

## A noble circle. The vogue for collecting Italian paintings in Denmark 1690-1730

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### Abstract

This article presents a closer look at an important moment in the history of art collecting in Denmark when Italian art first began to be admired by noble virtuosi. During the last decade of the 17th and first quarter of the 18th century, a number of art collections were formed by young Danish noblemen, most of whom had travelled in the company of Crown Prince Frederik. Due to the very incomplete level of documentation we are now often frustratingly unable to gauge the exact size and contents of these collections. Yet the sources presented in the article do suggest a strong bias towards Italian art, by old masters as well as contemporary painters.

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### Introduction

[1] At what point did Danish collectors begin to appreciate the art of Venice, Florence and Rome? While royal patronage was occasionally extended to Italian artists or artists working in an Italianate style, little is known of a taste for Italian fine art in other parts of Danish society.<sup>1</sup> This article aims to look past the much-studied phenomenon of royal patronage and focus instead on an early circle of private art collectors in Denmark. Most of these aristocratic collectors belonged to the entourage of Crown Prince Frederik (1671-1730), who in 1699 succeeded his father as King Frederik IV. And like their European contemporaries, these men came to consider Italian paintings the pinnacle of art and the

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<sup>1</sup> By the late 17th century, the Italian pieces in the royal collections included the paintings acquired by Frederik III from Salvator Rosa and Ciro Ferri in the early 1660s and the acquisitions by the architect Lambert van Haven on the king's behalf while travelling in Italy in 1668-69. These and other royal acquisitions of Italian fine art are briefly treated in Harald Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, Copenhagen 1961, 11-14, and in Henrik Carl Bering Lisberg, *Kunstkammeret. Dets Stiftelse og ældste Historie*, Copenhagen 1897, 133-138. A more general overview of the royal collections is provided by Bente Gundestrup, *Det kongelige danske Kunstkammer 1737*, vols. 1-2, Copenhagen 1991, and Jørgen Hein, *The Treasure Collection at Rosenborg Castle. The Inventories of 1696 and 1718. Royal Heritage and Collecting in Denmark-Norway 1500-1900*, vols. 1-3, Copenhagen 2009.

pearls of their collection. Our knowledge of collecting and uses of pictures in seventeenth-century Denmark remains extremely scarce, and while a widespread use of graphic images and decorative painting is documented, we know of few real attempts (excepting those of the king) to procure high quality paintings from abroad.<sup>2</sup> Thus the collecting activities of this circle of courtiers mark the point when art collecting first comes into view as a shared activity of the Danish elite, parallel to (if not always independent from) the taste and patronage of the king.

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### **The princely travel parties**

[2] Since late medieval times a European journey had formed an indispensable part of the education of young Danish nobleman.<sup>3</sup> These hugely expensive journeys were usually directed towards academic or military training, though a young gentleman was equally expected to return with a knowledge of foreign languages, manners and politics. Time was usually divided between universities and cultural capitals in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Italy, in approximately that order of preference. Artistic matters formed part of the standard curriculum too, yet the Danes do not appear to have brought back souvenirs of paintings and sculpture in greater number.<sup>4</sup> By the late seventeenth century, the character, duration and outcome of the nobleman's journey had been formalised into what we now know as the Grand Tour.<sup>5</sup> Danish princes too were expected to educate themselves abroad and in 1692-93, the young Crown Prince Frederik left for his Grand Tour. The chosen route carried him and his retinue via Frankfurt, Nürnberg and Innsbruck to the Alps, from where he entered Italy as the first Danish monarch in two centuries. After visiting Venice, the prince journeyed south along the Adriatic coast to spend spring in Rome and after a short sojourn in Florence in May, he continued by sea to Genoa and on to Marseille. The following six months were spent in different cities in southern and western France, studying language and customs. Only then was the prince

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<sup>2</sup> Povl Eller, *Kongelige portrætmalere i Danmark 1630-82*, Copenhagen 1971, 64-72; Povl Eller, "Borgerne og billedkunsten på Christian 4s tid. Uddrag af Helsingør skifteprotokoller 1621-1660," in: *Fra Frederiksborg Amt*, 1974, 7-185.

<sup>3</sup> Vello Helk, "Den danske adels dannelsesrejser i Europa 1536-1660," in: *Riget, magten og æren. Den danske adel 1350-1660*, Aarhus 2001, 524-556; Pernille Hasselsteen, "Christian IV's Ridderakademi i Sorø og den danske adels udenlandsrejser ca. 1560-1650," in: Flemming Lundgreen-Nielsen and Hanne Ruus, eds., *Svøbt i mår. Dansk Folkevisekultur 1550-1700*, vol. 4, Copenhagen 2002, 375-483.

<sup>4</sup> A few exceptional cases of paintings commissioned by earlier Danish travellers to Italy are mentioned in Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> The literature on the Grand Tour is vast, especially as the British tradition is concerned, see for instance: Anthony Burgess and Francis Haskell, eds., *The Age of the Grand Tour*, London 1967; Geoffrey Trease, *The Grand Tour*, New Haven and London 1991; Bruce Reford, *Venice and the Grand Tour*, New Haven 1996; Iliara Bignamini and Andrew Wilton, ed., *Grand Tour. The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, exh. cat., London 1996; Edward Chaney, *The Evolution of the Grand Tour. Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations since the Renaissance*, London 1998; Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, New Haven and London 2003.

considered ready to make his appearance in Paris and at the court at Versailles, before returning home via Flanders and Holland.

