



OLD MASTERS

2018

cat. no. 5

**Adam de Coster**

Mechelen 1585/86 – 1643 Antwerp

*The Denial of St Peter*

Oil on canvas  
109 x 131,5 cm.

**Provenance:**

Possibly identical with the *Denial of St Peter* sold by Adam de Coster to the Antwerp art dealer Jehan van Mechelen, mentioned in a notarial document dated 27 January 1627<sup>1</sup>  
Possibly Vienna, collection of the deceased art dealer Bartholomeus Floquet (c. 1650-1690)<sup>2</sup>  
Said to have been in the Visconti collection during the 18th century<sup>3</sup>  
Milan, Koelliker collection, 2000

**Literature:**

J.T. Spike, in: E. Capon (ed.), *Caravaggio and his world : darkness and light*, exh. cat. Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria 2003-2004, pp. 124-125, cat. no. 23  
J. Bikker, in: idem., G. Papi, N. Spinosa, *The International Caravaggesque Movement : French Dutch and Flemish Caravaggesque paintings from the Koelliker collection*, exh. cat. London, Robilant & Voena 2005, pp. 36-37, ill.<sup>4</sup>  
G. Papi, *Gherardo delle Notti : Quadri bizzarrissimi e cene allegre*, exh. cat. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi 2015, cat. no. 52, pp. 238-239  
A. Delvingt, 'A Magnificent Nocturnal Work by the Flemish Caravaggist Adam de Coster', in: M. Korchane, G. Perthuis (eds.), *Varia : peintures, dessins et sculptures, de Coster a Hartung : acquisitions récentes*, exh. cat. Lyon, Galerie Michel Descours 2015, pp. 13-19 (cat. no. 2), p. 18, fig. 4 (English transl. pp. 125-127)

**Exhibited:**

Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, *Caravaggio and his world: darkness and light*, 2003-2004  
Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi, *Gherardo delle Notti : Quadri bizzarrissimi e cene allegre*, 2015

**Copy:**

Sale London, Christie's, 4 July 1991, lot 632, as Circle of Georges de la Tour



In a notarial document dated 27 January 1627, Adam de Coster 'painter in the city of Antwerp, and about 40 years old' declared that he had recently sold a number of paintings to the Antwerp art dealer Jehan van Mechelen.<sup>5</sup> An intriguing document in itself, it estimates the painter's year of birth to be around 1586, a date confirmed by the age of 57 indicated at the time of his passing at 4 May 1643. We are barely informed about what happened during those 57 years. Undoubtedly, De Coster must have enjoyed a firm reputation in his time. His admired colleague Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) conferred on him the honour of including him in the *Iconography*, his portrait print gallery of 80 celebrities of his time – international politicians and statesmen, artists, art-lovers and scholars. Judging from his portrait (fig. 1), De Coster comes across as a self-assured, handsome man.<sup>6</sup> The caption underneath describes him as a 'Pictor Noctium Mechliniensis', a painter of nocturnal scenes from Mechelen, and it is as such that the artist's biographer Cornelis de Bie praises him in his *Gulden Cabinet* of 1662.<sup>7</sup> That he was indeed from Mechelen seems to be confirmed by another document from 1627, which informs us that his parents Jan de Coster and Clara van der Borch owned properties in and outside of Mechelen, as well as near Brussels.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, we might identify him with a certain Adam de Cuestere, who in 1598 was apprenticed to the otherwise little known painter Peter Ceulemans (1570-?) in Mechelen. In 1607 De Coster is first documented in Antwerp, when he was inducted into the city's Guild of St Luke. Nothing further is heard of him until 1626/27, when a certain Pauwels Telliers was apprenticed to him in Antwerp. Given the clear Caravaggesque character of De Coster's work, a sojourn in Italy seems likely. However, it has not proved possible as yet to locate De Coster there. Or as Caravaggism expert Benedict Nicolson once put it, 'no Monsù Adamo yet fits him'.<sup>9</sup> However, there is one 'Adamo' which might in fact qualify. In 1623, a certain 'Adamo Fiamengo' is recorded as living in a house on the Via Frattina, in the Roman parish of San Lorenzo in Luchina, in the company of the painters 'Sebastiano Fiamengo, pittore', 'Cornelio, pittore Fiamengo' (in all probability Cornelis van Poelenburch) and 'Francesco, pittore francese'.<sup>10</sup> As Adam was not a very common name among the Netherlandish painters in Rome, one might recognise the name De Coster here. However tangible evidence remains insubstantial.<sup>11</sup> Be this as it may, that De Coster did travel is proven by his presence in Hamburg in 1635, where he sold two nocturnes to the jeweller Abraham de la Ruelle. In his will, made up at his Antwerp house at the Schoenmarkt in September 1642, De Coster (who remained a bachelor) bequeathed two paintings to a friend in Holland. He died several months later, on 30 April 1643, in the house of his sister in the Hochstetterstraat (now the Borzestraat).



