

WRESTLING THE BEASTS IN THE COLISEUM

Artist: Frans Floris de Vriendt the Elder

Date: 1563

Dimensions: 130 x 187 cm

Material: Oil on wood

Inventory Number: 43606

Total Cost: € 23.355,00

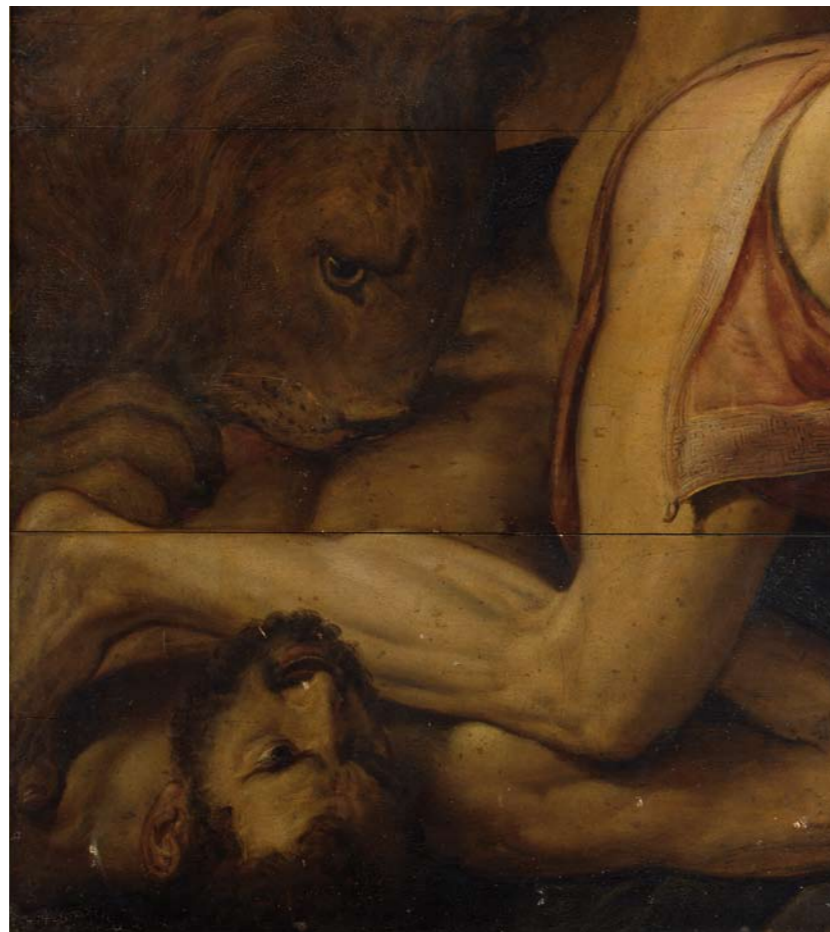
STATE OF PRESERVATION:

The wooden support is affected by large horizontal fissures. The colors are oxidized and there are several abrasions and lacunae, especially in the junctions of the two panels as a result of the support system put in place in a past restoration. This failed attempt at resisting the natural movements of the wood has contributed greatly to the situation today. The painting needs to be cleaned and restored while the frame and supports need to be repaired. The gold of the frame is flaking in several areas and needs cleaning.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Cleaning of the overall surface
- Remove the old support system and repair of the junctions.
- Creation of a new mechanical support with adjustable springs that can flex as needed.
- Cleaning and touching up of the gaps
- Reintegration of the pictorial surface
- Reapplication and balancing of the protective varnish
- Photographic documentation
- Cleaning and restoration of the gilded frame

This painting illustrates a battle of men who are fighting with wild beasts, including lions and a leopard. This scene is given depth and texture by the contrast between the bare human skin and the fur of the exotic animals. In the background is the view of an amphitheater, which may be the Coliseum. The scene is framed by an ivy-covered column on the left and a Roman statue on the right. The artist's monogram and the date of completion are written on the pedestal: HF 1563. The scene ideally reproduces the fight against the wild beasts in the arena and the *Bestiari* fighters. There were two categories of *Bestiari*: one category was composed of men sentenced to death who were condemned to be killed by these wild animals (*damnatio ad bestias*)



and the other of those fighters who voluntarily faced wild animals with their bare hands in exchange for money and fame.

The monogram "HF" seems to refer to the Flemish painter Frans Floris de Vriendt due to the style of the painting and his interest in ancient Rome. Floris was born in Antwerp around 1519 to a family of sculptors. His older brother, Cornelis II, was a well-known painter and engraver. After initial training as a sculptor, Floris moved to Liege to study with the painter Lambert Lombard and quickly inherited his teacher's love for Italian Renaissance art. In 1540 Floris returned to Antwerp and became the Master of the Guild. Between 1541 and 1545 he traveled to Italy and specifically to Rome, where he produced many drawings of ancient sculptures and reliefs. He especially liked the art of Michelangelo. In particular, he admired the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel ceiling and the Last Judgment, which he saw after it was just completed. Floris also drew inspiration from the works of Raphael and his workshop and those of the Florentine Mannerist painters, including Francesco Salviati and Andrea del Sarto.

Returning to Antwerp, he opened a shop with several employees. His major work is the painting for the altar of St. Michael in Antwerp depicting the Fall of Rebel Angels (1554). In addition to religious subjects and portraits, he also painted historical and mythological themes, of which he was a passionate connoisseur. Floris' works on historical themes were essential for the painters of historical scenes of the next generation, especially for the art of Rubens.