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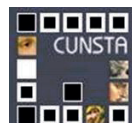
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Variants and Copies of Vouet's *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary Magdalene* in Czech Collections

Eliška Zlatohlávková*, Patrik
Farkaš**

Abstract

The text deals with the variants and copies of the painting by the French Caravaggist Simon Vouet (1590-1649) *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, kept in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, and brings new information about the genesis of the individual copies. The newly discovered variant from the collection of the Sternberg family at the castle in Častolovice in the Czech Republic stands out for its high quality of artistic execution and is thus the closest to the original. Art-historical analysis and non-invasive research have yielded findings that suggest that the author of the Častolovice painting is a painter from the immediate circle of Vouet and that this painting became the model for the creation of a copy at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington.

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Il testo tratta delle varianti e delle copie del dipinto del caravaggista francese Simon Vouet (1590-1649) *Marta che rimprovera la vana sorella Maria*, conservato al Kunsthistorisches Museum di Vienna, fornendo nuove informazioni sulla genesi delle singole copie. La variante appena scoperta, proveniente dalla collezione della famiglia Sternberg nel castello di Častolovice nella Repubblica Ceca, si distingue per l'alta qualità dell'esecuzione artistica ed è quindi la più vicina all'originale. L'analisi storico-artistica e le ricerche non invasive hanno portato a risultati che suggeriscono che l'autore del dipinto di Častolovice è un pittore della cerchia immediata di Vouet e che questo quadro è diventato il modello per la creazione di una copia allo Smithsonian American Art Museum di Washington.

1. *Simon Vouet's painting Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*

In the collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, there is a painting attributed to the French Caravaggist Simon Vouet (1590-1649) with the subject of *Mary Magdalene and Martha* (oil on canvas, 110×140 cm, inv. no. 225) (fig. 1). The picture depicts a scene based on the apocryphal texts from the Gospel of Saint Luke (Lk. X:41-42) in which Martha reprimands her sister Mary for her extravagance while adjusting her hairstyle in the mirror. The painting is neither dated nor signed. In 1924¹ Hermann Voss identified the picture as the work of Simon Vouet and included it among the artist's paintings produced during his several years in Italy (1613-1627). Recent literature dates the painting, on the basis of stylistic analysis, to 1621, when Vouet was staying in Genoa², where he travelled to paint a portrait of Isabella Appiani, Princess of Piombino (1586-1661), the Genoese fiancée of Paolo Giordano Orisini, Duke of Bracciano (1591-1656)³. In Genoa, the painter spent less than a year as a guest in the house of the brothers Gian Carlo (1576-1625) and Marcantonio Doria (born 1572). His short stay there, however, had a great influence on the transformation of his painting style, as is evident in the five surviving paintings, out of an original eleven, that Vouet painted for the Doria brothers and which are recorded in Gian Carlo's posthumous inventory⁴. Vouet abandoned the strong Caravaggesque contrasts that were typical of his work in his early years in Italy and moved towards a more lyrical depiction of

¹ Voss 1924, pp. 56-67, esp. 64-65. His attribution has subsequently been confirmed by Crelly 1962; Moir 1976; Nicolson 1979; Swoboda in Prohaska, Swoboda 2010. Dargent, Thuillier 1965, as well as Cuzin, Brejon 1973-1974 instead consider it a work from the circle of Simon Vouet.

² Swoboda, in Swoboda, Prohaska 2010, pp. 305-311.

³ Marengo 2019, p. 197. Vouet's journey to Genoa is mentioned by his biographer Félibien, who states that he stayed in Genoa from 1620. See Crelly 1962, p. 272.

⁴ *Portrait of Giovanni Carlo Doria, David with the Head of Goliath, Saint Sebastian Cared for by Widow Irene and a Maid, Judith and the Maid, Saint Catherine*. See Marengo 2019, p. 200.

figures under the influence of Orazio Gentileschi (1563-1639), who was working in Genoa at the same time. According to some scholars, Gentileschi was even supposed to have collaborated with Vouet on the creation of the Viennese painting of Mary and Martha and is said to be the author of the figure of Martha⁵. Although the painting *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary* is based in its subject and composition on Caravaggio's *Conversion of Mary Magdalene* (ca. 1598, oil and tempera on canvas, 100×134 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. no. 73.268), it is already characterised by an overall refinement of form and the loveliness of the faces of the figures, especially Mary Magdalene. In style, it corresponds entirely to the surviving paintings commissioned by the Doria brothers, namely *Judith with her Maid* and *St. Catherine* (both private collection), in which Vouet captured the same maidenly face as the one whose features we can recognise in the figure of Mary. From a compositional point of view, these two paintings foreshadow a group of paintings of female heroines depicted as portraits in the form of half-figures that Vouet produced around the mid-1620s after his return to Rome, in which the same female face appears again. These are mainly the paintings of *Herodiana* from the Corsini Collection (Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Corsini, Oil on canvas, 112×82 cm, inv. no. 45)⁶, *Judith* (Munich, Alte Pinakothek, oil on canvas, 96×78 cm, inv. no. 2279)⁷, and *St. Catherine* (private collection, Genoa)⁸.

