Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Jacob van der Ulft (Gorinchem 1627 - Noordwijk 1689)

Figures in an Italianate Landscape

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, within a drawn circle.
Signed and dated Jac: vander Ulft Fe: 1686. in the lower left and lower right margins.
172 x 170 mm. (6 3/4 x 6 5/8 in.)

Signed and dated 1686, the present sheet belongs with a small and distinctive group of circular landscape drawings by Jacob van der Ulft, all of approximately the same dimensions. These include a pair of drawings in the Saint Louis Art Museum and other examples in the British Museum, the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, and the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, MA. Others have recently appeared on the art market in Holland and England. With its fluid, bold use of brown wash punctuated by white highlights where the paper has been left to show through, the drawing displays the strong influence of Jan de Bisschop on Jacob van der Ulft.

Artist description:

Much of Jacob van der Ulft's surviving painted and drawn oeuvre is made up of Italianate landscapes, or antique Roman cityscapes and port scenes crowded with figures. His drawings - usually executed in pen and ink wash but also occasionally in gouache – are more highly regarded today than his relatively few surviving paintings. Van der Ulft seems to have been an amateur artist and was quite possibly self-taught, as no guild membership is recorded. Furthermore, he is known to have worked as a civil servant in (and at one time mayor of) his native city of Gorinchem. Although there are many quite specific views of Rome by the hand of the artist, many of which are inscribed and dated, it remains unclear whether van der Ulft ever actually visited Italy. The contemporary biographer Arnold Houbraken states definitively that he did not, and claims that his Roman views were based on the work of other artists. Certainly, van der Ulft was profoundly influenced by the work of another amateur artist, Jan de Bisschop (1628-1671), whose drawings approach his own in both style and handling. (It remains unknown, however, whether de Bisschop himself travelled to Rome). An album of forty-three landscape drawings by both Jacob van der Ulft and Jan de Bisschop, mostly views in or around Rome, is in the collection of the Dukes of Devonshire at Chatsworth. Another album of Roman views by van der Ulft is in the Institut Néerlandais (Fondation Custodia) in Paris.