

ebony frames, Isaack van Ruysdael was also a painter. Jacob van Ruisdael's earliest works, dated 1646, were made when he was only seventeen or eighteen. He entered the Haarlem painters' guild in 1648. It is not known who his early teachers were, but he probably learned painting from his father and his uncle Salomon van Ruysdael. Some of the dunescapes that he produced during the late 1640s clearly draw on works by Salomon, while his wooded landscapes of these years suggest he also had contact with the Haarlem artist Cornelis Vroom (c. 1591–1661).

Houbraken writes that Ruisdael learned Latin at the request of his father, and that he later studied medicine, becoming a famous surgeon in Amsterdam. Two documents are cited by later authors in support of the latter claim, the first being a register of Amsterdam doctors that states that a "Jacobus Ruijsdael" received a medical degree from the University of Caen, in Normandy, on 15 October 1676. This entry in the register has been crossed out—it is not clear when—and it seems unlikely that in his late maturity, Ruisdael the successful painter would have gone to France to get a medical degree. Nonetheless, a landscape with a waterfall was sold in 1720 as the work of "Doctor Jacob Ruisdael"; thus the possibility that the artist Jacob van Ruisdael was also a practicing doctor cannot be entirely dismissed.

During the early 1650s, Ruisdael traveled to Westphalia near the Dutch-German border with Nicolaes Pietersz. Berchem (q.v.), whom Houbraken identifies as "een groot vrient" [a great friend] of Ruisdael. Among the sites they visited was the castle Bentheim, which appears in both artists' work from this period.

About 1656 Ruisdael settled in Amsterdam, where on 14 July 1657 he was baptized into the Reformed Church (he had been brought up a Mennonite). In 1659 he was granted citizenship in Amsterdam, and his name appears again in the records the next year when he testified on 8 July that Meindert Lubbertsz., who subsequently adopted the name Hobbema (q.v.), had been his pupil. In Amsterdam, Ruisdael must have known the work of Allart van Everdingen (1621–1675) who resided in that city from about 1652. Everdingen had traveled to Scandinavia in the 1640s and painted views of pine forests and rocky waterfalls, subjects that Ruisdael explored in the mid-1660s. From about 1670 until his death, Ruisdael lived over the shop of the Amsterdam art and book dealer Hieronymous Sweerts, located just off the Dam, Amsterdam's main public square. He was buried in his birthplace

of Haarlem on 14 March 1682, but may well have died in Amsterdam, where he is recorded in January of that year.

One of the greatest and most influential Dutch artists of the seventeenth century, Ruisdael was also the most versatile of landscapists, painting virtually every type of landscape subject. His works are characterized by a combination of almost scientific observation with a monumental and even heroic compositional vision, whether his subject is a dramatic forest scene or a panoramic view of Haarlem. Early in his career he also worked as an etcher. Thirteen of his prints have survived, along with a considerable number of drawings.

In addition to Ruisdael's numerous followers, most important of which were Meindert Hobbema and Jan van Kessel (1641/1642–1680), the names of several other artists are associated with him by virtue of their having contributed figures to his landscapes. Among these are Berchem, Philips Wouwerman (1619–1668), Adriaen van de Velde (1636–1672), and Johannes Lingelbach (c. 1624–1674).

#### Bibliography

- Houbraken 1753, 3: 65–66.  
 Smith 1829–1842, 6 (1835): 1–107; 9 (1842): 680–718.  
 Michel 1890a.  
 HdG 1907–1927, 4 (1912): 1–349.  
 Rosenberg 1928.  
 Simon 1930.  
 Wiegand 1971.  
 Giltay 1980.  
 Schmidt 1981.  
 The Hague 1981.  
 Amsterdam 1987: 437–465.  
 Walford 1991.  
 Brown/MacLaren 1992: 379.

1942.9.80 (676)

#### *Forest Scene*

c. 1655  
 Oil on canvas, 105.5 x 123.4 (41 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 52 $\frac{1}{8}$ )  
 Widener Collection

#### Inscriptions

At lower right: *J v Ruisdael* (JvR in ligature)

**Technical Notes:** The picture support is a moderate-weight fabric from which all tacking margins have been removed in the process of lining. The fabric was prepared with a thin, cream-colored ground over which a grayish brown imprimatura, sparsely pigmented and transparent, was laid. The landscape is modeled with paint applied in moderately thick layers, with slight impasto. The picture is in good condition.