- [3] Prince Frederik's Grand Tour is considered of great importance for the course of royal patronage in Denmark. The impulses received are perhaps most notable in his modelling of his favourite palace Frederiksberg on Italian prototypes, yet the prince was not the only one to come under the spell of Italy. His retinue included a group of young court officials, many of whom had been friends of the prince since childhood. And as the prince was invited into the palaces of Rome, Florence and Paris, so were these young noblemen. As a consequence, most members of the travel party were severely smitten with the taste for anything Italian, be it art and architecture, dances or dinners.
- [4] Italy left such a deep impression on the prince himself that he even decided to return one day, and sixteen years later, in 1708, he embarked on his second Italian journey, now as King of Denmark.<sup>6</sup> That an absolute monarch should travel abroad for leisure was almost unheard of and caused endless administrative headaches. Several daily dispatches were needed for the king to rule from the far end of the continent. Though the purpose of the journey was clouded in mystery (and surely caused some speculation throughout Europe), the king's agenda was hardly suspect.<sup>7</sup> It seems that he simply wished to revisit Italy for the sake of entertainment and recreation, to attend lavish balls and in short to relive his youth. To this end, he brought with him a number of his companions from his first journey. This time the chosen route carried the travel party through Leipzig, Nürnberg and Augsburg to Innsbruck and from there across the Alps into Italy. Christmas was spent in Verona before arrival to Venice in time for the carnival.<sup>8</sup> Though Rome had been a natural and important stop on his first Grand Tour, it clearly held little fascination for the bon vivant King Frederik who felt no need to revisit the Eternal City. The lavishness and festivity of Venice suited his tastes better, and the ten-week sojourn there seems to have been the main object of the journey. And after spending the following six weeks in Tuscany, the king and his retinue of 121 people headed back to Denmark.<sup>9</sup>
- [5] Although Frederik himself was mostly interested in gardening and architecture and primarily brought back Venetian glass and other objets d'art, he also saw fit to acquire a

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<sup>6</sup> The most recent account of the second journey can be found in *Royal Treasures from Denmark 1709: Frederik IV in Florence*, exh. cat., Florence 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Mogens Bencard, "The Journey," in: *Royal Treasures from Denmark 1709: Frederik IV in Florence*, exh. cat., Florence 1994, 36 and 38.

<sup>8</sup> The grand regatta celebrating the king's arrival was depicted by Luca Carlevarijs and the painting sent to King Frederik in 1713 (now at the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle, see Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 47, and *The Glory of Venice*, exh. cat., New Haven and London 1994, no. 22). A slightly different version is owned by the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

<sup>9</sup> Piero Pacini, "The Florentine Sojourn," in: *Royal Treasures from Denmark 1709: Frederik IV in Florence*, exh. cat., Florence 1994, 49-75 and id., "The Programme of the Visit" in: *ibid.*, 76-91.

few paintings on his two journeys.<sup>10</sup> His purchases betray a particular appreciation of feminine beauty and include a group of paintings attributed to Jacopo Bassano, an oval painting by Giovan Gioseffo dal Sole (Fig. 1), a collection of pastels and miniatures brought from Rosalba Carriera (presumably including Fig. 2) and possibly also a couple of pastels and an oil painting by Benedetto Luti (Fig. 3).<sup>11</sup> The other members of the travel party all appear to have brought back Italian pictures too and perhaps in greater measure than the prince. The encounter with the Venetian art market in particular left its mark on the taste and collections of the courtiers.<sup>12</sup> Though the art works bought or commissioned by the Danes were rarely of great quality they were to be of importance to the dissemination of an aristocratic Italianate taste in Denmark.



1 Giovan Gioseffo dal Sole, *Tarquin Threatening Lucretia*, oil on canvas, 74 x 57,5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSsp128 (SMK Foto)

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<sup>10</sup> For the collection of Venetian glass, see Gudmund Boesen, *Venetianske Glas*, Copenhagen 1960, and Ole Villumsen Krog, ed., *Royal Glass*, exh. cat., Copenhagen 1995. A brief overview of King Frederik's other acquisitions, ranging from snuff boxes to busts and canons, is provided by Torben Holck-Colding in *Dansk kunsthistorie*, vol. 2, Copenhagen 1973, 329-330.

<sup>11</sup> Four of the eleven Bassanos are still installed in the so-called Chinese Room at Frederiksberg Palace. For the few remaining Carrieras, see Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 48. The pieces by Luti are divided between Rosenborg Castle and Statens Museum for Kunst, see Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 71, pl. LXXVb and CIIa-b. The king also bought some sculptures from Giovanni Baratta (Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 100-101), but not (as often claimed) any paintings by Cignani.

<sup>12</sup> Francis Haskell's *Patrons and Painters. A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, 1963 (and later editions), pt. 3, remains an indispensable introduction to the eighteenth-century art market in Venice encountered by foreign travellers.



2 Rosalba Carriera, *Chastity*, miniature on vellum, 8.8 x 7.1 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMS4838 (SMK Foto)



3 Benedetto Luti, *Head of a young woman*, 1704, pastel, 32.5 x 27.3 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSB14 (SMK Foto)

[6] Unfortunately, the sources for the activities of this early circle of Danish courtier-collectors are extremely scarce. As probate proceedings were not mandatory, the archival records give only an incomplete picture. Several of the collections were only documented much later and may well have been greatly reduced or augmented in the meantime. Similarly, many collections had by then been transferred to provincial manor houses, where the art works had to conform to entirely different uses. A large number of unfashionable ancestral acquisitions were weeded out in this process. In other cases, the sale of a family town house caused entire collections to be auctioned off. In all, the

reconstruction of early eighteenth-century private collecting in Denmark is difficult if not impossible. For the sake of clarity, I will focus on a few of the prince's better-known travel companions, beginning with the lesser court officials Wibe, Walter and Weiberg. These three men all appear to have shared a preference for contemporary painting, while their noble counterparts, the Counts Ulrik Adolph Holstein, Christian Detlev Reventlow and, perhaps, Christian Gyldenløve all seem to have preferred the Old Masters.

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### **Ditlev Wibe**

[7] The best documented example of early eighteenth-century collecting in Denmark is the prince's close childhood friend, the Secretary of the Danish Chancery and later Governor-general of Norway Ditlev Wibe (1670-1731). When the prince set out on his first Italian journey, Wibe had already spent several years studying abroad, particularly in Paris, and had even visited Rome in 1688.<sup>13</sup> Though he was not able to partake in the prince's entire Grand Tour, Wibe travelled from Paris to Rome to visit the Danish travel party.<sup>14</sup> Sixteen years later, however, he was an indispensable member of the king's council on his entire second journey.

