

The painting depicts the Resurrection of the Christ Child. In the center, the Virgin Mary holds the infant Jesus, who is standing on a stone slab. To the left, a Roman soldier in a red tunic and blue cloak kneels, holding a spear and touching the stone. To the right, another woman, likely the Holy Mary Magdalene, stands holding a lute. The background shows a landscape with a white horse and a distant town.

AGUTTES
FIRST INDEPENDENT AUCTION HOUSE IN FRANCE

Bernardino
Luini

RESURRECTION
OF A MASTERPIECE

AUCTION: 14 NOVEMBER 2019

DROUOT
PARIS

Bernardino
RESURRECTION
OF A MASTERPIECE

Luini

PRESS RELEASE



Bernardino Luini

RESURRECTION
OF A MASTERPIECE

- ✦ A Renaissance painting on the art market
- ✦ A major work from the corpus of Bernardino Luini, Leonardo da Vinci's most prominent pupil
- ✦ From the same collection as the *Salvator Mundi*

During the commemorations of the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death, the Aguttes auction house is selling a major work by the Italian genius's foremost pupil, **Bernardino Luini (v.1480-1532)**. This oil on panel of the *Madonna and Child with St George and an angel* will be presented at Drouot on 14 November.

The work is not unknown to the art market. It was bought in London two years ago by its current owner, a collector living in Germany, when it was part of Sir Francis Cook's collection, one of the most important assembled in England during the 19th century..

But many people are unaware of the extensive discoveries made since this acquisition. These reveal that the painting was a major piece by the artist, whose works were eagerly sought after by Lombard dignitaries in the late 15th and early 16th century

FROM A PRIVATE GERMAN COLLECTION

BERNARDINO LUINI (~1480 - 1532)

MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ST GEORGE AND AN ANGEL

Oil on panel

103.5 x 79.5 cm (40 ⁷/₈ x 31 ¹/₄ in.)

Estimate: €1,800,000/2,000,000

PROVENANCE

- Sir Francis Cook, 1st Baronet, Visconde de Monserrate (1817-1901), Doughty House, Richmond, 1875, and by descent in the Long Gallery of Sir Francis Cook, 4th Baronet (1907-1978), husband of Lady Brenda Cook.
- Christie's, 6 July 2017, bought at this sale by the current owner.





WHEN *SALVATOR MUNDI* WAS ATTRIBUTED TO LUINI



The first known provenance of the *Madonna and Child with St George and an angel* was the collection of Sir Francis Cook (1817-1901), 1st Baronet, Visconde de Monserrate, one of the leading English collectors of the late 19th and early 20th century. Cook was the head of one of Britain's main trading firms, and as a keen art lover began to collect paintings in the 1840s. However, he acquired the core of his collection – the Italian schools – between 1860 and 1890, and started taking advice from Sir Charles Robinson (1824 -1913) in 1869. Robinson was the curator of Queen Victoria's painting galleries, and the former director of the painting department at the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria & Albert Museum).

“The collection brought together at Doughty House is rightly considered one of the finest and most important in England, [in which] many original masterpieces of the Renaissance and modern times are of the utmost interest. [...]”.

MRS. ARTHUR STRONG, ARCHAEOLOGIST AND AUTHOR OF THE GENERAL CATALOGUE OF THE COOK COLLECTION IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY.



36. 170.

BERNARDINO LUINI

DATE of birth uncertain; recorded as a painter by 1512; died between January and July, 1532. Active principally at Milan and also at Chiaravalle, Sarona, Lugano, etc. Influenced by Borgognone, Bramantino and chiefly by Leonardo da Vinci. Luini is not a profoundly interesting artist and much in his work is mere routine; but he has a genuine feeling for beauty and in certain early works—e.g. the *Casa Rubia* and *Villa Pelucca frescoes*—exercises a great fascination through his gay and amiable temperament and poetical invention.

Bibliography: Morelli, "Italian Painters," i, 169 ff. ii, 88-91.
Catalogue of the Lombard Exhibition at Burlington House, Fine Arts Club, 1898 (London, 1899), pp. lxxi-lxxvii.
G. C. Williamson, "Bernardino Luini" (London, 1899).
B. Berenson, "North Italian Painters," pp. 246-251.
L. Beltrami, "Luini" (Milan, 1913).
F. Malinguzzi Falori, "Nuovi dipinti del Luini e Villa Pelucca frescoes"—exercises a great fascination through his gay and amiable temperament (Milan 1913), 27-35.

110. MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ST GEORGE AND AN ANGEL

THE Virgin wears a crimson robe and a green-blue mantle lined with orange; round her auburn hair is tied a transparent veil and another falls across her forehead and round her shoulders. She supports with both hands the Infant Christ, who, draped in a thin veil, stands with his left foot on an eminence on the green grass and places his right foot on the head of the Dragon which is presented to him by St George, to whom the Child gives a palm of Victory. St George wears a red, yellow and blue coat-of-mail. Behind the Virgin is seen an angel with blue wings, wearing a rose-coloured robe and a scarlet mantle and playing the mandoline. Behind the figures is a brown rock overgrown with plants. To the left of the rock, in the middle distance, may be seen the white horse of the Saint, near which the beheaded body of the Dragon is lying on the ground. Further back a group of trees, the grey buildings of the city and blue mountains.

Panel, 40 in. by 30½ in. (1.015 m. by 0.77 m.)
Doughty House, Long Gallery, No. 2.
Photo Anderson 18454.

EXHIBITED at Burlington House, Old Masters, 1902, No. 38.
Morelli, *Italian Painters*, ii, 91.
Catalogue of the Lombard Exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1898 (London, 1899), p. lxxii.
W.v. Seidlitz, in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, xxi, 408.
G. C. Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
B. Berenson, *op. cit.*, 251.
L. Beltrami, *op. cit.*, p. 550.
Restored by Signor Cavenaghi at Milan in 1898.
An old copy of this picture, with some variations, is in the Gallery of the King of Rumania, No. 21 (reproduced in Bachelin, *Tableaux anciens de la galerie Charles I., roi de Roumanie* [Paris, 1898], plate facing p. 32); another copy is in the church of Masnago near Varese (reproduced in *Rassegna d'arte*, xiii, 34).

1

129

This was the context in which the *Madonna and Child with St George and an angel* arrived at Doughty House in Richmond, and was hung alongside paintings by Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Sandro Botticelli and Andrea del Sarto, and the *Salvator Mundi* attributed to Bernardino Luini at its purchase by Sir Charles Robinson: an attribution that has recently been put forward again.

In 1913, Herbert Cook (3rd baronet, grandson of Francis, art historian and patron of the National Portrait Gallery in London) published a limited edition of the collection catalogue with Tancred Borenius. They devoted a double page to Luini's painting, illustrating it with a large reproduction and a long descriptive commentary. The catalogue tells us that Luini's *Madonna and Child* hung in the Long Gallery, where the collection's masterpieces could be seen.



The Long Gallery, Doughty House, in around 1925.

THE MOST FAMOUS MILANESE PAINTER OF HIS TIME

In the 16th century, Luini was the most famous Milanese painter of his time. Born in around 1480 in Dumenza, he arrived in Milan in 1500 as an apprentice. He left the city in 1504, returning three years later to paint the high altar piece of the *Madonna and Child with St Augustine and St Margaret*, now in the Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris.

At the beginning of his career, Luini was well-known in Lombardy as an excellent fresco painter, and was commissioned to paint monumental works in Milan, Saronno (a public commission from the city for the Santuario della Beata Vergine dei Miracoli), Lugano (Santa Maria degli Angioli) and many other venues in the region.



Bernardino Luini, *Madonna and Child with St Augustine and St Margaret*, c. 1507, oil on wood, panel. 142 x 142 cm. © RMN-Grand Palais/Agence Bulloz, Musée Jacquemart-André.

“For many, Bernardino Luini was the central figure of Milanese art, making it all the more remarkable that we know virtually nothing about him.”

**BURLINGTON FINE ARTS CLUB: CATALOGUE OF PICTURES
BY MASTERS OF THE MILANESE AND ALLIED SCHOOLS OF
LOMBARDY, LONDON, 1899, P.LXVII.**



Bernardino Luini, *The Marriage of the Virgin* (part of the mural in Saronno).
© Raffaele Pagani



Bernardino Luini, *The Infant Jesus Sleeping*, oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm, 92 x 73 cm. © Musée du Louvre/A. Dequier - M. Bard.



Bernardino Luini, *Madonna and Child with an angel, aka the Menaggio Madonna*, oil on wood, 80 x 58 cm. © Musée du Louvre/A. Dequier - M. Bard

When Leonardo da Vinci was working in Milan from 1482 to 1499, and above all from 1504 until he left for France, Luini and his contemporary Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (1467-1516) were his most talented pupils and assistants. The master's influence on Luini's work is often obvious, particularly in his use of sfumato and the composition of his easel paintings, like the *Madonna and Child with St John the Baptist* (c. 1510; National Gallery of London). Drawing on his apprenticeship with Leonardo and his work as a fresco painter, Luini developed his own style, which found its most accomplished expression in his easel paintings. In works like *The Infant Jesus Sleeping* (Musée du Louvre), we find Leonardo-like features characterising a Virgin full of dignity and maternal tenderness. On the other hand, the glowing shades are typical of the colourist's frescoes.

