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Est. 1760



Teodoro Filippo Di Liagno,
called Filippo Napoletano
(Naples or Rome, c. 1589 – 1629)

Falconry Scene

c. 1617 - 1621

oil on canvas

91 x 105 cm.;

35 7/8 x 41 3/8 in.

Comparative Literature

L. Lanzi, *Storia pittorica dell'Italia*, I, Bassano 1795-1796, p. 240;

M. Chiarini, 'Filippo Napoletano, Poelenburgh, Breenbergh e la nascita del paesaggio realistico in Italia', in *Paragone*, XXIII, no. 269, 1972;

M. Chiarini, *Teodoro Filippo di Liagno detto Filippo Napoletano, 1589-1629: vita e opere*, Florence 2007.

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Although probably Roman by birth, Filippo gained his sobriquet 'Napoletano' because of his early training in Naples, where his style was influenced by the works of northern artists such as Paul Bril (1554 – 1626) and Adam Elsheimer (1578 – 1610). He was certainly in Rome by 1614, where he stayed for three years before being called by Cosimo II de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, to become court painter in Florence. He then returned to Rome after Cosimo's death in 1621, and spent a further period in Naples between 1624-25.

Filippo is considered one of the key figures in the development of landscape genre painting, to the extent that Luigi Lanzi considered him to be the initiator of the 'the new manner (...) in the art of painting landscapes'.¹

As Giuseppe Porzio observed, in the present canvas one can note elements typical of Filippo's style: the rounded trees and bushes; the elegant, three-dimensional, figures; the composition featuring a river in the background, suggesting a deeper, wider, and more complex space; the sky, striped with white and darker clouds. The palette, bright and vivid, is influenced by Northern painters such as Bartholomeus Breenbergh (1598 – 1657) and Cornelis van Poelenburgh (1594 – 1667), the latter of whom was also active in Florence serving the Grand Duke Cosimo II.²

The present painting was almost certainly executed during Filippo's Florentine period (1617-1621). The subject, a woman riding side-saddle with a falcon in her hand, reflects the noble pastimes within the Medici court. The authority with which Filippo depicts the horses, portraying them from various angles, is a reminder that while in Florence he executed several life size "portraits" of the Grand Duke's horses, which are to date, missing. The superb black horse in the middle of the canvas - on which the lady with the falcon is sitting - turns its head away from the spectator, making the composition at once more dynamic.

The sharp lighting and plasticity of the figures, as well as their casual attitude and placement, demonstrates parallels with some of the finest paintings by Filippo to have appeared on the market such as the *River Landscape with Horsemen and Figures Bathing* (fig. 1).³

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Another point of comparison, even in terms of subject, is a *Hunting Scene* known through a black and white photograph in the Zeri photo archive (fig. 2).⁴ The contorted trees and the dogs' silhouettes are particularly similar.

We are grateful to Giuseppe Porzio for confirming the attribution of the present painting to Filippo Napoletano, for his help in the production of the catalogue note, and for proposing a dating of circa 1617-1621.

COLNAGHI

Est. 1760



Figure 1. Filippo Napoletano, *River Landscape with Horsemen and Figures Bathing*.
Private collection



Figure 2. Filippo Napoletano, *Hunting Scene*.
Location unknown, Fondazione Federico Zeri, inv. 81093

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Footnotes

¹ L. Lanzi, *Storia pittorica dell'Italia*, I, Bassano 1795-1796, p. 240.

² M. Chiarini, 'Filippo Napoletano, Poelenburgh, Breenbergh e la nascita del paesaggio realistico in Italia', in *Paragone*, XXIII, no. 269, 1972.

³ Oil on copper, 24 x 33 cm. Sold at Sotheby's London, 27 April 2006, lot 93.

⁴ Art market, Milan, 1987.