

ESSAYS
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PRESENTED TO
EGBERT HAVERKAMP-BEGEMANN
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Some 'Bambocciate' by Antoine Goubau

The reputation of the Flemish painter Antoine Goubau (1616-1698) rests on his large paintings of *capricci*, the picturesque views of peasants and travelers in grandiose, fanciful settings inspired by Baroque Rome and its environs.¹ The earliest known example of this type of painting by Goubau dates to 1651, the year following his return to Antwerp from Rome.² During his sojourn in Rome, however, which had lasted at least six years, the artist painted primarily *bambocciate*, the scenes of peasant life around the Eternal City popularized by Netherlandish artists.³ These paintings are generally smaller in dimension and less spacious, and they emphasize fewer narrative vignettes. Goubau must have painted a large number of them. Although active in the circle of Jan Miel (1599-1664), Michael Sweerts (1618-1664), Jan Lingelbach (1622-1674), and Michelangelo Cerquozzi (1602-1664), the major exponents of *bambocciate*, the important *Bamboccianti* exhibitions of the 1650s omit Goubau's work.⁴ The purpose of this note is to provide a modest introduction to this aspect of Goubau's achievement through several newly attributed paintings.⁵

*I was introduced to this topic while preparing a dissertation on Jan Miel under the supervision of Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, to whom I am grateful for his patience and kindness. I would also like to thank Professors George and Linda Bauer for reading a draft of this essay.

1. Didier Bodart discusses some examples and reviews the facts of the artist's life in *Les peintres des Pays-bas méridionaux et de la Principauté de Liège à Rome au XVIIème siècle*, I (Brussels and Rome, 1970), pp. 432-440. Jan Lingelbach is the most important practitioner of this type of subject matter during the same years. He seems to have first begun painting these subjects in Amsterdam in the early 1650s. Although I have found no evidence that the two artists were already painting such *capricci* in Rome, there does seem to be a relationship between their paintings both before and after 1650.

2. *Capriccio of a Roman Market*; sale, Christie's, London, December 12, 1980, lot 60, ill.

3. Goubau is documented in Rome in 1644 (Bodart, I, p. 432), but he may have arrived even earlier, as his presence in Antwerp is documented only until c. 1636-1637. Moreover, he probably stopped in Paris on his way to or from Rome, since there is evidence of close interaction with Sébastien Bourdon in some of their *bambocciate*.

4. Giuliano Briganti, *I Bamboccianti* (Rome, 1950), and Rolf Kultzen, *Michael Sweerts e i Bamboccianti* (Rome, 1957; Dutch ed., Rotterdam, 1958). Goubau is also omitted from the exhibition *Paesisti, Bamboccianti, e Vedutisti nella Roma seicentesca* organized by Marco Chiarini (Florence, Palazzo Pitti, 1967), even though the Florentine galleries own the only previously published *bambocciate* by him (fig. 7).

5. In this limited space it is impossible to discuss all the *bambocciate* which appear to be either by Goubau or close to his style. Further examples are briefly discussed in the author's Ph.D. dissertation, *Jan Miel (1599-1664), a Flemish Painter in Rome*, II (Yale University, 1978), cat. nos. D2, D25, D31, D40, D49, D50, D57, D58, and D59. *Bambocciate* monogrammed by Goubau are *Traveler Sleeping in a Grotto* (formerly Sabatello Collection, Rome, 18.5 x 14.5 in. [47 x 37 cm], canvas, sold Christie's, Rome, October 15, 1970, lot 80, as by Cerquozzi) and a *Camp Scene* (Mr. D.G. Lewis-Jones, Surrey, 18 x 24 in., canvas, photograph in the Witt Library, London, under Bourdon). A *Concert* in the John G. Johnson Collection, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, which is certainly by the same hand as cat. nos. D57 and D58 (Kren, *Jan Miel*, II), I believe also to be by Goubau (*John G. Johnson Collection: Catalogue of Flemish and Dutch Paintings* [Philadelphia, 1972], no. 607 as by DuJardin?).

