

# Luis Paret y Alcázar. The Triumph of Love



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**110**  
URTE AÑOS

BILBOKO ARTE  
EDERREN MUSEOA  
MUSEO DE BELLAS  
ARTES DE BILBAO

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In 1999 the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum acquired a canvas [II]<sup>1</sup> attributed to Luis Paret y Alcázar. Its dimensions (81.5 x 160 cm) and unusual lunette format distance it from the artist's habitual easel paintings, all of reduced size, depicting scenes with small figures and clearly intended as cabinet paintings. In contrast, the lunette shows a single, life-size figure which was implicitly identified as a putto when the work entered the museum with the title of *The Triumph of Love over War*, although in the catalogue of its first documented sale, in London in 1965, it was described as a *Reclining Cupid*.<sup>2</sup> The painting reappeared on the market in 1998, this time as an *Allegory of Peace triumphing over War*.<sup>3</sup> The museum's collection has recently expanded with the addition of the pair to this lunette [1].<sup>4</sup> It was sold in the same lot and as a pair to the other image in the auction of 1965, when it was assumed that the presence in both works of historical arms (the helmet, shield and sword on the bed) referred to a Roman warrior or classical god.

The first lunette that entered the museum's collection is signed and dated "L Parét A<sup>o</sup>. 1784." at the lower left corner. This signature reappeared during the cleaning undertaken by the purchaser of the work in 1998. The appearance of the signature, which corresponds to the handwriting and style of others by the artist in paintings and drawings of this period (the 1780s) undoubtedly contributed to the correct attribution of the painting, given that in the catalogue of the first auction both works were attributed to the French painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806).<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the signature had previously been intentionally concealed, possibly long before its first sale, in order to make it appear to be a work by an artist of higher standing than Paret, who was little known or appreciated at that date. In addition, both lunettes had been enlarged during a previous restoration with the addition to the edges on all sides of a strip of 6 cm wide

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1 Provenance: private collection, (?) -1965; auctioned at Christie's, London, 19 March 1965, lot 95 (as Fragonard and from a private collection; the two lunettes sold for 900 guineas); acquired by a private collection ("Spence"), 1965; "Spence" collection, 1965-1998; auctioned at Sotheby's, London, 9 July 1998, lot 343 (as Anonymous French, second half of the 18th century); acquired by the museum in 1999.

2 *Important pictures by old masters on Friday, March 19, 1965: illustrated catalogue*. London: Christie, Manson & Woods, 19 March 1965, vol. II, p. 36, lot 95.

3 *Old master paintings*. London: Sotheby's, 9 July 1998, p. 288, lot 343.

4 Provenance: private collection, (?) -1965; auctioned at Christie's, London, 19 March 1965, lot 95 (as Fragonard and from a private collection; the two lunettes sold for 900 guineas); acquired by a private collection ("Spence"), 1965; "Spence" collection, 1965-2017; auctioned at Christie's, London, 7 December 2017, lot 212; donated to the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum by Alicia Koplowitz, 2018.

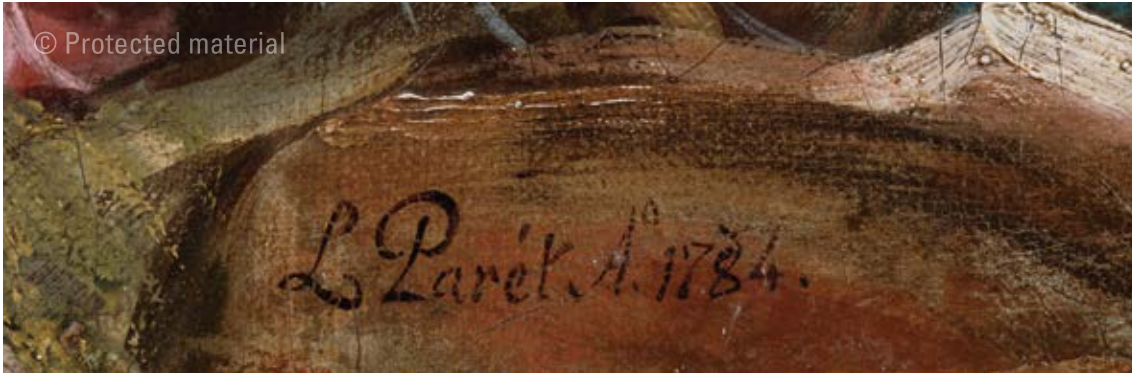
5 Although in 1998 the lunette was offered for sale as a work by the "French School, second half of the 18th century". Ibid.



Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*The Triumph of Love over War* [I] 1784  
Oil on canvas. 82 x 160.5 cm  
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum  
Donated by Alicia Koplowitz in 2018



Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*The Triumph of Love over War [II]* 1784  
Oil on canvas. 81.5 x 160 cm  
Signed: "L. Parét AO. 1784."  
Bilbao Fine Arts Museum  
Acquired in 1999

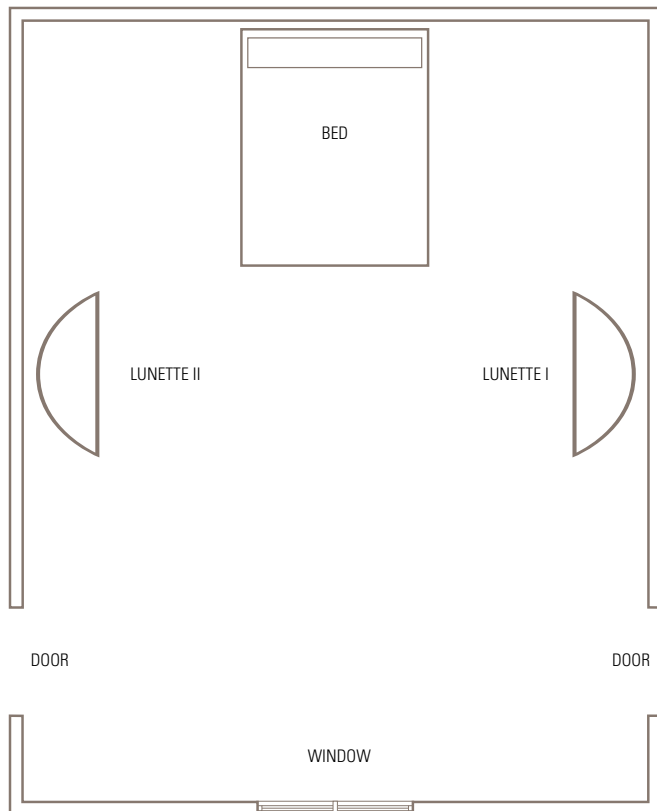


1  
Detail of the signature on lunette II

canvas painted green, as can clearly be seen in the X-radiographs (figs. 32-33). The join with the original canvas was concealed with a strip painted in black oil that was discovered when the two works were restored. These bands were undoubtedly intended to give the scenes a greater sense of breadth when they were mounted in their modern frames, which would otherwise have “strangled” the original compositions. It is possible that these modifications were carried out when the lunettes were separated from their original support, given that they were probably inset into the wall within fine quality, white plaster frames with gilded ornamental motifs, possibly flowers or simply classical borders in the 18th-century taste.

The style and technique of both works is surprising, not only for their size and subject matter but also in the way that they notably differ from Paret’s small cabinet paintings, which are either genre scenes, depictions of court life or small portraits. Works of that type constituted his best-known output until the reappearance of these lunettes and have continued to be the paintings most highly appreciated in subsequent publications, in which the artist’s most Rococo facet has almost always been praised. For this reason the signature [fig. 1] that emerged on the first lunette in the collection must have been the key factor in its attribution to Paret. This signature has minor damage to the strokes that form the name and date, which the artist painted with a thin brush in a warm black pigment, executed with the artist’s direct, sensitive and handwriting in strokes of varying intensity. These strokes are perfectly integrated into the original pictorial surface (as the infra-red photograph reveals) and over time have suffered the same fracturing as the surface as a whole, which has a craquelure evident in all areas of the canvas. The two lunettes have changed in the same way over time as the result of the varying temperature and humidity to which they have been subjected in the past and which gradually affected the smoothness of the pictorial surface. The pattern of the craquelure is the same as that present on other paintings by Paret and is the result of his particular technique. The artist must have habitually employed a specific mixture of pigments and agglutinants which he liked and which differed to that used by other artists, for example using a particular oil, possibly walnut, in specific proportions. The fact that the paint was still wet when the signature was applied meant that it fully integrated into the paint layer and has thus been subject to all its movements and small fractures from the outset.

The reappearance of the other lunette on the art market in 2017 (having been in a private collection since its sale at auction together with the first one in 1965) has made it possible for both works to be reunited twenty years later at the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum. While the rediscovery of this second *Triumph of Love over War* adds a work of great interest to Paret’s pictorial oeuvre, its addition by donation to a public collection makes it one of those fortunate coincidences that are rare in the museum world.



