

400-year-old Rubens sketch discovered at Uni

May 29 2013



A 17th century drawing by renowned artist Sir Peter Paul Rubens has been discovered at the University of Reading.

Just 10.8cm x 8.9cm in size, the drawing is valued at £75,000 and shows a profile view of the head of Marie de Médicis, Queen of France as the second wife of King Henry IV of France. The sketch was probably made in preparation for some life size paintings in the collection of the Louvre.

The drawing was acquired by an Oxford collector Henry Wellesly who bought drawings for the Ashmolean, and who was the illegitimate son of

the Duke of Wellington. The University then acquired the sketch for teaching purposes in the 1950s for the modest sum of no more than £50.

It was thought to be attributed to Rubens but its recent conservation revealed that the drawing was once owned by Jonathan Richardson, a noted British eighteenth century collector of Peter Paul Rubens' work. It was subsequently bought by Wellesly a nineteenth century collector of Rubens.

Professor Anna Gruetzner Robins, from the University of Reading's Department of Art, said: "This is an extremely exciting discovery. Sir Peter Paul Rubens was a major seventeenth century artist whose work has a special significance for Britain because he undertook several commissions in Britain including a decorative ceiling for the Banqueting House at Whitehall.

"This particular [drawing](#) has a fascinating history. It belongs to a group of portrait drawings of Marie de Médicis made c.1622 in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Louvre, and the Albertina, Vienna, all of which were studies for twenty-one life size paintings representing Marie's life from her girlhood, coronation as Queen of Henry IV of France, to old age and exile. The paintings are in the Louvre."

The discovery of the Rubens coincides with University of Reading's special celebration of arts and culture this June. The programme will feature some already established events including Museum of English Rural Life Fete while the Tracy Emin and Damien Hirsts of the future will be displaying their work at the University of Reading's Art Degree Show this month.

There will also be a selection of special events, with Vice-Chancellor Sir David Bell in conversation with Darren Henley, Director of Classic FM

and a Celebrating the sounds of the 60s evening in tribute to musician and prolific song-writer Geoff Goddard.

Professor Robins added: "The University of Reading has a rich cultural heritage, from fine art to film and music to museums. Revealing the Rubens is a wonderful way to begin our celebration of arts and culture."

Provided by University of Reading

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