

LAWRENCE STEIGRAD FINE ARTS



Flute Player with a Glass of Wine

oil on canvas  
29 ½ x 24 inches (74.93 x 60.96 cm.)

PROVENANCE

Private Collection, Germany, 1927

Anonymous sale, Julius Stern, Kunst Auktionshaus, Dusseldorf, June 11, 1932, lot 164

Private Collection, New York, until 1984

Their sale, Phillips, New York, May 16, 1984, lot 370, where acquired by  
Oliver T. Banks, New York and thus by inheritance until the present time

EXHIBITED

Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University, In Celebration: Works of Art From the Collections of Princeton Alumni and Friends of The Art Museum,  
February 22 – June 8, 1997, no. 153

Raleigh, North Carolina, North Carolina Museum of Art, Saints and Sinners, Darkness and Light, Caravaggio and his Dutch and Flemish Followers,  
September 27 – December 13, 1998, and traveling to the Milwaukee Art Museum, and The Dayton Art Institute, no. 39

LITERATURE

Photocertificate as Matthias Stomer by Dr. Hermann Voss, dated Berlin, April 20, 1927

Henri Pauwels, "De Schilder Matthias Stomer" in *Gentse Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis*, De Sikkels, Antwerp, 1953, pp. 172 – 173, 175, no. 16, illustrated

Benedict Nicolson, "Stomer Brought Up to Date" in *The Burlington Magazine*, volume 119, no. 889, April 1977, p. 242, no. 81

Benedict Nicolson, "Matthias Stomer" in *The International Carravaggist Movement*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1979, p. 96

Benedict Nicolson, "Matthias Stomer" in *Caravaggism in Europe*, volume I, Umberto Allemandi & C., 1989 p. 186, below no. 1499

Jill Guthrie, "Matthias Stomer" in *In Celebration: Works of Art from the Collections of Princeton Alumni and Friends of the Art Museum*, Princeton University, The Museum Princeton University, 1997, pp. 130, 157, no. 153, illustrated, (loaned in memory of Oliver T. Banks)

Dennis P. Weller, "Matthias Stom [Stomer]" in *Sinners & Saints, Darkness and Light, Caravaggio and his Dutch and Flemish Followers*, North Carolina Museum of Art, 1998, pp. 202 – 204, no. 39, illustrated (from the collection of Mr. & Mrs. Oliver T. Banks)

Very little is known about the life of Matthias Stom. He was one of the youngest Netherlandish Caravaggesques and among the last to keep its tradition alive. It has always been believed that he was born in Amersfoort around 1600, although no documentation exists to confirm this assumption. Stom's earliest works suggests that he received his instruction in Utrecht in the late-Mannerist style of Abraham Bloemaert and Joachim Wtewael. Most influential was the presence of Gerard van Honthorst in Utrecht after 1621, who had spent more than 10 years in Italy and worked in the manner of Caravaggio. Throughout Stom's career the impact of Honthorst's oeuvre remained.[1]

Documentation exists for Stom living in Rome in 1630, somewhat later he moved to Messina and around 1631 to Naples where he resided until 1640. Sometime before 1631 the artist was active in Palermo and Sicily where he executed paintings for the churches of Palermo, Messina and Monreal. Between 1646 – 1649 Antonio Ruffo, a nobleman of Messina, for whom Rembrandt painted Aristotle with the Bust of Homer, purchased three works from Stom. It is possible that around 1650 Stom moved to the north of Italy. His subject matter runs the gamut from religious, mythological, historical and genre,[2] of which Benedict Nicolson noted "the majority of genre scenes ... revert to Utrecht".[3]

In this work, that Nicolson records as painted in Naples, a flute player in Bohemian costume and wearing a brightly striped and plumed beret raises a glass of wine to greet the viewer. From a concealed light source on the left the young man is intensely illuminated by the play of light and shadow, the use of chiaroscuro being the hallmark of the Caravaggesques. Such nighttime lighting effects provided drama that could not be equaled in daylight, and it was due to his familiarity with Honthorst's Utrecht genre scenes, that Stom was able to reintroduce the fashion to Italy with his arrival in Rome in 1630.[4]

During this period drinking and certain types of musical performances were shunned, as flutes and recorders were thought to have sexual overtones. This belief is clearly stated in such contemporary works as an engraving by Nicolaes de Bruyn of a Merry Company depicting young men carousing with "ladies" while a flute and violin are played with the inscription "sex and drink ruin youth".[5] Yet Stom's image can only be viewed as warm and inviting. It is a paradox best summarized by Nicolson "all the Utrecht painters will go in for themes of moralistic genre, never coming quite clean about their moral attitude – such [a] characteristic feature of Netherlandish painting for the early sixteenth century onwards." [6]

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[1] Biographical information taken from "Matthias Stom, Old Woman Praying" at [metmuseum.org/art/collection](http://metmuseum.org/art/collection); and Matthias Stom (also called Stomer) at The Collection – Museo Nacional del Prado, [museodelprado.es](http://museodelprado.es) the collection.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Benedict Nicolson, *The Burlington Magazine*, op.cit., p. 239.

[4] Benedict Nicolson, *Caravaggism in Europe*, op.cit., volume I, pp. 25 – 27.

[5] Dennis P. Weller, op.cit., pp. 203 – 204.

[6] Benedict Nicolson, *Caravaggism in Europe*, op.cit., volume I, p. 23.