

KLAAS MULLER

M A T T H I J S N A I V E U

Mardi Gras

Matthijs Naiveu was the son of an innkeeper from Leiden. He would be educated by Abraham Toorenvliet (Jacob's father) and later by Gerrit Dou. Naiveu's earlier oeuvre consisted mainly of genre pieces.

In 1678, the painter moved to Amsterdam, where he was appointed inspector of breweries. His paintings also took on subjects for which the painter became known around this period: carnival scenes, scenes from the *comedia dell'arte*, theatre groups and festivities, usually during the evening or night. These themes were also typical of the so-called 'Bamboccianti'; Dutch painters active in Italy. However: Naiveu seems never to have been in Italy.

Our painting is therefore typical of the painter's second (Amsterdam) period. Naiveu depicts this evening scene with an eye for light, detail, humour, and especially a lot of movement.

"Mardi Gras", literally 'Fat Tuesday', is in French the name of the day before Ash Wednesday. In Dutch, however, people usually speak of Vastenavond, the last night of the carnival festival. The meaning goes back to when there were no storage facilities for foodstuffs on the one hand, and the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday on the other; all the food that had survived the winter had to be eaten until everyone was fat enough to cover the period until the new spring with new crops.

Signed right below *Matthijs Naiveu F(ecit)*

Oil on canvas, 54.5 x 64 cm (21 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches)

