



Jacob Salomonz van Ruysdael (Haarlem 1630 ca. – 1681)

Wooded Landscape with Cattle

Oil on Panel – 82,6 x 114,8 cm. – 1665-70 ca.

For the month of June and in order to celebrate the start of the summer we have chosen this wonderful Dutch landscape by the prominent artist, Jacob Salomonsz van Ruysdael. The artist belonged to one of the most important families of Dutch artists during the XVII century. He was the son of the great master Salomon van Ruysdael and cousin of Jacob van Ruysdael. In fact, his artistic career began by collaborating and helping his father, thereby learning the technique and style of painting landscapes.

Ruysdael's landscapes are usually composed of heavily wooded forests of great scale; they show a balance of trees with dense foliage and clear skies with moving clouds, which resembles the works of his father during his last working period. The difference between the artist's works and those by his father is the addition of figures and cattle to improve the composition and add more detail. The artist's cows are generally depicted with strong bones and accentuated hips.

Color plays an essential role in all of Ruysdael's works. The woods include many different types of trees and so the artist uses a great variety of greens, browns and yellows to show the leaves and tree trunks. The greens, yellows, and browns from the trees contrast against the clear blue sky that has big clouds that seem to be displaced by strong winds. The artist is an expert when it comes to creating the effect of light, which he accomplishes through a balanced use of light, color, and different tonalities.

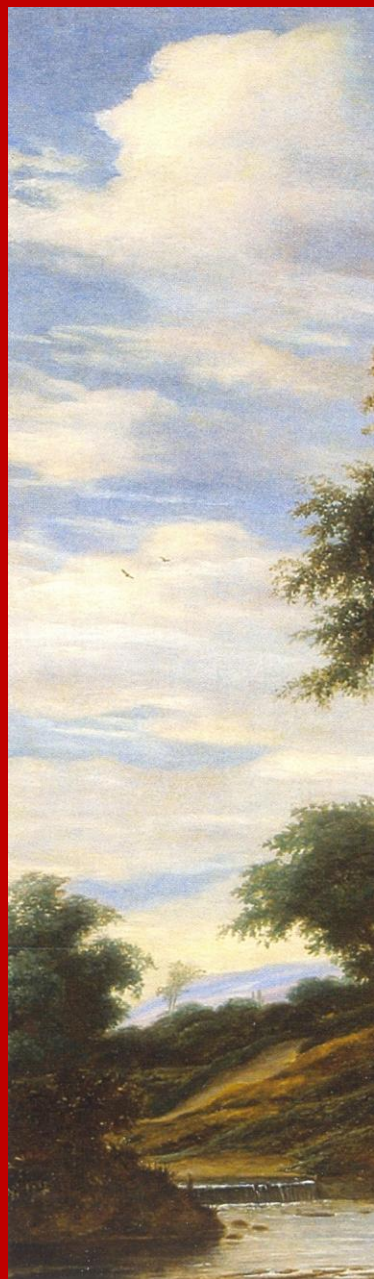
At times, the works of Jacob Salomonsz van Ruysdael are mistaken with those of his famous father, Salomon van Ruysdael. Despite the fame and recognition his father had, his son was a prominent and celebrated landscape artist in his own right as well.



