

The week in art: Swiss empire expands into Singapore

New Asian outpost for art fair group; auction sales looking good so far; Armory show cuts exhibitor costs; portraits sit pretty



Artemisia Gentileschi's 'Self-portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria' © The National Gallery, London

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1653) may not be a household name, but she is getting there. The Italian Baroque artist recently captured museum-goers'

imagination when her allegorical self-portrait from around 1638-39 was shown in the Royal Academy's Charles I: King and Collector exhibition. The daughter of a well-known artist and a follower of Caravaggio, in 1611 Gentileschi was raped by Agostino Tassi, a pupil of her father. She endured a harrowing trial at which Tassi was eventually found guilty, but his short banishment was never enforced.

Books and television programmes, including the recent BBC Civilisations series, have explored her story, and this year even the Edinburgh Fringe Festival features a restaging of the documented rape trial (It's True, It's True, It's True, Underbelly, August 2-12, 14-26). Now London's National Gallery has joined the fray and acquired Gentileschi's "Self-Portrait as Saint Catherine of Alexandria" (c1615-17) for £3.6m, the bulk of which (about £2.7m) came from the American Friends of the National Gallery.

The work was sold by dealers Marco Voena and Fabrizio Moretti, who spotted the painting at a small auction house in Paris in December, from where they bought it for €2.4m (est €300,000-€400,000).

Gentileschi was "one of a handful of women who [were] able to shatter the confines of [their] time", says Hannah Rothschild, chair of the National Gallery's board of trustees.