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Willem van de VELDE the ELDER

Leiden 1611 – 1693 Greenwich

A Dutch Ship at Anchor in the Open Sea, with Other Shipping.

Pen Painting in black and grey ink on canvas,
15 x 22.5 cm.
Signed bottom right: *w,v.velde f*

Provenance: Collection Franck W. Marten, London;
By inheritance, collection of his widow Phyllis Marten, London, 1938;
Private Collection;
Sale Christie's London, 29 March 1974, lot 60, plate 49 (sold for 3'200 gns. to M. Henderson);
P. and D. Colnaghi & Co. Gallery, London;
Private Collection, The Netherlands;
David Koetser Gallery, Zurich, Switzerland, 2009-2010;
Private Collection, United Kingdom.

Exhibited: *In de Ban van de Zee, De Gouden Eeuw van de Nederlandse marineschiderkunst, De Inder Rieden Collectie*, Museum Bredius, The Hague, 10 December 2019- 1 March 2020, no. 16, reproduced.

Literature: M. Robinson, *Willem van de Velde*, London 1990, vol. I, p. 85, no. 657 (as substantially by Willem van de Velde the Elder and c. 1685);
G. de Beer, *The Golden Age of Dutch Marine Painting, The Inder Rieden Collection*, Leiden 2019, Vol. III, no. 66, pp. 1040-1048, reproduced.

The hatched pattern of the waves and the precise draftsmanship of the main motif – a three master at anchor – point to none other than Willem van de Velde the Elder as the principal artist of this composition. Both his earlier and later drawings of 'water' have his characteristic pattern. It was suggested, in the past, that this small canvas had been trimmed. Close inspection has confirmed that this in fact is not the case. Cut-off compositions such as the present pen painting, showing a partial boat in the foreground, are not uncommon in the Van de Velde's oeuvre. The present pen painting belongs to the artist's late period. During these later years Van de Velde seems to have preferred this smaller format ideal for private collectors and most likely intended for the open market.

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Willem van de Velde the Elder was a true specialist. He was far less experienced in oil painting than his son and this would eventually result in a fruitful collaboration between the two. It resulted in a contractual clause regarding their activities in England: it stipulated that the son would execute in oils what his father had drawn.

More than any of his contemporaries Van de Velde the Elder excelled at capturing each individual element of a vessel with painstaking accuracy. Both his figure studies and de execution of vessels and ships in pen painting technique are unequalled. Generally speaking however, Van de Velde the Elder did experience difficulties drawing moving elements such as sails and flags. Yet this is not the case in the present composition, where the sails of the man-o-war's sail aesthetically arranged. It is thought that the present composition is predominantly by the father, but that in this instance the sails and flags were executed by the son. As Robinson repeatedly points out in his Catalogue Raisonne on the paintings of father and son during their time in England; their division of labor was always the same: Van de Velde the Elder was responsible for the ships' hulls, the Younger for the sails and flags.