2  
Reconstruction of the possible arrangement of the lunettes in their original location

The study and comparison of the two paintings side by side has allowed for an observation of their pictorial technique, particularly after the second was cleaned in the museum's conservation and restoration department. Both are painted with the same forceful technique, using energetic brushstroke that blend with other, extremely delicate ones, although the new arrival is conceived in a slightly more summary manner as if it had been executed after the first and more rapidly, with less interest in details than in the first, as evident in the beautiful classical rosettes on the soffit of the arch. It is not signed by the artist, which is often the case with works that belong to a group or form a pair such as these lunettes, of which the compositional structure, colour and lighting, in addition to their subject matter, all clearly reveal that not only were they painted at the same time but were intended for the same location. Furthermore, in this case the illumination of both scenes as well as the arrangement of the figures and the perspective indicate that they were not conceived to be hung next to each other but on facing walls [fig. 2]. The room in which they were originally hung probably had a window that illuminated the sleeping putto holding the arrow from the right, and the other one, the waking putto holding a laurel wreath and a dove secured with a ribbon, from the left. In the first lunette the light falls directly on the two doves at the putto's feet and on his body, leaving the thigh of his bent leg and the right side of the soffit of the arch in shadow. This is clearly evident in the ornamentation of the arch, which is more brightly lit on the left side where it receives the full impact of the light, in contrast to the darker right side. The other lunette is lit from the left so that the delicate infant body is brightly illuminated while the left side of the scene remains in shadow, as evident on the soffit of the arch where the rosettes are darker on this side and brightly lit on the opposite side.



3-4  
 Paulo Veronese. Details of *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* in the nave of the church of San Sebastiano, Venice

In both compositions the bed, the infant bodies and the soffits of the arch, as well as the floral crowns from which the garlands hang and which form the centre of the scene, reveal the use of a *di sotto in sù* perspective, indicating that the works were devised to be seen from below and were hung relatively high up. It is very likely that they were originally hung on the upper part of two facing walls in a room of not particularly large size and at a height of approximately 2.5 metres to the lower edge; in other words in a space in which both compositions acquired their full expressive intensity. The subjects, which are themes relating to Love, may suggest that the room was a “nuptial chamber”, in which case the lunettes, hung on facing walls, would have united the space through the actions of the infants, the one on the right releasing the dove that would “fly” towards the sleeping putto in the lunette on the left. On awakening he would in turn “shoot” the arrow with the three roses strung on it towards the opposite side.

There is no evidence that Paret visited Venice during his lengthy period in Italy (1763-66), so he would not have seen Veronese’s beautiful paintings in the nave of the church of San Sebastiano which unite the church’s interior space in a way similar to that employed by Paret in these lunettes. On the frieze of columns in the upper zone Veronese depicted three executioners shooting their arrows at Saint Sebastian from the right side of the nave. In the space between the columns on the left side the artist depicted the saint already wounded by one of those arrows, thus creating the impression that they have flown from one side of the nave to the other [figs. 3-4]. Again, Paret may well not have known Mantegna’s frescoes in the *Camera degli Sposi* in the ducal palace in Mantua in which both the ceiling frescoes, which depict an opening onto the sky with smiling figures leaning over it to look into the interior of the room, and the facing images on the walls suggest a unified space. The figures in Mantegna’s painted scenes interact with real people as they pass through the room, an effect Goya would subsequently create in 1798 in his frescoes on the dome of the church of San Antonio de la Florida in Madrid. Paret must have achieved a similar effect with his lunettes, although of a reduced type given that these are not large-scale works. They may not have been the only





5

Titian

*The Offering to Venus*, 1518-1519

Oil on canvas, 172 x 175 cm

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P-419)

paintings to decorate the room for which they were originally created but we cannot now know what those other works may have been. Whatever the case, during the years of his artistic relationship with the Infante don Luis de Borbón (1763-75) he could have seen Titian's famous canvases in the Spanish royal collection which were formerly in the *Camerino d'alabastro* in the ducal palace in Ferrara, commissioned from Titian by Alfonso d'Este in 1518: *The Bacchanal of the Andrians* and *The Offering to Venus* [fig. 5]. In the latter, for example, the group comprising the pairs of cupids in the foreground throwing apples or shooting arrows at each other - including the pair (possibly male and female) who have already fallen in love and are kissing in the foreground before the benevolent statue of the goddess - suggests a connection with Paret's amorous infants in his lunettes.



