



PRESS RELEASE

Acquisition by Bruges Master Joseph-Benoît Suvée for Musea Brugge

Musea Brugge has purchased a painting by Joseph-Benoît Suvée with the presentation of the Birth of the Virgin Mary. It is the first painting by Suvée with a religious subject in the collection of Musea Brugge.

The purchased work is a preliminary study for the large canvas by Suvée that can be seen today in the Église de l'Assomption in Paris, though it was originally intended for the Church of the Recollects in Ypres, which has since disappeared.

The 'modello'—or design—that Musea Brugge has purchased is painted with lively brushstrokes and shows, perhaps more than the finished painting, the personal signature style of the artist. It has a special value as a preparatory intermediate step in the working process of a great history piece.

Masterpiece in terms of religious painting

The Birth of the Virgin is viewed by experts as Suvée's masterpiece in terms of religious painting. Although Joseph-Benoît Suvée (1743, Bruges—1807, Rome) made multiple large religious paintings during his career, there are precious few of these that have been preserved in Flanders. The Resurrection of Christ, which is found in the St Walburg's Church in Bruges, is classified as a masterpiece by the Flemish Community as of 2020. In the St Martin's Church of Ypres there hangs another interesting painting by Suvée, The Adoration by the Angels.

Turning point in Suvée's career

It is noteworthy that The Birth of the Virgin always remained in France and never reached its destination in Ypres. The Birth of the Virgin is painted at a turning point of his career when Suvée was officially recognised by the French 'Académie Royale'. He presented the canvas at the Paris Salon of 1779, where he encountered great success with it. After the conclusion of the Salon, it was to have been sent to Ypres along with The Adoration by the Angels. Due to a disagreement between the artist and the commissioners of the work over the price, it ultimately remained in Paris.

“Self-assured with his mastery and the value of the painting, Suvée presented the canvas at the Paris Salon of 1779, where he encountered great success with it.”

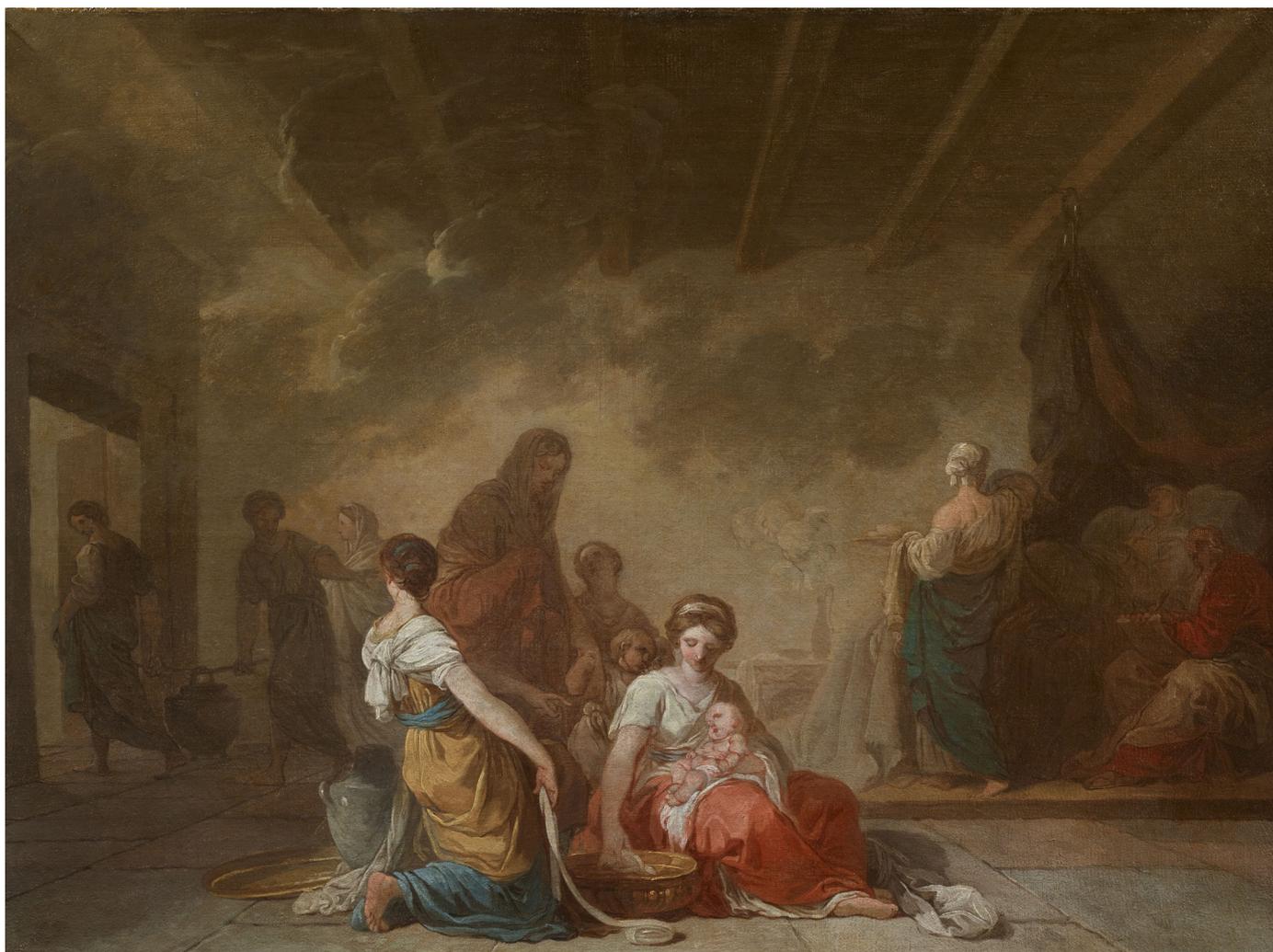
Intimate scene

The scene depicted takes place in the home of Anna and Joachim, the parents of Mary. All attention is placed upon the central figure group with the newly-born child in the arms of her nurse. A veiled young lady views the intimate scene with her two children. A gracious, kneeling woman appears to be attentively waiting

along with companions to provide Mary's first bath. On the right, we see Anna in her birthing bed in the accompaniment of a servant girl, while her husband, the aged Joachim, sits down next to her and records the miraculous event on a tablet.

Rediscovered after 300 years

Suvéé must have preserved the preliminary study for 'The Birth of the Virgin' until the end of his life in his studio, as seen from the inventory list and auction catalogue that was assembled after his death in 1807. The oil-painting sketch was then quickly purchased by Julien-Victor Veyrenc (1757-1837), an artist and collector that gifted many works to the Musée de Valence. Only in 2016 was it rediscovered by the descendants of Veyrenc. Since then, it landed on the art market, and until recently at the Galerie Jacques Leegenhoek in Paris where Musea Brugge purchased the work.



More information or other question? Contact:
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