Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Hendrick SONNIUS (The Hague c.1615 - England c.1688)

Italianate Landscape with Travellers and a Donkey

Pen and brown ink and brown wash on vellum.
Inscribed A. v. d. Velde near the lower left.
Inscribed (signed?) henritio zonius fl. 60 / Roma 1647 on the verso.
346 x 485 mm. (13 5/8 x 19 1/8 in.)

ACQUIRED BY THE TEYLERS MUSEUM, HAARLEM.

One of only two surviving drawings by Hendrick Sonnius, this very large drawing on vellum was attributed to the artist, on the basis of the old inscription on the verso, by a previous owner; the curator and art historian I. Q. van Regteren Altena, who published a pioneering article on the artist in Oud Holland in 1930. As he described the drawing: 'On the right, in the distance, is a country house surrounded by pines and cypresses, as used to be found near Rome and in the Campagna; above the river, on the left, one thinks one can make out the Temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli. It appears that a particular place is not depicted here, which may be deduced from the placement of the little temple...'

That the drawing was done in Rome in 1647 is evidenced by the inscription on the verso, and Van Regteren Altena pounts out that the figures this drawing may have been inspired by those found in paintings that Sonnius would have seen in Italy. As he further notes of the present sheet, 'The very individuality of the technique, when rendering many different elements, still displays a fine division of shadows and light, which is concentrated primarily on the bare tree trunk in the centre, and is certainly part of the artistic baggage that [Sonnius] has brought with him from the north. For the time being, this should encourage us to give Hendrick Sonnius a place alongside Willem de Heer in the history of Dutch drawing.'

Only one other drawing by Hendrick Sonnius is known; a much smaller pastoral scene drawn in graphite on vellum, signed and dated 1645, in the collection of the British Museum.

Provenance:

George Edward Habich, Kassel (Lugt 862)
His sale, Stuttgart, H. G. Gutekunst, 27 April 1899 onwards, lot 753 ('Henritio Zonius. Um 1650. Landschaft bei Tivoli mit dem Sibyllentempel, im Vordergrunde rechts ein Hirtenpaar mit zwei Maultieren. L. 49 cm, H. 34 1/2 cm. Feder und sepia. Miniaturartig ausgeführte Zeichnung auf Pergament.'), sold for 20 Marks to Meder
Anonymous sale, Frankfurt, F. A. C. Prestel, 27-29 June 1927, lot 355 [catalogue unlocated]

Iohan Quirijn van Regteren Altena, Amsterdam (his posthumous sale stamp [Lugt 4617] stamped on the verso), until 1980
By descent to his wife, Augusta Louisa Wilhelmina van Regteren Altena (née van Royen), Amsterdam, until 2006
Thence by family descent.

Exhibitions

Amsterdam, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, In de ban van Italië: Tekeningen uit een Amsterdamse verzameling, 1995, no.15.

Literature:

I. Q. van Regteren Altena, 'Vergeten Namen. I: Hendrick Sonnius', Oud Holland, 1930, pp.165-167, fig.1; Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler, Leipzig, 1937, Vol.XXXI, p.281; Ingrid Oud, Michiel Jonker and Marijn Schapelhouman, In de ban van Italië: tekeningen uit een Amsterdamse verzameling, Amsterdam, 1995, p.39, no.15; Frédéric Elsig, L'art et ses marchés: La peinture flamande et hollandaise (XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles) au Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève, Paris, 2009, pp.270-271, under no.166.

Artist description:

A pupil of Sybrecht Moninckx in The Hague between 1634 and 1635, although his name already appears in the register of the Guild of Saint Luke in the city by 1631, Hendrick Sonnius spent some time in Rome in the 1640s, where he may have worked for the Pope. He was back in The Hague by 1649, and 1656 is recorded as one of forty-eight artists - including Jan de Bisschop, Jacob van der Does, Joris van der Hagen, Adriaen Hanneman and Adriaen van de Venne – who, unhappy with the Guild of Saint Luke, founded the Confrerie Pictura, a local brotherhood of painters in The Hague. Sonnius is last recorded in The Hague in 1659, and seems to have spent the latter part of his career in England, where he is thought to have died at a very advanced age. He may perhaps be identified with the artist (Frederik?) Sonnius who worked in London as one of the chief assistants to Sir Peter Lely, and who was described in 1688 as 'old and touchy'.

Hendrick Sonnius is documented as a landscape and portrait painter, though no examples of the latter have survived. Indeed, only two paintings by the artist are known today; a signed Italianate Landscape in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire in Geneva and an Italianate Landscape with Peasants among Ruins, signed and dated 1645, which appeared on the art market in Belgium in 2005.