



Jan Massys

(Antwerp 1508 – 1575)

The Adoration of the Three Kings

Oil on Panel

102,7 cm. x 97 cm.

1530-40 ca.

For Christmas what could be better than this amazing panel featuring the "Adoration of the Three Kings" by the important sixteenth-century Flemish painter Jan Massys. The artist was part of a saga of artists, his father and teacher was the famous and renowned painter Quentin Massys (ca 1465 -. 1530). Also his brother Cornelis Massys (1508-1550) also developed his career as a painter, in fact in 1531 both would become Masters of the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp . Jan Massys repertoire encompasses various themes, among which religious representations, certain passages historical and genre scenes.

Jan Massys's work is mainly divided into two periods, the first with a clear influence of the style of his father, in which he repeated his same types of compositions and from the workshop of Joost Van Cleve. The second phase, which may date from 1540, in which after a long stay between Italy and France, is set in Antwerp again, bringing their new acquired knowledge learned during the travels into their pictorial works, and consequently becoming one of the top exponents of Mannerism in Europe. In the paintings of this last period, the colorful influenced can remind the viewers of the artist's father's works. Quentin, focused more on creating very elegant figures that included a a touch of sensuality.

Our painting would be within the time of transition from one period to another, as say the experts in Flemish painting who have studied the work: Dr. Jan de Maere, Dr. Klaus Ertz, Dr. P. Maximiliaan J. Martens and Dr. Caterina Limentani Viridis. This last signature the certificate stating that both the quality, such as the proximity of the work to certain compositions of his father, as well as certain characteristics typical of the artist, the work has been taken without any doubt by Jan Massys.



The adoration of *The Three Kings* is one of the most beautiful episodes in the history of Christianity, representing the three kings along with newborn Jesus. In this case, Jan Massys has recreated the scene masterfully, using a pyramidal composition that has placed the protagonists in the center the Virgin and Child, and sides worshipping in the position of reverence the Kings Melchor and Gaspar. But if something catches the eye, plus all the characters in the picture, is the spectacular Renaissance building clear Italian influence that serves as a backdrop.

First we have to mention the wonderful image of the Virgin and Child, located under the central arch covered as a niche. They are seated on a throne, in a much more Italian style than Flemish taste for its refinement and delicacy, as well as the composition of both figures. The Madonna is wearing a blue robe and her head covered with a white headdress which allows the viewer to get a glimpse of certain strands of her blonde hair, her face is beautiful, but his downcast eyes and head cocked indicate some state of sadness. This is probably in allusion to the painful future Passion. She is holding the Baby Jesus, caught in her lap and wrapped in a white sheet. The picture shows a lot of tenderness although the child directs attention away fidgeting in his mother's arms.





On both sides of the Virgin and Child the viewer can see Melchior with white beard dressed in an elegant red robe and huge white sleeves, which suggest a sword inlaid with precious stones, the meaning of his name in Hebrew is "king of light" and represents an adult man. Behind him we see Balthazar, whose name comes from Babylon and means "God protects the King" and symbolizes the youth of man. And finally on the right stands Gaspar with brown hair, carrying a sword with a rich decoration, whose name comes from the Persian and means "treasure administrator".



Each king carries a gift for the baby Jesus, Melchior carries gold as a sign of recognition of his kingship, Gaspar offers incense which is the symbol of the divine, and Balthazar gives him myrrh representing the man.



Besides Melchior the viewer can see page wearing a stylish hat and offering gold.



Beside Gaspar is the incense box and the page is carrying myrrh in his hands.





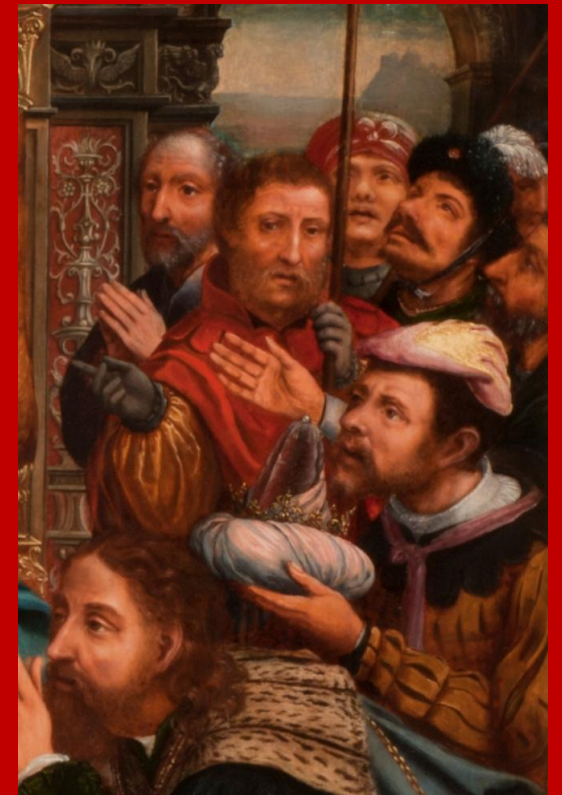
The most striking part of the work is the Renaissance architecture in which the scene is set with an exceptional pictorial quality, full of vegetables decorations in low relief.

On the columns of the central arch there are two sculptures of lamias, mythological figures of women with dragon body. Under the arched gallery you can find numerous characters. Right beside the King Gaspar, we can see up to seven characters, the protagonists being the pageboy holding a hat and the gentleman carrying the spear, probably alludes to the future Passion of Christ.



On the left behind the king Baltasar, one can see his page wearing an exotic silk turban.

This is a real masterpiece of Jan Massys, we gift a festive picture to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas.



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PROVENANCE

Private Collection, Europe, until 2011.

Soraya Cartategui Gallery, Madrid (Spain), 2013.

EXHIBITIONS

- Galleria Luigi Caretto, “53 Mostra Maestri Fiamminghi ed Olandesi del XVI-XVII secolo” TurIn, Italy. November 2012.
- *Brueghel. Meraviglie dell'arte fiamminga. The fascinating world of Flemish Art*, Rome, Cloister of Bramante, from 18 of December of 2012 to 2 of June of 2013
 - Feriarte November 2013 Madrid, Soraya Cartategui Gallery, Madrid, Spain.

MUSEUMS

Jan Massys's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Antwerp- Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Massachusetts)- Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels- Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Dresden- Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Stockholm- National Museum, Geneva- Palazzo Bianco, Madrid- Prado Museum, Paris- Louvre Museum, Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania)- Carnegie Institute, Vienna- Kunsthistorisches Museum.