Fig. 1 Pieter de Jode II after Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Adam de Coster*, engraving, 237 x 168 mm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

The first attempt to reconstruct De Coster's oeuvre was made by Nicolson, in two articles in *The Burlington Magazine* in 1961 and 1966.<sup>12</sup> As De Coster never signed his works, Nicolson's reconstruction was necessarily based on Lucas Vorsterman's (1595/96-1674/75) engraving after a *Backgammon Players by Candlelight*, which mentions De Coster as the painter (fig. 2).<sup>13</sup> Whereas Nicolson initially grouped no more than 8 pictures, he later pieced together a little over 20 autograph works,



Fig. 2 Lucas Vorsterman after Adam de Coster, *Backgammon Players by Candlelight*, engraving, 272 x 352 mm., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

almost all nocturnal genre scenes.<sup>14</sup> Since then the artist's oeuvre has expanded to over 30 works, now also including a large number of history paintings (interestingly the larger part of what is known about De Coster's production from contemporary sources).<sup>15</sup> Although De Coster's refined style has been linked to the work of several contemporaries – specifically the nocturnes of the slightly younger Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656) and the Caravaggesque works of his Antwerp colleague Gerard Seghers (1591-1651) – no direct, documented ties with these painters have so far been demonstrated.

The present *Denial of St Peter* belongs to the post-Nicolson additions to the artist's slender oeuvre. Initially recognised as a De Coster by professor Leonard J. Slatkes<sup>16</sup>, the work was first published in 2003, when it was in the renowned Koelliker Collection. The painting depicts one of the New Testament's most damning moments, following the Last Supper – during which Christ had prophesied to Peter that before the cock crowed twice he would have denied him three times – and the subsequent capture by night of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, as instigated by Judas. Related by all four Gospels, Christ was arrested by the guards of the high priest Caiaphas, who led him away to the latter's residence.<sup>17</sup> Peter followed the group at a distance, and upon arrival entered Caiaphas's courtyard where

he sat down by the fire with the soldiers, 'to see the end'. According to Matthew and Mark, St Peter was then recognised twice by a servant girl: first as he sat down, and the second time when he stood up to leave:

*'And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. [...] And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean." But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.'*<sup>18</sup>

Of course, Peter's lie was prompted by his fear of sharing his master's fate, and he thus succumbed to inner conflict, which ended in self-loathing. De Coster chose to depict the suspenseful moment just before the alarm was sounded. The artist situates the main narrative towards the left background of the scene, where the faces of the servant girl and Peter are illuminated with a candle obscured by her hand – a painterly device De Coster used over and over again. She confronts Peter, who sanctimoniously protests with a gesture that he is not the man she takes him for. Meanwhile, the foreground of the picture is reserved for Caiaphas's guards – tough men, who measure out their time with card playing – whom De Coster cleverly arranged around a candle-lit table. Although this scene is not mentioned in any of the gospels, this became the subject's established iconography, alluding to the forthcoming drawing of lots for Christ's garments. Just as he is about to roll the dice, one soldier suddenly gets wind of the discomforting conversation behind him, enough to make him turn a wary eye. His comrade, too, is on the alert, as he points at Peter and the servant girl. The guard in front of the table slowly rises up from his chair as well, and – suspicious of the situation – reaches for his rapier. De Coster set up his canvas with great feeling for theatrical suspense, creating what one author dubbed sheer 'Shakespearean intensity'.<sup>19</sup> The spatial arrangement of the figures ensures that the two hidden light sources are brought out to optimal effect, thus enabling the painter to display his outstanding abilities in rendering the *chiaroscuro* so fitting to the dark character of the story.

