



Veronese and Workshop

Veronese

Venetian, 1528 - 1588

Italian 16th Century

Rebecca at the Well

c. 1582/1588

oil on canvas

overall: 145.5 x 282.7 cm (57 5/16 x 111 5/16 in.)

framed: 175.3 x 313.1 x 10.2 cm (69 x 123 1/4 x 4 in.)

Samuel H. Kress Collection 1952.5.82

ENTRY

The story of Rebecca at the well comes from Genesis 24:11–22. The aged Abraham, wanting a wife for his son Isaac, sent his senior steward (usually identified as the Eliezer of Damascus mentioned in Genesis 15:2) to his homeland of Mesopotamia to find a suitable woman. Tired after his long journey, the steward stopped at a well outside the city of Nahor and prayed for guidance. Rebecca came out of the city to draw water from the well, and when she offered it to the old man and his camels, he recognized her as the appointed bride and presented her with the betrothal jewels of a gold earring and two bracelets. In Veronese's depiction, the jewels are offered by a kneeling servant, while the city of Nahor is represented in the right background.

First recorded in 1613, in the posthumous inventory of Charles de Croy, 4th Duke of Arschot, at the Château de Beaufort in the Spanish Netherlands, the picture once formed part of a series of ten paintings by Veronese and/or his workshop, five of which show scenes from the Old Testament and five from the New. [1] Of the other

nine, seven are now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (*Hagar and the Angel*, *Esther before Ahasuerus*, *The Flight of Lot*, *Susanna and the Elders*, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman* [fig. 1], *Christ and the Adulteress*, *Christ and the Centurion*); one is in the Castle Museum, Prague (*Adoration of the Shepherds*); and one (*The Flight into Egypt*—or more probably, a *Rest on the Flight*) is lost. [2] An eleventh canvas, *The Washing of the Disciples' Feet*, also in Prague, is sometimes, but inconclusively, associated with the series. [3]

As well as being complementary in their subject matter, the ten canvases are nearly identical in size and shape and were clearly commissioned as a cycle for a particular building; on the evidence of style, scholars are agreed that they date from the 1580s, the last decade of the painter's life. [4] The identity of the patron, however, remains a mystery; furthermore, it is far from clear whether the series was originally destined for a secular building—some princely residence or private palace—or for a church or convent. Sergio Marinelli preferred the secular option and even raised the possibility that the series was commissioned for a royal palace, such as the Escorial. [5] Friderike Klauner, by contrast, identified the site as some religious building in Venice; and this view is made more plausible by the demonstration by Hans Aurenhammer that another series of canvases by Veronese and his workshop with subjects drawn from the Old and New Testaments was originally painted for the sacristy of the Servite conventual church of San Giacomo della Giudecca. [6] In this connection it may be noted that the protagonists of the majority (but not quite all) of the canvases are women, in a way that would have been appropriate for a nunnery. Yet whatever the original destination, the paintings cannot have remained in place for long—indeed, for some reason they may never have been installed—since they had already reached the Netherlands within two decades of Veronese's death. In any case, as suggested by Beverly Brown, they may well have already been for sale in Venice in 1588 and been bought by Arschot, [7] and although she was mistaken in supposing that the 4th Duke was ever in the city, it remains perfectly possible that the paintings were acquired by his father, Philippe, 3rd Duke, who briefly visited in 1588, and who died there in 1595, on his return from a pilgrimage to Loreto. [8] Another possibility, raised by Klara Garas, is that the canvases are arguably identical with a group of pictures by Veronese that was unsuccessfully offered in 1606 to the German prince Ernst von Schaumburg by the painters Josef Heintz and Hans Rottenhammer. [9] In this case, the paintings would have remained either in their original destination or unsold between Veronese's death in 1588 and 1606, and the 4th Duke of Arschot would have acquired them between this date and his

death in 1612, perhaps through the same intermediaries.