6  
Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*Chastity*, 1787  
Grey wash, grey-brown wash and pen on laid,  
yellow-toned paper, 250 x 245 mm  
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (D-3800)



7  
Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*Chastity*, 1787  
Pendentive in the chapel of San Juan del Ramo,  
church of Santa María de la Asunción, Viana, Navarre  
[see fig. 10]

Nothing is known of the original provenance of the lunettes but the date of their creation, 1784, locates Paret in Bilbao, for which reason they may have been commissioned by a leading figure from that city or by one of the wealthy merchants from the Basque-French zone who lived there. The date is slightly prior to the start of an important project for the artist, the decoration of the chapel of San Juan del Ramo in the church of Santa María de la Asunción in Viana (Navarre). In September 1785 Paret sent the parish priest Silvestre Hernández the iconographic plan of the scheme based on scenes from the life of Saint John the Baptist. The Museo del Prado and the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid have carefully executed and highly finished preparatory drawings for a large number of these scenes [figs. 6-7], although there is no trace of the final cartoons



8-9  
 Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*The Annunciation of the Angel to Zacharias and The  
 Visitation of the Virgin to Saint Elizabeth, 1786*  
 Entrance to the chapel of San Juan del Ramo, church of  
 Santa María de la Asunción, Viana, Navarre

and preparatory studies that Paret produced in order to undertake these works, which are however referred to in his correspondence with the parish.<sup>6</sup> In his studio in Bilbao the following year Paret painted two altar paintings in oil for the entrance to the chapel [figs. 8-9] and in 1787 he started work in situ in Viana on the paintings for the dome. For the latter he employed tempera, which allowed for a faster execution than fresco and which he undoubtedly mastered more fully than the difficult Italian technique. It also allowed him to make use of his habitual pictorial devices and obtain his preferred colours. Over the course of that year Paret thus decorated an extremely large surface area which included the pendentives and compartments in the

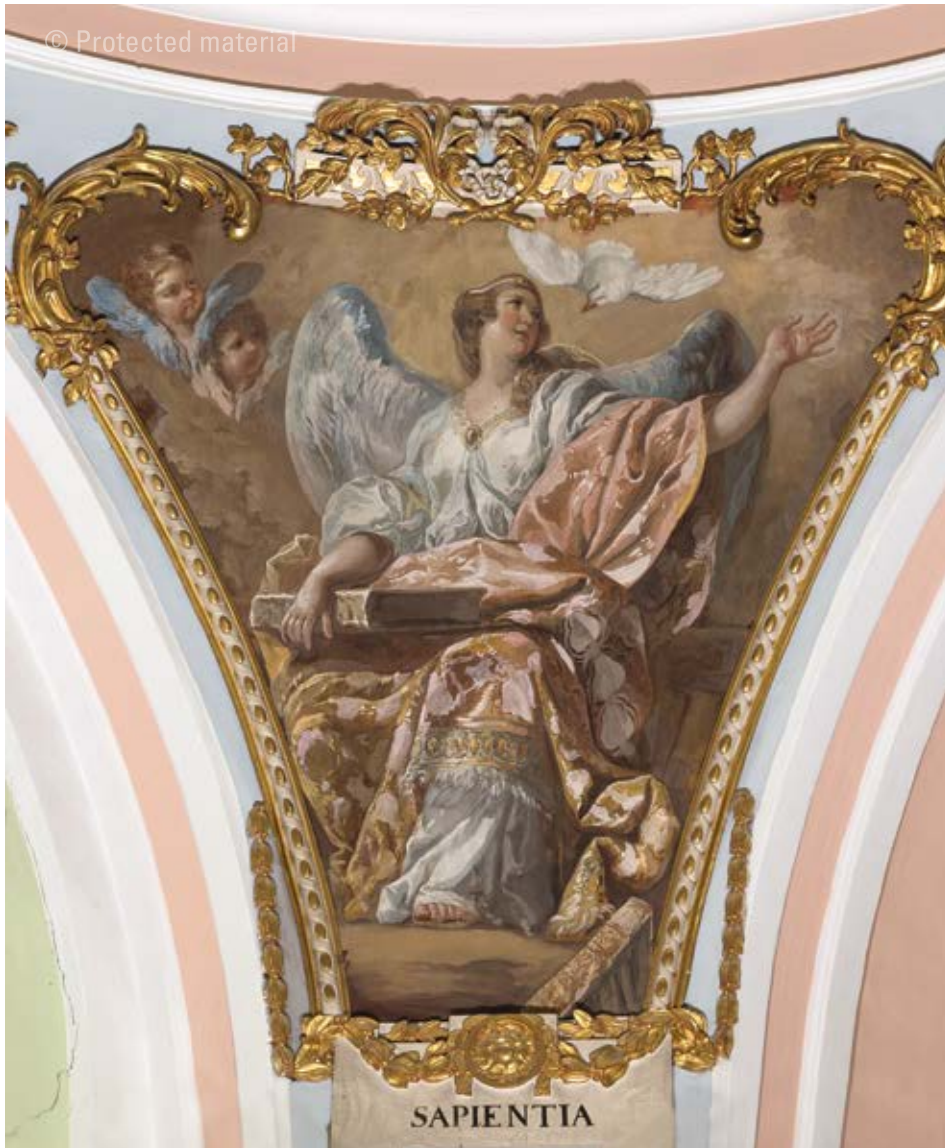
6 See Juan Cruz Labeaga Mendiola. *La obra de Luis Paret en Santa María de Viana*. Iruñea-Pamplona : Gobierno de Navarra, 1990.