The effect of candlelight on the eavesdropping soldier's face dramatically highlights his emotional peripety, the sudden change of circumstances; the reflections of the candle flame on his black and gold cuirass are breath taking, as is the spectacular rendering of the illuminated feathers on his hat. His vibrant vermilion sleeves interact beautifully with the resonant green of the servant girl's dress. Whereas the guard in front of the table essentially functions as a *repoussoir* against the light source, a recent restoration has revealed the rich plasticity and fine nuances of hue of his shadowy costume and the rapier frog hanging from his belt. This long-obscured wealth of depth and form can be observed everywhere in the picture, which has regained much of its original three-dimensionality.

Given the story's dramatic tension and its nocturnal setting, which provided a fine opportunity to show off an artist's virtuosity in chiaroscuro, the *Denial of St Peter* was understandably a popular subject among Caravaggists. De Coster had probably had seen numerous examples – in Italy, or possibly in Utrecht or on the Antwerp art market – which could have served as examples for him. Was he aware of Gerard van Honthorst's interpretations of the subject, specifically the work now in Rennes, painted during his last Italian years c. 1618/20 (fig. 3)?<sup>20</sup> Ultimately deriving from Bartolomeo Manfredi (1582-1622), Van Honthorst's compositional scheme includes a dark silhouette of a guard in front of a table with card players,



Fig. 3 Gerard van Honthorst, *The Denial of St Peter*, oil on canvas, 150 x 197 cm., Rennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts



Fig. 4 Gerard Seghers, *The Denial of St Peter*, oil on canvas, 157.5 x 227.3cm, Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art

with Peter and the maidservant on the left. Undoubtedly, De Coster's Antwerp colleague Gerard Seghers knew of Van Honthorst's composition when he painted his own masterly *Denial of St Peter*, now in Raleigh (fig. 4).<sup>21</sup> A splendid work, Seghers nonetheless takes a completely different take on the Biblical story from De Coster. Whereas Seghers created a rowdy spectacle, De Coster seems to switch the positions of Van Honthorst's dark *repoussoir* guard with the latter's card player looking over his shoulder, thereby shifting the emphasis from action to suspense. His painting is about the sense of danger, the imminent alarm call, the psychology of the lie and the subsequent fear of its discovery. Ultimately, De Coster makes us re-think Peter's cowardly betrayal not so much by cashing in on his denial, but by focusing on the sleeping dogs awoken.

In recent years, several works by De Coster have surfaced, thus providing new points of reference by which to re-evaluate his oeuvre, deepen our knowledge and establish cross connections. Interestingly, the Lilian *Denial of St Peter* finds itself at the centre of these connections, making a dating to the mid 1620s plausible. For one, its composition shows great affinity with



Fig. 5 Cat. no. 5

the lost *Backgammon Players by Candlelight* engraved by Vorsterman, so essential in the reconstruction of De Coster's oeuvre. Viewed in reverse (as prints reproduce original compositions in mirror image) the Vorsterman print presents virtually the same pictorial scheme as our painting, with a *repoussoir* figure in front of a table and blocking the light, two illuminated figures both to his left and right, and a slightly distinct group of two to the left (fig. 5, 6). De Coster in fact favoured this particular scheme on other occasions, as seen in his *Card Sharpers with a Lute Player*, known in two versions (fig. 7).<sup>22</sup> Huge similarity can also be observed between the present work and another *Denial of St Peter* by De Coster, now in a private collection in Turin (fig. 8). Not only do the two paintings share the same subject, but the models who posed for St Peter and the maidservant are no doubt the same individuals in both works. In fact, the same girl posed a third time for De Coster, now by herself, in a picture that recently made an astonishing auction record for De Coster in New York (fig. 9). Additionally, we may recognise the model for the central guard in De Coster's *Lute Player* in Dresden (figs. 10, 11). As for St Peter, we encounter him again in a number of workshop versions of the same theme, attributed by



