

JAN FRANS VAN BLOEMEN, CALLED ORIZZONTE

(Antwerp 1662 - Rome 1749)

A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum beyond

oil on canvas
39 x 25.5 cm (15³/₈ x 10 in)
in a carved and gilt wood frame

Provenance: Andrea Busiri Vici collection, Rome.

Literature: A. Busiri Vici, *Jan Frans van Bloemen, 'Orizzonte'*, U. Bozzi, Rome 1974, cat. no. 71, reproduced.

WITH VIBRANT ACCENTS OF COLOUR AND hasty brushstrokes, Jan Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, has captured here the lyrical quality of a summer's afternoon in the Roman *campagna*. Three women are busily engaged washing clothing at a picturesque fountain, set in a secluded grove on the outskirts of the city. Two lean over the fountain to scrub the garments whilst a third balances a bundle on her head, ready to make her way back towards Rome, whose monuments and terracotta tile roofed buildings are faintly outlined in the background. A fourth woman sits on the bank, in the company of a large burly man who is naked except for a cloth draped around his midriff. This artful piece of drapery and the women's simple timeless garments are reminiscent of antique dress and fit in with their classicised surroundings and the ancient beauty of the countryside.

The sketchy, almost impressionistic dashes of colour in *A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum beyond* are typical of Orizzonte's late style. Busiri Vici, who once boasted the painting as part of his collection, suggested that it might be a *bozzetto* for the larger signed work in the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome.¹ Although the overall design and distant view with the Colosseum are similar, the figures in each work are differently arranged.

Orizzonte favoured images that revealed a tranquil and harmonious way of life, most often incorporating depictions of rustic young women surrounded by tall majestic trees backed by views of a town or country estate. Ornamental fountains and fragments of classical architecture add to the sense of the landscape's eternal and untouched charm. A pair of paintings by Orizzonte in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg are slightly larger than the present work but show highly comparable views and formats. The first of the pair, *Italian Landscape*, see figure 1, depicts three women, two of whom are

washing clothes while a third idly lingers by a fountain. She is dressed in a classically inspired garment, clasped at one shoulder leaving the other bare, in contrast to the contemporary dress of her companions. The ornate fountain with a carved head spouting water and the amphora standing discarded at the edge of the pool enhance the air of serenity and Arcadian timelessness.



Jan Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, *A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum beyond* (Detail)

¹ Busiri Vici, A., *Jan Frans van Bloemen, 'Orizzonte'*, U. Bozzi, Rome 1974, cat. no. 316, reproduced.



(Also illustrated p. 5)



Jans Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, *Italian Landscape*, mid 1630s, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg; The Golitsyn Museum, Moscow, 1886 (Figure 1)

Italian Landscape, with its pair, *Landscape with a Fountain*, see figure 2, demonstrates, like the present work, the artist's favourite compositional device, framing the scene with tall Roman pine trees that arch slightly inwards to shelter and provide shade for the figures below. This provides the perfect opportunity to employ strong lighting effects and dramatic shading to express atmosphere. The Hermitage paintings appear, however, to lack the intensity of colour and vividness of *A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum beyond*, which is joyful and unrestrained. Orizzonte was known for his use of *pittori di tocco*, or light touches of paint on the canvas, to create an airy expressiveness that is exemplified in the present painting.

In *Landscape with a Fountain*, the familiar figure of the loosely draped man with dark curly hair, positioned with his back turned to the viewer, is depicted and a woman clad in blue and white, as in the present work, turns to speak to him. These prototypical figures recur throughout Orizzonte's oeuvre, in works such as *Paesaggio* of 1737 and *Campagna Romana*, both in the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome (figs. 3 & 4). *Paesaggio*, like the present work, shows the Colosseum in the background and the topographical detail in the highly finished work is exceptionally precise in comparison with the looseness of line in *A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum Beyond*.

The paintings by Orizzonte in the Hermitage and the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca are of much larger dimensions than the present work, and have a more refined and conventional appearance. *A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum beyond* is both intimate in size and informal in style, with its bold and spontaneous display of brushwork. *Landscape of the Roman 'Campagna'*, in the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, is perhaps closest in likeness to



Jan Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, *Landscape with a Fountain*, mid 1630s, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg (Figure 2)

the present work, both in size, as its dimensions are 35 x 25.4 cm (13 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 10 in), and in its impressionistic style (fig. 5). Here again the dark haired man draped in red is seated with his back to the viewer, this time conversing with another man clad in classical garments and carrying a staff. A further figure in blue can be seen in the background, wandering in the direction of the ruins which dominate the landscape. The foliage of the trees is painted in a hasty and expressive manner, with the late afternoon sunlight glinting off the leaves and forming tall shadows across



Jan Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, *A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum beyond* (Detail)



Jan Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, *Paesaggio*, 1737, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome (Figure 3)

the ground, much like in *A Capriccio View of Rome with Figures Resting in the Foreground, the Colosseum beyond*.

Orizzonte was the brother of Pieter van Bloemen, called Standaart (c.1657-1720) (cat. nos. 65 & 66), who also specialised in Italianate landscapes as well as in animal paintings. While growing up in Antwerp, Orizzonte was initially trained by Pieter, as was his younger brother Norbert (c.1670-1746). Pieter then left for Rome and Lyon, where Orizzonte, at the age of about twenty-two, decided to join him. There he apparently worked



Jan Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, *Campagna Romana*, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome (Figure 4)



Jan Frans van Bloemen, called Orizzonte, *Landscape of the Roman Campagna*, The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore (Figure 5)

with van der Cabel (1630-1705). The two brothers soon tired of Lyon and travelled to Turin and then Rome, where they were both members of the *Schildersbent*, the confraternity of Dutch and Flemish artists active in the city. Orizzonte earned his nickname on account of his facility for painting panoramic landscapes, a moniker that had previously been applied to Claude Lorraine (1604/5-1682). Apart from an eight-month journey to Naples, Sicily and Malta, where he sketched profusely, Orizzonte remained the rest of his life in Rome. He married in 1693 and the Dutch artist Caspar van Wittel, known as Vanvitelli (1652/3-1736) (see inventory), was godfather to his first child.

Orizzonte was drawn to the beauty of Rome and the surrounding *campagna* and inspired by the classicising landscape paintings of the Italian master Gaspard Dughet (1615-1675). His grounding in the Flemish landscape tradition enabled him to easily assimilate the analytical and picturesque realism of Dughet and he quickly became known as one of the finest classical landscape painters in Rome during the first half of the eighteenth century. Orizzonte's shifting patterns of light and shade are also characteristic of Dughet's works and his pastiches were so skilful that the younger artist's paintings were sometimes passed off as by Dughet. Orizzonte's pupils, including Francesco Oelefe, known as 'Bavarese', Gabriele Ricciardelli (d.1777) and Nicolo Bonito, all imitated his highly successful style. Among the artists that provided figures for his landscapes were Carlo Maratti (1625-1713), Placido Costanzi (1702-1759) and Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787). Throughout his time in Rome, the artist came into conflict, for unexplained reasons, with the Accademia di S. Luca, but was finally awarded membership at the age of eighty. This did not affect his career, however, which was enduringly successful and gained him numerous commissions from aristocratic Roman families.