



WILLEM van de Velde the younger
(Leiden 1633 - 1707 London)

. "A Galjoot and a Smalship at anchor and a small Kaag under sail"
circa 1652-1655
oil on panel: 31,5 x 43 cm;
signed with monogram 'WVV' (l.r. on the beam in the water)

Provenance:

Collection Countess de Grey and Barones Lucas (1750-1833), London; by descent to Thomas Philip Robinson, Third Baron de Grey, later second Earl de Grey thence by descent, until with Johnny van Haeften, London; from whom acquired by the former owner, a private Dutch collector, at TEFAF 2007.



Expertise:

Dr Jan Kelch, curator of the Dutch art department of the Staatliche Museum, Berlin, and co-author of 'Lof der Zeevaart', the indispensable overview of Dutch 17th century marine painting, published at the occasion of the exhibition under the same name in Rotterdam in 1996 and Berlin 1997. He confirms categorically that the painting belongs to the early years of Willem van de Velde the younger and is a specifically fine example.

. Literature: M.S. Robinson, 'The paintings of the Willem van de Velde', London 1990, Vol. I, pp. 524-25, no. 713, without ill. (incorrectly described as 1670's or later), based only on a photo from the Witt library



Detail photo signature lower right

Notes:

This early work shows the precocious talent of Willem van de Velde the Younger, who was to become the greatest Dutch marine painter of the seventeenth century. His most admired pictures, including the present work, are those of calm waters dating from the mid-1650s to the mid-60s, when he brought crystalline refinement to the manner he had adopted from Simon de Vlieger.

Willem van de Velde the Younger had a great influence on later marine painters until well into the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century he was a source of inspiration for none other than J.M.W. Turner.



This painting that Van de Velde made when he was barely 20 signifies the beginning of his career. Under a pale blue sky with heavy cumulus clouds, a small galliot and another flat-bottomed ship with its sails down are anchored close to shore on a calm sea, probably near the entrance of a harbor. A fluyt approaches from the right on a gentle breeze: a relatively small cargo ship with a narrow body, hundreds of which mainly sailed to the Baltic Sea countries and were important for the timber and grain trade. A barge ship with a spritsail, an inland vessel with swords, just tries to pass the two anchored ships along the windward side.

The art work breathes a serene atmosphere and belongs to the first phase of Willem de Velde de Jonge's artistry when he returned to painting at his father's studio in Amsterdam after he had completed a learning period with Simon de Vlieger. During that period he concentrated on seascapes with a light sky and calm water. The best works are dating from the 1653s to the early 1660s. The silvery atmospheric effects of the Vlieger's delicate seascapes had exerted a great influence on him and he painted a number of calm seascapes, rather monochrome in character, with diffuse light and soft reflections, aspects that are all strongly reminiscent of De Vlieger. This painting, which radiates a serene calmness, is one of the best works of his early period and already shows Van de Velde's mastery in the representation of subtle atmospheric moods and his mastery in perspective. The painting can be compared to paintings in Budapest, Kassel and St. Petersburg.

This picture reveals the young Van de Velde's mastery of aerial perspective which promotes a smooth transition across the expanse of water in the foreground to the boats close inshore and beyond, through a central vista, to the distant, low horizon. The small scale is characteristic of Van de Velde's compositions from this period as is the atmosphere of serene tranquillity.





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