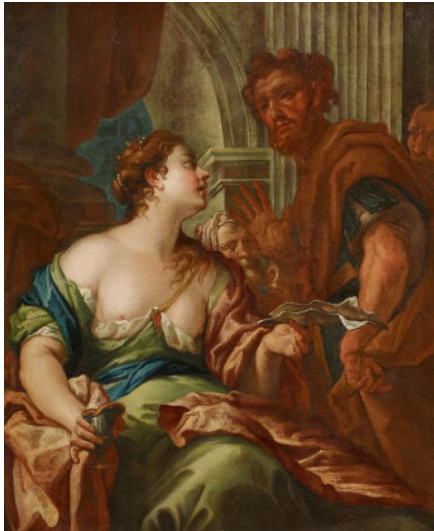


## Lot 1122



**Auction** Fine Art

**Date** 19.11.2020, ca. 15:13

**Preview** 13.11.2020 - 10:00:00 bis  
16.11.2020 - 18:00:00

MOLINARI, ANTONIO  
Venice 1655 - 1704

Title: Sophonisbe.

Technique: Oil on canvas.

Mounting: Relined.

Measurement: 113,5 x 94,5cm.

Frame/Pedestal: Framed.

Literature:

A. Craievich: Antonio Molinari, Cremona 2005, p. 200;

S. Brink: Genio vigoroso ed originale. Die Zeichnungen des Antonio Molinari, Düsseldorf 2005, p. 40-41, cat. 6.

Provenance:

Private ownership, Italy.

The figure of the Sophonisbe originates from Roman history and has traditionally been popular both for her beauty and her intelligence. She was the wife of Syphax, who, as king of the Massäsyliers, allied himself with the Carthaginians against the Romans on their advice.

After the defeat by the Romans in 203 B.C., she made the king of Numidia Massinissa fall in love with her. To escape the humiliation of slavery after her capture by Scipio, Massinissa sent her a cup of poison. Sofonisba drank the tragic gift and preferred to die rather than live as a slave to the Romans.

The present painting shows Sophonisbe holding the cup of poison in her right hand and the letter from her husband in her left, which tempts her to commit suicide. The author of the work is the Venetian Antonio Molinari, born in 1655, who was trained by his father Giovanni and Antonio Zanchi, known as a representative of the Tenebrosi. When Molinari was about twenty years old, he began to paint on his own, always following the example of the Tenebrosi in the spirit of naturalism and an accentuated theatricality of the scenery. From the eighties onwards Molinari changed his style and turned to more elegant forms and more delicate colours in the taste of the Neo-Renaissance, achieving considerable success with the smaller and medium-sized image formats. These represented in particular episodes of historical, mythological or biblical character, the success of which is confirmed by the demand for numerous repetitions.

These paintings often celebrate famous heroines, such as Portia or, as in the present painting, Sofonisba, some of them depicting figures from Roman history, depicted in theatrical poses in front of classical backdrops.

Molinari was also an excellent draughtsman, whose extensive graphic activity is documented by two collections, one in the Kunstpalast Museum in Düsseldorf and the other in the drawing cabinet of the Louvre. Molinari was able to summarize an entire composition with a few pen and watercolour strokes. The drawings often serve as graphic models for paintings: this Sofonisba was created on the basis of a drawing preserved in Düsseldorf.

Estimate: 12.000 € - 15.000 €; Hammer: 10.000 €

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