[8] Like most of his fellow travellers, Wibe seems to have been inspired by the French and Italian art collections. At any event, the Wibe home later contained a number of pictures that may well have been acquired during either Italian journey. These art works are all recorded in a unique copy of an anonymous sale catalogue kept by the National Library of Denmark. The sale took place in Copenhagen in December 1732 and a contemporary note on the catalogue's back cover states that the items described within "have been the estate of the late privy councillor and governor-general Mr Wibe".<sup>15</sup> The sale included 116 paintings, among them at least 30 pieces attributed to Italian artists, mainly of the 16th and 17th century. Besides names like Tintoretto, Titian and Carracci, we find more contemporary paintings such as "A large rectangular piece, Christ, Mary and Joseph", "A large piece with Cleopatra" and a "Mary Magdalen" all by Carlo Maratta, as well as "A Pan by Carlotti" i.e. by Johann Carl Loth.<sup>16</sup> In general, Wibe seems to have preferred contemporary painters to the Old Masters and his collection included paintings by the two artists most admired by the Danish travel parties, Sebastiano Bombelli (1635-1719) and Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757). The former had left a particularly good impression on the

<sup>13</sup> Vello Helk, *Dansk-Norske Studierejser 1661-1813*, Odense University Studies in History and Social Sciences 139, vol. 2, Odense 1991, 276. For the general biography of Wibe, see Svend Cedergreen Bech, ed., *Dansk biografisk leksikon*, vol. 15, Copenhagen 1984, s.v. Wibe, Ditlev.

<sup>14</sup> Frederik Weilbach, *Frederik IV.s Italiensrejser*, Copenhagen 1933, 27-28.

<sup>15</sup> The Royal Library, Ind. 670 8°. The inscription reads "har været dend Salige Hr: Geheime Raad og Stadtholder Wibes Gods". Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

<sup>16</sup> Wibe's sale, 8 December 1732, lot 20: "Et stort fiirkandt Stykke, Christus, Maria og Joseph, af Carl Morat", lot 33: "Et stort Stykke med Cleopatra, af Carl Morat", lot 49: "Maria Magdalena af Carl Morat" and lot 60: "En Pan af Carlotti". The latter is perhaps identical to a painting of a faun that later appeared in the estate sale of art dealer Nicolai Steemann, Copenhagen, 20 April 1796, lot 68.

Danes, and after a visit to his studio in February 1692 the prince himself considered Bombelli "den allerberühmtesten Mahler der heutigen Welt".<sup>17</sup> As Bombelli was the leading Venetian exponent of formal portraiture at the time, Wibe had naturally commissioned a portrait from him, probably the likeness of one of his companions.<sup>18</sup> Wibe's infatuation with the art of Carriera is attested by a letter to the artist dated 21 December 1709 in which he mentions having received a version of the portrait of La Zenobio.<sup>19</sup> "Il sert d'un grand ornement à mon Cabinet," Wibe assures the artist. The portrait probably formed part of the series of paintings by the artist later appearing in the sale of the Wibe collection as "6 cabinet pieces on ivory, varnished, with lacquered frames, by Mademoiselle Rosalba, 4 glazed and 2 unglazed."<sup>20</sup>

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### Frederik Walter

- [9] Wibe was not the only Dane interested in the Carriera pastels. Several members of the travel parties were in fact competing to buy these fashionable pieces, and the prince's *valet de chambre* Frederik Walter (1649-1718, Fig. 4) is likewise known to have written a thank you letter to the Venetian portraitist.<sup>21</sup> Other than that, Walter's taste and art collection has remained unknown. The reasons for his participation in the prince's journeys are, on the other hand, abundantly clear as he was exceptionally well travelled. In the 1670s, he had visited the Netherlands, France and Italy as tutor to the Swedish-German Count Johann Carl von Königsmarck and later Walter had served as tutor to Prince Frederik's half-brother, Count Christian Gyldenløve, on his journey to Italy in 1688-90.<sup>22</sup> Fluent in Italian and well versed in local customs, Walter was an obvious choice for the post of royal marshal on both Italian journeys.
- [10] Today Walter is mainly remembered as a discerning bibliophile, and especially his choice of bindings in French style red Morocco is well known to historians of book collecting.<sup>23</sup> Yet his probate inventory reveals that he also owned a large number of paintings.<sup>24</sup> His

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<sup>17</sup> Weilbach, *Frederik IV.s Italiensrejser*, 23. On Bombelli, see: Aldo Rizzi, *Mostra del Bombelli e del Carneio*, Doretto exh. cat., Udine 1964.

<sup>18</sup> Wibe's sale, 8 December 1732, lot 1: "Et Oval Mands Portrait med forgyldt Ramme af Bombelli".

<sup>19</sup> Bernardina Sani, *Rosalba Carriera. Lettere, diari, Frammenti*, vol. 1, Florence 1985, no. 113, gives the signature as De Suibe, though this is undoubtedly a misreading of D. Wibe. The letter was first published in Vittorio Malamani, *Rosalba Carriera*, Rome 1899, 81, where the author is erroneously given as Weiberg.

<sup>20</sup> Wibe's sale, 8 December 1732, lot 15: "6 Cabinet Stykker paa Elphenbeen Laquered med Brilliant Rammer af Mademoiselle Rosalba 4 med Glas for og 2 uden".

<sup>21</sup> Malamani, *Rosalba Carriera*, 18, 79-80 and 81.

<sup>22</sup> Helk, *Dansk-Norske Studierejser 1661-1813*, 271. For the general biography of Walter, see C. F. Bricka, *Dansk biografisk Lexikon*, vol. 18, Copenhagen 1904, s.v. Walter.

<sup>23</sup> See for instance Ingrid Ilsøe, "Bogbindsundersøgelser i det Kgl. Biblioteks samlinger II: Danske bind og bogbindere ca. 1710-1740," in: *Fund og Forskning* 35 (1996), 11-12.

<sup>24</sup> The Danish National Archives, Court jurisdiction ('*Hofretten*'), Ordinary estates, Frederik Walter 1718.

collection of some 139 paintings was first inventoried prior to his wedding in 1714 as part of a prenuptial agreement, whereas a second list drawn up after Walter's death in 1718 amounts to 148 pieces. The names of the individual artists, however, are only rarely stated. The collection held a large number of flower paintings and portraits, including likenesses of people that Walter had served under such as the Count and Countess Königsmarck, the Princess of Ostfriesland, Count Christian Gyldenløve and King Frederik IV. However, the two lists offer little evidence of any artistic souvenirs brought back from Italy, possibly excepting a landscape attributed to Salvator Rosa, two pictures by "Carlo Liota," and eight portraits by a certain "Monbelle" or "Monbelli".<sup>25</sup> The latter could perhaps refer to the favourite of the Danes, Sebastiano Bombelli, as the royal collection is known to have contained a portrait of Walter attributed to the artist.<sup>26</sup>



4 Copy after Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Portrait of Frederik Walter*, after an original from 1702, oil on canvas, 43 x 34 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMS4134 (SMK Foto)

[11] The two inventories of the Walter collection give only an incomplete picture of his Italianate taste. This is due to Walter's infamous habit of exceeding his means including

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<sup>25</sup> According to the prenuptial agreement of 1714 the following pieces were arranged in the green cabinet: no. 4, "Et Schilleri af 2 Corpus van Monbel"; no. 12, "Et Fruentimmer Schelleri von Monbelle"; no. 13, "Et Dito Fruentimmer von Monbelle"; no. 15, "Et Fruentimmer Skelleri von Monbelli"; no. 13, "Een Cavalers Portrait von Monbelle"; no. 19, "Princesinden fra Frieslands Skelleri von Monbellia"; no. 20, "Et dito von Monbellia" and no. 29, "Tvende Schilderier Bacus og Finus af Carlo Liota". The red cabinet contained: no. 23, "Et Dito [landskab] von Salvator Roesse".

