

# JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

VP4932

## JOOST CORNELISZ. DROOCHSLOOT

(1586 – Utrecht – 1666)

A Village with Peasants and a Feud in the Foreground  
and

A Village with Peasants merrymaking outside a Tavern

The first signed with monogram and dated,  
lower left on the wall: *JC.DS.1647*

The second signed with monogram and dated,  
Lower centre: *JC:DSc. 164[7]*

Oil on canvas, each 30 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 40 $\frac{3}{4}$  ins. (77.8 x 103.5 cm)

A Pair

### PROVENANCE

Kreuser Collection

Anon. sale, Weinmüller, Munich, 13 December 1951, lots 583 & 584

Where acquired by the previous owners

Unicredit Group, the Netherlands, until 2020

### LITERATURE

*Katalog Kunst in der Vereinsbank 1500 bis 1950*, Munich, 1997, pp. 31-35.



Joost Cornelisz. Droochsloot was one of the few Utrecht artists of the first half of the seventeenth century to devote himself to depicting aspects of daily life. He specialised in simple village scenes with peasants and beggars. These are descended from the Flemish sixteenth-century tradition of peasant *kermis* scenes popularised by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525-1567). Although there is no record of Droochsloot's training, his broad-featured figures are strongly reminiscent of the peasants painted by the Flemish *émigré* David Vinckboons (1575-1631), who settled in Amsterdam in 1591 and worked there for the rest of his life.

Almost invariably Droochsloot's village scenes follow a similar compositional scheme: a broad village street recedes into the distance, flanked on either side by peasant dwellings and other buildings. In this respect, our two signed and dated paintings of 1647 are entirely characteristic of the genre. In this pair, Droochsloot has sought to represent two somewhat contrasting aspects of rural life. In the first, the scene is one of merrymaking. The weather is fine, and a red flag flutters gaily from the church belfry signifying that today is a festival. The whole world and his dog are abroad, enjoying the holiday. Parties of peasants sit at long tables set up outdoors, while family groups stroll about and mingle with one another. A woman sits outside her house with a baby on her lap, chatting to a neighbour. However, the mood in the companion piece is quite different. A building on the right has been left to fall into disrepair and there are general signs of disorder and hardship throughout the scene, most evident in the left foreground where a drunken brawl has broken out between two men brandishing knives. On the right, a group of beggars and the infirm have gathered before a doorway, waiting to receive food handouts. In both paintings, the broadly handled treatment of the figures and the earthy, reddish-brown palette, enlivened with accents of red, blue and white are typical of the artist's mature style. As is often the case with other of his paintings, Droochsloot prepared the compositions by means of sketchy underdrawing on the ground layer, which is clearly visible in places beneath the thinly painted surface.

The depiction of the dispossessed and poor was a not an uncommon theme in Droochsloot's work. Indeed, he devoted a considerable part of his production to representations of the poor, often as recipients of charity. One of the artist's earliest commissions was the large *Seven Acts of Mercy*, painted for the St. Barbara and St. Lawrence Hospice (now in the Centraal Museum, Utrecht). He also painted representations of *St. Martin dividing his Cloak* and *The Procession of the Lepers on Copper Monday*.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Joost Cornelisz. Droochsloot was born in Utrecht: traditionally, the date of his birth is given as 1586 but that was almost certainly the year in which his parents were married rather than necessarily the year of his birth. In 1616, Droochsloot registered as a master painter in the Utrecht Painters' Guild, but the identity of his teacher remains unknown. In 1618, Joost Droochsloot married Agnietgen van Rijnevelt, the daughter of an officer, in the Reformed Church. Their thirteen children were baptized in various Reformed Churches but tragically only one son, Cornelis, reached maturity and became a painter: the others all died at a very young age, most of them shortly after birth. In 1620, the municipal auctioneer and art dealer, Jan Willemsz. van Rhenen, sold him a house on the Nieuwegracht and the corner of the

Magdalenastraat with a mortgage to be paid off in twelve annual instalments, each instalment consisting of paintings worth a total of 150 guilders.

In the early 1620s Droochsloot's career ran smoothly. He worked for several public institutions and in 1623 was elected dean of the guild. The following year he was able to move to the Plompetorengracht, where he bought a house with a large garden containing a summerhouse. Droochsloot lived the life of a respected burgher and was elected a lifelong regent of the St. Job's Hospice in 1638, dean of the guild again in 1641 and 1642, deacon of the Reformed Church in 1642 and sergeant of the local militia in 1650 and 1651. However, later in life his rather old-fashioned style was superseded by the more elegant manner of a younger generation of artists, many of them trained in Italy, such as Jan Both (c. 1516-1652) and Cornelis van Poelenburgh (1594-1667). Like many other artists, Droochsloot augmented his income by taking on pupils and specialised in giving drawing lessons: his most important pupil was Jacob Duck (c. 1600-1667). Nevertheless, his workshop declined and he was forced to take out several mortgages on his house. He died in 1666 and was buried in the Buurkerk<sup>i</sup>.

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<sup>i</sup> Biographical details drawn from Joaneath A. Spicer & Lynne Federle Orr, *Masters of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht during the Golden Age*, exh. cat., The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore & the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1997-1998, pp. 380-381.