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Paul de Vos
Birds of Prey, Parrots and Songbirds, 1640s

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PAUL DE VOS

(Hulst 1591 - Antwerp 1678)

BIRDS OF PREY, PARROTS AND SONGBIRDS, 1640s

Oil on canvas

102 x 244 cm.; 40 ¼ x 96 in.

Provenance

Possibly Don Miguel de Salamanca, Madrid, 1655;
Collection of the Count of Casas Rojas, Madrid, c. 1870;
By descent to the previous owner.



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Paul de Vos was the brother-in-law and pupil of Frans Snyders (1579 – 1657). His compositions are often more decorative than Snyders', and his manner of painting is somewhat smoother. Like Snyders, de Vos worked for an elite clientele, and often collaborated with Peter Paul Rubens (1577 – 1640), who was godfather to one of de Vos' sons.

De Vos particularly enjoyed the patronage of influential aristocrats in Spain, including the Marquis of Leganes (1580 – 1655), head of the Council of Flanders in Madrid, and Philippe-Charles Count of Arenberg (1587 – 1640), at that time also residing in Madrid. From the latter, de Vos obtained a commission to paint at least 36 paintings of birds, hunts and fables between 1633 and 1640. He also contributed to the decoration of the Torre de la Parada, the Alcázar and the Buen Retiro Palace, all Spanish royal residences. The present work likely belonged to a larger series and in 1985 Sotheby's Madrid auctioned a de Vos painting of wading birds of virtually the same size as our painting, which too had come from a Spanish collection (fig. 1). There is also an old copy of an original work by de Vos, with added sky, which appears to belong to the same series (fig. 2).

The present painting has been in Madrid in the collection of the Count of Rojas since at least the late 19th century and no doubt resided in Spain for much longer given the number of paintings de Vos exported to the country upon completion. Our work may be that cited in the inventory of the property of Don Miguel de Salamanca, Inspector of the Armada of Flanders, undertaken by Juan Carrêno de Miranda in Madrid on 12th June 1655 following the death of his wife, Doña Constanza Pardo. The inventory lists: 'otra Pintura grande de mussica de Pajaros de esneydes con su marco grande negro tassada. En seiscientos y sessenta Reales 660'. The fact that the painting was here given to Snyders does not disbar de Vos from being the actual artist, as the work may have been issued from the workshop as a painting by Snyders himself, even if it was painted by de Vos.

Fred Meijer tentatively dates the painting to the 1640s. Here, as is often the case, de Vos borrows motifs that originated in Snyders' work. For example, the parrot to the right can be found in the *Concert of Birds* in the Museo del Prado (fig. 3), while a very similar eagle appears in another painting by Snyders, also in the Prado (fig. 4).

We are grateful to Fred Meijer for confirming the attribution to Paul de Vos.

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Fig. 1. Paul de Vos, *Wading Birds*, 17th century. Private Collection



Fig. 2. After Paul de Vos, *Ducks and Fowl*. Private Collection

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Fig. 3. Frans Snyders, *Concert of Birds*, 1629 – 1630. Museo del Prado, Madrid



Fig. 4. Frans Snyders, *Concert of Birds*, 17th century. Museo del Prado, Madrid

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COLNAGHI *London*

26 BURY STREET, LONDON SW1Y 6AL
UNITED KINGDOM

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM

+44 (0)20 7491 7408

contact@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *Madrid*

CALLE GENERAL CASTAÑOS 9
PLANTA BAJA, DCHA.
28004 MADRID

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
BY APPOINTMENT

spain@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *New York*

23 EAST 67TH STREET, FOURTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10065
USA

MONDAY TO FRIDAY
10AM-6PM

+1 (917) 388-3825

newyork@colnaghi.com

COLNAGHI *Brussels*

RUE JACQUES JORDAENS 30
1000 BRUXELLES
BELGIUM

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

brussels@colnaghi.com