

## EARLY DIEGO VELAZQUEZ MASTERPIECE IDENTIFIED AT YALE

For immediate release, July 2, 2010



Attributed to Diego Velázquez, *The Education of the Virgin*, ca. 1617-18. Oil on canvas. Yale University Art Gallery

Based on the research of John Marciari, currently the Curator of European Art at the San Diego Museum of Art and formerly the Nina and Lee Griggs Associate Curator of Early European Art at the Yale University Art Gallery, the seventeenth-century Spanish painting portraying *The Education of the Virgin* in the collection of the Yale University Art Gallery has been reattributed to Diego Velázquez. The painting was donated to the Gallery in 1925 by Henry Hotchkiss Townshend, B.A. 1897, LL.B. 1901, and Raynham Townshend, MD, B.S. 1900S. The painting is thought to have been in their family for at least 40 years and was in poor condition when it arrived at the Gallery. Prior to the current attribution, the painting was considered

to be by an unknown artist from Seville, Spain. The work is now believed to have been painted by Velázquez himself in Seville around 1617, one of the artist's earliest works. The painting is currently being studied for conservation treatment and is not on view.

As part of the Yale University Art Gallery's renovation and expansion project, which began with the renovation of its 1953 Louis Kahn building in 2003 and continues now with the construction underway to renovate and expand the 1928 Egerton Swartwout designed-building and the 1866 Street Hall designed by Peter Bonnett Wight, the Gallery has done a thorough and extensive review of its collections.

The movement of the collection resulting from these renovations coupled with the augmentation of the curatorial staff has led to new research on the collection. Curators working together with the Gallery's conservation staff were able to study works closely using the naked eye as well as examine them using conservation technologies. By looking closely at the surface of the work and what lies beneath it, new ideas about attributions can be investigated and documentary evidence supporting the attributions pursued. Reattribution of art works is a long process involving technical and documentary research, visual analysis, and consultation between curators and their specialist colleagues throughout the world. The Velázquez painting discussed in Marciari's article for *Ars* is the result of six years of research and analysis.

The Department of European Art, created in 2002, focuses on the art of ninth through the nineteenth century. Laurence Kanter, formerly Curator-in-Charge of the Robert Lehman Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, became the Gallery's inaugural Lionel Goldfrank III Curator of European Art in 2002. That same year, John Marciari, who holds a PH.D. in the History of Art from Yale, came to the Gallery as the Florence B. Selden Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, during which time he coorganized the traveling exhibition and catalogue *Master Drawings from the Yale University Art Gallery*. He became the Gallery's first Nina and Lee Griggs Associate Curator of Early European Art in 2004, and in 2008, he left Yale to become the Curator of European Art and the head of Provenance Research at the San Diego Museum of Art.

### **Yale University Art Gallery**

The Yale University Art Gallery, America's oldest and one of its most important university art museums was founded in 1832, when patriot-artist John Trumbull donated more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then, the Gallery's collections have grown to number more than 185,000 objects, spanning the globe and ranging in date from ancient times to the present day. In addition to its celebrated collections of American paintings and decorative arts, the Gallery is noted for its important holdings of Greek and Roman art; early Italian paintings; later European art; Asian art; African art; art of the ancient Americas; and Impressionist, modern, and contemporary works. The Gallery's ongoing installation of works from these collections is complemented by a variety of special exhibitions and public programs. Moreover, in an effort to share its works with a broad public, the Gallery also organizes collections-based exhibitions that travel to museums nationwide.

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