

# JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

CS0371

## **SIMON DE VOS**

(1603 – Antwerp – 1676)

The Lamentation

Signed and dated, lower left: *S. D Vos. in et F 1644*  
Oil on panel, 14½ x 17⅝ ins. (36.8 x 44.8 cm)



## PROVENANCE

With James A. Gorry, Dublin, until

Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 6 October, 1950, lot 123

Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 9 July 2014, lot 159 (The Property of a Lady)

Private collection, England, until 2021

Born in Antwerp in 1603, Simon de Vos studied with the portraitist Cornelis de Vos (1603-1676) before enrolling as a master in the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke in 1620. Subsequently, he is thought to have rounded off his education with a trip to Italy. Although undocumented, a sojourn in Italy during the 1620s is the only plausible explanation for the stylistic similarities that exist between some of his early genre scenes and those of the German-born artist Johann Liss (c. 1595-1631), who was in Rome and Venice at that time. In any event, de Vos was back in his hometown by 1627, the year in which he married Catharina, sister of the still-life painter Adriaen van Utrecht (1599-1652). He remained in Antwerp for the rest of his life.

In his early career, Simon de Vos painted mostly cabinet-sized genre scenes. He specialised in merry company subjects, whose style and composition recall similar works by such Dutch contemporaries as Antonie Palamedesz. (1601-1673), Dirck Hals (1591-1656) and Pieter Codde (1599-1678). After about 1640, he turned increasingly to biblical subjects that show the influence of Frans Francken the Younger (1581-1642), Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641). With its rich, glowing colours and lively handling of paint, this signed and dated painting of 1644, exemplifies de Vos's history paintings in small format.

In this depiction of the *Lamentation*, Christ is shown just after his descent from the cross, surrounded by a small group of mourners, gathered before the mouth of the tomb. A bright light illuminates his lifeless body which is being supported by his grieving mother, the Virgin Mary, and Saint John the Evangelist. Kneeling on the left, sponge in hand, Mary Magdalene washes away the blood from Jesus's hand. She is assisted in her task by another mourning woman, who also went by the name of Mary. Joseph of Arimathea stands on the right, wearing a turban and holding the crown of thorns. A brass basin of water, a blood-stained cloth and a sponge lie on the ground in the foreground, together with a hammer, pincers and three bloody nails, recalling the crucifixion. In the background, three men, one of whom bears a lighted taper, prepares the tomb for burial.

The subject, which is only mentioned briefly in the Gospels, became a popular theme during the Counter Reformation, when religious images of this type were seen as an aid to personal devotions.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Born in Antwerp in 1603, Simon de Vos became a pupil of the portrait painter Cornelis de Vos, to whom he was not related. In 1620, he was registered as a master in the Antwerp Guild of Saint Luke. In the years that followed, he probably travelled to Italy, although there is no documentary evidence for such a trip. This hypothesis is supported by the style of his early genre scenes which shows a close affinity with the work of the German-born painter Johann Liss, who lived in Italy from 1621 until his death in 1631. De Vos must have returned to Antwerp no later than 1627, the year of his marriage to Catharina, sister of the still-life painter Adriaen van Utrecht. Between 1629 and 1642, he took on two apprentices in his studio in Antwerp. De Vos often collaborated with artists who were specialists in other fields, such as the flower painter Daniel Seghers (1590-1661) and the still-life painter Alexander Adriaenssen (1587-1661). He is known to have supplied paintings to the Antwerp art dealers Forchondt and Chrysostoom van Immerseel.

De Vos's standing among his contemporaries is indicated by the fact that Rubens owned a painting by him at the time of his death. The artist's portrait was painted by Abraham de Vries (fig 1), and a print of it was included in Van Dyck's *Iconography* (Antwerp, c. 1632-34).



Fig. 1. Abraham de Vries (1590-1649/50)  
*Portrait of Simon de Vos*, 1635, on canvas, 121 x 92 cm.  
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen, Antwerp.