The few small retouches that exist are concentrated in the sky along the top and righthand edges. An area of whitened retouch is located halfway up the right edge. The varnish is in poor condition, with numerous areas of delamination which are opaque. The painting has not been restored since its acquisition.

**Provenance:** Probably owned by Francis Nathaniel, 2nd Marquess Conyngham [1797–1876], Mount Charles, County Donegal, and Minster Abbey, Kent.<sup>1</sup> Hugh Hume Campbell, 7th Bart., Marchmont House, Borders, Scotland, by 1857;<sup>2</sup> (sale, Christie, Manson, & Woods, London, 16 June 1894, no. 48); (P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London); sold 1894 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:** British Institution, London, 1866, no. 59 (possibly also 1855, no. 54, and 1857, no. 79).<sup>3</sup> *Exhibition of the Works of Old Masters . . .*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1877, no. 199.

RUISDAEL'S majestic forest landscape overpowers the viewer with its large scale as well as the forcefulness of the image. The view is across a broad waterfall to a forest glade, in which several sheep graze. In the middle distance, a man and a woman travel along a path that crosses the rolling hillside. The figures, however, seem all but insignificant in comparison to the massive trees and rocks that surround them. The broad, rocky ledge with its waterfall and gigantic, broken birch trees in the foreground is at once forbidding and foreboding.<sup>4</sup> On a rock outcropping to the right a huge oak tree, its roots grappling for support and nourishment, towers above the forest. The stark, gray, cloudy sky and deep greenish hues of the foliage underscore the somber mood.

Ruisdael painted such forest scenes of water roaring over a rocky ledge many times during his long and productive career. As suggested by the half-timbered house visible in a similar landscape in Frankfurt (fig. 1), he may have encountered such landscape elements on his travels along the Dutch-German border in the early 1650s. The Washington painting also shares compositional characteristics with a landscape with a waterfall by Ruisdael in the Uffizi, Florence (fig. 2), including the diminutive figures and sheep.

Few of Ruisdael's paintings after 1653 are dated, so a precise chronology of his work is not possible. The general evolution of his style and range of interests, though, is now understood, and a framework exists for placing his works within certain time periods. The Uffizi painting, with its loose brushwork and more open composition, belongs to the 1670s, while the Washington landscape with its



Fig. 1. Jacob van Ruisdael, *Forest Scene with Waterfall*, mid-1650s, oil on canvas, Städelches Kunstinstitut Frankfurt, photo: Ursula Edelmann

closed composition and densely painted trees, is characteristic of works from the mid-1650s. Also distinctive for this earlier period of Ruisdael's career is the combination of the scene's rather heavy and somber mood and the delicacy of the artist's painterly touch. In this work, for example, he carefully articulated individual blades of grass and leaves, patterns of bark, and the flow of the water cascading over the rocks.

In many respects *Forest Scene* shares characteristics with *The Jewish Cemetery* in Dresden (fig. 3). Although the subject and lighting effects are more

Fig. 2. Jacob van Ruisdael, *Landscape with Waterfall*, 1670s, oil on canvas, Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi





Jacob van Ruisdael, *Forest Scene*, 1642.9.80

dramatic in the Dresden painting than in *Forest Scene*, the somber mood, the closed composition, and the descriptive character of Ruisdael's technique for rendering details are comparable. The two paintings even share certain motifs, such as the presence of wild viburnum growing along the edge of the forest. The date of *The Jewish Cemetery* has been much debated, with suggestions ranging from 1653/1655 until 1679.<sup>5</sup> A broad consensus, however, places it and the Detroit version of the same subject in the mid-1650s, a date likewise appropriate for the Washington work.<sup>6</sup>

Given the compositional and stylistic similarities between the *Forest Scene* and *The Jewish Cemetery*, one must also ask whether thematic ones exist as well. As has been frequently discussed, the presence of tombs, ruins, broken tree trunks, dead birches, and rainbows in the two versions of *The Jewish Cemetery* have explicit allegorical significance. They allude to the transience of life, particularly the temporal nature of man's endeavors, and also to the hope for renewed growth.<sup>7</sup> Similar symbolic significance alluding to the power and force of the cycle of nature was almost certainly attached to the compositional elements of the Washington painting. The dramatic forms of the tree stumps and the fallen birch trees establish the somber tenor of the scene, but directly behind them grow the viburnum bushes that flower in the spring, the time of life's renewal. The stream itself, which also has a symbolic function in *The Jewish Cemetery*, traditionally has served as a metaphor for the continuum of the forces of nature.

