



Painting in the Dutch Golden Age

A Profile of the Seventeenth Century

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
WASHINGTON

Painting in the Dutch Golden Age



A RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS

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National Gallery of Art, Washington

Acknowledgments

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cover and frontispiece

front cover: Jan Davidsz de Heem, Dutch, 1606–1683/1684, *Vase of Flowers* (detail), c. 1660, oil on canvas, 69.6 × 56.5 (27³/₈ × 22¹/₄), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Fund

back cover: Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Willem Coymans* (detail), 1645, oil on canvas, 77 × 64 (30¹/₄ × 25), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

frontispiece: Ludolf Backhuysen, Dutch, 1631–1708, *Ships in Distress off a Rocky Coast* (detail), 1667, oil on canvas, 114.3 × 167.3 (45 × 65⁷/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

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How to Use This Book

This book is one component of the *Painting in the Dutch Golden Age* teaching packet. Other elements include:

- twenty slides
- twelve 11 x 14 color reproductions
- CD with JPEG image files of every National Gallery work of art reproduced here
- separate classroom activity guide

Dimensions of works of art are given in centimeters followed by inches; height precedes width.

This book introduces teachers of middle school students and up to seventeenth-century Dutch culture and its early influence in North America. Three introductory chapters, “Profile of the Dutch Republic,” “A Golden Age for the Arts,” and “Life in the City and Countryside,” provide an overview. Next are five sections on the types of painting strongly associated with Dutch art of the Golden Age: “Landscape Painting,” “Genre Painting,” “Still-Life Painting,” “Portraiture,” and “History Painting.” Dutch paintings of the time presumably offer snapshots of what Dutch life was like, but in fact they contained an equal measure of reality and artifice. Dutch artists broke with conventions and took liberties to create images that reflected their republic’s socially conservative, yet worldly, aspirations. The result was a vast body of work enormously original in approach and varied in subject matter.

Dutch artists also continued efforts, begun during the Renaissance, to elevate the status of art

beyond its associations with lesser trades and to restructure the guild system. Patrons and artists discussed the fine points of composition, technique, and ways in which art engaged the attentions of the viewer. This connoisseurship (addressed in the section “Talking about Pictures”) spurred the founding of specialized art academies and a new “business” of art.

Within the chapters, “In Focus” sections look more deeply at individual works in the National Gallery of Art’s collection. These discussions crystallize key chapter concepts. You will also find multi-page special-topic features that address such subjects as “America’s Dutch Heritage” and “Flowers and Flower Painting.” The book also includes a timeline, a listing of resources, both printed and online, and a glossary.

We hope you find this packet a useful resource for engaging students on such subjects as world history, the founding of the United States, visual and cultural analysis, geography, world religion, and social studies. We welcome your comments and questions. Please contact us at:

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The Netherlands Today

Profile of the Dutch Republic



For the Netherlands, the seventeenth century was a period of remarkable prosperity and artistic output — a true Golden Age.



Jan van Goyen, Dutch, 1596–1656, *View of Dordrecht from the Dordtse Kil* (detail), 1644, oil on panel, 64.7 × 95.9 (25½ × 37¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

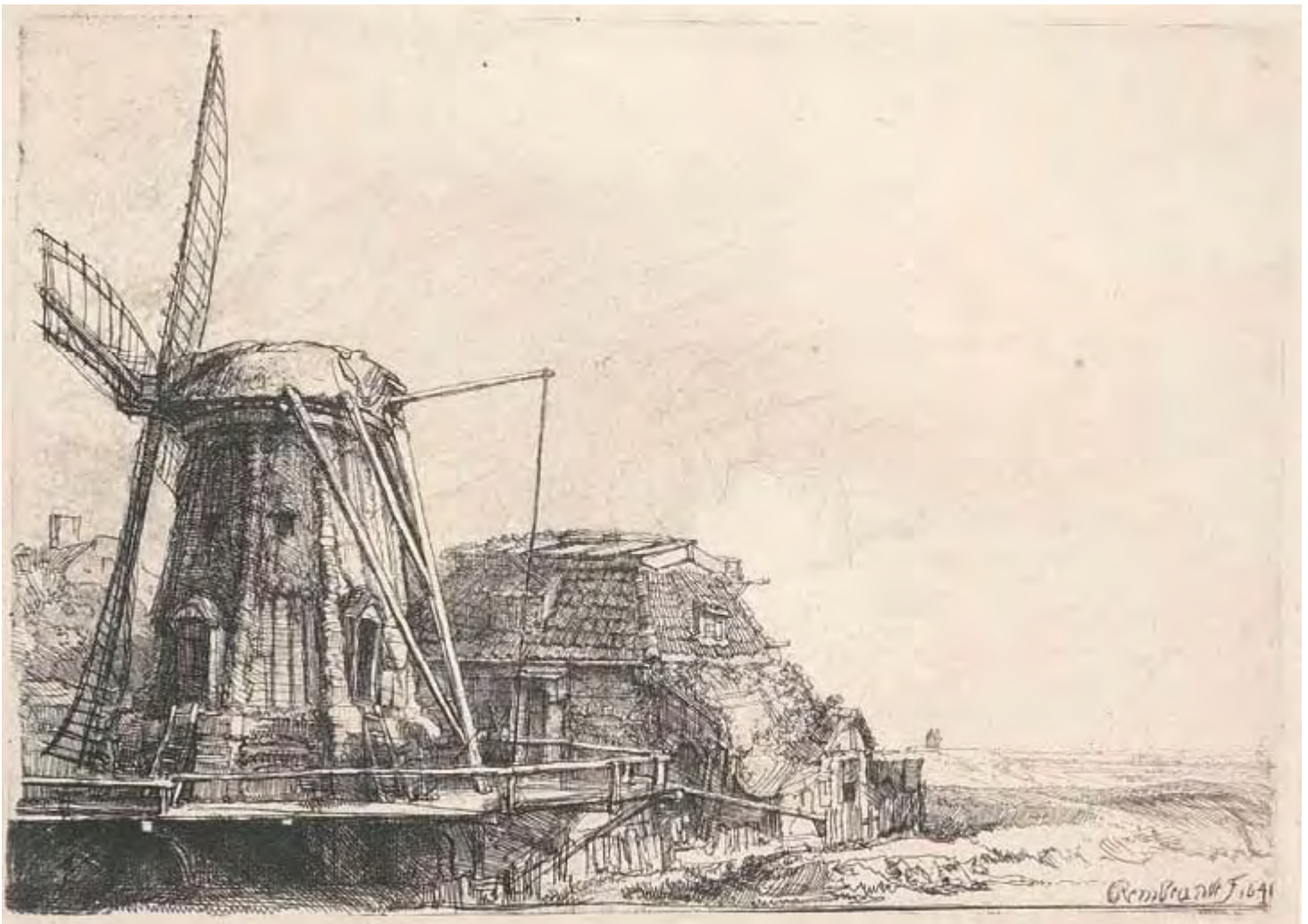
A LAND OF WIND AND WATER

There is a saying that God created the world but the Dutch made the Netherlands. The very word “Netherlands” means low lands. The country is located on the North Sea, and large areas lie below sea level; its lowest point is more than 22 feet below sea level and its highest only about 1,050 feet above. The nation’s geography has shaped its history and culture. Through the centuries, the Dutch have prevailed against the sea by hard work and constant vigilance, yet water and ocean winds have also been a boon, resources that played a key part in the success of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.



Shallow seas were drained to reclaim land, creating new arable areas called polders, a process begun in the 1200s to accommodate a growing population. Between 1590 and 1650, the area of northern Holland increased by one-third, and land reclamation projects continued through the seventeenth century. They were large-scale and costly ventures, often financed by selling shares.

Arent Arentsz, called Cabel, Dutch, 1585/1586–1631, *Polderlandscape with Fisherman and Peasants*, 1625/1631, oil on panel, 25.5 × 50.5 (10 × 19¾), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Windmills

Probably nothing is more emblematic of the Netherlands than the windmill. Today just under a thousand survive; at one time there were probably some nine thousand. In the seventeenth century they powered a range of activities, from grinding grain and mustard to sawing timber and processing paint. Until fairly recent times they still regulated inland water levels.

The mill in the etching seen here is a smock mill (named because it was thought to resemble a smock). Smock mills took many different forms. This one is a top-wheeler: to angle the sails so they could capture the wind, the miller only had to rotate the cap where the sails are attached. Top-wheeling mills were invented during the 1300s. Rembrandt van Rijn's painting (p. 13) shows a post mill, a type of mill

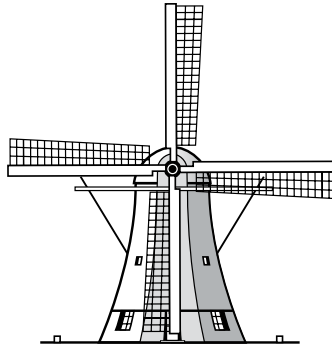
already in use around 1200. The sails are supported on a boxlike wooden structure that rests on a strong vertical post. Carefully balanced on a revolving platform, the entire upper structure is turned so that the sails can catch the wind.

A miller could communicate various messages by setting the idle sails of a mill in different positions. As late as World War II, prearranged sail signals warned of Nazi raids and urged townspeople into hiding.

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *The Windmill*, 1641, etching, 14.6 × 20.6 (5¾ × 8⅛), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of W.G. Russell Allen

Working

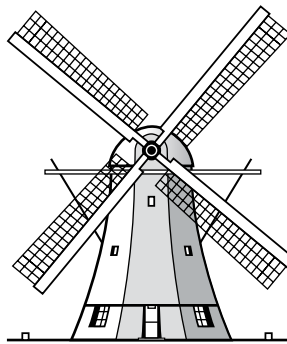
Lightning made it inadvisable to leave a sail in the full vertical position for long periods. If a potential customer found an idle sail upright, he could assume that the miller would likely soon return. (Today, after installation of lightning conductors, sails resting in this configuration are commonly seen.)



Windmill sail illustrations from *Windmills of Holland* (Zaandam, 2005), Courtesy Tjasker Design, Amsterdam

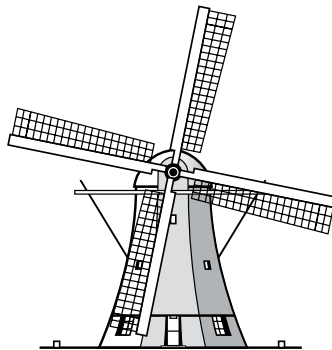
Diagonal or crossover

When the mill was to be idle for long stretches, this lower sail position was safer.



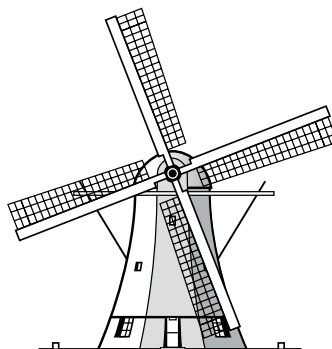
Rejoicing

In most parts of the Netherlands sails were set in this position to share the news when a miller's family celebrated births, weddings, or other happy occasions. The descending sail arm (in the Netherlands all mills move counterclockwise) is stopped short of its lowest point, before the mill door, meaning good tidings are on the way.



Mourning

The departing sail, by contrast, stopped just after passing the lowest point, communicated sadness.

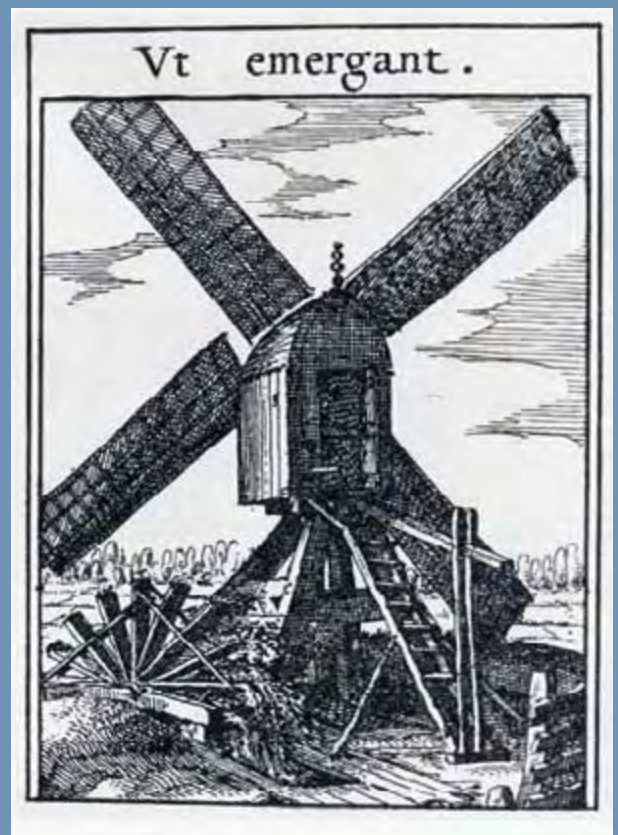


In Focus *A Dutch Stalwart*

Dark clouds, once ominous, have now blown past, allowing warm sunlight to wash over the sails of a windmill. The mill itself stands like a sentry on its bulwark, watching steadfast over small, reassuring motions of daily life: a woman and child are walking down to the river, where another woman kneels to wash clothes, her action sending ripples over the smooth water; an oarsman takes his boat to the opposite shore; in the distance, cows and sheep graze peacefully.

Rembrandt's father owned a grain mill outside of Leiden, and it has been suggested that his mill is the one seen here. Changes he made to the scene—painting and then removing a bridge, for example—indicate, however, that this is probably not any specific mill. More likely, Rembrandt chose to depict the mill for its symbolic functions. Mills had a number of associations in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. Some

observers drew parallels between the wind's movement of the sails and the spiritual animation of human souls. Windmills, which kept the soggy earth dry, were also viewed as guardians of the land and its people. At about the time Rembrandt painted his mill, a number of landscape paintings made historical and cultural reference to the Netherlands' struggle for independence, which had been won from Spain in 1648 after eighty years of intermittent war (see p. 14). Although it is not clear whether Rembrandt intended his *Mill* to be an overt political statement, it *is* an image of strength and calm in the breaking light after a storm. It can easily be read as a celebration of peace and hope for prosperity in a new republic where people, like those Rembrandt painted here, can live their lives without fear or war.



This print comes from an emblem book, a compendium of moralizing advice and commentary paired with illustrations that was a popular form of literature in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. Visscher's *Zinne-poppen* (also spelled *Sinnepoppen*) was first published in Amsterdam in 1614. A mill, pumping water from the soil, appears below the Latin legend *Ut emergant* (That they may rise up). Accompanying text (not illustrated) goes on to compare the windmill to a good prince who works selflessly for his people.

Roemer Visscher with copperplate engravings by Claes Jansz Visscher, Dutch, 1547–1620; Dutch, 1585/1587–1652, *Ut emergant* (That they may rise up), from *Zinne-poppen* (Emblems) (Amsterdam, 1669), National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



Rembrandt van Rijn,
Dutch, 1606–1669, *The
Mill*, 1645/1648, oil on
canvas, 87.6 × 105.6
(34½ × 41⅝), National
Gallery of Art, Washington,
Widener Collection

FOUNDATIONS

Struggle for Independence

In 1556 the territory of the modern Netherlands, along with lands to the south that are now Belgium, Luxembourg, and parts of northern France, passed to Philip II, Hapsburg king of Spain. The seventeen provinces of the Low Lands were administered by Spanish governors in Brussels. In 1579 the seven northern provinces—Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Overijssel, Gelderland, Friesland, and Groningen—formed a loose federation (the Union of Utrecht) and declared their independence. The struggle, however, had begun years earlier, in 1568, with a revolt led by the Dutch nobleman William of Orange.

It was a clash of two dramatically different cultures. As defenders of the Catholic faith, Philip and his governors were in deepening religious conflict with the northern provinces, where Calvinism had become firmly rooted. The violent suppression of Protestants was a major reason for Dutch dissatisfaction with their Spanish overlords and sparked the rebellion. Other antagonisms grew out of fundamental differences in economies and styles of governance, as well as increasing competition for trade. While Dutch wealth was derived from industry and mercantile exchange and was centered in the cities, Spain's wealth was based on inherited landownership and bounty from exploration around the globe. Power in Spain resided with the aristocracy, but in the Dutch cities, it was an urban, upper middle class of wealthy merchants, bankers, and traders that held sway. Independent-minded citizens in the traditionally autonomous Dutch provinces balked at attempts to centralize control at the court in Madrid.

William's rebellion was the first salvo of the Eighty Years' War—an often bloody confrontation interrupted by periods of relative peace. The war ended in 1648 with Spain's formal recognition of the independent Dutch Republic (officially the



Long before independence, the Dutch possessed a strong sense of national identity. During the revolt, William of Orange was often compared to Moses and the Dutch to the Israelites, God's chosen people. Goltzius' engraving suggests that William would lead them to their own promised land. Surrounding his portrait are scenes of the parting of the Red Sea (upper right) and other events from Moses' life.

Hendrik Goltzius, Dutch, 1558–1617, *William, Prince of Nassau-Orange*, 1581, engraving, 26.9 × 18.2 (10⁹/₁₆ × 7³/₁₆), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

Republic of the United Provinces) in the Treaty of Münster. (Already in 1609 Spain had given tacit recognition of the north's independence when it agreed to the Twelve-Year Truce with the seven provinces, although hostilities resumed after its expiration in 1621.) In addition to sovereignty, the treaty gave the Dutch important trade advantages. The southern Netherlands remained Catholic and a part of Spain.



Produced during the Twelve-Year Truce, this map marks the separation between the seven northern provinces that would become the Dutch Republic and those in the south that would remain the Hapsburg Netherlands. Major cities of the north are profiled in vignettes to the left and those of the south to the right. The lion — Leo Belgicus — was a traditional heraldic device that would come to represent the Dutch Republic and the province of Holland. In this image the ferocious lion is calmed by the prospect of the truce.

Claes Jansz Visscher and Workshop, Dutch, 1586/1587–1652, *Novissima, et accuratissima Leonis Belgici, seu septemdecim regionum descriptio* (Map of the Seventeen Dutch and Flemish Provinces as a Lion), c. 1611–1621, etching and engraving, 46.8 × 56.9 (18 3/8 × 22 3/8), Leiden University, Bodel Nijenhuis Special Collections



Political Structure: A Power Game

During and after the revolt, the political structure of the seven United Provinces balanced the military interests of the federation as a whole with the well-being and economic ambitions of the separate provinces and their main cities. The government that resulted was largely decentralized and local, with the greatest power residing in the richest cities, particularly Amsterdam.

For much of the seventeenth century, the Netherlands' highest military leader and titular head of state was the stadholder (literally, "city holder"). The office was reserved for princes of the House of Orange, whose family had long held hereditary title to the territory. William of Orange was succeeded as stadholder by his sons Maurits (ruled 1585–1625) and Frederick Henry (ruled 1625–1647), who created an impressive court at The Hague. The stadholder's power, however, was offset—sometimes overmatched—by that of the city governments, the provincial

Asked by the mayor of Amsterdam to accompany the Dutch delegation, artist Gerard ter Borch was present to record the ratification of the Treaty of Münster. He depicted each of the more than seventy diplomats and witnesses, including himself looking out from the far left. Ter Borch was careful to detail the hall, its furnishings, and the different gestures of the ratifiers—the Dutch with two fingers raised, and the Spanish motioning to a Gospel book and cross.

Gerard ter Borch II, Dutch, 1617–1681, *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster, May 15, 1648*, c. 1648/1670, oil on copper, 46 × 60 (18 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 23 $\frac{5}{8}$), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

assemblies (states), and the national legislative body, the states-general. These civil institutions were controlled by regents, an elite of about two thousand drawn from the wealthy upper middle class of bankers and merchants, whose well-compensated offices could be passed to heirs. The aristocratic stadholders remained dependent on the regents of the states-general in matters of taxation and politics, and their interests were often at odds. Continued warfare, waged primarily to regain territory from Spain, generally enhanced the stadholder's influence, while the states-general was more concerned with the protection of trade and city autonomy. At various points in the second half of the seventeenth century, the stadholder and the states-general, and especially the rich and prosperous province of Holland, vied for and traded supremacy. Between 1651 and 1672, a span called the "first stadholderless period," the strongest authority in the Netherlands was the civil leader of Holland, the brilliant statesman Johan de Witt.

New Enemies

After the war with Spain ended, the Dutch found themselves confronted with two other powerful enemies: France and England, whom they battled on land and at sea in the second half of the seventeenth century. Between the Eighty Years' War and these subsequent confrontations, the country was at war for much of what we call the Golden Age. In 1672 the Dutch suffered a disastrous invasion by French troops (provoking anger at De Witt and returning power to stadholder William III [ruled 1672–1702]). Despite war and internal conflict, however, the country also enjoyed long periods of calm and remarkable prosperity. (See the timeline for more about the complex history of the republic after independence in 1648.)

Geographic Names

The Netherlands is the name of the modern country, but it also describes the entire Low Lands before Dutch independence. The **northern Netherlands** and the **United Provinces** refer to the seven northern provinces that became the **Dutch Republic** after independence from Spain. **Holland**, commonly used today to refer to the entire country of the Netherlands, was the name of its most prosperous and populous province, now divided into North and South Holland. After independence and the formal separation of north and south, what had been the **southern Netherlands**, now mostly Belgium, is referred to as **Flanders**, after the name of its leading province.

In Focus *Armada for Independence*



Aelbert Cuyp is best known for idyllic landscapes where shepherds and cow herders tend their animals in quiet contentment (see p. 70). This large painting (more than five feet across), however, seems to record a real event. Early morning light streams down. The date is probably July 12, 1646. For two weeks a large fleet and 30,000 soldiers had been assembled in Dordrecht. The city entertained the men with free lodging, beer, bacon, and cake. The armada was a final show of force before the

start of negotiations that would lead to independence two years later.

The river is crowded with activity. Ships, shown in ever paler hues in the distance, include military vessels, trading ships, even kitchen boats. Small craft ferry families. Masts fly tricolor Dutch flags, and one yacht, bearing the arms of the House of Orange, fires a salute off its side. Decks are filled with people, but attention is focused on the wide-bottom boat on the right. Greeted by a drummed salute, three men

approach in a small rowboat. The two sporting feathered hats are probably dignitaries of the town—one wears a sash with Dordrecht's colors of red and white. Silhouetted against the pale water, he stands out, however modestly. Perhaps he commissioned Cuyp to make this painting. On board, an officer with an orange sash awaits him and the other dignitaries, who were probably dispatched by the town to make an official farewell as the fleet prepared to sail.

Aelbert Cuyp, Dutch, 1620–1691, *The Maas at Dordrecht*, c. 1650, oil on canvas, 114.9 × 170.2 (45¼ × 67), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Cuyp enhanced the drama of this moment, as the ships turn to sea, through the restless angles of the sails, contrasts in the billowing clouds, and the movement of water. Yet the glow of golden light also suggests a sense of well-being and bespeaks pride in the nation. Men and nature—and the soon-to-be-independent Dutch Republic—are in harmony.



The single-masted *pleyt* was commonly used as a ferry because it rode high in the water and could negotiate shallow inland waterways. Drawn up along the hull is a sideboard that provided stability under sail.

AN ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

During the Golden Age, which spanned the seventeenth century, the Netherlands—a country of approximately two million inhabitants—enjoyed unprecedented wealth. Although the country was short on natural resources and engaged in intermittent wars, several factors contributed to form a climate for remarkable prosperity, based largely on trade. In the late Middle Ages, many Dutch farmers had moved away from agricultural staples in favor of more valuable products for export, such as dairy and dyestuffs. Along with cod and herring, which the Dutch had learned to preserve, these goods provided an important source of capital, while grain and other necessities were imported cheaply from the Baltic and elsewhere. Exports and imports alike were carried on Dutch ships and traded by Dutch merchants, giving the Dutch the expertise and funds to invest when new trading opportunities became available

The Richest Businessmen in Amsterdam

These statistics, for 1585 and 1631, indicate the numbers of top tax-paying citizens engaged in various business activities. Overseas trading became increasingly more attractive than traditional occupations.

