SPHINX FINE ART

David Teniers II (Antwerp 1610 - Brussels 1690)

Landscape with a Drover and his Herd by a River

signed on the rock 'D.TENIERS' (lower centre)
oil on canvas
67.9 x 92.7 cm (26¾ x 36½ in)

Scenes of Netherlandish country life were the dominant genre in David Teniers II's varied and prolific career. This painting, dated by Dr. Margret Klinge to *c.* 1650, when Teniers was at the height of his powers, shows an Arcadian vision of rural existence. In the foreground a figure dressed in blue urges his herd of cattle, sheep and goats away from the river, whilst his dog lags behind. A woman in a red chemise waits patiently for the animals to move on, and in her arms she holds a jug filled with water. Beyond these figures, a shepherd follows his small flock of sheep over a bridge, whilst playing a tune on his pipe.

On the far side of the river, atop a small hill, is a slightly dilapidated building with a round tower, below which are more figures and cattle. The river leads the viewer's eye away into the extensive landscape, where a mountain range and a walled city can be seen in the distance.

Sadly the building in the present work cannot be identified, in part because 'During the 1640s and 1650s Teniers was apparently equally comfortable representing fantasy and reality in his depictions of country houses, so long as the effect created was sufficiently imposing'.[1] However, as his career progressed these buildings developed, from the rather dilapidated type seen in the present work, to the grander châteaux of the wealthy elite. In part this development may reflect the changes in Teniers' own social status, as his success led to ennoblement and the funds to purchase the grand country manor of Drij Toren, a building that features in many of his paintings from the late 1650s onwards.[2]

Although Teniers' landscapes were not intended to be topographically accurate, he did sketch extensively in the countryside, and as a result certain motifs reoccur throughout his work. In terms of the landscape, perhaps the most notable comparison to the present work is a painting in the Hermitage, which features the same bridge and building. The canvas of the Hermitage work is much smaller than our painting and as a result Teniers has compressed the scene, recognising that an extensive background landscape would in this case produce an ineffective composition, and instead the building dominates the picture frame. However, in both cases the building imbues the scene with an air of charming humble rusticity, providing a suitable backdrop for the idealised vision of rural life presented by Teniers.

Rural life of the type depicted in our painting was a subject that Teniers returned to throughout his career, a later example being the Royal Collection's *A Shepherd with his Flock in a Mountainous Landscape,* which dates from the later part of the 1660s. Although there are obviously significant compositional differences between the two landscapes, the central subject, of a herd being driven through an extensive landscape is the same. Again, the drover holds his staff out over the herd, and this is a figure who reappears on numerous occasions in Teniers' paintings, and can be seen in the lower left hand corner of a sheet of figure studies in the Louvre. The Royal Collection's painting also has the familiar figures of a woman carrying water, and a piper. In each work Teniers uses one of his favourite compositional devices, as a single figure looks directly out at the viewer, engaging our attention. In his early work Teniers often lampooned and satirised peasants, in the long tradition of Pieter Brueghel the Elder (*c.* 1525-1569) or Adriaen Brouwer (*c.* 1605-1638). However, both our painting and the Royal Collection's demonstrate how in the 1640s he began to idealise peasant life, and how this romanticising attitude remained for the rest of his career.

The painting has a particularly distinguished provenance having once been part of the noted collection of Alfred de Rothschild (1842-1918). Although he reluctantly worked as part of his family's famous banking business, his interests and influence lay more in the administration of Britain's public art collections, serving as a trustee of the National Gallery, and the Wallace Collection. He inherited thirty-eight, predominantly Dutch paintings, from his father, but by his death had built up a collection of over 200 works, which reflected 'his taste for seventeenth-century Dutch masters, for Reynolds and Gainsborough' and eighteenth-century French work.[3] A significant portion of the collection was acquired from those of the Earl of Lonsdale and Lord Ashburton and it was hung in either Seamore Place in London or Halton in Buckinghamshire.

Teniers was born in Antwerp in 1610, the son of a painter and art dealer of the same name. His father painted small scale history paintings, and served as Teniers' first teacher. Having served his apprenticeship he became a master of the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke in 1632-33, and in 1637 he joined Antwerp's most famous artistic dynasty, by marrying Anna, daughter of Jan Breughel I.

