Salomon van Ruysdael
Naarden c. 1600/03 – 1670 Haarlem

A River View with a Bastion, Fishermen and Shipping

Signed and dated lower right: *SvR 1645*
Oil on canvas
74 × 109 cm

Provenance
Possibly William Thomas Beckford (1760–1844), Fonthill Splendens, Wiltshire
possibly his anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 27 February 1802, lot 35
the Rev. Edward Henry Dawkins (1794–1859), and by descent in the Dawkins family
sold by direction of the beneficiaries of his will, Christie's, London, 28 February 1913, lot 88, 1,750 guineas; reportedly acquired at the above sale by A. Wertheimer
Mrs Ann Marks, Hammill Farm, United Kingdom
her estate sale, Dreweatts, Newbury, 3 March 2026, lot 213

Literature
W. Stechow, *Salomon van Ruysdael: Eine Einführung in seine Kunst, mit kritischem Katalog der Gemälde*, Berlin 1938, p. 122, no. 457; revised ed., Berlin 1975, reportedly p. 139, no. 457.
Art Sales. From Early in the Eighteenth Century to Early in the Twentieth Century, London 1921, vol. III, p. 134.

Signed and dated 1645, the present river landscape belongs to a crucial period in Salomon van Ruysdael's development (fig. 1). Together with Jan van Goyen, Ruysdael was one of the principal exponents of the naturalistic and tonal landscape that transformed Dutch painting during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. By the 1640s, however, his river scenes were becoming increasingly expansive and monumental, while retaining the restrained palette

and atmospheric unity characteristic of his earlier work. In the present painting, an immense cloud-filled sky dominates a broad stretch of water. At the right, a massive fortified wall and tower rise abruptly from the riverbank, providing a strongly vertical and architectural counterweight to the open expanse at the left. Fishing boats and sailing vessels are distributed across the middle and far distance, while figures near the fortification and fishermen working their nets animate the foreground without disturbing the prevailing stillness of the landscape.
The picture is closely connected with a group of river landscapes that Ruysdael developed from the early 1640s into the following decade. A particularly important point of comparison is his *River View near Deventer* in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 2), also dated 1645 and catalogued by Wolfgang Stechow as no. 458, immediately following the present work, no. 457. Both paintings employ the broad horizontal sweep, low horizon and monumental sky that were central to Ruysdael's mature conception of the Dutch river landscape.

The stronghold in the present composition has sometimes been associated with the Valkhof at Nijmegen. Such an identification, however, does not appear convincing on present evidence. Ruysdael painted recognisable views of the Valkhof in 1648 and again in 1652; in these works the elevated castle complex and its distinctive tower form a markedly different architectural silhouette. It therefore seems preferable to regard the architecture here as an unidentified, possibly composite fortification rather than to identify it specifically as Nijmegen. Such freedom would be entirely consistent with Ruysdael's practice. Even his identifiable town views were not always strictly topographical. In the Rijksmuseum's 1645 view of Deventer, recognisable monuments are rearranged and combined with architectural elements that do not correspond to the actual landscape. Ruysdael's river landscapes should thus be understood as carefully constructed pictorial syntheses in which observation and invention could coexist.

The motif of fishermen drawing their nets is especially characteristic of the artist. It appears repeatedly in his river scenes and anchors his expansive landscapes in the everyday working life of the Dutch waterways. Fishing, transport and commerce formed an integral part of the culture of the rivers that Ruysdael celebrated, while the small figures and boats provide scale against the overwhelming breadth of water and sky.

Ruysdael continued to develop closely related compositions well into his later career. A river estuary dated 1664, now known through the art market, likewise combines fishermen drawing in their nets with a fortification, a landing place and shipping beyond. That work, Stechow no. 470A, measures 67.3 × 88.8 cm and was sold at Dorotheum in 2017. A second, slightly smaller version of the 1664 composition is recorded in Dresden. These later variants demonstrate the longevity of the pictorial formula already fully developed in the present canvas of 1645.

The early provenance may connect the picture with one of the most celebrated British collections of the late eighteenth century. William Thomas Beckford sold the contents of Fonthill Splendens at Christie's on 27 February 1802; the sale included works of considerable importance, among them Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*. The identification of the present picture with lot 35 in that sale has not yet been confirmed from the original catalogue and should therefore remain qualified.

The painting is more securely documented in the Dawkins family collection. Works inherited under the will of the Rev. Edward Henry Dawkins were sold at Christie's on 28 February 1913 by direction of his beneficiaries. The present painting appeared as lot 88 and realised 1,750 guineas. It was subsequently in the collection of Mrs Ann Marks at Hammill Farm and reappeared at auction in 2026.

The picture was already included by Wolfgang Stechow in his fundamental catalogue of Ruysdael's paintings as no. 457. Its early date, substantial dimensions and ambitious combination of expansive water, working boats, monumental sky and fortress architecture make it an important example of the artist's transformation of the restrained tonal river landscape of the 1630s into the broader and more imposing pictorial language of the following decades.

S A L O M O N L I L I A N
DUTCH OLD MASTER PAINTINGS



Fig.1 Salomon van Ruysdael, *A River View with a Bastion, Fishermen and Shipping,* signed and dated 1645, oil on canvas, 74 x 109 cm. Salomon Lilian Dutch Old Master Painting



Fig. 2 Salomon van Ruysdael, *River View near Deventer*, signed and dated 1645, oil on canvas, 107.5 x 148.7 cm., Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, SK-A-3259