Luini was highly popular, as can be seen from the number of commissions he received. His major masterpieces were produced at the behest of prominent Italian families of the time, like the Calvi of Menaggio, who certainly commissioned the *Madonna and Child with an angel*, also known as the *Menaggio Madonna*. This panel was probably painted in around 1520-1530 for the Sant'Andrea altar in the Church of Menaggio, near Como. The work joined the Louvre collections in 1914, when the Marquise Arconati-Visconti donated it to the museum.

Luini's prestige is also illustrated by the provenance of his *Infant Jesus Sleeping*, now in the Grande Galerie at the Louvre. This painting was offered as a diplomatic gift to Louis XIV in 1664 by Pope Alexander VII via his legate, Cardinal Fabio Chigi.

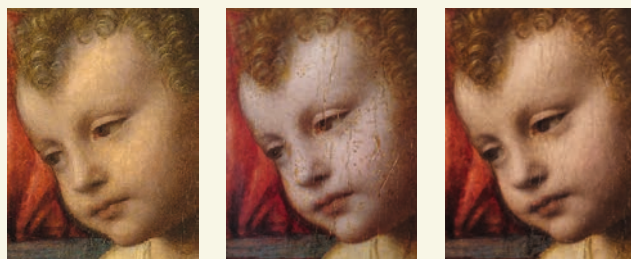
THE REBIRTH OF A MASTERPIECE



18454 - RICHMOND - Madonna, S. Giorgio e Angeli - Luini - Gall. Cook Rip. Int. Anderson Roma
Bernardino Luini, *Madonna and Child with St George and an angel*.
Published in Borenius, *Op. cit.*, 1913, p. 129.

The *Madonna and Child with St George and an angel* we are presenting today has undergone various stages of restoration work over the years, as is common with paintings half a millennium old.

The restoration undertaken by Signor Cavenaghi in Milan in 1898 is mentioned in the Cook catalogue. Further work was certainly carried out in the 20th century, and very recent restoration dates from around a decade ago, when clumsy overpainting rigidified the faces, and a coat of yellow varnish altered the original colours.



Three stages in the present-day restoration of the painting.

When we discovered the painting, it hardly produced the thrilling effect one would expect with such an important work of the Renaissance. The latest operation involved entirely removing the most recent overpainting, lightening the varnish and partially cleaning the second layer of restoration work.

Retouching consisted of filling in missing areas resulting from occasional wear and tear without going over the edges, leaving the original layer of paint as visible as possible, while taking care not to

overinterpret the artist's work. A binder was used, meaning that the restoration work can be reversed.

This cleaning process revealed all the beauty of the painting: the modelling typical of Luini can be seen in the flesh tints, while the lively colours of the clothing, like the pink, blue and orange of the Virgin's mantle, have regained their brilliance.

The most important discovery beneath the layers of restoration work is the face of Jesus, where the transparent texture of his skin, life-like flesh and tender gaze have now been brought to light.

A MATURE WORK: THE INFLUENCES AND FREE APPROACH OF A KEY RENAISSANCE ARTIST



Sodoma, *Saint George and the dragon*, c. 1518, oil on wood, 137.8 × 97.6 cm. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington

The *Madonna and Child with St George and an angel* is a subject found in Jacques de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*. This book written in Latin between 1261 and 1266 recounts the lives of some 150 saints or groups of saints.

Here Luini shows the scene in a complex and original way. The tightly-framed composition, which includes four figures and two animals, focuses the viewer's eye on the central, highly symbolic exchange between St George and the Child. The dynamic energy of the painting lies in the narrative aspect of the scene. In this it is highly original, because the "usual" image of St George shows him in action killing the dragon, as with the *St George and the Dragon* by Sodoma (1477-1549), which also belonged to Sir Francis Cook (National Gallery of Art, Washington). In the painting here, the dragon has already been defeated: in the background, we see its headless body lying on the ground by the white horse. In the foreground, the



Copy kept in the parish church of Masnago, Varese.



Copy kept in private collection, Christie's sale, Monaco, 1988.

interlaced hands illustrate four actions: St George gives the monster's head to Jesus; Jesus points to it as a sign of acceptance; in exchange he gives the divine palm of victory to the saint, who receives it. The scene symbolises the resolution of the combat between the Saint and the dragon, and the triumph of Good over Evil fundamental to the Christian faith.

The plants, depicted with virtually scientific accuracy, have a wealth of interpretations. Often typical of vegetation in Northern Italy and Lombardy, they also symbolise different episodes in the life of Christ and various qualities of the Virgin. The same plants appear in *The Madonna and Child with an angel*, aka *the Menaggio Madonna*.

