

STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



REMBRANDT Harmensz. van Rijn (Leiden 1606 - Amsterdam 1669)

Landscape with a Ruined Thatched Cottage

Pen and brown ink and brown wash, with grey wash in the foreground added by a later hand, with an arched top.

102 x 207 mm. (4 x 8 1/8 in.)

Rembrandt's landscape drawings are among his most personal and appealing works as a draughtsman. The artist first began to produce landscape drawings and paintings in the 1630s, and throughout the 1640s and the first half of the 1650s was particularly committed to the making of landscape drawings. (He also produced twenty-seven pure landscape etchings during the same period.) Rembrandt's drawn landscapes are, for the most part, executed in ink, using a combination of reed and quill pens, and often enhanced by wash. As has been noted of such drawings, '*They are alive with the freshness and immediacy of visual impressions the artist recorded on paper during walks in Amsterdam, its environs and elsewhere...With unerring accuracy his lines capture the charm of a view opening out from a pathway or the distinctive qualities of a farmhouse, a clump of trees or a building in a town or village. He reveals his profound love of nature and his feeling for both the particularities and the generally valid characteristics of his motifs. Those motifs often appear insignificant or arbitrary; it is his draughtsmanship that makes the viewer aware of their beauty.*'

Rembrandt seems to have kept most of his drawings in albums. Several such albums of landscape drawings are recorded in contemporary sources, including the inventory of the artist's property compiled after his bankruptcy in 1656, but many sheets appear to have been lost. The number of extant landscape drawings by Rembrandt is thought to amount to slightly more than 250 examples, as documented by Otto Benesch in his catalogue raisonné of the artist's drawings, published between 1954 and 1957.

By around 1650 the subjects of Rembrandt's landscape drawings had largely moved on from the panoramic views, townscapes or village scenes of the previous decade in favour of a particular interest in the depiction of individual farmhouses and cottages. Sometimes, as in the present sheet, the building fills the entire sheet.

What appears to be a drawing of the same low thatched cottage, viewed from a different angle, is in the collection of the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris. Both drawings depict a dilapidated cottage with a damaged thatched roof with a dovecote and a tall pole to one side, probably a landing stage for

pigeons. As Achim Gnann has noted, '*Rembrandt often produced variations on a single motif in his landscape drawings. His concern was less to represent the motif from different viewpoints than to invest it with different expressive qualities.*' It has been suggested that the cottage depicted in this and the Paris drawing was located on the Amsteldijk, along the banks of the Amstel river south of Amsterdam.

A handful of other landscape drawings by Rembrandt have been identified as depicting other buildings of the same farmstead. These include a drawing of a farm by a stream in the collection of the Dukes of Devonshire at Chatsworth, another view of the same property formerly at Chatsworth and now in the Harvard University Art Museums in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and drawings in the Fondation Custodia in Paris and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Like many other Rembrandt landscape drawings in pen and brown ink this sheet has been enhanced with gray wash. Generally, scholars consider these touches of gray wash later additions.

The first known owner of the present sheet was the 20th century Belgian scholar Jean-Charles-Auguste-Georges Jadot (1917-2010), who was closely associated with the Royal Numismatic Society of Belgium for some forty years and was also a member of several other learned societies. He seems to have begun collecting drawings and prints, as well as books and medals, from a very early age, around 1935. While some drawings and prints were donated by Jadot to the Royal Library and the Banque Nationale in Brussels, much of the collection was dispersed piecemeal. It is not known where Jadot acquired the present sheet, but it was in 1968 that the collector and connoisseur Frits Lugt first confirmed the attribution to Rembrandt, writing to Jadot to congratulate him on it, in a letter dated 16 November 1968. The attribution of the present sheet was later confirmed by K. G. Boon, who dated the drawing to the second half of the 1640s, as well as by Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, Martin Royalton-Kisch, Peter Schatborn, Achim Gnann and other scholars.

Literature:

Eva Benesch, 'Editor's preface', in Otto Benesch [ed. Eva Benesch], *The Drawings of Rembrandt*, London, 1973, Vol.I, p.xii; Martin Royalton-Kisch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt. A Revision of Otto Benesch's Catalogue Raisonné* [online], March 2013, (<https://rembrandtcatalogue.net/drawings-not-in-benesch/>, where dated 1650-1652?); Frits Lugt, *Les marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes* [online ed.], under no.L.4009; Peter Schatborn and Erik Hinterding, *Rembrandt: The Complete Drawings and Etchings*, Cologne, 2019, p.348, no.D540 (where dated c.1648-1650); Achim Gnann, *Rembrandt: Landschaftszeichnungen / Landscape Drawings*, Petersberg, 2021, pp.259-261, fig.241 (as location unknown).