



THOMAS WYCK

(Beverwijk 1616 - Haarlem 1677)

"Family of Villagers Inside an Italian Style Patio"

Oil on Panel

35 cm. x 46,5 cm.

1660 ca.

Thomas Wyck was an important artist from the city of Haarlem who specialized in creating beautiful landscapes and genre scenes. The painter was born into a family of artists and received his training from his father. Within the genre works, Wyck's interior compositions commonly represent alchemists in their laboratories surrounded by their strange tools. Another subject the painter liked depicting was the image of a philosopher lost amidst thousands of opened books, globes, notes, pens, and inkwells. These scenes were carefully painted by taking into account every small detail on each object. Wyck's landscapes were also wonderfully executed and were more common during his Italian period. It is known that the painter travelled to Italy where he spent some years in Naples. During his stay he painted numerous landscapes following the typical Italianate style, which consisted of using warm and golden color hues that create a soft light. Consequently, among Dutch artists, Wyck is considered a part of the Italianate School. It is believed that the painter travelled to Italy, around 1640, the year in which a 'Tommaso fiammingo, pittore' (Thomas the Fleming, painter) is documented as living in Rome in the Via della Fontanella. In 1642 Wyck was once again in the northern Netherlands, enrolled in Haarlem's Guild of St Luke. It is improbable that the artist returned to Rome in the spring of 1644 given the fact that on 22 May of that year he was married in Haarlem. His presence in his native city is further

documented in 1658, 1659, 1669 and 1676. Later on, Wyck journeyed to England about the time of the Restoration and was very busy painting commissioned works for the aristocracy. From Wyck's period in England there are very interesting and important works in which he represented the fire of London. He painted different versions of this tragic fire. The artist's works are very similar to those by A. Pynacker and P. Van Laer.



Wyck's paintings are very special because they are able accurately to portray Italian architecture of the time. The work shows a Roman patio in which the viewer is able to see the classic columns holding the structures together. This Roman villa must have previously belonged to a wealthy family but by looking at the decaying architecture, it seems that several lower class families currently inhabit it. Every part of the house seems unrenovated and furthermore there are chips on the wall and the paint is falling off. Next to the column there is a small well to supply the houses with fresh water. The pulley is holding a pot that is used daily for cooking and boiling water. This interior patio shows the windows and windowsills of each apartment. In the first window there appears to be someone peeking out and observing the lady who is cleaning the copper pots. There is laundry hanging from each window as well as ham, sausages, and fruits dangling on top of the man. It was common to have the food stored this way in order to avoid small animals from eating it and to better preserve it.



The composition has four figures who are finishing their daily errands. The woman and man sitting on the left are eating and chatting, while the man standing is bringing them a plate with hot food. The woman kneeling on the floor is polishing and cleaning some copper pots using the ashes of the fireplace, carefully observed by the dog next to her. It is very interesting to see how the people are dressed; they are all wearing typical Dutch clothes. Therefore, Wyck has painted an Italianate background but has added figures wearing traditional Dutch garments. This can be seen as an artist's "capriccio" or impulse. A "capriccio" is when the artist decides to create an unreal scene by combining two impossible elements. In this case an Italian patio with Dutch people living in it. The strong and soothing colors of each garment give the work a beautiful contrast. The reds, yellows, and browns contrast against the background and create a golden light.



Wyck was known for being very meticulous and enjoyed adding every detail to his pieces. In this section of the painting, the viewer can see every pot, container, kitchen utensil, wicker basket, clay pot, and copper jar carefully sketched. These types of elements allow the viewer to understand the daily life at that time as well as the utensils used in a kitchen. The kitchen seems to be also used as a laundry room since there are some clothes hanging around. Even though at first glance, the kitchen seems to be organized, looking at it closely one can perceive several items hidden or misplaced.



On the bottom right corner, there are a variety of vegetables and fruits scattered around. The large green cabbages are both on the floor and also inside a big basket while the carrots are littered in the vicinity. The eggplant and onions are also spilled near the clay pots and metal spoons. This small section adds a lot of color and detail to the whole scene, making it very complete and realistic. One of the most surprising elements in the scene is the candle right below the cabbage. This candle symbolizes the ephemerality of life; how.

In conclusion, "Family of Villagers Inside an Italian Style Patio"

is a very characteristic work within Wyck's artistic repertoire under the influence of the Italianate style in which realism is very present.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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 - Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum, The alchemist catalogue. 1960 n° 351
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PROVENANCE

Private Collection, England.

EXHIBITIONS

Rafael Valls Gallery, TEFAF, Maastricht, March 2014

Soraya Cartategui Gallery, Feriarte, Madrid, November 2014.

MUSEUMS

Thomas Wyck's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Avignon- Museum of Fine Arts, Berlin- National Museum, Cambridge- Fitzwilliam Museum, Copenhagen- Statens Museum for Kunst, Dublin- National Gallery, Glasgow- Art Gallery, Hull- Ferens Art Gallery, Oxford- Ashmolean Museum, Richmond- Ham House.