<sup>26</sup> The portrait by Bombelli is reported to have burned in 1859, see Gundestrup, *Det kongelige danske Kunstkammer 1737*, no. 646/75. The portrait illustrated here is considered a copy of the portrait by Hyacinthe Rigaud (belonging to the Museum of National History at Frederiksborg Castle; another version in the Herzog Anton-Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig) which has occasionally been attributed to Bombelli, e.g. by Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 42. The measurements of the Bombelli portrait, however, were much smaller according to the royal inventory of 1737.



(so the playwright Ludvig Holberg tells us) always ordering food for four people when dining alone.<sup>27</sup> As a result, he was often short of money and in the years 1713-15, he had had to pawn the most prized pieces of his art collection. In all 21 paintings were left with the Jewish jeweller Joseph Meyer Levin (died 1739) who in turn pawned them with the King's jeweller Andreas Norman (1666-1727).<sup>28</sup> After Walter's death his executors tried to auction off the paintings, most of which remained unsold and had to be handed back to Norman in restitution of debts.<sup>29</sup> The paintings included two portraits and a figure painting by Bombelli, a pastel by Rosalba Carriera (perhaps the one mentioned in Walter's letter to the artist) and some further paintings by Carlo Maratta and Benedetto Luti.<sup>30</sup> In all, Walter's collection is comparable to that of Wibe in both the preference for the fashionable names of contemporary Italian painting and in the comparatively small number of earlier Italian pictures. Though their preference for Venetian and Roman figure paintings and portraits is almost without precedence in Danish society, this pattern of collecting is, of course, hardly remarkable in a wider European perspective. The content of the Wibe and Walter collection is in fact reminiscent of the kind of art works commissioned and bought by British travellers during what has been termed "the early 'Maratta' phase of Grand Tour collecting."<sup>31</sup> And like contemporary British travellers, neither Wibe nor Walter showed any particular appreciation of Italian vedute or landscapes.

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### Frederik von Weiberg

[12] There is something to suggest that the taste of Wibe and Walter was shared by their close friend Frederik von Weiberg (ca. 1670-1720).<sup>32</sup> After studying abroad in the 1680s, particularly in Holland, Weiberg had visited Florence in 1690 before receiving a minor

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<sup>27</sup> Chr. Bruun, ed., *Ludvig Holbergs Epistler*, vol. 2, Copenhagen 1868, 95 and 368.

<sup>28</sup> Duplicates of the receipts, dated 16 October 1713 and 1715, are found in Walter's probate files, The Danish National Archives, Court jurisdiction ('*Hofretten*'), Ordinary estates, Frederik Walter 1718. Another group of paintings were pawned with Michael Lütjohan in January 1715, including "A Venetian head" ("Et Venetiansk Hoved") and "A small Italian landscape in a lacquered frame" ("Et lidet Ital. Landskab med lacerred Ramme").

<sup>29</sup> Walter's books were sold on 14 March 1719 and following days (Harald Ilsøe, *Biblioteker til salg. Om danske bogauktioner og kataloger 1661-1811*, Copenhagen 2007, 102-103) and his other belongings must have been auctioned off immediately afterwards.

<sup>30</sup> The receipt for paintings pawned with Andreas Normann (see note 28) includes: "Ein Extra schön Stüch von Benedeti Luti", "Ein schön Stüch von Karl Morati", "Ein schön Contrefeit von Bombelli", "Ein Contrefeit von selbigen", "Ein Contrefeit von Rosalba mit truken Farben", "Ein Krantz mit ein Italiens Kontrefeit" and "Ein Stüch von Bombelli mit zwei Figuren". Only the Maratta, the anonymous wreathed portrait and the figure painting by Bombelli were sold at the auction.

<sup>31</sup> James Stourton and Charles Sebag-Montefiore, *The British as Art Collectors From the Tudors to the Present*, London 2012, 85-99, here 87.

<sup>32</sup> The members of Weiberg's social circle, which included several members of the travel parties, are listed in Christian Polycarp Leporin, *Memoria Wolfiana*, 1725, 28-30. For the general biography of Weiberg, see Povl Engelstoft, ed., *Dansk biografisk Leksikon*, vol. 25, Copenhagen 1943, s.v. Weyberg.

post at the Danish court.<sup>33</sup> In 1693, he was ennobled and ten years later, he was given the hugely important commission of ambassador to the imperial court in Vienna. Still, Weiberg's partaking in the king's spectacular entrance into Venice was a given. During his stay in the city, Weiberg is known to have bought a number of miniatures by Rosalba Carriera, allegedly including a portrait of King Frederik.<sup>34</sup> After his return to Vienna, Weiberg (like Walter and Wibe) corresponded with the painter.<sup>35</sup> One of his letters, dated 3 January 1711, is a particularly valuable source to Weiberg's views on art. He writes:

"Les belles peintures, que j'ay de vos mains, attirent chez moy les virtuosi et les connoisseurs. Ils admirent la légèreté de vos couleurs, aussi bien que leur vivacité. Ils sont charmés de la ressemblance de vos portraits et ils souhaitent tous que j'eusse apporté votre propre portrait, afin qu'ils eussent au moins icy la copie d'une originale qu'ils honorent tant et qu'ils ne verront jamais."<sup>36</sup>

[13] Continuing, Weiberg makes sure to point out that he (like Wibe and Walter) preferred contemporary art to the Old Masters:

"Je puis avoir des tableaux de Guido Reni et de Correggio, mais je ne puis pas avoir leur portraits faits par leur propres mains, que j'estimerois plus que tous leurs autres ouvrages, puisque j'aurois dans une pièce et l'ouvrage et l'auteur qui s'est rendu célèbre par ses ouvrages."

