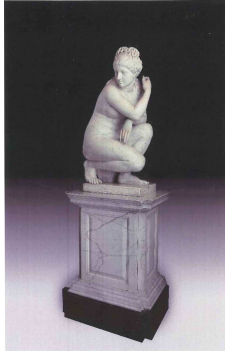


V&A acquires rare marble sculpture by John Nost the Elder

The Crouching Venus, John Nost the Elder, 1702



The V&A has acquired *The Crouching Venus*, an exceptional marble sculpture by John Nost the Elder, signed and dated 1702, following a temporary export bar placed on it in November 2011. A remarkable instance of Nost's assured carving, the sculpture is a rare surviving example of a classical subject by the artist, its scale and accomplishment giving it a grandeur and presence thought to be truly exceptional at this date in Britain.

Nost was a seminal influence on British sculpture of the 18th century, combining traditions derived from Netherlandish sculpture of the 17th century with classical forms from ancient Rome. Set on its original plinth, the carved marble depicts the nude figure of Venus gracefully crouching, her arms crossed and her head turned to her right. She wears an armband and a plain strap wreath in her hair. Nost's figure is based on an antique prototype of *the Crouching Venus*, of which several versions are known, in the Louvre, the Uffizi, and the Museo Nazionale in Rome. A 2nd century model, in the Royal Collection when Nost carved his figure and now on long-term loan to the British Museum, may well have been the one on which his sculpture is based.

In November 2011, the Culture Minister Ed Vaizey placed a temporary export bar on the sculpture, following a recommendation by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, administered by Arts Council England. The Committee recommended that the export be deferred, because the sculpture is of outstanding significance for the study of British sculpture in the 18th century.

Ed Vaizey, Culture Minister said: *"I am delighted that the export bar I placed on this magnificent sculpture has allowed the V&A to acquire it for the nation. This exceptional work by Nost will now take its rightful place in what is undoubtedly the world's greatest art and design museum, where it can be enjoyed by all."*

Martin Roth, Director of the V&A, said: *"We're thrilled to have acquired this important work by the exceptionally gifted sculptor John Nost the Elder. Thanks to a generous*

bequest, we are now able to display this outstanding piece in our permanent sculpture galleries for the enjoyment of visitors."

Lord Inglewood, Chairman of the Reviewing Committee, said: "*This impressive and compelling figure of the goddess Venus is an important example of one of the earliest versions in England of an antiquity in marble, made for a British client.*"

No documentation of the circumstances of the original commission survives, but it is thought to have been ordered by the statesman and lawyer Andrew Archer (1659-1741) for Umberslade Hall, Warwickshire, where it remained throughout the 18th century. Umberslade Hall was sold in 1858 to the Muntz family, who retained ownership of the sculpture until recently.

John Nost the Elder (active 1680s-1714) was a highly skilled sculptor. Comparatively little is known about him and his recognised works are rare, but his influence on 18th century British sculpture was considerable. Nost came to Britain from the Netherlands in the late seventeenth century, and worked in London alongside the Amsterdam sculptor Arnold Quellin in the 1680s. On Quellin's premature death, Nost married his widow and inherited his workshop and sculpture practice. Perhaps most famous for his lead garden works, notably the figures made for Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire, he also produced marble sculpture for Hampton Court and for the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth in Derbyshire. Two of his relatives, both also called John Nost, worked as sculptors in Britain in the eighteenth century, but John Nost the Elder is generally considered the most important of the artistic dynasty.

The sculpture has been acquired by the Museum with the assistance of The Hugh Phillips Bequest to the V&A. It is now on display in the V&A's Dorothy and Michael Hintze Galleries.

Notes to Editors

About the V&A

The V&A is the world's greatest museum of art and design with collections unrivalled in their scope and diversity. It was established to make works of art available to all and to inspire British designers and manufacturers. Today, the V&A's collections, which span over 2000 years of human creativity in virtually every medium and from many parts of the world, continue to intrigue, inspire and inform. The V&A holds the National Collection of Sculpture concentrating on Western European Sculpture from

the 4th century to the end of the 19th century. The Dorothy and Michael Hintze Galleries display some of the Museum's finest sculpture dating from 1600 to 1900 made by British sculptors or acquired by British patrons.

www.vam.ac.uk

Legacy Gifts to the V&A

The Hugh Phillips bequest established a purchase fund which over the years has helped the V&A to acquire a number of important 17th and 18th century works of art. The V&A, as a charity, welcomes legacy gifts, which provide an opportunity to make a lasting contribution and provide an important source of funding to the V&A.

www.vam.ac.uk/legacies

Arts Council England

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2011 and 2015, we will invest £1.4 billion of public money from government and an estimated £1 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

The Reviewing Committee on the Export Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest

The committee is an independent body, serviced by Arts Council England, which advises the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria. Where the Committee finds that an object meets one or more of the criteria, it will normally recommend that the decision on the export licence application should be deferred for a specified period. An offer may then be made from within the UK at or above the fair matching price.

For further PRESS information and images, contact the V&A press office on 020 7942 2502 or email press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

For further information on the Reviewing Committee on the Work of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest or Arts Council England please contact Sam Gough on 0207 973 5189 or email sam.gough@artscouncil.org.uk (not for publication).