

Herdsmen Tending Cattle

1655/1660

Oil on canvas, 66 x 87.6 (26 x 34½)

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Inscriptions

Signed lower left: *A. cuyp*

Technical Notes: The original, plain-woven, medium-weight fabric support has been lined. Tacking margins have been removed, and the remaining paint edges are worn. Cusping is slight on all sides but particularly along the left edge, suggesting that the painting's dimensions may have been slightly reduced along that side. A large paint loss and a long horizontal tear are present in the upper left sky. The ground is of medium thickness, is pigmented, and has a cool, pale ochre color.

The paint, applied in thin layers with no appreciable texture or impasto, is modified with transparent and translucent glazes and thin opaque scumbles. Aside from the loss around the tear, scattered small losses occur in the distant landscape, along the edges, and in a vertical band through the cows. Moderate abrasion is present overall, particularly in the clouds and dark areas in the foreground and cows.

Conservation was carried out in 1958 to adjust inpainting in the sky and in 1978 to consolidate minor local flaking. A complete restoration was undertaken in 1994 in which old repaint and discolored varnish were removed.

Provenance: Possibly Gerard Vandergucht [1696–1776], London, c. 1750.¹ Henry Penton [d. 1806], London by 1760;² (sale, Skinner & Dyke, London, 10 June 1800, no. 49); Sir Henry Paulet St. John-Mildmay, 3rd Bart. [1764–1808]; by inheritance to his widow, Lady Jane St. John-Mildmay [1765–1857]; by inheritance to her grandson, Sir Henry Bouverie Paulet St. John-Mildmay, 5th Bart. [1810–1902]; by inheritance to his son, Sir Gerald Anthony Shaw-Lefevre-St. John-Mildmay, 7th Bart. [1860–1929], Dogmersfield; (M. Knoedler & Co., New York, from 1902); sold April 1905 to Andrew W. Mellon, Pittsburgh and Washington; died 28 December 1934 to The A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust, Pittsburgh.

Exhibited: *British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom*, London, 1866, no. 43. *Works by Old Masters and by Deceased Masters of the British School* (Winter Exhibition), Royal Academy, London, 1883, no. 243. *Loan Collection of Pictures*, Guildhall, London, 1894, no. 51. *Exhibition of Painters of the Dutch School*, Guildhall, London, 1903, no. 176. *Paintings by Old Masters from Pittsburgh Collections*, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1925, no. 10.

THIS PAINTING of herders and cattle situated along an inland waterway and near an evocative ruin has more arcadian than agricultural associations. In this respect it parallels a rich literary tradition that glorified the values of country life. These ideals es-

poused by P. C. Hooft, J. van Heemskerck, and other Dutch writers and playwrights were ones that seemed to have particular resonance in and around Dordrecht.³

As is mentioned in the entry for Cuyp's *River Landscape with Cows* (1986.70.1), Cuyp's father and teacher, Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp, painted a number of pastoral scenes in the 1630s and 1640s that had a profound influence on his son's early style and choice of subject matter.⁴ By the time Cuyp executed this work his style had evolved to the point where the rhythms of the landscape, the foliage, and the clouds had been fully transformed. Even though the theme has Dutch precedents and the ruin in the background is a free adaptation of the Merwede Tower near Dordrecht, one no longer has the sense that the scene is situated in a site specific to the Netherlands. Cliffs, diffused in golden light, now border the inland waterway; clouds hang quietly over the land rather than being swept by winds off the North Sea; and the bright red jacketed cowherd could as well be Italian as Dutch. Indeed, in the interim between *River Landscape with Cows* and this picture the influences of Cuyp's father and of Jan van Goyen (q.v.) have been fully replaced by that of returning Italianate artists, particularly Jan Both (c. 1615–1652) and Jan Baptist Weenix (1621–1660/1661). From these artists Cuyp also derived his broad, planar technique as well as the elegant and artificial rhythms of the foreground vines and branches.

Although it seems probable that Cuyp executed *Herdsmen Tending Cattle* in the mid- to late-1650s, establishing a precise date for this work is difficult given the dearth of dated paintings in his oeuvre. Many of the components of this work—the *contre-jour* light effects, the atmospheric character of the distant landscape, the abstract shapes of foreground rocks and lacy branches, and even the donkey and its saddle—are similar in character to *Horsemen and Herdsmen with Cattle* (1942.9.16), a painting that probably also dates in the mid- to late-1650s. The comparison between the works, however, points out that nuances of light, abstractions of form, and compositional organization are not as developed in *Herdsmen Tending Cattle* as in *Horsemen and Herdsmen with Cattle*, which suggests that this work was executed somewhat earlier, before Cuyp had fully mastered Italianate ideas.