The six paintings here attributed to Antoine Goubau are the following:

1. *Picnic Before a Tavern*, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (fig. 1; to my knowledge previously unpublished)⁶
2. *The Chestnut Vendor*, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (fig. 2)⁷
3. *The Military Camp*, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (fig. 3)⁸
4. *Peasants Outside an Inn*, Hamburg, Kunsthalle (fig. 4)⁹
5. *The Street Musicians*, formerly Collection Quentin Crewes (fig. 5)¹⁰
6. *The Peasant Squabble*, formerly Collection Quentin Crewes (fig. 6; the pendant to the preceding)¹¹

One of the most distinctive features of Goubau's *bambocciate* are the figure types that appear in two signed works, one the only previously known *bambocciata* of his Roman period, the other a large *capriccio* from his years in Antwerp. The *bambocciata* is a *Farmyard Scene* (Florence, Palazzo Pitti; fig. 7), with a bearded harpist playing for peasant women and children near a barn.¹² The *capriccio* is a *Return of the Hunter* (Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum; detail, fig. 8), showing peasants and an elegantly dressed hunting party resting outside a tavern in an open landscape.¹³

The woman at the left in the *Farmyard Scene* is a good example of a favorite type, with her compact seated posture, ample décolletage, and the highlights that illuminate her fleshy cheek. These features also characterize the buxom woman who sits with her hands in her lap listening to the musicians in *Peasants Outside an Inn* (fig. 4), the woman who sits on the ground nursing a child in *The Chestnut Vendor* (fig. 2), and another woman also seated and nursing in *The Peasant Squabble* (fig. 6). In the last two examples the women are shown in profile, which emphasizes their full lips, sloping foreheads and chins.

6. No. 513 (FN 1310), 60.5 x 73 cm, canvas; from the Corsini Collection, 1883. The painting is classified in the files of the Palazzo Corsini under Jan Miel (Kren, *Jan Miel*, II, cat. no. D30).

7. No. 511 (FN 1312), 65 x 73 cm, canvas; from the Corsini Collection, 1883. Xavier Barbier de Montault, *Les Musées et Galeries de Rome: Catalogue général* (Rome, 1870), p. 304, n. 309; G.J. Hoogewerff, "Quadri olandesi e fiamminghi nella Galleria nazionale d'arte antica", *L'Arte* (1911), p. 365 (n. 1329) as by Miel; Briganti, *I Bamboccianti*, p. 27; N. di Carpegna, *Paesisti e Vedutisti a Roma nel '600 e '700* (Rome, 1956), no. 44 as by Miel; Bodart, I, pp. 392-393, II, fig. 201 as by Miel; Kren, *Jan Miel*, II, no. D4.

8. No. 167 (FN 1029), 59.5 x 75 cm, canvas; from the Corsini Collection, 1883. F. Hermanin, *Catalogo della R. Gallerie d'Arte Antica nel Palazzo Corsini - Roma* (Bologna, 1924), p. 17 as by Cerquozzi. The painting is currently listed in the files of the Palazzo Corsini as "by Miel (Cerquozzi?)" Kren, *Jan Miel*, II, under no. D4.

9. No. 102, 51 x 44 cm, oak; from the Collection Hudtwalcker-Wesselhoeft, bequest 1888. *Katalog der alten Meister der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, 4th ed. (1956), no. 108 as by Miel; Kren, *Jan Miel*, II, no. D32.

10. Sold London, Christie's, July 7, 1972, lot 50, purchased by Eisenbeiss; 45.7 x 27.9 cm, copper; Malcolm Waddingham, "Notes on a Caravaggesque Painting", *Arte Antica e Moderna*, 13/16 (1961), pp. 316-317 as by Miel. There is a replica attributed to Pieter van Laer in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy (40 x 32 cm). Catja Burger-Wegener has attributed this painting to Lingelbach (*Jan Lingelbach 1622-1674* [Ph.D. dissertation, Freie Universität, Berlin, 1976], cat. no. 16), and I previously was inclined to agree with her (*Jan Miel*, II, cat. no. D27), but now reject it ("Jan Lingelbach in Rome", *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, 10 [1982], p. 45, note 3). The replica is weaker in handling than the Crewes painting, but likely to be by the same hand.