10  
 Luis Paret y Alcázar. Dome and pendentives in the chapel of San Juan del Ramo, 1787  
 Church of Santa María de la Asunción, Viana, Navarre



11  
 Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*Sanctity*, 1787  
 Pendentive in the chapel of San Juan  
 del Ramo, church of Santa María de la  
 Asunción, Viana, Navarre [see fig. 10]



12  
Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*Wisdom*, 1787  
Pendentive in the chapel of San Juan del Ramo,  
church of Santa María de la Asunción, Viana, Navarre [see fig. 10]

sections of the dome, in addition to the lunettes crowning the altars at the entrance to the chapel and those on the upper part of those walls in the soffits of the arch [figs. 10-18]. These tempera paintings, depicting scenes of small angels and cherubim with the relevant symbols, reveal a similar pictorial technique and very comparable infant models to the present, secular works in terms of their poses and actions as well as their physical appearance. In addition, all the paintings in the chapel of the church in Viana include flowers as a decorative motif, particularly roses, which animate the scenes and adorn the figures' hair. Paret does not seem to have been interested in their symbolism or iconography in relation to such different, religious characters and they are rather included for the aesthetic appeal and beauty which they always transmit. In the lunettes in the Bilbao museum, however, Paret gave the flowers a specific meaning and importance, particularly the roses, which indicate their relationship to the two infant figures and a meaning connected to them and to the exaltation or triumph of Love which the two embody.



13-14  
Luis Paret y Alcázar. *Ecce Agnus Dei* and *Saint John and the Angel*, 1787  
Scenes on the dome of the chapel of San Juan del Ramo, church of Santa María de la Asunción, Viana, Navarre [see fig. 10]



15-16  
*The Preaching of John the Baptist and The Taking of John the Baptist, 1787*  
Scenes on the dome of the chapel of San Juan del Ramo, church of Santa María de la Asunción, Viana, Navarre [see fig. 10]



17  
 Luis Paret y Alcázar  
 Soffit of the entry arch to the chapel of San Juan del Ramo  
 and lunettes over the altars at the entrance, 1787  
 Church of Santa María de la Asunción, Viana, Navarre



18  
 Detail of the soffit [see fig. 17]

It is interesting to compare the technique and pictorial resources that Paret employed in the numerous scenes for the Viana cycle and those found in the present two works in Bilbao. In the latter Paret seems to be quite a different artist to the one evident at first sight in his small cabinet paintings in which his manner of painting is so diametrically opposite to that found in those works. The cabinet paintings are notable for their small, delicate and transparent brushstrokes, the sudden glints of highlights used to achieve details on the figures, clothing, furniture and objects, and the subtle touches of light and the inclusion of small white dots, particularly in the empty spaces, which function to animate specific elements in the compositions such as personal adornments or flowers. However, for the larger format paintings in the church in Navarre the artist employed an extremely forceful technique based on energetic and deftly applied brushstrokes which in some areas achieve a brio that borders on the violent although without ever losing a grip on the form, which Paret controlled through the use of a measured and very effective parallel hatching in which he defined the volumes in the manner of a mesh that contains and clarifies them. This technique was evidently designed to achieve the desired effect of large-scale figures in ample clothing with decorative folds which had to be seen from far off or from a middle distance in the case of the altar paintings, for which he slightly moderated his brushwork technique.





19-20  
Details of lunette II



21  
Detail of the pendentive with *Sanctity* [see fig. 11]

The type of painting to be seen in the church in Viana had already been used by Paret one year before in the lunettes in the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum, which were also designed to be seen from afar and for which the powerful, separated brushstrokes, each with its own character, again perfectly create the figures and their accompanying decorative elements, including the abundant flowers. Also to be seen here is the modulation of the forms when required through the use of short, thin parallel strokes which define the modelling. Once again Paret used groups or lines of small white dots which unite some elements, particularly the festoons of flowers, and also animate the surface of these canvases with a type of trompe l'oeil effect in the suggestion of movement which they transmit.

