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JAN JOSEFSZ VAN GOYEN

Leiden 1596 - 1656 The Hague

River Landscape with Figures and Cattle in a Ferryboat Approaching a Village

Black chalk and grey wash on paper. Signed with monogram and dated in black chalk, lower right: VG 1653. Inscribed in brown ink in the upper right margin: N^o=36, inscribed in graphite lower left: 314 and annotated lower right: *van goojen*.

207 x 303 mm

PROVENANCE: Jonkheer Johan Adriaen Repelaer (1889-1966), The Hague – Anonymous sale, Venduehuis der Notarissen, The Hague, 7 November 1967, lot 143 – Acquired at the above sale by Alfred Brod, London – Acquired from him in 1967 by Peter Mertens – Acquired from him in 1970 by the parents of the last owners

LITERATURE: Hans-Ulrich Beck, *Jan van Goyen 1596-1656, Ein Oeuvreverzeichnis, I, Katalog der Handzeichnungen*, Amsterdam 1972, p. 186, no. 554, repr. – William W. Robinson, *Bruegel to Rembrandt, Dutch and Flemish Drawings from the Maida and George Abrams Collection*, exhib. cat., British Museum, London; Institut Néerlandais, Paris; Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass., 2002-3, p. 249, note 4 to cat. no. 18

Beautifully composed, superbly preserved, and still retaining its original, broad margins, this particularly fine river landscape by Jan van Goyen encapsulates his gift for depicting humble Dutch rural life with a vitality and grandeur that not only engage and delight the viewer, but also somehow ennoble his subject-matter.

This scene is a hive of activity. To the left, farmers transport cattle across the river in two flat-bottomed boats, while on the shore to the right we see a washerwoman at work and other figures in boats. Further to the right a horse and cart make their way along the village street. Even the exterior of the farmhouse that forms the central focus of the scene is animated in its dilapidation. The bright sunlight illuminating the façade of the house and the reflections on the surface of the river additionally energise the scene. The use of a light grey wash to evoke tonal values and areas of shadow is a characteristic of van Goyen's working method from 1647 onwards.

Van Goyen was a prolific painter and draughtsman. Throughout his career he specialized in the production of finished drawings intended for sale. The majority of these bear the autograph monogram VG and a date. He would base the compositions on cursory studies jotted down in sketchbooks during his travels.

As an investor, however, he was remarkably unsuccessful. In 1637, caught up in the frenzy of *tulip mania*, a phenomenon that by then had taken hold of the Netherlands, he invested considerable sums of money in bulbs. The average price of a single tulip far exceeded the annual income of a skilled worker. But by the early 1640s, the market had completely collapsed. The drastic fall in prices made him insolvent and he was forced to sell many of his possessions at public auction in 1652 and 1654. On his death in 1656 his widow was obliged to sell all their remaining property, including their house. As a result of such severe financial problems, his activity as a draughtsman reached a peak in 1653, the date of the present sheet. He must have made several saleable drawings a day that year, to judge from

nearly three hundred dated examples in Hans-Ulrich Beck's monograph. The present extremely fresh drawing is amongst the best examples from that productive period.

Van Goyen very probably sold many of his finished landscapes as series, nearly all of which have since been broken up and can no longer be reconstructed. The present sheet belongs to a particularly fine group of eight drawings identical in format and signed and dated 1653. They were formerly in the collection of the Repelaer family and remained together as a group until their dispersal at auction in 1967.¹ The present drawing retains the original framing lines and broad, blank margins that many finished, seventeenth-century Dutch landscape drawings would originally have possessed. In the eighteenth century, margins were almost always cut down for mounting.²

All the drawings in the group bear a number inscribed in brown ink - presumably by a dealer or collector - in the top right margin. Two of the drawings from the group are now in the Abrams Collection³ [Fig. 1], one drawing belongs to Clement C. Moore,⁴ and the remaining four sheets are held in private collections in Europe and the United States.



Fig. 1: *Fishermen on a Riverbank with Houses*, 1653

Black chalk, grey wash on paper; signed and dated in black chalk: *VG 1653*, inscribed in brown ink: *N°=36*, inscribed in graphite: *314* and annotated *van gooyen*.

204 x 304 mm

Maida and George Abrams Collection, Boston, MA.

¹ For the other seven drawings, see Hans-Ulrich Beck, *op. cit.*, 1972, nos. 356, 357, 372, 389, 390, 434 and 555.

² Robert-Jan te Rijdt, in *Kleur en Raffinement, Tekeningen uit de Unicorn collectie*, exhib. cat., Museum het Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam, and Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht 1994-5, p. 92, under cat. no. 39.

³ Beck, *op. cit.*, nos. 356 and 555 – William W. Robinson, *Bruegel to Rembrandt, Dutch and Flemish Drawings from the Maida and George Abrams Collection*, exhib. cat., British Museum, London; Institut Néerlandais, Paris; and Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Mass., 2002-3, nos. 18 and 19.

⁴ Beck, *op. cit.*, no. 389 – Jane S. Turner, *Rembrandt's World. Dutch Drawings from the Clement C. Moore Collection*, exhib. cat., The Morgan Library & Museum, New York 2012, no. 25.