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JOHANNES PAUWELS MOREELSE

Utrecht 1603 - 1634

Shepherd holding a Pan's Pipe.

Oil on Panel, 71.5 x 59.2 cm
Monogrammed: *JPM* (in ligature)



Provenance: Probably in the collection of Gabriel Marselis (1609-1673);
Lord of Callenborg Johannes van Marselis (1641-1702);
Jan van Marselis (1672-1724);
Jan van Marselis (1700-1776), Lord of Zandvoort;
Jan van Marselis (1731-1792), Lord of Zandvoort;
Johanna Henriëtta van Marselis (1765-1818) married to Jan Hartsinck in
1781, Zandvoort; in 1821 the name of the last family heir Johanna Henriëtta
van Marselis was joined by Jan Hartsinck to his branch of the Hartsinck
family;
by descent in the Van Marselis Hartsinck family till the present owner.

Restored in 1984 by Jan Nagtegaal, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

We are grateful to Dr. Pieter Biesboer for researching and cataloguing this painting.

The present painting is one of a small number of works left by Johannes Pauwels Moreelse who died in Utrecht in 1634 at the young age of about thirty years a victim of the pest epidemic. He was the eldest son Paulus Jansz Moreelse (Utrecht 1571-1638 Utrecht) and Antonia van Wynterhoven. His father was a successful painter of portraits and history paintings who became councillor of Utrecht in 1618 as a result of the troubles between the factions of Pensionary Johan van Oldenbarneveldt and Prince Maurice of Orange Nassau. Johannes Moreelse most likely became a pupil of his father and spent his youth in his studio. After his training period Johannes travelled to Italy. In Rome on 28 Februari 1627 he witnessed a document for Johannes Honorijs van Axel de Seny together with two fellow artists Hendrick Bloemaert and Thomas Knijff from Utrecht, who probably were his

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travelling companions.¹ In a manuscript of the Utrecht humanist Aernout van Buchell (1565-1641) he is mentioned as “*ridder van St. Peter, pictor*”, knighted by the Pope, rather unusual for a Dutch Reformed educated person.² After his return in Utrecht Johannes Moreelse probably collaborated with his father in his studio, since he is not recorded as member of the Utrecht Guild of St. Luke and never married or founded a family. On the basis of a record in an inventory of Cornelis van Werckhoven dated 1655 at The Hague of a series of the five senses 3 by the young and 2 by the old Moreelse, we can establish with certainty that they collaborated.³

This painting of a shepherd has been in the possession of the same family for centuries and now for the first time makes its public appearance. The shepherd is depicted as a sitting half figure turned towards the right. With a gentle smile on his face he directs his gaze towards us holding a Pan’s flute in his hands. On his head he wears a wreath with vine leaves. He is partially undressed showing his bare arm and upper torso. We see part of his white shirt and a blue silk sash with red, white and blue tassels has been tied around his middle. A brown woollen coat is draped over his hips and legs. In front, on the right lies a small bag. More in the back we see a wine barrel and a shepherd’s stick leaning against it.

Paintings of shepherds originated in Northern Italy in the sixteenth century in Venice. Jacopo Bassano and Caravaggio greatly influenced the Utrecht Caravaggist painters, who introduced the subject of a single figure of a shepherd in The Northern Netherlands. Painters like Hendrick Terbrugghen, Dirck van Baburen and Gerard van Honthorst had lived in Rome for several years and after their return to Utrecht made it a popular subject.⁴ Johannes Moreelse lived in Rome later around 1627 and had first hand experience of works by Bassano and Caravaggio. Back in Utrecht he painted mainly subjects with a single half figure. A Penitent St. Mary Magdalene⁵ and two pendants of Heraclitus and Democritus are the only fully signed

¹ See the biography of Johannes Moreelse by Marten Jan Bok in: *Nieuw Licht op de Gouden Eeuw. Hendrick Terbrugghen en tijdgenoten*, catalogue exhibition Utrecht, Centraal Museum and Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum 1986-1987, p. 317.

² Knight of the (papal) order of St. Peter, painter. Bok 1986-87, p. 317.

³ 5 stucx schildereije uytbeeldende de 5 Sinnen, daervan dry geschildert by den jongen en twee 2 van den ouden Morelisse. A. Bredius, *Künstlerinventare. Urkunden zul Gechichte der holländischen Kunst im XVIIten, XVIIIten und XVIIIIten Jahrhundert*, III, Den Haag 1915-1922, p. 786-787.

⁴ See Leonard J. Slatkes, ‘Het Werk van Hendrik Terbrugghen’ in: *Nieuw Licht op de Gouden Eeuw. Hendrik Terbrugghen en tijdgenoten*, catalogue exhibition Utrecht, Centraal Museum; Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum 1986-87, p.44-45.

⁵ Signed J. Moreelse, panel 58 x 71,5 cm, Caen, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Caen, inv. 93.1.1.

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paintings by him. Just a small number of his paintings bear his monogram.⁶ The present hitherto unknown painting can now be added to his small oeuvre. Often he made variations of his paintings. A shepherd with a Pan's flute done by him is an example of such another version.⁷ In that painting the shepherd has his torso turned more towards us and his face is seen in profile, and only his right shoulder is uncovered and he holds up the Pan's flute. The colours are lighter, more daylight. A similar painting by him is a Young Boy Writing in the Southampton City Art Gallery.⁸ The present painting has the Italian chiaroscuro atmosphere. The figure leans forward and with his direct gaze he seems to tempt us to follow him into his careless life of Arcadian pleasure.

⁶ Heraclitus and Democritus, oil on panel 59,7 x 68,8cm, Utrecht, Centraal Museum in. nr. 13824 and 13825

⁷ Signed with monogram JPM, oil on panel 73 x 57,8 cm, Private Collection. See *Masters of Light: Dutch Painters of Utrecht during the Golden Age*. National Gallery, London 1998, nr. 65. Before entering a private collection the painting was at Johnny van Haeften's Gallery and was first presented at the TEFAF of 1989.

⁸ Signed with monogram JPM, oil on panel 70,5 x 54,3 cm, Southampton, Southampton Art Gallery, inv./cat. 110.