It is also interesting to compare the palette employed in the lunettes of the *Triumph of Love* with other works by Paret, particularly those in Viana due to their close proximity in time. The artist always employed a tonality between blueish, mauve and purple; this can be considered one of his most individual pictorial traits together with his preference for light blues and orangeish-yellows for the ground, colours which also appear in the lunettes, for example in the area of the signature in the canvas that first entered the museum. Alongside these specific tones Paret made a very distinctive use of shades of white in all his paintings [figs. 19-21], including these lunettes, in which the light and shade are always produced in the same way. Next to the luminous white of varying intensities applied to the areas of the surface on which the light falls most



22  
Detail of lunette I

strongly he located a characteristic blue tone which he often employed, again applied with varying intensity, through which he also achieved the modelling of the forms in the zones where it is present. In the case of the lunettes Paret used this technique for the draperies on the bed on which the infants are lying, the white flowers and the reflections of light on the metal helmets [fig. 22].

Paret devised the lunettes as two separate scenes but with a complementary significance that functioned to unite the space of a special room in which symbols of love flew from one side to another. The way the artist painted the two figures suggests that they are not of the same sex, given that he used one of the oldest devices in painting to distinguish male and female, namely different skin tone. The figure with the arrow and roses has a slightly more bronzed skin and a more manly type of body even at this young age, as evident in his hands and his face with its decided expression, while his position on the bed, lying face up, reveals the white cloth that conceals his genitals. Paret depicted male nudes of adults and infants in a similar way, as to be seen in the paintings for the church in Viana, for example the naked figure of Saint John the Baptist in the scene of *The Preaching of John the Baptist* [fig. 23] and in *The Taking of John the Baptist* [fig. 24] as well as the small angels present in all the scenes in this cycle [figs. 25-26].

In the second lunette the principal figure is closer to traditional representations of the female nude, evident in the soft, luminous white skin and anatomical details such as the budding pink breasts, all indicating that this is a female figure. In addition, Paret gave this infant nude a pose widely employed for the iconography of Venus in which the viewpoint showing the back of the body means that the sexual organs are not in the foreground, as used by Velázquez in *The Rokeby Venus*, for example [fig. 27]. In the lunette, however, and in many other comparable images, the torsion of the small infant nude gives the figure a markedly erotic pose intended to arouse the viewer due to its overt but simultaneously ambiguous presentation. Rather than looking to nudes in the Spanish tradition, which were more chaste and subject to the dictates of the Church, here Paret seems to have been inspired by 18th-century French examples and there are numerous compari-



23-24  
 Details of *The Preaching of John the Baptist* and *The Taking of John the Baptist* [see figs. 15-16]



25  
 Detail of the pendant with *Chastity* [see fig. 7]



26  
 Detail of *Saint John and the Angel* [see fig. 14]



27  
Diego Velázquez  
*The Rokeby Venus*, 1647-1651  
Oil on canvas, 122.5 x 177 cm  
The National Gallery, London



28  
François Boucher  
*L'Odalisque brune*, 1745  
Oil on canvas, 53 x 64 cm  
Musée du Louvre, Paris



29  
 Gilles Demarteau  
*Jeune femme nue étendue sur le ventre avec un Amour*  
 Crayon manner engraving after a drawing by Boucher  
 Musée du Louvre, Paris

sons in this regard. The closest to Paret's scene is perhaps *L'Odalisque brune* [Brown Odalisque] by François Boucher [fig. 28], dated 1745 but also present in the artist's oeuvre in later variants such as *Reclining Nude (Marie-Louise O'Murphy)* (1751, Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne). Boucher executed numerous replicas which he also disseminated through a crayon manner engraving by Gilles Demarteau [fig. 29] dedicated to "Monsieur Bergeret Receveur General des Finances". The young woman depicted by Boucher, Marie-Louise O'Murphy, Louis XV's lover, was fourteen when she posed as the model and notable elements in the print include the addition of a putto in the role of Cupid asleep on her leg, as well as roses and a bow and arrows in the foreground. It is not known if Paret made use of an actual model for his small Venus in the lunette, for which he may have been inspired by classical examples or by earlier painting but at this date, 1784, his daughters Maria and Ludovica were four and two. He had painted them as little putti in a small-format oil on copper which forms a pair to the portrait of his wife Micaela Fourdinier [figs. 30-31]. The artist thus had immediate access at this period to infant models which may have suggested or helped him with the undoubtedly naturalistic representation of the nudes for the secular lunettes and perhaps even for the paintings for Viana.