This painting, which can be dated to the latter part of Luini's career, can be seen as a synthesis of the styles he absorbed and made his own. Leonardo's influence is perceptible in the imaginary city in a mountainous landscape beneath a blue sky, the Virgin's kindly expression,

her auburn hair with its elegant curls (inevitably evoking the master's female figures), the subtle play of light and shade known as *sfumato* – Leonardo's speciality –, the light, luminous texture of the flesh tones and the true-to-life transparency of the skin. On the other hand, the palette of fresh and lively colours is drawn from Luini's practice as a fresco painter, as is the more emphatically sentimental character of the figures, which certainly contributed to the artist's considerable popularity in his time.

Luini had such a glowing reputation that three copies of the painting were made. One, from the 16th century, is now in the parish church of Masnago, near Varese. Another, in private hands, was sold in Monaco in 1988, and the third is now in the Bucharest National Museum of Art. While the composition is reproduced exactly, there is a considerable difference in the quality of painting between these copies and Luini's remarkable work, presented here.



WHY WAS BERNARDINO LUINI FORGOTTEN IF HE WAS SUCH A KEY ARTIST?

Although it is true that little is known about his life and career, the fact that he was forgotten was due to a mistake made by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), the biographer of the great artists, who called him "di Lupino" in his book *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, 1550. The author describes him as "a very delicate and pleasing painter" who "executed most perfectly in fresco. He also worked with a very high finish in oils, and he was a courteous person, and very liberal with his possessions; wherefore he deserves all the praise that is due to any craftsman who makes the works and ways of his daily life shine by the adornment of courtesy no less than

do his works of art."¹ In the 19th century, when the misunderstanding was cleared up, Vasari's praise earned Luini the nickname of the "Lombardy Raphael".

Subsequently, several of his works were attributed to Leonardo da Vinci before authorship was restored to him through research in art history. This was the case, for example, with *Christ among the Doctors*, now in the National Gallery, London, which was reattributed to Luini when it was acquired by the museum.

The artist was also the subject of much attention in the 19th century, when great writers of Romantic

1. Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite dei più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani*, 1550, part III, published by Einaudi, Turin, 1986, p. 716 (un pittore "delicatissimo, vago et onesto nelle figure sue" che "valse ancora nel fare ad olio così bene come a fresco, e fu persona molto cortese e servente de l'arte sua; per il che giustamente se li convengono quelle lodi che merita qualunque artefice che, con l'ornamento della cortesia, fa così risplendere l'opere della vita sua come quelle della arte").



Bernardino Luini, *Christ among the Doctors*, 1515-30, oil on wood, 72.4 x 85.7 cm, Holwell Carr Bequest, 1831. Courtesy of the National Gallery, London 2019.



Leonard de Vinci, *Salvator Mundi*

Europe, including Stendhal, recommended their readers to go and see Luini's frescoes in Saronno to "say farewell to the beautiful painting of Italy".² In the Cook collection catalogue published by Herbert Cook and Tancred Borenius in 1913, the latter wrote, "Luini has a real sense of beauty, and he exercises a genuine fascination in some of his earliest works, through his cheerful, pleasant temperament and poetic imagination."³

In 2014, the Palazzo Reale in Milan devoted a major exhibition to him, entitled "Bernardino Luini e i suoi figli".

But what really brought Bernardino Luini back into the limelight was the spectacular sale in 2017 of *Salvator Mundi*, knocked down for €450 million – because the most expensive art work in the world was originally attributed to him.

2. P.C. Marani, "Pittura e decorazione dalle origini del santuario fino al 1534. Giorgio da Saronno, Alberto da Lodi, B. L. e C. Magni", in *Il santuario della Beata Vergine dei Miracoli di Saronno*, edited by M. L. Gatti Perer, Cinisello Balsamo, 1996, p. 182, n. 21.

3. Borenius, *A Catalogue of the Paintings at Doughty House, Richmond and Elsewhere in the Collection of Sir Frederick Cook Bt., I, Italian Schools*, London, 1913, p. 129.





AGUTTES



Public auction

Old Masters | Drouot | 9 rue Drouot, 75009 Paris

Thursday 14 November 2019 at 6 p.m.



Public Viewing | Drouot, saleroom 6 | 9 rue Drouot, 75009 Paris

Tuesday 12 November : 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Wednesday 13 November : 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Thursday 14 November : 11 a.m - 4.30 p.m.



Old Master Paintings and Drawings department

Head of Department

Grégoire Lacroix

+33 (0) 6 98 20 77 42 | lacroix@aguttes.com

Press Relations | Drouot

Mathilde Fennebresque

+33 (0)1 48 00 20 42 | Mob. +33 (0)6 35 03 49 87

Press Relations | Aguttes

Sébastien Fernandes

+33 (0) 6 72 39 03 23 | fernandes@aguttes.com

