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Edouard Jonas

Paris

tabl de Jan Vermeer  
de Delft.

12 décembre 1932.

Monsieur,

C.

Nous avons pris connaissance avec un vif intérêt, de la notice et de la photographie que vous avez eu l'obligeance de nous communiquer. Nous vous en remercions sincèrement. Toutefois, je suis au regret de vous dire que le tableau dont il s'agit n'entre pas dans le programme des acquisitions actuellement poursuivies pour nos collections. D'ailleurs nos crédits extrêmement limités ne pourraient nous permettre d'envisager l'acquisition de ce tableau.

Nous vous remercions encore de l'amabilité que vous avez eue de nous soumettre votre offre et vous prions de vouloir bien agréer, Monsieur l'expression de notre considération distinguée.

Le Conservateur en Chef,

Monsieur Edouard Jonas,  
Expert près la Cour d'Appel,  
3, Place Vendôme,

PARIS.  
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# EDOUARD JONAS

Expert près la Cour d'Appel  
Expert du Gouvernement près les Douanes Françaises

## NEW-YORK

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## PARIS

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Téléph { OPÉRA 06-54  
" " 06-55  
" " 06-56

PARIS, le 6 Décembre 1932

*pas crevé*  
Monsieur le Président,

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire savoir que j'ai en ma possession un tableau de Vermeer de Delft, le seul qui reste actuellement à vendre sur les marchés mondiaux, représentant " LE GÉOGRAPHE " .

Ce tableau était à Bruxelles et faisait partie de la collection du Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies .

Comme vous le verrez par le petit opuscule que je vous envoie ci-inclus ce tableau est connu et classé depuis 1713 et a passé dans les collections les plus célèbres du monde . Il faisait partie avant d'entrer dans la collection du Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies, de la collection Kums à Anvers.

Ce tableau a coûté une somme extrêmement élevée, mais étant donné les circonstances actuelles, je serais disposé à faire de très grandes concessions, et je tiens à vous dire que s'il intéresse le Musée Royal de Bruxelles, je serai à votre entière disposition pour vous donner toutes facilités de paiement que vous pourriez désirer .

Si, lorsque vous aurez reçu l'opuscule et la photographie qui se trouve à l'intérieur de l'opuscule, vous jugez que la chose vous intéresse, je vous serai infiniment reconnaissant de me le faire savoir, et je vous donnerai immédiatement tous les renseignements que vous pourriez désirer .

Permettez-moi, Monsieur le Président, de vous prier d'accepter l'assurance de ma plus haute considération .

Monsieur le Président de la  
Commission du Musée Royal des  
Beaux-Arts .  
Rue de la Régence, BRUXELLES.

*Edouard Jonas*  
P.S. L'opuscule dont il est question plus  
haut vous est envoyé sous pli séparé

AN OIL PAINTING  
on panel  
representing

"THE GEOGRAPHER"

A Dutch Work of Art of  
the XVIIth century  
Signed and dated 1665

by

JAN VERMEER DE DELFT

1632 - 1675

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on panel  
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" THE GEOGRAPHER "

A Dutch Work of Art of the XVIIth Century

Signed and Dated 1665

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1632 - 1675

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From the Collection of the

COMTE DE RENESSE

BRUSSELS

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AN OIL PAINTING

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" THE GEOGRAPHER "

A Dutch Work of Art

of the XVIIth century

Signed and Dated 1665 - by

JAN VERMEER DE DELFT

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He is seated before a table covered with an Oriental rug, and upon which is a group of objects comprising a terrestrial globe, a compass, a protactor, a square, and some books; his left hand is placed upon the globe, while in the other he holds a small open book.

Upon his head, seen in profile,  
to the right, is a soft cap, from which protudes  
a mass of blond hair. He wears a loose garment  
with ample sleeves, and faced with leopard skin.  
The background is formed by a green curtain partly  
obscuring the room, and from the centre a quadrant  
is hanging.

HEIGHT 19 inches - WIDTH 14 1/2 inches.