Fig. 3. Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Jewish Cemetery*, mid-1650s, oil on canvas, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister



## Notes

1. HdG 1907–1927, 4: 119. The only source of information concerning the picture's whereabouts prior to 1857 is HdG, whose listing of the painting is extremely confusing. It seems that any or all of four entries in his catalogue raisonné (nos. 285, 367, 418, and 643c) may contain information that relates to the *Forest Scene*, but these entries also contain additional—and contradictory—provenance listings, which must refer to at least one other painting. It nonetheless seems likely that before the *Forest Scene* was acquired by Sir Hugh Hume Campbell, it was owned by a member of the Conyngham family of Ireland, most probably the 2nd Marquess, but also possibly his father, Henry, 3rd Baron and 1st Marquess Conyngham (1766–1832).

2. Waagen 1854–1857, supplement: 441. The NGA's *Forest Scene* may or may not have been the Ruisdael painting from Campbell's collection that was in the British Institution exhibition of 1855 (see note 3).

3. None of the catalogues of these three exhibitions gives any description of the pictures exhibited, making positive identification difficult. By the time Waagen was writing in 1857, Campbell owned three Ruisdaels, and so it is not necessarily correct to assume that the "Landscape" that appeared in the 1855 exhibition, or the "Landscape with figures" of 1857, were actually the same painting as *Forest Scene*. In the case of the 1866 exhibition, however, the more specific title of "Rocky landscape with waterfall" does not fit either of the other two Campbell Ruisdaels described by Waagen. Assuming that Campbell did not acquire another Ruisdael similar to ours between 1857 and 1866, it seems certain that the NGA's *Forest Scene* actually was the painting shown in this exhibition.

4. The identification of the foreground trees as birches was made by Dr. Henry M. Cathey, director, U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, in conversation on 25 September 1985. According to Ashton, Davies, and Slive 1982, 2–31, Ruisdael depicted beeches rather than birches. For the purposes of this entry the trees will be referred to as birches.

5. The Hague 1981, 68. Here, in the bibliography to his catalogue entry for the Detroit version of *The Jewish Cemetery*, Slive lists the dates that various authors have ascribed to each of Ruisdael's two treatments of the subject. (Slive places both paintings in the mid-1650s.) Walford 1991, 95, dates the two versions of *The Jewish Cemetery* to "about 1653/4."

6. A much later date for the *Forest Scene* is not likely because by the mid-1660s Ruisdael had begun to paint his large vertical Scandinavian waterfall scenes that were derived from the example of Allart van Everdingen (1621–1675). In these works he developed a greater looseness of touch, particularly in representing the spray of water falling over rocks, than is evident in *Forest Scene*.

7. See The Hague 1981, 34; also Kuznetsov 1973, 31–41.

## References

- 1854–1857 Waagen, supplement (1857): 441.
- 1866 London: no. 59.
- 1877 London: no. 199.
- 1885–1900 Widener: no. 274.
- 1907–1927 HdG, 4 (1912): 92, no. 285 (possibly also 4: 119, 134, 203).
- 1913–1916 Widener: unpaginated.
- 1923 Widener: unpaginated, repro.
- 1928 Rosenberg: 87, no. 241.
- 1930 Simon: 62, pl. 8.
- 1931 Widener: 94–95, repro.



- 1935 Tietze (English ed. 1939): 322, no. 192.
- 1948 Widener: 58, repro.
- 1960 Baird: 18–19, repro.
- 1963 Walker: 194.
- 1965 NGA: 119, no. 676.
- 1968 NGA: 106, no. 676.
- 1975 NGA: 326–327, repro.
- 1976 Walker: 292–293, no. 391, repro.
- 1981 Schmidt: 90.
- 1984 Wheelock: 36–37, color repro.
- 1985 NGA: 363, repro.
- 1986 Sutton: 305.
- 1991 Walford: 102–104, 117, 144, repro.
- 1992 NGA: 136, color repro.