	1585	1631
Overseas traders	147	253
Soap manufacturers	17	7
Grain dealers	16	3
Timber dealers	12	7
Dairy products dealers	11	0
Herring and fish dealers	8	0
Wine merchants	7	12
Brewers	6	5
Sugar refiners	0	12
Silk merchants	0	14

Adapted from Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford, 1995), 347.

through global exploration. Most overseas trade was conducted with the Caribbean and the East Indies, but Dutch colonies—dealing in fur, ivory, gold, tobacco, and slaves—were also established in North America, Brazil, and South Africa.

The war with Spain had had a number of positive effects on the Dutch economy and, indeed, the revolt had been partly fueled by competing economic interests. From the beginning of the conflict, the Dutch provinces had refused to pay the heavy taxes imposed by Spain. The Dutch blockade of Antwerp (in modern Belgium) in 1585–1586 paralyzed what until then had been Europe's most significant port. Amsterdam quickly assumed Antwerp's role as an international trade center.

The Dutch East India Company

At its height in the seventeenth century, the Dutch East India Company was the largest commercial enterprise in the world, controlling more than half of all oceangoing trade and carrying the products of many nations. Its flag and emblem—a monogram of its name in Dutch (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC)—were recognized around the globe. Founded in 1602, the VOC's charter from the states-general ensured its monopoly on trade between the tip of Africa and the southern end of South America. It was also granted diplomatic and war powers. The new corporation was formed by the merger of existing trading companies in six cities. Business was guided by seventeen "gentlemen," eight of whom were appointed by officials in Amsterdam. Any resident of the United Provinces could own shares in the VOC—the first publicly traded stock in the world—but in practice, control rested in the hands of a few large shareholders.

The VOC centered its operations in Jakarta, today the capital of Indonesia. The town was renamed “Batavia,” after the Roman name for the area of the Netherlands. The VOC dominated the highly desirable spice trade in Asia, not only in Indonesia but also in India, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere. VOC ships carried pepper, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon. They also transported coffee, tea, tobacco, rice, sugar, and other exotic commodities such as porcelains and silks from Japan and China. By the late seventeenth century, the VOC had become more than a trading enterprise: it was a shipbuilder and an industrial processor of goods, and it organized missionary efforts. In addition, it was deeply involved in political and military affairs within Dutch colonial territories. The fortunes of the VOC waned toward the end of the seventeenth century, but it remained in business until 1799.



Japanese export plate, 1660/1680, hard-paste porcelain with underglaze decoration, 5.4 × 39.5 (2 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 15 $\frac{1}{2}$), Philadelphia Museum of Art; Gift of the Women’s Committee of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1969

Throughout the seventeenth century, Amsterdam was the foremost center for trade and banking in Europe. Businessmen like those shown by De Witte in the *Amsterdam Stock Exchange* dealt in stocks and material goods and established futures markets where investors could speculate on commodities such as grains and spices — as well as tulips (see p. 92).

Emanuel de Witte, Dutch, c. 1617–1691/1692, *Courtyard of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange*, 1653, oil on panel, 49 × 47.5 (19 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 18 $\frac{3}{4}$), Museum Boijmans-van Beuningen, Willem van der Vorm Foundation, Rotterdam



Made in the Dutch Republic

The Dutch economy benefited from entrepreneurship and innovation in many areas. Most industries were based in and around the cities.

Delftware

Among the luxury products imported by Dutch traders were blue-and-white porcelains from China. When exports from the East diminished in the 1620s, the Dutch took the opportunity to create more affordable earthenware imitations. Delft became the largest producer. In its heyday more than thirty potteries operated there, making everything from simple household vessels to decorative panels. Most Delftware is decorated with blue on a white ground, but some objects featured a range of colors. One original maker, Royal Delft, founded in 1653, is still producing today.

Industrial Workforce

These figures are estimates of the urban workforce from 1672 to 1700, employed in various sectors of the economy.

Sector	Number of employees
Woolen textiles	35,000
Other textiles	20,000
Shipbuilding	8,000
Brewing	7,000
Production of Gouda pipes	4,000
Tobacco workshops	4,000
Delftware and tile production	4,000
Distilleries	3,000
Papermaking	2,000
Sugar refineries	1,500
Other refineries	1,500
Sail-canvas manufacture	1,500
Soap-boiling	1,000
Salt-boiling	1,000
Printing	1,000

Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford, 1995), 626.



Early in the seventeenth century, Chinese motifs were replaced with Dutch imagery — for example with landscapes and civic guard members.

Delft tile decorated with figure of a soldier, c. 1640, ceramic, 12.9 × 12.9 (5¹/₁₆ × 5¹/₁₆), Courtesy of Leo J. Kasun



Simon de Vlieger, Dutch, 1600/1601–1653, *Estuary at Dawn*, c. 1640/1645, oil on panel, 36.8 × 58.4 (14½ × 23), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund and Gift in memory of Kathrine Dulin Folger

Shipbuilding

Shipbuilding was another cornerstone of the Dutch economy. The war with Spain had led to several improvements in navy ships that also benefited the merchant fleet. By 1600 Dutch ships dominated the international market and were being sold from the Baltic to the Adriatic. The Dutch *fluyt* became the workhorse of international trade because of its low cost and technical superiority. Light and with a shallow draft, it nonetheless accommodated large cargo holds and broad decks. Sails and yards were controlled by pulleys and blocks, meaning that the ships could be piloted by small crews of only six to ten men—fewer than on competitors' ships.

Textiles

The Low Countries had been famous for cloth manufacture since the Middle Ages. It remained the most important part of the Dutch industrial economy, benefiting greatly from the emigration of large numbers of textile workers from the south (see p. 28). In Haarlem, linen was the town's most famous product (with beer a close rival). Haarlem workers specialized in bleaching and finishing; they treated cloth woven locally as well as cloth shipped in from other parts of Europe. The bleached linen was used to make clothing such as caps (*mutsen*), aprons, night shawls, collars, and cuffs.

Visscher's view of bleaching-fields around Haarlem is from a series of etchings he published under the title *Plaisante Plaetsen* (*Pleasant Places*), a collection of picturesque sites within easy reach of Haarlem citizens on an outing. His choice of this industrial process as a tourist attraction suggests Dutch interest and pride in their economic activities. Lengths of cloth were soaked for weeks in various vats of lye and buttermilk, then stretched out to bleach under the sun. They had to be kept damp for a period of several months, and the wet, grassy fields around Haarlem offered the perfect conditions.

Claes Jansz Visscher, Dutch, 1586/1587–1652, *Blekerye aededyne gelegen* (*Farms and Bleaching-Fields*), c. 1611/1612, etching, 10.4 × 15.7 (4¼ × 6¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund



In 1609 the English explorer Henry Hudson navigated the upper North American coastline and the Hudson River on behalf of the Dutch East India Company, reporting sightings of fertile lands, numerous harbors, and a wealth of fur-bearing animals. His landmark voyage spurred the Dutch to establish commercial settlements. The first ships out of Amsterdam carried mainly French-speaking exiles from the southern Netherlands who had accepted the company's promise of land in the primitive territory

in exchange for six years' labor. Arriving in New York Harbor in 1624 and 1625, they were dispersed along the Hudson, Delaware, and Connecticut rivers to develop Dutch East India Company posts along the water routes traveled by Indian hunters. Successive waves of immigrants followed the first voyagers—among them Jews seeking asylum from Eastern Europe, Africans (free and enslaved), Norwegians, Italians, Danes, Swedes, French, and Germans. Together with native inhabitants,

most notably Mohawk, Mohican, and Delaware Indians, they formed one of the world's most pluralistic societies. Over the next fifty years, the Dutch sustained a foothold in the North Atlantic region of the New World, surrounded by French and English settlements. Their territories were called New Netherland.

Trade: Foundation of the Dutch Settlements

The Dutch West India Company was established to fund the development of ports that would



Claes Jansz Visscher, published by Nicolaes Visscher, Dutch, 1586/1587–1652, *Novi Belgii Novaque Angliae nec non partis Virginiae tabula multis in locis emendata* (Map of New Netherland and New England), 1647–1651, issued 1651–1656, hand-colored etching (2nd state), 46.6 × 55.4 (18 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{3}{4}$), I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection of American Historical Prints. Photograph © The New York Public Library/Art Resource

This letter from a representative of the Dutch government to the states-general at The Hague documented the arrival of the first shipment of trade goods to the Dutch Republic, on a ship named the *Arms of Amsterdam*.

Rcd. November 7, 1626

High and Mighty Lords,

Yesterday the ship the *Arms of Amsterdam* arrived here. It sailed from New Netherland out of the River Mauritius on the 23rd of September. They report that our people are in good spirit and live in peace. The women have also borne some children there. They have purchased the Island Manhattes from the Indians for the value of 60 guilders. It is 11,000 morgen in size [about 22,000 acres]. They had all their grain sowed by the middle of May, and reaped by the middle of August. They sent samples of these summer grains: wheat, rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, canary seed, beans, and flax. The cargo of the aforesaid ship is:

7,246 beaver skins

178 ½ otter skins

675 otter skins

48 mink skins

36 lynx skins

33 minks

34 muskrat skins

Many oak timbers and nut wood. Herewith,

High and Mighty Lords, be commended to the

mercy of the Almighty,

Your High and Mightinesses' obedient,

P. Schaghen

(trans. *The New Netherland Institute, Albany, New York*)

Letter from Pieter Schaghen describing the Dutch purchase of the island "Manhattes" from the Indians and the first shipment of goods from New Netherland to The Hague, 1626, National Archives, The Hague



Beaver skins were exported from New Netherland and made into fashionable hats like this one. Hatters used mercury to mat beaver fur's dense, warm undercoat. Exposure to the toxic chemical, however, caused severe mental disorders and is the source of the otherwise strange expression, "mad as a hatter."

Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Portrait of a Member of the Haarlem Civic Guard* (detail), c. 1636/1638, oil on canvas, 86 × 69 (33¾ × 27), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection



The seal of New Netherland features the territories' most lucrative resource, the beaver.

Seal of New Netherland, from Edward S. Ellis, *Ellis's History of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1899)



serve Dutch business and government interests in the New World. In 1624 Fort Orange, named for Dutch patriarch William of Orange, was founded at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers in what is now Albany, New York, to facilitate trade and transport of highly marketable beaver skins and other goods. The demand for warm fur hats had reduced beavers to near extinction across Europe and Russia. When beavers were discovered in North America, beaver fur became one of the most profitable trade goods of the seventeenth century. Beaver pelts were also used to make felt—the material of highly fashionable hats. In 1649 alone, New Netherland exported 80,000 beaver skins to Europe. Successful fur trading made Fort Orange a standout among the company's early out-

posts along Indian travel routes, and the community grew beyond the confines of the fort into the town of Beverwijck (named after the Dutch word for beaver).

The relationship between the Indians and the Dutch was complex. They shared the same lands,

knew each other's villages and languages, and were avid trading partners, sometimes hunting shoulder to shoulder. New research has shown that the Indians were savvy in their dealings with white settlers. When the Dutch “purchased” Manhattan for 60 guilders and an array of household goods, the Indians—with no concept of property rights in their culture—considered this a land lease in exchange for needed currency and tools. The stereotype of native Indians as simple and defenseless developed only later, after misguided actions by both Dutch and English settlers led to incidents of violence.

New Amsterdam

In 1624 the Dutch claimed what was then an island wilderness called “mannahata” by the native

left: Aldert Meijer, *New Amsterdam or New York* in 1673, from Carolus Allard, *Orbis Habitabilis* (The Inhabited World) (Amsterdam, c. 1700), colored engraving, 22.2 × 27.8 (8¾ × 11), The New York Public Library, I. N. Phelps Stokes Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs. Photograph © The New York Public Library/Art Resource

below: Johannes Vingboons, Dutch, 1616/1617–1670, *Gezicht op Nieuw Amsterdam* (View of New Amsterdam), 1665, hand-colored map, National Archives, The Hague



Lenape Indians. Its location at the mouth of a great natural harbor opening to the Atlantic made it a perfect site for an international port. The European settlers must have compared the marshy coastal tip of the island, with its promise as a center for the movement of goods, to Amsterdam, after which they renamed it. Fur pelts, timber, and grains, along with tobacco sent up from Virginia by English farmers, passed through the island's docks en route to Amsterdam and beyond. The settlement quickly proved itself, growing from a crude earthen fort to an entrepreneurial shipping center with a central canal, stepped-roof houses, streets (on which, as was Dutch custom, household pigs and chickens freely roamed), and, as fortification against attack, a wood stockade wall at the town's northern border that later gave Wall Street its name. After a decade-long series of conflicts, however, Dutch control of New Amsterdam and the New Netherland territories was eventually ceded to the English.

Multicultural and Upwardly Mobile

The English inherited an ethnic and cultural melting pot, especially in New Amsterdam, where half the residents were Dutch, the other half composed of other Europeans, Africans, and native Indians. In 1643 eighteen differ-



ent languages evidently could be heard in the island's streets, taverns, and boat slips, even as many adopted the Dutch tongue. By 1650 one-fourth of marriages were mixed. While periodic oppression of religious groups occurred, the colony offered basic rights of citizenship to its immigrant residents, a system for redress of their civic grievances, and freedom to work in whatever trade they could master.

America's early Dutch settlements left a wealth of names, places, and customs in the New York City area. The Bowery neighborhood in lower Manhattan derives its name from the huge farm or *bouwerie* belonging to New Amsterdam director-general Pieter Stuyvesant, and the northern neighborhood of Harlem is named after the Dutch town Haarlem. Brooklyn (Breuckelen), Yonkers (after "Yonkeers,"

This plan shows the stockade wall across the lower tip of Manhattan Island that was constructed in 1653 and would give Wall Street its name.

After Jacques Cortelyou, French, c. 1625–1693, from a work based on *View of New Amsterdam—Castello Plan*, seventeenth century, watercolor. Photograph © Museum of the City of New York/The Bridgeman Art Library

the Dutch nickname of Adriaen van der Donck, an early adviser to Pieter Stuyvesant), and northern New York's Rensselaer County (granted to Dutch diamond merchant Kiliaen van Rensselaer for settlement) are just a few.

The Dutch imprint is also evident in windmills on Long Island, the colors of New York City's flag, pretzel vendors on the streets of Manhattan, and pancakes and waffles (*wafels*), cookies (*koeckjes*), and coleslaw (*koosla*).

An Urban Culture

Extensive trade helped the Dutch create the most urbanized society in Europe, with an unprecedented 60 percent of the population living in cities. While economic power in most countries was closely linked to landownership, in the Netherlands cities drove the economic engine, providing a nexus where traders, bankers, investors, and shippers came together. A landed aristocracy remained, but it was small in number, consisting of only a dozen or so families at the start of the seventeenth century. Their influence and holdings were concentrated in the inland provinces of the east, which also had the largest rural populations, chiefly independent farmers who owned their land.

Immigration

The Dutch Golden Age benefited from an influx of immigrants to the cities. By 1600 more than 10 percent of the Dutch population were Protestants from the southern Netherlands who had moved for religious and economic reasons. In 1622, fully half of the inhabitants of Haarlem, including painters Frans Hals and Adriaen van Ostade (see section 10), had emigrated north. Most of the migrants were skilled laborers, bringing with them expertise and trade contacts that helped fuel the success of the textile and other industries. Southern artists introduced new styles and subjects from Antwerp, a leading center of artistic innovation.

City Populations

City	1600	1647	% increase
Amsterdam	60,000	140,000	133%
Leiden	26,000	60,000	130%
Haarlem	16,000	45,000	181%
Rotterdam	12,000	30,000	150%
Delft	17,500	21,000	20%
The Hague	5,000	18,000	260%
Dordrecht	10,000	20,000	100%
Utrecht	25,000	30,000	20%

Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Oxford, 1995), 328, 332.

Religion and Toleration

With independence in 1648, Calvinism—the Dutch Reformed Church—became the nation’s official religion. Established in the Netherlands by the 1570s, the strict Protestant sect had quickly found converts among those who valued its emphasis on morality and hard work. By some it was probably also seen as a form of protest against Spanish overlordship. Nonetheless, Calvinists made up only one-third of the Dutch population. A little more than one-third were Catholic. The rest were Protestants, including Lutherans, Mennonites, and Anabaptists (from Germany, France, Poland, and Scotland), and there was a minority of Jews (from Scandinavia, Germany, and Portugal). The seven provinces had advocated freedom of religion when they first united in 1579, and they enjoyed tolerance unparalleled elsewhere in Europe. Nevertheless, Catholic Mass was occasionally forbidden in some cities, although generally tolerated as long as it was not celebrated in a public place.



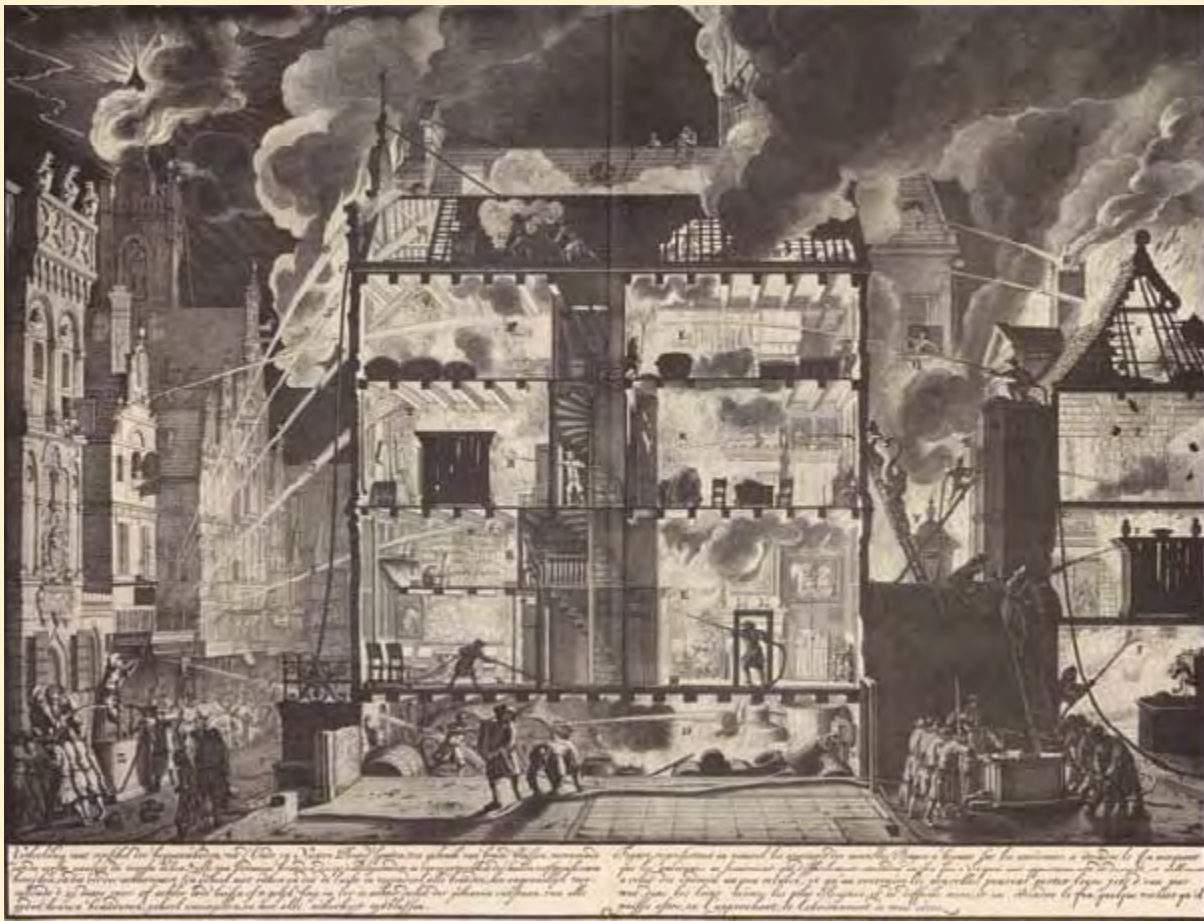
Destruction of Religious Images

Like many Protestants, Dutch Calvinists had a deep distrust of religious imagery. They believed that human salvation came directly from God, not through the mediation of priests, saints, or devotional pictures. Images tempted the faithful toward idolatry and were closely associated with Catholicism and the Spanish. In the summer of 1566, a wave of iconoclasm (image destruction) swept the Netherlands. Rioting bands destroyed religious sculptures and paintings in churches and monasteries throughout the northern and southern provinces. Walls were whitewashed and windows stripped of stained glass (see also p. 48).

Dirck van Delen, Dutch, 1604/1605–1671, *Iconoclastic Outbreak*, 1600, oil on panel, 50 × 67 (19¾ × 26¾), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Intellectual Climate

Still, the extent of intellectual freedom found in the Netherlands drew thinkers from across Europe. René Descartes, an émigré from France, for example, found a fertile environment in the Netherlands for ideas that recast the relationship between philosophy and theology, and opened the door to science. Many works on religion, philosophy, or science that would have been too controversial abroad were printed in the Netherlands and secretly exported to other countries. Publishing of materials such as maps, atlases, and musical scores flourished. The Dutch Republic was, in addition, the undisputed technological leader in Europe, first with innovations such as city street-lights and important discoveries in astronomy, optics, botany, biology, and physics.



Jan van der Heyden, Dutch, 1637–1712, Sectional view of an Amsterdam house on fire (juxtaposition of the abilities of two fire pumps), from *Beschryving der nieuwlijks uitgevonden en geotroeerde slang-brand-spuiten, en haare wyze van brand-blussen, tegenwoordig binnen Amsterdam in gebruik zijnde* (Description of the newly discovered and patented hose fire engine and her way of putting out fires), reprint of 1735 edition (Amsterdam, 1968), etching and engraving, folio, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

Some Notables of Dutch Learning

- The foundations of international, maritime, and commercial law were first laid out by Dutch lawyers, notably **Hugo Grotius** (1583 – 1645), who developed the idea of the freedom of the seas.
- **Constantijn Huygens** (1586 – 1687), secretary to the stadholder Frederick Henry, was a diplomat, poet, and de facto minister of the arts. He was also the father of **Christiaan Huygens** (1629 – 1695), who developed the wave theory of light, explained the rings of Saturn, and invented the pendulum clock.
- **Anton van Leeuwenhoek** (1632 – 1723) did not actually invent the microscope, but he found a way vastly to increase the magnifying power of lenses. He was almost certainly the first person to see a bacterium. He also investigated blood and the mechanics of insect wings. Van Leeuwenhoek was a friend of Johannes Vermeer and executor of the artist's estate.
- **Maria Sibylla Merian** (1647 – 1717) was born in Germany but spent much of her working life in the Netherlands, where she wrote and illustrated scientific works. Today she is recognized among the founders of entomology. Her study on the insects of Suriname, which she undertook in the field, did not simply record appearances but provided information about habitats and life cycles.
- **Baruch Spinoza** (1632 – 1677) was born in Amsterdam to Jewish parents who had fled the Inquisition in Portugal. Regarded as a founder of rationalism, along with René Descartes and Gottfried Leibniz, he was one of the most important philosophers and probably the most radical of his day. His conviction that human reason was key to understanding made him a proponent of freedom and self-determination.
- Not surprisingly, Dutch engineers were in the forefront of hydraulic technologies. **Jan Adriaensz Leeghwater** (1575 – 1650; his name means *empty waters*) devised a method of using ring dikes and windmills to create polders.
- Painter **Jan van der Heyden** (see section 10) was also an inventor. The pump and hoses he developed gave Amsterdam the world's most advanced firefighting equipment, which was even used aboard ships.

