

PRESS RELEASE

30 March 2017, for immediate release:



Johan Gregor van der Schar dt (1530/31–died after 1581)

A Foot

Italy or Nuremberg, 1560s–70s

Terracotta, painted and gilded

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GIFT IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR TIMOTHY WILSON

Terracotta Foot attributed to Johan Gregor van der Schar dt

A sculptural foot attributed to Johan Gregor van der Schar dt has been donated by Danny Katz to the Ashmolean Museum in honour of Professor Timothy Wilson on his retirement as Keeper of the Department of Western Art. The donation was made through the Cultural Gifts Scheme.

Johan (or Jan) van der Schar dt (c. 1530/31–died after 1581) was born in Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Known for his strikingly realistic painted terracotta portrait busts, van der Schar dt worked for the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II in Vienna and in Nuremberg, his home town. He toured Italy during the 1560s, making copies of classical and contemporary sculptures and was one of the few northern artists mentioned by Vasari. The terracotta foot was made in the 1560s–70s in Italy or possibly in Nuremberg. It is a free-modelled version of the left foot of Michelangelo's statue of *Day* from the tomb of Giuliano de' Medici in the Medici Chapel (San Lorenzo, Florence). The foot is recognisable from the unusual way the big toe curves upwards, while the smaller toes bend down. It is naturalistically modelled and includes exceptional anatomical details such as wrinkles on the sole. The foot is hollow, which raises the possibility that it was used as an exotic drinking or pouring vessel. However, the high quality of the modelling and finish makes it more likely that it was produced as an item for display and contemplation by a connoisseur – an ideal piece for a Renaissance *Wunderkammer* or 'cabinet of curiosities'.

Danny Katz says: 'I am very pleased to be able to make this gift through the Cultural Gifts Scheme to benefit the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. This idiosyncratic sculpture is the perfect object to honour Tim Wilson on his retirement, a remarkable curator with the most extraordinarily inquisitive mind.'

Edward Harley, Chairman of the Acceptance in Lieu Panel, says: 'This curious object, with its exquisite finish and altogether enigmatic function, will undoubtedly puzzle and intrigue scholars and visitors to the museum. I am delighted that the Cultural Gifts Scheme has been able to help this object find a home in a university museum where academics and the public can study and admire it. The Panel and I thank Danny Katz for donating items through this scheme once again, and I hope the example he has shown in using the scheme several times will be followed by many others who wish to enrich the public collections throughout the UK.'

Matt Hancock, Minister of State for Digital and Culture, says: 'I'm really pleased this unique piece has been gifted to the Ashmolean and will add to its fascinating collection of Renaissance art and sculptures.'

'Last year the Cultural Gifts Scheme and Acceptance in Lieu accepted some amazing works of art worth £50 million, meaning the whole nation and our visitors can all now enjoy them'.



Professor Timothy Wilson, 2017

Dr Xa Sturgis, Director, Ashmolean Museum, says: 'The Ashmolean is enormously grateful to Danny Katz and Arts Council England for this generous gift made in honour of Professor Tim Wilson. Over the course of nearly thirty years, Tim has been a tireless and passionate leader of the Western Art department during which time he has made many spectacular and unusual acquisitions for the Museum. This unique object, which intrigues, delights and amuses in equal measure, is a fitting commemoration of Tim's important service to the Ashmolean.'

Professor Timothy Wilson is a leading expert on European decorative arts with a particular focus on Renaissance ceramics and maiolica. He is a Fellow of Balliol College and Professor of the Arts of the Renaissance at the University of Oxford. He has published on sculpture, silver, jewellery, paintings, prints and drawings, and on the history of collecting. He joined the Ashmolean in 1990 as the Keeper of Western Art. Over the past three decades Tim has overseen the development of new galleries following the reopening of the Museum in 2009; and exceptional acquisitions ranging over the whole field of European art from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century. Amongst these was the acquisition in 2012 of the Wellby Collection of Renaissance silverware and exotica - a group of some five-hundred extraordinary objects made by German, Dutch and Scandinavian artists in rare and precious materials. The collection was published by Tim Wilson in *Treasures of the Goldsmith's Art* (2015) to coincide with the opening of a new gallery for the collection. Following his retirement, Tim becomes Honorary Curator, Department of Western Art at the Ashmolean.

ENDS

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▪ NOTES TO EDITORS

The Cultural Gifts Scheme

The Cultural Gifts Scheme was launched by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport in March 2013 as an important element of its expanding programme to encourage philanthropy for the arts. The Acceptance in Lieu Panel, chaired by Edward Harley, advises Ministers on all objects offered under the Cultural Gifts Scheme. The Scheme is administered by the Arts Council and enables UK taxpayers to donate important objects to the nation during their lifetime. Items accepted under the Scheme are allocated to public collections and are available for all. In return, donors will receive a reduction in their income tax, capital gains tax or corporation tax liability, based on a set percentage of the value of the object they are donating: 30 per cent for individuals and 20 per cent for companies: www.artscouncil.org.uk/tax-incentives/cultural-gifts-scheme

The Arts Council

The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018, we plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country: www.artscouncil.org.uk