1961.9.85 (1637)

## Landscape

c. 1670  
Oil on canvas, 53.2 x 60 (21 x 23⅞)  
Samuel H. Kress Collection

### Inscriptions

On rock to left of center: *J v Ruisdael* (JvR in ligature)

**Technical Notes:** The picture support is a moderate-weight fabric from which all tacking margins have been removed in the process of lining. The surface of the fabric was prepared to receive paint with a thin, cream-colored ground over which a grayish brown imprimatura, sparsely pigmented and transparent, was laid. The landscape is modeled with paint applied in moderately thick layers, with slight impasto. The picture is in good condition. The few small retouches that exist are concentrated in the sky along the top edge and along the righthand edge. An area of whitened retouch is located halfway up the right edge. The varnish is in poor condition, with numerous areas of delamination that are opaque.

**Provenance:** Baron Etienne Martin de Beurnonville [d. 1881], Paris; (sale, Pillet, Paris, 9–16 May 1881, no. 453); (Charles Sedelmeyer, Paris); Prince Johann II of Liechtenstein [d. 1929], Vienna and later Vaduz, by 1896;<sup>1</sup> (Frederick Mont, New York); purchased 1951 by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York.<sup>2</sup>

**Exhibited:** *Meisterwerke aus den Sammlungen des Fürsten von Liechtenstein*, Kunstmuseum, Lucerne, 1948, no. 175.

IN THIS LANDSCAPE Ruisdael has depicted a view across a small waterfall that transforms a smoothly flowing river into a turbulent stream. As the water rushes toward the lower left foreground it passes under a wooden bridge that is traversed by a mother and child and their dog. The path they follow enters a densely forested, somewhat hilly terrain, passing by three large oak trees that dominate the center of the composition. One of these trees is almost dead

and another has a dramatically broken branch hanging precariously over the falls.

In contrast to paintings by Hobbema, Ruisdael often composed his scenes so as to limit the viewer's easy access into the landscape. In this painting the land across the river can only be reached by way of the bridge, but the juncture of the bridge and the near shore does not occur within the picture. The effect is to make the landscape unapproachable and forbidding, a mood intensified by the ominous trees on the far shore and the steel gray clouds overhead. As in Ruisdael's painting *The Jewish Cemetery* (see 1942.9.80, fig. 3) and his *Forest Scene* (1942.9.80), the juxtaposition of dead and broken trees with a stream flowing turbulently through a rocky landscape is probably an allegorical reference to the transience of life.<sup>3</sup>

Despite Ruisdael's compositional schema and the presence of these allusions to metaphysical elements, the mood of the painting is less ominous than in comparable scenes. In large part the difference is one of scale. Not only is the painting relatively small, but also the forms themselves are not as massive and overpowering as in, for example, the *Forest Scene*. The landscape elements, moreover, are delicately painted. The branches of the trees are not formed with the contorted rhythms of those in Ruisdael's paintings from the early part of his career. Nuances of light on the leaves and branches of the trees are softly indicated with deft touches of the brush. These qualities, consistent with those of Ruisdael's later period, suggest that he probably executed this work around 1670, when he turned from the turbulent, vertical waterfall scenes of the preceding decade to more peaceful compositions in a horizontal format.

Ruisdael often adapted and modified motifs from one work to another. A landscape with a similar waterfall occurs in a painting of almost identical dimensions, also dated around 1670, that was formerly in a private collection in Oklahoma City.<sup>4</sup> The bridge is of a type often found in his works, for example, in his landscapes in the Frick Collection, New York, and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.<sup>5</sup> The figure group on the bridge also appears in a different setting in his *A Wooded and Hilly Landscape, Evening* in the Cleveland Museum of Art (inv. no. 63.275).

### Notes

1. The first reference to the existence of the painting in the Liechtenstein Collection is 1896 (see Bode 1896, 99). Waagen's account of a Ruisdael *Landscape with a Bridge* in the Liechtenstein Collection (Waagen 1866, 287) must refer to a