It is not known for whom Vouet painted the painting of Mary and Martha. The commissioner was probably one of Vouet's Roman supporters⁹, possibly Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588-1657), who was familiar with Caravaggio's painting of the same subject. Vouet had already painted a picture for dal Pozzo in 1617 with the subject of *La buona ventura (A Fortune Teller)* (oil on canvas, 95×137 cm, now in the collection of the Galleria Nazionale d'arte antica di Palazzo Barberini)¹⁰, which was also based on a painting by Caravaggio that

⁵ Swoboda, in Swoboda, Prohaska 2010, p. 311; Marengo 2019, p. 197.

⁶ Provenance: Corsini family. There has been a great deal of scholarly debate about whether this painting is the work of the painter himself or of a studio or painter in his circle. Dargent, Thuillier 1965; Cuzin, Brejon Lavergnée, Nicolson 1979 and 1989 considered it more of a workshop work. The painting was rehabilitated at the great Vouet retrospective held in Rome in 1991, when, after restoration, it was included among the original works of Vouet. This view was subsequently adopted by Brejon Lavergnée 1993 and Schleier 2007. Doubts about Vouet's authorship were expressed by Loire 2011.

⁷ Provenance: until 1806 in the Düsseldorf gallery. The literature places *Herodiana* in the period of the final years in Rome (1624-1627), i.e. after the Genoese episode; *Judith* was sometimes placed even before the Genoese sojourn in 1617-1618 – see Thuillier, Brejon de Lavergnée, Lavalle 1991, p. 131, cat. no. 2, but sometimes to the mid-1620s as *Herodiana* from the Corsini collection.

⁸ Brejon de Lavergnée 2011, pp. 245-247, fig. p. 246.

⁹ On Vouet's commissioners in Rome, see Schleier 2011, pp. 67-80.

¹⁰ The painting was first published by Rossella Vodret. See Vodret 1996, pp. 89-94. For a list of other paintings that Vouet painted for Dal Pozzo, see Schleier 2011, pp. 67-69.

was in the collection of Cassiano's friend and Caravaggio's main patron, Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte (1549-1627)¹¹.

Caravaggio was commissioned to paint *The Conversion of Mary Magdalene* by Olimpia Aldobrandini, the sister of Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, with the approval of Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte. It is recorded in the inventory of her collection in 1606 as «un quadro di S.ta Marta e Madalena quando la convertisce con conrice negre e oro»¹². The painting is listed as being in the family's possession until 1769¹³.

This painting by Caravaggio was well-known in Rome. Its unusual composition inspired several other contemporary painters to create their own versions of the subject, not only Simon Vouet¹⁴, but also, for example, Orazio Gentileschi, whose painting is one of the most famous variants of Caravaggio's painting (oil on canvas, 134×145.5 cm, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Alte Pinakothek, inv. no. 12726)¹⁵.

The first mention of Vouet's *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary* comes from the 1635 inventory of the collection of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1592-1628): «Frenchman: The two Magdalens, or Martha and Mary». It is not known when or from whom the Duke acquired the painting. However, it must have been no later than 1628, when the Duke was assassinated. Buckingham's chief artistic agent and advisor in the creation of the collection was Balthazar Gerbier (1591-1667), who made Buckingham's collection one of the finest in contemporary England¹⁶. In 1621-1622, he travelled to Italy to purchase paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, and Bassano for the Duke¹⁷. Theoretically, he could also have acquired a Vouet painting for the Duke in Italy at this time, but there is no evidence for this. Indeed, there is no mention of the Vouet painting in the documents published so far on Gerbier's acquisitions in Italy¹⁸. Michel le Bon and Endymion Porter also occasionally bought paintings for the Duke, but there is no evidence that they bought a Vouet painting either. Nor is the painting in the list of works acquired by the Duke from Lord Hamilton in 1624¹⁹.

The collection was inherited by his son George Villiers II, who was born a few months after his father's death. For political reasons, in 1648 he fled to Holland, where he managed to send two-thirds of the collection, which he planned to sell because of his debts. Among these works was a painting of

¹¹ Marengo 2019, p. 196.

¹² Cappelletti, Testi 1990, pp. 240-241.

¹³ Vannugli 2000, p. 64.

¹⁴ On these copies and variants, see Moir 1976, Appendix I, pp. 107-109.

¹⁵ Cummings 1974, p. 578.

¹⁶ Gerbier also introduced the Duke to Peter Paul Rubens and managed to negotiate for the Duke to acquire the Rubens collection. See Keblusek 2003, p. 76.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ McEvansoney 1987, pp. 27-38.

