



**JACOB JORDAENS and Studio**  
(1593-Antwerp-1678)

"Diogenes searching for an Honest Man"  
Oil on canvas: 120 x 162 cm; circa 1650  
Finely framed

*Provenance:*

sale organised by Jordaens' Heirs in The Hague, 22 March 1734, no.12, catalogued by Gerard Hoet; Viscount Boyne, Burwarton House, Shropshire; sale Knight Frank and Rutley, July 1956, lot 249, (as by Jacob Jordaens, bought by Delbanco); it has been in a private collection since the 1950's.

*Expertise:*

Prof. R.A. d'Hulst, Dilbeek, 30th of July 1992, datable circa 1650-55;  
Prof. Michael Jaffé, England, 4th of January 1994.



#### *Literature:*

Max Rooses, 'Jordaens' Leven en Werken' Amsterdam-Antwerp 1906, p 104: "In de veiling van Jordaens' nalatenschap, ('s Gravenhage, 1734) bevond zich een kleiner exemplaar" (compared to the Dresden version) - "in den Catalogus der veilingen F. Bernard Standstead (Londen, 1783) en van Geetryen en Beeckmans (Antwerpen, 1850) wordt een 'Diogenes een mensch zoekende' vermeld"; Compare: R.A. d'Hulst, Jordaens Drawings, 1924, p. 270, no. A182, as a studio work and 'at Grange's;

See for the large version: Gemälde Galerie Alte Meister, Dresden, "Katalog der ausgestellten Werke", Dresden 1987, no 110, with ill. (233 x 349 cm).

Compare: Paris, Musée de Louvre, 'Diogenes in search of a Man', cat. no. C29, ill. 508, watercolour over black chalk, 41 x 57,2 cm.

#### *Exhibition:*

Leeuwarden, Fries Museum, 'Van Jan Steen tot Jan Sluijters, De smaak van Douwes', from 21-11-98 until 21-2-99, cat. ill. no.17;

Sint-Niklaas, Belgium, Tentoonstellingszaal Zwijgershoek, 'In het Spoor van Rubens', Sept 2009 - January 2010, ill on p. 27 of the catalogue.

#### *Notes:*

Jacob Jordeans was born on May 19, 1593, the first of eleven children, to the wealthy linen merchant Jacob Jordaens Sr. and Barbara van Wolschaten in Antwerp. Little is known about Jordaens's early education. It can be assumed that he received the advantages of the education usually provided for children of his social class. This assumption is supported by his clear handwriting, his competence in French and in his knowledge of mythology.

Jordaens familiarity with biblical subjects is evident in his many religious paintings, and his personal interaction with the Bible was strengthened by his later conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism. Like Rubens, he studied under Adam van Noort, who was his only teacher. During this time Jordaens lived in Van Noort's house and became very close to the rest of the family. After eight years of training with Van Noort, he enrolled in the Guild of St. Luke as a "waterschilder", or watercolor artist.

This medium was often used for preparing tapestry cartoons in the seventeenth century. although examples of his earliest watercolor works are no longer extant. In the same year as his entry into the guild, 1616, he married his teacher's eldest daughter, Anna Catharina van Noort, with whom he had three children. In 1618, Jordaens bought a house in Hoogstraat (the area in Antwerp that he grew up in). He would then later buy the adjoining house to expand his household and workspace in 1639, mimicking Rubens's house built two decades earlier. He lived and worked here until his death in 1678.



Jordaens never made the traditional trip to Italy to study classical and Renaissance art. Despite this, he made many efforts to study prints or works of Italian masters available in northern Europe. For example, Jordaens is known to have studied Titian, Veronese, Caravaggio, and Bassano, either through prints, copies or originals (such as Caravaggio's Madonna of the Rosary). His work, however, betrays local traditions, especially the genre traditions of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, in honestly depicting Flemish life with authenticity and showing common people in the act of celebratory expressions of life. His commissions frequently came from wealthy local Flemish patrons and clergy, although later in his career he worked for courts and governments across Europe. Besides a large output of monumental oil paintings he was a prolific tapestry designer, a career that reflects his early training as a "watercolor" painter.

Jordaens' importance can also be seen by his number of pupils; the Guild of St. Luke records fifteen official pupils from 1621 to 1667, but six others were recorded as pupils in court documents and not the Guild records, so it is probable that he had more students than officially recorded. Among them were his cousin and his son Jacob. Like Rubens and other artists at that time, Jordaens' studio relied on his assistants and pupils in the production of his paintings. Not many of these pupils went on to fame themselves, however a position in Jordaens's studio was highly desirable for young artists from across Europe.

