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Galería de Arte

Soraya Cartategui

Dear friends,

In this month of February the gallery presents you this wonderful religious work of the important flamish painter, Jan Cossiers.

Best wishes,
Soraya Cartategui



Jan Cossiers

(Antwerp 1600 - 1671)

“Mystical marriage of Santa Catalina”

Oil on panel

58,5 x 71,5 cm. (23,03 x 28,15 in.)

1650 ca.

Born in Antwerp in 1600, Jan Cossiers was the pupil of his father, the painter Antoon Cossiers (d. 1646/1647), and possibly of Cornelis de Vos. He traveled to Rome in 1623 and subsequently resided in Aix-en-Provence from 1623 to 1626, where he collaborated on paintings for the Confraternity of Penitents. After returning to Antwerp, he joined the Saint Luke's Guild in 1628/1629 and the rhetoricians' chamber De Violieren in 1632/1633. He was elected dean of the guild in 1640. Aside from the Caravaggesque genre scenes for which he is best known, Cossiers also painted altarpieces, mythological scenes, and portraits. Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) enlisted Cossiers, along with Jacob Jordeans, to assist him in the decoration for the triumphal entry into Antwerp of Cardinal Infante Ferdinand in 1635 and the painting of a decorative cycle for the Torre de la Parada, Philip IV's hunting lodge near Madrid, in 1637. On the death of P.P. Rubens, Cossiers made numerous ecclesiastical commissions, such as the Adoration of the Shepherds for the Jesuit Church of Amsterdam (Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis). These works denote a freer invocation in the use of color and in the use of brilliant effects of light and shadow that result in an obvious *sfumato*. In addition, the figures are endowed with a strong expressive load that is increased in the later works where the compositions influenced by P.P. Rubens turn to others inserted in environments of greater emotional charge, such as the set of the Passion of Christ that he made for the church of the Beguinage of Mechelen.



This excellent work realized by the artist Jan Cossiers, frames a religious scene, the Mystical Marriage of Saint Catherine, related by Santiago de la Vorágine in *The Golden Legend* work of the middle of the XIII century.

Saint Catherine of Alexandria was of royal stock, persecuted after its conversion to Christianity by the emperor Maxentius. In a dream, the Saint had a vision where as a child Jesus refused to take her as a wife because she wasn't beautiful enough. She interpreted the dream and decided to convert to Christianity, learning the precepts of the Christian faith with a hermit, getting baptized. After a while, St. Catherine has a dream again, where the baby Jesus accepts your beauty, becoming the heavenly wife of Christ, confirming himself by placing a ring on his finger, a moment that is represented in our work.

After his conversion, the emperor Maxentius sent fifty philosophers to convince the Saint to renounce his faith, but far from convincing her, the philosophers were converted to the Christian faith by the Saint. Maxentius exasperated, forced Saint Catherina to marry a prince, to which she refused in resounding, so she was beaten and imprisoned. In the prison he turned the empress, a courtier and several soldiers of the guard. When Maxentius found out, he condemned her to death in a wheel full of sharp iron points. When the martyrdom was to be executed, the wheel broke and the iron points flew through the air, then she was beheaded. His martyrdom took place on November 25, around the year 310.

The scene, dominated by a triangular composition, shows the Virgin, with an angelic face that directly observes the

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with great tenderness and affection. She wears a white tunic, symbol of her purity and red and blue dress, symbolizing eternity, so typical of Marian iconography. In the hair, it carries a delicate veil that shows the mastery of the author when it comes to translating the transparencies in such a beautiful way. The baby Jesus gives off a halo of light from his little head, which is treated with a very typical fleshiness of P.P. Rubens, as a sign of the contact between the two painters.

On the right, we find Saint Catherina, like a young noblewoman with curly hair, who wears a crown, because of her royal descent. He holds the wheel with his left hand, instrument his martyrdom, next to a palm leaf, attribute of the martyr. His clothes, dominated by ocher and brown colors, show the great mastery of Jan Cossiers at the time of representing the chiaroscuro, through folds made with a carefree but accurate brushstroke.



After remembering the story, we can easily identify the scene represented in the central part of our work. This is the moment in which the baby Jesus takes the hand of Saint Catherine to place the ring

that bears on her right hand, in order to make her his heavenly wife.

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are powerful and fleshy figures, characterized by a great tenderness and beauty so typical in the works of Jan Cossiers, which at the same time resemble those made by P.P. Rubens, as a sign of the contact between the two painters. The skin of the figures, with a great luminosity, contrasts with the chiaroscuro of the folds of the clothes worn by the characters.



The neutral background, in gray tones, only accentuates the celestial sparkle of the figures of the Virgin and the baby Jesus, and the fleshiness characterized by a whitish skin, symbol of the purity of the characters. This background praises the importance of the scene represented in our beautiful work.

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PROVENANCE

- Private collection, France.

MUSEUMS

There are works by Jan Cossiers in the Museum Collections of the following cities, among others: National Prado Museum, Madrid - Louvre Museum, Paris - National Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp - Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg - Hunterian Museum, Glasgow - Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel. Abbeville - Mus. Boycher de Perthes, Antwerp - Convent of Zwartusters, Bruges - Church of St. Walburgis, London - Buckingham Palace, Mechelen - Church of Groot Beginjnhof, Lille - Museum of Fine Arts, The Hague - Mauritshuis, Vienna - Gg. Der Akaemie, Dunkirk - Museum of Fine Arts, Culemborg - Church of St. Barbara, Munich - Alte Pin., Saint-Omer - Sandelin Museum.

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