



Pieter van de Velde (Antwerp 1634 - 1707)
Coastal Landscape with Figures
Oil on Canvas - 80 x 118 cm. - 1680 ca.

For the month of April we have chosen this stunning coastal scenery made by important Flemish painter Pieter van de Velde, born in Antwerp in 1634 and belonging to a prominent family of artisans. Influenced by the great Willem van de Velde "The Young", which was probably his teacher, he specialized in marine and coastal views. Thanks to the documentation of the time we know that in 1654 he became master of the Guild of Saint Luke in Antwerp, indicating its prestige as an artist since then. Technically his works are reminiscent of Jan and Bonaventura Peeters, but with a less precise drawing showing a more natural. His artistic career was brilliant, enjoyed great recognition and popularity in his time, both for its great artistic quality as the theme of his works, which were of the most requested by bourgeois society at the time.

Thanks to his extensive repertoire of works we can say that Pieter van de Velde was a great scholar of ancient history, which led him to travel throughout Europe coming to southern Spain, interested above all the great cities of antiquity as Constantinople. In his paintings we can see reconstructs these places architectures incorporating coastal landscapes, with boats and characters of the seventeenth century.

His works are characterized for being wrapped in a light golden haze, a very Italian taste, with a predominance of blue and ochre tones. His compositions are always full of movement, with attention to the smallest detail.



We can divide the painting in two areas. On the right the space occupied by the sea in absolute tranquility as a mirror reflects at length the four boats.

One of these ships shoots their cannons, causing a dense gray smoke as a sign of celebration or welcome.

Despite the large size of our canvas, it's amazing how Van de Velde is even the smallest detail of these sailboats and can see perfectly their masts, flags and beautiful wooden hulls. In particular we must highlight the stern of the boat on the left, at the top we see the relief of two golden lions facing shield safeguarding the boat, at the bottom is given by decorating silver and gold volutes. On the right, this fun piece of a small rowing boat with his crew. It's amazing the thoroughness with which they are painted characters each dressed with different clothing so as not to confuse.





The walled city that appears on the hill, is an example of such reconstructions so dear to Van de Velde, who as a great historian used as reference ancient cities. In this case, it is very likely to be Constantinople.

The painter depicts the smallest detail of the walled city, in this way we can see from an aerial perspective, towers, temples, palaces, even the layout of the streets. It is a city in a strategic position in terms of maritime trade; in fact the scene depicted below indicates the typical movement of the market a typical day.

At left is a port that uses natural resources and supply ground to moor boats.

We return to an emphasis on the details of the camp, the boats beached, the tiny characters, the horses and the doggie on the right.





Experts affirm that among the many travels in Europe Pieter van de Velde, visited southern Spain, and it is likely that this mountain that appears in the center of the composition is a side view of the Rock of Gibraltar. It's wonderful to see how to stop through a superposition of planes the artist manages to create the volume of the rock.

As we can see, the painting includes different periods and concepts. We see a coastal landscape with the typical characteristics of the XVII Century Flemish School, located in the ancient city full of activity. In the bottom of the canvas we see how the characters are from different nationalities and social classes, and interact harmoniously. On the right an elegant lady appears next to a gentlemen dressed a turban, one with a basket full of fish at his feet and the other with a curious square gadget surrounding his waist with exotic birds probably parrots, who enjoyed a lot in that time as fun pets.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PROVENANCE

De Jonckheere Gallery, Paris, 1992

Private Collection, Paris.

MUSEUMS

Pieter van de Velde's works can be found in many museums around the world including: Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Ansbach- Residenz Gemadegalerie, Stockholm- Statens Konstmuseum, Kiev- National Museum, Lille- Fine Arts Museum, London- Greenwich National Maritime Museum, Prague- Nostitz Museum, San Petersburg- Hermitage, Sibiu- Museo Brukenthal.