A Golden Age for the Arts



LOVE OF PICTURES

Foreigners who visited the Netherlands in the seventeenth century were amazed at the Dutch fondness for pictures. British traveler Peter Mundy noted in 1640: “As for the art of Painting and the affection of the people to Pictures, I think none other go beyond them....” In addition to well-off merchants, Mundy reported bakers, cobblers, butchers, and blacksmiths as avid art collectors. This was a new kind of patronage. Painting was no longer primarily the preserve of church or aristocracy or even the very wealthy. It was a change that would shape Dutch art—the types of pictures produced, the manner in which they were made and sold, and their appearance.

Political, economic, religious, and social circumstances created a unique and fruitful climate for the arts. A remarkable number of pictures of extraordinary quality were produced during the Dutch Golden Age. Estimates put the number of works in the millions. Over the course of a century, the Dutch supported more than a thousand artists, including some of the greatest painters of any era.

Painting in Homes

It was not uncommon for a wealthy citizen to own ten or fifteen paintings, in addition to prints and large maps. They are pictured in many interior scenes. Initially, these images were of modest dimensions, but as prosperity and connoisseurship increased, so did the size of Dutch pictures. In time, they were also hung lower on the wall for easier study up close. Owners often displayed their best works in the main public room of their homes, the *voorsaal* or *voorhuis*, which typically ran along the entire front of the house and was also used for transacting business.



Note the landscape painting hung over the doorway.

Pieter de Hooch, Dutch, 1629–1684, *The Bedroom* (detail), 1658/1660, oil on canvas, 51 × 60 (20 × 23½), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

Before midcentury, few rooms in the typical middle-class Dutch house had specialized functions. Beds, for example, were placed in halls, kitchens, or wherever they fit. But when rooms did assume a particular use, it was often reflected in the paintings chosen to decorate them—domestic scenes or religious images were selected more often for private areas of the house while landscapes or city views were shown in public areas.

INSIDE DUTCH PAINTINGS

What did the Dutch see in their paintings? More than meets the eye. Dutch paintings not only depicted Dutch experience but they also helped convey and create meaning of various kinds.



Familiar images such as windmills and cows may have communicated the pride Dutch citizens felt in their nation and its success.

clockwise from top left:

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *The Mill* (detail), 1645/1648, oil on canvas, 87.6 × 105.6 (34½ × 41⅝), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection



Portraits memorialized individuals and commented on their position, character, and place within the community.



Art was a reminder and model for viewers to maintain the proper balance between worldly and spiritual concerns.

Aelbert Cuyp, Dutch, 1620–1691, *Herdsman Tending Cattle* (detail), 1655/1660, oil on panel, 66 × 87.6 (26 × 34½), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Johannes Vermeer, Dutch, 1632–1675, *Woman Holding a Balance* (detail), c. 1664, oil on canvas, 39.7 × 35.5 (15⅞ × 14), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck, Dutch, 1606/1609–1662, *Andries Stille as a Standard Bearer* (detail), 1640, oil on canvas, 101.6 × 76.2 (40 × 30), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund



clockwise from top:

Willem Claesz Heda, Dutch, 1593/1594–1680, *Banquet Piece with Mince Pie* (detail), 1635, oil on canvas, 106.7 × 111.1 (42 × 43¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund

Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, Dutch, 1573–1621, *Bouquet of Flowers in a Glass Vase* (detail), 1621, oil on copper, 31.6 × 21.6 (12⅞ × 8½), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund and New Century Fund

Still lifes—with glass from Venice and Javanese pepper in a paper cone—celebrated the Netherlands' wealth and the exotic goods of its far-flung trade, but they also prompted consideration of moral and religious themes—a dangling lemon peel might suggest life's impermanence.



Aelbert Cuyp, Dutch, 1620–1691, *The Maas at Dordrecht* (detail), c. 1650, oil on canvas, 114.9 × 170.2 (45¼ × 67), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection



Luminous skies and warm light express a sense of divine harmony and well-being—a feeling that Dutch success and prosperity were God-given.

Painting preserved nature beyond its season, suggesting the sweet smell of flowers in winter, for instance, and it recalled the great diversity of God's creation.



While exotic landscapes were popular elsewhere, most Dutch picture-buyers seem to have preferred scenes that captured the beauty and harmony of their own country.



Spotlessly neat homes and industrious women, as well as happy, well-tended children, celebrated the order and morality of private lives.

clockwise from top left:

Jan van Goyen, Dutch, 1596–1656, *View of Dordrecht from the Dordtse Kil* (detail), 1644, oil on panel, 64.7 × 95.9 (25 × 37¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

Pieter de Hooch, Dutch, 1629–1684, *Woman and Child in a Courtyard* (detail), 1658/1660, oil on canvas, 73.5 × 66 (29 × 26), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Officers and Subalterns of the Saint George Civic Guard* (detail), 1639, oil on canvas, 218 × 421 (85¹³/₁₆ × 165³/₄), Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem



In the seventeenth century, Dutch success was fueled by the energy of cities, and the battle for independence had engendered great pride in civic institutions. Civic

guards, charitable groups, guilds, and literary societies were all new buyers for, and subjects of, paintings.

A woman in a blue morning coat stands in the stillness of a room. She seems not simply illuminated but inhabited by the soft light descending through an orange curtain. Her gaze and concentration are turned to a small balance. Its pans are level, her fingers in delicate poise. All is stopped in a moment of quiet equilibrium so we can consider her action. In what appears at first glance to be a genre scene, all the resonance of a history painting (see sections 5 and 8) emerges.

The dark canvas on the rear wall is a foil to the woman's radiance. It depicts the Last Judgment, when the souls of the dead are weighed in a moral balance. On the table, shiny gold chains and lustrous pearls reflect strong highlights. It would be easy to assume that Vermeer is showing us a woman more concerned with the temporal value of these worldly goods than with eternal worth. But in Vermeer's paintings, meaning is usually not so clear-cut. Perhaps this *is* a warning about mortality and righteousness.

Perhaps the woman *is* a secularized image of the Virgin Mary, as has been suggested. But almost certainly Vermeer intends for us to experience and understand multiple, and subtle, possibilities.

There is no sense of tension in this quiet scene, no feeling of competition between spiritual and earthly pursuits. The woman's expression is contemplative, even serene. In fact, her scales are empty; rather than weighing out the rewards of earthly life, she is testing the scales' balance to ensure their trueness—and her own. The measured calm and the incandescent quality of the light suggest to us that she understands and accepts her responsibility to keep the proper spiritual balance in life. She considers her choices in relation to the Final Judgment behind her. The mirror opposite reflects her self-knowledge. Her attention to spiritual balance allows her to act in the earthly realm, to handle these gold and pearl strands without compromising her soul.

Vermeer communicates his thematic concerns visually through a carefully thought-out composition. The connection

between the subject of his painting and that of the Last Judgment is made by their congruent rectangular shapes. Light draws attention to the hand supporting the scales and the horizontal (level) gesture of the woman's little finger. The quiet mood is underpinned throughout by a stable balance of horizontal and vertical forms. Notice also how the scales occupy their own compartment of pictorial space between the spiritual realm of the painting on the wall and the artifacts of temporality on the table below. (Vermeer made this space by adjusting the lower edge of the wall painting—it is higher to the right of the woman than on the left.) The woman stands on the axis of the Last Judgment, where the archangel Michael would have been depicted weighing the souls of the dead, and the lit oval of her head and translucent linen cap link her with the oval mandorla of Christ in radiance just above.



Johannes Vermeer, Dutch,
1632–1675, *Woman
Holding a Balance*,
c. 1664, oil on canvas,
39.7 × 35.5 (15⁷/₈ × 14),
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Widener
Collection

THE BUSINESS AND PRACTICE OF PAINTING

It has been estimated that about 650 to 750 painters were working in the Netherlands in the mid-1600s—about one for each 2,000 to 3,000 inhabitants. In cities the ratio was much higher: Delft had about one painter for every 665 residents, Utrecht one for every 500. A similar estimate establishes the number of painters in Renaissance Italy at about 330 in a population of some 9 million.

Who were these artists? In the early part of the 1600s, as had been true for centuries before, many were the sons of painters, assuming the family trade. But as demand for pictures grew, others were increasingly attracted to a living that provided a reasonable wage. Most painters came from middle-class families. Painting generally did not offer sufficient status to attract the wealthy, while the poor could rarely afford the training. As their status and social ambition rose, some Dutch artists assumed the manners, and dress, of their wealthy clients. Although some artists did become wealthy, often through advantageous marriages, most remained solidly middle class, averaging two or three times the income of a master carpenter. A few, like Rembrandt, gained and lost substantial fortunes.

Training of Painters

Training was traditionally overseen by guilds in each city. Boys, usually ten to twelve years old, were apprenticed for a fee to a master painter, in whose workshop they worked and sometimes lived. After learning to grind pigments, stretch canvas, and clean brushes, they began to study drawing from prints, casts, or drawings made by their masters, and sometimes later from live models—often other boys in the shop. Eventually they would paint copies of their masters' works and contribute elements to the masters' paintings, such as backgrounds, still-life components, or details of costume. When the master and guild were satisfied with a student's progress, usually after two to four years, he became a journeyman. After submitting a masterpiece to the guild, journeymen could be accepted as masters themselves, open their own studios, and take on students. Many, however, continued to work in the shops of other artists. Most students took up the same type of painting that had occupied their teachers—it was what they had been trained to do.

The Guilds

Painters in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century normally belonged to the Guild of Saint Luke in their home cities. Saint Luke was the patron saint of artists. Since the Middle Ages, various guilds had regulated all aspects of economic life and provided social support for many groups of skilled laborers and artisans. Guild membership was usually required to exercise a trade. Guilds controlled the local markets and protected their members against competition from the outside. They also stipulated rules to ensure quality and reasonable working conditions. Guild members formed tight communities, gathering on feast days and for religious ceremonies. Many were neighbors.

As the status of artists rose, guilds were reorganized in many cities and their influence waned. Painters, wanting their vocation accepted as a liberal art, objected to sharing their guilds with embroiderers, weavers, and even house painters and saddle makers. In Utrecht, painters, sculptors, woodcarvers, frame makers, and art dealers who all had been part of the saddlers' guild established their own Guild of Saint Luke in 1611; twenty-eight years later painters voted the sculptors and woodcarvers out and formed a new College of Painters. By midcentury the Guild of Saint Luke in Amsterdam could no longer force artists to be members or closely control the activities of noncitizens. Rembrandt was among those who chose to work outside the guild, which by then was reduced largely to providing social services.



Buying and Selling

Paintings were most often bought by members of the large Dutch middle class, which ranged from well-off regents to tradesmen of much more modest means. Laborers or peasants in the countryside probably could not afford paintings, but contemporary reports suggest that even humble homes often contained drawings and prints. Prices varied widely—while some paintings fetched fewer than 20 guilders, a large-scale portrait by Rembrandt could command 500 guilders and a small scene of everyday life by Leiden master Gerrit Dou 1,000. Sometimes pictures were bartered for goods; we know of one instance where a painter traded his marine landscapes for mortgage payments. A few artists, Vermeer for instance, might sell several works per year to a single important patron; others, like Dou, had agreements that gave important clients right of first refusal—but this was not the norm. Most artists sold from stock directly out of their studios. Patrons would select a finished painting or perhaps one still

Salomon de Bray, Dutch, 1597–1664, *Book and Picture Shop*, c. 1669, ink and watercolor, 7.6 × 7.6 (3 × 3), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

in progress; commissioning a specific work or subject was rare, except for portraits. Paintings could also be bought from booksellers, private collectors, and independent art dealers, or more cheaply at fairs, auctions, and lotteries, which became increasingly popular. A competitive open market, where works of art were purchased predominantly by private individuals and groups in these different ways (in the absence of large institutional patrons such as the church), encouraged artists to specialize, one of the most striking characteristics of Dutch Golden Age painting. Artists cultivated a reputation for a certain type of painting in order to differentiate their offerings from those of their competitors, and they honed their skills to produce high-quality works that were desired by collectors. Buyers understood where to go for still lifes, maritime scenes, or portraiture.

Painting as a Liberal Art

The Painter. What the eye sees is not yet the most essential. / Art shows us an illusion / what the essence of its subject is / Like the great Painting / of the ENTIRE visible world / [having] received its shape through [heavenly] wisdom, shows what its origin is.

This epigram appears below Jan Luiken's image of an artist (opposite). It reflects the view, which originated in Renaissance Italy, that painting is a liberal art, an activity that engages the mind as well as the senses. Dutch writers such as Karel van Mander (see p. 125) emphasized that painting was not simply a record of what an artist saw, no matter his accuracy and skill. It required training and imagination on a par with literature or philosophy. Painting was equated with poetry, most famously in the often-quoted words of Horace, written in the first century BC: *ut pictura poesis* (as is painting, so is poetry).

The Most Popular Paintings

The table below indicates which types of paintings were most popular, based on inventories from Haarlem. At the beginning of the century, the religious or literary themes of history painting were favored. But by 1650, "modern" interiors were decorated with larger numbers of portraits, landscapes, still lifes, and genre scenes from daily life. In sections 4 to 8 each of these types will be explored in greater detail.

	1605 – 1624	1645 – 1650
Biblical scenes	42.2%	18%
Portraits	18%	18.3%
Land- and seascapes	12.4%	21%
Still lifes	8.5%	11.7%
Scenes from daily life (genre)	6.1%	12.9%
Other	12.8%	18.1%

Marion Goosens, "Schilders en de markt: Haarlem 1605 – 1635," PhD diss., Leiden University, 2001, 346 – 347.

Advice for Young Painters

Van Mander believed artists had to display exemplary behavior so that their profession would be taken seriously. In his *Painters' Book*, he offered the following advice:

Do not waste time. Do not get drunk or fight. Do not draw attention by living an immoral life. Painters belong in the environment of princes and learned people. They must be polite to their fellow artists. Listen to criticism, even that of the common people. Do not become upset or angry because of adverse criticism. Do not draw special attention to the mistakes of your master. Food is neither praise nor blame to yourself. Thank God for your talent and do not be conceited. Do not fall in love too young and do not marry too soon. The bride must be at least ten years younger than the groom. While traveling avoid little inns and avoid lending money to your own compatriots in a foreign country. Always examine the bedding most carefully. Keep away from prostitutes, for two reasons: It is a sin, and they make you sick. Be very careful while traveling in Italy, because there are so many possibilities of losing your money and wasting it. Knaves and tricky rogues have very smooth tongues. Show Italians how wrong they are in their belief that Flemish painters cannot paint human figures. At Rome study drawing, at Venice painting. Finally, eat breakfast early in the morning and avoid melancholia.



Jan and Caspar Luiken, Dutch, 1649–1712; Dutch, 1672–1708, *The Painter's Craft*, from *Afbeelding der menschelyke bezigheden* (Book of Trades) (Amsterdam, 1695?), engraving, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

There also have been many experienced women in the field of painting who are still renowned in our time, and who could compete with men. Among them, one excels exceptionally, Judith Leyster, called “the true leading star” in art....

Haarlem historian, 1648

It was rare for a woman in the seventeenth century to be a professional painter, and Judith Leyster *was* a star in her hometown. The comment quoted above not only points to her fame but also puns on the family name, which meant lodestar. She was one of only two women accepted as a master of the Haarlem guild. In this self-portrait she turns toward the viewer, smiling with full confidence and happy in the very act of painting. Her lips are parted as if to speak, and her pose—one arm propped on the back of her chair—is casual. Even the brushwork is lively. We can imagine her pausing to engage a patron, inviting attention to a work in progress. In fact, Leyster’s self-portrait serves as a bit of self-promotion. She demonstrates skill with a brush by holding a fistful of brushes against her palette. The painting still incomplete on the easel advertises a type of genre painting for which she was well known: a so-called merry company that depicted

revelers, costumed actors, dancers, and musicians. Initially she had planned a different picture in its place; in infrared photographs, a woman’s face becomes visible. Probably this would have been her own face. By painting the violin player instead, she was able to emphasize, in this one canvas, her skill in both portraiture and genre.

It is not certain whether Leyster actually studied in Frans Hals’ Haarlem studio, but she was clearly a close and successful follower. The “informalities” in her self-portrait—its loose brushwork, casual pose, and the momentary quality of her expression—are innovations introduced by Hals in the 1620s (see p. 98). They stand in some contrast to earlier conventions for artist portraits. From the very beginning of the century, as artists tried to elevate their own status and win acceptance of painting as a liberal art, the equal of poetry, they depicted themselves in fine clothes and with elegant demeanor. Leyster’s dress, of rich fabric and with a stiff lace collar—wholly unsuited for painting—are marks of that tradition. It has also been suggested that her open, “speaking” smile makes reference to the relationship between art and poetry.

Dutch Women and the Arts

While Judith Leyster was unusual in painting professionally, she

was not entirely alone. A dozen or so women gained master status from guilds around the Dutch Republic. One of the most notable of all flower painters and a favorite among European courts was Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750), whose lush bouquets combine refined technique and sweeping movement.

Many women created art without seeking professional status. Daughters of artists, for example, often worked in their fathers’ studios before marriage. If they married artists, which was not uncommon, they were likely to take over the business side of the workshop—as Leyster did for her husband, painter Jan Miense Molenaer. The redoubtable scholar Anna Maria van Schurman (see p. 100) was made an honorary member of the Utrecht Guild of Saint Luke as a painter, sculptor, and engraver. Women from well-to-do families were encouraged to pursue various arts to hone their feminine virtues. They made drawings and pastels, glass engravings, oils and watercolors, embroidery and calligraphy samples, and intricate paper cutouts. Another popular outlet for women’s creativity was elaborate albums that combined drawings and watercolors with poetry and personal observations about domestic life and the natural world.



Judith Leyster, Dutch, 1609–1660, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1630, oil on canvas, 74.6 × 65 (29 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 25 $\frac{5}{8}$), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss

Life in the City and Countryside

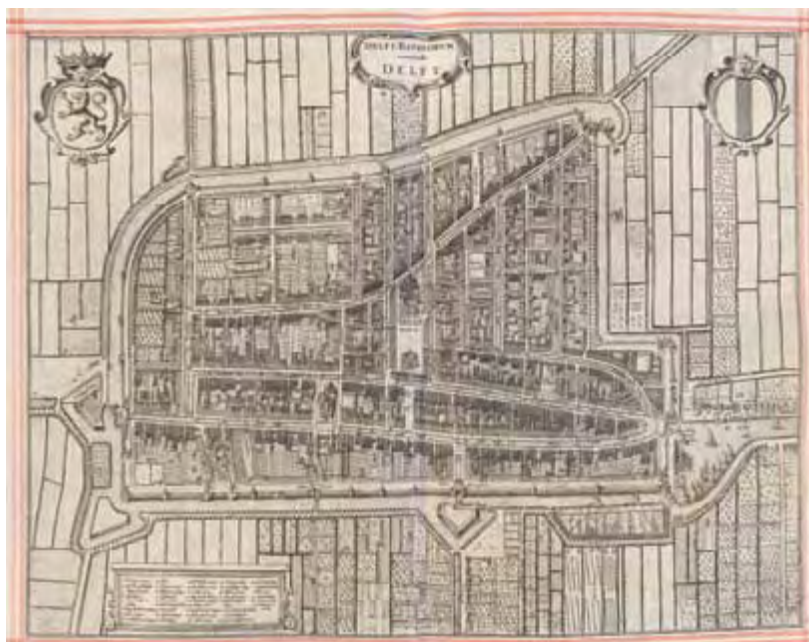


CITY LIFE

There was no shortage of paintings documenting the Dutch city, which seems to have exemplified many ideals of the Dutch Republic—self-determination, zest for achievement and innovation, and the value of order within the chaos of life. Most often represented in art were the urban centers of Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Delft. The compositions and aesthetics of cityscapes drew on the body of maps, topographic views, and architectural images that flourished as an expression of national pride in the young Dutch Republic and preceded the development of cityscapes in the 1650s and 1660s.

Maps were often graphically creative and colorful. One especially popular variant showed the republic in the shape of a lion, long a symbol of the Low Countries, surrounded by thumbnail images representing major cities. Other versions captured the political boundaries that existed at different points in time. A view of Delft pictured on the border of a map of the province of Holland (top right) offers a distant, profile view of the city, while the bird's-eye view of Delft in a cartographic atlas of the period (bottom right) opens up a wealth of detail—trees, gardens, roads, buildings, and canals.

Consider Johannes Vermeer's *View of Delft* (p. 46), which combines the visual devices seen on Dutch maps and silhouette city views with brilliant artistry. We stand at a distance, looking across the water at the beautiful, historic city of Delft bathed in morning light. What can we make of this view, which at first glance, by virtue of its low vantage point directed at walls and the profiles of buildings, seems to conceal the very subject the artist promises? Scan the city's silhouette across the harbor (built in 1614 to link Delft by water to locations south). A presence emerges. While darkened clouds shade the sandy embankment of Delft's harbor, in midground a bright sky perches over the city, casting blurred



Claes Jansz Visscher and Workshop, Dutch, 1586/1587–1652, *Comitatus Hollandiae denuo forma Leonis* (Map of the Province Holland as a Lion) (detail), 1648, 46 × 55.5 (18¹/₁₆ × 21⁷/₈), Leiden University, Bodel Nijenhuis Special Collections

Joan Blaeu, Dutch, 1596–1673, *Cartographic View of Delft*, from *Tooneel der steden van 'skonings Nederlanden* (Theater of Cities of the Netherlands), vol. 1 (Amsterdam, after 1649), National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, David K. E. Bruce Fund



silhouettes of its boats and buildings on the water and illuminating its weathered walls, red-tile roofs, a bridge, rampart gates (the Schiedam on the left, with clock tower registering 7:10; the Rotterdam on the right, with twin turrets and spires). Tiny orbs of light fleck the textured brick surfaces, as if sprinkling the town with grace.

The image seems to radiate serenity, belying the political upheaval and catastrophe that were also part of Delft's fabric. This Vermeer accomplished on several fronts. He rooted his viewpoint in the dense, friezelike profile of the city. Shifts in tonality—from bold blues, yellows, and reds to gently modulated earthen hues—impart a sense of solidity and beauty. The composition, expansive in the foreground and compacted in the distance, is inviting yet self-contained. Vermeer's light articulates Delft's architecture.

Amid bold and subtle shifts of illumination, the sun-drenched tower of the Nieuwe Kerk, or New Church (right of center), may have signaled to seventeenth-century observers Delft's connection to William of Orange, the revered patriarch of the Dutch Republic. He led the northern Netherlands' revolt against Spain and his remains were entombed in the church. Because Delft was a walled city and therefore considered reasonably safe from attack, it had been the seat of government under William until he was assassinated there. Delft's place in the republic's quest for independence and peace would not be forgotten, nor would the devastation wrought by the 1654 explosion of its gunpowder warehouse, which killed hundreds and leveled part of the city. Delft was also Vermeer's hometown.

Few artists, however, achieved Vermeer's poetic vision, and cityscapes were often rendered with such

Johannes Vermeer, Dutch, 1632–1675, *View of Delft*, c. 1660–1661, oil on canvas, 98.5 × 117.5 (38¾ × 46¼), Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photograph © Mauritshuis, The Hague/The Bridgeman Art Library



Gerrit Berckheyde, Dutch, 1638–1698, *A View of Saint Bavo's, Haarlem*, 1666, oil on panel, 60.3 × 87 (23¾ × 34¼), Private Collection

idealization as to become sanitized “portraits.” *A View of Saint Bavo's, Haarlem*, by Gerrit Berckheyde is typical. The immaculate scene is consistent with the Dutch municipal vision: pristine brick paving and architecture are in visual lockstep, markets are neatly lined up along the church wall, and residents are captured in picture-perfect vignettes. The day-to-day reality of the Dutch urban scene, however, included congestion, makeshift construction, and dirt.

