



**JAN BRUEGHEL II**

(Antwerp 1601 – 1 September 1678)

**HENDRICK VAN BALEN**

(Antwerp 1571 – 17 July 1632)

*“The Flight into Egypt”*

Oil on Panel

54,7cm. x 87,2cm.

December is the last month of the year and it is very special because it welcomes the Holidays that represent cheer and celebration. Soraya Cartategui Gallery is pleased to share with you this incredible work that represents the Flight into Egypt by the master artist Jan Brueghel II in collaboration with Hendrick van Balen.

This work represents the narrative from the New Testament described in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 2:13-23) and it narrates how an angel appeared in Joseph's dreams and ordered him to flee to Egypt with his wife Mary and infant son Jesus because of King Herod's decree to kill the infants of that area. After a time Joseph and the others returned from Egypt after their enemies had perished. Matthew 2:15 cites Hosea 11:1 as prophetically fulfilled in the return of Joseph, Mary and Jesus from Egypt.

The Brueghel family birthed a dynasty of painters who became great influencers in the Netherlands during the XVI and XVII century. Pieter Brueghel was the most prominent artist in the family and he had three children, including Pieter Brueghel II and Jan Brueghel I. Jan Brueghel II, the painter of this work began painting at the age of ten along with his father, and when his father passed away he inherited his studio.

Jan Brueghel II profited greatly from his heritage; he would sell his father's works and even finished or retouched works by his father, thereby creating a new style. During this period, J. Brueghel minutely recorded in his diary every single one of his works, copies, sales, and names of the artists with whom he collaborated. He was a very accomplished artist known for his distinguished landscapes and still lives. Some of the recurring themes in his works include mythology, allegory, and religious scenes. Jan Brueghel's works are often mistaken for the works by his father; nonetheless, the colors used by Brueghel II are less vigorous and the brushstrokes are thicker and less accentuated.



It was very common for Flemish artists to portray landscapes by framing them with commonly known biblical scenes. They often depict idyllic landscapes that allude to paradise. These settings were created without taking into account reality or real locations, and therefore it is common to find idealized features. The viewer is able to see mysteriously colored towers and trees shaped like feathers with long, spindly branches.

In this work, the artist fills the horizon with hills, which can remind the viewer of Italian landscapes, with wide bright green prairies next to a magnificent castle. The Flemish landscape artists had masterful technique, which they showcased with complex and detailed architecture. Many of these works also featured lakes or other bodies of water to show their skill.



The serene prairie, which is filled with cows resting and grazing, symbolizes fertility and a source of livelihood. In fact, one can see a peasant milking a cow, which also shows a daily life scene within the painting. It is incredible to see how the artist plays with different ranges of green, thereby creating a magical and balanced atmosphere, so characteristic of the Flemish landscapes.



In lower part of the work, the viewer is able to see an angel with the body of a child. This symbolizes purity and innocence, two factors that were frequently represented in the baroque period. The angel is surrounded by fruits, flowers, and different animals. This scene also depicts a still life work.

The angel is carrying a bouquet of delicate flowers such as tulips, roses, peonies, and other wild flora. All the flowers are very colorful and are shown with vivid colors. They suggest splendor and noble values such as virtue and harmony. The painting shows all sorts of fruits and vegetables as well as different animals, representing the diverse aspects of life.

Notably, there are some lilies in the work, which had a symbolic purpose. Not only do they denote fertility, beauty, and spirituality, but also, in Christian iconography, they represent purity and are often carried by the Virgin Mary.



Within this small still life, there are some humorous animals that walk next to the sweet angel such as a monkey, squirrel, and rabbit. These animals represent good and evil. For example, in Christian iconography, the monkey is viewed as inferior and animalistic. On the other hand, the rabbit next to Virgin Mary's feet represents chastity and purity. The squirrel symbolizes the temptations in life and the ability to avoid them represented by a basket of fruits, which the squirrel avoids.

La ardilla representa las tentaciones que presenta la vida y su gran habilidad de evitarlas, por ello aparece sobre un canasto de ricas y apetitosas frutas.



The majority of the works by Jan Brueghel I were part of a collaboration, with other artists executing the figures. J. Brueghel, the elder, was involved in numerous collaborations with Hendrick van Balen. Jan Brueghel II also collaborated with van Balen in works such as this one.

Looking closely at the scene with Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus in her lap, the viewer is able to see four angels, who serve as messengers between God and men. In the Old Testament their leadership is unquestionable since they appear as carriers of the order of God. Two of them have large wings and beautiful garments and are represented as adults along with two small angels in the form of children. In the painting, Joseph is in the foreground with his right hand on his chest and left hand holding a book looking towards the sky.

Virgin Mary is sweetly contemplating the scene in which the angels are offering Baby Jesus a small bird. At the same time, there is a small angel carrying a basket of flowers as an offering for Baby Jesus. The Angels announcing the Flight to Egypt are carrying a basket with delicious fruits.

It is very important to look closely at how the figures have been painted. They have exquisite proportions and have been executed very realistically and delicately. The clothes of their garments flow and move very naturally and the strong and vibrant colors of the cloth help reinforce their beauty.



In the upper right corner, there is a scene depicting two angels throwing a shower of flowers over the main scene. This small detail gives the work a prevailing heavenly atmosphere.

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## MUSEUMS

Jan Brueghel's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Antwerp- K.M.S.K., Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Berlin- Staatl. Preussischer Museum, Kulturbesitz Gg., Detroit (Michigan, USA)- Institute of Art, Dresden- Gemaldegalerie, Dublin- National Gallerie of Ireland, Madrid- Museo del Prado, Munich- London- National Gallerie, Montpellier- , Munich- , Nantes- , New York- Metropolitan Museum, Philadelphia- Museum of Art, San Francisco, California,- M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, Vienna- Kunsthist Museum.

## NOTE

This work is certificated by Dr. Professor Klauz Ertz.