

# RICHARD GREEN

SALOMON VAN RUYSDAEL

Naarden 1600/03 - 1670 Haarlem

Ref: CC 232

*River estuary with wijdschips, a rowing boat and other small vessels*



Signed with monogram lower left: *SR*  
Oil on panel: 14 5/8 x 12 5/8 in / 37.1 x 32.1 cm  
Frame size: 19 3/4 x 18 1/4 in / 50.2 x 46.4 cm  
In a black polished seventeenth century style Dutch frame

Painted *circa* 1660



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## *Provenance:*

Raoul Dastrac (1891-1969), Aiguillon, France;  
by inheritance to his widow;  
by family descent

## *Exhibited:*

Paris, Musée Carnavalet, *Chefs d'Oeuvres des Collections Parisiennes*, exh. cat. by M Legrand,  
November-December 1950, no.68

## *Literature:*

W Stechow, *Salomon van Ruysdael*, Berlin 1975, p.76, no.44A

Salomon van Ruysdael was the poet of Dutch waterways, depicting tree-fringed rivers with laden ferry boats, frozen inland waterways with townsfolk enjoying the pleasure of skating, and shorelines with the cargo vessels that were the lifeblood of the Dutch economy. In the seventeenth century, there was less drained land in the northern Netherlands than there is today and by far the easiest means of transport was by boat. Travel along the canals between towns was very efficient; Haarlem, for example, had an hourly barge service to Amsterdam.

In the mid-1640s Ruysdael began to paint small works on panel in which boats float on an uncluttered foreground against a vast sky. He developed this theme throughout the 1650s and early 1660s. *River estuary with nijdschips* is one of a group of upright views depicting the inland waterways of Holland which Ruysdael developed around 1660. The sky occupies two-thirds of the panel, filled with clouds spiralling up into the blue, five seagulls rising on the air currents. In the right distance, the lowering grey parts to reveal a gleam of the hidden sun, the sunlit part of the clouds depicted in creamy impasto. A buff-pink ground is characteristic of this group of marines: here Ruysdael allows it to show slightly through to give a warm undertone to the clouds.

The foreground of gently lapping waves is in shadow, emphasising the horizontal depth of the composition in tension with the vast, vertical skyscape. On the right horizon is a village and in the central distance two church towers. They read clearly, despite being only two millimetres high. Ruysdael keeps an extraordinary balance between painterliness and linearity, employing loose brushwork for the clouds and exquisite detail in the boats which bob serenely, anchoring the left-hand triangle of the work. They are familiar Dutch vessels: a rowing boat, *smalschips* and *nijdschips*. The latter were cargo boats with a broad beam and shallow draught, so called because they were wider than 16ft 16in; they were used on the larger inland waterways such as the Harlemmermeer and the Zuiderzee. Narrow barges would take goods into the canals of the cities.

Ruysdael spent all his career in Haarlem and was inspired by the watery expanse of the Harlemmermeer (today a polder, reclaimed in the nineteenth century, on which Amsterdam's airport stands). Sometimes his inland waterway paintings depict identifiable topography, such as the upright *Ships on the Boven-Merwede with Gorinchem in the distance*, 1659 (private collection)<sup>1</sup> and *A*

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<sup>1</sup> Sotheby's New York, 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024, lot 323.

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wijdschip *and other small Dutch vessels on the Harlemmermeer, with Heemstede Castle in the distance*<sup>2</sup>. Very often however, as with the present work, his paintings avoid topographical identification in favour of conjuring up the beloved characteristics of his hard-won Dutch homeland, imbued with great sensitivity to atmosphere and classical calm.

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<sup>2</sup> Stechow, *op. cit.*, no.302.

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## **SALOMON VAN RUYSDAEL**

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Salomon Jacobsz van Ruysdael was born in Naarden in Gooiland. He was originally called Salomon de Gooyer (Goyer), but he and his brother Isaack (1599-1677), also an artist, adopted the name 'Ruysdael' from Castle Ruisdael (or Ruisschendael), near their father's home town. Salomon spelled his name Ruysdael (or occasionally Ruyesdael), as distinguished from his nephew Jacob, who used the name Ruisdael. Salomon entered the painters' guild in Haarlem in 1623 (as Salomon de Gooyer), was named *vinder* of the guild in 1647, dean the following year, and a *vinder* again in 1669. His earliest dated painting is of 1626, and as early as 1628 he was praised as a landscapist by the chronicler of Haarlem, Samuel van Ampzing. In a document of 1651 he was also called a merchant, and dealt in blue dye for Haarlem's bleacheries. His wife, Maycken Buysse, was buried in St Bavo Church in Haarlem on 15th December 1660. Like his father, Salomon was a Mennonite and was listed as such when he was living on the Kleyne Houtstraat in 1669. His religion forbade him to bear arms but he contributed to Haarlem's civic guard. Although he seems to have lived in Haarlem all his life, he undoubtedly travelled in the country; his paintings depict scenes in, among other places, Leiden, Utrecht, Amersfoort, Arnhem, Alkmaar, Rhenen, Dordrecht and Weesp. The artist was buried in St Bavo's Church on 3rd November 1670.

Although Salomon's teacher is unknown, his earliest works of c.1626-29 recall the art of Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630), who worked in Haarlem from 1609-1618. Salomon's early works also show many parallels with the landscapes of Jan van Goyen and Pieter de Molijn and it is likely that all three influenced one another. In addition to numerous landscapes, river views and seascapes of calm - never stormy - weather, Salomon also painted a few still lifes in his later years. Salomon was the father of Jacob Salomonsz. van Ruysdael (c.1629/30-1681), also a painter.

Biography by Peter C Sutton