

JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

VP4947

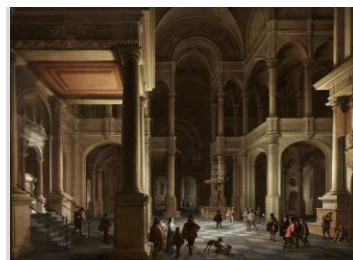
ANTHONIE DELORME

(c. 1610 Doornik – 1673 Rotterdam)

A View of an imaginary Church Interior.

Signed and dated on the base of a column,
lower left: *A DELORME. 1648*

Oil on panel, 36¼ x 48¾ ins. (92 x 124 cm)



PROVENANCE

Otlet Collection [possibly Paul Otlet (1868-1944)], Brussels, 1902, lot 42 (as Neeffs)

Anonymous sale, Palais Galliera, Paris, 20 June 1966, lot 47

José Serratosá Nadal (1893-1983), Valencia, Spain

Compañía Valenciana de Cementos Portland, S.A., Spain

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LITERATURE

H. Jantzen, *Das Niederländische Architekturbild*, 2 vols, Brunswick, 1979, no. 219

Bernard G. Maillet, *Intérieurs d'églises 1580-1720: La Peinture Architectural des Écoles du Nord*, Paris, 2012, p. 268, no. M-0543

NOTE

The *staffage* is by Anthonie Palamedesz. (1601–1673)

Anthonie Delorme devoted his entire career to painting architectural subjects. Born in Doornik (Tournai), in modern-day Belgium, he moved with his family to Rotterdam while still very young. He probably received his training in Rotterdam, where he lived and worked for the rest of his life.

Delorme's *oeuvre* falls rather neatly into two halves: first, his work executed before 1652, when he painted imaginary, often candlelit, interiors inspired by his probable teacher Jan van Vucht (c. 1603-1637) and the architectural painter Bartholomeus van Bassen (c. 1590-1652), and secondly, his work produced after that date, when he switched to making accurate, daylight representations of the actual interior of the Laurenskerk, in Rotterdam. This sudden change of direction was likely prompted by recent developments in architectural painting instigated by Gerard Houckgeest (c. 1600-1661) in nearby Delft. A somewhat older artist than Delorme, Houckgeest had started out similarly as a painter of imaginary architectural views, but, in 1650, he turned to making faithful representations of the interiors of the Oude and Nieuwe Kerks in Delft. His new approach set a trend which soon caught on with other architectural painters in Delft, such as Hendrick van Vliet (1611/12-1675) and Emanuel de Witte (c. 1616-1691/2). Delorme was likewise quick to realise the potential for this new genre in his hometown. From 1652 onwards, the Laurenskerk became virtually his only subject, as the French nobleman Balthasar de Monconys remarked after a visit to his studio in 1663, "he makes only diverse views of the church in Rotterdam, but does so with great skill"¹.

This imposing panel of 1648 characterises the imaginary church interiors painted by Delorme during the first phase of his career. Such a work can best be described as a *capriccio* - an example of the artist's virtuosity in which he demonstrates his facility not only with architectural forms and perspective, but also with artificial light. It is a display of carefully constructed vistas designed by the artist to manipulate the experience of the beholder. In this classicising church interior, the main view is taken from a slightly elevated vantage point, looking along the length of the nave. Giant orders of columns rising to a great height support a barrel-vaulted ceiling, creating a cavernous space, illuminated by the glow from a candlelit chandelier. To left and right, dimly lit vistas open up, affording glimpses into the furthest recesses of the building. The interior is embellished with several tombs, a pulpit and an organ, but the absence of any religious imagery indicates that the church is conceived as a place of Protestant worship. The scene is enlivened by small groups of strolling and conversing figures, painted by the figure specialist Anthonie Palamadesz., adding human interest, accents of colour and a sense of scale.

In the seventeenth century, architectural paintings, whether of secular or sacred buildings, were frequently described as "perspectives", and as such were appreciated for their qualities of design and illusionism. Contemporary documents attest that works of this type commanded high prices and were often collected by wealthy burghers and members of the court in The Hague. In this painting, Delorme has constructed his complex interior around a one-point, off-centre perspective scheme. A massive column situated in the foreground to the left of centre introduces a deep recession into space that leads the eye into the composition. The orthogonal lines, accentuated by the alternating cream and black floor tiles, converge upon a central vanishing point located at the foot of a lancet window in the far wall of the church. The illusion of three-dimensional space has been further enhanced by the skilful interplay of light and shade.

As was his usual practice, the perspective scheme in this painting was worked out with great care in the underdrawing before Delorme applied paint to his panel, using a method often employed by architectural painters of his day. The technique involved driving a small pin into the canvas or panel precisely on the spot marking the vanishing point. A piece of string was then attached to the pin which served as an aid in drawing the orthogonal lines. The evidence that Delorme employed this method here can be ascertained from the small indentation which is visible in the paint surface at the vanishing point, as well as from the meticulously drawn orthogonals that can be seen in places where the paint layers have become somewhat transparent with the passage of time.