From early in his career Teniers had excellent relationships with Antwerp's art dealers, who greatly prized the genre paintings with which he quickly established his reputation. Although in this early work he absorbed a number of influences, 'The most lasting impression, however, was made by Adriaen Brouwer's (1605/6-1638) paintings of excited simple folk'.[4] Brouwer spent the last period of his life in Antwerp and his pictures of the daily lives of peasants proved hugely influential for Teniers. However, where Brouwer's figures tend to be very direct, expressive and animated, in contrast to these, Teniers' paintings have a comparative calmness and composure. As Klinge says 'his artistic individuality, unlike Brouwer's, resides precisely in his almost still-life-like handling of figures and spaces'.[5]

Teniers soon became one of the most successful painters in Antwerp, and attracted several prestigious commissions. By the 1640s he had prospered to the extent that he was able to rent a large manor house, and in 1645 he became the Dean of the Guild of St. Luke. In 1647 he received his first commission from the newly appointed Governor of the Southern Netherlands, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1616-1662), and court painter and court painter four years later. This appointment meant he was responsible for expanding the Archduke's picture collection, which saw him travelling to England. Teniers captured the collection in several gallery pictures as well as an illustrated catalogue *Theatrum Pictorium* (1660). After the Archduke left Brussels, Teniers stayed on as Court Painter to the new governor, Don Juan of Austria, and he also worked for Philip IV of Spain and Willem II of the Northern Netherlands. He continued to have great success and led an aristocratic lifestyle. He died in Brussels but his legacy continued to prove enormous influential to future generations of artists.

We are grateful to Dr. Margret Klinge who confirms this painting to be a work by David Teniers the Younger, dateable to *c.*1650.

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[1] Dreher, F. P., 'The Artist as Seigneur: Chateaux and Their Proprietors in the Work of David Teniers II', in *The Art Bulletin,* vol. 60, no. 4 (Dec., 1978), p.698.

[2] For a full discussion of Teniers social advancement and the depiction of châteaux in his art, see Dreher, pp. 682-703.

[3] Conlin, J., 'Butlers and Boardrooms: Alfred de Rothschild as Collector and Connoisseur', in *Rothschild Archive Annual Review*(2006), pp. 28-29.

[4] Klinge, M., 'Introduction' in *David Teniers the Younger: Paintings, Drawings*, exh.cat., Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, May-Sept 1991, p.16.

[5] Ibid., p. 18.

Provenance:

Alfred de Rothschild (1842-1918), Seamore Place, London;
thence by inheritance to his daughter, Almina, Countess of Carnarvon (1877-1969);
by whom sold, London, Christie's, May 31, 1918, lot 156;
where purchased by Duits Ltd;
Jules van Goidsenhoven;
his posthumous sale, Galerie Fievez, Brussels, 17 December 1930, lot 791;
anonymous sale, London, Christie's, November 16, 1973, lot 32;
with Cohen, London;
anonymous sale, Sotheby's Mak van Waay, Amsterdam, October 31, 1977, lot 129A;
Kunstalon Francke, Baden-Baden, 1979;
on loan to the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, 1980 – 1982;
West German Private Collection;
anonymous sale, New York, Sotheby's, January 17, 1985, lot 97 (unsold);
anonymous sale, Munich, Neumeister Kunstauktionen, September 23, 1992, lot 556.

Exhibitions

Exposition rétrospective du paysage flamand (XVIe, XVIIe,XVIIIe siècles), Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1926.

Artist description:

David Teniers the Younger was perhaps the most celebrated in a line of artists who shared his name, from his father David Teniers the Elder, his son David Teniers III and his grandson David Teniers IV. His wife Anna, née Breughel, was the daughter of Jan Brueghel the Elder and the granddaughter of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. He became a master of the Antwerp Guild of St Luke in 1632–3 after an apprenticeship to his father, with whom he often collaborated.

From the outset Teniers the younger was an extremely productive painter, thanks to his good relationship with Antwerp art dealers. During the 1630s he produced small-format religious scenes on commission for Chrysostoom van Immerseel, who supplied the Spanish market. However, it was Teniers's genre pieces that were greatly prized by the Antwerp dealers and made him famous. Teniers quickly became one of Antwerp's pace-setting and most successful painters, which probably accounts for his assumption of functions that carried a degree of social prominence, such as the office of Master of the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament in the St Jacobskerk between 1637 and 1639, and Dean of the Guild of St Luke in 1644–5. He also received such prestigious commissions as the large group portrait of the *Arquebusiers' Company* (1643; Hermitage, St Petersburg). During this same Antwerp period he also executed commissions for Antonine Triest (1576–1657), Bishop of Bruges, one of the most prominent patrons of the arts in the southern Netherlands. By 1647 Teniers was working for Archduke Leopold William, Governor of the southern Netherlands from 1646, and in 1651 he became the Archduke's court painter. He consequently moved from Antwerp to the court at Brussels, and in 1656 he bought a building near the archducal palace and had it rebuilt as a spacious and handsome house-cum-studio.

