

27 October 2010

Two major seventeenth-century artworks join Fitzwilliam Museum's collection

- Caravaggio-inspired oil painting by Dutch artist Hendrik ter Brugghen acquired with Art Fund assistance
- Louis XIV cabinet, acquired through Acceptance in Lieu scheme, is an exceptional example of French Royal furniture produced by monarch's own cabinetmaker
- Both works on prominent public display at the Fitzwilliam

The world-class collections of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, have been enriched with the acquisition of two seventeenth-century masterworks: a Caravaggio-inspired Dutch painting, and an exceptional Louis XIV cabinet.

These two works, *Young woman tuning a lute* (1626-7) by Hendrik ter Brugghen and a Louis XIV *première-* and *contre-partie* tortoiseshell and floral marquetry cabinet-on-stand (c. 1680) by André-Charles Boulle, are now on public display as part of the Fitzwilliam's permanent collection, which ranges from antiquities to contemporary art.

Young woman tuning a lute takes its place within the Fitzwilliam's fine collection of Dutch paintings thanks to generous grants of £225,000 from the Art Fund and £50,000 from the MLA/V&A Purchase Fund. This is the Museum's first acquisition of a work by ter Brugghen - one of the leading painters amongst the Utrecht followers of Caravaggio - and is one of only a handful of works by this artist in the UK. Ter Brugghen, who died young, was an important innovator for later Dutch 17th-century genre paintings. More recently, he has been recognised as an unorthodox but significant influence on the work of artists such as Vermeer. The permanent acquisition of this work - previously on loan to the Fitzwilliam - will not only secure it for continued public enjoyment, but also introduce a new audience to the skill and subtlety of ter Brugghen's art.



Young woman tuning a lute (c.1626-7)

Hendrik ter Brugghen (1588-1629)



Louis XIV ormolu-mounted *première-* and *contre-partie* tortoiseshell and floral marquetry cabinet-on-stand, c. 1680, with giltwood monopodia supports, c. 1795

André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732) Trumpington Street
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The six-foot high Louis XIV cabinet has entered the Fitzwilliam's collections having been allocated through HM Government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme. The scheme administered by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) enables items of historical or artistic importance to be given to the nation in place of inheritance tax. Its maker, André-Charles Boulle, was arguably the pre-eminent cabinet-maker of the late Baroque period, and was awarded the title of cabinet-maker to Louis XIV in 1672. An exceptional example of the most expensive and fashionable kind of display furniture produced for the monarch and his court, this cabinet – which bears a gilded brass profile portrait of the king himself surrounded by trophies of war – is richly decorated in brass, pewter, specimen woods, turtleshell and horn. It combines beautiful materials with exquisite pictorial and geometric designs to create a visually stunning piece of luxury furniture, truly fit for a king.

These acquisitions will allow the Museum's visitors – of which there were 390,000, last year – to enjoy two exceptional artworks on prominent display. The Boulle cabinet was previously at Wrotham Park in Hertfordshire, a private residence not open to the general public.

"We are delighted to announce the acquisition of these exceptional works, which will greatly enhance and enrich our permanent collection," said Dr Timothy Potts, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

"We are immensely grateful to the Art Fund and the MLA/V&A Purchase Fund for their crucial assistance in the acquisition of ter Brugghen's exquisite painting of a lute player, and to the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council for their role in allocating the cabinet via the Acceptance in Lieu scheme. Not only will the visiting public be able to enjoy these two works on display in the galleries, but the Museum's role as a key department of the University of Cambridge means that they will also provide an invaluable aid to teaching and research."

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Art Fund, said: "Ter Brugghen's painting really does capture a moment in time. It's an intriguing work, displaying the influence of Caravaggio on Dutch painting of the time. We're really pleased to have helped the Fitzwilliam secure this masterpiece for its permanent collection and we're grateful to our members and supporters for helping to make this acquisition happen."

Young woman tuning a lute and the Louis XIV cabinet can now be seen in Galleries 15 and 17 respectively of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

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Media opportunity

On **Monday 1 November 2010 between 11.00 and 13.00** there will be an opportunity for members of the press to view these works with the curators **by prior appointment**. The Museum is closed to the public on Mondays, so to arrange admission please contact the Marketing and Press on press@fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk or phone 01223 332941 Office no later than midday on Friday 29 October.

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Details for publication:

Young woman tuning a lute (c.1626-7)

Hendrik ter Brugghen (1588-1629)

Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund, the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Matthiesen Foundation and the Orbis Pictus Trust, 2010

About the cabinet: Louis XIV ormolu-mounted *première* and *contre-partie* tortoiseshell and floral marquetry cabinet-on-stand, c. 1680, with giltwood monopodia supports, c. 1795.

André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732)

Acquired through HM Government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme

Detailed information on both works is available below

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

OPEN: Tuesday - Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00

Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 - 17.00

ADMISSION FREE

Further information and images:

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Notes for Editors

Young woman tuning a lute (c.1626-7)

Hendrik ter Brugghen (1588-1629)

Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund, the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Matthiesen Foundation and the Orbis Pictus Trust, 2010

Ter Brugghen was one of the leading painters in the group of artists active in Utrecht in the 1620s who adapted Caravaggio's subject matter and style to suit the Dutch taste for religious and secular paintings, and came to be known as the 'Utrecht Carravaggisti'. Ter Brugghen left the Netherlands for Italy in 1605, returning in 1614, and was the only one of these artists who may have been in Rome whilst Caravaggio was still working there. The influence of work by Caravaggio and other artists he had seen in that country would permeate his work until his death in 1629.

Young woman tuning a lute is an autograph replica, with slight differences, of a painting in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. It reflects the development of ter Brugghen's single-figure genre paintings of the type normally associated with Utrecht; portraying lute-players, musicians and drinkers amongst others, but with a sensitivity beyond the reach of his Utrecht colleagues.

The work bears the hallmarks of ter Brugghen's style and personality, such as a subtle use of unusual colour harmonies, lively brushwork and paint surfaces, and complex and varied folds of drapery as shown on the sitter's dress and turban. It also shows ter Brugghen's practice of employing a cool crisp light source and a sense of form, derived as much from the direct observation of the movement of light across surfaces as from such prime Italian followers of Caravaggio as ter Brugghen's contemporary Orazio Gentileschi. It is this technique in particular that has led some modern critics to see in ter Brugghen a prototype for the paintings of Johannes Vermeer.

The horizontal shape of the composition – which shows awareness of Caravaggio's *Lute-player* of c.1596 – is unusual for ter Brugghen, most of whose paintings of musicians are of vertical format and show men playing, and the bareness of the subject's right shoulder emphasises the sensuality of the composition. Questions surrounding this painting and its sitter still remain unanswered: is the girl really singing, or rather concentrating as she tunes her lute? The subject of the painting is hearing, but the girl's turban covers her ears – is this, and the emergent presence of a pearl earring, a subtle joke or allegory?

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“*Young woman tuning a lute* is a painting of distinction conceived with considerable subtlety and executed in a painterly manner unlike many Dutch paintings of this period,” says David Scrase, Keeper of Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the Fitzwilliam. “Music – and, in particular, that of the lute – occupies a special position in the history and collections of the Museum, as Titian’s *Venus and a lutenist* was part of the bequest by Viscount Fitzwilliam that founded the Museum in 1816.”

Louis XIV ormolu-mounted *première* and *contre-partie* tortoiseshell and floral marquetry cabinet-on-stand, c. 1680, with giltwood monopodia supports, c. 1795.

André-Charles Boulle (1642-1732)

Acquired through HM Government’s Acceptance in Lieu scheme (settled £465,700 of tax)

Boulle’s work was renowned for its technical virtuosity, his innovatory production methods and designs, and his skill as a sculptor. His genius in veneering furniture with turtleshell, pewter, and brass marquetry was such that that this technique became known as ‘boulle work’. Boulle gained the title of master cabinet-maker before 1666, and his appointment as cabinet-maker and sculptor to Louis XIV in 1672 brought the royal privilege of working in the Louvre. This particular cabinet was executed at the height of Boulle’s career and demonstrates the most mature expression of his creative output.