[14] Apparently a close friend of Walter's, Weiberg even dares to compare their individual acquisitions:

"Le portrait, que Vous avez fait, de Mad. votre Mère pour Mr. De Walter, me plaît beaucoup; mais si Vous voulez me favoriser de votre propre portrait, je l'estimerai au dessus de tout ce que Mr. de Walter et moy avons dans nos cabinets."

[15] It would surely be invaluable to our understanding of contemporary collecting if we were to cast a further glance into the cabinet of Weiberg's Viennese residence. However, this is made difficult by the peculiar events following his death in July 1720, whereupon the imperial Hofmarschall for some unknown reason sealed up his estate.<sup>37</sup> This enraged Weiberg's Danish heirs but the well-founded protests aired by his nephew, Mr. Voscamp, only caused him to be extradited from Austria. Even though the case caused a short diplomatic crisis, it seems that Weiberg's belongings remained in Austria where they were probably sold by the imperial officers. It has not been possible to locate any probate inventory drawn up on this occasion, nor has it been possible to identify any pieces of his collection, except perhaps the copy of Walter's portrait (Fig. 4).<sup>38</sup> Until the Weiberg estate

<sup>33</sup> Helk, *Dansk-Norske Studierejser 1661-1813*, 274.

<sup>34</sup> Malamani, *Rosalba Carriera*, 83; Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Sani, *Rosalba Carriera. Lettere, diari, Frammenti*, no. 114 and 144.

<sup>36</sup> Sani, *Rosalba Carriera. Lettere, diari, Frammenti*, no. 144.

<sup>37</sup> Andreas Hojer, *König Friederich des Vierten glorwürdigstes Leben*, vol. 2, Tondern 1829, 37.

<sup>38</sup> The portrait was acquired by the Statens Museum for Kunst in 1936 from a Danish bookseller who in turn had bought it in Austria. It seems probable that Walter and Weiberg would have exchanged portraits, as the former owned a portrait of Weiberg by the Swedish-born court painter in Vienna David Richter the Elder.

papers resurface in the imperial archives, we may reasonably assume that his collection matched the Italianate taste of his two friends.

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### The Counts Holstein and Reventlow

[16] Other members of the travel party may have returned from Italy with a more pronounced preference for the Old Masters, yet Count Ulrich Adolph Holstein (1664-1737) and Count Christian Detlev Reventlow (1671-1738) are the only ones known to have formed such collections.<sup>39</sup> Like Wibe, both Holstein and Reventlow had been childhood friends of Prince Frederik. In turn, the king rewarded Holstein with a countship and the powerful position of High Chancellor, whereas Reventlow was made a general of the army and long remained the king's close confidant. For a while, Reventlow was in fact engaged to Prince Frederik's half-sister Anna Christiane Gyldenløve and ultimately one of his sisters married Count Holstein while the other became a mistress to the monarch. Yet in 1692, Holstein was still just *valet de chambre* to the prince and Reventlow had not yet returned from his five years of military training abroad. Nevertheless, both were natural members of the first travel party.

[17] It seems highly likely that both Holstein and Reventlow should have acquired paintings while travelling in Italy, at least judging from some later notes by the steward of the royal collections, Lorenz Spengler (1720-1807). The latter had gathered a large private collection of paintings, including an *Adoration of the Kings* attributed to Veronese, which according to Spengler "kam mit Fiederich den 4ten aus Italien".<sup>40</sup> His son and successor, Johan Conrad Spengler, later elaborated that "Il fut achetté par un Comte de Holstein à Venise dans la quelle famille il a resté longtems".<sup>41</sup> This surely must refer to Count Holstein's visit to Venice with the prince in February 1692. Lorenz Spengler furthermore mentions having bought a number of paintings attributed to Titian and others at an auction in 1778.<sup>42</sup> The sale was prompted by the sale of the Reventlow Mansion in Copenhagen and is said to have featured another Titianesque painting too, a copy after the master's lost portrait of Alfonso d'Este (Fig. 5).<sup>43</sup> No copy of the sale catalogue is preserved but a newspaper advertisement

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<sup>39</sup> For the general biography of Holstein, see Bech, *Dansk biografisk leksikon*, vol. 6, Copenhagen 1980, s.v. Holstein, U. A. For the biography of Reventlow, see *ibid.*, vol. 12, Copenhagen 1982, s.v. Reventlow, Christian Ditlev.

<sup>40</sup> Lorenz Spengler, "Verzeichnis meiner Mahlerey Sammlung", manuscript of c. 1800/1807, in: Statens Museum for Kunst, *Archives of the Royal Collection of Paintings*, box IV, fol. 1, no. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Johan Conrad Spengler, "Notes sur la Collection de Tableaux de feu Mr L. Spengler", manuscript note, in: Statens Museum for Kunst, *Archives of the Royal Collection of Paintings*, box IV.

<sup>42</sup> Spengler, "Verzeichnis meiner Mahlerey Sammlung", fol. 43. The auction took place on 25-26 May 1778 as documented by the commission for resolving the debts of Count Conrad Reventlow in 1777-78, the Danish National Archives, Brahetrolleborg Manor, Probate documents, testaments etc. 1750-1864.

<sup>43</sup> The Reventlow provenance of the Titian copy was documented by a wax seal once attached to the stretcher and mentioned by its previous owner, the archaeologist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen in his notes "Mine Malerier", manuscript of c. 1846-47 in the National Library of Denmark, Add. 643 h 2 4°, 5-6. See also N.L. Faaborg, "Den unge C.J. Thomsen som kunstsamler og hans forhold til

tells us that the sale did include "a number of magnificent paintings in both oil paint and water colours."<sup>44</sup> It seems likely that the collection of the elder Count Reventlow was included in this sale and the two "Titians" may well have been part of his legacy. In fact, Reventlow had enjoyed apt opportunity to enlarge his collecting when commanding the Danish troops in Italy during the War of the Spanish Succession.<sup>45</sup> Whether he in fact brought back Italian paintings, we do not know. If not, he was given another chance to do so when joining the king's second Grand Tour in 1708-09 on which occasion he may have acquired a number of Florentine and Roman drawings dating from the 1690s to the early 1700s that were later found at his country estate.<sup>46</sup>



5 Copy after Titian, *Portrait of Alfonso d'Este Duke of Ferrara*, oil on canvas, 51.5 x 41.2 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMS843 (SMK Foto)

[18] In time, the Holstein collection too reached a considerable size and it was necessary to hire a paid keeper. For this position Count Holstein chose the miniature painter Georg Saleman (ca. 1670-1729) who was later succeeded by his friend and pupil Jacob Fosie

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J.C. Dahl," in: *Fund og Forskning* 25 (1981), 112-114.