Berckheyde also presents a subcategory of city views: images showcasing churches. The good fortune and material comforts that the Dutch enjoyed were empty achievements without the temperance and moral guidance offered in their places of worship. The churches also served, as they do today, as

gathering places for the organization of communal activity and sometimes civic action. In periods of crisis, the government's call to its citizenry to pray and fast resulted in public devotions inside churches and in surrounding public squares. In calmer times, the church served as a site for a variety of sacred and secular purposes, such as funerals, baptisms, weddings, shelter, and tourism. Above all, churches symbolized the collective spiritual strength of the Dutch people and their awareness of the fleeting nature of life and possessions.

In Focus *Inside Dutch Churches*

The Cathedral of Saint John at 's-Hertogenbosch, a town near the Belgian border, is the largest Gothic church in the Netherlands. Amsterdam's Oude Kerk (Old Church) is the oldest in the city, begun in the thirteenth century. Before completion of the Dam Square's City Hall in 1655 (see p. 50) in Amsterdam, marriage licenses were obtained from the church sacristy after entering through a red door, prompting a popular saying of the time. Inscribed over the door was the admonition "Marry in haste, repent at leisure." On June 10, 1634, Rembrandt went "through the red door" of the Oude Kerk before his marriage to Saskia (see section 10). In addition to religious functions, these churches would have offered shelter and meeting places. Church officials found it necessary to prohibit beggars and dogs from the premises, with varying degrees of success.

Saenredam's attention to light and the underlying shapes of the architecture impart a certain abstract, almost ethereal quality. Using a low vantage point and multipoint perspective, and changing the color of the light, which rises from pale ocher to the most delicate of pinks, he conveys the soaring height and luminous stillness of this place. In a painting that must have been made for a Catholic patron, he



Pieter Jansz Saenredam,
Dutch, 1597–1665,
*Cathedral of Saint John at
's-Hertogenbosch*, 1646,
oil on panel, 128.9 ×
87 (50 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 34 $\frac{1}{4}$),
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Samuel H.
Kress Collection



has also “restored” a painted altarpiece, among furnishings removed when the cathedral became a Calvinist church.

De Witte’s bolder contrast of light and dark suggests a different tone. He is interested in what *occurs* in this church and in its spiritual function. A tomb is open in preparation for a burial, and mourners arrive for the funeral.

Narrow light falls on the white hat and shawl of a woman who nurses a child. The two recall images of the Madonna and Child that would have decorated this church in Catholic times. The values of work and cleanliness are represented by a broom. Close by, however, a dog urinates against a column—perhaps a reminder of man’s animal nature and the need for constant moral direction, but

also providing a touch of humor. In fact, expectations of good behavior applied to the Dutch across religious preferences, and many images—particularly scenes of everyday life—include both serious and witty references to Dutch standards of behavior.

Emanuel de Witte, Dutch, c. 1617–1691/1692, *The Interior of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam*, c. 1660, oil on canvas, 80.5 × 100 (31¹¹/₁₆ × 39³/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons’ Permanent Fund



Gerrit Berckheyde, Dutch, 1638–1698, *Dam Square in Amsterdam*, 1668, oil on canvas, 41 × 55.5 (16 1/8 × 21 7/8), Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp. Photograph © Kavalier/Art Resource, NY

Images of Amsterdam further reveal the communal Dutch consciousness—a mix of civic, spiritual, and national pride. The city’s central Dam Square is pictured here, the nave and spire of its Nieuwe Kerk (New Church) visible to the right. At center, business activities are conducted before the massive Town Hall, built between 1648 and 1655 and considered the world’s eighth wonder at the time. The building’s classical style and decorative scheme of paintings and sculpture were intended to personify the city of Amsterdam as a powerhouse of international commerce with a virtuous, civic-minded government.

Dam Square and Town Hall—then immediately adjacent to the harbor—were the hub of the republic’s commercial transactions and the depot for much of the world’s trade goods. The Dam provided space for markets (foreground) and meetings among trade agents. The square also featured an exchange bank, an early model of the modern banking system.

Customers were able to open accounts, deposit and withdraw funds, and change foreign currency—services that smoothed the transaction of business. The Dam’s *Waag*, or weigh-house (right center, later demolished), its seven ground-floor doors opening to large weighing scales inside, was always surrounded by goods and by those who carried and carted them from dockside. Two more weigh-houses, one for very heavy items, another for dairy products, were kept busy by the constant influx of goods. Because city government controlled operations, officials also extracted charitable contributions—a form of taxation—from those who used the Dam or Hall in the course of business.

THE VEGETABLE MARKET

On the Prinsengracht Canal, one of the angled rings of waterways that flow under bridges connecting the streets of central Amsterdam, the image of a vegetable market serves as a lesson on Dutch economic and social identity. Details of the scene include, left to right, two women haggling, probably over the price of the vegetables set on a wheelbarrow; a young matron holding a metal pail for fish; behind her, a man trying to attract her attention; and a basket of vegetables on the ground at right, beyond which a dog and a rooster seem at odds, just like the haggling women opposite. The scene seems to contain allusions beyond the quotidian. The vegetables, for example, may indicate Dutch national and local pride in horticultural innovation: intense cultivation and seasonal crop rotation had teased maximum production from the country's sparse land. The development of new crops such as the Hoorn carrot (in the cane basket on the ground), named after the town of Hoorn near Amsterdam, brought the Dutch international recognition through global seed trade.

Carrots and other root vegetables, such as onions, turnips, parsnips, and beets, were prized



Artist Gabriel Metsu knew this site well, as he lived on an alley around the corner from it.

Gabriel Metsu, Dutch, 1629–1667, *The Vegetable Market*, c. 1675, oil on canvas, 97 × 84.5 (38 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 33 $\frac{1}{4}$), Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photograph © Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY

in the first half of the seventeenth century not only because they kept over the long winter but also because they were considered plain and humble, in line with the Dutch value of moderation. Indeed, one of the allegorical paintings commissioned for Amsterdam's Town Hall depicted the preference of turnips over gold by a Roman general, connecting his simple integrity to the burgo-masters of Amsterdam and their guardianship of Dutch humility.

The vignettes in this work also capture the chaotic reality of Dutch urban street life. Despite endless regulations stipulating, for example, the type of tree to be planted on Amsterdam's streets (the linden, depicted here), or forbidding the sale of "rotten...or defective" vegetables "because pride could not be taken in or from such things," the messiness of living infiltrated. Imagine the rooster's piercing crows, the spaniel's deep growls, and the claims and counterclaims of the women bent over produce, and your ear will have captured the hustle and din of urban life in the Dutch Golden Age.



The Hoorn carrot was cultivated around 1620 for its smooth taste, deep orange color, and ability to grow in shallow earth or in mixtures of soil and manure.

Service to the Community

Progressive economically, Dutch society was not egalitarian or gender neutral; much of public life was male-oriented, while females dominated the domestic spheres of home and market. Charity work was one area in which women were as prominent as men. Caring for the poor, sick, and elderly, as well as for orphans, had formerly been the province of the Catholic Church. Calvinist social welfare institutions, often housed in former monasteries, absorbed this responsibility. (Today, the Amsterdam Historical Museum occupies a former city orphanage built on the site of a convent.) Women often served as regents (directors) in addition to providing care. Houses of charity were a point of urban civic pride. They were funded through contributions from their regents or through alms boxes, often located in taverns where business deals were expected to conclude with a charitable gift, or funds were exacted from traders and brokers as part of the price of doing business in the town.

Charity pictures consisted of two types: group portraits of regents (usually hung in their private boardrooms), or scenes addressing their work. Jan de Bray's image of the Haarlem House for Destitute Children shows three works of mercy related to the daily care of the poor—the provision of clothing, drink, and food. At left, a woman helps two children exchange ragged garments for orphanage clothes, recognizable across the Netherlands for their sleeves of different colors—one red, the other black. In the figural group opposite, another receives drink from a tankard—probably the weak beer most children consumed daily (industries such as the bleaching of linen and processing of wool polluted drinking-water supplies). At center, a young girl dressed in orphanage clothing receives bread from another woman, who is aided by a male worker. At front right, one boy changes clothes—his telltale red-and-black garment



beside him—while another, with bread in hand, leans forward, perhaps aiming to strike up a friendship. De Bray delivered monumentality through the sculptural quality of the complex tableau he arranged on the canvas, and through the strongly directed light and shadow defining the figures' varied places in the composition.

Jan de Bray, Dutch, c. 1627–1688, *Caring for Children at the Orphanage: Three Acts of Mercy*, 1663, oil on canvas, 134.5 × 154 (53 × 60%), Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem

Civic Guards (*Schutterijen*)

Men in Dutch cities worked in positions that ranged from humble porter to business magnate, from diplomat to scholar. As the ambitious, lucky, or favorably born advanced in status, they might, in addition to charity work, serve in their local civic militia. During the Dutch struggle for independence, all-male militias were important to community defense. In peacetime, the guard maintained military preparedness and lent luster to local events, the organizations becoming more like clubs. They trained and socialized in armory buildings (*doelen*), which were hung with commissioned images of the lively banquets that marked members' obligatory departure from the corps after three years' service, or with group portraits of their officers.



Frans Hals' image of a Haarlem militia in full dress is typical of *schutterijen* group portraits. Sporting their company's colors in sashes, flags, and hat adornments, the men hold implements of their rank. Second from left in the front line is Johan Claesz Loo, a local beer brewer and member of the Haarlem town council, holding the top commander's staff. Captains carry pikes with tassels, while sergeants carry the halberd, an earlier form of pike with blade and pick under its spearhead. Conventions of pose and gesture convey the public image of males as self-possessed, eloquent, and active: members of the group stand erect, stride, turn to one another as if about to speak, and cock their elbows.

Officers followed the dress code of the Dutch elite with black silk garments and tan riding cloaks, elegant lace ruffs and flat collars, gloves and felt hats, their high-keyed sashes linking them to their militia "colors." Ostentation was unseemly in the Dutch Republic (Rembrandt sued his relatives for libel after they accused his wife, whom he often pictured wearing items from his extensive collection of costumes, of *pronken en praelen*—flaunting

Frans Hals included himself in this portrait, second from left in the back row. This was a privilege rarely granted a nonofficer, perhaps given here because the Haarlem master had already painted five other portraits of the company when he was commissioned to make this one.

Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Officers and Subalterns of the Saint George Civic Guard*, 1639, oil on canvas, 218 × 421 (85 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 165 $\frac{3}{4}$), Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem

and braggadocio), but exceptions to sober dress were made for the young, members of the stadholder's court, and soldiers.

One such exception is Andries Stilte. The young standard (flag) bearer for a Haarlem militia (the Kloveniers) wears a lush, pink satin costume while displaying his company's colors on his elaborate sash, plumed hat, and the flag balanced on his shoulder. The standard bearer was expected to die wrapped in his militia's flag rather than allow the enemy to seize it. He had to be unmarried and young, both to avoid leaving behind a widow and to represent his company's virility. This image captures the confidence and bravado of the wealthy young man whose family coat of arms is tacked to the wall behind him. After marrying, Stilte was obliged to resign his guard post and wear somber black.

Few paintings in Western culture are as famous as Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, a civic-guard picture commissioned along with five other works to decorate the newly expanded armory hall of the Kloveniers militia in Amsterdam. It is reproduced here not because of its status as an icon but because it transformed the visual language of civic-guard imagery. Rembrandt dispatched with the typical chorus-line format and the farewell banquet schema. In their places he lodged a dynamic, drama-fueled scene of a guard company on the move. Captain Frans Banning Cocq and his lieutenant (center) lead their company to march. Striding forward and gesturing with his left hand, Cocq seems to be issuing orders as they depart while his group emerges from the dark recess of their hall, flags and weapons barely visible. The composition is laced with diagonal cross-positionings and flashes of light and dark, approximating a strobe-light photograph of soldiers in action—unlike any other civic-guard picture of its time.



Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck, Dutch, 1606/1609–1662, *Andries Stilte as a Standard Bearer*, 1640, oil on canvas, 101.6 × 76.2 (40 × 30), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund



Rembrandt van Rijn,
Dutch, 1606–1669, *The
Company of Frans Banning
Cocq and Willem van
Ruytenburch*, known as
Night Watch, 1642, oil
on canvas, 363 × 437
(142¹⁵/₁₆ × 172), Rijks-
museum, Amsterdam

THE COUNTRYSIDE

Peasants and Burghers in the Countryside

We love the kinds of picture that show us realistically what we are used to seeing every day. We recognize in them the customs, the pleasures, and the bustle of our peasants, their simplicity, their entertainments, their joy, their pain, their characters, their passions, their clothes; it is all expressed with the exactest of truth; nothing is concealed. They are painted according to their nature; we can make believe we are seeing them and hearing them as they speak: it is this that seduces us.

eighteenth-century Paris art dealer
discussing peasant scenes by Adriaen
van Ostade

In pictures and prints of the Dutch countryside, artists created detailed, realistically rendered scenes of peasants and tradespeople going about their daily business—tending to animals, spinning wool, moving in and around their cottages, or in social settings—at taverns, dances, and fairs. But the artists' interest in realism does not necessarily mean that the images are exact descriptions of what life was like in the country.

The artists who painted, etched, and drew these images were primarily residents of the cities. They selectively fashioned images of the country that were tailored to satisfy the tastes of urban patrons. Why did sophisticated art buyers want pictures of the countryside? Its inhabitants and activities may have held appeal as parables, already present in many popular literary and visual forms such as emblem books, proverbs, and amateur dramatic skits, which articulated and reinforced ideas of proper behavior and roles for men and women in society. Pictures



Influences from other artists and traditions helped shape images of country life. Flemish painters of the previous century, especially Pieter Breugel the Elder, established what would become certain conventions for the depiction of market and village scenes, which were transmitted north as southern artists migrated to escape Spanish persecution.

Pieter Breugel the Elder, Flemish, c. 1525/1530–1569, *The Peasant Dance*, 1568, oil on panel, 114 × 164 (44 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 64 $\frac{1}{2}$), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

featuring satirical or comic misbehavior—drinking, brawling, gambling—provided a foil for viewers' presumed upstanding character, allowing them to distance themselves from moral turpitude, yet also to enjoy images of it, like forbidden fruit. That the miscreants in the pictures were peasant types, unlike those viewing the images, further underscored differences of social class.

As the century wore on, more respectful images of peasants and activities in the countryside that were neutral on issues of class or morality gained in popularity. Pictures also featured people visiting the countryside for leisure and relaxation. The country increasingly became a place where one could escape the pressures of city life and refresh body and soul.

The artist Isack van Ostade was a resident of Haarlem, and like the well-dressed gentlemen in the center of the picture—one having dismounted the dappled gray horse, the other descending from the black horse—he probably passed through villages like this one. Travelers could rest at an inn, have a drink and a meal, and sometimes find accommodations for the night. Amid the hubbub outside the inn—the gabled structure with vines growing on



it, which is teeming with adults and children, dogs and chickens—the gentlemen travelers stand out with their clothes, hats, and fine horses. They have arrived with the setting sun, its last rays catching their faces and the speckled coat of one horse’s rump, with long shadows shifting on the ground. For village residents the workday is over, as indicated by the upturned wheelbarrow at left and by people seated on their stoops, eating, smoking, and drinking. The horses and wagon in the background are returning from the fields. The gentlemen at the center of the scene provoke no great attention from the villagers. Country inns, offering basic amenities and refreshments, such as beer, cheese, and bread, were used by travelers and locals alike as stopping places and taverns, as well as social centers and gaming halls. Here, the classes mingled, although charges for food and drink apparently varied according to one’s social standing and means. It is a picturesque and amiable scene, bathed in golden light and watched over by the church tower in the background.

Van Ostade repeated the “halt before the inn” theme, which he originated, in several paintings, using certain figure types more than once. He probably composed his pictures from numerous drawings he made while traveling outside Haarlem. This newfound genre allowed him to combine atmospheric landscapes and complex groupings of figures and animals. He may have trained with landscape painter Jacob van Ruisdael, although his work also shows his interest in Italianate landscape (see p. 75), as well as possibly with his brother Adriaen van Ostade, also a painter of low-life and country genre scenes (see p. 80). Isack van Ostade was prolific and skilled, though he died in Haarlem at the young age of twenty-eight. He is less widely known than his brother Adriaen, although some historians believe he would have proved the more accomplished painter had he lived.

Isack van Ostade, Dutch, 1621–1649, *The Halt at the Inn*, 1645, oil on panel transferred to canvas, 50 × 66 (19⁵/₈ × 26), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

In Focus *Love and Foolishness*

A master storyteller, Jan Steen filled his pictures with silent but vivid commentary; they recall proverbs and expressions, and they convey a sense of energy through color and composition. This crowded scene contains various messages about love and life. People of all ages and from different levels of society have gathered under the vine-covered arbor of a country tavern. In the background we see the tents of a village fair or *kermis*. Crowds from across the socioeconomic spectrum and from miles around came to these fairs to exchange news, examine the wares of peddlers (and quacks), and enjoy the performances of traveling drama troupes. It was a time to eat, drink, and be merry—and relax normal social restrictions.

A curious-looking couple occupies center stage: a peasant, rough but decked out in his very best and sporting cock feathers on his hat, leads a hesitant city girl to dance. The contrast in their clothing would have made it obvious to contemporary viewers that they are an ill-matched couple, destined for trouble.

Seated around the table are three couples whose love for each other can only be construed in a positive sense:

- an elderly couple in matching outfits, who have grown old together
- a broadly smiling man who is none other than Jan Steen, and a woman who is very likely his wife
- a mother balancing a child on her lap

The toy may be another allusion to harmony; two hammering men at either end of the toy tap in unison as the horizontal slats are moved back and forth. Moralists such as Jacob Cats sometimes likened a good love relationship to such teamwork; in work, as in marriage, collaborative effort leads to success. “Father Cats” (1577–1660) was a venerated guide to public and domestic virtues; his books continued to be published into the nineteenth century.



Several motifs underline the transient nature of life, including the broken shells and cut flowers spilling from the bucket. They reminded viewers of the fragility of beauty and the brevity of sensual pleasure — only moral values last.



The pair of birds in the cage above the elderly couple makes the point that love is best served by the kinds of limits imposed by society, religion, and tradition.

The feathers inclined toward the girl leave little doubt about the man's amorous intention.

The girl on the far side of the railing has also been lucky enough to receive a new toy, a pinwheel that she holds aloft. Pinwheels were especially associated with fairs, about the closest thing to a toy store most seventeenth-century children would ever experience.

The empty barrel in the foreground refers to a well-known emblem and saying: "A full barrel does not resound." That is to say: while the wise deport themselves in a quiet, respectable manner, the words of the ignorant echo hollowly in the air. The barrel's prominent position in front of the couple makes a comment on the foolishness of the dance the girl is about to undertake.

Jan Steen, Dutch, 1625/1626–1679, *The Dancing Couple*, 1663, oil on canvas, 102.5 × 142.5 (40³/₈ × 56¹/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection



Roemer Visscher with engravings by Claes Jansz Visscher, Dutch, 1547–1620; Dutch, 1585/1587–1652, *Een vol vat en bomt niet* (A full barrel does not resound), from *Zinne-poppen* (Emblems) (Amsterdam, 1669), National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

Working

While artists such as Isack van Ostade created golden-lit images of village life, frequently focused on moments of relaxation and repose, others depicted tradesmen at work. This was in keeping with the virtue the Dutch saw in honest, hard work. Yet images of truly heavy labor, such as draining fields, construction, or agricultural work, were rarely shown, even though these activities made up large sectors of the rural economy.

In *A Farrier's Shop*, Paulus Potter vividly captures the drama of an everyday scene. A farrier's, or blacksmith's, shop provided horseshoeing and also served as a country veterinary service. Here, the black horse is confined in a small shed to prevent it from rearing up or moving side to side. The man in the red tunic is probably filing the horse's teeth with a large rasp. The animal's fear is evident in its rolling eyes and desperate lunging. A young boy, dumbfounded by the scene, stands just behind the farrier with a man who is perhaps the horse's owner. Dramatic lighting, with sunlight emphasizing the horse's white blaze and falling on the placid back of the unperturbed gray horse behind it, contrasts with the darkness of the shop interior, where flames of the smithy's fire emit a deep, orange glow. This active scene evokes the sounds of the men talking to the horse to calm it, the horse's whinnying, chickens pecking on the dusty ground, dogs scuttling, the hammer of the smithy ringing, and the distant voices of the other field-workers humming.

According to the artist's widow, Potter used to take walks in the countryside around The Hague, where they lived, carrying a sketchbook with him to record scenes that interested him.



The Other Countryside

As cities such as Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Leiden grew, they also developed the ills that are still associated with cities today, such as smells and congestion, and some that were particular to the age, for example rampant waves of disease and mortality. Those with the means to escape the city did so, repairing to stately homes in the country for fresh air and a salubrious dose of nature. Between Amsterdam and Utrecht, many wealthy families built homes along the Vecht River on land reclaimed from salt marshes drained by windmill power. The riverside location offered an easy means of transportation to and from the city. In those days, the country was not as remote as it can be today, and greenery and open spaces could be found just beyond the city walls, in what we would understand today as the suburbs. These park-like areas were also enjoyed by the middle class as a nearby respite.

In Ruisdael's *Country House in a Park*, a large, classically inspired chateau has materialized in the distance. A formerly uninhabited wood has been cultivated for use as a pleasure garden and retreat. The manor house is prominent but still a small-scale element within the composition, much like the figures of the foreground, allowing Ruisdael to maintain a focus on the landscape. The Dutch were inventive

Paulus Potter, Dutch, 1625–1654, *A Farrier's Shop*, 1648, oil on panel, 48.3 × 45.7 (19 × 18), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

and influential gardeners and landscape designers, and this scene depicts a “wilderness garden” featuring exotic Scandinavian pines. The fountains are typically a feature of a more refined, formal garden. Further examination also reveals some merriment in this otherwise somber image: a trick fountain has sprayed the couple that dashes from it on the right. With these various elements, Ruisdael has continued his practice of imaginatively combining disparate elements that may or may not represent actuality in a convincingly realistic style. He has incorporated a few telling details that may signal his discomfort with the changing artistic climate. A felled, dead pine in the foreground and a toppled classical pillar to the right suggest that these foreign elements, introduced by man, will one day be gone and that the natural order will reassert itself.

Cuyp’s *Lady and Gentleman on Horseback* is unambiguous about the enjoyment to be had in the country. This sophisticated pair is taking a pleasure ride outside of town, seen in the immediate left, a fictional scene perhaps inspired by both the artist’s native Dordrecht and the Italian Campagna (the region south of Rome). The pair is attended by elegant dogs and the dog keeper, as well as other riders following behind, suggesting that they are participating in a hunt, an activity that became popular among the leisure class later in the century. They are dressed in an elegant manner, the lady wearing pearls and feathers in her hat, the man a gold sash. Even the horses have ribbon embellishments on their bridles and beaded blankets. The painting may be a wedding portrait because of the presence of symbolism associated with love, such as the hunt theme itself and the burdock plant (left of the dogs), a symbol of virtue and fidelity.



These two paintings from the second half of the seventeenth century are representative of a new taste for images depicting the wealthy, their homes, and their pursuits. Painters such as Jacob van Ruisdael and Aelbert Cuyp devoted much of their careers to the creation of landscape scenes that cast the countryside as remote, sublime, or peacefully agrarian. However, even in Ruisdael’s and Cuyp’s work, wealthy pleasure-seekers began to make appearances.

Jacob van Ruisdael, Dutch, c. 1628/1629–1682, *Country House in a Park*, c. 1675, oil on canvas, 76.3 × 97.5 (30 × 38¼), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Rupert L. Joseph

Aelbert Cuyp, Dutch, 1620–1691, *Lady and Gentleman on Horseback*, c. 1655, oil on canvas, 123 × 172 (48½ × 67¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

In Focus *Country Estates and Manors*



Jan van der Heyden,
Dutch, 1573–1645, *An
Architectural Fantasy*,
c. 1670, oil on panel,
49.7 × 70.7 (19⁹/₁₆ ×
27¹³/₁₆), National Gallery
of Art, Washington, Ailsa
Mellon Bruce Fund

Jan van der Heyden's fantasy scene of a palatial country house is a sign of the inroads made into the country by the wealthy and the popular architectural taste of the period among those with the means to realize the construction of villas. Its architectural design is based upon Italian Renaissance models, as indicated by its overall symmetry, triangular pediments, fluted pilasters with capitals, and relief sculptures. The freestanding statuary placed at the corners of the pediments and roofline is not typical of the styles the Dutch were interested in, nor are marble mansions known at that time in the Dutch Republic; both are creative flourishes on the part of the artist.

The perspective is slightly off-center, but if the viewer were to move to the right, the entry pavilion would be on axis with the entry of the manor house and repeat its form. This house is likely a composite of homes Van der Heyden may have seen that sprang up along the Vecht River. Such homes were popularized by the very wealthy and members of the stadholder Orange family in the latter part of the seventeenth century. They emulated the court architecture of other European cities and were also reflected in civic buildings such as the Amsterdam Town Hall. In this work, the manor house seems to float ethereally in the distance, yet the figures at the front are vivid and lifelike. The master of the house appears to be heading out for a walk with his dogs, while the

dog keeper is sitting on classical architectural fragments and the hounds are waiting just below. Here, nature has been subsumed by a grand house and its surrounding landscaped property. It is effectively cordoned off from its surroundings (excepting the equally large home to the right) and perhaps the kind of daily reality suggested by the imagery in the foreground and the clearly delineated wall.

In a distinctively Dutch touch, a beggar woman importunes the master at the gate, a reminder of the obligation of the wealthy to contribute alms to the poor and to charity. Van der Heyden also demonstrates his mastery as a *fijnschilder*: the incredible detail of the foreground and brickwork are characteristically Dutch.



Gerrit Willemz Heda, Dutch, active 1640s and 1650s, *Still Life with Ham* (detail), 1650, oil on panel, 98.5 x 82.5 (38½ x 32½), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of John S. Thacher

The rich could afford elaborate meals at lavish dinner parties, while the average citizen's fare was plain.

Exotic spices such as pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves were status symbols for the rich. The poor used cheaper spices such as salt. This chart gives only a rough indication, as little quantitative research has been done in this field.

Breakfast	RICH wheat bread, cheese, butter pickled herring, fried fish sometimes white bread	POOR rye bread, sometimes with cheese
Main Meal (eaten at noon)	RICH fish or meat dishes such as mince pie dishes prepared in single pot, such as soup, porridge, or hodgepodge with meat	POOR dishes prepared in single pot, such as porridge or boiled peas sometimes smoked meat or dried fish
Evening Meal	RICH same as main meal, or porridge, or bread and cheese	POOR rye bread, sometimes porridge and cheese
Festive Meal (holidays)	RICH game, fowl, boiled or roasted meats, various fishes and seafood, vegetables, fruits, nuts, olives, and bread for dessert, pastries, pies, jam	POOR greater quantities of every- day food

Old Recipe for Pancakes

This recipe is inspired by seventeenth-century cookbooks.

Three-in-the-Pan

2 packages dry yeast
¼ cup warm water (100° to 110° F)
pinch sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
pinch salt
1 ½ cups milk, lukewarm
1 cup currants or raisins
2 medium Golden Delicious apples or other firm, tart apples, peeled, cored, and chopped
butter for frying
confectioners' sugar

Sprinkle the yeast over the warm water, then add sugar. Let stand 2 minutes, then stir. Leave in a warm place until bubbly, about 5 minutes. Place the flour and the salt in a deep bowl. Make a well in the middle and add yeast mixture. Stirring from the middle, add the lukewarm milk a little at a time until the batter is smooth. Add the currants or raisins and chopped apples, and combine. Allow the batter to stand in a warm place for about an hour. Heat enough butter in a large frying pan to amply coat the bottom, about ⅛ inch, and pour out batter to make three small (about 3-inch) pancakes. Fry on both sides until golden brown and serve hot, heavily dusted with confectioners' sugar and with just a small pat of butter in the middle. Yield: about 18 small pancakes.



Rembrandt was particularly fascinated by certain low-life types, including beggars and street people, probably less as individuals than for their dramatic potential and as a means of expressing the pathos of the human condition. The central figure here is an elderly woman pancake maker. Pancakes were a form of street food made on portable griddles, meant to be eaten on the go, like a hot dog bought from a food truck today. Such vendors as the pancake woman would have been a feature of both urban and village life. Three pancakes are in her pan, suggesting she is using a recipe for three-in-the-pan, a type of pancake made with yeast rather than eggs that was light and fluffy.

The woman's expression is rendered economically but clearly as she focuses on making sure her pancakes do not burn while people crowd around her, waiting to buy them. She is hunched and withered, suggesting a life of hard work. This image influenced other artists, such as Jan Steen, who also came to paint pictures of pancake women, popularizing the theme in seventeenth-century Dutch art.

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *The Pancake Woman*, 1635, etching, 11.3 × 7.9 (4⁷/₁₆ × 3¹/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

Landscape Painting



It can even be said, as far as naturalism is concerned, that in the works of these clever [landscape painters], nothing is lacking but the warmth of the sun and the movement caused by the gentle breeze.

Constantijn Huygens

The flat, low-lying Netherlands does not boast the world's most dramatic scenery, yet probably no place on earth was so often painted. Paradoxically, the most urbanized nation of the seventeenth century also invented the naturalistic landscape. As a subject in its own right—something more than a backdrop for figures—landscape was still relatively new, a creation, largely, of the southern Netherlands in the sixteenth century. But those panoramic bird's-eye views (called “world landscapes”) by artists such as Joachim Patinir (1480–1524) from Antwerp or Pieter Breugel the Elder, who died in Brussels in 1569, were quite different. They are crowded with ordinary detail as well as fantastic and sacral elements. Dutch painters began to produce a new view, one of the here and now—the world as experienced by real people.

Their contribution is reflected in our very word “landscape,” which comes from the Dutch *landschap*. The percentage of landscape paintings listed in household inventories rose dramatically from about 25 to 40 percent between 1610 and 1679. The overwhelming majority was painted for the open market, and the average price was modest, perhaps about the equivalent of two weeks' wages for a skilled craftsman (though, of course, the best-known painters commanded higher prices). Images of the Dutch countryside had wide appeal for various reasons. They were, like the countryside itself, a source of refreshment and pleasure. Like paintings of flowers and food, they reminded viewers of the gifts of God's creation. Landscape paintings were also a natural outlet for the pride the Dutch felt in their



This painting, by a follower of Pieter Breugel the Elder, employs a high vantage point to offer the viewer a sweeping sense of the landscape and the various activities taking place in it, which would not be possible from a single, terrestrial viewpoint.

Anonymous Artist, Follower of Pieter Breugel the Elder, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c. 1550/1575, oil on panel, 58.5 × 87.5 (23 × 33¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

nation—“pictures” of their independence and well-being.

The countryside of the Netherlands was within easy reach of most city dwellers, often only a few minutes outside town walls or a short boat ride along the waterways. After midcentury, as wealth increased, large numbers of city people built second homes in the country—from rich estates to more modest retreats. These offered a restorative break from the ills, physical and moral, that plagued the city. A new literary genre appeared, the *hofdicht* (“country house” poem) that combined horticultural advice and moralizing dicta with descriptions of estate grounds. The country walk—in poetry, practice, and painting—became one of the Netherlands' favorite pastimes.

In Focus *Landscapes of Harmony*

The warm green, gold, and brown, the high, lumious sky, and the bands of sunwashed fields lend an idyllic character to the countryside. People cluster along a stream, where flickers of light punctuate an otherwise shadowy foreground. This is not a vision of wild, struggling, or even noble nature—this is a world carefully ordered by man. A steeple rises in the distance behind tidy farm buildings. Their pointed roofs were typical of vernacular architecture in the eastern Netherlands, especially Overijssel, but it is unlikely that Hobbema was painting any particular place. Instead, he used nature and the Dutch countryside as inspiration for an ideal of harmony and well-being.

The small figures in the foreground—a woman with children, a group of men resting for a bank-side meal—were not painted by Hobbema. He usually employed others for this task, an example of the specialization common in Dutch workshop practice. Around 1660 vertical landscapes became more popular, especially those conceived as pairs or pendants.



Meindert Hobbema,
Dutch, 1638–1709, *A
Farm in the Sunlight*,
1668, oil on canvas, 81.9
× 66.4 (32¼ × 26⅞),
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Andrew W.
Mellon Collection



Paintings of cows were popular, but few artists lent them the same power and grandeur that Cuyp did. These fine animals, silhouetted against a bright sky and silvery waterway, bask in the late sun of summer. On a slight rise, two shepherds converse with a man on horseback, their bodies also caught in shafts of light. The sense of pastoral well-being

is enhanced by the picture's low vantage point and honeyed tone. These are features Cuyp adopted beginning in the 1640s from artists like Jan Both, who had traveled in Italy (see p. 75). Cuyp rendered the warm light of the Mediterranean but continued to focus on his native Dutch landscape.

Aelbert Cuyp, Dutch,
1620–1691, *River
Landscape with Cows*,
1645/1650, oil on panel,
68 × 90.2 (26¾ × 35½),
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Gift of
Family Petschek (Aussig)



Hendrick Avercamp, Dutch, 1585–1634, *A Scene on the Ice*, c. 1625, oil on panel, 39.2 × 77 (15⁷/₁₆ × 30⁷/₁₆), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

LANDSCAPE SUBJECTS

Many artists specialized in certain types of landscape: winter scenes, moonlight scenes, seascapes, country views, or cityscapes.

Winter Scenes

Hendrick Avercamp made a good living painting skating or winter scenes such as the one above. His sweeping views are taken from a high vantage point, giving him a wide panorama to fill. He showed people from all levels of society. Here, wealthy, well-dressed citizens are enjoying a ride in a sleigh, drawn by a horse whose shoes are fitted with spikes. On the left, a working-class family unloads barrels from a sledge, while a group of middle-class children play *kolf*—a kind of mixture of golf and hockey—on the lower right. People are skating or ice fishing, or simply passing the time. The setting here may be the quiet village of Kampen northeast of Amsterdam, which was Avercamp’s home town.

Nocturnes

Aert van der Neer excelled in nocturnal landscapes, which he first explored in the 1640s and kept painting throughout his career. Luminous clouds float before a full moon. Reflections on a stream direct attention to the distance, where a town stands opposite a walled estate—or perhaps it is a ruin? Van der Neer is recording a mood, not a particular site. Light glints off windows and catches a fashionable couple conversing by an ornate gateway. A poor family, more faintly illuminated, crosses the bridge. Van der Neer’s virtuosic light effects are created by multiple layers of translucent and opaque paint. Using the handle of his brush or a palette knife, he scraped away top layers of dark color in the clouds to reveal underlying pinks, golds, and blues.

Aert van der Neer, Dutch, 1603/1604–1677, *Moonlit Landscape with Bridge*, probably 1648/1650, oil on panel, 78.4 × 110.2 (30⁷/₈ × 43³/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons’ Permanent Fund



City Views

To celebrate the end of war and Dutch independence, Amsterdam built a new town hall. It was the largest and most lavish building created in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, and it soon became a favorite subject for painters. Originally a device was attached to the frame of this picture that helped the viewer find the perfect vantage point to appreciate the painting's careful perspective.

Maritimes

Maritime themes were naturally popular in a seafaring nation like the Netherlands. Ludolf Backhuysen painted the drama of sky and sea. Here, three ships are threatened with destruction during a powerful storm; floating debris indicates that a fourth ship is already lost. The ships are *fluys*, the wide-bellied cargo workhorse of the Dutch merchant fleet (see p. 23). The rocks, so dangerously close, do not at all resemble the Dutch coastline—their very presence suggests foreign waters, perhaps around Scandinavia. The red-and-white flag on the ship at right is that of Hoorn, one of the member cities of the Dutch East India Company (see p. 20) and the place where the *fluyt* was first made. It is possible that a real event is depicted here. Sailors struggle to control their vessels, masts are already broken, and collision seems possible. Only the clear skies and the golden light at the upper left offer hope for survival.



Jan van der Heyden,
Dutch, 1573–1645, *The
Town Hall of Amsterdam
with the Dam*, 1667, oil on
canvas, 85 × 92 (33½ ×
36¼), Galleria degli Uffizi,
Florence. Photograph ©
Scala/Art Resource, NY

Ludolf Backhuysen,
Dutch, 1631–1708, *Ships
in Distress off a Rocky
Coast*, 1667, oil on canvas,
114.3 × 167.3 (45 × 65⅞),
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Ailsa Mellon
Bruce Fund

ARTISTIC TRENDS

Naturalistic landscape painting first appeared in Haarlem and Amsterdam around 1620. Three main stylistic trends emerged: tonal, “classic,” and Italianate.

Tonal Landscape

Hushed, atmospheric landscapes with subtle colors were very popular in various Dutch artistic centers from the mid-1620s to the mid-1640s. Originating in Haarlem, their warm palette and silvery tones were comparable to those of the monochrome still lifes that emerged there about the same time (see p. 90). Jan van Goyen was one of the first and leading painters of tonal landscapes.

“Classic” Landscape

The great age of Dutch landscape painting extended from about 1640 to 1680. More monumental than Van Goyen’s modest scenes, these so-called classic landscapes are typically structured around clearly defined focal points, such as stands of trees, farm buildings, or hills. Contrasts of light and dark and billowing cloud formations lend drama. The greatest painters in this style were Jacob van Ruisdael and his student, Meindert Hobbema. Ruisdael explored, with a somber eye, the nobility and variety of nature, from dark, ancient forests to waterfalls and torrents, to sunlit fields. While Hobbema (see p. 70) adopted many of his teacher’s subjects, his disposition was sunnier. Both artists’ depiction of trees is distinctive—Ruisdael’s grow in dense, solid masses, while Hobbema’s are silhouetted against a clear background, making them look more airy and open.



Jan van Goyen, Dutch, 1596–1656, *View of Dordrecht from the Dordtse Kil*, 1644, oil on panel, 64.7 × 95.9 (25 × 37¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

Jacob van Ruisdael, Dutch, c. 1628/1629–1682, *Forest Scene*, c. 1655, oil on canvas, 105.5 × 123.4 (41⅝ × 52⅞), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

Italianate Landscape

A number of Dutch artists, particularly from Utrecht, traveled to Italy to work and study. Landscape painters sojourning there in the 1630s and 1640s returned home with an Italianate style. It was infused with the warm, clear light, the dramatic topography, and the idyllic feeling of the Campagna (the region south of Rome).

Drawing Outside

It was a common practice for landscape painters to go into the countryside and record painterly views in sketchbooks. In fact, the introduction of sketchbooks and the greater use of charcoal for drawing probably helped make the art of landscape painting more popular—and practical. Van Mander and other theorists were clear in their advice that artists should venture to the country to make studies *naar het leven* (from life). Using motifs from these drawings, landscape artists subsequently created paintings in the studio. Although many landscape drawings exist, relatively



few seem to have been preparatory sketches; instead of serving as a preliminary step in the creation of a certain composition, they are tools, both to train the artist's eye and to provide a compendium of motifs for future use in paintings.

Jan Both, Dutch, 1615/1618–1652, *An Italianate Evening Landscape*, c. 1650, oil on canvas, 138.5 × 172.7 (54½ × 68), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *View over the Amstel from the Rampart*, c. 1646/1650, pen and brown ink with brown wash, 8.9 × 18.5 (3½ × 7¼), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection



Genre Painting



As the statistics from Haarlem show (see p. 40), no single type of painting gained more in popularity between 1600 and 1650 than scenes of everyday life—their audience more than doubled. Pioneered in Haarlem and Amsterdam, genre, like still life and landscape, had emerged only in the sixteenth century. Today we group diverse subjects under the single rubric “genre,” but in the seventeenth century different settings would have been denoted by specific names—merry companies, smoking pictures, carnivals, *kermisses* (harvest festivals), and so on. Some serious, some comic, they depict in great detail the range of life and society in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, from peasants in a tavern brawl to the quiet domestic order of a well-kept home. The pictures impart a broad sense of what living in the seventeenth-century Netherlands looked and felt like, capturing the texture and rhythms of life in a particular place and time.

Genre also provides a window on the way people living in the Dutch Republic understood—and valued—their society, surroundings, and moral responsibilities. Especially in the early part of the century, genre pictures tended to have clear allegorical content. The vanities of worldly pleasures, the dangers of vice, the perils of drink and smoke, the laxness of an old woman who nods off while reading her Bible—all these helped promote a Dutch image of rectitude. Genre painting both reflected and helped define ideals about the family, love, courtship, duty, and other aspects of life.

Genre

“Genre” is French, meaning type or variety. In English it has been adopted to: 1) encompass all the various kinds of painting — landscape, portraiture, and so on are different “genres”; and 2) describe subjects from everyday life — tavern scenes or domestic interiors are “genre pictures.”

Many genre paintings drew on familiar sayings and such illustrated books as Jacob Cats’ *Houwelick* (On Marriage), which was first published in 1625 and sold, according to contemporary estimates, some 50,000 copies. It gave advice on the proper comportment of women from girlhood to widowhood and death. Emblem books were another popular form of “wisdom literature” that advised on the proper conduct of all aspects of life, from love and child-rearing to economic, social, and religious responsibility. These books encapsulated a concept with an illustration and pithy slogan, amplified by an accompanying poem.

By midcentury, most genre pictures had become less obviously didactic. Spotless home interiors with women busy at their tasks or tending happy, obedient children conveyed in a more general way the well-being of the republic and the quiet virtues of female lives. These domestic pictures, in which few men appear, reflect a civic order that was shaped in part by a new differentiation between the private and public spheres. Women presented in outdoor settings were often of questionable morals and depicted in contexts of sexual innuendo. By contrast, male virtues celebrated in genre painting are usually active and public.

In Focus *Subtleties and Ambiguities*

Many kinds of subtleties are found in this painting—psychological nuances as well as refinements of technique. The setting is an upper-class home, with rich furnishings. A young woman, setting aside her music and viol, has risen from her duet to greet a young man. He receives her approach with a sweeping bow. The elegantly dressed pair is regarded with a somewhat dubious expression by a man standing before the fire. At the table another young woman concentrates placidly on her French lute (also called a *theoboro*, it has a second neck for bass strings). This seems a dignified and decorous tableau, but contemporary viewers would have sensed the sexual subtext right away. The picture is transformed by innuendo. The couple's gaze, hers direct, his clearly expressing interest, only begins to tell the story. Musical instruments, whose sweet vibrations stir the passions, are frequent symbols of love and point to an amorous encounter. Gestures are more explicit: with thumb thrust between two fingers, she makes an invitation that he accepts by circling his own thumb and index finger.

Less clear is the outcome of this flirtation—Ter Borch is famous for ambiguity (which influenced the younger Vermeer, see pp. 36 and 84). Dutch literature delved into both the

delights of love and the dangers of inappropriate entanglements. This was a theme addressed by Ter Borch's sister Gesina in an album of drawings and poetry. She equated white with purity and carnation-red with revenge or cruelty. These are precisely the colors worn by the young woman here, who was in fact modeled by Gesina (Ter Borch often posed friends and family members; the model for the suitor was his pupil Caspar Netscher). Viewers might also have recalled the young man's hat-in-hand pose from a popular emblem book in which men are warned that a woman's advances are not always to be trusted. Perhaps this gallant is being lured only to be spurned and turned cruelly away? Ter Borch deployed posture and expression as subtle clues to human psychology. As an art critic in 1721 wrote, "With his brush he knew to imitate the facial characteristics and the whole swagger with great liveliness...." His skill in projecting complex emotion was probably honed by his work as a painter of portraits.

During his lifetime, Ter Borch was celebrated for his remarkable ability to mimic different textures. The same art lover went on to say that he knew "upholstery and precious textiles according to their nature. Above all he did white satin so naturally and thinly that it really seemed to be true...."

The skirt in *The Suitor's Visit* is a technical tour de force. No other artist matched the natural fall and shimmer of his silks or the soft ruffle of lace cuffs. Although Ter Borch's brushstrokes are small, they are also quick and lively, and animate the surface.



To Paint a Satin Skirt

Young portrait painters quickly learned that sitters do not sit still. This was especially problematic when painting clothes; the appearance of folds could barely be sketched in before it changed again. One solution was to hang the clothes on a manikin, where they could remain undisturbed for days or weeks. We know that Ter Borch's father thought a manikin an important enough part of an artist's equipment that he provided one to his son.

Of all fabrics, silk satin is probably the hardest to capture because of its smooth, shiny surface. Light falling on satin is reflected instead of being scattered like light that falls on softer, more textured fabrics. One technique Ter Borch used for silk was to increase the contrast between the brightest highlights and the areas in middling shadow. Compare the pronounced alternation of light and dark in the skirt with the very narrow range of tones in the man's linen collar.



Gerard ter Borch II, Dutch, 1617–1681, *The Suitors Visit*, c. 1658, oil on canvas, 80 × 75 (31½ × 29⅞), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection



Nicolaes Maes' old woman has fallen asleep while reading the Bible. The prominently placed keys, which often symbolized responsibility, suggest that she should have maintained greater vigilance. Maes created many images of both virtuous elderly women and ones who neglect their duties. He was a student of Rembrandt in the 1640s, and Rembrandt's influence can be seen in Maes' broad touch, deep colors, and strong contrast of dark and light. Neither Rembrandt nor any of his other pupils, however, had Maes' moralizing bent.

Rude peasants like Adriaen Brouwer's naughty lad were a perfect foil to the ideals of sobriety and civility held by the middle-class burgher who must have bought the painting. It was the Flemish Brouwer who introduced this type of peasant scene to the northern Netherlands. At about age twenty he moved to Haarlem, then working in Amsterdam and elsewhere before returning to Antwerp in 1631. Later biographers said he had studied in Hals' studio (along with Adriaen van Ostade, see below), but no clear record exists. His pictures were admired for their expressive characters and lively technique.

While Brouwer was most interested in the faces and expressions of the peasants he painted, Van Ost-



Nicolaes Maes, Dutch, 1634–1693, *An Old Woman Dozing over a Book*, c. 1655, oil on canvas, 82.2 × 67 (32³/₈ × 26³/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Adriaen Brouwer, Flemish, 1605/1606–1638, *Youth Making a Face*, c. 1632/1635, oil on panel, 13.7 × 10.5 (5³/₈ × 4¹/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, New Century Fund

ade focused on action. In *Peasants Fighting in a Tavern*, his bold pen strokes capture the mayhem that erupts after drinking and gambling. The lighter elements of the background were added by Cornelis Dusart, who was Van Ostade's pupil and inherited his studio. He probably included these details of the tavern setting to make the drawing more salable—tastes had changed since the time of Van Ostade's original drawing, and customers now preferred drawings with a more finished look.

Men, women, and children alike participate in the *melée*, which the jug being wielded by one of the rabble-rousers identifies as a drunken brawl. Some genre pictures may appear to our eye as rather cruel, relying on stereotypes in which physical coarseness—large features, stumpy limbs, or bad posture—is correlated with coarse behavior and character. The assumption was that peasants were naturally prone to drunkenness, laziness, and other vices. Urban viewers of these images would have considered them comic, but also illustrative of the kind of reprehensible conduct caused by immoderate behavior, which they, naturally, avoided. After midcentury, art patrons began to prefer pictures with a more refined emotional resonance, turning increasingly to



Adriaen van Ostade, Dutch, 1610–1685, *The Cottage Dooryard*, 1673, oil on canvas, 44 × 39.5 (17³/₈ × 15³/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

Adriaen van Ostade and Cornelis Dusart, Dutch, 1610–1685; Dutch, 1660–1704, *Peasants Fighting in a Tavern*, c. 1640, pen and dark brown ink over graphite (by Van Ostade) and pen and light brown ink with gray-brown wash (by Dusart) on laid paper, 14.9 × 26 (5⁷/₈ × 10³/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Edward William Carter and Hannah Locke Carter, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art

pictures of their own milieu. Peasant pictures, too, took on a more generous character—the simplicity of country life came to be seen as admirable, characterized by hard work and few of the temptations of city life (see p. 45).

