

Vincent De Vos
Courtrai 1829-1875

Circus Friends

Oil on canvas
41½x55¼ in. (105x 140,5cm)

Signed, inscribed and dated ' V.de Vos./Cortrai 1869' (lower right).

Born in Courtrai in 1829, Vincent De Vos studied at the Courtrai Academy under religious artist Philip De White, and Edward Woutermaetens a painter of animals and following his example he specialized in animal paintings. At the Academy, his early works won medals for composition in 1848, antique images in 1849, anatomy in 1851, and the gold medal for perspective in 1852.

In 1870 he spent time in the Campagna Romana, Italy, but eventually he settled down in his hometown of Courtrai, where he set up his studio, which most described a small zoo. He kept dogs, wolves, foxes, monkeys and even a camel. Small sized painting of oil on panel was the majority of his works, but the present work, dated 1869, is probably one of his largest and more ambitious paintings. He often depicted animals in circus dresses resting on a tradition that dates back to the XVII century when Flemish painters like David Teniers and Jan Van Kessel introduced the theme of animals, especially monkeys, dressed in a fashionable way and acting as human being.

The theme was particularly popular all around Europe in XVII and XVIII century. In XVIII century France some artists like, Christophe Huet, specialized in the so called *singerie* painting, French word for "Monkey Trick", a genre depicting monkeys apeing human behavior, often fashionably attired, intended as a diverting sight, always with a gentle cast of mild satire.

His work was successful commercially, and was exhibited primarily in Belgium and France.

The similar exemple of this scene is present in the BroelMuseum of Courtrai *Animals on Stage, 1870*, (Monkeys always play scene); *The General, 1870*

(The General ride his dog), and in the same Museum *Waiting, 1870*, (Portrait of a funny monkey in a reastaurant).