Like other architectural painters of the period, Delorme often collaborated with a specialist figure painter. During the 1640s, he formed a successful partnership with the Delft portrait and genre painter Anthonie Palamedesz., who was his collaborator here. Palamedesz.'s lively and skilfully lit figures not only enhance the impression of a large vaulted space through their strategic placement and carefully judged scale, but also add accents of colour and anecdotal interest. The eye alights first upon a group of well-to-do burghers and two frolicking dogs situated close to the viewer on the left: the lady, dressed in blue, and a man in red, are flooded with light, while their companions are seen from behind in silhouette. One's gaze is drawn then to a party of characters on the right, one of them clad in vivid red, which is being approached by a black man holding a lighted taper and red pouch – perhaps a collection bag – and two beggars lurking in the shadows by a column. Further small figures, dotted in ones and twos throughout the interior, invite the viewer to explore deeper into the cavernous interior.

Delorme's fictive church interiors may be regarded as the culmination of the tradition of imaginary architectural painting that had its origins in the perspective inventions of Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1607). Architect, designer, painter and theorist, Vredeman de Vries was born in Friesland in 1527, but pursued his career in various European cities, including Antwerp, Prague, Amsterdam and The Hague. His illustrated books on architecture and perspective were especially influential and provided an invaluable source of inspiration for almost all the early specialists in architectural painting. In Antwerp, his pupil Hendrick van Steenwyck the Elder (c. 1550-1603), specialised in depictions of actual and imaginary church interiors, mostly in the Gothic style, as did members of the Neeffs family of painters. The fanciful tradition was continued by Steenwyck's son, Hendrick the Younger (c. 1580-1649), whose views of palatial porticoes and plazas found admirers in courtly circles in London and The Hague.

In the decades preceding Delorme, the chief exponents of imaginary architectural painting in the Northern Netherlands were the Middelburg artist Dirck van Delen (1605-1671), who was active from the 1620s onwards, and The Hague painter-architect Bartholomeus van Bassen. A comparison of their work of the late 1630s and 1640s with the early work Gerard Houckgeest and Anthonie Delorme makes clear that all four artists shared similar concerns. Above all, their paintings can be distinguished by a common interest in idealised, classical forms of architecture and an awareness of the role of light and atmosphere in articulating three-dimensional space. However, to see their architectural inventions as little more than the tail end of a Flemish tradition is to do them an injustice for as Walter Liedtke argued most

eloquentlyⁱⁱ, the work of these painters reflects contemporary trends in architecture as well as the interests and tastes of architects and intellectuals, particularly those associated with the court of the stadholder Frederick Hendrick in The Hague. Indeed, in their day, such paintings of imaginary classicist architecture were greatly appreciated by sophisticated connoisseurs and regarded as the height of fashion. Nevertheless, Houckgeest's impulse around mid-century to switch his attentions to the actual interior of his local church soon gave rise to a new, realist tradition that within a few years had almost completely displaced the old imaginary one. Thus, Delorme's career, spanning some thirty years or more, can be seen as straddling these two artistic traditions.

BIOGRAPHY

Very little is known about the life of Anthonie Delormeⁱⁱⁱ. His parents, Augustijn Delhorme, from Doornik, and Marie Beghin were married in Antwerp in 1588. Anthonie was born in Doornik (Tournai) around 1610^{iv}, but his family had moved to Rotterdam by 1612. Anthonie is first documented in Rotterdam in 1627, when he served as a witness for Jan van Vucht (c. 1603-1637), a painter of church interiors, who is thought to have been his teacher. Afterwards, he acted as witness for van Vucht on a number of occasions. When he married Maertje Floris van der Werf in Rotterdam on 12 May 1647, he was described as "Anthony de Lorme, single, of Doornijck, residing at Buttersloot". In 1649, he made a will, from which it appears that he also had a shop selling stockings, candles, ribbons, etc. In 1663, he received a visit from the French nobleman Balthasar de Monconys, who noted in his *Journal des Voyages*, that Delorme "... ne fait que l'église de Rotterdam en diverse veues, mais il les fait bien." He died in Rotterdam in 1673. Following his death, the sale of his house in the Gootse Wagenstraat and his household effects yielded just enough to pay his debts.

ⁱ "[Il] ne fait que l'Eglise de Rotterdam en diverse veues, mais il les fait bien." Balthasar de Monconys, *Journal des voyages de Monsieur de Monconys*, 2 vols., Lyons, 1665-66, p.131.

ⁱⁱ W. Liedtke, "The Court Style: Architectural Painting in The Hague and London", in *Perspectives: Saenredam and the architectural painters of the 17th century*, exh. cat. by J. Giltaij and G. Jansen, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 1991, pp. 31-41.

ⁱⁱⁱ For what little documentary evidence survives see in biography the exhibition catalogue cited above, p. 237, and the RKD in The Hague.

^{iv} Some sources state that he was born earlier *circa* 1600-1605. See: biography in *Rotterdamse Meeters uit de Gouden Eeuw*, exh. cat., 1994, Historisch Museum Rotterdam, Rotterdam, p. 276.