*no. 50 x 37,5 cm.*

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JAN VERMEER

or

VAN DER MEER OF DELFT

1632 - 1675

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VERMEER is one of the rarest painters of Holland, and his vogue, though great in his own day, for modern collectors only dates from 1866, when W. Burger published a paper on him in the "Gazette des Beaux-Arts". He was born at Delft and studied under Rembrandt's pupil, Carel Fabritus, whose influence is marked in Vermeer's "Diana and her Nymphs" at the Hague.

When only twenty, Vermeer married.

His circumstances were poor; in 1654 he had to raise a loan, and he left his widow and eight children in straits twenty years later. He entered the Guild of Painters at Delft, December 29th, 1653, and was often

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on its committee and once its president.

As opposed to the concentrated light and warm colour of Nicholas Maes, Vermeer's conspicuous characteristics are his pervading cool light and silvery whitish colour. In this way, he is a notable pioneer of modern artistic research in the problems of actual daylight. Vermeer's name to-day stands high, and not only on the score of his pictures' rarity. Of all Dutch painters, he is the most content with a simple genre motif. The majority of his pictures contains but a single figure, set in the simplest surroundings. As a pioneer again we see him in his landscape, especially the "View of Delft", at the Hague. This piece seems wonderfully to anticipate nineteenth century landscape, on which its influence has been marked.

Vermeer's mastery in landscape seems more astonishing when we remember that he practised it only as an exception. As a genre-painter, Vermeer fills the place of the Dutch School that Chardin has in the French. The technique of each has the same mysterious perfection.

He died at Delft, where he had lived since 1660, in December 1675, at the comparatively early age of forty-three.

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DR. W.R.VALENTINER, Director of the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts, endorses this picture as follows :

" This painting reproduced in this photograph is in my opinion a characteristic excellent work by JAN VERMEER OF DELFT. It is signed with the initials of the artist and is dated 1665, which is rather unusual, since only two other known paintings by the artist have a date (the ones in Dresden and in the Rothschild Collection, Paris).

The painting is in a fine state of preservation and is most harmonious as well in the carefully balanced composition as in the fine subdued colour scheme built upon the shades of grey, and light brown. This picture is described and reproduced in all important books on Vermeer (Hofstede de Groot, E. Plietzsch, Vanzype, Hausenstein, etc..)

Vermeer has painted twice again a similar subject, in the paintings in the Museum at Frankfurt A/H, and in the collection of Baron Edouard de Rothschild, Paris, but in each version the composition and accessories are entirely changed.

The present painting has been formerly in the Isaac Pereire Collection, Paris, and in that of the Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies, Brussels. "

Detroit, November 29th, 1929.

SIGNED : W.R. VALENTINER.

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W. BURGER-THORE, in the "Gazette des Beaux-Arts,"  
April 1864, pp.313-314, writes:

"The gallery of Mr. Isaac Pereire  
furnishes a new conquest to my list of Vermeer's  
works. The picture representing a Geographer is a  
pendant to a Geographer belonging to M. Dumont of  
Cambrai. It is dated 1665, but I have not yet been  
able to discover the signature, if it is there.  
I have never come across, but once, a separate date  
on a painting by Vermeer, -1656- on the picture in  
the Dresden Museum, n° 1432, with four figures of  
large proportions, in the style and treatment of  
Rembrandt. Van der Meer was then in 1656, but twenty-  
four years old, he having been born in 1632, and per-  
haps, after the death of his first master, Carel Fabritius,  
who perished in a powder explosion in Delft in 1654, he  
worked with Rembrandt himself.

The Geographer of M. Pereire is

seated before a table covered with an Oriental rug, and upon which is a globe, a square, a compass and some books. The left hand is placed upon the globe; the right hand holds an open book. The head, with profile to the right, is covered with a soft cap from which emerges long blond curls. The very full mantle is of a dull grey material. Contrary to the habit of the master, which led him to place his figures against pale panelling, the background is not quite clear; we distinguish in tee-tones, a book-case, a geographical chart, a part of a curtain; a quadrant is hanging from the ceiling. One of the open books on the table bears certain undecipherable words. It is there, without doubt, that we may find the signature of the monogram."

