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Butterscotch Auction Gallery Sells Rachel Ruysch Painting for \$2,040,000

by Jeanne Schinto



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A tiny auction house in Bedford Village, New York, sold an 18thcentury still life by Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750) for a very big price on Sunday, February 12. Butterscotch Auction Gallery described the buyer as "an important London dealer." Bidding by phone against two room bidders, he paid \$2,040,000 (including buyer's premium) for the signed 44½" x 35" oil on canvas by the Dutch golden age painter known for monumental flower paintings such as this one.

The 25-year-old auction house, owned and operated by Paul and Ann Marinucci, who named it after their first cat, took the painting in from a local family in central Westchester County. Butterscotch employee Brendan Ryan traced it back to the Alton Towers estate in Staffordshire, England, formerly the seat of the



on February 12. According to the auction house, the price for the 44½" x 35" oil on canvas is a new auction record for the artist. Photo courtesy Butterscotch Auction Gallery.

Earls of Shrewbury, currently a theme park. Ryan said that in 1857, after the last true earl passed away without leaving an heir, the contents of the estate were sold at auction by Christie & Manson.

"Since the catalog for the 1857 auction [was] arranged by room, we know exactly which other paintings were hanging alongside the Ruysch: a Titian, a Claude, an Andrea del Sarto, [and] a Luini, among others," Ryan wrote in a statement prepared for the press. According to Ryan, the Ruysch was sold again, at a Christie, Manson & Woods sale in 1876, and then again by Christie's in 1913, when the grandfather of the consignor's late husband acquired it. From there the painting went to Zurich, where it descended in the family, members of which brought it with them to the United States in the 1980's.

In its entire history no other item sold by Butterscotch, which holds three auctions a year, has brought nearly as much. "Paul calls the sale of the Ruysch an aberration," said Ryan. "For him, what's important is the regular business. He's happy because, notwithstanding the painting, we sold eighty-five percent of the merchandise this time. That's compared to other auctions in the past year, which have been more like sixty-five percent."

Still, Ryan, for his part, is obviously happy to be associated with this success, especially since he is just starting out in the business. A 2007 graduate of Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York, where he was a music major, the native of Bedford Village has worked for the auction house for only four years, having started out part time, moving furniture. "My mother [Lynn Ryan] worked at Sotheby's; she runs the Bedford Village Antiques Show. And I've sort of been around antiques, but I just fell into it. Now I really love it, and I'm going to have a career in it, I'm assuming."

Chris Jussel, who also lives in Bedford Village, is mentoring Ryan, taking him along to auction previews and the like. "I feel incredibly lucky," said Ryan. "He introduces me to people who I assume are just normal, and then I find out they're among the most important dealers in the world. It's pretty crazy."

For more information, call Butterscotch at (914) 764-4609 or visit the Web site (www.butterauction.com).

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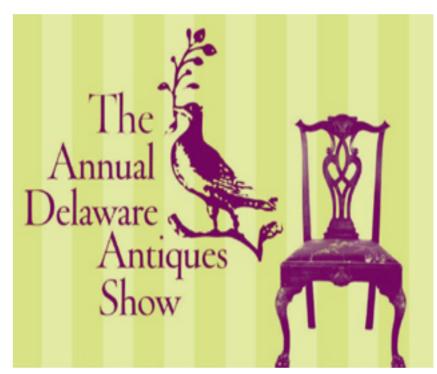
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