<sup>44</sup> *Københavns Adresse-Contoires Efterretninger*, 19 May 1778: "endeel prægtige Malerier saavel i Olie- som Vandfarver".

<sup>45</sup> The souvenirs and trophies of Count Reventlow included a painting attributed to Dürer, presented to him in 1706 by the city of Passau, see Louis Bobé, "Brahetrolleborg," in: *Danske Slotte og Herregårde*, vol. 8, Copenhagen 1965, 190.

<sup>46</sup> Some remaining parts of the Reventlow collection were sold at auction in Copenhagen on 2 November 1936 and included a number of Italian drawings. A drawing by Alessandro Gherardini, presented to the Statens Museum for Kunst in lieu of cataloguing fees, could well have been brought back by Count Christian Detlev; see Chris Fischer, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings, Statens Museum for Kunst: Central Italian Drawings*, Copenhagen 2001, no. 156. Another such case is a drawing by Filippo Luzi that had already entered the museum in 1868; see Ursula Verena Fischer Pace, *Italian Drawings in the Department of Prints and Drawings, Statens Museum for Kunst: Roman Drawings before 1800*, Chris Fischer ed., Copenhagen 2014, no. 104.

(1679-1763). At this time, the collection was undoubtedly arranged in the Holstein Mansion on the fashionable Copenhagen square Kongens Nytorv. Later, in 1780, Count Holstein's grandson sold the mansion while the majority of the collection must have been transferred to the family's country estate at Holsteinborg.<sup>47</sup> A great number of paintings remain there, though it is now hard to distinguish the original parts of the collection from later additions. In all, it is most difficult to assess the number of Italian paintings in the collections of Count Holstein and Count Reventlow, though the few attributions reported in later sources suggest a taste for Venetian *cinquecento* painting. We are left to speculate whether men like Reventlow and Holstein were deliberately striving to emulate the taste for Bassanos, Titians and Tintoretts that had been so dominant in seventeenth-century collecting.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the thoughts that went into the acquisitions of such pieces (not least regarding the acquisition of religious pictures) are entirely a matter of conjecture.

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### **The Counts Gyldenløve and Danneskiold-Samsøe**

[19] Even if the prince's half-brother and close friend Count Christian Gyldenløve (1674-1703) did not take part in the two royal Grand Tours, he too may have acquired the Italianate taste. Like Wibe, Count Gyldenløve had visited Italy in the years 1688-90, bringing Frederik Walter as tutor.<sup>49</sup> Later the count went into French army service though mainly staying at the royal court at Versailles. Except for a brief campaign in northern Italy, Gyldenløve spent the rest of his short life in Copenhagen, but overall he had every opportunity to admire and acquire fine art in the Italian style. Even so, there is only little evidence that he was a collector of any consequence. One clue, however, is a painting now at Gaunø Manor (and still considered by some a sketch by Rubens for the Banqueting Hall putti), which during Gyldenløve's lifetime is known to have been installed in his Copenhagen town house. Here it served to decorate a ceiling in a small chamber, known as "the chapel".<sup>50</sup> His country estate Gissfeld may also have contained some art works, yet on the occasion of his widow's remarriage in 1714 little was left of artistic value.<sup>51</sup> Knowing almost nothing of Count Gyldenløve's collection, we must instead focus our attention on the much more famous collection of his son.

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<sup>47</sup> The Danish National Archives, Holsteinborg Manor, The sale of the Copenhagen townhouse.

<sup>48</sup> The taste for Venetian *cinquecento* at the Jacobean and Caroline court has been the subject of countless studies, including Timothy Wilks, "Art Collecting at the English Court from the Death of Henry, Prince of Wales to the Death of Anne of Denmark (November 1612 – March 1619)," in: *Journal of the History of Collections* 9 (1997), no. 1, 31-48; Sophie Reinhardt, *Tizian in England - zur Kunstrezeption am Hof Karls I*, Frankfurt 1998, and most recently Francis Haskell: *The King's Pictures. The Formation and Dispersal of the Collections of Charles I and His Courtiers*, New Haven and London 2013, 33-42. The dissemination of this particular taste to a.o. the Habsburg court in Vienna has been explored by Jonathan Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs. Collecting art in seventeenth-century Europe*, New Haven and London 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Helk, *Dansk-Norske Studierejser 1661-1813*, 128. For the general biography of Gyldenløve, see Bech, *Dansk biografisk leksikon*, vol. 5, Copenhagen 1980, s.v. Gyldenløve, Christian.

<sup>50</sup> Karl Madsen, "Et hidtil ukendt Maleri af Rubens," in: *Illustreret Tidende*, January 1915, 18.

- [20] Like his father, Count Christian Danneskiold-Samsøe (1702-1728) was an early bloomer.<sup>52</sup> During his short life, he studied at Oxford from age ten to thirteen, wrote poetry, held high offices and married twice, before dying at the age of 25. The count not only left behind an insurmountable debt but also an enormous collection of books and manuscripts. This famously led King Frederik to wonder why anyone would want that many books if he had no intention of joining the clergy. Yet Count Danneskiold-Samsøe also left a legacy much more fitting to his standing: a collection of several hundred paintings, miniatures and small-scale sculptures. Part of the collection may well have been passed down from his father, Count Gyldenløve, as it included works by a number of artists admired by Danish travellers in the 1690s. At present, it is impossible to prove or disprove this assumption as Count Danneskiold-Samsøe may simply have acquired said paintings from members of the travel parties or from their estates, as he did from the estate of Frederik Walter.<sup>53</sup>
- [21] When the Danneskiold-Samsøe estate was settled in 1728 the task of cataloguing the art collection was handed over to the court painter Hendrik Krock and the keeper of the Holstein gallery Georg Saleman.<sup>54</sup> By then the collection included a large number of Italian pieces. The Venetian *cinquecento* was particularly well represented through names like Bassano, Palma, Titian and Veronese, while the seventeenth century was represented by such masters as Ribera, Rosa (Fig. 6, here attributed to the circle of Pier Francesco Mola) and Cignani (Fig. 7). Furthermore, the collection contained works by the contemporary Italian painters admired by the prince and his companions: Sebastiano Bombelli, Niccolò Cassana (1659-1714) and Johann Carl Loth (Fig. 8).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Gissfeld Manor archives, inventory of Gissfeld Manor on the occasion of the second marriage of Dorothea Krag, 1714 (mentioned in Otto Andrup, *Fortegnelse over Malerierne paa Gissfeld Kloster*, Copenhagen 1918, 3).