The scenes in the two lunettes are clearly devised to emphasise the connection between the two figures, which are not putti as they do not have their characteristic wings and are rather metaphorical representations of the world of adults. The similar garlands of flowers unify the two works and locate the children's actions beneath the central floral crowns, elements that evoke the nuptial rituals of antiquity. The disordered bed defines the location of their encounter, in itself referring to Love, and is where Paret located the symbolic elements that characterise the two infants: the quiver with arrows protruding from it, the standard in the background and the helmet in the left-hand lunette; and the shield, baton of command and a different

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30  
Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*Portrait of the Artist's Daughters, María and Ludovica*, 1783  
Oil on copper, 37 x 28 cm  
Private collection

helmet in the right-hand one. Despite the simplicity of the scenes Paret must have produced highly-finished drawings for both the creative process and in order to present his “idea” for the works to his client, as he had done with the mural paintings for the church in Navarre. For this reason the two paintings show few changes aside from some small adjustments to the position of the draperies and to some of the flowers in relation to the underlying compositions, which have been studied under X-radiography and infrared reflectography [figs. 32-35].

The figure on the right, which has abundant blond hair tied up with a blue ribbon recalling the bands worn round the head of victorious athletes in ancient Greece (such as Polyclites’ *Diadoumenos*), is waking up. Its eyes are half-open as one of the two doves of Venus is pecking or kissing its lips. This seemingly female figure (as described above on the basis of its physical features) is holding in her right hand Venus’s thin pink belt or girdle (*cestus* in the Roman world) which captivated men and rekindled love. She has tied it round the other dove of Venus, which has a sprig of olive, symbol of peace, in its beak and has started to fly towards the sleeping boy in the opposite lunette. In her left hand this figure holds a laurel wreath of the type worn by victorious generals entering Rome but here this object loses its connotation of military triumph as it is



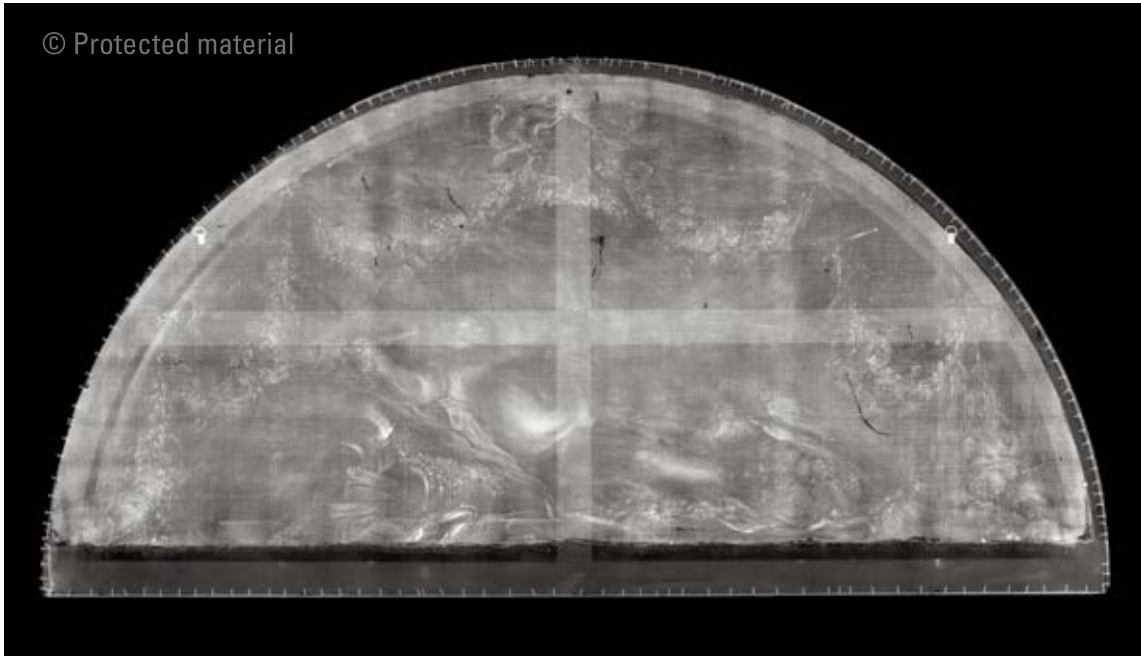
31  
Luis Paret y Alcázar  
*María de las Nieves Micaela Fourdinier, the Painter's Wife*, 1783  
Oil on copper, 37 x 27.7 cm  
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P-3250)

held by a little girl and rather refers to peace by showing that Love is the victor. This concept also explains the position of the arms lying on the ground: on the left, the shield, again decorated with the laurel wreath of victory and with the baton of command crossing under it; and on the right, the helmet. Also fallen over and leaning against the shield are three interlaced bronze letters reading "VSC" [fig. 36], which Paret's knowledge of classical culture led him to include here for his patron. They correspond to the Roman votive inscription *Voto Suscepto Curavit*<sup>7</sup> which, when present on funerary stelae, for example, indicated that the person had made the necessary vows to the gods before dying. Paret's intention was thus to indicate that the warrior in this scene had laid down arms but not before honourably fulfilling all obligations.

