

JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

CS236

SALOMON VAN RUYSDAEL

(Naarden 1600/03 – 1670 Haarlem)

A View of Alkmaar with the Sint Laurenskerk from the North



Signed and dated on the boat lower right: S. VRUYSDAEL. 1644

(VR in ligature)

Oil on panel, 24¼ x 36¾ ins. (61.6 x 93.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

Private Collection, Great Britain

Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 10 July 1987, lot 44

With Otto Naumann Ltd., New York

Anonymous sale, Sotheby's, New York, 24 January 2008, lot 20 (\$900,000 hammer)

Private collection, West Coast, U.S.A., until 2013

LITERATURE

W. Liedtke, "Pentimenti in our Pictures of Salomon van Ruysdael and of Jan van Goyen", in *Shop Talk. Studies of Seymour Slive, presented on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, Cambridge, Mass. 1995,

p. 155 and reproduced, p. 355, fig. 3

W. Liedtke, *Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New Haven and New London*, 2007, vol. 2, pp. 812-814, under cat. no. 187, reproduced p. 812, fig. 234.

NARRATIVE

Between the years 1644 and 1664, Ruysdael painted seven landscapes with the city of Alkmaar, six of which are recorded in Stechow in his 1975 monograph on the artistⁱ. The present work, which appears to be the earliest and one of the most accurate views of the city, was not known to him. It appeared on the art market in 1987 and has since been universally accepted as an autograph work. However, the two figures and the basket in the foreground lower left, visible in the 1987 catalogue illustration, proved to be nineteenth-century additions and have since been removed.

The city of Alkmaar is only about 35 kilometres from Haarlem, and Ruysdael is known to have been there in 1644, as his brother, Pieter de Goyer, was buried in the Grote Kerk (Sint Laurenskerk) on 28 January 1644. Ruysdael shows the city from the north, the church dominating all other buildingsⁱⁱ. Its choir is to the left and the nave to the right, while the long transept stretches out towards the viewer. Immediately to the right of the transept is an odd bulbous shape, which reveals itself as a family of storks nesting in the bell tower of a now-destroyed monastery. The orientation here is the same as the Dublin painting of *Alkmaar*

with the Grote Kerk, Winter (Stechow 21), dated 1647ⁱⁱⁱ. The Dublin picture at first looks quite different from *A View of Alkmaar with the Sint Laurenskerk from the North* because of the change in season. The presence of the frozen river, with its crowds of skaters and the large sledges in the foreground, masks the fact that the basic geography is the same – even the imaginary course of the river in the foreground. However, the *View of the Town of Alkmaar*, in the Metropolitan Museum (Stechow 401) is far closer in feeling. There Ruysdael shows the church from the west, so that we see the nave of the church coming towards us. In the foreground is a similar lazy river landscape, though with a ferryboat replacing the fishermen.

A View of Alkmaar with the Sint Laurenskerk from the North is characteristic of Ruysdael's paintings of the mid-1640s. Here he has left behind his tonal phase, when he was strongly under the influence of Jan van Goyen, and has moved to a more majestic depiction of the Dutch landscape. His palette is richer and more varied, with deeper blues in the sky and touches of local colour in the foreground figures and the sails. Ruysdael uses a traditional compositional device to create a sense of spatial recession: the long thin triangle of shore that moves from middle ground to the distant right. This is energised by the more dramatic falling line of the treetops, anchored at the centre by the large mass of the church, which dwarfs the surrounding buildings. He peoples the foreground with fishermen and their baskets and nets and scatters the smaller silhouettes of waterfowl among them. The present work is a combination of historical accuracy and imagination that vividly evokes the landscape and mood of seventeenth-century Holland.

Salomon Jacobsz. van Ruysdael was born in Naarden around 1600, the son of a cabinet maker from Gooiland, Jacob Jansz. de Goyer. Early in his life, Salomon used his father's name but later he and his brother Isaack adopted the name Ruysdael, probably derived from the country manor, Ruisschendael near Blaricum, their father's home town. Despite the difference in spelling, it is the same family as the artist's famous nephew, Jacob van Ruisdael. Shortly after their father's death in 1616, Salomon and Isaack, who was also a painter, frame maker and art dealer, moved to Haarlem. Salomon entered the city's St. Luke's Guild in 1623 and lived there for the rest of his life. His earliest known landscape is dated 1626 and he was praised as a landscape painter as early as 1628 by Samuel van Ampzing^{iv}. In 1647 and 1669 he served as an officer of the St. Luke's Guild and, in 1648, was made dean. In 1651, Ruysdael was recorded as a merchant dealing in blue dye for Haarlem's bleacheries. Although he lived most of his life in Haarlem, he appears to have travelled widely in The Netherlands and his paintings include views of Dordrecht, Utrecht, Arnhem, Alkmaar and Rhenen. He was buried in St. Bavo's Church in Haarlem in 1670.

ⁱ W. Stechow, *Salomon van Ruysdael, eine Einführung in seine Kunst*, 2nd (revised) edition, Berlin 1975, cat. no. 9, 1656, London art market 1957; cat. no. 21, 1647, Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland; cat. no. 401, datable to mid-1650s, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; cat. no. 523B, 1651, Longleat, The Marquis of Bath; cat. no. 535, 1664, New York, Private Collection; cat. no. 545, Rheden, F. H. Fentener van Vlissingen.

ⁱⁱ See. W. Liedtke, *Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, New Haven and London, 2007, vol. 2, pp. 812-814, under cat. no. 187, for a discussion of the orientation of the church and the geography of the city.

ⁱⁱⁱ The signature and date are not recorded by Stechow but were revealed in cleaning. See: H. Potterton, *Dutch Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Painting in the National Gallery of Ireland. A Complete Catalogue*, Dublin 1986, p. 138, cat. no. 27.

^{iv} Samuel Ampzing, *Beschrijving ende lof der stad Haerlem in Holland*, Haarlem, 1628.