

single diagonal that recedes to the left rather than with the counterbalancing diagonals found in *The Halt at the Inn*. This dynamic composition reinforces the sense of activity and enlivens the streetscape. As seems to have been his standard procedure, Ostade must have composed this painting in his studio on the basis of drawings he made from life. A comparison with his *Halt at the Inn* of 1646 in Vienna (fig. 1) suggests how he may have freely adapted his models from one painting to the next: the cripple in the Washington painting certainly derives from the same prototype as does the man carrying a bucket at the left in the Vienna painting. Presumably similar modifications occurred with building and animal studies as well.

Paulus Potter

1625–1654

PAULUS POTTER came from a family of artists. His father, Pieter Simonsz. Potter (c. 1600–1652) was a practicing artist, and his mother, Aaltje Paulusdr. Bartsius, was the sister of the painter Willem Bartsius (born c. 1612). Paulus was baptized in Enkhuizen, on 20 November 1625. In 1631, the family moved to Amsterdam, where, according to Houbraken, Potter studied painting under his father. Other writers, however, have argued that Potter studied with the Amsterdam painter Claes Moeyaert (c. 1590/1591–1655), whose style was similar to that of Pieter Potter. Since a “P. Potter” was registered in 1642 as a student of the Haarlem artist Jacob de Wet (1610–1671/72), it seems probable that Potter would have also been familiar with artistic currents in that city during the early 1640s.

By 1646, Potter was living in Delft where he joined the painters’ guild on 6 August of that year. In 1647 he seems to have moved to The Hague, for in that year his father registered with the guild in that city and his sister was baptized there. Potter himself is first mentioned in guild records there in 1649. On 3 July of the next year he married Adriana Balcken Eynde, the daughter of the city architect. From 1649 to 1652 Potter lived in a house on the Dunne Bierkade owned by the landscape painter Jan van Goyen (q.v.).

It may have been through his father-in-law, who worked on royal building projects, that Potter came

Notes

1. I would like to thank Dr. Claus Virch, a former owner of *Workmen before an Inn*, for providing information regarding the painting’s provenance (see letter of June 1991 in NGA curatorial files).

2. See Linda A. Stone-Ferrier in Lawrence 1983, 216.

3. There seems, however, to have been no scarcity of storks in the Netherlands if one is to judge from the comments of John Ray, see Ray 1673, 56.

4. Ray 1673, 50–51.

References

1829–1842 Smith, 9 (1842): 132–133, no. 32.

1877 Gueullette: 154–171.

1907–1927 HdG, 3 (1910): 466, no. 96.

1977a London: no. 20.

1991 Washington: 72, repro. 73.

to receive commissions from Amalia van Solms, widow of Prince Frederik Hendrik. Potter executed at least one picture for her, now in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, but apparently did not fulfill other obligations: in 1651 he was sued by the royal court for failure to deliver paintings.

By 1 May 1652, Potter had returned to Amsterdam, according to Houbraken at the bidding of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp. In the following year he painted the impressive life-sized equestrian portrait of Nicolaes Tulp’s son, Dirck Tulp (Six Collection, Amsterdam). Potter died from tuberculosis shortly thereafter. He was buried in the Nieuwezijdskapel on 17 January 1654. Despite the fact that he died at the age of only twenty-eight, Potter’s work was both original and influential. From very early in his career, he accorded animals an extremely important position in his compositions and was one of the first artists to depict them as subjects in their own right. He also produced some two dozen etchings of animal subjects.

Although he had no documented pupils, Potter may have influenced Karel du Jardin (c. 1622–1678); for landscapes he produced around the time of Potter’s death are quite similar in style.

Bibliography

Houbraken 1753, 2: 126–129.

Smith 1829–1842, 5 (1834): 113–165; 9 (1842): 620–628.

Michel 1906a.
HdG 1907–1927, 4 (1912): 582–670.
Zoege von Manteuffel 1924.
Von Arps-Aubert 1932.
Walsh 1985.
Amsterdam 1987: 416–422.
Brown/MacLaren 1992: 313–314.
The Hague 1994.