¹⁹ McEvansoney 1992, pp. 524-526.

Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary, as evidenced by two promissory notes. Buckingham was under pressure from his creditors and, before the sale of the collection was completed, the Duke was forced to temporarily stop some of the works. One note is dated 8 May 1648, and Vouet's painting is mentioned there under the number 258: «Item un pièce de la Mère de Dieu et Marta faict du peintre Voit»²⁰. In 1650, the collection was eventually purchased by Archduke Leopold Wilhelm for the sum of 70,000 guilders²¹. At the sale, a list of works was drawn up, first published by Brian Fairfax in 1758, in which the painting is listed: «By Voyett. Mary and Martha. 5f 6 inches × 6f», i.e. as a work by Simon Vouet, including dimensions.

A part of the collection, including the painting of *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, was sent to Prague in the same year, where it supplemented the Picture Gallery of Prague Castle, which was looted by Swedish troops during the siege of Prague in 1648²². The fact that the painting was sent directly from Antwerp to Prague is confirmed by the fact that the painting is not recorded in the inventory of the Archduke's collection from 1659. The work is first mentioned in the inventory of the Prague Castle Picture Gallery in 1685²³. It remained in Prague until at least 1718, when it is listed in an inventory drawn up under the direction of inspectors from Vienna under the number 197 as «Zwei frauen, deren eine sich aufbutzet». The painting was included among the 46 works from the Prague Castle Picture Gallery, which were taken to Vienna in 1721 and 1723 to the newly built gallery in Stallburg, which was completed in 1728. It is first recorded in the inventory of the Viennese collections in 1772 under the number 959 as a copy after Guido Reni: «Magdalena, wie sie allem Pracht abgelegt, mit einer anderen Weibsperson Copey nach Guido Reni».

2. Copies and variants according to Vouet's painting

Vouet's painting was highly sought after and popular among collectors, as evidenced by the several copies found today in various collections around the world²⁴. There are at least three in the Czech Republic: in the collection of the

²⁰ Duverger 1992, p. 482, no. 1559.

²¹ McEvansoney 1996, p. 141.

²² The Inventory of the Castle Collections of 29 July 1650 does not yet mention works from the Buckingham Collection. See Köpl 1889, pp. CXXXI-CXXXII. The paintings must have been installed in the Picture Gallery of Prague Castle no later than 1656, when the coronation of the Emperor's second wife Eleonora Gonzaga and Ferdinand's son Leopold took place there. See Fornasiero 2017, pp. 137-138.

²³ As the work of Guido Reni, of course.

²⁴ There are about 15 of them, all described by Alfred Moir. See Moir 1976.

Sternbergs at the castle in Častolovice (oil on canvas, 117×170 cm) (fig. 2), in the collection of the Lobkowicz family in the palace at Prague Castle (oil on canvas, 153×189 cm, inv. no. LR4829) (fig. 3), and in the castle in Libochovice in Central Bohemia (oil on canvas, 109×178 cm, inv. no. 1700) (fig. 4)²⁵. In the United States there is a version at the Smithsonian American Art Institute in Washington (oil on canvas, 120×171.5 cm, inv. no. 1998.41.1fv) (fig. 5). The last one known to us is in the collections of the Glasgow Museum of Art (oil on copper, 26×19 cm, inv. no. GLAHA:45020). A painting of the same subject and composition, but with a view of the landscape in the background in the upper right, is depicted in a painting showing a view of an unknown gallery, believed to be by Gonzales Coques (the painting was sold at Sotheby's in London on 10 July 2002, lot 4)²⁶. This version, if it existed at all and was not a mere invention by Coques, is unknown today.

When the above-mentioned copies were made is questionable, since Vouet's painting entered the Buckingham Collection shortly after its creation and was subsequently purchased by Archduke Leopold William. It is unlikely that the painting was copied while it was in Lord Buckingham's possession. After his death the collection was entrusted to the care of two trustees, Philip Herbert, 1st Earl of Montgomery and later 4th Earl of Pembroke (1583-1650), and Sir Robert Pye MP (1585-1662). Between 1640 and 1648 it was administered by Algernon Percy, 10th Earl of Northumberland (1602-1668) on behalf of minor heirs after their mother converted to Catholicism²⁷. Two-thirds of the collection was exported to Amsterdam by the 2nd Lord of Buckingham in 1648, and two years later, including Simon Vouet's painting of *Martha Scolding Her vain Sister Mary*, it was sold to Archduke Leopold.

The copies must have been made in direct continuity with the painting itself, as the painting was not converted into graphic form, as is the case with most of Vouet's paintings²⁸.