The humble courtyard of Van Ostade’s peasant home is an image of domestic virtue. A man enters to find his wife cleaning mussels for the family meal, as an older sister tends her youngest sibling. Washing is hung out to dry. The place is simple but not unkempt. By the time this painting was made, peasant life in the country had come to embody a virtuous way of life. Unlike rich burghers in the city, this simple family is uncompromised by the pursuit of wealth or luxury.





In Metsu's *The Intruder* we find just such well-off city dwellers. Its convincing textures—fur, velvet, and satin clothing, the grain of wooden floorboards—pull us into the well-appointed room. We get a vivid sense, too, of a drama unfolding, responding to the postures, gestures, and expressions of the actors. A handsome, well-dressed man has burst through the door, stopped momentarily by the friendly intervention of a maid. Within the chamber a sleepy young woman, with wan expression, reaches for her shoe as she tries to dress quickly after having been lounging abed. Seated at the table, another woman performs her toilet with an ivory comb, a possible signal not only of cleanliness but also of moral purity; with her is a small dog, often a sign of loyalty. Is this contrast between the women—their activities, the colors they wear, even the way they are lit—a reminder of the daily choices between uprightness and sloth? Metsu is a master storyteller, and like Ter Borch, he does not always make his



endings clear. Perhaps, though, the artist gives us a clue to this man's choice in that he and the virtuous woman exchange a warm and smiling greeting and are framed by similar arches.

In De Hooch's *The Bedroom*, a woman folds bedclothes in an immaculate house as a young child—because they were dressed alike at this age, it is impossible to say whether it is a boy or a girl—pauses at the door with ball in hand, apparently just returning from play. A pervasive sense of calm and order derives not only from the cleanliness of the room and the woman's industriousness but also from the balanced composition itself. Measured horizontals and verticals make for stability and link foreground and distance. Mood is also created by the clear light that gleams off the marble tiles and makes a soft halo of the child's curls. The light unifies colors and space. De Hooch is known for his virtuoso light reflections and layered shadows, which he must have carefully observed from life. This same interior also forms the backdrop for some of his other scenes—perhaps it is his own home. It has been suggested that the woman is his wife and that the child,

Gabriel Metsu, Dutch, 1629–1667, *The Intruder*, c. 1660, oil on panel, 66.6 × 59.4 (26½ × 23¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Pieter de Hooch, Dutch, 1629–1684, *The Bedroom*, 1658/1660, oil on canvas, 51 × 60 (20 × 23½), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection



Jan Steen, Dutch, 1625/1626–1679, *Merry Family*, 1668, oil on canvas, 110.5 × 141 (43½ × 55½), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

who reappears in another painting, is their daughter Anna.

Compare the serenity of De Hooch's interior with Jan Steen's unruly scene. Steen acquired a great reputation for pictures of messy households. Here the adults merrily sing, drink, and smoke, as do the children. The jumble of strong colors and the energy of the diagonals in the composition add to a sense of disorder. The picture is a visual rendition of the popular saying, "Like the adults sing their song, so the young will peep along," which also appears on the sheet tacked to the fireplace above the merry-makers' heads. Quite appropriately, perhaps, for an artist with such a strong interest in proverbs, Steen himself became proverbial. A house where everything is in disarray is called a "household of Jan Steen" in Dutch.

In Focus *The Poetry of Everyday Subjects*

Their quiet mood, serene light, and ambiguous intention make Vermeer's paintings more universal, less telling of a public narrative than many genre pictures. His figures exist in a private space, poised between action and introspection.

Consider this woman writing a letter. To whom is she writing? Her pen still rests on the paper but she has turned from it. Is she looking at us, the viewers? Are we surrogates for another figure in her room, an unseen maid or messenger perhaps? Is she looking instead into her own thoughts? Uncertainty enhances the poetic possibilities of our experience with the painting. Contemporary Dutch viewers would have

been able to answer at least one of these questions with confidence. They would have known that this woman is writing to her lover. Letters in Dutch pictures are almost always love letters, and here, the idea is reinforced by the painting on the wall behind her. Dark and difficult to see, it is a still life with bass viola and other musical instruments. Music, like love, transports the soul.

The painting's mood is achieved by many means: the woman's quiet expression; the soft quality of the light that falls from some unexplained source; or the composition itself, in its organization of dark and light and disposition of shapes. Three deeply shaded rectangles frame the woman's leaning form, which is bright and pyramidal. The pale wall in

the upper right occupies an opposite but equal space to the dark table on the lower left. The only strong colors in a muted palette are balancing complements—yellow in her rich, ermine-trimmed robe, blue on the tablecloth.

The woman's outward look is unusual for letter writers in Dutch genre pictures, and it is possible that this may also be a portrait, perhaps even of Vermeer's wife. She wears what is very likely the yellow jacket listed in their household inventory.



Johannes Vermeer, Dutch, 1632–1675, *A Lady Writing*, c. 1665, oil on canvas, 45 × 39.9 (17¾ × 15¾), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Harry Waldron Havemeyer and Horace Havemeyer, Jr., in memory of their father, Horace Havemeyer

Still-Life Painting



Still-life painting, as a subject worthy in its own right, seems to have appeared more or less simultaneously in Italy, northern Europe, and Spain in the sixteenth century. Painters turned their focus on plants, animals, and man-made objects just as scientists and natural philosophers developed a new paradigm for learning about the world that emphasized investigation over abstract theory. Exploration, by Spain and the Netherlands especially, increased interest in exotic specimens from around the globe and created a market for their accurate renderings. Still-life painting also spoke more universally about the bounty of God's creation and the nature of art and life. "Simple" paintings of flowers and food could have complex appeal and various meanings for viewers.

Ars longa, vita brevis (Art is long, life is short)

Painted images prolonged the experience of nature. Finely painted flowers brought tremendous pleasure during a cold Dutch winter. Permanence was considered a great virtue of art—it outlasts nature. Still life reminded viewers of the prosperity of their republic. It is probably not a coincidence that it emerged parallel with the world's first consumer society. The Dutch were proud of their wealth and the effort that

produced it, yet abundance could also nudge the conscience to contemplation of more weighty matters. Paintings in which fruit rots, flowers wither, insects nibble at leaves, and expensively set tables lie asunder served as a *memento mori* or "reminder of death," intended to underscore life's transience and the greater weight of moral considerations.

Still life did not rank high with art theorists. Hoogstraten (see p. 125) called still-life painters "foot soldiers in the army of art." Yet Dutch still-life paintings were hugely popular. They attracted some of the finest artists and commanded high prices. Many painters specialized in certain types of still life, including pictures of flowers or game, banquet and breakfast pieces that depict tables set with food, and *vanitas* still lifes, which reminded viewers of the emptiness of material pursuits.



Pieter Claesz, Dutch, 1596/1597–1660, *Breakfast Piece with Stoneware Jug, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread*, 1642, oil on panel, 60 × 84 (23 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 33), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Mrs. Edward Wheelwright, 13.458

Willem Kalf, Dutch, 1619–1693, *Still Life*, c. 1660, oil on canvas, 64.4 × 53.8 (25 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 21 $\frac{3}{16}$), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Chester Dale Collection



STILL-LIFE SUBJECTS

Breakfast and Banquet Pictures

Pieter Claesz' quiet tabletop still lifes, such as this simple breakfast of fish, bread, and beer, have extraordinary naturalism and directness. His warm, muted colors echo the tonal qualities that appeared in Haarlem landscapes around the same time (see p. 74). Willem Kalf's more sumptuous painting reflects a later style, called *pronkstijl*, which featured brighter colors and more opulent objects, like this Chinese porcelain.

Game Pictures

Game pictures were especially sought by aristocratic patrons (or those with aristocratic pretensions) who alone had the land and means to practice the hunt. In this large painting Jan Weenix combined a still life—the textures of feathers and fur done with remarkable skill—with a landscape. The sculpted relief, pond, architectural follies, and garden statuary would have been found on a patrician estate. The painting, however, also has religious connotations: the relief represents the Holy Family, and the departing dove beyond the dead swan probably relates to the freeing of the soul after death. Even the plants reinforce the symbolism—bending before the plinth is a calendula, symbolically associated with death, while the rose thorns in front recall Mary's sorrows.

Vanitas

Like the Flemish painter Jan van Kessel, some Dutch painters also referred explicitly to the transience of life by incorporating skulls, hourglasses, watches, and bubbles. All these reminders of death serve to underscore the “vanity” of life and the need to be morally prepared for final judgment.



Jan Weenix, Dutch, 1642–1719, *Still Life with Swan and Game before a Country Estate*, c. 1685, oil on canvas, 142.9 × 173 (56¼ × 68⅞), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund



Jan van Kessel, Flemish, 1626–1679, *Vanitas Still Life*, c. 1665/1670, oil on copper, 20.3 × 15.2 (8 × 6), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Maida and George Abrams

Flavored with currants and expensive spices, mince pie was a treat reserved for special occasions. Other foods on this sumptuously set table are also exceptional—imported lemons and olives, oysters to be enjoyed with vinegar from a Venetian glass cruet, seasonings of salt mounded in a silver cellar, and pepper sprinkled from a rolled paper cone. At the top of Heda's triangular arrangement is a splendid gilt bronze goblet. But the meal is over and the table in disarray. Two platters rest precariously at the edge of the table. Vessels have fallen over and a glass has been broken. A candle has been snuffed out. Along with the edible items, these objects were familiar symbols of life's impermanence, reminders of the need

to be prepared for death and judgment. Another warning may lie in the oysters, which were commonly regarded as aphrodisiacs. Empty shells litter the table, while in the center of the composition a simple roll remains the only food uneaten. Enjoying the pleasures of the flesh, these banqueters have ignored their salvation, leaving untouched the bread of life.

Characterized by a contemporary Haarlem historian as a painter of “fruit and all kinds of knick-knacks,” Willem Claesz Heda was one of the greatest Dutch still-life artists, noted particularly for breakfast and banquet (*ontbijtje* and *banketje*) pieces. The large size of this painting suggests that it was probably made on commission. Its scale helps create the illusion of reality—objects are life-size. The projection of the

two platters and knife handle and the dangling lemon peel bring the scene into the viewer's own space. These elements, which increase the immediacy of seeing, connect viewers with Heda's message about the true value in life.

This painting is an example of the monochrome palette Dutch artists preferred for still lifes and landscapes (see p. 74) from the 1620s to the late 1640s. Heda was a master of these cool gray or warm tan color schemes. The colors of gold, silver, pewter—even the vinegar and beer in their glass containers—play against a neutral background and white cloth.



Willem Claesz Heda,
Dutch, 1593/1594–1680,
*Banquet Piece with Mince
Pie*, 1635, oil on canvas,
106.7 × 111.1 (42 × 43³/₄),
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Patrons'
Permanent Fund

FLOWERS AND FLOWER PAINTING

The Dutch prized flowers and flower paintings; by the early seventeenth century, both were a national passion. Flowers were appreciated for beauty and fragrance and not simply for their value as medicine, herbs, or dye-stuffs. Exotic new species from around the globe were avidly sought by botanists and gardeners. Paintings immortalized these treasures and made them available to study—and they gave sunny pleasure even in winter. Viewers could see—almost touch and smell—the blossoms.

The Tulip Craze

The Dutch were entranced most of all by flowering bulbs, especially tulips. After arriving in the Netherlands, probably in the 1570s, tulips remained a luxurious rarity until the mid-1630s, when cheaper varieties turned the urban middle classes into avid collectors. The Dutch interest in tulips was also popularized around Europe, as visitors to the Netherlands were taken with these exotic flowers and with Dutch gardening prowess in general. At the same time, a futures market was established. Buyers contracted to purchase as-yet-ungrown bulbs at a set price, allowing bulbs to be traded at any time of the year.

On paper, the same bulb could quickly change hands many times over. Speculation drove prices upward. The price of a Semper Augustus was 1,000 guilders in 1623, twice that in 1625, and up to 5,000 guilders in 1637. The *average* price of a bulb that year was 800 guilders, twice what a master carpenter made annually. A single tulip bulb could command as much as a fine house with a garden. People from all walks of life entered this speculative market, and many made “paper” fortunes, which disappeared after a glut caused prices to plummet.

Among those ruined was the landscape painter Jan van Goyen (see section 10). Eventually bulb prices normalized to about 10 percent of their peak value. They were still costly, but not outrageously so.



This painting, based on a print, was made shortly after the tulip market's collapse. Haarlem weavers, who have abandoned their looms, follow the goddess Flora as her chariot drives blindly to the sea. She holds out flamed red-and-white Semper Augustus tulips while another woman weighs bulbs, and other companions in fool's caps, one with a bag of money, drink and chatter on.

Hendrik Gerritsz Pot, Dutch, c. 1585–1657, *Flora's Wagon of Fools*, c. 1637, oil on panel, 61 × 83 (24 × 32½), Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem

This watercolor was made for one of the many *tulpenboeken*—illustrated catalogues of tulip varieties. Flamed tulips were highly sought after. Today it is understood that their broken color results from a virus.

Unknown artist, Dutch, *Geel en Rood van Leydden* (Yellow and Red of Leiden), from a tulip book, 1643, watercolor on parchment, volume 39.7 × 28.5 (15½ × 11½), Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem

For religious reasons, Bosschaert moved from Antwerp to Middelburg, one of the centers of the Dutch East India Company and noted for its botanical garden. Several of the blooms he included here appear in more than one of his paintings, sometimes reversed. They are based on initial studies made from life. Sometimes artists waited whole seasons for a particular plant to flower so it could be drawn. The species here actually flower at different times of the year: cyclamen (lower right) blooms from December to March and iris (top right) from May to June. Spring bulbs and summer roses are shown as well.

This must be among Bosschaert's last paintings. The French inscription, added after his death, is a testament to the painter's fame: "It is the angelic hand of the great painter of flowers, Ambrosius, renowned even to the banks of death."

Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, Dutch, 1573–1621, *Bouquet of Flowers in a Glass Vase*, 1621, oil on copper, 31.6 × 21.6 (12 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 8 $\frac{7}{16}$), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund and New Century Fund



This sheet from a florilegium, a book devoted to flowers, depicts an imaginary garden, but several cities in the Netherlands opened real botanical gardens. The first, one of the earliest anywhere in the world, was established in 1590 at the Leiden University. Carolus Clusius (1526 – 1609), among the most important naturalists of the sixteenth century, arrived there in 1593 and remained as professor of botany until his death. He collected plants from around the globe and traded them with scholar-friends. In those exchanges he probably introduced the tulip to Holland. Clusius was most interested in tulips' medicinal potential, but others were charmed by their beauty and rarity. Clusius' own tulips were stolen, but today his garden has been re-created at the university botanical garden.

Crispijn van de Passe II, Dutch, c. 1597–c. 1670, *Spring Garden*, from *Hortus Floridus* (Flowering Garden) (Arnhem, c. 1614), hand-colored book illustration, 19.1 × 55.3 (7 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 21 $\frac{3}{4}$), Collection of Mrs. Paul Mellon, Oak Spring Garden Library, Upperville, Virginia

The illusion is so convincing that it extends to senses beyond sight. In 1646 a Dutch poet extolled the beauty of a flower picture *and* its fragrance: “our eyes wander in the color, and also her fragrance permeates more than musk.”

Dew clings to leaves whose every vein is delineated; it is difficult to fathom that paint, not surface tension, shapes these droplets. Tulip petals are silky, a poppy paper-thin, a burst seed pod brittle and dry. Yet the likeness is shaped by art and embodied with meaning beyond surface appearance.

Still-life painting was not a slavish recording of what the artist saw before him—all art demanded imagination, artifice. Here are blossoms that appear at

different times of the year. This arrangement of peonies and roses, poppies and cyclamen not only reflects the wonders of nature’s creations but also something of the artist’s making. He manipulated the forms: exaggeratedly long stems allow for a more dynamic composition, and the dark background intensifies his color.

This painted bouquet outlasts nature, and permanence was argued by theorists to be one of art’s fundamental virtues. By contrast, caterpillars and tiny ants that eat away at leaves and flowers, petals that begin to wither, flower heads that droop—all remind us of the brevity of life. De Heem’s bouquet also seems to make symbolic reference to Christ’s resurrection and man’s salvation. In addition to the cross-shaped reflection of a mullioned window

in the glass vase, there are other signs. A butterfly, often associated with the resurrection, alights on a white poppy, a flower linked with sleep, death, and the Passion of Christ. A sweeping stalk of grain may allude to the bread of the Eucharist. Morning glories, which open only during the day, may represent the light of truth, while brambles may recall the burning bush signaling God’s omnipresence to Moses. Perhaps not every viewer would “see” these meanings, but they were certainly intended by the artist.

Dutch painting is not an ordinary mirror of the world. Bouquets such as De Heem’s address the meaning of life, the nature of art, and the bounty of God’s creation.



Jan Davidsz de Heem,
Dutch, 1606–1683/1684,
Vase of Flowers, c. 1660,
oil on canvas, 69.6 ×
56.5 (27³/₈ × 22¹/₄),
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Andrew W.
Mellon Fund

Portraiture



Portraiture flourished in the northern Netherlands and the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century. Among the many thousands of portraits made during the Dutch Golden Age, those that survive to this day tend to be of the highest quality, preserved over the centuries by their owners and descendants.

The Rise of Portraiture

Portraiture as an artistic category in Europe had flourished in Renaissance Italy and thereafter in the southern Netherlands, which grew wealthy from a trading economy centered in the port city of Antwerp. Interest in images of individuals, as opposed to saints and other Christian figures, was fueled in part by the new and burgeoning concept of personhood. The rise of Renaissance humanism—a revival of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy valuing human dignity and the material world—contributed to this sense of personal identity, as did a new kind of economic autonomy enjoyed by wealthy merchants and successful tradesmen. These shifts in attitude and economy greatly expanded the market for portraits. Gradually, merchants and successful traders joined traditional customers—the aristocracy and high-ranking members of the church—in commissioning portraits of themselves.

For the Dutch, a similar sense of individuation may have been fostered by religion. Calvinists were encouraged by their clergy to pursue a direct, unmediated understanding of faith through reading the Bible. In the secular realm, scholars working in the republic, such as René Descartes and Baruch Spinoza, represented a new breed of intellectuals who advanced the idea that human reason and rationality, alongside faith in God, could improve man's condition in life.

Economically, the ascendance of the northern Netherlands to the world's premier trading hub (following the blockade of the port of Antwerp) produced vast new commercial opportunities. A decentralized political structure also vested power

in a new “ruling class” that consisted of thousands of city regents (city councilors), burgher merchant families, and those made prosperous through the pursuit of trades such as brewing or fabric making. With disposable income and social standing, they avidly commissioned portraits from the many painters offering their services. Portraits were made of newlyweds, families, children, groups, and individuals wishing to create records of family members, ceremonial occasions, and to mark civic and personal status in their communities.

Early in the seventeenth century, the types and styles of portraits made in the northern Netherlands were governed by conventions established by earlier portrait painters to carefully communicate status, regional and family identity, and religious attitudes. Émigré painters from the southern Netherlands and Dutch artists who had visited Italy brought their knowledge of these approaches to the northern Netherlands. The quality of these conventional portraits was impersonal, unsmiling, and formal. Sitters' poses (a three-quarter view was typical) and placement of hands (for men, assertive gestures; for women, demure ones) were prescribed to conform to portrait decorum.

Throughout the Golden Age, Dutch portrait painters continued many of these conventions as likenesses still functioned as a means of illustrating a subject's identity and status. However, the genius of the age was in the way Dutch portraitists also transformed the genre by infusing portrait subjects with increasing naturalism, humanity, emotion, and sometimes drama. They expanded technique, subject, and pose. Subjects turn to us in direct gaze, gesture with confidence, and express mood, becoming *individuals* in whom painters attentively captured personality and character—qualities that make these pictures distinctive and even modern to our eyes.

Individual Portraits

Hals' patrician lady exemplifies his stunning ability to capture a sitter's personality and the uniqueness of the individual. Her richly rendered black dress, lace cuffs, Spanish-style millstone ruff, and white lace coifs or hair coverings (lace under-coif and starched linen over-coif), while expensive and of high quality, would have been considered conservative and perhaps out of fashion at the time this picture was painted. However, among mature and religious persons (she holds a prayer book or bible in her hand), following fashion probably would have been regarded as frivolous or the province of younger people. From underneath this staid, matronly carapace bubbles forth a jolliness and liveliness—an appealing small grin and crinkly eyes make our elderly lady appear as if she is about to break into a broader smile or talk to us. It is this quality that commands the whole picture and is the substance of Hals' "speaking likenesses," which capture such a spontaneous moment.

As a woman of a certain age and standing, she may have permitted only herself and Hals her small revealing smile. With a young and rakish man, however, Hals could go even further in creating an expressive portrait full of character and life. The portrait is of a twenty-two-year-old scion of the Coymans family—a large, wealthy merchant and landowning clan with branches in Amsterdam and Haarlem. In essence, Hals seems to match his technique to his subject. The loose and free painting style of *Willem Coymans* accords with the fact that the sitter is a young, unmarried man, and a raffish and sophisticated one at that, with his calculatedly rumpled—yet rich—manner of dress. His attitude is extremely casual, his arm thrown over the back of a chair. Hals innovated the practice of depicting portrait subjects in a sideways pose, arm flung over a chair, and artists such as Verspronck and Leyster also used this device. The effect is livelier than the conventional three-quarter pose. We notice Coymans' long hair, which falls, unkempt, to his shoulders. His



black hat, with a large pompom, is cocked to the side. His white linen collar is exaggeratedly wide. The light coming from the right side of the picture highlights the collar and the gleaming gold embroidery of the sitter's coat. In the background, the family's crest features three cow's heads—the family name literally means "cow men." This is a man of fashion and of wealth, with the liberty and means to present himself as he wishes.

Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Portrait of an Elderly Lady*, 1633, oil on canvas, 102.5 × 86.9 (40³/₈ × 34³/₁₆), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

High Fashion

Willem Coymans' appearance, though disheveled, is carefully cultivated, demonstrating a bit of self-invention. Among men of his social class a sort of "negligent" romantic style became fashionable at this time. Books on manners, which were becoming popular, noted that it was not considered manly for one's dress to be too neat. At least some of the inspiration for these ideas came from Baldassare Castiglione's 1528 book *The Courtier*, read by Coymans' circle, which describes the accomplishments and appropriate turnout for the perfect gentleman (Castiglione describes an ideal gentlewoman, too). It entailed knowledge of art, literature, and foreign languages; possession of manly virtue; and, importantly, *sprezzatura*, which meant that none of these accomplishments or aspects of appearance should appear laborious, but instead effortless and even offhanded. Some of the sartorial trends practiced by Coymans and others did trickle down to other levels of society. The vogue for long hair, transmitted to different classes and even ministers (perhaps because it could be achieved by those who would not afford expensive clothing), was seen as a vanity. It became of sufficient concern to church councils to generate a controversy known as "The Dispute of the Locks" in 1645, the year *Willem Coymans* was completed. The lengthening of men's hair and its impact on public morals was duly deliberated, and church officers eventually stalemated on the issue.



Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Willem Coymans*, 1645, oil on canvas, 77 × 64 (30 ¼ × 25), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

In Focus “*A Learned Maid*”

The appearance of this portrait is at first glance different from the naturalistic style that many Dutch portrait artists pursued. One reason is its palette: it is painted en grisaille, or monochrome, because it was designed to be used as the model for a print executed by another artist. In addition, the formalized, “heraldic” style, with a trompe l’oeil frame and emblems relating to the subject’s life arrayed around the perimeter, is another device often incorporated into prints. Further examination of the subject, however, reveals a very Dutch attention to naturalistic details, such as the veins in the woman’s hands and an image that neither idealizes nor exaggerates the visage of this middle-aged sitter. The painting is another example of the ways Dutch artists combined and reinvented different styles of portraiture.

