



Jacob van Ruisdael  
Dutch, c. 1628/1629 - 1682

## *Landscape*

c. 1670

oil on canvas

overall: 53.2 x 60 cm (20 15/16 x 23 5/8 in.)

framed: 78.7 x 85.1 x 9.5 cm (31 x 33 1/2 x 3 3/4 in.)

Inscription: lower center on rock to left: J v Ruisdael (JvR in ligature)

Samuel H. Kress Collection 1961.9.85

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### ENTRY

In this landscape Ruisdael has depicted a view across a small waterfall that transforms a smoothly flowing river into a turbulent stream. As the water rushes toward the lower left foreground it passes under a wooden bridge that is traversed by a mother and child and their dog. The path they follow enters a densely forested, somewhat hilly terrain, passing by three large oak trees that dominate the center of the composition. One of these trees is almost dead, and another has a dramatically broken branch hanging precariously over the falls.

Ruisdael often composed his scenes to limit the viewer's easy access into the landscape. In this painting the land across the river can be reached only by way of the bridge, but the juncture of the bridge and the near shore does not occur within the picture. The effect is to make the landscape unapproachable and forbidding, a mood intensified by the dense forest on the far shore and the steel gray clouds overhead. As in Ruisdael's painting *The Jewish Cemetery* [fig. 1] and his *Forest Scene*, the juxtaposition of dead and broken trees with a stream flowing turbulently through a rocky landscape is probably an allegorical reference to the transience of life. [1]

Despite Ruisdael's compositional schema and the presence of these allusions to metaphysical elements, the mood of the painting is less ominous than in comparable scenes. In large part the difference is one of scale. Not only is the painting relatively small, but also the forms themselves are not as massive and overpowering as in, for example, the *Forest Scene*. The landscape elements, moreover, are delicately painted. The branches of the trees are not formed with the contorted rhythms of those in Ruisdael's paintings from the early part of his career. Nuances of light on the leaves and branches of the trees are softly indicated with deft touches of the brush. These qualities, consistent with those of Ruisdael's later period, suggest that he probably executed this work around 1670, when he turned from the turbulent, vertical waterfall scenes of the preceding decade to more peaceful compositions in a horizontal format.

Ruisdael often adapted and modified motifs from one work to another. A landscape with a similar waterfall occurs in a painting of almost identical dimensions, also dated around 1670, that was formerly in a private collection in Oklahoma City. [2] The bridge is of a type found often in his works, for example, in his landscapes in the Frick Collection, New York, and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts. [3] The figure group on the bridge also appears in a different setting in his *Wooded and Hilly Landscape* in the Cleveland Museum of Art. [4]

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

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## COMPARATIVE FIGURES



**fig. 1** Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Jewish Cemetery*, mid-1650s, oil on canvas, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden. Photo: Elke Estel / Hans-Peter Klut

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## NOTES

- [1] See Seymour Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael* (New York, 1981), 34, and also Yuri Kuznetsov, "Sur le symbolisme dans les paysages de Jacob van Ruisdael," *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* 14 (1973): 31–41.
  - [2] Christopher Wright, *Catalogue of Old Master Paintings from a Private Collection in the United States* (Bradford and London, 1984), no. 7, and Seymour Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings, Drawings, and Etchings* (New Haven, 2001), no. 247.
  - [3] *Landscape with a Footbridge* (Seymour Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings, Drawings, and Etchings* [New Haven, 2001], no. 511) and *Landscape with Bridge, Cattle, and Figures* (no. 523).
  - [4] Seymour Slive, *Jacob van Ruisdael: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings, Drawings, and Etchings* (New Haven, 2001), no. 463.
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## TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The picture support is a moderate-weight fabric from which all tacking margins have been removed in the process of lining. The surface of the fabric was prepared to receive paint with a thin, cream-colored ground over which a grayish brown imprimatura, sparsely pigmented and transparent, was laid. The landscape is modeled with paint applied in moderately thick layers, with slight impasto.

The painting was treated in 2005 to remove discolored varnish and inpainting. The treatment revealed a substantial vertical loss in the sky to the right of the large cloud formation and a significant amount of abrasion surrounding the loss and throughout the sky.

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## PROVENANCE

Baron Etienne Martin de Beurnonville [1789-1876], château de la Chapelle, Labbeville, Val d'Oise; (his estate sale, by Pillet, Paris, 9-14 and 16 May 1881[12 May], no. 453); (Charles Sedelmeyer, Paris). Prince Johann II of Liechtenstein [1840-1929], Vienna and later Vaduz, by 1896;<sup>[1]</sup> (Frederick Mont, New York); purchased 18 October 1951 by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York;<sup>[2]</sup> gift 1961 to NGA.

[1] The first reference to the existence of the painting in the Liechtenstein Collection is in 1896 (see Wilhelm von Bode, *Die Fürstlich Liechtenstein'sche Galerie in Wien*, Vienna, 1896, 99). Gustav Friedrich Waagen's earlier account of a Ruisdael *Landscape with a Bridge* in the Liechtenstein Collection (Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Die vornehmsten Kunstdenkmäler in Wien*, Vienna, 1866: 287), must refer to a different work because the Washington painting was sold by the Baron de Beurnonville only in 1881. The provenance given in Strohmer's 1943 catalogue of the Liechtenstein Collection (Erich V. Strohmer, *Die Gemäldegalerie des Fürstern Liechtenstein in Wien*, Vienna, 1943) is incorrect; in the 1948 Lucerne exhibition catalogue (*Meisterwerke aus den Sammlungen des Fürsten von Liechtenstein*, Kunstmuseum), this painting's provenance was associated with the wrong painting.

[2] The bill from Frederick Mont to the Kress Foundation for three paintings from the Liechtenstein collection, including this one, is dated 18 October 1951; payment was made four days later (copy of annotated bill in NGA curatorial files, see also

The Kress Collection Digital Archive, <https://kress.nga.gov/Detail/objects/1217>).

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## EXHIBITION HISTORY

1948 Meisterwerke aus den Sammlungen des Fürsten von Liechtenstein, Kunstmuseum, Lucerne, 1948, no. 175.

1997 Rembrandt and the Golden Age: Dutch Paintings from the National Gallery of Art, The Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, 1997, unnumbered brochure.

1999 Masterpieces from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art; Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, 1999, no. 82, repro.

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- 1907 Hofstede de Groot, Cornelis. *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*. 8 vols. Translated by Edward G. Hawke. London, 1907-1927: 4(1912):94, no. 295, 129, no. 407.
- 1907 Hofstede de Groot, Cornelis. *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*. 10 vols. Esslingen and Paris, 1907-1928: 4(1911):89, no. 295.
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*Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*

- 1959 *Paintings and Sculpture from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1959: 322, repro.
- 1964 Gorissen, Friedrich. *Conspectus Cliviae. Die klevische Residenz in der Kunst des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Kleve, 1964: no. 62.
- 1965 *Summary Catalogue of European Paintings and Sculpture*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1965: 119.
- 1968 National Gallery of Art. *European Paintings and Sculpture, Illustrations*. Washington, 1968: 106, repro.
- 1975 National Gallery of Art. *European paintings: An Illustrated Summary Catalogue*. Washington, 1975: 316, repro.
- 1977 Eisler, Colin. *Paintings from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: European Schools Excluding Italian*. Oxford, 1977: 146-147, fig. 132, as *Landscape with a Little Waterfall*.
- 1981 Schmidt, Winfried. *Studien zur Landschaftskunst Jacob van Ruisdaels: Frühwerke und Wanderjahre*. Hildesheim, 1981: 75, pl. 22.
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