

## DAVID TENIERS THE YOUNGER

*Antwerp 1610 - 1690 Brussels*

---

*The Interior of an Inn with Peasants smoking by a Table and conversing before a Fire*

Signed lower right: *D. TENIERS . Fec* and dated centre (on the drawing): 1650

On panel: 13 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 17 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in / 34 x 44 cm

### Provenance:

The Wittelsbach Princes and Electors of Bavaria, probably acquired by Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria (1662-1726; reg. 1679-1704 and 1715-26), while Governor of the Spanish Netherlands;  
displayed in the Residenz, Munich, by 1700;  
by descent to the last of the Wittelsbach line, Maximilian III Joseph, Elector of Bavaria (1727-1777; reg. 1745-77);  
from whom inherited with the Electorate by the head of the Palatinate branch of the dynasty, Karl Theodor, Elector Palatine of the Rhine and Elector of Bavaria (1724-1799; reg. Palatinate 1742-99 and Bavaria 1777-99);  
by whom transferred in 1781 to the Hofgartengalerie, Munich, and from whom inherited with the Electorate by the head of the Zweibrücken branch of the dynasty, Maximilian IV Joseph, Elector of Bavaria and, from 1806, King Maximilian I Joseph of Bavaria (1756-1825; reg. 1799-1825);  
by whom moved by 1800 to Schloss Schleissheim, and by whom bequeathed to his son King Ludwig I of Bavaria (1786-1868; reg. 1825-1848),  
by whom transferred in 1836 to the newly-constructed (Alte) Pinakothek  
The Alte Pinakothek, Munich, no.904, until 19th August 1938, when deaccessioned and sold to Dr Walter Bernt, Munich;  
by inheritance, until 2003

### Literature:

A. Rosenberg, *Teniers der Jüngere*, Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1895, p.12, fig. 8; 2nd edition 1901, p.18, fig. 11

W. Bernt, *Niederländischen Maler des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1970, vol. III, no.1165

### Engraved:

Johann Wölfle

This outstanding painting was made in Antwerp in 1650, shortly before Teniers was summoned to Brussels to become court painter to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, Governor of the Spanish Netherlands. Hugely successful in his lifetime, Teniers has been celebrated ever since for the harmony of composition and colour, delicacy of execution and gradation of reflected light in his pictures. This painting is typical of his finest work in the 1650s, when he was at the height of his powers. The complex composition, with smokers in the foreground and more peasants in the tavern room beyond, allows an exquisite exploration of the qualities of light, from the sharply defined, arrogant fellow at foreground left, to the shadowy figures of the interior, lit by a shaft from the murky window and the coals of the fire. The foreground is enlivened by brilliant still life groups: the brazier, twist of tobacco paper and guttering candle on the rough bench, the gleaming smoothness of the cooking pots to the right. The composition is unified not just by a complexity of spaces held together by light and shade but by a palette which grades from dazzling white to slate blue to a myriad of soft browns. Teniers's sheer painterly genius holds the viewer's attention for a very long time.

The theme of the low-life interior was developed by the brilliant but short-lived painter Adriaen Brouwer (1605/6-1638), by whom Teniers was much influenced. By the 1650s Teniers had moved away from Brouwer's rough and satirical depiction of peasant life to a more indulgent view of his subjects. Smoking is a favourite theme of his tavern interiors, appearing in such works as *Le bonnet rouge*, 1644 (Byng Collection, Wrotham Park), *The smoker*, 1645 (Hermitage, St Petersburg), *Interior with a smoker at a table*, 1643 (Louvre, Paris) and *Boors carousing*, 1644 (Wallace Collection, London). Controversy had raged about the desirability of smoking ever since tobacco had been imported from America in the sixteenth century; even James I of England had weighed in with a pamphlet denouncing the filthy practice. Teniers sees it merely as part and parcel of tavern life: there is aesthetic beauty in the wisp of smoke which drifts from the mouth of the swaggering young man in the foreground, echoed in the smoke from his pipe, from the guttering candle and the coals of the brazier. A seventeenth century audience would have seen in the drifting smoke a reference to the transitoriness of human life. Life is short, why not enjoy it? There are hints of other pleasures: the empty jug and the beer glass gleaming in the background; the aphrodisiac shellfish and woman's shoe (a lascivious symbol) in the right foreground. Teniers's sophisticated urban clientele would have marvelled at his technical brilliance and smiled indulgently at his depiction of peasant life.

For a century and a half this painting was in the collection of the Wittelsbach Princes and Electors of Bavaria. It was probably acquired by Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria (1662-1726; reg. 1679-1704 and 1715-26) while he was Governor of the Spanish Netherlands. By 1700 it was displayed in the Residenz, Munich. In 1836 King Ludwig I of Bavaria (1786-1868; reg. 1825-1848), who transformed Munich with his patronage of the arts and building programmes, transferred the Teniers, along with much of the huge Wittelsbach Old Master collection, to the newly-constructed Alte Pinakothek. It was deaccessioned on 19th August 1938 as part of a policy to sell a number of Dutch and Flemish Old Masters to raise funds to buy seventeenth-century Spanish works. It was bought by the art historian Dr Walter Bernt and remained in his family until 2003.

David Teniers the Younger was one of the most important seventeenth-century Flemish painters of genre and landscape. Born in Antwerp, he first studied with his father David Teniers the Elder, and became a member of the Guild of St Luke in 1633. He married Anna Brueghel, daughter of the celebrated flower and landscape painter Jan Brueghel the Elder, in 1637. Anna's guardian Peter Paul Rubens was a signatory to their marriage contract.

Between 1645 and 1646, Teniers was Dean of the Antwerp Guild of St Luke. In 1651, while he was at the height of his powers, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, Governor of the Spanish Netherlands, brought Teniers to Brussels as Court Painter and Curator, giving Teniers an authoritative role in building up the Royal Collection. From 1656-59 he was Court Painter to the new Spanish governor, Don Juan of Austria, brother of Philip IV, and retained close ties with the court for the rest of his life. In 1663 Philip IV gave Teniers permission to found the highly influential Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. His last known dated work was painted in 1683; Teniers died in Brussels in 1690.

Teniers's early works were influenced by Adriaen Brouwer (1605/6-1638), particularly his treatment of peasant, low-life subjects and interior scenes, although he also painted landscapes, genre, portraits, religious and allegorical subjects. Later, Teniers turned increasingly to landscapes with figures; unlike his predecessors, however, he sought to convey the serenity of rural life rather than the more basic aspects of rustic realism. The works of Teniers were extremely influential on Flemish painting during his lifetime and beyond, and his paintings were avidly collected by princely connoisseurs.

The work of David Teniers the Younger is represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Hermitage, St Petersburg; the Louvre, Paris; the Prado, Madrid; the National Gallery, London and the Wallace Collection, London.