

Aert SCHOUMAN
(DORDRECHT, 1710 – THE HAGUE, 1792)

GUINEA FOWL OF NUMIDIA AND A BLACK HEADED CAIQUE ON A BRANCH

A RED IBIS AND A VICTORIA CROWNED PIGEON



OIL ON CANVAS, A PAIR

DIMENSIONS WITHOUT FRAME: 37 3/16 x 43 5/16 IN.

DIMENSIONS WITH FRAME: 42 15/16 x 48 7/16 IN.

SIGNED LOWER RIGHT FOR THE FIRST AND SIGNED LOWER LEFT FOR THE SECOND: *A.*
SCHOUMAN

PROVENANCE: PRIVATE COLLECTION

RELATED WORK:

AERT SCHOUMAN, PREPARATORY DRAWING OF THE GUINEA FOWL, PEN AND INK AND WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, 15.16 x 12.64 IN, PRIVATE COLLECTION, *FIG.3* (STUDY FOR THE CURRENT PAINTING)

27, Quai Voltaire, 75007 Paris

Aert Schouman is the youngest of a family of six children. He is the son of Leendert Schouman and Cornelia de Vos, both middle-class citizens of Dordrecht. His older brother Cornelis Schouman (circa 1696 - circa 1748), was a painter of the « *manière fine* » (Fijnschilder). At 15 years old, he entered the workshop of the portraitist Adriaen Van der Burg (1693-1733) of Dordrecht, who was a pupil himself of Arnold Houbraken (1660 – 1719), a famous author of the *Big Theater of the artists and the Dutch painters* published between 1718 and 1721. This book contains painter's biographies of the 17th century and was conceived as the suite of the *Book of the painters* of Carel Van Mander (1548 – 1606) published in 1604.

Early paintings by Aert Schouman reveal numerous influences (fig. 1) : Van der Burg, Houbraken, but also Samuel van Hoogstraten (1626 – 1678) and before him Rembrandt.

From a stylistic point of view, paintings of these five artists are different but the compositions are relatively close. Alongside his teacher van der Burg, Aert Schouman was formed in the depiction of genre scenes, history paintings and portraits. Brilliant student, he touched various fields, being willing copyist and then realizing still lifes, portraits, genre scenes, biblical scenes as well as topographical subjects and representations of plants and animals.



Fig. 1. Aert Schouman, *The flight into Egypt*, oil on canvas, 5.27 x 4.37 in., Amsterdam, Art Gallery Salomon Stodel.

In 1732, Aert Schouman loses his mother. The next year, Adriaen van der Burg, his teacher, dies. He was very quickly recognized for his talent and was at the head of Saint Luke's guild (Dordrecht) between 1742 and 1792, becoming simultaneously in 1751, director of the art school of The Hague.

With his success and his drawing skills, Schouman attracts the trust of prestigious patrons among whom Guillaume V, prince of Orange-Nassau and latest Stathouder of the United Provinces from 1751 à 1795. The young prince owned a cabinet of zoology - partially formed by Frédéric-Henri (1584 – 1647), first Stathouder of the United Provinces then completed by his son and successor Guillaume (1624 -1650) - and a menagerie. Located in the Palace of Het Loo (Apeldoorn, the Netherlands), the menagerie accommodated mammals (fig.2), reptiles and also beautiful exotic birds coming from countries colonized by the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) created in 1602.

In 1770, Guillaume V put his natural history cabinet and his menagerie in the hands of the collector Arnout Vosmaer (1720-1799), who made an inventory of species, nonexistent before. Aert Schouman, assisted by the engraver Simon Fokke (1712–1784) and by the German zoologist and botanist Peter Simon Pallas (1741 – 1811) produced a catalogue in the form of 34 treaties about foreign animals between 1767 and 1787, two years after the publication of the catalogue *Description exacte des principales curiosités naturelles du magnifique cabinet d'Albert Seba*, by the chemist Albert Seba (1665 – 1736), in four volumes.



Fig. 2. Mammals from the menagerie of the prince Guillaume V at Het Loo, with the Royal Palace in background, aquarelle, 248 x 306 mm, Paris, Institut néerlandais, fondation Custodia.

Thanks to this notable work combining scientific truth and decorative appearance the animal representations by Aert Schouman interested very quickly private and royal connoisseurs. Animal representations were multiple and executed with Indian ink, watercolor or gouache. Our artist was not familiar with the classification of plants and animals unlike Swiss naturalist Linnaeus (1707 – 1781) who noted everything in Latin.

Schouman just used common names given to animals or the name given by the animal owner (Laurens J. Bol, Aert Schouman ; Ingenious Painter and Draughtsman, Doornspijk, 1991, p. 81).



Fig. 3. Aert Schouman, Preparatory drawing of the Guinea Fowl, pen and ink and watercolor on paper, 15.16 x 12.64 in, Private collection.