Beauty And The Beasts: On Museums, Art, The Law, And The Market

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The real Beast — though he didn't like to be called a beast — was a man named Petrus Gonsalvus. He was born in 1537 in the Canary Islands, and he had a hereditary condition that made him appear hairy. Instead of being treated like a person, Petrus was dismissed as a “wild man.” Stories of wild men had flourished for centuries. They were seen as more animal than human, barbarians that lived on the edges of civilization. And unfortunately, everyone assumed that young Petrus was somehow not fully human because of his condition.