

RICHARD GREEN

FINE PAINTINGS • ESTABLISHED 1955

GODFRIED SCHALCKEN

Made, near Dordrecht 1643 - 1706 The Hague

Ref: BX 108

Portrait of a young lady as the goddess Diana attended by her nymphs, in a forest with a hunting dog



Signed lower left: G. Schalcken

Oil on canvas: 20³/₄ x 17 ³/₈ in / 52.7 x 44.1 cm

Frame Size: 27 x 22¹/₂ in / 68.6 x 57.2 cm

Painted circa 1680-85

In a polished black seventeenth century Dutch style frame



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Provenance:

TPC Haag, The Hague, 21st December 1812, lot 4 (70 florins to Leesbergen)
Theo Stokvis, before 1938;
for whom stored in the depot of the Gemeente Museum, The Hague, inv. no.42-38, 1938-13th August
1948, at which date returned to the owner
Schaeffer Gallery, New York, by 1956

Private collection, USA

Literature:

C Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, translated and edited by EG Hawke, London 1913, vol. V, p.330, no.71a
T Beherman, *Godfried Schalcken*, Paris 1988, p.119, cat. no.32, illus.
G Jansen, 'Additions to Godfried Schalcken's oeuvre as a draftsman', *Hoogsteder Mercury*, vol. 13/14, 1992, pp.77-78, fig. 8
G Jansen, in AK Wheelock (ed.), 'Diana and Her Nymphs in a Clearing', *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, New York 2017, <https://www.theleidencollection.com/archive/>

This charming painting is a *portrait historié*, with the sitter presented in the guise of the goddess Diana, the chaste huntress: a fitting analogy for a young girl who would soon be launched on the marriage market. The painting subtly balances fierceness with softness. 'Diana's' steely nature is indicated by the bloody arrow-head which she holds and the brilliantly realistic hunting dog which dashes, fangs bared, behind her. In the far left distance is a tiny male figure with dogs coursing deer, a reference to Actaeon, who in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was changed by Diana into a stag and slaughtered by his own hounds for the sin of stumbling upon the goddess while she was bathing. This rather forbidding presentation of the goddess-sitter is gently undercut by the shimmering, sensuous composition, by her pearly, luminescent skin and the palette of soft gold, rose, blue and white in the trailing draperies. The composition is built upon serpentine forms, from the bow and Diana's crescent headdress, to her elegantly curved limbs and those of her companions.

This portrait, with its Classical references, would have appealed to the élite of Dordrecht, a city of which Schalcken had become its most fashionable painter by the 1680s. He was highly educated and certainly knew Ovid's poetry in the original, being the son of Cornelius Schalckius (1610/11-1674), Rector of the Latin School in Dordrecht. First intended for the Church, Godfried originally studied

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theology, which demanded knowledge of Latin and Greek. However, in the words of his fellow townsman, Arnold Houbraken, Schalcken's 'love of art made him bid farewell to the study of languages, even though he was far advanced in them'¹.

The myth of Diana was a favourite theme with Schalcken, both in history paintings and *portraits historiés*. He painted the eighteen-year-old *Magdalena de La Court* as Diana (private collection) around 1680². The history painting *Diana and her nymphs in a clearing* (Leiden Collection, New York) which has similar delicious ice-cream colours to the present portrait, was made *circa* 1680-85³.

A preparatory drawing for the present portrait is in a private collection⁴.

¹ Translation from *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, The Hague 1718-21, vol. 3, p.175.

² Beherman, *op. cit.*, p.165, no.66, illus.

³ Not known to Beherman. There are two other versions of this painting, one in the Schönborn Collection at Schloss Weissenstein, Pommersfelden (Beherman no.30b) and one in a private collection (Beherman no.30).

⁴ G Jansen, *Hoogsteder Mercury*, *op. cit.*

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Godfried Schalcken, *Diana and her nymphs in a clearing*, c.1680-85. © The Leiden Collection.



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GODFRIED SCHALCKEN

Made, near Dordrecht 1634 - 1706 The Hague

Godfried Schalcken was born in 1634 at Made near Dordrecht, the son of a minister. He studied with Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678) in Dordrecht from 1656-62 and with the genre painter Gerard Dou (1613-1675) in Leiden, acquiring Dou's fineness of execution.

By 1665 Schalcken was back in Dordrecht. In 1679 he married Françoise van Diemen, daughter of a wealthy officer from Breda. He became Dordrecht's most fashionable portrait painter and built up an international reputation for portraits and genre scenes by candlelight. Schalcken also painted Biblical and mythological subjects and *portraits historiés*, and made etchings. He attracted the attention of wealthy Court patrons at The Hague and in 1691 became a member of The Hague painters' confraternity.

Schalcken spent 1692-7 in London specialising in portraits, including one of William III by candlelight (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). By 1698 he was back in The Hague. In 1703 Schalcken went to Düsseldorf to execute religious works for Johann Wilhelm, the Elector Palatine. He died in The Hague in 1706. Schalcken's pupils include the portrait and genre painter Carel de Moor (1656-1738) and the candlelight painter Arnold Boonen (1669-1729), as well as his own sister and nephew.

The work of Godfried Schalcken is represented in the British Royal Collection; the National Gallery, London; the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; the Uffizi, Florence; the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe; the Kunsthalle, Hamburg; the National Museum, Stockholm and the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

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