The Dumont picture is now in the Stadel Institute at Frankfort.

PROF. DR. W. MARTIN, Director of the Royal Gallery  
of Paintings, Mauritshuis,  
the Hague, writes, in a letter,  
as follows :

"This picture is one of the works  
by Ver Meer that has been the least studied, because  
since 1898, the date on which it passed through public  
sale from the Kums Collection into that of the  
Viscount du Bus de Gisignies, it has been seen by but  
a very few privileged persons, the owner having always  
refused to show it. Recently it went into the Collection  
of Count de Renesse (son-in-law of the Viscount du Bus  
de Gesignies) where we have been able to examine it at  
leisure. After having removed the varnish, which  
rendered it dark, we had the surprise to discover the  
genuine and certain date and signature, which are  
quite visible, when one knows the exact place, on the  
photogravure reproduction which appears in the remark-  
able work by M. Hofstede de Groot on Vermeer & Fabritius.

This picture bears a very distant date, 1665, written in Arabian characters on the middle of the right leaf of the book leaning against the globe. In the upper left corner of the map hanging on the wall can also be seen, in the form of an inscription, four lines of hand-writing. The map being disposed obliquely to the view of the observer, the painter, faithful translator of the laws of perspective, has accordingly brought closely together the down-strokes of the lettering. Leaving the first line, which appears to defy transcription, one can read, on the second line, a signature absolutely similar to that which is seen on the "Courtisan", and it also recalls the monogram on the "View of Delft". Yet, one's attention is drawn to the fact that the name is written Mee instead of Meer, leading one to suppose that the "r" has disappeared, and that the

the last letter was an "e". Underneath can be seen other figures and letters, probably an indication of the date of the month and year.

It may also be that no great care has been taken in the two capital letters which can be seen, one on the book held in the hand of the "Geographer", and the other on the book leaning against the globe, letters which, by a very singular coincidence, may be read as "V" and "M".

The place of this signature should not surprise anyone. Although Van Meer seldom dated his paintings, he, on the other hand signed twenty-two of his works, and the greater number of his signatures he placed in the middle of his pictures, and often in large character".

SIGNED: W. MARTIN.

M. RENE GIMPEL, in the "Connoisseur", London,  
March, 1921, pp. 181-182, writes:

"This picture called THE GEOGRAPHER,  
by JOHN VERMEER OF DELFT, reproduced as a plate, is  
the least studied of this master's works, the reason  
being that the late Vicomte de Bus de Gisignies, since  
he acquired this painting in 1898, at the sale of Kums  
Museum, absolutely refused to show it. It has recently  
been inherited by the Comte de Renesse, however, and  
we have been able to examine it carefully. A thick  
varnish formerly covered the painting, and the date,  
the authenticity of which cannot be doubted, has only  
now been discovered together with a signature.

Vermeer has painted another GEOGRAPHER  
(Frankfort Museum), in quite a different way, and he  
has painted an ASTRONOMER (Edward de Rothschild's  
collection). The former bears a spurious date - 1669.

On the letter, Messrs. Hofstede de Groot and Blietzsch read without any certificate 1673, and it leads both critics to believe that the three pictures were painted towards the end of the painter's life. But this date 1673 is not very legible, and could be interpreted as 1668. The present picture bears a very clear date (1665) written in Arabic numerals just above the middle of the right-hand side page of the book propped up against the globe.

As we only knew till now of three dated pictures by Vermeer, this newly-discovered date brings a most interesting light on all Vermeer's work, and may aid a more precisely chronological classification of some of his pictures.

