Dear researchers,


Janson wrote about it: "The curious painting, The Dream, in the Richardson Collection (Pl. XXXIXb) includes a scene of a monkey making the portrait of a simian lady which, to judge from the costumes, reflects a design (probably a print) of the early years of the seventeenth century. Significantly enough, the group forms part of a whole cycle of similar travesties in the same picture, many of them strongly reminiscent of [Pieter] van der Borcht’s engravings."

Janson does not tell where he got the reproduction from, he just states he got it from Panofsky. He describes the painting further: "This preoccupation with the theme of Vanitas becomes even more obvious in a curious painting owned by Mr. David Richardson, Cambridge, Mass. (Pl. XXXIX b). The picture is of uncertain date and provenance but reflects a Flemish prototype of the very early seventeenth century, probably a print. In the center, we see a young man asleep under a tree; he is leaning on a large sphere in much the same manner as the nude youth in the well-known Dream by Michelangelo. Around him a large variety of human actions is being performed by clothed apes. Some of them are analogous to those depicted by Pieter van der Borcht, such as the siege of a castle, and various outdoor diversions. On the whole, however, the selection seems to have been made with a view to suggesting the seven capital sins of old, even though the scheme is not carried through consistently: Idleness (apes gaming); Luxury (she-ape riding on he-ape with fool's cap); Wrath (apes fighting); Avarice (ape relieving himself into 'pot of gold'); Gluttony (ape eating and drinking at table). On the extreme right, a simian lady is having her portrait painted, as an instance of Vanity or Pride. In the background, we witness the birth of an ape on the left, and his funeral on the right. There is also a wheel of fortune mounted on a pole, with apes vainly trying to reach the top position. All this further emphasises the moral lesson of this 'panorama of human life' However, such didactic rigour appears to have been rather exceptional. It is Pieter van der Borcht, rather than the author of the Richardson
picture, who leads us to the monkey travesties of David Teniers the Younger and the other satirical genre painters of the Flemish Baroque [...]."


Does anybody know about the whereabouts of this painting? I'm particularly interested in the depiction of the "simian lady [who] is having her portrait painted".

I'm very grateful for every hint.

Best,
Dr. Ulrich Blanché
University of Heidelberg

Reference: