



**PIETER CORNELISZ VAN RIJCK**

(Delft 1598 – Haarlem after 1628)

*“Kitchen Interior”*

Oil on Canvas

106 cm. x 134 cm.

1620 ca.

In order to start the year we have chosen this magnificent work that depicts a “kitchen” painted by the renowned Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck, a Dutch artist who specialized in still lives and portraits. His works are very similar to those by Pieter Aertsen and J. Beuckelaer, who Rijck admired and followed stylistically. According to the documentation of the time, it is known that the painter worked with Grimanni and travelled with him to Italy in 1588; he lived in Venice until 1602 where he was influenced and inspired by Bassani's works. Upon Rijck's return to Haarlem, he worked on commissioned pieces, among them “Kitchens,” which were very popular compositions. The Italian influence is key in these representations; they are always filled with utensils and food. At times, these kitchen scenes include very beautifully executed figures that represent the housemaids doing their daily duties. These paintings are very interesting to look at because they serve as a historic document that shows the dining traditions of the society of the Dutch Golden Age.

This particular “kitchen” is very rich and notable because it shows a great variety of meats and diverse dishes; it is these small elements that help the viewer understand that it belongs to the house of an important landlord or a bourgeois family who lived a privileged lifestyle. During the period, due to the economy, food and dining was a very popular theme in the art market. Therefore, it is no surprise that the iconography and symbolism played a crucial role. It is also significant to note that during this period, the Dutch were the best fed society within Europe.

The opulence shown in this picture follows a very distinct baroque style, where there is a balance between live animals, fruits, vegetables, domestic animals, diverse types of meats, and prepared food.



On the top left corner, there is a basket with live chickens that are awaiting their fate. Close to them there is a lamb's leg ready to cook and next to it there is a dead rabbit still with its fur along with a dead duck. All the diverse types of game are staggered carefully over the table. The variety and quantity is meant to shock the viewer. It is also a big contrast to see the combination of live animals, dead animals, and prepared foods in the kitchen. In the background there are some onions ready to be used. Towards the center of the painting, there is a striking basket made out of wicker that carries apples, grapes, and pears. On the other hand one of the few visible vegetables is a big artichoke.



It is very surprising to see such a wide range of objects such as a humble clay pot filled with butter, a pewter platter that lays over an empty copper cooking pot that is waiting to be used to cook a delicious and hearty meal. Next to all the items, the viewer can see meats and pots and a wooden cube that holds fish, atop a simple wood table there is a big clay pot that is filled with eggs along with some bread rolls.



Within this busy composition, there are two little animals that look like intruders. One of them is a mouse who is running around the edge of the pot containing butter and the other one is a fat cat who is trying to get close to the fish plate.



Towards the side of the painting, there are two figures; one of them is an older man next to a young maid who clearly belongs to the house staff. The man is wearing simple but nice clothing such as big fur hat while the maid is properly groomed and wearing a uniform to cook and serve. The man is concentrated on cutting a large piece of cheese and is looking directly at his hands. One of his hands is holding the cheese while the other is tightly gripping the large knife. The way the young maid is looking at the viewer is disconcerting while she promiscuously offers tasty bread rolls from a basket. The bread symbolizes the sustenance of the body and the soul of humans.

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## PROVENANCE

Private Collection, Italy.

## EXHIBITIONS

Madrid, Spain, Soraya Cartategui Gallery, Feriarte, November 2014.

## MUSEUMS

Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck’s works can be found in many museums around the world including: Amsterdam- Rijksmuseum, Gante- Museum voor Schone Kunsten, etc.