On the left-hand corner of the map hanging on the wall are four lines of writing. This map is drawn obliquely. Vermeer, respecting the laws

of perspective, brought closer together the tails of his letters, making them most difficult to read. The first line seems to be illegible; on the second we read a signature quite similar to that on "The Courtissane", and which also recalls the monogram of the "View of Delft". At the foot of the first tail of the "M" is a kind of hook, giving the "V" of Vermeer, and in the middle of the "M" and "I", the initial of "John". It must be confessed that the whole signature reads "Mer", but the third letter might be an "E", the last letter of the name; the "r" might have disappeared. On the third and fourth lines we think that there might be letters and numbers. In any case, this signature seems to us to be quite genuine.

One ought also to pay more attention to the two small letters which are visible, one in the book the Geographer holds in his hand, the other one on

that propped against the globe, which can be read as "V" and "M". Certain writers claim that this picture and "the Astronomer" in the Rothschild Collection are identical. They made this mistake because they had not seen the Rothschild picture, but only its engraving in "Lebrun's Galerie des Peintres Flamands" (1792). There is a similarity between both pictures, and as the engraving is reversed, a lack of attention might lead to this false belief, but a comparison of the two paintings themselves reveals many points of difference.

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R E F E R E N C E S

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CATALOGUE du célèbre Cabinet de Jan Danser Nyman,  
Amsterdam, 1797, n° 167, described.

W. BURGER THORE : Galerie de MM. Pereire. In  
"Gazette des Beaux Arts," Paris,  
1864, pp. 313-314. Described.

W. BURGER THORE : Van der Meer de Delft. In  
"Gazette des Beaux Arts" Paris,  
Dec. 1866, Vol. XXI. p. 560.,  
n° 35 in list. Described.

FRANCIS PETIT: Catalogue des Tableaux, Galerie de  
M. Pereire, Paris, 1872, n° 135.  
Described with note by W. Burger-Thore

HENRY HAVARD : Van der Meer Collection des Artistes  
célèbres, Paris 1883. N° 5 in list.  
Mentioned.

MAX ROOSES : Catalogue des Tableaux composant le  
Musée formé à Anvers par M. Edouard  
Kums, Consul honoraire de Saxe-  
Cobourg & Gotha, Antwerp, 1898,  
p. 120, n° 104. Illustrated in  
photogravure. Described.

CORNELIUS HOFSTEDÉ Catalogue raisonné of the Works of  
de Groot: the most eminent Dutch Painters of  
the XVIIIth century, London 1907,  
vol. 1. pp. 583-584. N° 4. Described.

GUSTAVE VANZYPE : Vermeer de Delft. Brussels 1908,  
p. 97. Mentioned.

CORNELIUS HOFSTEDÉ DE GROOT : Jan Vermeer of Delft  
& Carel Fabritius, photogravures  
of all their known paintings.  
Amsterdam, 1909. Plate 6.  
Folio illustration, & short reference

EDOUARD PLIETZSCH : Vermeer van Delft. Leipzig, 1911.  
p. 73. Plate XXVII.

M. RENE GIMPEL : "The Geographer", by Vermeer of Delft,  
in "The Connoisseur", London, March  
1921, pp. 181-182. Illustrated  
p. 176 (short article).

GUSTAVE VANZYPE : Jan Vermeer de Delft, Brussels, 1921,  
pp. 28, 31, 32 & 72. Illustrated in  
photogravure p. 22.  
(Various brief references).

E.V. LUCAS : Vermeer of Delft. With an intro-  
duction by Sir Charles J. Holmes,  
Director of the National Gallery,  
London, 1922, p. 31. Mentioned.

REIFFENBERG & HAUSENSTEIN : Vermeer van Delft. Das Bild  
Atlanten sur Kunst, Munich, 1924.  
Illustrated p. 24.

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Formerly in the respective collections of

LORD ..X.....Sale at Rotterdam, 1713.

Hendrick Sorch.....Amsterdam, 1720.

Govert Looten.....Amsterdam, 1729.

Jan Danser Nigman.....Amsterdam, 1797.

Isaac Pereire.....Paris, 1872.

Edouard Kums.....Antwerp, 1989.

Vicomte du Bus de Gisignies, Brussels,

and on the death of the latter, it was inherited  
by his son-in-law, Count de Renesse, mentioned  
above.

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