

The Toulouse Judith Beheading Holofernes



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2014 and was bought by the American billionaire and art collector J Tomimison Hill (1,2). It is in every respect identical to the copy of the Intesa Sanpaolo bank, in Naples. The painting differs only slightly in its dimensions (144 x 173,5 cm as opposed to the 140 x 180 cm of the Naples painting). Whereas some researchers like Olivier Morand

The painting depicts the subject of Judith beheading Holofernes (**figure 1A**) which is an episode from the Old Testament's Book of Judith 13, 1-10. Judith, a young and beautiful woman from Bethulia, recently widowed, devised a strategy to kill Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian army who had taken siege of the city of Bethulia, in Jude. Indeed, she seduces the general during a feast held for her inside his tent. As Holofernes is lying drunk on the bed, Judith, with the help of her maid Abra, cuts off his head.

The painting of Judith beheading Holofernes, was found by accident in a Toulouse attic in

(1) attribute this version to Flemish painter Louis Finson, (1580-1617), some others such as Nicola Spinosa (2), former museum curator of Naples, think that the Italian painter Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, 1571-1610) did it around 1607.

In the painting, Judith at the right of the image, supports from one hand the sword and from the other Holofernes head. Her elderly and clearly ill servant Abra (**figure 1B**), who arbors a large nodular goiter, is looking at her. In the Renaissance Art, artists became more aware of the human body, making accurate depictions of anatomical detail as the outstanding goiter herein represented. Indeed, as a consequence of iodine deficiency, thyroids swellings were common in people that were painted by the renaissance artists. In their textbook "The Remarkables: Endocrine abnormalities in art", Clark and Clark identified more than 200 paintings from Renaissance artists in which characters with a thyroid swelling are represented (3).

References

- 1) Olivier Morand Le Finson de Toulouse 2019, (www.academia.edu/39547444/Le_Finson_de_Toulouse)
- 2) Nicola Spinosa. <https://thetoulousecaravaggio.com/en/caravaggio-specialists/nicola-spinosa>
- 3) E. Clark, O. Clark. The Remarkables: Endocrine Abnormalities in Art. University of California Press, Oakland, CA 2012.



Figure 1: The Toulouse Judith Beheading Holofernes, by Caravaggio (1571-1610) or Louis Finson (c.1606-1607). Oil on canvas, 144 x 173.5cm. Collection of J. Tomilson Hill.

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