



Adam Pynacker
Dutch, c. 1620 - 1673

Wooded Landscape with Travelers

late 1640s

oil on canvas

overall: 57 x 48 cm (22 7/16 x 18 7/8 in.)

framed: 77.2 x 69.4 cm (30 3/8 x 27 5/16 in.)

Gift of Ruth B. Benedict and Bertha B. Leubsdorf in memory of Sophie and Carl Boschwitz 1979.27.1

ENTRY

In this densely wooded landscape, dappled light draws the eye to the various figural groups that help enliven the scene. In the foreground four resting travelers quietly converse while in the distance a man and a woman tend a fire on the bank of a stream, perhaps to prepare a repast for the travelers resting in a nearby boat. Light not only picks out figural groups, but also illuminates pockets of grass and accents tree trunks and the lively rhythms of branches, even those growing from broken logs lying on the ground.

This landscape, which is neither signed nor dated, has been attributed to Adam Pynacker by Bode, Nieuwstraten, and Harwood. [1] An early work, it probably dates to the late 1640s. [2] In style and character, this painting relates closely to *Wooded Landscape with a Ford* in the Museum Bredius [fig. 1], which Harwood dates about 1648. [3] The stump in the foreground of that latter work, with its high projecting branch on the left and a lower branch on the right, is strikingly similar to the stump on the far bank in the *Wooded Landscape with Travelers*. The horizontal log with its lacelike branches also resembles the boughs of the dead tree enclosed in the underbrush in the National Gallery of Art painting. More significantly, the handling of space in these works is much the same: in both paintings the artist composed his scene with a series of planes approximately parallel to the picture plane.

Pynacker's setting is undoubtedly imaginary, although the roughness and untamed character of this hilly terrain, the types of trees, as well as their other tonalities, reflect the character of the eastern region of the Netherlands. Indeed, the figures

are dressed in contemporary clothes similar to those one would expect from Dutch travelers. Whether or not Pynacker did go to Italy, as Houbraken asserts, [4] there is little evidence in this early work that he was influenced by Italianate landscapists he would have seen there, except for the use of *contra-jour* light to accent figures and foliage. [5]

The prominence of the broken tree trunk in this work suggests, as Harwood has already postulated, that Pynacker looked beyond his native Schiedam for artistic inspiration and turned to the far more active community of painters in nearby Rotterdam. [6] There he would have met, among others, Herman Saftleven (Dutch, 1609 - 1685), who painted in 1647 a comparable forest scene with resting travelers that is similarly dominated by a huge broken tree stump (see the 1995 catalog entry PDF for the comparative image). This motif, however, was not unique to Saftleven, and, indeed, it gained great prominence in landscape paintings of the late 1640s. For example, it is also seen in paintings as diverse as Jacob van Ruisdael's *A Blasted Elm with a View of Egmond aan Zee*, 1648 (The Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire), and Salomon van Ruysdael's *River Landscape with Ferry*. Whether the broken tree trunk had specific symbolic associations, such as the transience of life, or whether artists were attracted to it for other pictorial reasons is not known.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

April 24, 2014

COMPARATIVE FIGURES



fig. 1 Adam Pynacker, *Wooded Landscape with a Ford*, c. 1648, oil on panel, Museum Bredius, The Hague

NOTES

- [1] Wilhelm von Bode, director of the Prussian Royal Museums, 1906–1920, in a label attached to the back of *Wooded Landscape with Travelers*, probably written in 1925: “Die vorstehend abgebildete Landschaft ist ein tüchtiges u. charakteristisches Bild der Adam Pynacker, von beste Erhaltung, W. V. Bode.” See letter to purchaser Carl Boschwitz from Dr. Eduard Plietzsch, director, Galerie van Diemen, Berlin, September 24, 1925, in NGA curatorial files; J. Nieuwstraten, director, Rijksbureau von Kunsthistorische Documentatie, letter, April 26, 1979, also in National Gallery of Art curatorial files; and Laurie B. Harwood, *Adam Pynacker (c. 1620–1673)* (Doornspijk, 1988), 113, no. 9.
- [2] This date is also proposed by J. Nieuwstraten, director, Rijksbureau von Kunsthistorische Documentatie, letter, April 26, 1979, in National Gallery of Art curatorial files. Laurie B. Harwood, *Adam Pynacker (c. 1620–1673)* (Doornspijk, 1988), 113, no. 9, proposes c. 1649. Pynacker’s earliest dated painting is 1650. See Laurie B. Harwood, *Adam Pynacker (c. 1620–1673)* (Doornspijk, 1988), 18, no. 15.
- [3] Laurie B. Harwood, *Adam Pynacker (c. 1620–1673)* (Doornspijk, 1988), 101, no. 4. Reproduced in Albert Blankert, *Museum Bredius: Catalogus van de Schilderijen en Tekeningen* (The Hague, 1978), 102, where, however, Blankert suggests a date of 1650/1655.

- [4] Arnold Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen*. 3 vols. (The Hague, 1753; reprint: Amsterdam, 1976): 2:96. Houbraken does not indicate when Pynacker went to Italy, and the possibility exists that Pynacker travelled to Italy at a later stage of his career.
- [5] See, for example, *An Italianate Evening Landscape* by Jan Both (Dutch, 1615/1618 - 1652). Although Both painted this work after he returned to Utrecht, it reflects the style of paintings he made in Italy.
- [6] Laurie B. Harwood, *A Golden Harvest: Paintings by Adam Pynacker*, exh. cat., Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (Williamstown, MA, 1994), 25.
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TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The support, a medium-weight, plain-weave fabric, has been lined with the right, left, and top tacking margins trimmed and the bottom tacking margin turned out and incorporated into the picture plane. A hard, brittle layer of sizing is discernible below the thin, tan ground layer. Paint is applied as fluid pastes and stippling in the foliage.

The condition of the painting is only moderately good. The greens in the landscape, moreover, have darkened over time. Discrete inpainting covers scattered small losses, and later repaint is found along the bottom edge. In 1978 the painting was lined and discolored varnish and inpainting were removed.

PROVENANCE

(Galerie van Diemen, Berlin); sold 1925 to Carl Boschwitz, New York; [1] by inheritance 1977 to his daughters, Dr. Ruth B. Benedict [1913-1993], Washington, D.C., and Bertha B. Leubsdorf, New York; gift (partial and promised) 1979 to NGA; gift completed 1980.

[1] See the letter dated 24 September 1925 from Dr. Eduard Plietzsch of the Galerie van Diemen to Carl Boschwitz, in NGA curatorial files.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

1994 A Golden Harvest: Paintings by Adam Pynacker, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, 1994, no. 2, repro.

2002 Extended loan for use by Attorney General John Ashcroft, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C., 2002-2005.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1985 National Gallery of Art. *European Paintings: An Illustrated Catalogue*. Washington, 1985: 321, repro.
- 1988 Harwood, Laurie B. *Adam Pynacker (c. 1620-1673)*. Doornspijk, 1988: no. 9.
- 1994 Harwood, Laurie B. *A Golden Harvest: Paintings by Adam Pynacker*. Exh. cat. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota. Williamstown, 1994: 40-41, no. 2, repro.
- 1995 Wheelock, Arthur K., Jr. *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*. The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue. Washington, 1995: 201-202, color repro. 203.
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