



**Claes Dirck van der Heck**  
(Alkmaar 1571 - after 1649)  
*Riverport Landscape*  
Oil on Panel  
34 x 60,7 cm. - 1630-40 ca.

For the month of September we have chosen this wonderful landscape made by prominent Dutch painter Dirck van der Heck Claes, specializing in landscapes and portraits. Lived between the sixteenth and seventeenth century, belonging to a family of artists, in fact the painter Jacob van der Heck Claes, was his uncle. Thanks to the documentation of the time we know that in 1635 appears as a member of the Guild of Saint Luke in Alkmaar, and that their teachers were C. van Mander and Jan Nagel. Judging by the many references we found on Van der Heck, he had to paint a large number of works. In many cases their pictures have been confused with those of his uncle, who also painted landscapes compositionally very similar.

The landscape as a genre has its origin in Flanders, with a strong tradition of landscape painters, which created imaginary landscapes that served as a backdrop for their works. Soon came this trend to Holland, where it was an absolutely innovative genre, landscapes were real and totally recognizable. There were many artists who specialize in this area, the Dutch painters directly observing nature, leaving the field, took long walks, took notes and sketches which later developed in workshops, giving life to beautiful landscapes. The purpose of this genre was to increase visual knowledge of the world, determined to record reality acting as a mirror of nature.

Our panel is a fine example of early Dutch landscape with some Flemish influence. By geographical proximity, the artists were in constant communication with each other; hence as in our case, we find works compositionally so rich.

Being a landscape, the absolute protagonists of the work are the trees that appear on both sides of the composition, framing the scene parenthetically. The artist takes special care in different shades of green foliage to create the different volumes that make up each of the cups.

Although Van der Heck is a Dutch painter, our work possesses many characteristics of Flemish landscapes, especially in the colors used, highlighting those bluish green so typical of Flemish artists of the early seventeenth century, is that as mentioned above, in this period the artists in their paintings introduced certain features of his colleagues.

If we look at the two characters that appear to the left foot, it's funny how one of them seems to have wings like an angel, but if you look closely, it is not, it is a mound or bump on the ground that has created this confusion.





As in almost every landscape, the river is a constant. In our case has serpentine shape and serves to divide the composition into two. They are amazing the different shades Heck used to create a different effect on each phase of this river. In the foreground, the water is somewhat agitated, moving with a colorful lot livelier. Then, after the bridge, shows a small oasis with calm water and certain birds resting on the surface, and

finally the river now fades away zigzag up to the horizon.

In the background at the center, we can see the silhouette of a city, in which you can clearly see the tower of the church.

On the right is an imposing building in a rural environment, surrounded by the river as a fortress. As was common, with the manor house, we see a much more modest building, a farm whose peasants work the land and take care of the cattle to supply the palace belongings and themselves.





In the foreground we see a wooden bridge whose railings are completely broken. A lone character appears gait crossing with sorrowful, holding over his shoulder what looks like a fishing rod or an agricultural implement, and is very likely headed to relax after a long working day.

In the seventeenth century Dutch artists liked to introduce into his works some moralizing or sobering message hidden in different elements or attitudes, in our case has painted van der Heck, in the foreground and the central axis of the truncated tree composition, symbolizing the transience of life, alluding to how short and fleeting it may be our existence.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- A. Bredius, *Oud Holland*, XLIX, 1932, pg. 288.
- T. P. Wortel, *Oud Holland*, LX, 1943-45, pgs. 44-59 y 128-143.
- *Catalogue All the paintings of the Rijkmuseum in Amsterdam*, pg. 262.
- E. Benezit, *Dictionnaire des peintres, sculpteurs, dessinateurs et graveurs*, Vol. 4, pgs. 921 y 922.

## PROVENANCE

Private Collection, London

## MUSEUMS

Claes Dirck van der Heck's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Alkmaar- Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Dublin- National Gallery, Groningen- Groninger Museum, Laren- Singer Museum, Manchester- Manchester City Art Gallery, Montpelier- Musée Fabre, Utrecht- Rijksmuseum "Het Catharijneconvent", Zierikzee- Gemeentemuseum.