

WOUTER VERSCHUUR

(Amsterdam 1812 - Vorden 1874)

A Moment of Rest

signed and dated 'W. Verschuur/1847' (lower right)

oil on panel

30 x 41 cm (11⅞ x 16¼ in)

A *MOMENT OF REST* BY WOUTER VERSCHUUR depicts a scene of rural simplicity and charm. A bare-footed peasant, riding a horse and leading another alongside, stops to speak with two labourers. Ahead of them is an expansive landscape, bathed in the soft pink glow of the setting sun. Distant details such as the horse and plough in the fields and the cottages with smoke drifting from their chimneys give the scene a sense of order and gentle productivity.

Verschuur, a member of the last generation of Dutch Romantic painters, was particularly inspired by the work of Philips Wouwerman. Like Wouwerman, Verschuur was interested in both genre and landscape elements and his compositions harmoniously balance the two. In *A Moment of Rest*, the figures and horses in the foreground of the painting are the viewer's initial point of interest; however, the surroundings are given equal painterly attention and complete the picture. Verschuur's favourite subjects were horses, and in the present picture the two draught horses form a dignified and docile pair, with the last of the sun's rays reflecting off their muscular flanks and thick manes. Their forms and faces are depicted with great detail and in a more convincing manner than those of the labourers who stand nearby. The woman dressed in a simple bodice and skirt and a Dutch bonnet, and the man next to her in a green cap leaning against a wheelbarrow appear less significant by comparison to these majestic and magnificent creatures.

Verschuur's delight in painting work horses in rustic surroundings also extended to his interior scenes, such as *Interior of a Stable with Horses and Figures* in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 1). In this painting the tranquil pastoral setting of the present picture is replaced by a rough and chaotic stable scene filled with horses, men, dogs, and chickens. The nobility of the horses, however, is again striking and their well defined bodies and glossy coats and manes are expertly translated onto the canvas.

Verschuur was the son of an Amsterdam jeweller and studied under a number of artists, notably Pieter Gerardus van Os and Cornelis



Wouter Verschuur, *Interior of a Stable with Horses and Figures*, 1874, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (Figure 1)

Steffelaar, who specialised in painting landscapes and cattle. He showed talent from an early age and won gold medals in competitions in 1831 and 1832 at the Felix Meritis Society in Amsterdam. In 1833 he was appointed a member of the Akademie voor Beeldende Kunsten and of the Koninklijk Nederlands Instituut in Amsterdam. He joined the artist's society, Arti et Amicitiae, in 1839. During his career, he worked in The Hague, Doorn, Brussels and Haarlem as well as Amsterdam. From 1840, Verschuur began making a name for himself as a painter of horses both nationally and abroad. One of his entries in the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855 was bought by Napoleon III. Verschuur sometimes collaborated with other artists such as Cornelis Springer, Peter Christ and Cornelis van Bolt. He had many students, of whom the most important was Anton Mauve, who often incorporated depictions of draught horses and livestock similar to those of Verschuur into his compositions.

