

# Caylus



**SOFONISBA ANGUISSOLA**

(Cremona, ca. 1535– Palermo, 1625)

*The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine*

1588

Oil on canvas

94 x 70 cm

Signed: “S. L. A. / P / 1588”

#### LITERATURE:

RUIZ GÓMEZ, L. (curator). *Historia de dos pintoras. Sofonisba Anguissola y Lavinia Fontana*, exhib. cat., Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2019, cat. no. 49, pp. 198-199

#### RELATED LITERATURE:

SACCHI, R. “Tra Sicilia e Genova. Sofonisba Anguissola Moncada e poi Lomellini”, Cremona, exhib. cat., 1994, pp. 153-172.

MAGNANI, L. *Luca Cambiaso da Genova all'Escorial*. Genoa: Sagep, 1995, p. 277.

Born into a noble family in Cremona, Sofonisba Anguissola and her five sisters were all instructed in painting. Her first teacher, from 1545 onwards, was Bernardino Campi, after which she entered the studio of Bernardino Gatti in 1549. Her output is particularly notable for its portraits, including numerous self-portraits executed throughout her career, in which the artist depicts herself reading, playing a musical instrument or painting, offering images of herself engaged in activities appropriate to her noble status.

Early influences detected in Anguissola's work include those of Campi and Correggio, of whom the latter continued to be important for art in Cremona throughout the century. Anguissola's early output in that city included small works for private devotion. In 1559 she was invited to the court of Philip II through the mediation of the Duke of Alba and the Duke of Sessa, the latter governor of Milan at that date. In Madrid Anguissola served as lady-in-waiting to Queen Isabel de Valois while continuing to produce portraits. Around 1571 she married Fabrizio de Moncada, brother of the Viceroy of Sicily, to where she then moved. After the death of her first husband she married again, to the Genoese nobleman Orazio Lomellino, and lived between Genoa and Palermo. She was visited in the latter city by Anthony van Dyck in 1624 who drew her in his travel sketchbook and noted her age as 96, a fact that did not prevent her from retaining her subtle mind and from discussing painting with him.

The present *Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine* was painted in Genoa and is signed and dated 1588 (fig. 1), the signature including the initial of her second husband's surname. That same year Anguissola painted *The madonna lactans* now in the Szépművészeti Museum in Budapest (inv. no. 4216). Both works clearly reveal the style of Luca Cambiaso, who

despite his death more than a decade earlier continued to be one of the principal references for painting in that city.



Fig. 1