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ANTONIO MANCINI
1852 - 1930

LA MODELLA
c.1883

Oil on canvas, signed 'Mancini Antoni... MM.....'
113.7 x 62.2 cm

PROVENANCE

Andrea De Angelis, Naples, Italy (by 1911);
Augusto Lurati, Milan, Italy;
Galleria Borgonuovo, Milan, Raccolta Lurati, 1929 (consigned by the above);
Sotheby's, Monaco, Tableaux Italiens du XIXe Siecle, 21 April 1990, lot 66;
where acquired by a private collection USA.

EXHIBITED

Florence, *Società delle Belle Arti - Esposizione Retrospettiva, Italiana e Regionale Toscana*, 1911, Sala 10, no. 542 (as *Capriccio di modella*)
Milan, Galleria Borgonuovo, *La raccolta Augusto Lurati*, 1929, no.170 (as *La modella*)
Naples, Florida, *The Gilgore Collection, A Chisel and a Brush. Vincenzo Gemito: 1852-1929, Antonio Mancini 1852-1930. From the Gilgore Collection Italian Art 1850- 1925*, 2000, no. 26
Palm Beach, *American International Fine Art & Antique Fair*, 2008, no.23

LITERATURE

Esposizione Retrospettiva Italiana e Regionale Toscana, Società delle Belle Arti in Firenze, catalogo della mostra, società per le Industrie Grafiche G. Spinelli, Florence, 1911, p.122, no.542
Galleria Borgonuovo, Milano *Catalogo della vendita all'asta della Raccolta A. Lurati. Quadro moderni e antichi*, 1929, no.170, illustrated (pl.58)
'La raccolta Augusto Lurati alla Galleria Borgonuovo,' in *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, VII, anno LVI, 21 Apr. 1929, p.628, n.16, illustrated (as *La Modella*)
A.Schettini, 'Vita di Antonio Mancini,' in *Roma - Napoli*, Rome, 1 Feb. 1940, p.3, illustrated
G.L.Marini, *Il valore dei dipinti dell'Ottocento Italiano*, VIII edizione, Allemandi, Torino, 1990, p.246
Sotheby's, Monaco, *Tableaux Italiens du XIXe Siecle*, 21 Apr. 1990, lot 66, illustrated (as *Portrait d'un Peintre au Travail*)
V.Greene & F.Licht, *A Chisel and a Brush. Vincenzo Gemito: 1852-1929, Antonio Mancini 1852-1930. From the Gilgore Collection Italian Art 1850-1925*, Naples, Florida, 2000, p.19, 86-87, no.26, illustrated (as *the Model*)
U.W.Hiesinger, *Antonio Mancini: Nineteenth-century Italian Master*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2007, p.26, 58-60, illustrated
F.Licht, *Artisti, generi, acquirenti nelle Esposizioni dell'800 dell'Accademia di Brera*, Brescia, 2008, p.109, 111
An exclusive preview of Palm Beach International fine art & Antique Fair Benefiting the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties Mosaic Fund & Honoring the Museums of Florida, 2008, no. 23, illustrated
C.Virno, *Antonio Mancini, Catalogo ragionato dell'opera*, Rome, 2019, vol.I, p.236, no.321, illustrated (as *Dispetto di modella/ Capriccio di modella/ La modella gitana / Ritratto di una pittrice al lavoro*).



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Mancini executed *La Modella* soon after his decisive move, in 1883, to Rome, his primary city of residence for much of his life thereafter. Careful study of the canvas reveals that the artist cleverly inscribed his name along the shaft of the paintbrush held by the young model. Perhaps Mancini's decision to inscribe the brush - the artist's instrument of creation - was a gesture meant to announce his profession as a painter in his new place of domicile.

The model is dressed in the type of folkloric costume worn by a *ciociara*, a country girl from the Ciociaria, the rural area surrounding the Italian capital. But this image is not simply a didactic rendition of local Roman tradition: the young woman daintily holding the brush slightly extended towards her audience (presumably the artist and the viewer), is more than just a model and ciociara. Together with the tools of the painter's trade, she also becomes the muse of painting, casting this work in an allegorical light.

However, there is a further dimension to this depiction: Mancini presents the model just after she has ostensibly broken through a picture that has been placed backwards on an easel (the heavily impastoed palette hanging diagonally from the easel's corner tells us that we are seeing the front of the easel). The model's smiling face pushes through a triangular opening of the work, forcing back a corner of the painted canvas, while her hand and forearm separate the fabric from the bottom of the wooden stretcher. This apparently destructive act reminds us that art is but an illusion, easily eradicated by the physicality of the real. Yet, Mancini doubles this illusion upon itself by reproducing an image within an image. Thus, the scene denoting the destruction of the represented painting constitutes the actual object we are viewing. This complex, multifaceted composition demonstrates Mancini's investigations into the very meaning of painted representation and the multiplicity of signs that define an image.