Fig. 6 Fig. 2, mirrored



Fig. 7 Adam de Coster, *Card Sharpers with a Lute Player*, oil on canvas (?), measurements unknown, Santiago de Compostela, Rectorado de la Universidad

Nicolson to Gerard Seghers in his article of 1971, which focused on that painter's alleged predilection for the theme of St Peter's Denial.<sup>23</sup> However, given their much stronger likeness to the work of De Coster, these paintings should rather be given to his workshop. Another *Denial of St Peter*, which surfaced with Clovis Whitfield in 2004, was rightly given to De Coster as well, raising the number of versions of the subject by the artist to four.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, when the present Lilian painting was exhibited in the Uffizi galleries in 2015, professor Gianni Papi proposed – I believe

completely convincingly – the re-attribution of another three Denials of St Peter previously given to Seghers, to De Coster as well (in fact, more paintings previously given to Seghers should be reconsidered as works by De Coster).<sup>25</sup> Whereas Benedict Nicolson remarked on Seghers that, due to some erroneous attributions 'nobody had realized quite how often he attacked this theme', it seems that this remark applies at least as much to the 'Pictor Noctium' par excellence Adam de Coster.

JH



Fig. 8 Adam de Coster, *The Denial of St Peter*, oil on canvas, 119.4 x 101.6 cm., Turin, private collection



Fig. 9 Adam de Coster, *A Young Woman Holding a Distaff before a Lit Candle*, oil on canvas, 134 x 94.9 cm., sale New York, Sotheby's, 25 January 2017, lot 23



Fig. 10 Cat. no. 5, detail of the central guard



Fig. 11 Adam de Coster, *Lute Player*, oil on canvas, 105 x 77.5 cm., Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

#### Notes

- 1 E. Duverger *Antwerpse kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw*, 14 vols., Brussels 1984-2009, 3: 1627-1635 (1987), pp. 10-11, doc. 598: 'une peinture de Saint Pierre déniant Notre-Seigneur, de laquelle est encoires un principal'.
- 2 J. Denucé, *Kunstsluiter in de 17e eeuw te Antwerpen: de firma Forchoudt (Bronnen voor de geschiedenis van de Vlaamse Kunst 1)*, Antwerp 1931, p. 231: '88. Verloogeninge Petri van Adam de Koster'. It concerns a letter dated 22 April 1690 from Floque's sister in Antwerp to the Flemish art dealer Marcus Forchoudt in Vienna, in which she asks him to assist on her behalf in the matter relating to her deceased brother's legacy, consisting of, among others, more than 157 paintings in storage in Vienna.
- 3 According to Prof. Leonard J. Slatkes in an unpublished research report on the present painting, dated 18 May 2000, to Mr. L. Koeliker. Report available upon request.

