



Pieter Neeffs "The Young"
(Antwerp 1620 - Antwerp, after 1675)
Church Interior with Figures
Oil on panel - 24,5 x 34,5 cm.
Signed Work - 1640-45 ca.

This time we have chosen this magnificent interior of church done by famed seventeenth century Flemish painter, Pieter Neeffs "The Young". He belonged to a great saga of painters, in fact his father Pieter Neeffs "The Elder" (Antwerp 1578-1656) was his teacher, and therefore teach him the technique and skill to perform architectural compositions. They worked together on numerous occasions, for which his works have been confused quite often, but in the works of "The Young" colors are much more vivid.

Our painter spent his entire artistic activity in the city of Antwerp, so that his paintings represent their churches, especially the Cathedral. His compositions bear a very good architectural perspective, liked to portray the interiors of temples both in daylight and night, in this case illuminated by the fascinating and magical candlelight. It is known that in general the characters that appear within these churches were made by other renowned artists who were also collaborators of his father, as Frans Francken and David Teniers II.

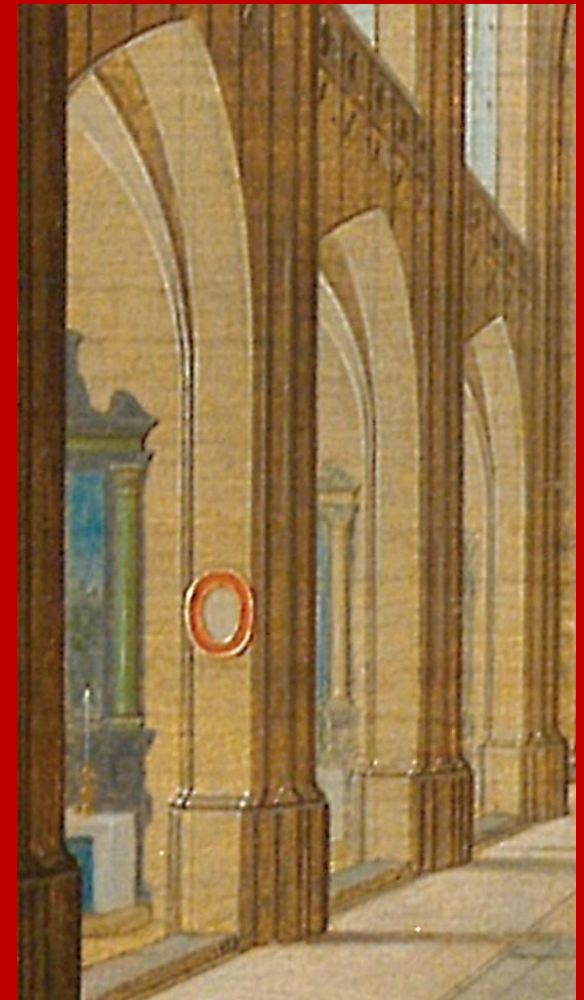
There were many painters specialized in painting architectures, especially views of cities, but perhaps the best known are those doing church interiors, as they had to show a great mastery of technique, a great knowledge of the structural elements that make temples, as well as a great sense of symmetry and balance. Pieter Neeffs II, was in his time a great recognition and success as a painter, in fact his works are part of the most important collections of European art.



Our picture, despite its small size, is filled with details. On the left is a small chapel where a priest is officiating a Mass with the help of an altar boy, a child, and three parishioners shown kneeling doing prayer. But if something catches your eye, is the picture over the altar, representing the Crucifixion of Christ.

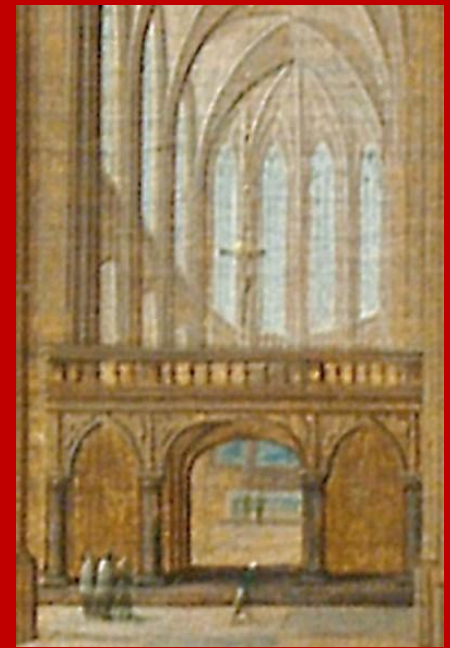
The characters have been painted later, something very common in this type of painting; in fact in this case experts say as very possible that the author is Frans Francken.