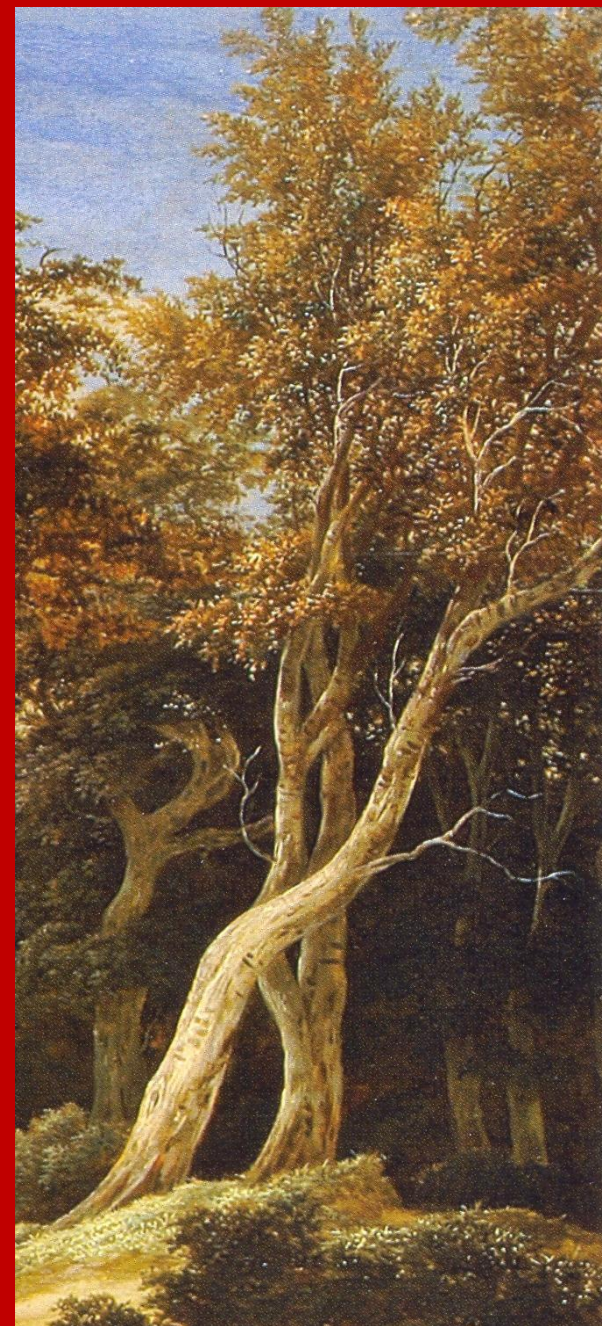
The tree is without a doubt the main character of the work. The oak tree is in the middle of the composition and also serves as a balancing and division point. To the left of the oak there is a river and waterfall with a valley as the background. The sky still occupies most of the composition. To the right of the oak tree there are two beautiful trees that allow the light to pass through the foliage. It was very common for artists of the time to use this type of composition or place elements of the works in this way.

The division allows the viewer to imagine two separate dialogues within the work.

The eye-catching oak tree is strategically placed in the middle of the work, its branches are filled with leaves that are painted by using small and delicate brushstrokes filled with material and using a predominating dark green tone. The drier leaves are painted using orange and brown. Combining all these tonalities creates a wonderful and rich contrast. To the right, behind the mound, the viewer can see the chimney and roof of a farm that is surrounded by nature.



As mentioned previously, it was very common for Dutch landscape artists to create similar compositions as this one. More specifically, they would place similar elements in the same places within the panel. In the case of this work, there is a large open space in which there is a calm river that divides the composition and adds a valley that opens up to an astounding sky filled with clouds that occupies more the three fourths of the composition. The sky allows the work to have more depth and contrast against the wooded landscape. The other section of the panel is filled with trees and nature. In the case of this work, there are two beautiful trees that appear to intertwine whose foliage is illuminated by direct light. The light that shines on the leaves creates a nice and warm golden effect that works perfectly with the dark and intense greens of the oak that is the center of the piece.





The viewer's eye is led directly to the cattle that are starting to cross the river. Ruysdael has included both cows and sheep. One of the artist's most significant characteristics is to paint the cows with a very strong and reinforced bone structure, especially in the hips and legs.

According to experts, this characteristic can serve as a signature. Another important detail is the reflection of the river; The viewer can clearly see the cattle and the sheep mirrored.

In almost every single landscape from the Golden Age, there is a broken tree trunk blocking a path, in the case of this painting it is an enormous trunk on the shore of the river. This is a message that alludes to the fragility and ephemerality of life.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PROVENANCE

Kunsthandel Douwes, Amsterdam, 1987;

Private Collection, Amsterdam.

MUSEUMS

Jacob Salomonsz van Ruysdael's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Haarlem- Frans Hals Museum, La Haya- DVR, Rotterdam- Museum Boymans van Beuningen.