover, which is dated to *circa* 1626-30 (fig. 1). However, having seen this remarkable painting in the flesh in 2006, Paul Huys Janssen reinstated it to Bijlert's oeuvre. It is larger than the Landesmuseum picture, and technical analysis suggests that they were painted side-by-side: when the painting was on loan to the San Francisco Legion of Honor, the museum curators observed: 'The paint was applied in a straightforward manner to imitate the general appearance of the painting in Hannover, but with a more economical technique. A photoshop overlay of the three [Hannover, present picture and Davis Museum copy] paintings to scale…implies that they were all [painted] using the same cartoon or [that] the [present] and Wellesley paintings were based off of cartoons from the Hannover painting. While the figures align with each other individually, they do not align as a full scene. This is typical for 17th Century Dutch paintings in which artists frequently used multiple cartoons to transfer large compositions that they were replicating…the lack of major changes seems to imply that this painting was painted in direct proximity to the signed version in Hannover.' (Conservation report, 31 March 2021). This is entirely in keeping with what we know of Bijlert's working method, as the artist produced a number of autograph replicas of his own compositions, sometimes with only one version – presumably that painted first – signed, or signed and dated.[1]

Describing the composition, Huys Janssen writes: 'a group of people gathered around a stone table represent the Five Senses. In the left foreground sits Venus, with Cupid behind her. She points to a mirror and holds a magnifying glass in her other hand, symbolising Sight. Behind her stands a man smelling a pink, representing the sense of Smell. The woman with the lute symbolises the sense of Hearing: the man next to her, feeling a round on his wrist from which blood is streaming, the sense of Touch. The semi-nude boy at the right with a wine glass and a bunch of grapes represents the sense of Taste.' This figure is the mirror image of that of Lot in Van Baburen's *Lot and his Daughters* of 1622 (figs. 2-3).

There is a long tradition of representing the Five Senses in painting and engraving. Bijlert provided his figures with well-known attributes, although the figure of the man with the wound on his wrist, with a thorn on a broken twig piercing the flesh, seems to be the artist's own invention; the grimace on his face emphasises his pain. Life-size illustrations of the subject

[1] See, for example, the *Venus Chastising Amoretti* signed 'j bijlert fe', sold Christie's, London, 8 Dec. 1995, lot 31 and the unsigned version in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

are known by Caravaggesque painters such as Louis Finson and Theodoor Rombouts. In this same tradition, in 1651 Herman van Aldewereld painted his *Allegory of the Five Senses*, now in Schwerin. Jan van Bijlert was a pupil of his own father, the glass painter Herman van Bijlert, in Utrecht. He was later apprenticed to the painter Abraham Bloemaert. Jan went to France somewhere around 1617 and then to Italy. He is recorded in Rome in 1621. There he was one of the founding members of the Bentveughels, a group of artists originating from the North of Europe, and he was given the nickname Aeneas. In 1624 he returned to his native Utrecht.

As so many other painters staying in Rome, Van Bijlert became influenced by the chiaroscuro painting style of Caravaggio. Caravaggism was the dominant style during the 1610s and 1620s and has had a strong impact on art all over Europe. After his return to Utrecht, Jan van Bijlert painted many compositions in his own typical Caravaggesque style. During the 1630s his style developed, according to the fashion of those days, into a more refined and classical manner. He was at that time much influenced by Gerard van Honthorst (1596 – 1656), a fellow painter and court artist from Utrecht. This development can clearly be seen in Van Bijlert's history and genre paintings, which form a large part of his oeuvre, as we know it.

A note on provenance.

This painting belonged to Baron Michele Angelo Lazzaroni, the financier, collector and amateur dealer who lived at Villa Madeleine in Nice. The Lazzaroni family was ennobled by Umberto I in 1879 for services to the financial industry, shortly after Michele was born in Rome in 1863. According to Edward Fowles, Director of the Duveen Brothers' Paris office, Baron Lazzaroni 'furnished Duveen's more Italian pictures than any other person at this time (1920). He was greatly favoured by BB [Bernard Berenson]…' Lazzaroni, a dilettante painter and restorer himself, owned masterpieces by Bernini, Carlevarijs and others now in the collections of major international museums including the National Gallery, Washington, D.C. and the Getty in Los Angeles. In addition to Villa Madeleine, he owned numerous other grand residences, including Villa Lazzaroni and the Palazzo Grimaldi Lazzaroni in Rome, Castello di Gagliano Aterno in the Province of l'Aquila in Abruzzo, and a home in Paris at 16 rue Spontini.

Fig. 1. Jan van Bijlert, *The Five Senses*, 1626-30, oil on canvas, 154.3 x 185.8 cm. Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum, Hanover

Fig. 1. Detail of the present painting.

Fig. 2. Dirk van Baburen, *Lot and his Daughters*, 1622, oil on canvas, 100 x 146 cm.
Private Collection, France.

COLNAGHI

COLNAGHI
London

26 BURY STREET, LONDON SW1Y 6AL
UNITED KINGDOM

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM–6PM

+44 (0)20 7491 7408

contact@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI
Madrid

CALLE GENERAL CASTAÑOS 9
PLANTA BAJA, DCHA.
28004 MADRID

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
BY APPOINTMENT

spain@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI
New York

23 EAST 67TH STREET, FOURTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10065
USA

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM–6PM

+1 (917) 388-3825

newyork@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI
Brussels

RUE JACQUES JORDAENS 30
1000 BRUXELLES
BELGIUM

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

brussels@colnaghi.com

© COLNAGHI 2025. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.