In the absence of certain information about the original destination of the series, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the choice of subjects. As noted by Brown, some of the Old and New Testament scenes can be arranged in typologically matching pairs, and the Gallery's picture finds a natural pendant in the *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*, in which the scene is likewise set beside a well, from which a beautiful young woman draws water and gives it to her unknown guest to drink. Just as in the Old Testament scene Abraham's steward recognizes Rebecca by this act as the wife promised to Isaac by God, so in the corresponding New Testament scene (John 4:6–42), the Samaritan woman—at a well founded by Rebecca's son Jacob—recognizes Christ as the Messiah. [10] Since both scenes are lit from the left, it might further be inferred that they were intended to hang beside one another in their original setting. Yet most of the other subjects cannot be paired off in this way, and as noted above, while a majority of them has a female protagonist, in a way that might be interpreted as appropriate as a positive or negative model for a community of nuns, a subject such as Christ and the Centurion would have no place in such a scheme. Brown also noted that most of the canvases repeat subjects, poses, and compositions previously used by Veronese, and in the end it may be that the choice of subjects was determined as much by practical convenience as by any strict iconological program.

Although some scholars, including Alessandro Ballarin, Remigio Marini, and Rodolfo Pallucchini, [11] have regarded the series as autograph, or substantially autograph, works by Veronese, there exists a long tradition for judging them to be products of the master's workshop: Franz Wickhoff, for example, gave them to Veronese's close follower Francesco Montemezzano (1555–c. 1602). [12] Any assessment of the quality of the Gallery's picture is complicated by its present badly abraded condition and its many inexpert retouchings. Yet it is clear that the execution of the landscape and vegetation must always have been perfunctory, with even the yellow drapery on the foreground servant poorly handled, and Brown was certainly correct to insist that the *Rebecca* is not as refined as Veronese at his best. [13] Brown suggested that the figure of Rebecca follows, in reverse, a design used for her counterpart in another version of the subject, in the collection of the Earl of Yarborough. This picture, however, is of even weaker quality, so the relationship of the two compositions to each other, to a third version of the subject (Château de Versailles), and to an autograph preparatory drawing showing figures and camels (private collection, England) remains to be clarified. [14]

The reuse of existing designs might also explain why the figure of Rebecca appears somewhat small in relation to the male figures, and why, as observed by Kurt Badt, [15] the psychological and dramatic potential of the story is not properly realized.

Peter Humfrey

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COMPARATIVE FIGURES

NOTES

- [1] Alexandre Pinchart, “La collection de Charles de Croy, duc d’Arschot, dans son château de Beaumont,” *Archives des Arts, Sciences et Lettres* 1 (1860): 164 (see Provenance). The series is the subject of an unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Venice in 2010 by Lucia Casellato; see the summary of the author’s arguments by Augusto Gentili, “Veronesiana cum figuris: Almanacco 2000–2015; Parte prima,” *Venezia Cinquecento* 23, no. 46 (2013): 55–60.
- [2] For these paintings, see Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, *Veronese* (Milan, 1995), 2:466–472. Brown has convincingly matched up the individual paintings with the sometimes vague descriptions in the Arschot inventory of 1613, in Beverly Louise Brown, “The So-Called Duke of Buckingham Series,” in *Nuovi studi su Paolo Veronese*, ed. Massimo Gemin (Venice, 1990), 231. Klauner argued that there never was a *Flight into Egypt*, in Friderike Klauner, “Zu Veroneses Buckingham-Serie,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 44 (1991): 116.
- [3] The reason for associating the picture with the series is that like the others (except for the apparently lost *Flight into Egypt*), it belonged to the Duke of Buckingham and is of similar size and format. Friderike Klauner, “Zu Veroneses Buckingham-Serie,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 44 (1991): 107–109, also found it integral to her theological interpretation of the series. It may be noted, however, that the picture is not mentioned in the Arschot inventory of 1613, and that it was originally narrower than the other canvases and may have been widened to conform with them. Brown has suggested that a 12th picture by Veronese, *The Anointing of David* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna), which was likewise owned by Arschot and later by Buckingham, also belonged to the series, but this suggestion was rejected by Klauner, and by Pignatti and Pedrocco, because of its

different style and format. See Beverly Louise Brown, “The So-Called Duke of Buckingham Series,” in *Nuovi studi su Paolo Veronese*, ed. Massimo Gemin (Venice, 1990), 234–239; Friderike Klauner, “Zu Veroneses Buckingham-Serie,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 44 (1991): 119 n. 24; Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, *Veronese* (Milan, 1995), 2:466.

