

Press release 58/2016

Dresden, 21 November 2016

**Gift of the painted study for Francesco Trevisani's "Massacre of the Innocents"
to the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden**

<p>Photograph of the painting, destroyed in 1945</p>  <p>Francesco Trevisani, Massacre of the Innocents, around 1714, oil on canvas, 250 x 464 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, gallery no. 445, destroyed by fire in 1945 in Dresden; copyright: SKD</p>	<p>Study for the painting and gift</p>  <p>Francesco Trevisani, Massacre of the Innocents (study), around 1714, oil on canvas, 75 x 136 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, DLN Nr. 2016/2; copyright: SKD, photograph: Estel/Klut. 2016 gift from Karen S. W. Friedman, Edward A. Friedman, Kristin Friedman, Theodore N. Mirvis, Ruth Mirvis, Gary D. Friedman, Darcy Bradbury and Eric Seiler through the "Friends of Dresden" in New York City</p>
---	--

The Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (Old Masters Picture Gallery) at Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden is receiving a unique gift from a group of private owners in New York. It is an oil study by the Baroque artist Francesco Trevisani (1656–1746) painted in preparation for his enormous painting "Massacre of the Innocents", which was on display in Dresden for more than 200 years. The particular significance of this gift is in the fact that Trevisani's painting was destroyed by fire in Dresden in the Second World War. This oil study is the only known artistic document depicting the entire painting.

Francesco Trevisani is considered one of the central Roman Baroque painters of the first half of the 18th century. He created the "Massacre of the Innocents" in around 1714 for Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667–1740), one of the most influential and innovative art patrons of the time.

Before the artist painted the subject onto the huge canvas, more than four and a half metres wide, he painted the oil study ("bozzetto" in Italian) in preparation. The impressive dimensions of this study (75 x 136 cm) indicate that the draft was also presented to the client to give him an initial idea of its composition and colour scheme.

Trevisani's "Massacre of the Innocents" was part of a cycle on Jesus' childhood which Ottoboni probably commissioned to mark the 25th anniversary of his appointment as a cardinal and vice-chancellor of the Holy Roman church. Four artists worked on the cycle, which originally comprised eight paintings. Of the five works from the cycle still known today, four were purchased in 1743 by Augustus III, Prince Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, for his collection of paintings in Dresden. As well as the "Massacre of the Innocents", the other paintings are "The Three Magi in front of Herod" by Sebastiano Conca, "The Adoration of the Magi" by Giuseppe Bartolomeo Chiari and "Rest on the Flight into Egypt" by Francesco Trevisani, all three of which are still in the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.

The emotion-laden rhetoric of the imagery is typical of Late Baroque painting. Trevisani places the figures as if they are on a stage, giving them passionate gestures and facial expressions. He uses this rhetorical repertoire to portray the scene described in the Gospel according to St. Matthew when baby sons were massacred on the orders of King Herod immediately after Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:16). Herod wanted to do away with the new-born king of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth, his putative rival.

Darcy Bradbury, representing the donators, commented, "We are very pleased to bring this important work to the City of Dresden. The subject matter of our painting is tragic, and the destruction of the original masterpiece in the last, terrible weeks of World War II was also tragic, a reminder of the terrible human consequences of war. Dr. Blobel, a Nobel prize winning scientist and founder of "Friends of Dresden", who contributed his entire Nobel prize award to the restoration of Dresden, was protected as a young child by some kind and courageous citizens of Saxony from the worst consequences of war. As American Jews, that story spoke to us so deeply. By giving this painting to the people of Dresden, we hope that it can remind all of us of the both the terrible and beautiful things that humankind can do. "

Marion Ackermann, Director General of Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, announced, "We are very grateful to the donators in the USA for this generous gift. This study will give our visitors a specific impression, for the first time, of the appearance of this large-scale painting by the Roman artist before it was destroyed in 1945. I would like to thank the donators Karen S. W. Friedman, Edward A. Friedman, Kristin Friedman, Gary D. Friedman, Theodore N. Mirvis, Ruth Mirvis, Darcy Bradbury and Eric Seiler on behalf of Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. The "Friends of Dresden" association (New York City) made the organisational aspects of this donation possible, for which we would also like to thank Günter Blobel."

During the press conference, Trevisani's oil study will be hung in the permanent exhibition at the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.