

131); D. Mahon and N. Turner, *The Drawings of Guercino at Windsor Castle*, Cambridge, 1989, p. 30 (55); M. Helston, *Guercino in Britain, Paintings from British Collections*, exh. cat., N.G.L., 1991 (nos. 19 and 20); B. Ghelfi, *Il libro dei conti del Guercino 1629–1666*, Venice, 1997, p. 57

61 *Venus and Cupid*

Canvas, oval painted surface on rectangular canvas, 112.7 × 85 cm

Companion piece to *Mars as a Warrior* (see previous entry).

WM 1511–1948

C.M. Kauffmann, rev. by S. Jenkins, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Wellington Museum, Apsley House* (English Heritage, 2010), p. 130

Paired images of Mars and Venus were popular from at least the fifteenth century and celebrated the love affair between Mars, the god of war, and Venus, goddess of love and wife of Vulcan. Whilst Mars brandishes his sword and gestures as if departing, Venus appears to remonstrate with him, whilst her son Cupid points his bow out of the picture, aiming an arrow at Mars.

A drawing of Venus and Cupid, probably a study for this painting, with Cupid on the left of the composition, drawing an arrow from his quiver, is in the Royal Collection, Windsor (Mahon, Turner, 1989, p. 30, no. 55, fig. 57). Mahon and Turner suggest that, since the drawing was conceived for a horizontal composition, it could be a study for the painting at an early stage, before the vertical format had been decided upon.

CONDITION. Some wear, e.g. hair and shadow near Venus's right breast, otherwise good. The original shape appears to have been oval.