3. *The painting from Libochovice*

The painting from Libochovice (oil on canvas, 109×178 cm, inv. no. 1700) (fig. 4) is a direct copy of Vouet's painting. It was made in 1689-1691 by Christian Schröder, who was commissioned by Prince Gundakar Dietrichstein (1623-1690), together with 43 other copies based on works from the Prague

²⁵ Fornasiero 2017, p. 209.

²⁶ Swoboda, in Swoboda, Prohaska 2010, p. 305.

²⁷ McEvansoney 1996, p. 133.

²⁸ Vouet's paintings were mostly translated into graphic form by Claude Mellan and Charles Mellin. See, for example, Fiacci 1989; Malgouyres 2007.

Castle Picture Gallery, selected by the curator of the collection, František Leux of Liechtenstein²⁹. The Count was not a great lover of fine art and had the copies made to decorate the newly rebuilt interiors of the castle at Libochovice, which he bought in 1676 from Wenzel Adalbert of Sternberg³⁰. The scene is an exact copy of the original, with the right part depicting Martha's entire dress, which proves that Vouet's painting was subsequently cut down to its current dimensions of 110×140 cm after it was transported to Vienna after 1718. As far as the quality of the artistic execution is concerned, Schröder's painting looks somewhat cumbersome and does not show much artistic quality in comparison to the other versions. The dimensions of the canvas (109×178 cm) and the composition were adapted to the carved frame above the door in which the painting was set.

4. *The painting from the Lobkowicz collection*

The painting from the Lobkowicz collection (fig. 3) is also a copy made directly from Vouet's original, but its author was a more skilled painter than Schröder. The painting is first listed in the inventories of the Lobkowicz collection in the mid-19th century as *Judith* without the artist's name, and even in later inventories, the work is always recorded as being by an unknown master. The painting was commissioned by Ferdinand Augustus Lobkowicz (1655-1715) around the same time as Schröder's copy for Count Dietrichstein for the decoration of the newly-rebuilt castle in Roudnice nad Labem. In addition to the copy of Vouet's painting, copies of several other works from the Prague Picture Gallery were made for Lobkowicz at the time, such as *Supper at Emmaus*, after Titian, or *Fortune Teller* and *Guard's room*, after Bartolomeo Manfredi. These copies were to be painted by Francesco and Giovanni Marchetti and Michael Wenzel Halbax³¹.

5. *The paintings from Washington and Glasgow*

The painting from Washington (fig. 5) is a high-quality copy made by an unknown painter, who faithfully followed the model, but slightly altered the features of Mary's face. It was acquired for the collections of the Smithsonian

²⁹ Fornasiero 2017, pp. 97, 134-135, and 209.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Art Institute as a gift from the wife of Hannis Taylor (1851-1922), a lawyer and the American ambassador to Spain (1893-1897). There is no information about his collecting activities, so we do not know where he acquired the painting.

The Glasgow painting was originally in the possession of Sir Robert Strange (1721-1792). He had it auctioned at Christie's as a Simon Vouet replica in 1771, at which time William Hunter purchased the work. The painting was acquired by the University of Glasgow Museum after Hunter's death in 1783³². The treatment of the folds of the drapery and the features on the faces of the two women differ considerably from Vouet's Viennese painting. In terms of painting, it is more akin to the Washington version. It is probably its copy.

6. *The painting from Častolovice*

The painting from Častolovice (fig. 2) is the closest to Vouet's original in terms of the execution and quality of its painting. Similarly to the paintings from Libochovice, from the Lobkowitz collection, and from Washington, Martha's dress is depicted in its entirety. It is securely documented in the Sternberg family collection before 1704. In this year, a posthumous inventory³³ of the property of Count Adolf Vratislav of Sternberg (1627?-1703) was drawn up and merged into a fideicommissum that had been created in 1701, where the painting is listed under the number 88 with a description of the subject «Heilige Magdalena und Martha (Holy Magdalene and Martha)». On the back of the frame on the lower left is a label with the handwritten inscription «Zasm. Fid. Com. No. 88 (abbreviation of Zášmuky Fidei Commisum No. 88)» confirming that this is the same painting as the one recorded in the 1704 inventory.

The painting is neither dated nor signed, and no authorial attribution is found in the 1704 inventory, nor in later inventories from 1723³⁴ (described as «Heilige Magdalena und Martha» (Holy Magdalene and Martha), 1858 (inventoried under No. 72), 1878 (inventoried under No. 14), and 1900³⁵ (inventoried under No. 384 and described «Junges Mädchen ihr haar bereitend, rechts ein älteres Weib, Halbfiguren 17 Jahrhundert »(Young girl preparing her hair, on the right an elderly woman, half-figures, 17th century). The painting was housed at the chateau in Zášmuky in Central Bohemia until the early 20th

³² Black 2007; cat. Laskey 1813, p. 88, no. 43 (the earliest inventory of William Hunter's collection); Young 1952, no. 8; Nicolson 1979, p. 109, after Simon Vouet; Wright 1985, pp. 145ff.

³³ National Archive in Prague, FDK VII E 17/(F 32/98), box 911.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ State district archive in Zámorsk, Sternberg Family Archive, Častolovice, inv. no. 537, Inventory of the Zášmuky collection of paintings, book no. 25.

century, when it was moved to the main family seat, the chateau in Častolovice, when the owner of the estate was Count Leopold Sternberg (1896-1957), the father of the current owner, Diana Phipps-Sternberg (*1936).

7. The question of the creation of individual copies

Several copies were made that were based on Vouet's painting, and which differ significantly in the quality of their execution. The date of creation and the author are known only for the Libochovice version and probably for the Lobkowicz one. In the case of the Častolovice painting we know that it was created before 1704. However, we can state with certainty that all the versions were created before 1718, when Vouet's painting was taken to Vienna and subsequently cut down to its present size of 110×140 cm³⁶. All the derivations show Martha's entire dress in the right-hand part of the painting. Although the other copies are the work of artists who remain anonymous, the genesis of their creation can be determined on the basis of one detail. Not all the copies known so far were not made directly from Vouet's original. The bracelet on Mary's right arm is proof of this idea. This gold jewel is inlaid with green and red gems. And it is the way the coloured stones alternate in the bracelet that provides the answer to the question of the origins of the Častolovice, Washington, and Glasgow paintings. In the Vouet painting the order of the stones is red, dark green, light green, and light green. The same order is repeated in the painting from the Lobkowicz collections. This is proof that this painting was also copied directly from the original when it was exhibited in the Picture Gallery of Prague Castle. In the painting from Častolovice the order of the stones is different: red, dark green, red, and dark green. It is therefore different from Vouet's original. The same order of colours appears in the Washington and Glasgow versions, which must have been painted after the Washington picture, as the faces of the two Marys show similar features. The Washington picture must therefore have been painted after the one from Častolovice as a copy of it. This hypothesis is further supported by the essentially identical dimensions of the two paintings, 120×171.5 cm and 117×170 cm respectively.

The painting from Častolovice was not created by copying Vouet's painting when it hung in Prague, but most probably as a replica, perhaps even a workshop replica, in Italy in the circle of Vouet himself, because the execution of

³⁶ These dimensions first appear in the 1783 inventory – 4'5" wide and 3'4" high. The 1635 inventory of the Buckingham Collection gives dimensions of 5f 6 inches × 6f, roughly equivalent to 167×182 cm, considering that one foot is roughly 30 cm and an inch 2.5 cm. The conversion of one foot to cm is now usually given as 1 ft = 30.48 cm, but in past centuries the length of one foot may have been in the range of 25-35 cm.

the painting is of high quality and its author was not an average copyist. The painter who created the Častolovice version was a bravura artist. He treated the folds of the drapery, including the top layers of the glaze, which are missing from Vouet's painting as a result of the earlier restoration, masterfully and paid great attention to the careful rendering of the jewels – the clasps on Mary's cloak and the bracelet on her right arm. A close comparison with Vouet's painting reveals a slightly different way of modelling the folds of the fabric, especially on the white fabric of Mary's bodice. The folds are rendered more plastically and the individual brushstrokes stand out more. The pasty layers of bright white contrast more sharply with the areas in shadow. The lock of hair that falls like a curl onto Mary's forehead is also painted differently. It casts a sharp shadow, which is not so contrasting in Vouet's painting.

This way of depicting the hair and a similar modelling of the drapery can be found in the painting *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (c. 1620-1621, KHM Vienna, oil on canvas, 115×86 cm, inv. no. 5795)³⁷, originally in the possession of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm. The work was thought to be by Simon Vouet, as can be seen from an entry in the Archduke's inventory of 1659: «Judith mit blossen Brüssten in einen roth vndt goldtfarben Klaidt vnd grünen Mantl, halt in der rechten Handt das Schwerdt vnnd in der linckhen desz Holoferni Kopff beym Haaren [...] Original vom Monsieur Voet»³⁸. *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* belongs to the group of paintings depicting female Old Testament heroines or mythological figures. These works date from after 1620. Earlier scholarly literature attributed these paintings to Simon Vouet. However, contemporary specialists see slight differences in the paintings style between the works and therefore attribute some of them to painters in Vouet's circle: Claude Vignon, Claude Mellan, Giovanni Battista Muti, Vouet's brother Aubin, or even his wife Virginia da Vezzo. In 1962, William Crelly still considered the *Judith* in Vienna to be an authentic work by Simon Vouet. Other authors have hesitated over this attribution or even questioned it. Arnauld Brejon de Lavergnée and Pierre Cuzin perceived the work as artistically inferior, and therefore suggested attributing it to Claude Mellan³⁹, a painter who was born in Abbeville in 1598 and spent the period between 1624 and 1636 in Rome, at least one year of which (1625) was directly in Vouet's studio.