- [4] See the summary of critical opinions by Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, *Veronese* (Milan, 1995), 2:466–472.
- [5] Sergio Marinelli, in *Palladio*, ed. Guido Beltramini and Howard Burns (Venice, 2008), 129.
- [6] Friderike Klauner, “Zu Veroneses Buckingham-Serie,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 44 (1991): 118; Hans H. Aurenhammer, “‘Quadri numero sette esistenti nella sagrestia de San Giacomo della Zueca fatti per mano del q. Paolo Veronese.’ Zur Provenienz und ursprünglichen Bestimmung einiger Bilder Veroneses und seiner Werkstatt im Wiener Kunsthistorischen Museum,” *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 1 (1999): 151–187.
- [7] Beverly Louise Brown, “The So-Called Duke of Buckingham Series,” in *Nuovi studi su Paolo Veronese*, ed. Massimo Gemin (Venice, 1990), 239.
- [8] For the 3rd Duke’s death in Venice in 1595, see F. von Reiffenberg, *Une existence de grand siegneur au seizième siècle: Mémoires autographes de Charles de Croy* (Brussels, 1845), xxiii; Hans H. Aurenhammer, in *Meisterwerke der Prager Burggalerie* (Milan, 1996), 76; and Hans H. Aurenhammer, “‘Quadri numero sette esistenti nella sagrestia de San Giacomo della Zueca fatti per mano del q. Paolo Veronese.’ Zur Provenienz und ursprünglichen Bestimmung einiger Bilder Veroneses und seiner Werkstatt im Wiener Kunsthistorischen Museum,” *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 1 (1999): 153, who has also drawn attention to the earlier visit of 1588. Aurenhammer concluded that the 3rd Duke would not have had time during either of his two brief visits to negotiate for the purchase of the paintings. It is worth noting, however, that his host in Venice in 1595 was the wealthy merchant Carlo Helman, whose family, originally from Cologne, had close dealings with Titian, and who is likely to have been well informed about the Venetian art market. See Valentina Sapienza, in *Der späte Tizian und die Sinnlichkeit der Malerei*, ed. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden (Vienna, 2007), 347.
- [9] Klara Garas, “Veronese e il collezionismo del nord nel XVI–XVII secolo,” in *Nuovi studi su Paolo Veronese*, ed. Massimo Gemin (Venice, 1990), 20. Her suggestion is supported by Hans H. Aurenhammer, in *Meisterwerke der Prager Burggalerie* (Milan, 1996), 76, and Hans H. Aurenhammer, “‘Quadri numero sette esistenti nella sagrestia de San Giacomo della Zueca fatti per mano del q. Paolo Veronese.’ Zur Provenienz und ursprünglichen Bestimmung einiger Bilder Veroneses und seiner Werkstatt im Wiener Kunsthistorischen Museum,” *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums*

Wien 1 (1999): 153.