11. Dimensions, support, and provenance identical with those of the preceding example. Waddingham, pp. 316-317, and Kren, *Jan Miel*, II, cat. no. D45.

12. No. 1041, 50 x 75 cm, canvas; Bodart, I, p. 433; II, fig. 241.

13. 101 x 136 cm, canvas; Bodart, I, p. 437; II, fig. 246.

The itinerant musicians, who were a recurrent theme for Goubau, can also be compared. The central figure in the *Farmyard Scene* (fig. 7) is a harpist who reappears, though without the fluffy beard, in *The Street Musicians*. Similarly, the same violinist, wearing a cape and a tall hat with a wide, rolled-back brim, entertains in both the *Picnic Before a Tavern* (fig. 1) and *Peasants Outside an Inn* (fig. 4),¹⁴ and the features of this character are nearly identical to the singing, bearded hurdy-gurdy player – again wearing a cape and hat – in the signed *Return of the Hunter* (fig. 8).

Scrawny but attentive peasant children also play a prominent role in Goubau's *bambocciate*. In the *Farmyard Scene* (fig. 7), a pair are depicted seated on the ground beside a harpist. Their long, loose sideburns, flat heads, and slightly underfed character call to mind the child on the ground in *The Peasant Squabble* (fig. 6), the child playing the flute in *The Street Musicians* (fig. 5), the child kneeling before the wine barrel in *The Military Camp* (fig. 3), and, above all, the appealing gallery of children in the foreground of *The Chestnut Vendor* (fig. 2). The musicians in these paintings are often accompanied by young boys who sing, as in the examples in Hamburg (fig. 4) and in Rome (fig. 1), or who play a musical instrument, like the barefoot boy in the *Return of the Hunter* (fig. 8).

These figure types occupy similar settings. Nearly all of the eight pictures under consideration here show a vista to one side, in a few instances quite small, which is frequently bathed in a golden light or haze, and they repeatedly integrate ancient ruins with modest, and sometimes dilapidated, domestic architecture. Finally, certain formal details unite this group of pictures, such as the deep loop folds, tightly gathered at joints and particularly evident in the seated figures. Examples include the soldier seated on the ground in the signed *Return of the Hunter* (fig. 8) and the completely draped figure begging in *The Peasant Squabble* (fig. 6). Such elements as the still life with a diagonally placed banner and pieces of armor, as well as the figure with the raised glass, are shared by *The Military Camp* (fig. 3) and a *Guardroom Scene*, monogrammed by Goubau and now in the Staatliches Museum, Schwerin.¹⁵

It bears mentioning that the dimensions and the provenances of the three paintings in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica are nearly identical, and it is likely that the paintings are companions.¹⁶ Although the subjects are related only in the most general terms, this would not have been uncommon, as in the case of *The Street Musicians* and *The Peasant Squabble* (figs. 5, 6). This further supports their grouping under a single master, and their lucid integration of figures and monuments foretells on a modest scale the dynamics of Goubau's large *capricci*. Moreover, in the overall brownish tonality, the very thin pigment, and the

14. These subjects – violinists, harpists, and hurdy-gurdy players before inns – were also popular with Jan Lingelbach; cf. the painting in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux, and several recently on the art market (Burger-Wegener, *Jan Lingelbach*, cat. nos. 108-116). There is another parallel between the two artists' careers. Like Goubau, after Lingelbach returned to the north he eventually abandoned *bambocciate* largely in favor of the large *capricci* described above.

