Willem van de Velde (Leiden 1633 - Greenwich 1707)

The Yacht Mary at Anchor, with a Royal Barge and other Small Vessels

Pen and grey ink and grey wash, over an underdrawing in black chalk, with framing lines in black ink.
Signed W:V.V. at the lower left and numbered N=60 on the verso.
168 x 253 mm. (6 5/8 x 10 in.)

This drawing is related to a finished oil painting by William Van de Velde the Younger, The Departure of William of Orange and Princess Mary for Holland, November 1677, in the collection of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London. The return to the Netherlands of the newly-wed couple was the first significant event which both Van de Veldes bore witness to in their work since their arrival in England and since the end of the Third Anglo-Dutch War in 1673. Willem the Elder travelled with the party on the Mary back to his homeland, and made a series of at least fifty-six drawings of the various stages of the journey. It is almost certain that Willem the Younger was (along with the king and his brother James, Duke of York, the father of the bride) in attendance to see off the procession when they embarked at Erith on 19th November, for, in the related oil painting, William of Orange is seen standing prominently in the waist of the Mary, and his trunk is seen about to be hauled aboard from a launch below. It is recorded that William intended to travel in the Mary and that his wife was to go separately on the Katherine; the yacht seen in the left-hand background of the present drawing. However, the flotilla was unable to sail out of the Thames estuary due to adverse winds, and the party disembarked and travelled across the North Foreland, eventually re-embarking at Margate. The bridal party did not make their public entrance into The Hague until the 4th of December. The crossing of the North Sea, the disposition of the accompanying vessels and the couple's arrival at Ter Heide are accurately recorded in the aforementioned series of drawings by Willem the Elder.

The marriage procession by sea would have been of great importance to the Van de Velde studio, closely associated as they were with the Stuart court by 1677, hence perhaps the careful and extensive coverage in drawings by by Willem the Elder. Hardly any other drawings of this journey by Willem the Younger are known, by contrast, and it can therefore be assumed that this example was part of the preparatory process for the majestic oil painting at Greenwich. In spite of the wealth of detail, suggestive of a royal commission, it remains unknown who in fact did order the large painting from the Van de Veldes. Within little more than a decade, the marriage of Mary with the Protestant William of Orange would prove to have the most profound and lasting consequences on the Stuarts and on English history. It is significant that the same yacht is the subject of another large, bustling oil painting by Willem the Younger showing the return of Mary to England after her husband's dramatic accession to the throne, The 'Mary' Yacht, arriving with Princess Mary at Gravesend in a Fresh Breeze, February 1689, also in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

The yacht seen here is not, as has previously been thought, the same vessel which formed part of the gift of artworks and other treasures from the Dutch to Charles II on the occasion of his Restoration, and which is shown in a fine Van de Velde drawing in the British Museum. That yacht, so named after his sister by Charles, was lost off Anglesey in 1675.

This drawing bears, on the verso, the mark of the 20th century German collector Ernst Jürgen Otto, who lived at Celle, near Hannover. Otto's collection of drawings included works by 17th century Dutch artists, as well as early 19th century German works and some 20th century watercolours.

Provenance:

Richard[?] von Kühlmann, Berlin and Munich

Ernst Jürgen Otto, Celle (Lugt 873b)
Henry and June Weldon, New York.

Literature:

Providence, RI, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Northern Baroque Paintings and Drawings from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Henry H. Weldon, 1964, no.35 (as 'H.M.S. Mary').

Artist description:

The son of the distinguished Dutch marine painter Willem Van de Velde the Elder, Willem Van de Velde the Younger followed in his father's footsteps as a painter and draughtsman of naval scenes, working in Holland and England. A large and comprehensive group of over seven hundred drawings by both Willem Van de Velde the Elder and Willem Van de Velde the Younger is today in the collection of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London.