

The female follower of Caravaggio who is now a major investment in her own right



'Allegory of Rhetoric' by Prudenzia Gentileschi, oil on canvas, 90 x 72 cm
CREDIT: ROBILANT + VOENA

A painter closes the gender gap

Artemisia Gentileschi, the only contemporary female follower of Caravaggio, has attracted her own following not just in the visual arts but also in film and literature.

She has a position both as a feminist icon, who grappled with the not always beneficial attentions of the opposite sex, but also as an exponent of a robust style of figurative painting.

An exhibition at the Robilant + Voena gallery in Mayfair titled *The Gentileschi Effect*, strewn with the artist's pictures of elegant men, rumbustious women and severed male heads, and showing alongside works by her colleagues, students and artists working today, demonstrates her influence over the centuries.

Included is a rare work that is thought to be by her daughter, Prudentia, an artist by whom no signed works are known, and a recent work by Francesco Vezzoli, one of Italy's foremost contemporary artists.

For gallery owners Edmondo di Robilant and Marco Voena, *The Gentileschi Effect* could translate into millions. It was they, for instance, who discovered a self-portrait of the artist as Saint Catherine of Alexandria (circa 1615-17) in a Paris auction last year. Estimated at €300,000, they bought the painting for €2.4 million, and then sold it to the National Gallery this summer, for €3.6 million.

This year, they exhibited a mere fragment of a larger painting by Gentileschi, *Allegory of Fame* (1630-35), at the European Fine Art Fair in New York, where it sold to an American collector for [REDACTED]

In the current Mayfair exhibition, they have a full-length portrait of a man, which they bought incorrectly attributed in New York about 15 years ago, later establishing it as a portrait by Gentileschi of Antoine de Ville. The collector they subsequently sold it to has now returned it to the gallery, where it has a \$ [REDACTED] million price tag.