



Isaac van Ostade
(Haarlem 1621 - 1649)
Interior of a barn with villagers
Oil on panel
36,5 cm. x 31,1 cm.
Work Signed Partially
1640-42 ca.

For the month of May the gallery has chosen this wonderful picture depicting the interior of a barn with villagers by Isaac van Ostade, a the leading Dutch painter of the seventeenth century. Ostade developed his artistic activity in the city of Haarlem. His brother, Adriaen van Ostade (Haarlem 1610-1685) was one of the greatest masters of the seventeenth century Dutch painting and worked together under the direction of Frans Hals (Antwerpen ca 1580 - . Haarlem 1666). The artists specialized in genre scenes and landscapes. The first works by Isaac van Ostade were very similar to those of his brother, usually depicting taverns and barn interiors with peasants drinking and eating. Isaac van Ostade used an ocher and yellow color paletter, and therefore differenciated himself from his brother by less brown.

Isaac van Ostade died very young , at age twenty-eight, and in this respect all experts agree that if he had lived more years he would have surpassed his brother in quality and recognition. In all his pictures, the viewer can truly appreciate his great cartoonist skills; this was a talent only great artists would have been able to achieve. This technique is complicated because it involves moving the oil through improvised strokes and creating a deeper understanding of the space and details.

In Ostade's compositions there is always light that enters through a small opening , and falls in a given point of the picture. This style is a clear influence of Rembrandt. In all his works, there is a true skill handling light by creating an atmosphere that only geniuses are capable of painting . It shows special care in the location of the figures, which are dressed without ostentation and are integrated harmoniously in the composition. A large number of works by Isaac van Ostade are preserved, yet, it is often very difficult to distinguish the work of both brothers.



This work is a beautiful genre scene with two peasants basking in the firelight. As the background, Isaac van Ostade has chosen to show a barn that has made as a sketch. Through rapid brushstrokes, the artist has managed to capture the main elements of these spaces in a studied chiaroscuro, which was the place where the villagers lived and worked.

The work is done by using brown and ocher hues, the only color note is the red on the woman's jacket who is sitting in front of the fire and the different light sources in highlighting the white color.

To the left of the picture, the viewer can see between two peasants the most tender and delicate detail of the picture, a beautiful bassinet with a beautiful canopy, covered in blankets, baby clothing, placed close to the fire in order to exploit its heat. It is one of the areas of the table in which most incident light.

The artist has used a common resource among Dutch genre painters of the seventeenth century, the location of certain items such as jars, earthenware bowls, broom, etc., As if it were a small still life.





As mentioned previously, a common aspect of Ostade's compositions is that light enters through a given point of the work. In this painting the light comes from the door and back window, bathing the room in a bright white light that leaves the rest in chiaroscuro. If we look carefully we can see the brush strokes because it has managed to capture outside light.

On both sides of the door we see certain work tools and a room full of baskets and firewood, and essential tools for everyday chores.

The main scene or storyline is very interesting; there are two peasants beside the crib, so it occupies little space in the composition, the barn occupies more than half of the work, giving a great sense of depth, it also gives the artist the opportunity to unleash his great skill as a draftsman.



As a detail, the viewer can see on the ground what looks like a bale of straw or wicker. And right above the ceiling a wicker basket. Both made through those quick strokes so common in van Ostade.





But if something is noteworthy in this picture, is that it was conceived as a sketch. The background is the main protagonist and where the main scene is happening. The appeal of chiaroscuro has served Isaac van Ostade as a pretext to unleash his painting skills. Through studied brushstrokes the artist is able to convey all the visual elements of the composition. Thus, we can distinguish perfectly the wooden structure of the room, which is still standing by huge tree trunks that serve as pillars. The thatched roof also serves to store certain goods.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PROVENANCE

Private Collection, France.

MUSEUMS

Isaac van Ostade's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Antwerp- Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Berlin- Gemaldegalerie, Brussels- Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest- Szépmvészeti, Copenhagen- Statens Museum for Kunst, Edimburg- National Gallery of Scotland, Florence- Galleria Palatina, Londres- National Gallery, Madrid- Museo del Prado, Munich- Alte Pinakothek, Paris- Louvre Museum, Vienna- Kunsthistorisch Museum.