Then we can see the different side chapels overlooking the central nave, whose access is through typical pointed arches of Gothic architecture. As we can see, the church is illuminated by natural light, artificial light we see only in the lighted candles in some of the side chapels, which does not produce any type of contrast and chiaroscuro effect. The daylight causes a clear view of each of the architectural elements that make up the work.





Pieter Neeffs flaunts his mastery of perspective, in the representation of the central nave, at its best, with the vault ending in a semicircular apse, which is the main altar. This type of churches, as we see, have a separation between the nave and the head, which is entered through a lowered arch, it was used to preserve the most sacred part of the temple.



The sculpture with the image of Christ crucified, is located on top of the apse, so it can be seen from the whole church, under a part of the altarpiece see adorning the altar. In this case there are many characters we see, carried out as a sketch, without any significant detail.

At left is the wonderful front of an organ, musical instrument in the seventeenth century had its peak in France, taste quickly seized across Europe, showing the public works of art carved in wood. Usually located in high, so that his music could reach every corner of the church.





Our panel is signed at the base of the pillar on the right, and under this heading, appears a beggar sitting on the floor with his hat begging the rich characters nearest him. Placing homeless in this type of enclosure is a very common among the Flemish painters of the time.

On the right we can glimpse another small chapel with its corresponding tableau, and a curious character, we hardly see his legs, which actually looks like a mannequin, which seems closer to pray. In this case, we must emphasize the magnificent play of light and shadows in such a small space, even creating through the architectural perspective and a wonderful sense of chiaroscuro unique in the picture.



Finally, we must emphasize the three characters located in the center of the composition, a woman dressed very elegantly, accompanied by a handsome gentleman, followed by a little page on a lively conversation. This distinguished group serves the artist as story line of the work and to break with the sobriety of the whole architectural composition, filling it with beauty.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Walter Bernt, *The Netherlandish Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, Vol. 2, pg. 85, plates 832 y 833.

- R. H. Wilenski, *Flemish Peinters*, 1960, pg.610.

- *Catatalogue Rubens e la pittura fiammingia del Seicento nelle collezioni pubbliche fiorentine*, Florencia, Palazzo Pitti, 22/7-9/10/1977.

- H. Jantzen, *Das Niederlandische Arkitekturbild*, Leipizg 1910.

- G. Martin, *National Gallery Catalogue. Flemish School*, Londres 1970, pg. 98

- J. de Maere & M. Wabbes, *Illustrated Dictionary of 17th Century Flemish Painters*, pg. 296, plates 881 – 883.

- J. Gitaij & G. Jansen, *Perspectives Saerendam and arquitectural painters of 17th century*, Exh. Catálogo Rotterdam, Boymans-van Beuningen Museo, 1991.

- E. Benezit, *Dictionnaires des peintres, scupteurs, dessinateurs, et graveurs*, 1999, Band 10, pg. 132.

PROVENANCE

Private Collection, Spain.

MUSEUMS

Pieter Neeffs' II works can be found in many museums around the world including:, Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Antwerp- Fine Arts Museum, Bath- Victoria Gallery, Boston- Fine Arts Museum, Brumswick- Herzog Antón Ulrich Museum, Brussels- Fine Arts Museum, Budapest- Szépmuvészeti Muz., Kassel- Fine Arts Museum, Florence- Galleria Uffizi, Geneve- History Museum, The Hague- Mauritshuis, London- National Gallery, Madrid- Museo del Prado, Munich- Alta Pinacoteca, New York- Metropolitan Museum, Paris- Louvre, Roma- Galleria Nazionale, Rotterdam- Boymans van Beuningen Museum, San Petersburg- Hermitage, Stockholm- Statens Konstmuseum, Vienne- Kunthistorisches Museum, Washington- National Gallery of Art.