The cabinet’s central door is supported by spectacular splayed lion paw mounts and is surmounted by a profile portrait of Louis XIV, surrounded by elaborate military trophies. It is decorated with a beautifully-observed parrot seated on an oak branch, with butterfly above, all executed in specimen woods and, most unusually, set into a beautiful turtleshell background. The intricate geometric designs of the surrounding frame are created in brass, white metal (almost certainly pewter), horn with its reverse coloured blue to simulate costly lapis lazuli (now faded), and turtleshell with its reverse painted with an intense red pigment. Equally spectacular are the pair of wood marquetry roundels inserted on each side of the cabinet, which continue the motif of birds set amidst flowering foliage, again with turtleshell grounds.

The central door is flanked on each side by a set of five drawers decorated in *première partie* (i.e. brass decoration on a turtleshell ground) with foliate mask lock-plates. As is common in Boulle cabinets, there is a non-matching drawer at the very top to either side. When the door is unlocked and opened, further drawers are revealed. Their decoration is even more elaborate than those on the sides because the turtleshell of the ground appears to have had sheets of gold applied to its reverse (as opposed to the clear red pigment painted onto the turtleshell used for the side drawers) to imitate the colour of amber. Moreover, the ornament is made not only from brass but also from white metal (probably pewter). The play of differently-coloured materials and increasing elaboration of design continues on the inside of the door: here the ground is white metal, and the ornament, turtleshell, brass and white metal.

The elaborate marquetry of the cabinet is equally apparent on the stand below. The cabinet was originally supported on baroque herm figures representing Ceres and Bacchus (as seen on a virtually identical cabinet in the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch at Drumlanrig Castle, Scotland). These were replaced in c. 1795-1800 by the current restrained neo-classical Egyptian monopodia in giltwood, with ormolu edges. This adaptation of the design is indicative of the changing tastes of collectors and connoisseurs, who appreciated the virtuoso design and execution of earlier craftsmen but wanted to keep up with the latest contemporary styles, namely the growing interest in all things Egyptian.

Victoria Avery, Keeper of Applied Arts at the Fitzwilliam, said: “The magisterial quality of the Boulle cabinet, with its breathtaking marquetry in various materials combined with the highest quality of Boulle work in metal, offers fascinating comparisons with other pieces in the Museum’s collection. The fact that the cabinet has been altered renders it exceptionally useful for teaching purposes and helps explain culture at its most extravagant in two distinct periods of furniture design. It is both a consummate example of French Royal furniture and proof of how works of art were sometimes modified at a later date to reflect the changing tastes of collectors and connoisseurs.”

The cabinet will be placed on permanent public display in Gallery 17 of the Fitzwilliam, alongside other examples of floral-decorated furniture and French flower paintings. Interestingly, several of these works are by artists working at the same time as Boulle, and from whom the cabinet-maker is believed to have drawn inspiration for many of the floral marquetry compositions seen in his furniture. The placement of the cabinet alongside such paintings of the period will serve to demonstrate the close links and influences between painting and the other decorative arts.

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The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints. The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21st century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins. The Fitzwilliam Museum welcomes over 300,000 visitors a year, offers a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events, and has an award-winning Education Service. The Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00. Free admission. www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

The Art Fund

The Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for works of art and plays a major part in enriching the range, quality and understanding of art in the UK. It campaigns, fundraises and gives money to museums and galleries to buy and show art, and promotes its enjoyment through its events and membership scheme. Current initiatives include sponsoring the UK tour of the ARTIST ROOMS collection, and running a major campaign in partnership with the National Trust to raise £2.7 million to save Brueghel's *The Procession to Calvary* for Nostell Priory. The Art Fund is funded by its art-loving and museum-going members and supporters who believe that great art should be for everyone to enjoy. Find out more at www.artfund.org. Press contact | 020 7225 4888 | media@artfund.org

The Acceptance in Lieu scheme

The Acceptance in Lieu scheme is administered by MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) on behalf of the Government. It is one of the most important means of enriching collections of public museums, libraries and archival offices. In 2008/09 the scheme settled £10.8 million of tax which resulted in cultural objects with a value of almost £20 million entering public collections throughout the UK. Details of all the material accepted in 2008/09 can be found at http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/cultural/tax/acceptance_in_lieu

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