<sup>52</sup> By convention, the name Gyldenløve was only used by the illegitimate children of Christian IV, Frederik III and Christian V and was never passed on. Instead, their male descendants held the title Count Danneskiold. For the general biography of Danneskiold-Samsøe, see Bech, *Dansk biografisk leksikon*, vol. 3, Copenhagen 1979, s.v. Danneskiold-Samsøe, Christian.

<sup>53</sup> A painting copied from Van Dyck by Caspar Netscher and sold at the Danneskiold-Samsøe auction in 1732 as lot 161, is undoubtedly identical to one mentioned in Walter's collection. The painting was among the 21 pieces pawned with jeweller Andreas Normann in 1713 and remained unsold at the Walter auction in 1719, see note 24. The painting now belongs to the Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. no. KMS3225 (Olaf Koester, *Flemish Paintings 1600-1800*, Copenhagen 2000, 96-97, and Chris Fischer and Jesper Svenningsen, "Nicolai Abildgaards tegningssamling," in: *Konsthistorisk Tidsskrift. Journal of Art History*, forthcoming).

<sup>54</sup> Gissfeld Manor archives, probate inventory of the Christian Danneskiold-Samsøe estate (mentioned in Andrup, *Fortegnelse over Malerierne paa Gissfeld Kloster*, 3). The inventory formed the basis of the sale catalogue printed in 1731.

<sup>55</sup> Several other pictures by Cassana are documented in Danish collections: A portrait of Iver Rosenkrantz by Cassana belongs to the Museum of National History, Frederiksborg Castle (see Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 49) while another Cassana portrait of a Danish knight was sold at the estate sale of Gerhard Morell, 15 March 1773, lot 240.



6 Circle of Pier Francesco Mola (here attributed to; formerly attributed to Salvator Rosa), *The Flight into Egypt*, oil on canvas, 56.2 x 38.5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSst27 (SMK Foto)



7 Carlo Cignani, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, oil on canvas, 262 x 192 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSsp125 (SMK Foto)



8 Johann Carl Loth, *The Death of Cato the Younger*, oil on canvas, 119 x 95 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSsp154 (SMK Foto)

- [22] Next to the Italian pictures, the Danneskiold-Samsøe collection was particularly strong in Italianate Dutch paintings. In fact, the collection reads like a regular who's who of this particular school with names like Jan Asselijn, Bartholomeus Breenbergh, Nicolaes Berchem, Leonaert Bramer, Michiel Carré, Johannes Glauber and Gerard de Lairesse, Pieter van Laer ("Il bamboccio"), Pieter Lastman, Dirk Maas, Pieter Mulier, Cornelius van Poelenburgh, Dirk Stoop, and Thomas Wijck. Some of these pictures could well have been bought by Count Gyldenløve in Italy in the 1690s (including a large sea battle by Pieter Mulier, now in the Statens Museum for Kunst).<sup>56</sup> Yet it seems more likely that this part of the collection reflects Danneskiold-Samsøe's own taste. As the nephew of King Frederik, the young count was a generation younger than Wibe, Holstein, Reventlow and the other members of the king's travel party, but he was an attentive heir to the Italianate taste of this generation. Unable to buy Italian pictures first hand, the Count probably had to settle for the next best thing, the more easily available ideal landscapes and battle scenes by Italianate northern artists. Admittedly, it is impossible to judge whether these works were indeed added by the young Count Danneskiold-Samsøe or if they, too, had possibly formed part of Gyldenløve's collection.

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### **Artists and experts**

- [23] By the third decade of the century, the taste for Italian paintings was widespread and was shared by not only noble collectors but also by artists working in the Italian style. One such artist was the Norwegian sculptor and painter Magnus Berg (1666-1739) who

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<sup>56</sup> KMSsp590, at present wrongly attributed to Pieter de Molijn.



had at one time studied in the workshop of Carlo Maratta.<sup>57</sup> Though he may have brought back a rudimentary art collection from his Italian sojourn, Berg's collection was certainly much enlarged on his journey to Vienna, Prague and Amsterdam in 1722-23. On this occasion, he acquired a group of Italian paintings, which according to a contemporary source included some attributed to Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, Caravaggio, Pietro Testa, Francesco Albani, Johann Carl Loth, Salvator Rosa and Pier Francesco Mola (Fig. 9).<sup>58</sup> At the estate sale of Berg (which also included a further painting by Bassano), the king bought a number of these, yet very few of Berg's Italian acquisitions have retained their attributions to this day. Most are, in fact, now considered northern copies after Italian prototypes, yet testifies to the widespread (if unguided) craving for Venetian and Roman painting in Denmark.



9 Pier Francesco Mola or his school, *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, oil on canvas, 97 x 181 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, KMSSt532 (SMK Foto).

[24] Berg's rival, the painter Hendrik Krock (1671-1738) had first visited Italy in the early 1690s in the company of the young Count Ulrik Christian Gyldenløve (1678-1719), brother of Count Christian Gyldenløve and half-brother of the crown prince. Later Krock had returned once more to Rome where he too had studied in the workshop of Carlo Maratta.<sup>59</sup> Being schooled in the Italian baroque style, now very much in vogue at the court of King Frederik, Krock was eminently suitable to fill the office of court painter. Furthermore, his education proved valuable as he supplied the Danish court with a level of expertise on Italian art. In 1703, when still in Rome, Krock had bought some Italian

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<sup>57</sup> For the general biography of Berg, see Åshild Paulsen, *Magnus Berg (1666-1739). En kunstner ved kongens hoff*, Oslo 1989.

<sup>58</sup> Naamand Hinrich Prehn, "Den berømte Kunstners Magnus Bergs Levnets Lob," in: *Danske Magazin*, vol. 1, no. 8 (1745), 232-233; Paulsen, *Magnus Berg*, 217-226.

