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Nicolaes Maes, Portrait of Three Children as Ceres, Ganymede and Diana, 1673

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Nicolaes Maes

Dutch (1634 –1693)

Portrait of Three Children as Ceres, Ganymede and Diana, 1673

Oil on canvas

74 x 55 in.

Museum Purchase, 2005.4



icolaes Maes' *Portrait of Three Children as Ceres, Ganymede and Diana*, 1673 is an unusually large painting of three children dressed as mythological figures from the estate of Lillian Rojzman Berkman. The youngest child is Ceres, daughter of Saturn and Ops. In Roman mythology, she was the goddess of grain and motherly love. She is shown clutching Ganymede's leg. The young boy Ganymede whose beauty was admired by Zeus rides a hawk. To the right stands Diana, Goddess of the moon and the hunt with a hunting dog. She carries her attributes — a bow, quiver and arrows. In the late 1670s and early 1680s, Maes painted several portraits of children. A comparable group portrait with four children was painted in 1674 and is now in Dordrecht.

The painting *Portrait of Three Children as Ceres, Ganymede and Diana*, 1673 – newly acquired by the Haggerty – appeared on the cover of *The Connoisseur* magazine in November, 1962. Since that time it has been exhibited in museums across the United States. In 1999, it was featured in the Haggerty Museum of Art exhibition *Children in Art: A Century of Change* (February 12- May 23).

The Dutch painter Nicolaes Maes was a master of domestic scenes and portraits. He was born 1634, the son of the prosperous Dordrecht merchant Gerrit Maes and Ida Herman Claesdr. He learned to draw from Arnold Houbraken in his native town before he studied painting with Rembrandt. Between 1648/50 and 1653, Maes worked in Rembrandt's studio in Amsterdam. In 1653, Maes completed his training and settled in Dordrecht where he began painting intimate domestic scenes, often of women and children. In the mid-1650s, Maes was among the most innovative Dutch genre painters. He was recognized for his expressive figures and for the variety of anecdotal details found in his paintings. He was among the first Dutch genre painters to paint complex domestic interiors. His experiments in this area influenced several Delft artists including Johannes Vermeer and Pieter de Hooch.

From the later 1650s, Maes increasingly turned to portraiture. From 1660s until his death, he worked as a portraitist. According to Arnold Houbraken's 1721 biography of the painter, Maes "learned the art of painting from Rembrandt, but lost that way of painting early, particularly when he took up portraiture and discovered that young ladies preferred white to brown." On visits to Antwerp, Maes studied the work of Rubens, van Dyck and Jordaens. Maes' interest in French portraiture is also reflected in his work. In addition to single portraits, Maes painted several group portraits of children and families. These often depict the sitters as mythological figures in landscape settings as seen in *Portrait of Three Children as Ceres, Ganymede and Diana*, 1673, in the Haggerty Museum of Art collection.

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