

Worcester Art Museum Catalog Sheet

1960.13

Accessioned Feb 05, 1960

Europe

Painting

Artist Follower of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio
Italian, 1571– 1610

Title *The Vision of Saint Jerome*

Date first half of the 17th century

Medium oil on canvas

Dimensions 73.2 x 97.5 cm (28 13/16 x 38 3/8 in.)
Frame: 94.5 x 119.5 cm (37 3/16 x 47 1/16 in.)

Credit Line Austin S. Garver Fund

Provenance Julius Weitzner, New York NY

Exhibitions "Caravaggio--On the Tracks of a Genius", museum kunst palast, Dusseldorf, Germany, September 7, 2006 - January 7, 2007.

Location On view

Citations 1. Caravaggio; Originale und Kopien im Spiegel der Forschung. Stiftung Museum Kunst Palast. 2006. Pages: p. 198



Curator Signature:

Date:

THE VISION OF SAINT JEROME

Follower of Caravaggio

First half of the 17th century, possibly Italian

Oil on canvas

Museum purchase, Austin S. Garver Fund, 1960.13

St. Jerome, one of the four church fathers, is known for his translation of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew to Latin in the 4th century AD. Despite his religious position he was also fascinated with Roman writings, including Cicero, as he secretly confessed in his letters. This painting depicts the moment when God accuses the church father of reading pagan literature.

Any discussion about the painting's authorship includes one of the foremost Baroque painters, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571 – 1610), as well as other important Italian and northern European artists active in the first half of the 17th century. Some art historians consider it to be an autograph work by Caravaggio, but the attribution remains uncertain. Caravaggio's revolutionary art, as well as his moral conduct, made him the most admired and scorned artist during his lifetime. After his death however, he was nearly forgotten until the 1940s when art historians rediscovered his work. Recently, several major international Caravaggio exhibitions provide proof of his greatness and art historical significance.

If not by Caravaggio, this work could only have been painted by an artist who had closely observed the master's work. Caravaggio's use of dramatic lighting or chiaroscuro, and realistic approach to religious subject matter had a strong influence on his contemporaries, such as Ribera, Rembrandt, and Georges de la Tour.

Typically, depictions of the *Vision of St. Jerome* include angels blowing their trumpets. Here the artist takes an unusual approach and focuses exclusively on the moment that the saint is struck by divine light. Frightened, he shields himself with his right arm, snuffing out the candle and dropping the skull that now rests in broken pieces on the table. The still life can also be read as a *memento mori*, a reminder of the transitory nature of life.

Art historians continue to search for ways to untangle the mysteries of this Caravaggesque painting with its unusual depiction of St. Jerome.

CARAVAGGIO

1573-1610

Michelangelo Merisi; born at Caravaggio, which is not very far from Milan. Apprenticed in 1584 to Simone Peterzano. Went to Rome ca. 1588 or later, and probably studied under the Cavaliere d'Arpino ca. 1591. Ca. 1606, Naples; then Malta, Sicily. He had an international influence.

Follower of CARAVAGGIO

1960.13 S. JEROME (?)

The figure is seen raising his hands and head at an Illumination; he is shown at half length, seated behind a rough table on which are a skull (with broken jawbone), a candle in a candlestick, an inkpot with quill and some books. The letter N is visible on the open page of the topmost book.

Canvas, lined, 28 13/16 x 38 3/8 (0.732 x 0.975). Much damaged from cracking, and extensively repainted, as is particularly noticeable in the white shirt. The candlestick appears to be well preserved. Various enquiries seem to indicate that the picture has not been cut down to any significant extent.

The figure is not completely characterized as S. Jerome, but the identification is probable¹. The subject may be merely an Illumination². It seems not to be a representation of *S. Jerome listening to the Trumpet of the Last Judgment*³ since there is no trumpet, and apparently no trumpet has been cut away⁴. The significance of the letter N on the book has not been explained⁵.

The picture was ascribed, apparently on the authority of Longhi⁶, to Ulrich Loth (ca. 1600(?)-1662). By the kindness of the authorities at Munich, the present writer has seen various pictures and photographs of pictures by or ascribed to this painter, but has not seen any connection with no. 1960.13. A *Magdalen* in the Bavarian State Collections (inv. 1515), comparable in size and scale, is signed by Ulrich Loth and dated 1630, rather early in his activity. A *S. Peter* there (inv. 10662) is signed and dated 1646; this is small, on copper⁷. If it turned out that some version of the Worcester picture is by or reasonably ascribed to Ulrich Loth, the present writer believes that no more than community of design would be established.

The condition is not too bad to separate the picture from Ulrich Loth; but probably it will prevent any convincing attribution to a particular follower of Caravaggio. Possibly, the painter was not Italian. A suggestion was aired that it is identifiable as a picture of *S. Jerome* by Caravaggio, mentioned by Bellori⁸; the present writer rejects this.

PROVENANCE⁹: Said to have been found on the Island of Malta; owned by Pico Cellini, Rome, and by Giuliano Briganti, from whom purchased through Julius H. Weitzner, New York, Austin S. Garver Fund, 1960.

EXHIBITIONS: At Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1965 and at Wichita, Kansas, in 1967-8. (See References d and e.)

NOTES: (1) The picture in the Borghese Gallery at Rome, usually accepted as Caravaggio's, is perhaps even less characterized, but there the identification as S. Jerome is unworthy of doubt; cf. Paola Della Pergola, *Galleria Borghese, I Dipinti*, Vol. II, 1959, pp. 80 f., no. 115. A candle (as in the Worcester picture) symbolized S. Jerome's nocturnal studies; this was noted already by Molanus (d. 1585). (2) Such would seem to be the theme of El Greco's *S. Jerome* at Washington (H. E. Wethey, *El Greco and his School*, 1962, Vol. I, pl. 291); but it should be borne in mind that this figure is clearly characterized as a S. Jerome in penitence. A picture by H. Bloemaert, 1630, in the Harrach Collection formerly at Vienna (now Schloss Rohrau), may represent an Illumination, and if so is much more closely comparable with no. 1960.13; repr. by Anna Strümpell in the *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. II (1925-6), pl. LII D. Illumination may be thought to descend on S. Jerome (in his study) from the three theological virtues in Cigoli's picture of 1599 in S. Giovanni de' Fiorentini, Rome; E. Rufini, *S. Giovanni de' Fiorentini*, 1957, fig. 14, and pl. XXVI of the catalogue of the Cigoli exhibition at San Miniato, 1959. (3) Although this seems not to be the subject, a note on it is here inserted. Among S. Jerome's spurious works, a *Regula Monachorum* includes the phrase "Igitur, sive leges, sive dormies, sive scribes, sive vigilabis, Amos (?) tibi semper buccina in auribus sonet," in connection with the Last Judgment; and in a *Regula Monacharum*, which may or may not be related, there is "Semper tuba illa terribilis vestris perstrepat auribus: Surgite mortui, venite ad iudicium" (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. XXX (Jerome, Vol. XI), cols. 375, 417). A somewhat varied conflation of these two is quoted by Cornelius a Lapide, *Commentaria in omnes Divi Pauli Epistolas*, 1679, p. 657, and he adds "quamquam in operibus Hier. haec sententia jam non reperitur." The *Regula Monachorum* is nevertheless claimed to be made up of phrases used by S. Jerome, and was produced by the Spaniard Lupo de Olmedo and approved by Pope Martin V ca. 1429 (Migne, *op. and vol. cit.* in this note, cols. 385sq.). This gave a firm basis for a section of the Hieronymites, known as the Monk-Hermits of S. Jerome of the Observance (founded in 1424 at Lupo de Olmedo's instance); there is much about Lupo de Olmedo in Hélyot, *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques*, Vol. III, 1715, pp. 447 ff. The words quoted from the *Regula Monachorum*, apparently mingled with those of the *Regula Monacharum*, may indeed have been influential for the iconography of S. Jerome's association with the Last Judgment. In a picture of 1439 by Antonio Alberti da Ferrara, at Urbino, S. Jerome as a cardinal holds a book inscribed with words clearly related, but applied to S. Jerome himself; repr. by R. Longhi, *Officina Ferrarese*, 1956, fig. 24. Compare also a fresco of 1458 by Iacobus (Giacomo di Bedo) in S. Secondo at Gubbio; repr. by Salmi in *Art in America*, Vol. XI (1923), p. 157, fig. 1, the inscription recorded by Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Central and South Italian Schools of Painting*, 1965, col. 593. Also a picture with shorter inscription, at Brooklyn, assigned to Jacopo Bellini; B. Berenson, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance, Venetian School*, 1957, Vol. I, fig. 59. Cf. also a woodcut of S. Jerome in penitence, including a scroll more or less similarly inscribed; W. L. Schreiber, *Handbuch der Holz- und Metallschnitte des XV. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. III, 1927, p. 137, no. 1547, repr. by C. Dodgson, *Woodcuts of the XV Century in the British Museum*, 1935, Vol. II, pl. LXXXII. Among later works with a comparable inscription, see a design mixing the motives of S. Jerome in penitence and in his study, associated with the

