

CHRISTIE'S *The Art People*

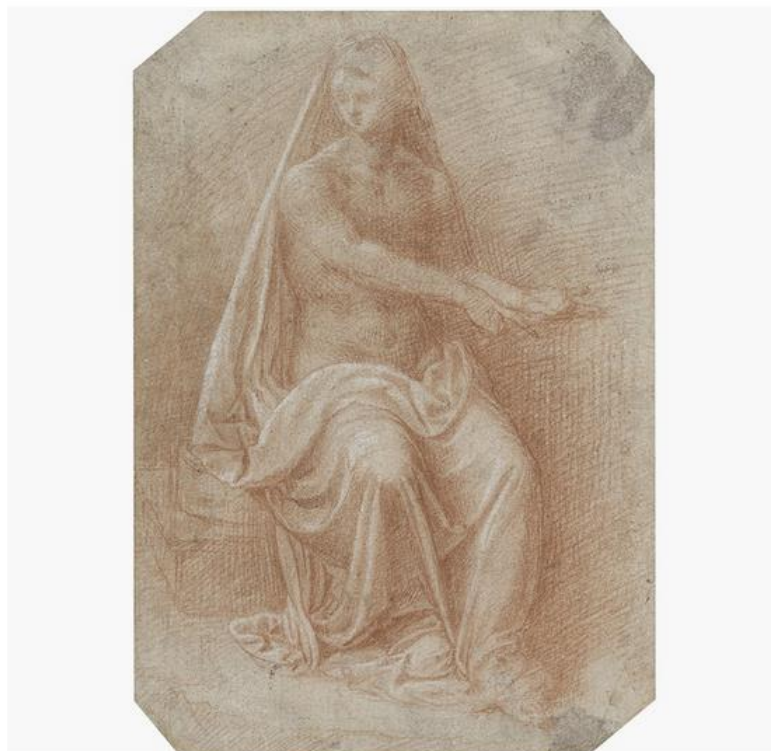


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*Antenna: Major finds at
London Art Week*

Galleries showing during London Art Week revealed some unique discoveries, and rediscoveries from five centuries of European art, as Meredith Etherington-Smith reports

First came a previously unseen drawing by Cesare Magni (active in Milan 1511-1534) at Martin Hirschboeck. Magni was a pupil and successor of Leonardo da Vinci (of whom something surprising later) which has recently been confirmed as the only known drawing to be firmly attributed to the artist. It is a light and airy chalk study; a preparatory drawing for the major work by the artist of *Madonna and Child with Two Saints*, now in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana.



Cesare Magni (1495-1534, Italian), *Drapery Study for a Seated Figure*, circa 1618. Courtesy [Martin Hirschboeck](#)

The group of drawings shown by Maurizio Nobile included two preparatory drawings for a series of 22 engravings that Guercino realized for his patron Antonio Mirandola around 1618. Until today, scholars only knew about a group of drawings related to the frontispiece page of the so-called *Guercino's Drawing Book*, a collection of the artist's engraved drawing studies for the encouragement of drawing pupils, and dedicated to Ferdinando Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua.



Giovan Francesco Barbieri, il Guercino, *Studi di orecchie, penna su carta*. 15 x 23 cm. Courtesy of Maurizio Nobile

An exciting and important discovery shown for the first time by Galerie Sissman of Paris during London Art Week was the beautiful marble sculpture of the tragic figure of Lucretia, attributed to Philippe Bertrand, artist at the court of Louis XIV. It was believed to have been displayed at the Salon de Louvre exhibition in 1704 and has been unseen in public ever since.



It recently re-emerged from the mists of history from an anonymous private collection. At 70 cm tall, this ethereal marble displays the unfortunate victim as she takes her life, the hilt of the dagger visible on her chest. This is an extremely exciting addition to the known oeuvre of this important artists whose works can be seen at The Louvre, The Metropolitan Museum, The Hermitage Museum, The Royal Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

From a painter who was important at the court of a later French King, Louis XV, came a different kind of discovery, one revealed hidden by layers of paint. Ben Elwes Fine Art revealed a previously unknown masterpiece, by Claude Vernet, one of the most celebrated landscape painters of the 18th Century.



Claude Joseph Vernet (French, 1714-1789) *Noon, Return from Fishing*, c1750-51. 98 x 137cm, after restoration. Courtesy [Ben Elwes](#)

It emerged from the 19th Century gloom of a badly painted waterfall after a year of restoration, which brought to light this stunning lost masterpiece. Under the layers of paint this stunning work emerged, dated to 1750/51, the highpoint of the artist's career and painted shortly before he returned to France from Rome to carry out a royal commission from Louis XV to depict a series of monumental views of the major commercial and military seaports of France.

A different, more personal discovery, a coincidence indeed, was made by Deborah Gage. A portrait, attributed to James Worsdale, came into her gallery of an unknown woman wearing a splendid dress made of Spitalfields silk. However, there was a clue — a reference to Hengrave Hall, Suffolk. As chance would have it, Hengrave Hall had been the home since the Tudor era of a branch of the Gage family but the house, estate and collection had been sold in 1952.



James Worsdale (1692-1767), *Portrait of a girl in a Spitalfields dress*. Courtesy [Deborah Gage](#)

Deborah Gage is the Gage family historian and she happened to have a copy of the 1952 Hengrave sale catalogue in her files. When she searched the catalogue she found the reference for this early 18th Century canvas, and digging deeper believes she has now identified the sitter as Lucy Knight, later Lady Gage who married Thomas Rookwood Gage, lived for the rest of her life as chatelaine of Hengrave Hall, and is buried there. A portrait of one of Deborah's ancestors, in other words.

A discovery of a very, very different kind is the pioneering sub-zero work Leonardo da Vinci did on inventing a fridge around 1492 when he was in Milan and the Sforza court. His concept drawing, recently re-discovered, depicts a system of bellows pumping air into three leather chambers which then pushes the air briskly through eighteen spouts into a central vacuum that holds the container to be cooled.



Leonardo da Vinci, *Design for a fridge*. Courtesy Museo Ideale di Vinci

Recently, Leonardo scholar Alessandro Vezzosi discovered the working drawings in the Museo Ideale Leonardo da Vinci where he is a director. He built the model and it's now on display at the Museo della Scienza e della Tecnologia 'Leonardo da Vinci' until late October. Will Leonardo ever cease to surprise? I doubt it.