

Jan Frans van Bloemen, called l'Orizzonte  
(Antwerp 1662 – 1749 Rome)

*A capriccio with the Colosseum and figures at a fountain*  
Oil on canvas, 124 x 174 cm

Van Bloemen was a specialist in the genre of landscape and view painting which distinctly featured classical architecture. In Antwerp he was a pupil of Antonio Goubau, later moving to Paris in 1682 and Lyon in 1684, after which he would travel to Italy. He stayed in Turin for four months before settling in Rome in 1685 together with his brother Pieter. When residing in Rome he became a member of the Bent fraternity that brought together expatriated Flemish and Dutch artists who lived in the city at the time.

His landscapes were in great demand among noble Roman families such as the Pallavicini, Colonna, Doria, Rospigliosi and Corsini families. He collaborated with several artists, namely Carlo Maratta, Sebastiano Conca, Placido Costanzi and Filippo Lauri, who was involved mainly in the rendering of figurative elements.

Van Bloemen was one of the most significant exponents of classical landscape painting which followed the tradition and manner of Nicolas Poussin. Indeed, he was influenced by Gaspar Dughet, a pupil of the great French painter who was also active in Rome at the time.

Most importantly, he is recognized as being the inventor of a new type of landscape genre defined as 'rural', as his landscapes were no longer used as a visual medium for story telling, but were simply settings populated by people at rest, peasants, soldiers, travelers and various animals, such as dogs, herds and horses. Therefore, his paintings stepped away from heroic narrative and scenery, becoming simple renderings of the Lazio countryside featuring imaginative arrangements of well-known architectural structures from antiquity.

Indeed, the *Capriccio with the Colosseum and figures at a fountain* is a perfect example of his innovative style, where the composition scheme of the painting is balanced through his creative arrangement of famous monuments alongside multiple figures dressed in timeless, atypical clothing, clearly inspired by the style of Dughet. Furthermore, the arrangement of trees on both sides of the composition acts as a backdrop to the landscape. In the background the viewer can distinguish the Colosseum, while in the foreground one finds the remains of a lost monument, including a fountain with a sculpted mask, which used to lean on Villa Sinibaldi on Via Flaminia, on the corner of Via Dell'Orso. There is an exceptional variation of color in this painting, ranging from soft yellowish-green tones to delicate light pink hues. The materiality of the colour is undoubtedly Italian through its rich density, liberated brushstrokes and its overall translucent effect.