It is not easy to safely identify the author of works that are very close to Simon Vouet's style but do not show such high quality. Vouet was a great painter; from 1624 he held the post of *principe* di Accademia di San Luca in Rome and many painters passed through his studio. Many of their names are known, but very few works are attributed to them, as in the case of Virginia da Vezzo or

³⁷ Prohaska, Swoboda 2010, pp. 313-320.

³⁸ Berger 1883, p. CXV.

³⁹ Brejon de Lavergnée, Cuzin 1973-1974, p. 250.

Vouet's brother Aubin⁴⁰. It is therefore very difficult to attribute other works to them with any certainty, because it is not possible to define their individual painting style with any certainty on the basis of the small number of their works.

Claude Mellan is credited with the most works from the Vouet circle. Mellan made his name in Rome primarily as an engraver who converted many of Vouet's paintings into graphic form. From 1627 onwards, he also devoted himself to painting, as can be seen in some of the prints where he is listed as an inventor. These are, for example, graphic sheets with the subjects *Samson and Delilah*, *Lot and his Daughters*, and *Rest on the Flight to Egypt*. He also devoted himself to portrait painting. The Giustiniani family commissioned him to paint the gallery in their Genoese palace in 1636⁴¹. Erich Schleier credited Mellan with a painting on the subject of *St. Bruno*⁴². Mellan's authorship is considered for the painting *Joseph Explaining His Dreams* (oil on canvas, 168×241 cm, Rome, Galleria Borghese). In the 1950s Jacques Thuillier attributed to Mellan a painting with the subject of Herodiana of Montpellier, for which there is a graphic sheet listing Mellan not only as an engraver but also as a painter. However, the *Salomé* (Herodiana) in this engraving does not exactly correspond to the Montpellier painting, which is why Mellan's authorship has been questioned in some recent literature and it has been suggested that the painter should rather be called Master *Salomé* of Montpellier⁴³.

J.P. Cuzin considers the group of paintings, which includes *Herodiana* of Montpellier, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* of Vienna, *St. Catherine* and *Ceres and Bacchus*, to be the works of a single painter, characterised by the hardness and fragility of the voluminous drapery, and above all by a lock of hair twisted into a curl falling onto the forehead and creating a sharp shadow. Cuzin leaves it open whether they are by Claude Mellan, to whom some attribute the painting of *Salomé* (Herodiana) of Montpellier⁴⁴.

The painting from Častolovice shows some similarities to the Viennese painting of *Judith* and therefore also to the Montpellier painting of *Herodiana*. In all three paintings the drapery is modelled in a similar way. The foreheads of Judith, Salomé, and the Mary of Častolovice have a similar curl, and their shadows are painted in a similar way as well. It is tempting, therefore, to attribute the Častolovice painting to the same master, whether Claude Mellan or the Master of *Salomé* of Montpellier. In the case of the Častolovice painting, one must be very careful. The fact that it is a replica and not the painter's

⁴⁰ For example: Virginia da Vezzo, *Judith*, oil on canvas 87×74 cm, 1624/162, Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts; Aubin Vouet, *David with the Head of Goliath*, oil on canvas 117×89 cm, 1620/1621, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux.

⁴¹ Brejon de Lavergnée, Cuzin 1973-1974, pp. 66-67.

⁴² Schleier 1978, pp. 511-515.

⁴³ Ficacci 1989, p. 361; Cropper 1990, pp. 457-459.

⁴⁴ Prohaska, Swoboda 2010, p. 317.

own expression also makes a specific attribution difficult, so the individual painting style of the painter is more suppressed.

In attempting to approach the authorship of the painting of Mary and Martha from Častolovice, it is necessary to consider the note attributed in the inventory of the Sternberg collections from 1900, relating to this work, which is registered under the number 384 as «Junges Mädchen ihr Haar bereitend, rechts ein älteres Weib, Halbfiguren 17 J(ahrhundert) Autor wie 385»⁴⁵. It is stated here that this is the work of the same artist who painted the painting *Joseph and the Wife of Potiphar*⁴⁶, which is listed in the inventory as number 385. The author of the inventory was Josef Mauder, a painter and sculptor, but also an art critic. He also added his own critical evaluation to each item. The two paintings, which Mauder considered to be by the same artist, show some similarities in their execution. First of all, it concerns the way the drapery is modelled. In particular, the folds of the white fabric of the bodice of both Potiphar's wife and Mary Magdalene resemble strands of string. The curls falling onto the forehead of Joseph, who is trying to free himself from the woman's amorous embrace, are painted in a similar way⁴⁷.

