

**MELCHIOR D'HONDECOETER**

Utrecht 1636 – 1695 Amsterdam

*A Study of a Swan in fighting pose.*

Oil on Panel, 30 x 23 cm



Melchior d'Hondecoeter was the son of Gijsbert Gillisz. d'Hondecoeter (1603/04-1653), one of the first Dutch artists to specialize in painting live birds in a landscape. Melchior was born in Utrecht, where he was taught by his father and, after his father's death in 1653, by his uncle Jan Baptist Weenix, an important and innovative painter of landscapes and still lifes, among other things.

The majority of his oeuvre, mostly signed but rarely dated, consists of scenes with live birds in landscapes, examples of which can be found in many museums, and a few landscapes with other animals. Especially early in his career, he painted a number of still lifes, mostly of small game. By 1670, Hondecoeter's style had fully matured, and his work had become very popular.

The swan study discussed here is an interesting addition to Melchior d'Hondecoeter's oeuvre. So far, it is the only known study of a single bird (fig.1). However, the execution is similar to that of the other two oil studies, for example, in the strong lighting, confident modeling, and the fleeting hint of the bird's shadow. This same swan appears in only one known signature painting by Melchior d'Hondecoeter, on a much larger scale, in a scene with swans and peacocks

Since Melchior d'Hondecoeter rarely dated his works and remained relatively consistent in his style and execution after his work matured around 1670, it is difficult to accurately date his works, and a study like this even more so. However, it seems quite likely that it originated sometime in the 1670s.



Fig. 1 Drawing Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-T-1900-A-4473

*Provenance:* Collection Johan Peijnenburg, Geldrop (restored by A.M. Wild, bought in the 1930's according to newspaper clippings in the RKD press documentation, as Jan Asselijn);  
Kunstzaal Oudt Holland (A.J. Boer), The Hague (as Jan Asselijn with expertise by Max J. Friedländer from 1941);  
Van Marle, de Sille & Baan, Rotterdam, Auction 28-29 January 1942, lot 23 (as Jan Asselijn);  
Private Collection, The Netherlands.

*Literature:* Fred Meijer's report, 20 April 2020.