The painter, Cornelis Jonson van Ceulen, was of Flemish descent and born in London, where his parents had fled from the southern Netherlands to escape religious persecution. Jonson became a successful portraitist in London, and the oval portrait with trompe l’oeil elements was very popular with the British aristocracy who frequently commissioned his work. When this portrait was painted, the artist

had returned to the Netherlands, this time to the north, because of the start of the civil war in England (1642). He lived in Middelburg, Amsterdam, and eventually Utrecht, where he died.

The portrait’s subject, Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1671), was born in Cologne to a wealthy family of noble lineage. The family relocated to Utrecht during her formative years to avoid religious persecution. Anna Maria demonstrated her intellectual gifts early, apparently reading by age three. Her parents allowed her to pursue an intensive education: she was taught side by side with her three brothers, a highly unusual practice for girls at the time. Later, Anna Maria became the first female student permitted to enroll at a Dutch university, the University of Utrecht. She was, however, obliged to sit behind a screen during classes.

Self-confident and intellectually voracious, Anna Maria pursued writing, calligraphy (penmanship was considered a masculine pursuit), astronomy, music, theology, the study of numerous languages (Latin, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Turkish, Ethiopian, and half a dozen others), painting, and copper engraving. She also undertook a lady’s fine crafts, such as embroidery, glass engraving, and cut-paper constructions. In her artistic pursuits, she showed suf-

ficient skill to gain admittance to the Utrecht Guild of Saint Luke as an honorary member in 1641. Her book, *The Learned Maid* (1657), gave early support to women’s (partial) emancipation from strictly household and child-bearing duties and argued for women’s education. She moved in high circles, both intellectually and socially, and cultivated many admirers, including Jacob Cats, author of a number of Dutch emblem books; the philosopher René Descartes (who advised her not to waste her intellect studying Hebrew and theology); and Constantijn Huygens, secretary to stadholder Frederick Henry. Numerous artists painted her portrait or made prints and engravings of her.

At the time this picture was painted, she would have been fifty years old and her achievements internationally known. Around the oval window frame are painted emblems of her various pursuits: brushes and an easel, a globe, compass, book, and lute, and a caduceus, symbol of the medical profession. In the background, beyond the drapery, is the cathedral of her native Utrecht. Below her is a blank cartouche that the later engraver of the image filled with a Latin ode to her talents.



Cornelis Jonson van
Ceulen, Dutch, 1593–1661,
*Anna Maria van
Schurman*, 1657, oil on
panel, 31 × 24.4 (12 $\frac{3}{16}$ ×
9 $\frac{5}{8}$), National Gallery of
Art, Washington, Gift of
Joseph F. McCrindle



Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *A Marriage Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen*, c. 1622, oil on canvas, 140 × 166.5 (55 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 65 $\frac{9}{16}$), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Marriage Portraits

The most common occasion for commissioning a portrait was marriage, and many pendant portraits—a pair of separate paintings depicting a man and woman that were meant to hang together on a wall—were commissioned. Double portraits with the man and woman in the same painting were less common.

This joyous marriage portrait depicts Isaac Massa, a wealthy merchant who traded with Russia, and Beatrix van der Laen, a regent's daughter. In contrast to the posed formality of many portraits of this period, the couple's attitude is unforced and almost casual, more like a contemporary photographic snapshot. Their body language conveys the love and affection they feel toward each other and is communicated in symbolic ways the Dutch would have recognized: Isaac holds his hand over his heart, a gesture of love, while Beatrix leans on his shoulder (displaying her wedding rings) to signal dependence, just as the vine in the background depends on the tree for its support. Calvinist doctrine supported a more companionate model of marriage than did the Catholic religion, and a couple's attraction for each

other was not something shameful or dishonorable, but part of God's scheme to unite compatible couples (who also should have similar social standing and spiritual beliefs—shared values that would prevent conflict in the marriage). Such beliefs may have supported the artist's choice to depict this couple's obvious affection for each other. The couple's dress, though subdued in color and conservative, is made with rich fabrics and laces that communicate their status. Their smiles are unusual for the time, as laughing and smiling in a portrait often connoted foolishness and was usually reserved for genre pictures. Hals' loose or "rough" painting style seems to support the spontaneity of their gestures. The painting's large size—nearly 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet—also makes this work dramatic. X-ray studies of Hals' work reveal that he painted directly onto the canvas, without any preparatory underpainting or drawing, a bold, virtuoso technique that few artists could attempt.



A pair of sober pendants takes a more traditional approach to the marriage portrait, reflecting the couple's immaculate appearance, modesty (the woman's), and status in the community (the man's), rather than the couple's relationship. The poses are complementary. Wtewael paints himself as a gentleman artist, with a palette, brushes, and maulstick (a device used by the painter to steady his hand), and dressed not in painter's garb but in the fine garments of the well-to-do. In addition to his work as a painter, Wtewael was also a successful flax and linen merchant, and as such, a prominent citizen in his home city of Utrecht. He was active in politics and a founding member of the Utrecht Guild of Saint Luke. His wife Christina is also arrayed with items related to her occupation: that of virtuous housewife. She holds a bible in one hand, and a scale is on the table to her right, suggesting her thriftiness as well as qualities of justice,



Joachim Anthonisz Wtewael, Dutch, c. 1566–1638, *Self-Portrait*, 1601, oil on panel, 98 × 73.6 (38⁷/₁₆ × 29), Collectie Centraal Museum, Utrecht

Joachim Anthonisz Wtewael, Dutch, c. 1566–1638, *Portrait of Christina Wtewael van Halen*, 1601, oil on panel, 99.2 × 75.7 (39 × 29¹³/₁₆), Collectie Centraal Museum, Utrecht

wisdom, and knowledge, all credits to a good wife. She reaches out in a conversational gesture as if to impart her knowledge to others (although portraits of women often did not seek to engage the viewer directly in this fashion).

Compared to Wtewael's brightly colored, exaggerated mannerist history paintings of biblical and mythological scenes (see p. 118), these portraits are subdued. They represent the gradual transition to a more naturalistic style that occurred during Wtewael's lifetime. These works are painted on panel, which generally allowed the artist to achieve a smoother, finer effect, and the precision of the painting shows his exacting style.



Jan de Bray, Dutch, c. 1627–1688, *The Eldermen of the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke*, 1675, oil on canvas, 130 × 184 (51½ × 72½), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Group Portraits

Numerous societies also liked to commemorate their service and affiliations in group portraits: local militias or guards (see pp. 55–57), the regents and regentesses of charitable concerns, and guild members. Often commissioned for display in public places, such as guild and militia halls, group portraits reinforced the sitters' status in the community.

Jan de Bray pictures himself as the second from the left, with the sketching pad, in a rare group portrait, which is the sole painting in known existence of a group of artists of the day.

De Bray has captured each official in a particular role, and they are posed as if in the midst of conducting guild business. In the front is Gerrit Mulraet, a silversmith who was the deacon (*deken*) of the guild; he holds a plaque commemorating Saint Luke, the artists' patron saint. Seated at the right, taking notes, is Jan's brother, Dirck de Bray, also a painter.

In the background are several landscape paintings. The Haarlem guild included a variety of professions and was not restricted to painters only. Jan de Bray himself was a mathematician and practicing architect.

As was common with group portraits, spaces in the composition were reserved for new members, to be added later. While it is uncertain whether De Bray, who held senior positions in the guild over a number of years, was commissioned for the portrait or made the work out of fealty to his guild brothers, the standard practice was for the painter to charge per subject. A sitter's prominence in the overall composition was factored into his share of the total cost of the portrait. This practice of apportioning costs is the origin of the term "going Dutch."

Family Groups

While family group portraits were not created for public display, they demonstrated the family's status and social ideals to visitors to the home. Family portraits also served a commemorative function, recording images of loved ones for posterity. The Dutch sought the comforts of familiarity and order, and images of family could have been a reassuring emblem of stability. New figures could be added as children were born and a family grew. It was also common for deceased family members to be included in a family tableau—they might be grouped with the other sitters—or in a picture within the picture on the wall, or in a small likeness held by one of the sitters.

De Hooch was a contemporary of Vermeer in Delft, and in his early career he explored evocations of light, space, and perspective in scenes with solitary or just a few still figures set within tranquil domestic interiors. Later in his career, as tastes for portraiture evolved away from domestic and genre scenes and toward depictions of wealth and status, he also accepted commissions of this nature.

The children and *huysvrouwen* (hausfrau or wife) of De Hooch's earlier works (see p. 82) have been replaced by denizens of a well-to-do burgher family—the Jacott-Hoppesacks were Amsterdam cloth merchants. The strict, rectilinear geometry of De Hooch's composition parallels that of his earlier paintings: the figures are stiffly formal—almost like statues in a gallery, a reflection of the interest in classicized styles, which were becoming more popular toward the end of the century. The scene's stillness and order suggest that nothing is awry in this family group—they are models of adherence to the conventions of strict Calvinist family life. In the Dutch Republic the stability of the family unit, buttressed by religious belief, was seen as crucial to the health of the republic and its ability to withstand the years



of war and conflict with Spain. The term *kleyne kerck* (little church) referred to a well-managed, organized, and godly household, unified in its beliefs.

As is typical in family portraits, the patriarch, Jan Jacott, is seated to the left side of the frame, with his wife, Elisabeth Hoppesack, to his left. She looks toward her husband and leans her elbow on his chair. Her inclusion in the portrait may be posthumous. Next are the children, who appear to be exemplary and obedient. The son, Balthasar, stands respectfully behind his mother and politely indicates the presence of his two sisters to his left. The older girl is Magdalena; the younger one's name is unknown—she died at age four. The men in the family wear black, appropriate for public functions, while the women wear the light or colored clothing suitable for the private sphere, for children, and for some male ceremonial occasions. This painting was made after De Hooch moved to Amsterdam from Delft, the city with which he was primarily associated, in 1660–1661.

Pieter de Hooch, Dutch, 1629–1684, *Jacott-Hoppesack Family*, c. 1670, oil on canvas, 98.2 × 112.8 (38³/₁₆ × 44³/₈), Amsterdams Historisch Museum



The unusual profile format of De Bray's portrait is derived from coins, medals, and cameos of the Renaissance period. Members of the papal court, the aristocracy, and scholars were usually pictured on them. The profile format was considered more legible graphically than a frontal portrait when rendered in a single material without color differentiation.

Florentine 15th Century, *Cosimo de' Medici*, 1389–1464, *Pater Patriae*, c. 1465/1469, bronze, diameter 7.8 (3 $\frac{1}{16}$), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

Classical Influences in Portraiture

This somber and formal portrait of Jan de Bray's parents was painted posthumously as a tribute to their memory. In the years 1663–1664, the plague ravaged the population of the artist's native Haarlem and took the lives of both his parents as well as four of his siblings. Salomon de Bray was an artist, architect, poet, and urban planner. Here, he is portrayed raising his hand in a conversational gesture, which, like his skullcap and robes, indicates his rhetorical skills and that he is a man of learning. His wife, Anna Westerbaen, is almost subsumed by his image, which also has the effect of obscuring her feminine attributes, such as hair or dress. The picture locks them together as a pair or single unit, suggesting their dependence upon each other and perhaps that they both passed away within a short period of time.



Much of Jan de Bray's work was informed by his interest in classicism and his training with his father, who specialized in history scenes based on classical themes. "Classicism" is a term that may be applied to any art form—painting, architecture, or music, for instance—and refers generally to the pursuit of an overall impression of beauty, orderliness, balance, and clarity. Its origins are the world of classical Greek and Roman art, in which the representation of physical perfection and idealization were the highest aims. An interest in the values of classicism was revived in Italy during the Renaissance, from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century, and the

Jan de Bray, Dutch, c. 1627–1688, *Portrait of the Artist's Parents, Salomon de Bray and Anna Westerbaen*, 1664, oil on panel, 78.1 × 63.5 (30 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 25), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Joseph F. McCrindle in memory of my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Feder



Jan de Bray, Dutch, c. 1627–1688, *A Couple Represented as Ulysses and Penelope*, 1668, oil on canvas, 111.4 × 167 (43⁷/₈ × 65³/₄), Collection of The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky

art, architecture, and culture of that period influenced Dutch artists in the later part of the seventeenth century.

Classically inspired art is more stately and controlled than mannerism or the style of the Caravagists (Dutch followers of the Italian painter Caravaggio di Merisi, see Honthorst biography, p. 142), the former characterized by active compositions and off-key colors and contrasts (see p. 118), the latter by lifelike, dramatic scenes focused on a few central figures. Classically inspired artists pursued detailed and precise methods of execution, as opposed to broad, impasto brushstrokes and the use of balanced composition and lighting. The style is often associated with history painting (see section 8) and features still, statuary-like figures posed in a tableau, often in Greek robes or drapery and in settings with classical pillars or other architectural details.

In this painting, Jan de Bray portrayed himself and his first wife, Maria van Hees (De Bray married three times), in such a tableau—a scene from Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. De Bray, like Rembrandt,

Painted numerous *portraits historiés* (see p. 114) in which individuals of the day pose and dress as actors in historical, biblical, or mythological scenarios. Here, the warrior has returned to his faithful wife after twenty years waging the Trojan War. Maria as Penelope is dressed in a contemporary rather than historical style, and she holds on her lap Penelope's symbol, the loom. She used it in a stratagem to ward off suitors during Ulysses' absence, promising to marry again only when she had finished weaving a cloth for Ulysses' father, but secretly unwinding her work at the end of each day in order never to complete this task. Jan de Bray as Ulysses, however, wears the warrior's regalia of cloak and armor. The dog jumps up to greet the return of his master. While such works draw from the same sources that inspired earlier Italian artists to revive classical traditions, Dutch classicism is more firmly rooted in a realistic—and empathetic—rather than idealized conception of the human form.

Children's Portraits

Portraits of individual children were common in the Dutch seventeenth century. Children were important to the foundation of a secure family unit, and child-bearing was considered a virtuous act that solidified a couple's union. Parents instilled the appropriate morals and discipline, nurturing and protecting the child so that he or she would become a healthy, contributing member of society. At this time in Europe, there was a gradual reconception of childhood as a time distinct from adulthood—a period of dependency with its own unique experiences—and children actually were rendered childlike rather than like miniature adults or wooden dolls. The little girl (whose identity is lost), painted by Govaert Flinck, a student of Rembrandt, has definite childlike attributes, with her pudgy face and ruddy complexion (signifying good health). Yet she is also trussed up in an adult-style gown and accessorized with three strands of beads and a straw basket. Her small chubby hands grasp at a biscuit and some sweets that sit on her carved wooden high chair; a chamber pot would probably have been in the cabinet beneath, suggesting her need of training. While young boys and girls were often dressed identically, we know this is a girl from the garland in her hair. She has a rattle or teething toy around her neck, which, with its semi-precious stone at the end, also served as an amulet to protect the child from illness, as child mortality was high. The influence of Rembrandt may be seen in the manner in which the child emerges from an indistinct, dark background, although Flinck's brushwork is finer than Rembrandt's.



Stadholder and Family

A spectacular portrait captures stadholder Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange (1584–1647), and his family. It was part of an elaborate program of commissioned art made for installation in the Huis ten Bosch (House in the Woods). Construction of this home, a stately country retreat and summer home for the royal family just outside The Hague, and planning for the art that would occupy it were begun in 1645. This painting by Gerrit van Honthorst was actually completed after Frederick Henry's death in 1647, just one year prior to the signing of the Treaty of Münster. After his death, his widow, Amalia (who lived until 1675), continued overseeing the construction of the small palace. She turned its main ceremonial hall or *Oranjezaal*, a quasi-public space, into a spectacular monument to Frederick Henry's military exploits and ultimate triumph in securing the peace with Spain, even though he did not live to see it ratified. Monumental paintings in a classicized style by the finest Dutch and Flemish artists of the day, with scenes from his life and battles, lined the entire room

Govaert Flinck, Dutch, 1615–1660, *Girl by a High Chair*, 1640, oil on canvas, 114.3 × 87.1 (45 × 34 $\frac{5}{16}$), Mauritshuis, The Hague



Gerrit van Honthorst, Dutch, 1590–1656, *Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, with His Wife Amalia van Solms and Their Three Youngest Daughters*, 1647, oil on canvas, 263.5 × 347.5 (103¾ × 136%), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

and were created to complement its architecture. (Today Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands lives in the Huis ten Bosch, the only royal residence from the seventeenth century that remains intact.)

This painting picturing Frederick Henry, Amalia, and their three young daughters, Albertine Agnes, Maria, and Henrietta, was part of a suite intended for the Huis ten Bosch's living quarters. Separate portraits of their married children Willem II and Louisa Henrietta and their spouses were to hang in the same room. The three paintings share similar architectural features and flagstone flooring, suggesting that all the family members are assembled together and expanding the sense of space within the room. Here, angels in the upper left, indicating celestial powers, fly in to crown Frederick Henry with the laurels of victory. Amalia wears traditional black, although her dress could not be more sumptuous. The three daughters pictured are permitted, as children, to wear colorful clothing, which is as elaborate as their mother's.

Amalia van Solms herself came from noble lineage and grew up in the German royal court, where she became accustomed to a certain pomp and sense

of grandeur. These qualities she brought to Frederick Henry's stadholderate. With his help, she created her own brand of court life at The Hague and their other homes, very distinct from that of the previous two stadholders, who subscribed to a more inconspicuous way of living in accordance with the Dutch ethos. Amalia and Frederick Henry's way of life, modeled after that of other European courts, included patronage of the best architects and artists of the day to help glorify the House of Orange.

Honthorst had already served as court painter for Frederick Henry at The Hague since 1637, as well as at other European courts, where he had produced flattering and monumentalizing images. The golden light of the background and the classic style of the architecture framing the family (note the two columns behind the stadholder, symbolizing his strength and solidity) suggest Italian influences, while the regal attitude of the figures reflects the style of Flemish portrait painters, such as Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck, whose work was popular in court circles.



Ordinary Citizens

Painters also made portrait images of working people. These images of the individuals who baked bread, bleached linen, fished, and built ships offer another view of Dutch life. Their efforts made it possible for the Dutch citizenry, particularly in urban centers, to enjoy an unprecedented standard of living.

Jan Steen's baker proudly displays his bread, rolls, and pretzels, whose bounty creates a still life within this active picture. Oostwaert seems to be bringing them out to a wide outdoor sill, perhaps to sell or cool them. His wife daintily plucks a large biscuit from the pile. The little boy blows a horn, announcing to the neighbors and passersby that the baker's goods are ready. The rolls cooling on the rack above him appear to be issuing from his horn!

Jan Steen specialized in low-life genre scenes of merriment, debauchery, or everyday life, peopled by figures who were rendered as types, not as individuals, even if specific persons had modeled for the picture (Steen frequently modeled as well, depicting himself as a merryman or low-life type). This portrait, however, is of specific individuals, and is lightheartedly humorous rather than laden with moralizing messages. The inscription on the back of the painting reveals the names of those depicted, Arend Oostwaert and Catharina Keyzerswaert. Archives record the couple's marriage in Leiden in 1657. It is likely that they commissioned this painting, completed the following year, as a marriage portrait. As

in the Hals marriage portrait (p. 102), the vines above the couple's head could signal partnership in the marriage. The little boy is believed to be Jan Steen's seven-year-old son, Thaddeus.

While in both today's world and in times prior to the Dutch Golden Age a baker and his wife would be unlikely art patrons, during the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, painters and painting were plentiful. A commissioned portrait could be reasonably priced, similar to purchasing a piece of furniture. Only very few artists were renowned and commanded high prices. Many others earned a living wage, like tradespeople; they created art for and about a middle-class milieu, of which they were a part.

Artist Portraits

Artist portraits and self-portraits flourished. Images of artists, particularly those who became famous and were accorded high standing in the community, were sometimes desired by collectors. They also served to disseminate an artist's visage, attendant skills, and reputation abroad, which could provide an advantage in the highly competitive art marketplace. The Italian art patron Cosimo de' Medici II began a gallery of self-portraits by artists he admired in 1565, a collection on view today at the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Self-portraits of Dutch painters including Rembrandt, Gerrit Dou, and Gerard ter Borch were added to the collection by Cosimo de' Medici III in the late seventeenth century.

The pair of artist self-portraits opposite could not convey more different impressions. The full-length portrait of Gerard ter Borch is in the same style as the commissioned portraits he created for prominent families and wealthy burghers. He projects a refined and cultivated air that reflects his family's high standing in the town of Zwolle, in the eastern portion of the Dutch Republic. Ter Borch held a number of key political positions in the town, in addition to conducting his artistic career; this formal portrait identifies him in his civic role rather

Jan Steen, Dutch, 1625/
1626–1679, Leiden
*Baker Arend Oostwaert
and His Wife Catharina
Keyzerswaert*, c. 1658, oil
on panel, 38 × 32 (15 ×
12⁷/₁₆), Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam



Gerard ter Borch II, Dutch, 1617–1681, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1668, oil on canvas, 62.69 × 43.64 (24¾ × 17⅞), Mauritshuis, The Hague

Jan Steen, Dutch, 1625/1626–1679, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1670, oil on canvas, 73 × 62 (28¾ × 24⅜), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

than the artistic one. His sophisticated style may derive from his travels to England, Italy, the southern Netherlands, and the cities of Amsterdam, Delft, The Hague, and Haarlem. The portrait was originally a pendant to a portrait of his wife, Geertruid Matthys, from which it was separated when a collector in the eighteenth century sold off the portrait of Geertruid. It remains unaccounted for.

Jan Steen chose to picture himself as a jolly musician. However, despite the casual demeanor he projects, the image is no less refined, in its way, than Ter Borch's. Steen has, in the manner of his genre pictures, layered the image with other meanings and implications. His clothing would have been identified as distinctly old-fashioned by contemporary viewers, suggesting that he has donned a persona for the picture. His cap, with its slits, is also distinctive as a type that would have been worn by the fool or jester in a farcical play. The lute, tankard, and book may be linked to a popular emblem describing a sanguine, or cheery and lively, temperament, as would his ruddy appearance and somewhat rotund form. This temperament was associated with "gifts of the mind" and perhaps the canniness with which Steen depicts himself, as an ironical "jester" type. Contrast this image with Steen's more formal self-portrait (see p. 150).

Another form of an artist's self-portrait, albeit more indirect, was that of the participant. Since the Italian Renaissance, artists such as Michelangelo and Raphael had inserted their own image into the scenes of their paintings, appearing as participants in historical or biblical narratives. Many artists of the Dutch Golden Age continued this practice, including Jan Steen, Jan de Bray, and Rembrandt, who placed themselves within the context of imagined history or genre settings.



Here, Steen has situated his own image amid the merriment of a feast and celebration. He smiles broadly as he gives an affectionate and familiar chuck under the chin to the young lady drinking a glass of wine next to him. Because Steen frequently portrayed himself in these parties and sometimes in bawdy scenes in various guises — from fool to rake — biographers such as Houbraken have claimed "his paintings were like his mode of life, and his life like his paintings." While there may have been some correspondences between Steen's art and life, their extent is not fully known.

Jan Steen, Dutch, 1625/1626–1679, *The Dancing Couple* (detail), 1663, oil on canvas, 102.5 × 142.5 (40⅞ × 56⅞), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

REMBRANDT SELF-PORTRAITS



Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *Self-Portrait Leaning on a Stone Sill*, 1639, etching, 21 × 16.8 (8¼ × 6⅝), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *Self-Portrait, Frowning*, 1630, etching, 7.6 × 6.5 (3 × 2⅝), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

Rembrandt's self-portraits, among the most recognizable works produced by any artist of the seventeenth century in Europe, are celebrated for capturing a sense of individual spirit and for their expressive sensitivity. Through skillful handling of light, shadow, and texture, the artist was able to elicit unprecedented emotional depth and immediacy. The sometimes ambiguous, multilayered meanings of his works never cease to fascinate and puzzle.

