



Willem van Herp
(Antwerp 1614 - 1677)

Tavern Interior with Card Players

Oil on Panel - 61 x 91,5 cm. - Signed Work - 1660 ca.

To start the year, we have chosen this wonderful panel that represents a "Tavern Interior with Card Players" by the important Flemish painter Willem van Herp, who specialized in religious and genre scenes.

His rustic interior compositions follow the style of A. Brower and D. Teniers. In 1625/26 he is shown to have been a member of the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp, as a student of Damiaen Wortelmans, and then later, from 1628 to 1629, of Hans Biermans. He had a brilliant career there, going on to become the Master of the Guild in 1636 to 1637, and between 1644 and 1654 he would have many students. Around 1651 Herp was associated with the Flemish dealer M. Musson, for whom he would retouch some copies of paintings of P. P. Rubens. He married Maria Wolfaerts (Wolffort) in 1654 and had two children, Norbertus (born before marriage) and Willem, who would also become painters.

The artist's genre interior works always have a jovial mood, showing characters eating or doing housework, in a very personalized style, despite the clear influences to which we have referred above. In these compositions there are certain elements that make the works of Van Herp easily recognizable; a clear example of this is his featuring of dogs, usually in the bottom corners of the scene, which many experts consider a way the artist signed his works.

His works were very successful in Spain and England, and his widespread recognition was due in large part to the numerous engravings of his works published by English engravers. Today Willem van Herp's works are preserved in the most important museums worldwide.



In the scene we can distinguish two scenes. First, on the left we see a woman with a jug of wine, surely a waitress from the tavern, notable for her pristine white apron full of contrasts, with two men trying to approach her. The one behind tries to surround her with his arms and the one who is sitting with his back to the viewer tries to put his hand under the apron. Tenderness in the scene is given by the little girl, probably the daughter of the lady, pulling her mother's apron trying to get her attention and to distract the two gentlemen who are intimidating her.

At the bottom of this image we see a crouching cat and a stylish hat leaning on a chair, which provide anecdotal note to work. It also serves to know that it was common at the time women, men, and children shared leisure time with household pets.



The other scene, which gives title to the work, depicts various characters around a table. A woman and an elderly man play cards under the watchful eye of a boy who observes the the cards, which the man is playing to the table, thereby establishing a sense of the pace of the game.



To the left a maid and a gentleman are in the middle of a conversation and enjoy cheese and bread arranged on table on a pristine white cloth. The layout of a still life in this type of work is a resource that occurs repeatedly between genre painters of the Golden Age.

As discussed above, in the works by Willem van Herp there is always the image of a dog on the bottom of the painting. In this case it is shown drinking from a bowl, and the pup acts to highlight the skill of the artist in every stroke of his fur with great realism.





This is a scene set in a rustic tavern atmosphere. On the large fireplace shelf the viewer can see different utensils made out of clay.

This type of work shows us the daily life of the society of that time, particularly in the table in which we see that this is a moment of rest, in which men and women and even children gather around a table participating in a lively atmosphere, full of optimism. Surprisingly, the mid-seventeenth century was a very advanced society where women drank, talked, played cards, etc., along with male company, without any discrimination from high society.

A curious detail we see in many tavern interiors can be found in the woman who has her back to the viewer, tallying the consumption of those present on a wooden board.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- F. C. Legrand, *Les Peintres flamands de genre*, Bruselas, 1963, pg. 167-175.
- Walther Bernt, *The Netherlandish Painters of Seventeenth Century*, Vol.2, pg. 55 plate 514.
- J. de Maere & M. Wabbes, *Illustrated Dictionary of 17th Century Flemish Painters*, 1994, 3 Vol., Texto pg. 210.
- L. van Puyvelde, “*W. van Herp*”, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 1959, pg. 362.
- G. Martin, *Natinal Gallery Catalogue, Flemish School*, Londres, 1970, pg. 82.
- Lawrence Steigrad Fine Art, “*Portraits and Other Recent Acquisitions*”, 2006, Pg. 9, Estudio de la obra de Willem van Herp “*Interior de taberna con jugadores de cartas*” realizado por Prof, Dr. Fred G. Meijer, R.K.D de La Haya.
- E. Benezit “*Dictionnaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs et Graveurs*” Tomo 6, pag.942,943.

PROVENANCE:

Private Collection, New York from 1981 to 2011

EXHIBITIONS

- Tefaf Maastrich, Netherlands March 2006, Lawrence Steigard Fine Arts.
- New York, USA, Lawrence Steigard Fine Arts, December 2011.
- Galleria Luigi Caretto “*53 Mostra Maestri Fiamminghi ed Olandesi del XVI-XVII Secolo*” November 2012, Turin, Italy.
- Feriarte November 2013, Madrid , Spain. Soraya Cartategui Gallery

MUSEUMS

Willem van Herp’s works can be found in many museums around the world including: Brussels- Museum of Fine Arts, Constance- City Museum, Dublin- National Museum of Fine Arts, Dunkerque- National Gallery, Edinburgh- National Gallery of Scotland, Stockholm- Fine Arts Museum, Lille- Antique Art Museum, London- National Gallery, Dulwich Pictures Gallery, Madrid- Prado Museum, New York- New York Historic Society, Raleigh- North Carolina Museum of Art, San Francisco- M. H. de Young Memorial Museum. Vienna, Austria Harrach Gallery.