1942.9.52 (648)

A Farrier's Shop

1648
Oil on oak, 48.3 x 45.7 (19 x 18)
Widener Collection

Inscriptions

In transom frame above doorway on left: *paulus potter f. 1648*

Technical Notes: The cradled-panel support consists of a single oak board with a vertical grain. Worm tunnels are visible in the x-radiograph and on the back of the panel, and a small vertical hairline crack is found right of center in the bottom edge. Vertical striations are visible from the brush application of the moderately thick white ground. Opaque paint is applied in light passages with impasted highlights, while dark passages are thinly glazed in a series of translucent layers.

Pentimenti of a chicken and a stick are visible in the lower right corner, and minor changes were made in the legs of the standing dog. The sky and dark passages are moderately abraded, and there are scattered small losses and local abrasions, particularly along the right edge in a vertical band. The painting was treated in 1981 to remove discolored varnish and repaints, although insoluble overpaint was left in place in some areas.

Provenance: (Sale, Ghent, 23 September 1777, no. 49). Jacques Clemens, Ghent; (sale, Maison Mortuaire, Ghent, 21 June 1779, no. 212; Neijman, Amsterdam. Johan Philip de Monté, Utrecht; (sale, A. Lamme, Rotterdam, 4–5 July 1825, no. 1); M. L. J. Nieuwenhuys, London.¹ Count François-Alexandre-Charles Perregaux [1791–1838], Paris; by inheritance to Madame Perregaux; (sale, Ridet & Seigneur, Paris, 8 December 1841, no. 26); Madame Autran, Marseilles, by 1867. (Charles Sedelmeyer, Paris). M. Rodolphe Kann [d. 1905], Paris and Marseilles; (Duveen Brothers, London and New York, 1907); sold 1909 to Peter A. B. Widener, Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; inheritance from Estate of Peter A. B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park.

Exhibited: *Illustrated catalogue of 300 Paintings by Old Masters . . .*, Sedelmeyer Gallery, Paris, 1898; no. 108. *Winter Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters and Deceased Masters of the British School*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1908, no. 66.

ACCORDING TO Paulus Potter's widow, whenever the artist had an extra hour to take a walk, he would put a little sketchbook in his pocket. When he saw something that was intriguing or enjoyable and would serve his purpose, he straight away sketched the subject.² This anecdote about Potter's working process may well help explain how he came upon the idea to depict this intense little drama between man and animal outside a farrier's shop, a subject no other Dutch artist ever depicted. One can only imagine that Potter, on one of his walks near the polders outside of The Hague, was attracted by the commotion caused by a horse whose muzzle was being pinched to open his mouth so that his teeth could be filed, or floated.³ There he must have seen the horse pawing the air with his left foreleg; the intense concentration of the old, bespectacled man as he braced himself to work the rasp; and the openmouthed expression of his younger accomplice who held the twitch. There too he may have witnessed the slack-jawed gaze of the young bystander, who, with hands stuffed in his pockets, looks up at the operation in amazement. Inside the shop, hard at work at his anvil, is the blacksmith, taking no more interest in the proceedings than the dogs or the chickens scratching for food. Whether Potter recorded his impressions in his sketchbook or merely carried them home in his head, the subject was so vividly imbued in his mind that he was able to create a work that captured the sense and emotional intensity of the moment.

While the basic compositional scheme is one that Potter had developed in the previous year, particularly in *Barnyard Scene: Horses with Figures*, signed and dated 1647 (Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. no. E 24–3–17), this painting is unique in its vivid characterization of a scene. To enhance the dramatic effect Potter situated the action along a shaded diagonal wedge formed by the farrier shop and the small wooden structure attached to it. Long shadows on the ground and the brightly illuminated white horse behind the central group of figures accentuate the chiaroscuro contrasts between foreground and background. Above, gray smoke from the blacksmith's fire rises from the chimney and merges into the dark clouds of the windswept sky.

It is not known what influences inspired Potter to develop this compositional scheme, although enough similarities exist between it and paintings by Isack van Ostade (for example, *The Halt at the Inn*, 1942.9.49, and *Workmen before an Inn*, 1991.64.1) to suggest that he might have been familiar with that artist's work. Indeed, Potter apparently spent some