



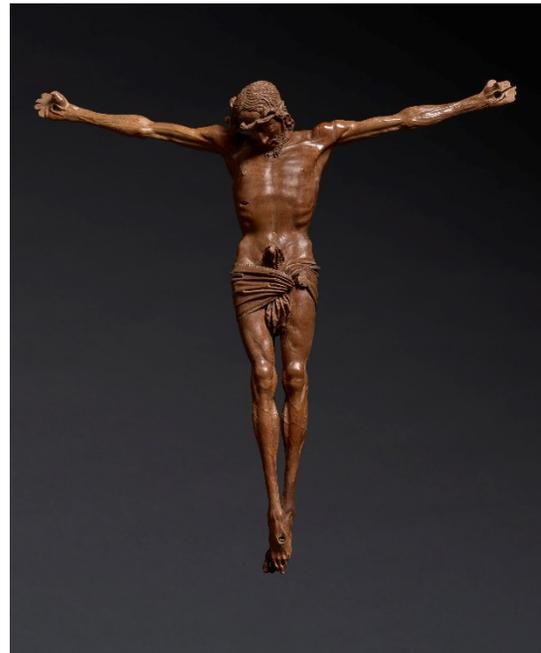
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**J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM ANNOUNCES ITS INTENT TO ACQUIRE  
18<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY PAINTING BY JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY  
AND THE ACQUISITION OF  
15<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY SCULPTURE BY VEIT STOSS**



*Two Boys with a Bladder*, about 1769-70, oil on canvas, by Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797)



*Corpus Christi*, about 1490-1500, wood, by Veit Stoss (1447 –1533)

**LOS ANGELES** – The J. Paul Getty Museum announced today its intent to acquire *Two Boys with a Bladder*, about 1769-70, a painting by Joseph Wright of Derby, which has not been on public view since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was previously unknown to scholars. The Museum also announced the acquisition of *Corpus Christi*, about 1490-1500, a small-scale wooden sculpture depicting the crucified body of Christ by Veit Stoss.

"These two works of art offer exceptional opportunities to enrich our collections," said Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "The striking depiction of the crucified Christ represents a rare opportunity to acquire a masterwork from the great era of early Renaissance German sculpture. It joins our growing collection of late-Medieval and early-Renaissance sculpture and decorative arts, complementing the manuscripts and paintings collections, to offer a more complete picture of the visual culture of the period.

"*Two Boys with a Bladder* is a masterpiece that counts among Joseph Wright of Derby's most accomplished nocturnal subjects and reflects the experimental interests of artists and scientists of the Enlightenment," continued Potts. "Should we obtain the necessary export license from England, the painting will join two other works by the artist at the Getty, adding a completely new and engaging note to our 18<sup>th</sup>-century paintings collection."

### **Corpus Christi**

*Corpus Christi*, about 1490-1500, by Veit Stoss, depicts the crucified body of Christ following the traditional representation of Jesus of Nazareth nailed to a Latin cross at his hands and feet. His head, lowered slightly toward his right shoulder, bears the woven crown of thorns. His right side bears the wound left after Longinus pierced Christ's chest to ensure he was dead. The body is depicted with astonishing realism, emphasizing the bodily stress and physical pain caused by the crucifixion. The small scale of this *Corpus Christi* (it is 13 inches tall) and the care with which the details were carved on both the front and back of the figure indicate that it was intended for private devotion, its patron being able to hold it for worship.

One of the most important German sculptors of the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Stoss, who was also an engraver and painter, excelled at carving wood and was renowned for his work in that medium. The great Florentine art historian Giorgio Vasari described Stoss's virtuosity as a "miracle in wood." In the Getty's *Corpus Christi* that skill is evident in highly detailed curls of the hair and beard, elaborate drapery folds, the realistic representation of swollen veins in Christ's legs and arms, the backbone pressing through the flesh, and the deep wrinkles in his feet.

"This *Corpus Christi* is a rare and striking work of art from the great era of early Renaissance German sculpture, of which Veit Stoss was a master," said Anne-Lise Desmas, senior curator of sculpture and decorative arts at the Getty Museum. "It is among a handful of surviving examples of the master's small-scale figures. Comparable in quality to the monumental crucifixions that Stoss created for churches in Krakow (Poland) and Nuremberg

(Germany), this statuette stands out for the compelling power of its realistic rendering of the anatomy of the martyred body and its intensely expressive representation of human suffering."

### **Two Boys with a Bladder**

The acquisition of *Two Boys with a Bladder* is subject to an export license being granted by the Arts Council of England, which is being applied for on the Getty's behalf by the seller's representative, Lowell Libson and Jonny Yarker Ltd., London.

The recently rediscovered painting depicts two young boys, boldly lit by a concealed candle, inflating a pig's bladder. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, animal bladders served as toys, either inflated and tossed like balloons or filled with dried peas and shaken like rattles. While bladders appeared frequently in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch painting they were depicted less frequently in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Britain. It was a motif that Wright made his own; the elaborate costumes that the boys wear are of the artist's own invention, in the style of British "fancy pictures." The dramatic pictorial effect created by the concentrated candle light within a dark interior setting was in vogue in much of Europe in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that English artists picked up the theme, Wright being among the first to do so.

The previously unpublished masterpiece is Wright's earliest known treatment of the subject. Unseen in public since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the painting forms part of a sequence of dramatic nocturnal paintings that includes *The Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (1768, National Gallery, London) and *An Academy by Lamplight* (1770, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT). It was painted as a pendant to *Two Girls Dressing a Kitten by Candlelight*, which is now at Kenwood House in London.

"*Two Boys with a Bladder* is a remarkable discovery that sheds new light on Wright's work at the most important moment of his career," said Davide Gasparotto, senior curator of paintings at the Getty Museum. "It is a compelling example from his most important and successful genre, candlelight paintings. Moreover, Wright's innovative experimentation with the use of metal foil embodies a sense of technical and scientific exploration that typifies the intellectual milieu of the midlands on the eve of the industrial revolution. It is a major addition to the Getty's holdings of art from the English golden age."

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**The J. Paul Getty Museum** collects Greek and Roman antiquities, European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculpture and decorative arts to 1900, as well as photographs from around the world to the present day. The Museum's mission is to display and interpret its collections, and present important loan exhibitions and publications for the enjoyment and education of visitors locally and internationally. This is supported by an active program of research, conservation, and public programs that seek to deepen our knowledge of and connection to works of art.

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