

# ANDREA MELDOLLA, CALLED SCHIAVONE

(Zara, now Zadar 1510 - Venice 1563)

## *Perseus and Andromeda*

oil on panel, with *trompe l'oeil* shaped corners  
24.9 x 49.8 cm (9¾ x 19⅝ in)

**Provenance:** Anonymous sale, New York, Sotheby's, 20 May 1993, lot 11.

**P**ERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA PRESENTS A ROMANTIC and heroic mythological rescue. The story, taken from Greek mythology, tells us of Andromeda, the daughter of an Ethiopian king, who had been chained to a rock and offered as a sacrifice to a sea monster. The myth relates that Perseus, who had happened upon the pitiful figure, first thought Andromeda to be a statue due to her porcelain white skin. On realising her plight Perseus slew the monster, released her from captivity and the couple fell in love and were married.

In Renaissance and modern interpretations, Perseus is shown flying to her rescue on the winged horse Pegasus. The present work represents all of these elements within an oval composition. On the right, the nude Andromeda is unshackled by Perseus while the sea monster, unaware of her rescue, languishes nearby in the water. In the background Pegasus waits patiently, his rainbow coloured wings raised. The composition is set within an oval, and the *trompe l'oeil* shaped corners would suggest that this painting once formed part of a larger complex, perhaps a *cassone*-shaped panel, which may have been dismantled later. When the painting was sold in 1993, it was extremely dirty and the corners had been painted over.

*Cassoni* (*cassone* in the singular) were Italian boxes or chests, often decorated with carving, gilding and painted panels. During the Renaissance, they were frequently made in pairs or groups of three, and were included as part of a wedding dowry since the bride would receive a *cassone* from her family on marriage. Such marital associations meant that the pictorial narratives often illustrated acts of heroism or love, such as in the present work. The National Gallery, London holds another *cassone* panel attributed to Schiavone, showing two mythological figures embracing, possibly Jupiter and Callisto (fig. 1).

Born in Zara (now Zadar) on the Dalmatian Coast in 1510, Schiavone was essentially a self-taught artist, copying from the drawings of Parmigianino (1503-1540). By the late 1530s, Schiavone had established himself as an artist working in Venice, though his first surviving paintings and etchings date from c.1538-1540. These early works show the influence of Parmigianino and the Central Italian Mannerists in terms of figure and composition, whilst also retaining the *colore* and painterly style associated with Venetian art of the period. Schiavone was also a proficient fresco painter who applied the medium in a



Attributed to Andrea Schiavone, *Two Mythological Figures*, probably c.1548-1550, National Gallery, London (Figure 1)

particularly impressionist manner and his works 'shocked some contemporaries and stimulated others'.<sup>1</sup> Later in his career he influenced the works of aspiring Venetian artists such as Jacopo Bassano (c.1510-1592) and Jacopo Tintoretto (1519-1594), particularly through his introduction of Mannerist painting methods to Venetian circles and his innovative 'impressionist' works executed on a large-scale.

<sup>1</sup> In 1548, Pietro Aretino reported to Schiavone that Titian was amazed 'at the technique you demonstrate in setting down the sketches of stories.'

