



PIETER CORNELISZ VAN RIJCK

(Delft 1567 – Italy ca. 1637)

Kitchen Interior

Oil on canvas

106 x 134 cm. (41,73 x 52,75 in.)

1620 ca.

In this month of May the gallery presents this wonderful kitchen interior by the important Dutch painter Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck, who specialized in portraits and still life paintings.

Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck came from a family dedicated to the production of beer, with the exception of his cousin Floris van Dyck, a famous still life painter. Thanks to the documentation of the time signed by Van Mander, Rijck learned to draw from the painter Jacob Willemsz Delff, but quickly left his teacher to devote himself to business for a few years. In 1588 he returned to the arts by the hand of the master Huybrecht Jacobsz Grimani, with whom he traveled to Italy that same year and settled in Venice for about 15 years, where he worked for the high nobility throughout Italy, specializing in interior portraits and of course, in his famous and valued kitchens.

Upon his return to Haarlem in 1604, he worked on commissions for the wealthiest families, as kitchens were highly sought-after compositions. The Italian influence was key in his interior paintings, always filled with utensils and provisions. Sometimes accompanied by very well executed figures representing the service staff, who took care of the domestic chores of the house. It is very interesting to observe carefully this type of compositions, since they show us

the customs of the society of the Dutch Golden Age and in most of the occasions they enclose messages through the symbols represented in the food.



Our work is splendid, there is a whole display of food and kitchen utensils that squander all the sumptuousness of the domestic economy. It seems to be the house of a feudal lord or that of a bourgeois who imitated the style of feudal life, which consisted of a closed economic system that generated the means of his own subsistence. The theme of food and food supply was of interest to the commissioner or buyer of the work, since at that time the production and

processing of food was one of the most important economic problems of society. Hence it is understandable that in the iconography they played a preponderant role. Nor should we forget that in that period the Dutch population was the best fed in Europe. Opulence in the purest Baroque style is amply shown in this composition, where live animals, fruits, vegetables, people, domestic animals, various types of meat, processed foods, etc., coexist perfectly and in harmony.

In the upper left corner we see several live chickens in a wicker cage, which are expectant of



everything that is happening around them. Near them is a leg of lamb ready to cook and next to it lies an inert hare accompanied by a dead duck. This staggered arrangement of the different types of meat on the table is extremely careful, recreating the variety and quantity. As well as in its modality, some live, others dead, and others ready for consumption. In the

background is clearly visible a string of onions ready for use. In the center there is a beautiful woven wicker basket full of fruit, apples, grapes and pears are the protagonists, as a representation of the vegetables we find a solitary artichoke of good size.

In the lower part is where we find numerous kitchen utensils of different materials such as ceramic, clay, pewter, wood, etc., a great example of the author's mastery in representing the different types of materials. It is surprising the harmony between all these objects: a humble clay pot full of lard, a large pewter plate that is supported on a beautiful and shiny empty copper cauldron, waiting to be used to cook a rich and succulent meal, following this dance of utensils and food, a wooden bucket contains some fish apparently waiting their turn to cook and on the sober wooden table, there is a large clay dish that is full of eggs accompanied by a couple of buns.



We are struck by the arrangement of all this magnificent scenery in which two intrusive animals are present, a mischievous little mouse that roams freely around the edge of the pot full of aromatic butter, and a beautiful cat approaching the tempting fish.





On the left side of this magnificent composition there are two characters, a man and a young maiden who clearly belong to the domestic service of the house. The man, dressed in good but simple clothes, wears a large fur cap on his head, and the maiden, with her hair neatly combed, is dressed more appropriately to serve her masters. He is concentrating on splitting a large cheese and is looking at the action of her hands, one holding the cheese and the other holding tightly a good sized knife. The beautiful young woman looks directly at the viewer, at the same time offering appetizing rolls from a basket.

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- Norbert Schneider, *Naturaleza Muerta*, p.49.

PROVENANCE

- Private collection, Italy.

MUSEUMS

There are works by Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck in the collections of museums in the following cities among others: Rijkmuseum, Amsterdam (The Netherlands) - Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent (Belgium) - Museum of Art, North Carolina (USA) - Boijmans Museum, Rotterdam (The Netherlands), etc.