- [10] Beverly Louise Brown, "The So-Called Duke of Buckingham Series," in *Nuovi studi su Paolo Veronese*, ed. Massimo Gemin (Venice, 1990), 235. Friderike Klauner, "Zu Veroneses Buckingham-Serie," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 44 (1991): 113–114, agreed with this typological pairing, but suggested that further theological allusions in the *Rebecca* were intended. She pointed out, for example, that Rebecca was often interpreted as a type for the Virgin Mary (and hence also as a symbol of the church), and the well as a symbol of baptism and eternal life. According to Augusto Gentili, detailed arguments for the typological pairing with the *Samaritan Woman* were presented in 2010 by Lucia Casellato, who also argued that the series as a whole was intended for a feminine audience. See Augusto Gentili, "Veronesiana cum figuris: Almanacco 2000–2015. Parte prima," *Venezia Cinquecento* 23, no. 46 (2013): 55–60.
- [11] Alessandro Ballarin, "Osservazioni sui dipinti veneziani del Cinquecento nella Galleria del Castello di Praga," *Arte veneta* 19 (1965): 72–74; Remigio Marini, *Tutta la pittura di Paolo Veronese* (Milan, 1968), 122; Rodolfo Pallucchini, *Veronese* (Milan, 1984), 152–153, 187–188.
- [12] Franz Wickhoff, "Les écoles italiennes au Musée Impérial de Vienne: 2," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 9 (1893): 139–140. More recent scholars who have accepted a greater or lesser degree of workshop assistance include Giuseppe Fiocco, *Paolo Veronese: 1528–1588* (Bologna, 1928), 200; Jaromír Neumann, *The Picture Gallery of Prague Castle* (Prague, 1967), 296–300; Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings* (Washington, DC, 1979), 1:522–524; Richard Cocke, *Veronese* (London, 1980), 109; Kurt Badt, *Paolo Veronese* (Cologne, 1981), 215–216; Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, *Veronese* (Milan, 1995), 2:466; and Sergio Marinelli, in *Palladio*, ed. Guido Beltramini and Howard Burns (Venice, 2008), 129.
- [13] Beverly Louise Brown, "Replication and the Art of Veronese," *Studies in the History of Art* 20 (1989): 116–118.
- [14] For this drawing and its relationship with the Versailles picture, see Richard Cocke, *Veronese's Drawings* (London, 1984), 238–239; for its relationship with the Yarborough picture, see W. R. Rearick, in *The Art of Paolo Veronese* (Cambridge, 1988), 196. In the latter work, 180–181, Rearick also discussed the evolution of Veronese's various paintings of *Rebecca at the Well* with reference to a picture at Burghley House, which he dated to 1584.
- [15] Kurt Badt, *Paolo Veronese* (Cologne, 1981), 215–216.
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TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The picture was painted on a plainly woven, relatively coarse fabric, with three horizontal seams and one vertical seam. The vertical seam runs the entire height of the painting and is located approximately one-tenth from the right edge. One horizontal seam is located approximately one-third of the height of the painting from the bottom edge. It runs the entire length of the painting, including the area to the right of the vertical seam. The second horizontal seam is located approximately one-quarter of the height of the painting from the top edge. It runs from the left edge to the vertical seam. The topmost seam runs on a diagonal starting two inches from the top edge on the left to the center of the top edge. The painting has been lined, and cusping visible in the x-radiographs along the side edges indicates that the painting retains its original dimensions in the horizontal direction. The top and bottom edges have had their tacking margins flattened out, resulting in a slight expansion of the picture surface in the vertical direction. A thin imprimatura of warm brown was applied to a heavy white ground, and analysis of the paint application around the edges of the figures suggests that these were painted first, before the background. The paint was applied fluidly and relatively quickly, with its thickness varying from very thin in the darker areas of the background to moderately impasted in the highlights. The surface shows extensive abrasion and has suffered from a very heavy-handed lining, resulting in a general flattening, particularly of the impastos. The original paint is disfigured in places by careless retouchings.

Peter Humfrey and Joanna Dunn based on the examination reports by Michael Swicklik and Joanna Dunn

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PROVENANCE

Charles de Croy, 4th duc d'Arschot [1560-1612], Château de Beaufort, Hainaut;^[1] his estate; purchased 1619 from his widow, Dorothée, by George Villiers, 1st duke of Buckingham [1592-1628], York House, London;^[2] by inheritance to his son, George Villiers, 2nd duke of Buckingham [1628-1687], York House;^[3] purchased 1650 in Antwerp by Leopold Wilhelm, archduke of Austria [1614-1662], on behalf of his brother, Ferdinand III, Holy Roman Emperor [1608-1657], and brought to Prague;^[4] Hapsburg Imperial Collection, Prague Castle, until 1876, and then Vienna;^[5] Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; sold February 1952 through (M. Knoedler &

Co., London, New York, and Paris) to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York; [6] gift 1952 to NGA.

