

Pieter van Bloemen (Antwerp 1657 - 1720)

A Saddled Horse, Seen from Behind

Brush and grey ink and grey wash, over traces of an underdrawing in pencil, within framing lines in black ink.
Faint traces of an inscription at the lower left.
204 x 176 mm. (8 x 6 7/8 in.)

Horses are central to many of Pieter van Bloemen's painted compositions, and he is also thought to have painted the horses in the work of other artists, including those of his younger brother. As has been noted of van Bloemen, 'his favourite subject is evidently the horse saddled or unsaddled, with or without rider and harness, being shod etc....These sketches were undoubtedly used by van Bloemen for his paintings of the same subjects.' Such drawings were usually in black or red chalk, often with added grey wash, although the artist also drew with just the brush alone, as in the present sheet.

A closely comparable drawing by van Bloemen of a saddled horse seen from behind, in an identical technique, is in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. Among other stylistically comparable drawings of horses are two drawings in the Louvre and one in the Teylers Museum in Haarlem.

Provenance:

Private collection, Amsterdam.

Artist description:

A student of the battle painter Simon Johannes van Douw in Antwerp, Pieter van Bloemen entered the city's painter's guild of Saint Luke in 1674, at the age of just seventeen. In 1684 he is recorded in Lyon, where he was joined by his younger brother and pupil, Jan Frans van Bloemen. (Another younger brother, Norbert, was also trained by Pieter.) The following year Pieter and Jan Frans van Bloemen

travelled together to Rome, where Pieter spent several years. He is documented between 1685 and 1692 as a member of the Schildersbent, the association of Dutch and Flemish artists in Rome, and was given the nickname ‘Standaart’, probably because of the flags and banners that often appear in his paintings of military caravans and encampments.

On his return to Antwerp in 1694 he rose to become director of the academy there five years later. Pieter van Bloemen’s landscape paintings, as well as his military and genre subjects, often show the particular influence of a painter of the previous generation, Philips Wouwermans. Like him, many of van Bloemen’s Italianate landscapes are dominated by groups of animals – most often, beautifully observed horses - placed at the centre of the composition. Indeed, van Bloemen was particularly admired as an animal painter, and was often asked to paint animals in the compositions of other artists, including those of his brother Jan Frans.