



Jacob van Ruisdael

Haarlem 1628/29 - 1682 Amsterdam

River Landscape with Angler, the "Grote Kerk" of Naarden Beyond

Oil on canvas 26.5 x 38 cm

Signed lower left with monogram

Datable c. 1649

Provenance

Horutener collection, Rouen, by 1781, the year of the death of the engraver Jacques Bacheley

Private collection, Switzerland

With Kornfeld, Bern, 1992

With Gebr. Douwes, Amsterdam & London, until 1994

Private collection, Boston, acquired from the above, until at least c. 2001

Private collection, Netherlands

With Noortman Master Paintings, Maastricht, c. 2007

Private collection, Netherlands

Literature

J. Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters*, 9 vols., London 1829-42, vol. 6, no. 95, p. 32

C. Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*, 10 vols., Esslingen & Paris 1907-28, vol. 4, no. 192b

S. Slive, 'Additions to Jacob van Ruisdael: II', *The Burlington Magazine* 137 (1995), pp. 456-457, ill.

S. Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings, Drawings and Etchings*, New Haven & London 2001, no. 521, p. 381 (as on panel), illustrated in colour

An angler fishes while enjoying the quiet scenery. On the opposite side of the stream a high bank with dense bushes and trees just permits a view to a church tower and a mill. Beyond, the river, framed by meadows in which cattle graze, expands. A screen of woodland closes off the polder and the rooftop of a house a mill punctuate the skyline. The sky is filled with imposing clouds.

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The great Ruisdael scholar Professor Seymour Slive dated our painting to about 1650. The thickly painted passages and the concentration of trees in the centre of the composition more specifically recall Ruisdael's works from the late years 1640s. This lovely painting ranks among Ruisdael's most refined early landscapes.

Slightly earlier - around 1647 - , at the start of his career, Ruisdael explored the countryside in the environs of Naarden making sketches, several of which are preserved.¹ He also painted his well-known panoramic view of the town presently in Madrid (Museo Thyssen). The church spire in our painting no doubt is Naarden's. Naarden lies about twenty kilometres southeast of Amsterdam on the former Zuider Zee. Naarden was of special significance to Ruisdael; his grandfather settled there late in the sixteenth century and his father Isaack and his well-known uncle Salomon van Ruysdael were born there. Even though Ruisdael may not have intended to portray an actual spot faithfully, contemporary viewers would have recognized this topographical feature immediately.

The British Museum holds a fine drawing by Ruisdael of 1648 showing the shore of the Zuider Zee with the ruined church of Muiderberg and Naarden in the distance (fig. 1). In the foreground are several anglers. This highly finished drawing was probably meant as an independent work but could nevertheless have played a role in inspiring the artist to conceive the present work, and at any rate shows Ruisdael's concern with this particular topographical subject matter and staffage.



Fig. 1. Jacob van Ruisdael, *Shore of the Zuider Zee with Three Anglers and a View of the Ruined Church at Muiderberg and Naarden*, black chalk and pen

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with grey wash and touches of red, green and yellow watercolour, 177 x 295 mm.
Monogrammed and dated 1648. London, British Museum

Before this important painting resurfaced in 1992, it was only known from a print by Jacques Bacheley dated 1781, at which time it was in the collection of the Rouen merchant Horutener (fig. 2).² Subsequent authors, the London connoisseur and dealer John Smith and Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, based their descriptions on the print.



Fig. 2, Jacques Bacheley, engraving, 314 x 389 mm. London, British Museum

It appears that Ruisdael kept this landscape with him for some time. His pupil Meindert Hobbema (1638 - 1709), who entered the studio around 1658, made a free copy of it in about 1660 of almost double the size (fig. 3).

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Fig. 3, Meindert Hobbema after Jacob van Ruisdael, panel 46.7 x 67.3 cm. Signed. Glasgow, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

Ruisdael was one of the greatest landscape painters of all time and took landscape painting to a new level. In the present river view Ruisdael combined the powerful features of Haarlem landscape painting, such as the finely delineated and richly textured foliage reminiscent of Cornelis Vroom (1590-92 - 1661) and sensitive atmospheric effects with an unprecedented sense of poetry, forecasting his mature compositions that were to have such a tremendous impact on the Romantic school of landscape painting, notably John Constable (1776 - 1837). Here, Ruisdael already represents nature as a metaphor of powerful emotions. Sunlight piercing through just behind the towering treetop in the centre enlivens the melancholic mood, called up by the overcast sky.

Jacob van Ruisdael's year of birth is deduced from a document of 1661, in which he stated his age as 32. His father, Isaack van Ruisdael, was a painter, a frame maker and a picture dealer. Undoubtedly, Jacob studied with him and possibly also with his uncle, Salomon van Ruysdael. His earliest landscapes are dated 1646. Dated drawings from that year are preserved as well. During his first years of productivity he also made some



etchings. In 1648, Jacob joined the Guild of St. Luke in his native town Haarlem. In these years he paid visits to Naarden and Egmond and recorded his impressions in drawings, which he later used for paintings. Around 1650 he travelled with his friend Claes Berchem to the area along the Dutch-German border. In 1656 or slightly later Ruisdael moved to Amsterdam, where he received citizenship in 1659. He remained in Amsterdam for the rest of his life and died a bachelor. Meindert Hobbema is Ruisdael's only documented pupil, but his influence extended to a large group of contemporary landscape painters, among them Guillaume Dubois, Cornelis Decker, Roelof van Vries, Salomon Rombouts and Jan van Kessel.

Notes

¹ Two are panoramic views on Naarden. One is preserved at the Dutch Institute for Art History (RKD), The Hague, and the other is in the Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt. See for a discussion, S. Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael. Master of Landscape*, exh. cat. Los Angeles (Los Angeles County Museum); Philadelphia (Philadelphia Museum of Art) 2005/06, p. 48.

² At that time the subject was called: "Vue des environs d'Utrecht". The print is lettered in the lower margin with its title, dedication and production details: "Ruisdaal Pinxit." and "Bacheley sculp." and "Dédiée à Monsieur le Cornier de Cideville Ancien Conseiller au Parlemens de Normandie / Membre de l'Académie Royale des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Rouen / Par son très humble et très obéissant Serviteur Bacheley" and "Tirée du Cabinet de M. Horutener Nég.t à Rouen" and "A Paris Chez Chereau Graveur rue St Jacques près les Mathurins".