[1] The picture is listed, together with its companion-pieces by Veronese, in the posthumous inventory of 1613 of the duke's collection in his castle of Beaufort in Hainaut, no. 52: "Une pièce encoire sur thoilie du susdit maistre, longue et large, et ces molures commes les précédentes, contenant la représentation d'une femme aiant les bras demy nud avecq ung viellard, ung nein, ung moriaume et pluisieurs chaux" (A picture on canvas by the aforementioned master [Veronese], of the same dimensions and framing as the others, showing a woman with half-bare arms, an old man, a dwarf, a moor, and several camels). See Alexandre Pinchart, "La collection de Charles de Croy, duc d'Arschot, dans son château de Beaumont," *Archives des Arts, Sciences, et Lettres* 1 (1860): 164. Before the series was bought by the Duke of Buckingham in 1619, other English collectors, including the Earls of Somerset and Arundel, were alerted by their agents that they were available for purchase. See Philip McEvansoneya, "Some Documents Concerning the Patronage and Collections of the Duke of Buckingham," *Rutgers Art Review* 8 (1987): 29 n. 18; Beverly Louise Brown, "The So-Called Duke of Buckingham Series," in *Nuovi studi su Paolo Veronese*, edited by Massimo Gemin, Venice, 1990: 231-232; Philip McEvansoneya, "Italian Paintings in the Buckingham Collection," in *The Evolution of English Collecting: The Reception of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, edited by Edward Chaney, New Haven and London, 2003: 320. Charles de Croy's widow was his second wife and his first cousin once removed; they were married in 1605 and she died in 1661.

[2] The painting was acquired by Balthasar Gerbier in Antwerp in July 1619 on behalf of the Duke of Buckingham. See Philip McEvansoneya, "Some Documents Concerning the Patronage and Collections of the Duke of Buckingham," *Rutgers Art Review* 8 (1987): 29; Philip McEvansoneya, "Italian Paintings in the Buckingham Collection," in *The Evolution of English Collecting: The Reception of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, edited by Edward Chaney, New Haven and London, 2003: 320.

[3] The picture, described as "Paulo Veroneso. Abraham's Servt and Rebecca," is included in the 1635 inventory of Buckingham's collection at York House in the Strand. See Randall Davies, "An Inventory of the Duke of Buckingham's Pictures,

etc., at York House in 1635,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 10, no. 48 (March 1907): 381.

[4] Brian Fairfax, *A Catalogue of the Curious Collection of Pictures of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham* . . . , London, 1758: 7, no. 5 (of the list of paintings by Veronese). For the sending of the greater part of the Buckingham collection to Amsterdam for safekeeping in 1648 and the circumstances of its acquisition by Leopold Wilhelm on behalf of the emperor, see Klara Garas, “Die Sammlung Buckingham und die kaiserliche Galerie,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 40 (1987): 114-115; and Philip McEvansoneya, “The Sequestration and Dispersal of the Buckingham Collection,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 8 (1996): 133-154.

[5] The picture is recorded in the Prague inventories of 1685 and 1718, no. 478, and 1737, no. 486: see Karl Köpl, “Urkunden, Akten, Regesten, und Inventare aus dem K. K. Statthaltereii-Archiv in Prag,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 10 (1889), cxxxviii and clxi. It is still recorded in Prague by Woltmann 1877, but in Vienna by Engerth 1884: Alfred Woltmann, “Die Gemäldesammlung in der kaiserlichen Burg zu Prag,” *Mittheilungen der K. K. Central-Commission*, N. F., Vienna (1877): 44-45; Eduard R. von Engerth, *Kunsthistorische Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses, Gemälde, vol. 1: Italienische, Spanische und Französische Schulen*, Vienna, 1884: 401. See also Jaromír Neumann, *The Picture Gallery of Prague Castle*, Prague, 1967: 290; Klara Garas, “Die Sammlung Buckingham und die kaiserliche Galerie,” *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 40 (1987): 118.

[6] M. Knoedler & Co. Records, accession number 2012.M.54, Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: Series II, Sales Book 16, Paintings, 1945 January-1953 June, page 383, no. CA3945 (copy in NGA curatorial files, see also The Kress Collection Digital Archive, <https://kress.nga.gov/Detail/objects/1761>).

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