

Provenance

Anton van Dyck (Antwerp, 1599 - London, 1641)

Christ and the Adulteress

ca. 1620-22

oil on canvas

169 x 252 cm

inv. n.º. 581



The work, formerly part of the Royal Collections, was damaged in the 1734 fire at the Royal Alcázar of Madrid. At a later stage it entered the collection of Infante Sebastian Gabriel de Borbón, where it was restored. In 1982 it was acquired for the BBVA Collection.

The anagram “S. G.” pyrographed on the back clearly identifies it as once belonging to the collection of Infante Sebastian Gabriel de Borbón, allowing us to retrace its provenance.

It was mentioned for the first time in the 1686 inventory of the Royal Alcázar of Madrid, with no. 125, in the “chamber of Our Lord the King” and attributed to Tintoretto (1518-1594). It may have been at the Alcázar since the time of Philip IV (1605- 1655) given that Charles II (1661-1700) did not

significantly increase his collection. Its absence from the 1666 inventory, made at the monarch’s death, is not a conclusive fact, as some rooms, including the king’s chamber, were left without inventorying.

In the 1700 inventory of the Royal Alcázar of Madrid, undertaken at the death of Charles II, it is recorded with no. 615, and placed in “the Prince’s room,” maintaining the attribution to Tintoretto and valued at 500 doubloons.

The fire of 1734 severely devastated this section of the palace. However, the painting was saved and moved to the Buen Retiro palace, where it is recorded in the 1772 inventory of Charles III (1716-1788) with no. 380, though lacking attribution and noted as seriously damaged.

There are no further references to the work in the Royal Collections, a fact that leads us to believe that it probably passed into the hands of Infante Sebastian Gabriel, who would have ordered its restoration. The damage suffered by the work in the fire would explain the overcleaning of the background landscape and of part of the areas of flesh.

Sebastian Gabriel de Borbón (1811-1875) was the son of Pedro de Borbón, grandson of the Infante Gabriel and great-grandson of Charles III. His collection was formed by three main blocks: the paintings inherited from Charles III, confiscated in 1835 to go on display at the Museo de la Trinidad and then returned to him in 1861; the paintings brought from his exile in Naples; and the acquisitions made in Spain after Mendizábal’s confiscation of church property in 1855. This last group included the collection of the painter José Madrazo (1781-1859) that the infante bought from his heirs after his death.

The painting in hand was included among the collection of 800 paintings listed in the execution of Infante Sebastian Gabriel’s will in 1887. On the infante’s demise in 1875, the collection was exhibited for the first time in 1876 at the Antiguo Asilo of Pau, where it was valued by the gallery’s director, Eusebio Rey, the curator Salvador Cubells and the president of the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts. Here it appeared under reference no. 480 with the title *The Adulteress* and attributed to Titian (1490-1576).

The execution of the infante’s will led to the dispersion of the paintings among his five children and his widow and to their heirs, from whom the bank purchased the work in 1982.