- 4 The same catalogue was also published in Milan in 2005 under the title *French, Dutch and Flemish Caravaggese paintings*.
- 5 Duverger loc. cit. (note 1). See for De Coster's biography S. Somers, in: *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: die Bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, var. vols. Munich/Leipzig 1992-21 (1999), pp. 485-486.
- 6 This was also noted by Benedict Nicolson in his ground-breaking article on De Coster. See: B. Nicolson, 'Notes on Adam de Coster', in: *The Burlington Magazine* 103 (1961), pp. 185-189. See further B. Nicolson, 'Candlelight Pictures from the South Netherlands', in: *The Burlington Magazine* 108 (1966), pp. 253-254 (where he attributes several pictures of boys to an unknown master close to De Coster, which he later included in De Coster's oeuvre after all).
- 7 C. de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet vande edele vry schilderconst*, Antwerp 1661 (1662), p. 124: 'Adam de Keuster, die fray schilder was van nachten'.
- 8 See also F.J.P. van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, Antwerp 1883, pp. 654-656.
- 9 Nicolson 1961, p. 186. Nicolson has also pointed to the stylistic similarities between De Coster and the Lombardian painter Antonio Campi (1522-1587). See B. Nicolson, *The International Caravaggese Movement: List of Pictures by Caravaggio and his Followers throughout Europe from 1590 to 1650*, Oxford 1979, pp. 44-45.
- 10 G.J. Hoogewerff, *Nederlandsche kunstenaars te Rome (1600-1725): uitrekkels uit de parochiale archieven*, The Hague 1942, p. 92. Hoogewerff proposes that 'Cornelio, pittore famengo' could be identified with Van Poelenburch, as does N. Sluiter-Seijfert, *Cornelis van Poelenburch 1594/95-1667: The Paintings*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2016, p. 21. Adamo is not mentioned as a painter (as opposed to the others). This happened more often (random examples are the Antwerp painter Balthasar Lauwers, who is mentioned as 'Baldassarre Fiamengo' in the Via Condotti, and Leonard Brammer, listed as Leonardo de Brava in the Via dei Ponticelli, alongside Wouter Crabeth, who is mentioned as 'pictore'. See Hoogewerff 1942, pp. 81, 92). Interestingly, the Antwerp painter Gerard Seghers – whose work seems very close to that of De Coster – lived in the same street, Via Fratrina, several years earlier, before he moved back to Antwerp.
- 11 The evidence found in a painting by De Coster in Copenhagen, said to depict the sculptors François Duquesnoy (1597-1643) and Georg Petel (1601-1653), who could only have met in Rome in c. 1622 – is feeble, as there is no consensus over the identification of the sitters. See O. Koester, *Flemish paintings: 1600-1800* (collection catalogue Statens Museum for Kunst), Copenhagen 2000, pp. 85-89, inv. no. KMSp810. The painting – not a portrait in the strict sense – depicts two men inspecting sculptures at a dimly lit table. Specifically, the identification of Duquesnoy has proven problematic. Moreover, Petel was in Antwerp 1620/21.
- 12 See note 6.
- 13 See for this print in particular G. Luijten, in: E. de Jongh, G. Luijten, *Mirror of everyday life: genreprints in the Netherlands 1550-1700*, exh. cat. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum 1997, cat. no. 39.
- 14 B. Nicolson, L. Vertova, *Caravaggism in Europe*, 3 vols., Turin 1990, pp. 100-101. Nicolson lists 18 compositions, some of them in several autograph versions, adding up to 24 works. However, two of these works are known only through copies: the *Concert*, formerly Arcade Gallery, now Oldenburg (Niedersachsen), Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Oldenburg, inv. No. LMO 14.296; and the *Backgammon Players by Candlelight*, known only through Vorsterman's engraving. Moreover, the Prado *Judith and Holofernes* is listed as an 'unconvincing attribution', leaving 21 attributed works.
- 15 The basis for this number is Nicolson 1990 (see previous note). To these can be added several more recently discovered/attributed works: 1) the present *Denial of St Peter*; 2) *The Denial of St Peter* (sale New York, Sotheby's, 5 June 2008, lot 58); 3) *The Denial of St Peter* (sale London, Christie's, 3 December 2014, lot 172); 4) *St Francis in Meditation with Brother Leo* (with Michel Descours, see Delvingt 2015); 5) *Card Players* (Skokloster, see Somers 2000); 6) *Lute Player* (Dresden, see Somers 2000);