Master of the Death of the Virgin or Jan de Hemessen, known in several painted versions, some dated in the 1540's (M. J. Friedländer, *Die Altniederländische Malerei*, Vol. IX, 1931, no. 40; G. Marlier, *Erasmus et la Peinture Flamande de son Temps*, 1954, p. 209; a photograph of the version in Brussels was kindly sent by Dr. H. Pauwels). It may be that in this design S. Jerome is conceived as having just written the sentence on a paper lying on the table in front of him, before taking up a stone with which to smite himself. Specifically bringing the Last Judgment in pictorially was done, for example, by Marinus van Reymerswale by showing S. Jerome with his book open at a representation of the event; see various examples repr. by M. J. Friedländer, "Der Hl. Hieronymus von Marinus van Reymerswale," in *Pantheon*, Vol. XIII (1934), pp. 33 ff. (for other aspects of these and related pictures, see Marlier, *op. cit.*, pp. 169 ff.). Sometimes Christ in Judgment with a few other figures is shown small in the sky; an example including an angel blowing a trumpet is by Jan de Hemessen, 1534 (Friedländer, *Die Altniederländische Malerei*, Vol. XII, no. 210, pl. XXXIX). The matter was also represented merely by showing one or more trumpets, often blown by an angel. The present writer does not know when this was introduced. What is acceptably an example is a fresco apparently established as of 1585 or soon after, in the Church of the Escorial, stated to have been designed by Luca Cambiaso and executed after his death by Romolo Cincinnato; see some description by F. de los Santos (on pp. 52-3 of the translation by G. Thompson, *A Description of . . . The Escorial*, 1760), the record on p. 128 of B. Suida Manning and W. Suida, *Luca Cambiaso*, 1958, and the reproduction of an engraving, adumbrating this fresco in a general view of the surroundings, in *El Escorial 1563-1963*, Vol. II, *Arquitectura—Artes*, Madrid, Ediciones Patrimonio Nacional, 1963, p. 679. An example by Camillo Procaccini, considered to be of 1598, is in the Certosa di Pavia; see E. Arslan, "Otto tele della Certosa di Pavia," in *Arte Lombarda*, Vol. V (1960), pp. 243 ff., repr. fig. 3. An example of 1609, with a monogram accepted as that of Evert Crijnsz. van der Maes, is at Rotterdam, Boymans-van Beuningen Museum; repr. by H. Noë, *Carel van Mander en Italie*, 1954, fig. 40; monogram repr. in the Rotterdam catalogue in French, 1892, pp. 147-8. The motive, popular in the 17th century, continued after that, an example by Sigalon being exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1831 (a lithograph after it by de Bichebois aîné was published in *L'Artiste*, Series I, Vol. I, 1831; cf. Maurice Tourneux, *Salons et Expositions d'Art à Paris*, 1919, p. 59). There is, finally, no doubt that a trumpet thus associated with S. Jerome does, or at least should refer to the Last Judgment; apart from some literary sources, see for instance two pictures in the Prado at Madrid, one (with the dead being raised) a Luca Giordano (repr. by A. Venturi, *L'Arte a San Girolamo*, 1924, p. 268, fig. 224), and one by Antonio de Pereda, where there is a trumpet and a book open at the Last Judgment (repr. by F. J. Sánchez Cantón, *The Prado Museum*, 1949, pl. LXXXV). (4) There is evidence that the trumpet has been cut away from Guido Cagnacci's *S. Jerome* at Vienna; see the *Katalog der Gemäldegalerie*, Vol. I, 1960, p. 26, no. 478; reproduction in the catalogue of the exhibition *Maestri della Pittura del Seicento Emiliano*, Bologna, 1959, pl. 152. (5) The letter N appears rather similarly placed in Cagnacci's picture, mentioned in the previous note; yet there its position would seem awkward for *Novum Testamentum*, which might suit here at a pinch. G. Kaftal, *Iconography of the Saints in Tuscan Painting*, 1952, col. 524, cites for S. Jerome an inscription on a picture that begins *Nichil*; in a Lotto in the Prado at Madrid (*Catálogo*, 1963, p. 374,

no. 448) an inscription referring to S. Jerome begins *Nunc*. It may be thought that in the Worcester picture something else was intended. (6) Longhi's opinion is recorded in a letter at WAM from Julius H. Weitzner, October 8, 1959. (7) Photos of these and others at WAM. For the *Magdalen* see the catalogue *Deutsche Maler und Zeichner des 17 Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1966, no. 56, fig. 50. (8) Besides the existing *S. Jerome* in Malta Cathedral, Caravaggio "fece un'altro San Girolamo con un teschio nella meditatione della morte, il quale tuttavia resta nel palazzo"; G. P. Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, etc., 1672, p. 210. The brief description does not fit the Worcester picture very well. (9) Documentation at WAM including letter from Julius H. Weitzner, November 12, 1959, and receipt signed by Giuliano Briganti, January 22, 1960.

REFERENCES: (a) *The Art Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII (1960), pp. 186 f. (repr.). (b) *La Chronique des Arts* (Supplement to the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*), February, 1961, p. 26 (repr.). (c) H. van de Waal, "Rembrandt's Faust Etching, a Socinian Document and the Iconography of the Inspired Scholar" in *Oud-Holland*, Vol. LXXIX (1964), p. 41, fig. 34. (d) Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, *Problem Pictures: Paintings without Authors* (exhibition catalogue), October 13–November 15, 1965, no. 6. (e) Wichita Art Museum, *Masterpieces of Religious Art* (exhibition catalogue), December 1, 1967–January 30, 1968, pp. 34, 35 (repr.). (f) WAM *Annual Report*, 1960, pp. ix, xiv.