Gerbrand van den Eeckhout (Amsterdam 1621 - Amsterdam 1674)

**Jacob's Dream**
1672
Oil on canvas, 121.3 x 102.8 cm
Signed and dated lower right: G.V. Eeckhout / A 0 1672

Kingston, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, 2001, acc. no. 44-008

**Provenance**
John Turner et al. sale (anonymous section), London (Sotheby's), 6 May 1953, lot 150 (as dated 1652); sale, London (Christie's), 11 March 1955, lot 170 (as dated 1652); London, collection of Efim Schapiro; An American Corporation et al. sale (Dr. Efim I. Schapiro section), London (Christie's), 13 July 1979, lot 10 (pl. 5, as dated 1652); purchased by Alfred Bader; Milwaukee, collection of Alfred and Isabel Bader

**Literature**

**Exhibition Catalogues**

CHAPTER 28 OF the Book of Genesis tells how Jacob, after having cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright, obeyed his father Isaac’s order to visit his uncle Laban in Padan-aram (in present-day Syria) and there to find himself a wife. During his journey, Jacob “lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.” As he slept, he dreamt that he saw “a ladder set up on the
Jacob’s Dream. For the period from around 1640 to 1644 it is possible to detect a close connection between Bol and Van den Eeckhout with regard to their choice of subject matter and their Rembrandtesque painting style. Although both painters were working as independent masters from around 1641, Rembrandt’s influence remained noticeable in their work. Blankert speculates that Rembrandt may have given his two pupils the task of depicting an encounter between a biblical figure and an angel.5

For the present painting, Van den Eeckhout made a preparatory red chalk drawing, now in the Staatliches Museum in Schwerin (fig. 70b).6 Despite slight variations (see, for example, Jacob’s hat) there can be no doubt about the close connection between the drawing and the painting, although the latter seems to have been slightly cut down on the left. In 1984 David McTavish observed that beneath the wings of the second angel, in the background of the painting, there is an earlier figure, with longer and more horizontally positioned wings. These are still visible through the top paint layer.7 This original set of wings corresponds to that of the same angel in the Schwerin drawing. For stylistic reasons the drawing must be dated to the 1650s. Van den Eeckhout evidently referred back to it for his painting of 1672, altering the wings of the angel in the background in order to give them the same shape as those of the angel dressed in white.8

Volker Manuth

1. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Jacob’s Dream, 1642, oil on canvas, 76 x 116 cm, Warsaw, Museum Narodowe, inv. 54, see Sumowski 1979-1994, vol. 3, p. 773, no. 738 (colour ill.). This version is the only one Van den Eeckhout painted in a horizontal format.
2. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Jacob’s Dream, 1669, oil on canvas, 128 x 104 cm, signed, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie alte Meister, inv. 619; see Volker Manuth in exhib. cat. Melbourne and Canberra 1997-1998, p. 274 (fig. 55a).
3. Jan Pynas, Jacob’s Dream, etching, 1602, 15.3 x 20.5 cm; see Hollstein, vol. 17, p. 116 (III). For further discussion, see Volker Manuth in exhib. cat. Melbourne and Canberra 1997-1998, p. 574 (fig. 554).
5. Ibid., p. 30.

The angel standing beside Jacob has raised his right hand, as if to protect the sleeping man, and points with his left up toward heaven. This figure displays similarities with Ferdinand Bol’s angel in his painting of Jacob’s Dream, now at the Dresden Gemäldegalerie (fig. 70a).4 In comparing the figure of the angel in Bol’s painting with Rembrandt’s figure of Christ in his 1642 etching The Raising of Lazarus, Albert Blankert dates Bol’s version of Jacob’s Dream to around the same year. As noted above, 1642 is also the date of Van den Eeckhout’s earliest version of Jacob’s Dream. For the period from around 1640 to 1644 it is possible to detect a close connection between Bol and Van den Eeckhout with regard to their choice of subject matter and their Rembrandtesque painting style. Although both painters were working as independent masters from around 1641, Rembrandt’s influence remained noticeable in their work. Blankert speculates that Rembrandt may have given his two pupils the task of depicting an encounter between a biblical figure and an angel.5

For the present painting, Van den Eeckhout made a preparatory red chalk drawing, now in the Staatliches Museum in Schwerin (fig. 70b).6 Despite slight variations (see, for example, Jacob’s hat) there can be no doubt about the close connection between the drawing and the painting, although the latter seems to have been slightly cut down on the left. In 1984 David McTavish observed that beneath the wings of the second angel, in the background of the painting, there is an earlier figure, with longer and more horizontally positioned wings. These are still visible through the top paint layer.7 This original set of wings corresponds to that of the same angel in the Schwerin drawing. For stylistic reasons the drawing must be dated to the 1650s. Van den Eeckhout evidently referred back to it for his painting of 1672, altering the wings of the angel in the background in order to give them the same shape as those of the angel dressed in white.8

Volker Manuth

1. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Jacob’s Dream, 1642, oil on canvas, 76 x 116 cm, Warsaw, Museum Narodowe, inv. 54, see Sumowski 1979-1994, vol. 3, p. 773, no. 738 (colour ill.). This version is the only one Van den Eeckhout painted in a horizontal format.
2. Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, Jacob’s Dream, 1669, oil on canvas, 128 x 104 cm, signed, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie alte Meister, inv. 619; see Volker Manuth in exhib. cat. Melbourne and Canberra 1997-1998, p. 274 (fig. 55a).
3. Jan Pynas, Jacob’s Dream, etching, 1602, 15.3 x 20.5 cm; see Hollstein, vol. 17, p. 116 (III). For further discussion, see Volker Manuth in exhib. cat. Melbourne and Canberra 1997-1998, p. 574 (fig. 554).
5. Ibid., p. 30.