It would certainly also help to know where Adolf Vratislav of Sternberg obtained the painting from. He was a true art lover and during his lifetime he created a rather large collection of more than 300 paintings of various schools, which includes works of exceptional quality⁴⁸ and average paintings as well as copies and replicas of well-known works⁴⁹. No documents about his acquisitions are known to date. A large part of the family archive has not yet been inventoried and studied⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ State district archive in Zámorsk, Sternberg Family Archive, Častolovice, inv. no. 537, Inventory of the Zásmuky collection of paintings, book no. 25.

⁴⁶ The painting *Josef and the Wife of Potiphar* was attributed in 2018 by Jana Zapletalová to Michele Desubleo (1601-1676) as an early work. This painter, originally from the Netherlands, stayed in Rome in 1624 and 1625 with his half-brother Nicolas Régnier (ca. 1588-1667). The works of both masters from this period also show certain stylistic similarities. Régnier, and probably also Desubleo, was in contact with Simon Vouet in Rome. See Zapletalová 2019.

⁴⁷ Despite this assessment, however, Jana Zapletalová does not work with Mauder's thesis and, on the basis of a formal analysis, places the authorship of the painting *Joseph and the Wife of Potiphar* with Michele Desubleo. The question of the possible connection between the two paintings can be answered by technological research on them and a subsequent comparison.

⁴⁸ E.g. the paintings by Johann Heinrich Schönfeld (1609-1684) *Mucius Scaevola before Porsena*, *Joseph of Egypt and his Brothers*, and *Landscape with Ruins of Classical Antiquity*, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by David Teniers II (1610-1690), etc. See Zlatohlávková, Zapletalová, Kindl 2022, pp. 233-248.

⁴⁹ Copy of the composition by Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) titled *Christ Healing the Paralytic*, replica of the *Last Judgement* by Hans Rottenhammer (1564-1625) painted by Hendrick van Balen – see Zlatohlávková 2021, pp. 87-98.

⁵⁰ Most of the documents relating to Adolf Vratislav are stored in the Sternberg-Manderscheid family archive in the archives of the National Museum. The archive has not processed and consists of approximately 34 metres of material.

Adolf Vratislav held high positions in the imperial court and was a close friend of Emperor Leopold I. He participated in many diplomatic missions, during which he would have been able to obtain works of art as gifts or to buy them; his will specifically mentions a painting of the Virgin Mary which he brought back from his most important diplomatic mission in Sweden⁵¹. His cousins, Wenzel Adalbert and Johann Norbert of Sternberg, made a Grand Tour to Italy in 1662-1664⁵² and visited various art centres. On their return to Bohemia, they may have brought some works by Italian artists with them, and some of them may have ended up in the collection of Adolf Vratislav, with whom Wenzel Adalbert maintained close contact⁵³. However, this is mere speculation, which cannot be supported by any evidence. For the time being, we must content ourselves with the conclusion that the Častolovice painting was created in the circle of artists around Simon Vouet during his stay in Italy (1613-1627) and wait to see if any clues emerge that might allow us to attribute the painting to its author or clarify its provenance.

The discovery of the Častolovice painting, which was previously unknown to the professional public, is a new and important contribution to the knowledge of the work of artists from Vouet's circle, but also a clarification of the genesis of the creation of copies of Vouet's painting of *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*. The Washington painting, which was previously considered to be a copy based on Vouet's original, can be confidently stated to have been created after the Častolovice painting at a time before it became part of the Sternberg collections, where it is housed today and has been at least since the death of Adolf Vratislav in 1703.

8. *Research of the Častolovice version by imaging and non-invasive instrumental methods*

The painting from Častolovice was found in a good state of preservation – it was covered with water-soluble deposits and a yellowed varnish. In the past,

⁵¹ On his diplomatic mission to Sweden see Bakeš 2008; Bakeš 2014, pp. 31-61.

⁵² Kulíková 2001; Kropáček 1987, pp. 86-98.

⁵³ Also in the estate of Wenzel Adalbert of Sternberg were paintings which he bequeathed in his will to his cousin Adolf Vratislav's son Franz Leopold (1680/81-1745), who was not the inheritor of the family fideicommissum established by his father but was a direct ancestor of the present-day owner of the collection, Diana Phipps Sternberg. They came into his possession after 1708. The paintings are listed in a posthumous inventory ordered by the widow Clara Bernardina of Maltzano. The document lists twenty-nine paintings located in «a cabinet whose walls were covered in red satin» (*Das Cabinet ist mit Rothen Atlas auß spallirt*). See the inventory of the Sternberg Palace at Hradčany compiled in 1708, Prague, National Archive, FDK VII E 17/(F 32/98), box 911. However, the painting of Mary and Martha was already in the possession of Adolf Vratislav.

the work had been professionally restored, including a canvas lining on a new linen support. Its original canvas was woven with a plain weave with an average density of 12×15 threads per square centimetre, thus having a finer texture than the 8×9 thread set of the Viennese version⁵⁴. Further restoration interventions on the work consisted of retouching the damaged parts of the painting. The numerous defects of the painterly layers are up to a half a centimetre in size, with larger losses around the sides of the canvas and in the area of Martha's hair. The state of preservation of the painting is determinable using UV-induced visible fluorescence (UVF), which, in addition to the retouchings, can also be used to observe the uneven secondary varnish treatment of the painting, executed by vertical broad brushstrokes (fig. 6)⁵⁵.