Although *Herdsmen Tending Cattle* has been widely published and praised, its poor condition prior to the 1994 restoration made it difficult to fully appreciate its original qualities. Discolored varnish and extensive overpaint distorted its appearance; it has suffered various losses, and the surface is gener-



Aelbert Cuyp, *Herdsmen Tending Cattle*, 1937.1.59



Fig. 1. Copy of *Herdsmen Tending Cattle*, oil on canvas, Norfolk, England, Collection Graham Baron Ash of Wingfield Castle, Diss

ally abraded (see Technical Notes). The painting appears to have been slightly trimmed, which would account for the rather cramped quality of the composition. Its original appearance can perhaps be deduced from an old copy (fig. 1).⁵

Notes

1. The only source to mention Vandergucht (also written van der Gucht) in the provenance of this painting is the draft catalogue of Knoedler pictures in the National Gallery of Art (Mellon Collection), written about 1937 by G. H. McCall for Duveen and Company (copy at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts). McCall says that the picture was in the Vandergucht sale of 1777, whence it was acquired by Penton, but it is clear from the inscription on Vivares' engraving (see note 5) that the picture was in fact already in Penton's possession by 1760. Simpson 1953, 41, lists a *Landscape with Cattle etc.* by Cuyp as being no. 66 in a 1757 Vandergucht sale, where it was bought by "Jennens." It has not been possible, however, to confirm this reference or to know whether the painting in question is identical to *Herdsmen Tending Cattle*.

2. See Duveen notes in NGA curatorial files.

3. Lambert van den Bos, for example, the headmaster of a local school in Dordrecht, wrote a book entitled *Dordrechtsche Arcadia* in 1662.

4. For Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp see Reiss 1975, 82–105; Dordrecht 1977, 22–41; Dordrecht 1992, 144–155.

5. François Vivares' reproductive engraving, entitled *The Evening*, is dated 1760. It depicts the composition in reverse but, with the exception of a group of two birds, it is otherwise identical. The reduction in size, thus, must have occurred prior to this date. This print is listed in Le Blanc 1854–1889, 4: 141, no. 20; and Andresen 1870–1873, 2: 678, no. 17. In addition to the Ash copy of the composition, a replica is owned by Dr. Wallace B. Shute, Ottawa.

References

1827/1880 Burnet (1880): 26–27, pl. 6, fig. 1 (etching).

1829–1842 Smith, 5 (1834): 305, no. 75.
1891 Cundall: 161.
1894 Temple: 14, repro.
1907–1927 HdG, 2 (1909): 68, no. 203.
1913–1915 Graves, 1: 245, 247, 250.
1941 NGA: 50–51.
1949 Mellon: 96, repro.
1963 Walker: 314, repro.
1965 NGA: 35.
1968 NGA: 28, repro.
1975 Reiss: 129, no. 92, repro.
1975 NGA: 88–89, repro.
1976 Walker: 298, no. 402, color repro.
1983 Spicer: 251, 253, fig. 2.
1985 NGA: 109, repro.
1986 Sutton: 306, fig. 456.

1942.9.16 (612)

Horsemen and Herdsmen with Cattle

1655/1660

Oil on canvas, 120 x 171.5 (47 3/8 x 67 1/2)

Widener Collection

Inscriptions

In lower right corner: *A. cuyp.*

Technical Notes: The original, medium-weight, plain-weave fabric support has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed. Cusping on all sides indicates that the original dimensions have been retained. A warm white ground layer is present. The paint is applied in thin layers, both opaque and translucent, blended wet into wet with minimal brush-marking and no appreciable impasto. Cuyp appears to have enlarged the scale of the Monterberg, the hill on the far left.

Numerous scattered tiny losses indicate a history of flaking, but abrasion is slight. Inpainting is discrete but discolored. An aged varnish layer reinforces the golden tonality of the painting, with brown remnants of old coatings trapped in the interstices.

In 1967 the painting was lined, partially cleaned, and inpainted, and a natural resin varnish applied over the existing surface coating.

Provenance: Johan van der Linden van Slingeland, Dordrecht, by 1752;¹ (sale, Yver, Delfos, Dordrecht, 22 August 1785, no. 71);² Fouquet. M. Albert Dubois, Paris; (sale, Lebrun, Paris, 20 December 1785, no. 16, bought in). William Smith [1756–1835], Norwich;³ Edward Gray, until 1830.⁴ Alexander Baring, later 1st Baron Ashburton [1774–1848], London, by 1834;⁵ by inheritance to his son, Lord Ashburton, The Grange, until 1907; (Thomas Agnew & Sons, London). (Arthur J. Sulley, London, until 1909); 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: *Italian Recollections: Dutch Painters of the Golden Age*, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1990, 109–110, no. 28.