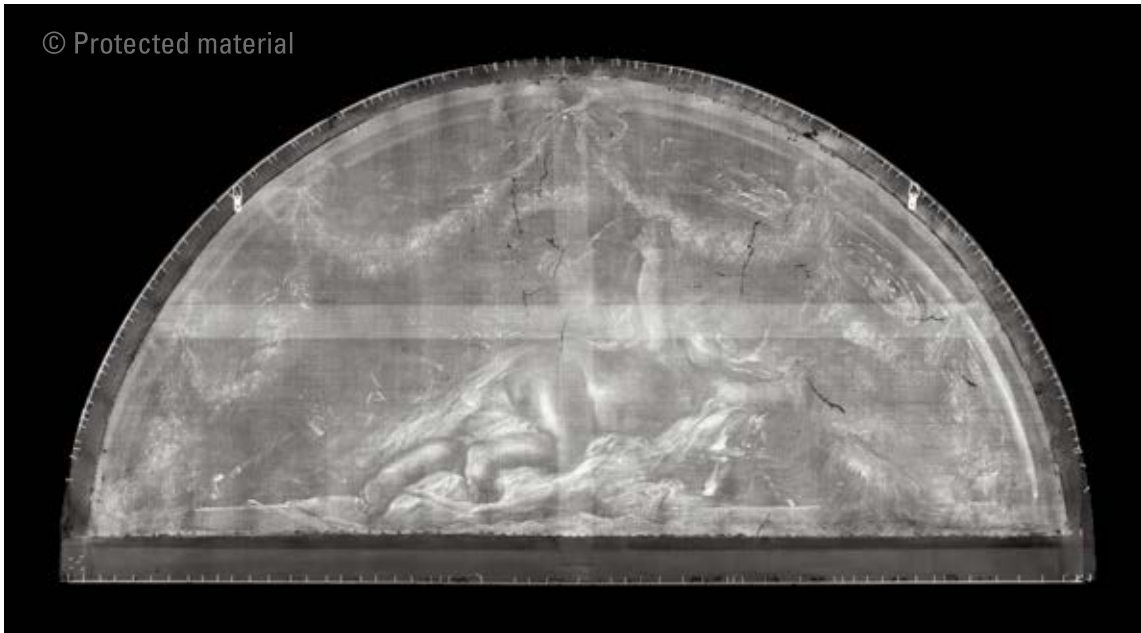
The lunette on the left is slightly different as the boy is still asleep, indicated by his closed eyes and arms outstretched on the bed. At his feet is the pair of white doves. Having flown across to the sleeping young warrior, they are now engaged in amorous courtship with the stronger male pecking at the female who lies

7 This Latin inscription appears in the extensive bibliography on the most important epigraphs in the Roman world, which Paret could have known through the Italian and French originals. One of these large compendia was published in Spain in 1794, translated from the Italian by one of the key figures of the Spanish 18th century, Casto González, known as "El Emeritense", the pseudonym of Friar Juan de Navas (1741-1809): *Instituciones antiquo-lapidarias traducidas de la lengua toscana por Casto González Emeritense*. Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1794.

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32-33  
X-radiographs of the lunettes



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34-35  
Infra-red reflectographs of the lunettes



36  
Detail of the inscription on lunette II



37  
Detail of the arrow on lunette I

face up underneath him stretched out in abandon, as indicated by her extended wings. Their cooing will awaken the boy, who although still asleep is ready to offer a rosebud with his left hand while in his right he holds the arrow strung with roses which he will shoot at his companion when he wakes up and to which Paret has applied a brushstroke of bright red on the tip [fig. 37].

Paret does not seem to have given a name to these two small warriors of Love, unless it was that of the future married couple who commissioned these works for their nuptial chamber. Their symbols do not allow them to be identified with any of the couples from the classical world or from poetry, including Achilles and Penthesilea, Camilla and Aeneas, Tancred and Clorinda or Rinaldo and Armida, whose combats always concluded with the male victorious. It would rather seem that the artist took his child metaphor to its farthest possible extent and that these figures are in fact the infant Venus and Mars.

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