Jordaens was greatly influenced by Peter Paul Rubens who occasionally employed him to reproduce small sketches in a larger format. After the death of Rubens, Jordaens advanced to the position of one of the most admired painters in Antwerp. Like Rubens, Jordaens relied on a warm palette, naturalism, and a mastery of chiaroscuro and tenebrism.

#### *This painting:*

Diogenes, also known as Diogenes the Cynic, was a Greek philosopher and one of the founders of Cynicism (philosophy). He was born in Sinope, an Ionian colony on the Black Sea coast of Anatolia in 412 or 404 BC and died at Corinth in 323 BC.

Diogenes was a controversial figure. He was allegedly banished, or fled from, Sinope for debasement of currency. After his hasty departure from Sinope he moved to Athens where he proceeded to criticize many cultural conventions of the Athens of that day.

He modelled himself on the example of Heracles, believing that virtue was better revealed in action than in theory. He used his simple lifestyle and behavior to criticize the social values and institutions of what he saw as a corrupt, confused society. He had a reputation for sleeping and eating wherever he chose in a highly non-traditional fashion and took to toughening himself against nature. He declared himself a cosmopolitan and a citizen of the world rather than claiming allegiance to just one place.



Diogenes made a virtue of poverty. He begged for a living and often slept in a large ceramic jar, or pithos, in the marketplace. He became notorious for his philosophical stunts, such as carrying a lamp during the day, claiming to be looking for a "man" (often rendered in English as "looking for an honest man"). This stunt was beautifully immortalized by Jordaens in this current painting as well as another larger version that is now in the Gemaldegalerie in Dresden.

He criticized Plato, disputed his interpretation of Socrates, and sabotaged his lectures, sometimes distracting listeners by bringing food and eating during the discussions. Diogenes was also noted for having mocked Alexander the Great, both in public and to his face when he visited Corinth in 336 BC.

Diogenes was captured by pirates and sold into slavery, eventually settling in Corinth. There he passed his philosophy of Cynicism to Crates, who taught it to Zeno of Citium, who fashioned it into the school of Stoicism, one of the most enduring schools of Greek philosophy. No writings of Diogenes survive, but there are some details of his life from anecdotes (chreia), especially from Diogenes Laërtius' book *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* and some other sources.

*Expertise:*

Prof. R.A. d'Hulst suggests that the present painting is a smaller version with extended architectural elements, of the fully autograph composition by Jordaens, circa 1640, in the Gemäldegalerie, Dresden (223 x 349 cm); in Jaffé's opinion the elaborate architectural setting, absent in the earlier version of the subject at Dresden, indicates that the present work belongs to the latter half of Jordaens' production, after circa 1650. D'Hulst further states that the present painting was probably identical to lot 12 in the Jacob Jordaens sale in 1734 (see G.Hoet, *Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen met Derzelver Pryzen*, 1752, p. 400, no. 12); the 1734 sale catalogue records the size of lot 12 as '3 voet 1 dium' by '5 voet 1 dium' which is approximately 104,7 x 134 9 cm. The discrepancy in size between that and the present canvas is probably due to the fact that dimensions in every major city were different at this time (i.e. 1 foot in Antwerp was not the same length as 1 foot in the Hague).

Professor Jaffé as well, confirms in his letter that the painting is the same as the one catalogued by Hoet in the 1734 Jordaens sale.

He states: "The figure, upper left, leaning over the balustrade is a rapid rather brilliant touch, presumably introduced at a late stage. There are numerous pentimenti: in shifting the nearest cow's head further to the right; in shifting the lantern and the silhouette of Diogenes' forearm, by suppressing the landscape, which extended beyond the right hip, by the head of the third cow. The centurion's horse, the donkey, the nearest cow and the swine (which relates to the drawing formerly in the Museum Fodor, Amsterdam), are choice passages of painting, according to Jaffé.



Stylistically, there are various similarities between two paintings by Jordaens: "Diogenes searching for an Honest Man" and "Christ Blessing the Children" in the Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen. Apart from a similar size, the same canvas structure, the same use of colours and a similar painting technique there are many more characteristics.

In particular the similarity of the faces of the elder persons in both paintings is striking. The other figures do vary in facial expressions, but this is due to the nature of the subject.

Another strong resemblance can be found in the gestures of the figures in both paintings: finely pointing hands and fingers in both cases.

Despite the different subject matter of these paintings, some similarities in the composition can be seen here as well: the figures are set against each-other and almost wrought together. The central figure in the "Diogenes" painting draws the left and the right part of the painting together. As far as the architectural setting is concerned, we see that both paintings contain identical elements, such as arches and pillars.



Statue of Diogenes with a lamp at his birthplace in Sinop, Turkey





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