KLAAS MULLER

JAN WILDENS

Landscape with cows

Jan Wildens must have had a close relationship with Rubens; Rubens was a witness at Wildens' wedding, they were distant relatives, and Wildens was appointed as one of the executors of Rubens' will. Wildens must also have worked on some of Rubens' paintings, contributing the landscape or the background. The influence of Rubens' landscapes on Wildens is undeniable: certainly after Rubens' death in 1640, Wildens produced a number of small-scale landscapes on panel in a very Rubensian style, of which this work is one.

A river flows through the centre of a wooded landscape; in the background, we can see the spire of a church tower. On the right, we see a figure with a dog herding a small herd of cows towards the bank, presumably to let them drink. On the left bank, we see a figure with a herd of pigs and a building with a thatched roof.

The landscape is very idyllic yet lively; the painter succeeds in depicting a beautiful day in the countryside using a rich colour palette (with the classic brown-green-blue composition). The rendering and brushwork are both detailed and spontaneous, yet powerful.

It is clear that the iconographic and metaphorical meaning of this landscape is secondary to the depiction of the landscape 'in itself'. The focus here is primarily on the representation and creation of a rural world; the painter opens a window onto nature for the viewer.

Oil on panel, 41.2 x 64 cm (16 $^{1}/_{4}$ x 25 $^{1}/_{4}$ inches)