- 7) *Young Woman Holding a Distaff before a Lit Candle* (sale New York, Sotheby's, 25 January 2017, lot 23); 8) *Denial of St Peter* (Tours, see Papi 2015); 9) *Denial of St Peter* (Milan, private collection, see Papi 2015); 10) *Denial of St Peter* (St Petersburg, see Papi 2015); 11) *Capture of Christ* (Madrid, private collection, see Papi 2015). Contemporary sources mention many works, including more than half history paintings. See, for instance, the notarial document of January 1627 referred to above (note 1), which mentions six history works (plus one *Crucifix*), and two copies thereafter: Denucé 1931, 16 works (possible overlap), 8 of which qualify as history paintings. In addition, the 1638 inventory of Cornelis van de Geest in Antwerp mentions a *Judith and Holofernes* by De Coster. See J. Denucé, *De Antwerpsche "Konstkamers" inventarissen van kunstverzamelingen te Antwerpen in de 16e en 17e eeuw* (Bronnen voor de geschiedenis van de Vlaamse Kunst 2), Amsterdam 1932, p. 53.
- 16 Noted by Slatkes in his unpublished research report (see note 3), in which he confirms the attribution, and dates the painting to c. 1625.
- 17 Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:17-18; 25-27.
- 18 Mark 14:66-72. ESW. Matthew states that it was another servant who recognised him for the second time, whereas according to Luke, Peter is seated when the girl addresses him, John mentions that the girl opens the door of the courtyard to Peter.
- 19 Slatke 2003-2004.
- 20 R.J. Judson, R.E.O. Ekkart, *Gerrit van Honthorst 1592-1656*, Doornspijk 1999, pp. 75-77, cat. nos. 54 (Rennes), 55 (England, private collection) and 56 (Minneapolis, The Minneapolis Institute of Art).
- 21 As noted by Judson/Ekkart 1999, cat. no. 54. B. Nicolson, 'Gerard Seghers and the Denial of St Peter', in: *The Burlington Magazine* 113 (1971), pp. 304-309, p. 304, argues that not the Raleigh version, but the version in the collection of the Earl of Mansfield (Scone Palace) is the prime version.
- 22 The other version was auctioned in Berlin (Bauer sale), 12 May 1928, lot 60. See Nicolson/Vertova 1990, p. 101.
- 23 Nicolson 1971, p. 309, fig. 17 (two versions: with Wildenstein (1947) and at Drouot (1934). See also Nicolson/Vertova 1990, p. 175. A third version, not listed by Nicolson, is in the Utrecht Catharijneconvent, inv. no. BMH 5995.
- 24 The painting was with Clovis Whitfield in 2004, and subsequently in a sale, London, Christie's, 3 December 2014, lot 172 (see note 15, no. 3).
- 25 Papi 2015. In addition, I'd like to propose another two attributions from the same group: it seems that the two versions of a *St Jerome in St-Leu-St-Gilles*, Paris and in Honfleur, previously given to Trophime Bigot (A. Blunt, 'Review of F. G. Pariset, *Georges de la Tour*', in: *The Burlington Magazine* 92 (1950), p. 145) and Gerard Seghers (Nicolson 1971, pp. 307-308, fig. 17; Nicolson/Vertova 1990, p. 174, no. 1428, ill. (Honfleur); see also L.J. Slatkes, 'Master Giacomo, Trophime Bigot and the Candlelight Master', in: M.J. Harris (ed.), *Continuity, innovation, and connoisseurship: old master paintings at the Palmer Museum of Art*, University Park 2003, pp. 63-83, pp. 66-67, fig. 9 (St-Leu-St-Gilles)) should also be given to De Coster. Not only is the painterly style completely consonant with the works rightly given to De Coster by Papi 2015 (hence Nicolson's shared attribution of all these works to Seghers), the model for St Jerome is no doubt the same man who also posed for the Milan *Denial of St Peter*, for the former Whitfield *Denial of St Peter* and for the *Card Sharps* in Santiago de Compostella (here fig. 7) and the other version in the Bauer sale (see note 22). Moreover, there is a huge resemblance with the recently discovered *St Francis in Meditation with Brother Leo*, which shows brother Leo with the same folded hands praying behind a table, and the exact same crucifix and skull in front of him on the table. Delvingt 2015 rightly connects this work with the aforementioned 1627 notarial document (note 1), in which this very rare subject is described in detail. The same document also mentions a *St Jerome* ('Et encoires une peinture de St Jérôme'), and a second version of that painting with the same measurements as the original ('Et aussy une peinture de St Jérôme de la grandeur du principal'). It could very well concern the two versions of *St Jerome* here attributed to De Coster, which are nearly identical in size (St-Leu-St-Gilles: 90 x 121 cm.; Honfleur: 91.4 x 129.9 cm.), the Honfleur painting being the superior one.