Teniers's earliest work is remarkable for its similarity to the work of Adriaen Brouwer, who settled in Antwerp in 1631 and brought a new freshness to the Bruegelian tradition of peasant scenes. From Brouwer, Teniers took the sinister and satirical figures as well as their setting in a smoky, half-darkened interior. Like those of Brouwer, these paintings are executed in a somewhat monochrome palette. The most characteristic examples include *The Smokers and the Drinking Peasants* (1634; Karlsruhe, Staatl. Kunsthalle). Some of Teniers's early pieces were formerly attributed to Brouwer, and it is known that from the 1630s Teniers was making copies of Brouwer's work. In spite of Teniers's close adherence to Brouwer's style, his own character can be clearly distinguished, particularly in the compositions, which, in contrast to Brouwer's expressive directness and animated movement, are somewhat artificial.

In the early years of his career Teniers painted scenes with middle-class figures, and in the 1640s and 1650s, Teniers began to draw and paint open-air peasant fairs. These are partly indebted to similar works by his father-in-law. They are set in front of an inn and often include a group of nobles who watch the revels with amusement, and executed in a richly varied and pastel-tinted palette. The areas of colour are saturated with light and evoke an unmistakable illusion of tactile effects. The smoky and monochrome tonality of the interiors from the 1630s is replaced by a luminous, silvery atmosphere, in which the peasants sit at their ease, conversing or playing cards (e.g. *Peasants Carousing*, 1644; Wallace Collection, London). These paintings exemplify a completely different and far more positive attitude to country life and the peasantry than the satirical pieces influenced by Brouwer. Teniers's later peasant scenes have a more arcadian spirit (a fairly widespread characteristic of the fashionable élite of the period). The people in these landscapes have completely lost the sinister and satirical distortion of the earlier paintings. There are numerous surviving sketchy drawings from life from this period, which indicate Teniers's concern with an accurate portrayal of his characters.

Teniers's appointment as court painter meant that he was responsible for enlarging and displaying Leopold William's magnificent art collection. In particular, he was involved in the purchase of a large number of Italian, and especially Venetian, masterpieces from the confiscated collections of Charles I and his Jacobite supporters. The extent and appearance of his patron's collection can be seen in the artist's eight surviving views of his gallery. Teniers also produced an illustrated catalogue of the Archduke's collection, the *Theatrum pictorium* (1660). For the engravers he made small-scale copies of all the Italian paintings in the collection. Teniers also produced numerous original paintings for his patron, including both small-scale religious scenes and his characteristic genre scenes of peasant life. Other prominent figures in the Spanish Habsburg court at Brussels also showed interest in Teniers's work. Most important among them was Leopold William's successor, Don Juan of Austria, who was

Governor from 1656 to 1659. Teniers's work was also appreciated by the nobility outside the southern Netherlands: the Dutch Stadholder Prince William II of Orange, Queen Christina of Sweden and, particularly, King Philip IV of Spain. During this period, Teniers's way of life was deliberately aristocratic, as is evident from his attempt to be ennobled and his purchase of a country house, Drij Toren (Three Towers), at Perk. In 1663 Teniers finally achieved noble status. This and his position as court painter occasioned a great deal of professional jealousy among his less privileged colleagues in Brussels. However, his relationship with the artistic community in Antwerp remained excellent, partly owing to his contacts with the influential local art dealers, one of whom, the firm of Matthijs Musson (c. 1600–78), was particularly important in building Teniers's international reputation. In 1663, urged by his Antwerp colleagues, Teniers used his prominent post at court to lobby successfully for the establishment of an art academy in their city like those in Paris and Rome.

In Teniers's artistic work after c. 1660, the arcadian element dominates. Humanity and nature seem to have fused in an evocatively idyllic moment. The dominant themes also changed: instead of the buzzing activity of the peasant fairs, he painted primarily pastoral scenes with a limited number of figures. There is some indication that Teniers's last years were financially difficult, possibly owing to the unsettled international climate culminating in the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13).