<sup>59</sup> For the general biography of Sigrid Theimann, *Henrich Krock 1671-1738. Der Hofmaler im absolutistischen Dänemark*, Copenhagen 1980.

paintings on behalf of the king and seven years later, he parted with two pieces by Ghisolfi, probably from his own collection.<sup>60</sup> More importantly, at about this time Krock also sold "2 stück mit Kinder und Bluhmen von Carl Maratti gemacht" to King Frederik for his Italian-style palace at Frederiksberg.<sup>61</sup> Krock's knowledge of Italian painting came in handy not only when cataloguing the Danneskiold-Samsøe collection in 1728 but also some years later when acting as agent to King Christian VI at the Danneskiold-Samsøe sale. In the royal accounts, we find an entry on 4 April 1732 for 2,131 Rixdollars paid "An des seel. H.<sup>r</sup> Grafen Christian Danneskiold Samsøe Erben, für die aus deßen Auction, von dem Kantzley Raht Krock, auf Ihr. Königl. Mayst. allergnädigste Approbation und Ordre, gekaufte Gemälde".<sup>62</sup> A more elaborate receipt reveals that on this occasion the king received a total of sixty-five canvases and nine miniatures from the estate of his half-cousin.<sup>63</sup> Only a handful of these have previously been identified in public collections.<sup>64</sup> It is worth noticing the kind of paintings chosen by Krock for the king, especially as the auction marks the culmination of four decades of Italianate taste in Denmark. Indeed, Krock picked out many of the Venetian and Roman pictures, including Johann Carl Loth's *The Death of Cato the Younger* for 30 Rixdollars (Fig. 6), the two paintings attributed to Veronese for 20 and 12 Rixdollars respectively, Bombelli's copy after Correggio also for 20 Rixdollars and a history painting by Benedetto Luti for 19 Rixdollars.<sup>65</sup> The king also paid 80 Rixdollars for the *Christ before Pilate* then attributed to Palma Giovane, while Cignani's *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (Fig. 8) became the second most expensive buy at 150 Rixdollars.<sup>66</sup> On the other end of the scale, a night piece by Bassano cost just 10 Rixdollars. Krock also secured for the king a number of Dutch Italianate paintings by Jan

<sup>60</sup> The Danish National Archives, The Privy Purse ('Partikulærkammeret'), 15 March 1704 (Frederik Julius Meier, *Frederiksberg Slot*, 1896, 117, mistakenly gives the year as 1705) and 17 December 1710 (the receipt itself dated 28 November 1710).

<sup>61</sup> Frederik Julius Meier, *Efterretninger om Fredensborg Slot i Frederik IV's, Kristian VI's og Frederik V's Dage og om de Kunstnere, som i de nævnte Kongers Tid vare virksomme der*, Copenhagen 1880, 185. Meier refers to a receipt in the royal accounts, dated 1710, which I have failed to locate.

<sup>62</sup> The Danish National Archives, The Privy Purse ('Partikulærkammeret'), Expense and building accounts, 4 April 1732. The sale probably took place in March 1732 though the catalogue had already been printed the previous year. In modern times, the sale has erroneously been termed the first auction of an art collection on Danish soil (see André Leth, *Lidt om Auktioner*, Copenhagen 1943, 9). This status, however, is only due to the fact that no copies of earlier sales have survived, e.g. that of the Walter collection in 1719.

<sup>63</sup> The Danish National Archives, The Privy Purse ('Partikulærkammeret'), 1732, receipt no. 184.

<sup>64</sup> The king's acquisitions are briefly mentioned in Olsen, *Italian Paintings and Sculpture in Denmark*, 15, though Olsen gives their number as 58. Only a small number of the paintings bought at the Danneskiold-Samsøe sale were handed over to the keeper of the royal art collection. The majority were probably intended for decoration of the royal apartments at Christiansborg Palace, particularly the rooms of Queen Sophie Magdalene. From here a few paintings would later enter the royal art collection (e.g. KMSsp495 and KMSsp825), while a large number must have been destroyed or sold off (such as KMS3225).

<sup>65</sup> Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. nos. KMSsp154 (Loth) and KMS972 (Bassano).

<sup>66</sup> Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. nos. KMSsp94 (Kuijl) and KMSsp125 (Cignani).

Asselijn, Nicolaes Berchem, Bartholomeus Breenbergh, Carlo de Fiori, Pieter Mulier, Pieter van Laer, Jan Frans Bloemen, Johannes Glauber, and Gerard de Lairesse.<sup>67</sup>

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### **The waning taste**

[25] The 1730s in general and the Danneskiold-Samsøe sale in particular marks the turning point of Italianate taste in Denmark. By the early 1740s, taste had begun to shift towards Netherlandish paintings, now in fashion throughout much of Europe and strongly promoted in Denmark by the influential art dealer Gerhard Morell (c. 1710-1771).<sup>68</sup> New collections were formed along these lines by Count Johan Ludvig Holstein-Ledreborg, Count Otto Thott and Count Adam Gottlob Moltke. Existing collections too had to conform to this new fashion and were now quietly transformed. Morell (and later Lorenz Spengler) profited from this changing taste and their own collections filled with the Italian spoils of past collectors. In a manner of speaking, the Italian core of the old collections was now slowly hollowed out. This process serves to explain why the taste of the preceding generation has so completely passed under the radar of modern historians of collecting. Between the successful dismantling of Italianate collections and the severe scarcity of sources, the interconnectedness of this group of collectors is indeed hard to make out. We are only just beginning to hint the outlines of this early circle of Danish collectors and their shared taste for Italian and Italianate art. It is, however, clear that the vantage point of this generation of courtier-collectors was neither the portrait galleries of their rural estates, nor the royal art collections. Instead, the Italian journeys of Prince Frederik were the all-important catalysts as they sparked a marked interest in Venetian 16th century painting, contemporary Italian art and Italianate Dutch painting. Through direct and shared confrontation with French and Italian collections, this generation gave birth to the first true culture of private art collecting in Denmark.

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### **Acknowledgements**

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<sup>67</sup> Of this group, the following can be identified in the Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. nos. KMSsp500 (Breenbergh), KMSsp658 and KMS3093 (Carlo de Fiori), KMSsp590 (Pieter Mulier) and KMSsp629-630 (Gerard de Lairesse).

<sup>68</sup> The activities of Morell have recently been studied by Michael North, *Gerhard Morell und die Entstehung einer Sammlungskultur im Ostseeraum des 18. Jahrhundert*, Greifswald 2012.