

PETER DE NEYN

(Dutch 1597 - 1639)

Travellers on a Path, in a Dune Landscape

signed with monogram 'PN' (lower right)
oil on panel
47 x 70 cm (15¾ x 27½ in)

Provenance:

Count Hans Henrik von Essen;
his son Hans Henrik von Essen;
his daughter Charlotte von Essen;
her brother William Henriksson von Essen
his neice Eva Brynhilda von Essen;
by descent thereafter, in the family of the previous owners.

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF A SMALL VILLAGE, TWO well dressed travellers make their way on horseback along a country track. In the field on the left-hand side, three peasants cannot hide their curiosity at these elegant horsemen. On the far side of the rickety wooden fence is a small thatched dwelling, possibly an inn where the travellers have spent the night. In the distance the a tall church spire, its grandeur contrasting with the humble rusticity of the foreground.

Travellers on a Path, in a Dune Landscape, is a typical example of de Neyn's work, comparable to *Farmhouses along a Sandy Road with Rider* (fig. 1). De Neyn has composed both work in similar ways, by using broad horizontal bands of colour. A strip of shadow runs across the foreground of both works, and this darkness serves to emphasise the vivid yellow and green of the dune landscape. A large expanse of both works is given over to the sky which is filled with grey cloud. Rustic dwellings nestle in the dunes and tall trees punctuate the otherwise flat Dutch landscape.



Pieter de Neyn, *Farmhouses along a Sandy Road with Rider*, Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage, The Netherlands (Figure 1)



Jan van Goyen, *Dunes*, 1629, Staatliche Museen, Berlin (Figure 2)

De Neyn received his artistic education in Haarlem from Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630) (see inventory), but he was also highly influenced by his fellow pupil Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) (see inventory). Van Goyen frequently depicted the dune landscapes, that are found around Haarlem, throughout his career, see figure 2, and his example had a profound impact on de Neyn. Within these rustic landscapes, both artists would depict motifs reflecting the humble lifestyle of the Dutch peasant, such as a dilapidated farmhouse or a sagging wooden fence. The resulting pictures are beautifully observed, naturalistic depictions of the Dutch countryside.

De Neyn spent the majority of his life in his native Leiden, but trained as an artist in Haarlem. According to Arnold Houbraken, de Neyn's father apprenticed him to a mason. He was successful in this initial career, to the extent that he could take on pupils and support himself whilst he broadened his own education in the fields of mathematics and architecture. He was friends with several painters, including van de Velde, who became his formal teacher between 1611 and 1617, after which time he returned to Leiden, where he married. He eventually died of lung disease, a common cause of death among masons.

