

Caylus



MARIANO SALVADOR MAELLA
(Valencia, 1739–1819, Madrid)

The Cardinal Virtues

1785

Oil on canvas

63 x 31.5 cm

PROVENANCE:

Aguttes, Paris, 16 September 2018, lot 47 (as "Att. à Francisco Bayeu")

RELATED LITERATURE:

DÍAZ GALLEGOS, C., "Las decoraciones murales en la planta principal del Palacio Real de Madrid", *Arbor*, CLXIX, nº 665, May 2001, pp. 59-81.

MANO, J. M. de la, *Mariano Salvador Maella (1739-1819), Dibujos. Catálogo razonado*, Santander, Fundación Botín, 2011, t. I, cat. V. 9, pp. 374-375.

MANO, J. M. de la, *Mariano Salvador Maella. Poder e Imagen en la España de la Ilustración*, Madrid, Fundación Arte Hispánico, 2011, cat. IV. 1, pp. 353-354.

Mariano Salvador Maella initially trained with his father, a modest Valencian painter of the same name. In 1750 he moved to Madrid in order to enter the drawing studio of the sculptor Felipe de Castro. He then entered the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando where he was assigned to Antonio González Velázquez as his professor. In 1757, having been awarded various prizes in the Academia's competitions, Maella went to Rome to complete his studies.

On his return to Spain in 1765 he entered the circle of Anton Raphael Mengs, who welcomed him as one of his protégés and assisted him in obtaining royal commissions. From that point onwards Maella was active as a fresco painter in the Royal Palace in Madrid and in other royal residences. In 1774 he was appointed a court painter and in 1776 he embarked on the cycle of fresco paintings for the cloister of Toledo cathedral, working on that project with Bayeu. Again for the cathedral, Maella executed six large-format altar paintings (1778-1805) and a series of allegories (1778). He also worked for his native city, which he returned to in 1787 to decorate various chapels, namely those of the Blessed Gaspar Bono in the conventual church of San Sebastián, and the altar painting for the chapel of San Francisco of Borja in the cathedral, which was flanked by Goya's famous paintings. Within the context of his religious compositions Maella produced numerous depictions of the Immaculate Conception, a subject greatly in demand from churches and private clients.

Maella divided his time between his activities for the court and the position he occupied at the Royal Santa Barbara Tapestry Manufactory where he was responsible for supervising the work of the young painters employed there. Maella was a creatively fertile

artist of boundless imagination in all the pictorial genres. In addition to his work as a painter he was active in the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, becoming an academicien of merit, replacing Mengs as a teacher there on the latter's return to Rome in 1769 and being appointed deputy director in 1772. In 1794 he was made director of painting at the Academia and the following year became its director general. In 1799 Charles IV made the artist First Painter to the King, a position that had been vacant since the death of Mengs but one that Maella shared with Goya.

The present oil sketch appeared at auction in Paris in September 2018. In December of that year another oil sketch on the same subject was offered at Alabarte in Madrid (lot 188, December auction) (fig. 1). In addition, the library in the Royal Palace in Madrid has a black chalk study of this ceiling which is included in an album of drawings that belonged to Ferdinand VII (fig. 2). These works indicate Maella's intensive preparatory activity for this fresco for the private rooms of the Infante Don Gabriel and his wife, the Infanta María Ana Victoria, in the Royal Palace. Maella tried out various formulas for the ceiling, combining the Cardinal Virtues, until he achieved the final composition (fig. 3). These studies include Justice, Prudence, Temperance and Fortitude accompanied by traditional symbols of sovereign power such as the lion and the column, in addition to winged genii with consular fasces.



Fig. 1 (left). Mariano Salvador Maella. *The Cardinal Virtues*. 1785. Black chalk and wash on laid paper, 230 x 145 mm. Madrid, Real Biblioteca, Patrimonio Nacional (Álbumes de dibujos de Fernando VII, t. II, fol. 43, dib. 63).



Fig. 2 (right). Mariano Salvador Maella. *The Cardinal Virtues*. 1785. Oil on canvas, 54,5 x 28 cm.



Fig. 3. Mariano Salvador Maella. *The Cardinal Virtues*. 1785. Fresco. Madrid, Palacio Real (inv. PM-10010259).