15. No. 311, 57 x 43 cm, canvas; monogrammed "AG". Several pictures of this subject appear in the files of the Netherlands Institute of Art History under Bourdon, including a painting formerly with the art dealer Goudstikker (RKD neg. no. L53786 and 79/4781) and the one in the collection of Mr. D.G. Lewis-Stones (see note 5). Still another, "*Een Italiaansche Corps du Garde daar de Soldaten zitten te speelen door A. Goubaie 1655*", is listed in the sale of Heere Graaf van Hogendorp, July 27, 1751, The Hague, lot 20 (G. Hoet, *Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schilderyen met derzelver Pryzen*, II [The Hague, 1752], p. 300).

16. See notes 6, 7, and 8.

canvas supports, these three pictures are closer to the signed *Farmyard Scene* (fig. 7), and all four are typical of *bambocciate* executed in Rome.¹⁷

The other three paintings under consideration here show thicker paint film and different supports. The painting in Hamburg is executed on oak, an indication that it may have been carried out in the north, perhaps not long after the artist's return to Antwerp. The pendant *Street Musicians* and *The Peasant Squabble* are painted on copper, and the technique, especially the heavier paint film and tighter brushwork, may result from the support.¹⁸ Nevertheless, they are similar in execution to the painting on oak.

The second half of the 1640s was one of the liveliest periods in the history of *bambocciate*. It saw Miel, Cerquozzi, Sweerts, Lingelbach, and briefly Jan Baptist Weenix, along with Goubau, in Rome. Clearly Goubau's *bambocciate* merit attention. The discoloration which obscures some of the detail in the three *bambocciate* today in Rome (figs. 1, 2, and 3) does not hide the humor and vitality of his characters or the ambitious nature of the compositions. In the amusing *Picnic Before a Tavern* (fig. 1), a theme often treated by Jan Miel, Goubau injects a humorous incident into his interpretation: the musician's captive audience is mostly bored or asleep. *The Chestnut Vendor*, moreover, strongly anticipates Jan Baptist Weenix's monumental composition *Figures among Ruins in the Roman Campagna* (Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum).¹⁹ They share the motif of a buxom woman seated at the left before a monumental pedestal, with a view of Roman hills through the distance in the center. Finally, one may agree with Waddingham that the artist of *The Peasant Squabble* and *The Street Musicians* "... conveys with unusual freshness and originality the inherent contrasts of the Roman scene",²⁰ and if by no means a great or even important master, Goubau in his *bambocciate* reveals himself to be a sympathetic and witty observer of human behavior.

17. On the physical characteristics of *bambocciate* executed in Rome, see Kren, "Jan Lingelbach in Rome", p. 53.

18. It bears mentioning that this technique calls to mind the quality of Lingelbach's paint film upon his return to Amsterdam c. 1650-1651 (ibid.).

19. E. Haverkamp-Begemann, ed., *Wadsworth Atheneum Paintings, Catalogue 1: The Netherlands and German-Speaking Countries, Fifteenth-Nineteenth Centuries* (Hartford, 1978), no. 169, ill.

20. Waddingham, p. 317.



1. Antoine Goubau, attributed to, *Picnic Before a Tavern*. Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (Photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome).



2. Antoine Goubau, attributed to, *The Chestnut Vendor*. Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (Photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome).



3. Antoine Goubau, attributed to, *The Military Camp*. Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (Photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome).



4. Antoine Goubau, attributed to, *Peasants Outside an Inn*. Hamburg, Kunsthalle (Photo: Ralph Kleinhempel).



5. Antoine Goubau, attributed to, *The Street Musicians*. Formerly Collection Quentin Crewes (Photo: A.C. Cooper).



6. Antoine Goubau, attributed to, *The Peasant Squabble*. Formerly Collection Quentin Crewes (Photo: A.C. Cooper).



7. Antoine Goubau, *Farmyard Scene*. Florence, Palazzo Pitti (Photo: Gabinetto Fotografico, Soprintendenza alle Gallerie, Florence).



8. Antoine Goubau, *Return of the Hunter* (detail). Brunswick, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum (Photo: B.P. Keiser).