However, for a better understanding of author's procedures, the results of infrared reflectography (IRR) play a larger role in our research⁵⁶. These results confirmed, among other findings, numerous local destructions of the image, spread over its entire surface. In addition to these, two types of preparatory drawings can also be observed. The first of these is an outline drawing, executed with a dry medium, giving the impression of traced cardboard. The use of this transfer technique is indicated by the area of Mary's hand and head (fig. 7). Their positions and volumes were each defined by outlining. The objects on the table – the mirror, the comb, and the bottle – were similarly represented by a circumferential line. The artist used a different approach to the graphical defining of the facial parts, where he used a finer drawing in the second stage of the graphic layout of the painting, in places combined with a wet medium, applied with a fine brush (figs. 7-8). When one compares the nature of the underdrawings and the resulting pictorial execution of the closest painting to this one, a version of the same subject from the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the relationship of the two works can be evaluated as two distinctive versions with clear successiveness. The present *pentimenti* of the Viennese original, legible in its X-ray scan, reflect the artist's search for a satisfactory position for Mary's hand, Martha's head, and the shape of her nose⁵⁷. These parts are presented in the Častolovice painting in the form defined in the previous work. The painting of *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary* at Častolovice was therefore very probably created after the Viennese version.

⁵⁴ Swoboda, in Swoboda, Prohaska 2010, p. 305, ref. 5.

⁵⁵ UVF images was executed using two powerful sources of UV light with a 365-nm wavelength.

⁵⁶ IRR images were produced using two reflectors with sources of IR light, while carefully monitoring the inevitable temperature changes of the artwork. The reflected IR light was captured with an InGaAs sensor in OSIRIS camera, using a broadband spectrum filter (900-1700 nm).

⁵⁷ Cf. Swoboda, in Swoboda, Prohaska 2010, p. 307, figs. 2-4.

The version from Častolovice was created by analogous artistic procedures, based on the layering of coloured areas on a red-brown ground, topped with glazes, thus building up the effects of spatiality and gloss, most notably in Mary's bluish sleeves, which were interpreted by X-ray fluorescence spectrometer (XRF) results as glaze layers of smalt and azurite, while the red colour tones of the drapery of Mary's sleeves were executed with a combination of red iron ground and vermilion – as in the other red parts of Mary's garment⁵⁸. The yellow-ochre tones of Martha's dress were painted with lead white, lead-tin yellow, and vermilion. A different technique for the execution of the yellow tones was used in the gold parts of the jewellery, where, in addition to the last two pigments mentioned, auripigment, commonly used for this purpose, can also be found. The incarnate tones of the painting were created by combining lead white and vermilion, while chalk was also captured in the measurement. The dark background was created by a mixture of bone black and umber. However, a copper colourant was found as well. All of these listed pigments were typical of both the 17th and 18th centuries, thus corresponding with the framework dating of the work.

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⁵⁸ We thank Stanislava Trginová for the collaboration on the XRF analysis of the painting. The artwork was analysed using a Thermo Scientific Niton XL3t GOLDD+ spectrometer. Maximum voltage: 50 kV, detector: SDD+, measurement time: 200 s. – Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 305.

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Appendix

Fig. 1. Simon Vouet, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, 1621, oil on canvas, Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum



Fig. 2. Circle of Simon Vouet, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, after 1621, oil on canvas, Častolovice castle, Czech Republic, Sternberg collection



Fig. 3. Copyist after Simon Vouet, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, oil on canvas, Lobkowitz Palace, Prague Castle, Czech Republic, Lobkowitz Collections



Fig. 4. Christian Schröder after Simon Vouet, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, 1689-1691, oil on canvas, Libochovice castle, Czech Republic



Fig. 5. Anonymous painter, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, oil on canvas, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian American Art Institute



Fig. 6. Circle of Simon Vouet, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, Častolovice castle, Czech Republic, Sternberg collection, Photography in UV-induced visible fluorescence



Fig. 7. Circle of Simon Vouet, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, Častolovice castle, Czech Republic, Sternberg collection, Infrared reflectogram, detail of Mary's hand



Fig. 8. Circle of Simon Vouet, *Martha Scolding Her Vain Sister Mary*, Častolovice castle, Czech Republic, Sternberg collection, Infrared reflectogram, detail of Mary's head

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