Rembrandt made about eighty self-portraits, a large number for any artist. In his early career, he

used a mirror to help capture a range of facial expressions that he recorded in etchings—scowling, laughter, shouting, surprise. Those same expressions appear in later history paintings. Other self-portraits experiment with the various personas that Rembrandt liked to explore, almost like an actor playing different roles. In yet other self-portraits, he examines his identity as an artist, frequently making references to other artists and artistic periods he admired.

Associated largely with self-portraits of his later years, shadowy, seemingly moody images

of Rembrandt also existed in the beginning of his career. Although young when he painted *Self-Portrait at an Early Age*, Rembrandt was already running his own studio and had students.

It is one of his earliest known painted self-portraits. The artist almost obscures his own face and turns away from the raking light coming in from the left side of the painting. This allowed him to experiment with strong contrasts of light and dark. Details such as the tip of his nose and the collar are highlighted with white strokes,



and his curly hair is picked out in individual detail, probably by using the brush handle to scrape away the paint in spontaneous swirls. Neither the artist's face nor the nature of his clothing or setting—the traditional markers of portraiture—are in clear view, which lends the image a feeling of mystery.

In the next image, Rembrandt is about fifty-one years old and looks world-weary. His face is rendered in heavy impasto (layering of paint on the canvas) and reflects light from above; light also seems to sink into the velvety dark background. His eyes are shadowed and his heavy brow is

accentuated, as are the etched lines of his face and drooping jowls. He looks out at the viewer directly, eyes clear, as if to say that he has nothing to hide. At the time this work was painted, Rembrandt's life had been disrupted: his house and belongings had been repossessed or auctioned off, and he had moved into a modest house where he, nonetheless, continued to paint (as he did until the end of his life, regardless of his financial circumstances). As if to affirm the continuity of his professional life, he has depicted himself, as he did many times, in his painter's garb with a beret and what is likely a *tabaard* or smock that some artists wore

when working. The beret was worn by painters during the sixteenth century and would have been considered out of date in Rembrandt's time, except with ceremonial costumes such as academic robes. Rembrandt's use of it in this image and others may pay homage to older artistic traditions and the artists he admired who also wore the beret, for example Renaissance masters Raphael and Titian. Does he uphold grand artistic traditions—and his own dignity? Determination and perseverance reside in this visage, which also bears the marks of age, experience, and perhaps wisdom.

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *Self-Portrait at an Early Age*, 1628, oil on panel, 22.6 × 18.7 (8⁷/₈ × 7³/₈), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *Self-Portrait*, 1659, oil on canvas, 84.5 × 66 (33¹/₄ × 26), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Costume Portraits

Rembrandt was fascinated by different character types and repeatedly depicted himself and others dressed in historical or biblical roles, or simply as exotic figures from faraway places. He is said to have accumulated a large stash of authentic sixteenth-century clothing and items from foreign lands where the Dutch conducted trade, which he used to dress himself and others for portraits. As Rembrandt ran a large studio with many students and followers, his pursuits influenced numerous other artists who also painted portraits with an element of role-play. The taste for history painting contributed to the proliferation of these kinds of portraits. No one explored these genres with as much originality as Rembrandt, however.

Portraits historiés (historicized portraits) depicted contemporary persons in historical costume, or, by portraying incidents of the past with which they personally identified, placed them in proximity to significant persons or events in history. Here, Rembrandt pictures himself in a double portrait with his wife Saskia Uylenburgh, who sits on his lap. His expression is jolly and expansive as he raises his glass in a salute, with the other hand on the small of her back. Saskia turns to face the viewer with a little smile. The work is not a straight double-portrait, but a representation of the New Testament tale of the prodigal son in which Rembrandt is the freewheeling spendthrift who squanders his family's fortune on "riotous living," then returns home and throws himself on his father's mercy. This means that the artist has represented his wife as a loose woman on whom he is wasting his money. The prodigal son has also apparently spent some of the funds on their lavish costumes. Why Rembrandt would elect to por-



tray himself and his wife in a story with unflattering connotations is not fully understood—it could have been satirical, an answer to criticism that he and his young wife were living an excessive lifestyle (by the time this work was painted, Rembrandt and his family were very well-off, some of the funds having come from Saskia's family).

Rembrandt van Rijn,
Dutch, 1606–1669, *Self-Portrait with Saskia in the Parable of the Prodigal Son*, c. 1635, oil on canvas, 131 × 161 (51 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 63 $\frac{3}{8}$), Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden. Photograph © The Bridgeman Art Library

Rembrandt likely based this portrait on his own features, adding the mustache and other elements as parts of the “costume.” The portrait is of a Polish nobleman, who displays a great dignity of bearing and rich fur robes, gold-tipped scepter, beaver hat, chains, and earring, a type of outfit that would have looked exotic to the Dutch. The rich finery is also heavily painted with impasto highlights. The artist wiped away sections with a cloth and scraped others with the end of his brush to create great variation of texture. The drama of the work is heightened not only by the contrast of light and dark, or *chiaroscuro*, but also by the riveting expression on the man’s face, which is poignant and sorrowful. His brow seems furrowed with concern, his mouth slightly open as if to speak, his jowls hanging like those of a bulldog. There is something supremely human and empathetic about this stranger from another land.



Rembrandt van Rijn,
Dutch, 1606–1669, *A
Polish Nobleman*, 1637,
oil on panel, 96.8 × 66
(38½ × 26), National
Gallery of Art, Washington,
Andrew W. Mellon
Collection

History Painting



Painter and art theorist Samuel van Hoogstraten (see p. 125) described history painting as “the most elevated and distinguished step in the Art of Painting...” It revealed, he said, “the noblest actions and intentions of rational beings,” and he ranked it above portraiture, landscape, and every other kind of subject. The term “history painting” refers to subjects taken from the Bible, ancient history, pastoral literature, or myth. In the Netherlands and across Europe, theorists and connoisseurs considered it the highest form of art because it communicated important ideas and required learning and imagination. As the Dutch said, it came *uyt den gheest*—from the mind. To appreciate a history painting, or to create one, entailed knowledge, not only about the stories represented but also about the conventions and symbols of art.

History painting offered uplifting or cautionary narratives that were intended to encourage contemplation of the meaning of life. It also satisfied a desire for religious imagery that remained strong, even after most traditional religious pictures had been removed from Calvinist churches (see p. 29). Its moral lessons were important to Dutch viewers. History paintings could also extol, allegorically,

Dutch identity and success, communicating a sense of lofty, even divine, purpose behind the nation’s destiny. But history painting was also a source of delight, offering exotic settings and stories of romance. Underlying these subjects—from the Old Testament to Ovid—is a focus on the human figure in action. Many artists chose moments of great drama or of transition, turning points in the fate of a person or situation. These subjects offered fertile ground where emotions and passions, whether religious, patriotic, or romantic, could be explored and experienced.

Though other types of pictures were sold in greater numbers by the mid-1600s (see p. 40), history painting never lost its prestige or popularity. Rembrandt’s greatest ambition was to be a history painter, and he painted religious and historical subjects throughout his career; they account for more than one-third of all his painted works. Many artists better known for other types of painting also addressed religious subjects, even Jan Steen, who was most closely associated with rowdy feasts and households in disarray.

In Focus *Moses and the Dutch*



Joachim Anthonisz
Wtewael, Dutch, c. 1566–
1638, *Moses Striking the
Rock*, 1624, oil on panel,
44.6 × 66.7 (17³/₁₆ ×
26¹/₄), National Gallery of
Art, Washington, Ailsa
Mellon Bruce Fund

This story is told in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Numbers. The action takes place in the right middle of the picture, where Moses stands with his brother Aaron amid a crowded swirl of men and beasts. During their time in the wilderness, the Israelites grew impatient with their leader and complained bitterly of thirst. God appeared to Moses, telling him that the rock at Horeb would flow with water if Moses struck it with his rod. In Wtewael's painting, water has already filled a pool. The people drink and collect it using every means imaginable—pitchers and pails, even a brimmed hat. A store of vessels spills from a basket. Dogs and a cat, cattle and goats are also refreshed. Water—a life-giving power for body and spirit—is at the true center, physically and thematically, of Wtewael's picture. Contemporary theologians understood the episode in symbolic terms as foreshadowing the future sacrifice of Christ. They equated the rock with his body and the miraculously springing water with the blood he shed for human salvation. The prominence of Aaron, who was high priest of the Israelites and here wears a bishop's miter, underscores this connection between the eras of the Old and New Testaments.

For Dutch viewers, Wtewael's picture also may have suggested their own divinely guided destiny. It recalled a part of Dutch mythology, which drew parallels between Moses and William of Orange (see p. 14). Both William and Moses led their people to a promised land of peace and prosperity, but neither reached it (William was assassinated in 1584). In 1624, when this work was painted, William's successors were renewing military efforts against Spain following the expiration of the Twelve-Year Truce three years before.

Unlike most Dutch painters, who adopted a more naturalistic approach beginning around 1600, Wtewael continued to work in the mannerist style. This painting can almost be seen as an exemplar of the mannerist principles expounded by Karel van Mander. As recommended, dark figures at the corners draw the eye in. The composition circles around the thematic focus, which occupies the center. As a "pleasing" painting should, it fulfills Van Mander's requirement for "a profusion of horses, dogs and other domestic animals, as well as beasts and birds of the forest." Finally, witnesses outside the action observe the scene, much like viewers of the painting itself will.

Mannerism

The term mannerism comes from the Italian *maniera*, meaning "style." Mannerism has been called the "stylish style" and is marked by sophisticated artifice. Colors are often strong and unnatural, space is compressed illogically, and figures with elongated or exaggerated proportions are arrayed in complex poses. Originating in central Italy around 1520, mannerism can be said to have arrived in the Netherlands in 1583, when Karel van Mander (see p. 125) left his native Flanders to settle in Haarlem. He had spent four years in Italy and also encountered the work of mannerist artists in Antwerp. Mannerism appealed to Van Mander's belief that excellence in painting demanded richness of invention. Elegance and complexity were more desirable than mere lifelike realism. The mannerist drawings Van Mander carried to the Netherlands had an immediate impact on the work of Hendrik Goltzius (see below), Joachim Wtewael, and other Dutch painters, especially in Haarlem and Utrecht. However, this effect was short-lived, and after about 1620 Dutch artists turned increasingly to more naturalistic styles.



Hendrik Goltzius, Dutch, 1558–1617, *The Fall of Man*, 1616, oil on canvas, 104.5 × 138.4 (41½ × 54½), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund

After a short trip to Italy in 1590–1591, where he studied the art of antiquity and the Renaissance, Hendrik Goltzius moved away from the mannerism of his earlier prints—he did not begin to paint until 1600—and toward a more classical style. *The Fall of Man* casts Adam and Eve as mythological lovers. Adam's pose is based on a drawing Goltzius made in Rome of a reclining river god, a common figure in ancient sculpture. While earlier images of the Fall of Man had emphasized shame and punishment, in Goltzius' painting we find real physical beauty and the awakening of desire—new in the art of northern Europe. Small details amplify the painting's message: the serpent's sweet female face warns of the

danger of appearance; goats are traditional symbols of lust, while a distant elephant, a creature known to be wary of snakes, stands for Christian virtues of piety and chastity. The cat, often a symbol of Eve's cunning, looks out with an expression both worried and knowing—perhaps to catch the viewer's eye and prompt reflection on sin and salvation. Its soft fur, as well as the surfaces of plants and the glowing skin of Adam and Eve, reveal Goltzius' keen observation of the natural world.



Louis Vallée, Dutch, died 1653, *Silvio with the Wounded Dorinda*, 165(1)?, oil on canvas, 105.1 × 175.2 (41³/₈ × 69), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Patricia Bauman and the Honorable John Landrum Bryant

Subjects from pastoral literature became popular with Dutch patricians around midcentury, especially in Amsterdam. They complemented the country estates that many wealthy families built as retreats and meshed with the trend toward classicism seen in Dutch painting around the same time.

Louis Vallée's scene is taken from a play of the late sixteenth century, but it reprises the idyllic literature of ancient Greece and Rome, which glorified life in Arcadia, a rustic, simple land where mortals and demigods frolicked amid flocks and nature. Here

we see the denouement of one of the play's secondary plots, which chronicled the love of the nymph Dorinda for the shepherd Silvio. Faithful Dorinda has been inadvertently wounded by the hunting Silvio and fallen into the arms of an old man. Silvio, distraught, swears to end his own life should Dorinda die. He looks on anxiously, holding an arrow toward his heart. Fortunately, Dorinda's injuries are superficial, and the young couple marries before the day is done.

In Focus *A Moment of Moral Dilemma*

This painting, whose subject comes from Livy's history of ancient Rome, exemplifies the qualities that make Rembrandt's greatest works so powerful: perceptive characterization and emotional truth. He gives us a profound understanding of this woman and this moment, as she is poised to sacrifice her life for her honor.

Lucretia lived in the sixth century BC, when Rome was ruled by the tyrant Tarquinius Superbus. Her virtue, loyalty, and industry drew the attention of the tyrant's son, Sextus Tarquinius. While Lucretia's husband was away in battle, Sextus stole into Lucretia's bedchamber and threatened to kill her if she did not submit to his advances. Rather than endure this violation and sacrifice her honor, she would happily have chosen death at that moment; however, Sextus devised an even more dishonorable and violent scenario. He threatened to kill his own slave and place the slave's and Lucretia's bodies

together as if they had been lovers. Lucretia therefore submitted to his assault, but the next day, she told her father and her husband about it. Despite their support of her innocence, she could not live with this mark on her family's reputation or with the idea that adulterous women might use her as an example to escape deserved punishment. She pulled a dagger from her robe and plunged it into her heart. Grief-stricken, the men pledged to avenge her death. They began a revolt that would overthrow the tyranny and lead to the establishment of the Roman Republic. For Livy, Lucretia embodied the greatest virtues of Roman womanhood, and Dutch viewers related her story to their own revolt for independence. But this painting explores inner emotion and anguish, not public duty or honor.

Lucretia turns fully to the viewer, arms outstretched. Clasps on her bodice have been undone. The dark background and the dramatic fall of light, glinting off the blade and gold in her clothing, communicate tension. She

looks to the dagger in her right hand, lips parted as if exhorting it to her breast. Her expression conveys strength but also sad uncertainty. We recognize a real woman facing a horrible choice. The power of the image, and the possible likeness of the model to Rembrandt's companion Hendrickje, have suggested to some that it resonated with the artist's own travails (see section 10). But Rembrandt often infused historical and mythological subjects with Christian themes, and here Lucretia's pose echoes that of Christ on the cross. For a Roman matron suicide was the honorable course. But this Lucretia, alone on the canvas without reference to setting or time, faces a different circumstance. Rembrandt seems to have inflected the painting with a Christian understanding of suicide's prohibition. In her moment of hesitation, the artist and his viewers are led to consider Lucretia's impossible moral dilemma.



Rembrandt van Rijn,
Dutch, 1606–1669,
Lucretia, 1664, oil on
canvas, 120 × 101 (47¼ ×
39¼), National Gallery of
Art, Washington, Andrew
W. Mellon Collection

Talking about Pictures



Art Theorists and Biographers

Karel van Mander (1548 – 1606) was a Flemish painter, writer, and poet who lived much of his life in Haarlem and Amsterdam. An early supporter of Netherlandish and Flemish art, he published *Het Schilderboek* (*The Painters' Book*) in 1604, a compilation of nearly two hundred biographies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists, both living and historical. His model was *Lives of the Artists* by sixteenth-century Florentine painter and critic Giorgio Vasari. Van Mander's work also included guidance on artistic techniques and even behavior befitting an artist (see p. 41). He was particularly concerned with the status of art — it should be viewed on a par with literature and poetry.

Art writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example Samuel van Hoogstraten and Arnold Houbraken, followed Van Mander's example, writing about other artists who came into prominence later and continuing his discussion on the status of art and the relative merits of different types of painting. All three viewed the elevated themes of ancient history, the Bible, and mythology as the most esteemed because they required learning and imagination. Though read in intellectual circles — and discussed by connoisseurs — it is not clear that their ranking had a real impact on artists or the art-buying public, most of whom bought lowly genres such as still life and landscape. Still, history painting attracted many of the finest painters (see section 8). Hoogstraten, who was a student of Rembrandt, was also particularly interested in the rules of perspective and painted a number of works to illustrate their application.

Today much of what we know about the lives of Dutch painters of the Golden Age comes from these writers, even though their information is not always totally reliable. Modern scholars combine their anecdotal accounts with contemporary records and archives.



A new type of image developed in the Netherlands at the beginning of the seventeenth century, one that showed art lovers looking at pictures. Visiting collectors' cabinets or painters' studios to admire and critique, art lovers did indeed study paintings — and painting.

Well-rounded gentlemen found it important to be able to talk about art intelligently. They developed their knowledge and eloquence by studying paintings closely and by talking with artists and other connoisseurs. They read treatises that linked the present with the grand traditions of arts of the past. Many took drawing classes and some even learned to paint.

From the early seventeenth century, art lovers in many cities joined the Guild of Saint Luke alongside artist practitioners. In guild records, they are specifically called *liefhebbers* (lovers of art). As paying members they presumably received the guild's permission to resell paintings they had purchased from artists. Also, they could attend festivities organized by the guilds and socialize with painters.

Pieter Codde, Dutch, 1599–1678, *Art Lovers in a Painter's Studio*, c. 1630, oil on panel, 38 × 49 (15 × 19³/₈), Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

AN ART VOCABULARY

How did seventeenth-century artists and art lovers talk about paintings? A variety of sources give an impression of their approach, particular interests, and vocabulary. No Dutch seventeenth-century text treats composition or color as isolated objects of aesthetic analysis. Instead, color and composition are considered means to create illusionistic effects or to emphasize the most important thematic elements of a painting. A quick look at some of the terms found in art lovers' discourse gives an idea of the criteria by which they judged pictures.

Houding (Balancing of Colors and Tones)

The Dutch employed a special term that describes the use of color and tone to position elements convincingly in a pictorial space: *houding* (literally, “bearing” or “attitude”). As a general rule, bright colors tend to come forward (especially warm ones, such as red and yellow), as do sharp tonal contrasts. These factors had to be considered when creating a convincing illusion of space—they could enhance illusion or hinder it, depending on where in the “virtual” space of the composition they were used.



The term *houding* also encompasses what we now call “atmospheric perspective.” When we look out over a landscape, the parts that are farthest away seem less distinct and paler, and they have less contrast than areas in the foreground. The most distant regions take on a bluish cast.

Jan Both, Dutch, 1615/1618–1652, *An Italianate Evening Landscape* (detail), c. 1650, oil on canvas, 138.5 × 172.7 (54 ½ × 68), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund



Note how differently Rembrandt painted the man in yellow in the foreground and the girl in yellow in the middle ground. Not only did he use a much brighter yellow in the foreground, but he also created sharp tonal contrasts in the man's costume.

Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *The Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch*, known as *Night Watch* (detail), 1642, oil on canvas, 363 × 437 (142 ¾ × 172), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Doorsien (View into the Distance)

Dutch painters were particularly interested in views into the distance, which they called *doorsien*. Art theorist Karel van Mander even criticized Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel for lacking a deeper look into space. *Doorsiens* not only enhance the sense of depth in a picture but also helped the artist structure complex scenes with large numbers of figures, convincingly situating them on different planes.

Schilderachtig (Painterly)

In English we use the word “painterly” to describe an expressive, free manner of applying paint—we would say, for example, that Hals' *Willem Coymans* is a more painterly work than his portrait of the elderly woman (see pp. 98–99). However, when the Dutch called something *schilderachtig* (painterly), they meant that the subject was *worthy* to be painted. Initially, the word encompassed the rustic and picturesque, but as the taste for more classicized styles increased, some began to associate it with what was beautiful. Around the end of the century, painter and art theorist Gerard de Lairese made a passionate plea that art lovers stop applying this word to pictures of old people with very wrinkled faces or dilapidated and overgrown cottages, and reserve it for well-proportioned young people and idealized landscapes.



De Hooch always incorporated a view into the distance in a central place within his compositions. Like his use of subtle light reflections, these *doorsiens* are hallmarks of his style, tying together the interior and exterior, the public and private.

Pieter de Hooch, Dutch, 1629–1684, *Woman and Child in a Courtyard* (detail), 1658/1660, oil on canvas, 73.5 × 66 (29 × 26), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection



Kenlijckheyd (Surface Structure)

Rembrandt's pupil Samuel van Hoogstraten explained that the very texture of the paint on the canvas could help strengthen or weaken the illusion of three-dimensionality. Thickly painted highlights create uneven surfaces that tend to reflect light, making those elements appear closer to the viewer. Smoothly painted areas appear more distant.

left:

Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Willem Coymans* (detail), 1645, oil on canvas, 77 × 64 (30¼ × 25), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Gerrit Dou, Dutch, 1613–1675, *The Hermit* (detail), 1670, oil on panel, 46 × 34.5 (18½ × 13⅝), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Timken Collection



Ruwe and fijne, the Rough and Smooth Manners

Years before Frans Hals developed his characteristic free handling of paint or Gerrit Dou specialized in extremely precise brushwork, Dutch artists and art lovers already distinguished between two main painting styles: rough (*ruwe*) and smooth (*fijne*). Fine painting was also referred to colloquially as *net*, or “neat.” Rembrandt’s first pupil, Gerrit Dou, developed the technique in the 1630s. The time Dou spent on his minutely detailed works is legendary: according to some of his contemporaries it took him days to paint a tiny broom the size of a fingernail. Fine painting was a particular specialty in Leiden. Van Mander advised artists always to start by learning the smooth manner, which was considered easier, and only subsequently choose between smooth and rough painting. To best appreciate the two styles, it was recommended that art lovers adjust their viewing distance: farther away for a roughly painted work, close up for a finely executed one.



right:

Christoffel Pierson, Dutch, 1631–1714, *Niche with Falconry Gear*, probably 1660s, oil on canvas, 80.5 × 64.5 (31⅞ × 25⅜), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons’ Permanent Fund

Deceiving the Eye

All seventeenth-century painters tried to create a convincing illusion of naturalness. When praising a painting, writers on art often commented on paintings that looked so real they “deceived the eye.” Theorists recalled the fame of ancient Greek artists like Zeuxis—it was said that birds had tried to eat his painted grapes—or Parrhasios, whose painted curtain fooled even Zeuxis. Dutch painters could allude to these stories and point to their own mimetic powers, with scenes revealed through parted curtains or with bunches of grapes in still-life compositions.



While some Dutch artists, for example Christoffel Pierson, employed trompe-l'oeil effects (French for “deceive the eye”), most approached illusionism in the more “natural” way, seen in Carel Fabritius’ *Goldfinch*. Trompe l’oeil typically depicts objects at life-size and makes use of fictive architecture or other frames to locate objects logically in a space. Projecting elements bring the painted surface into the sphere of the viewer.

The Passions of the Soul

Seventeenth-century art lovers also discussed painters’ abilities to depict what they called the “passions of the soul” (*beweeingen van de ziel*). Rembrandt especially was said to be capable of infusing scenes from the Bible or history with appropriate emotions. Theorists did not explain how to read the passions depicted; they believed that their power was such that even those with little knowledge of painting would immediately recognize and experience a personal connection to them.

Carel Fabritius, Dutch, c. 1622–1654, *The Goldfinch*, 1654, oil on wood, 33 × 32 (13 × 12½), Mauritshuis, The Hague. Photograph © Mauritshuis, The Hague/The Bridgeman Art Library



Rembrandt painted Paul several times, once casting his own self-portrait in the guise of the apostle. Unlike most artists, who depicted the dramatic conversion of the soldier Saul on the Damascus road, Rembrandt showed the man in more contemplative moments. Paul’s writings were an important source of Reformation theology. Here he pauses to consider the import of the epistles he writes. The light striking his bold features reveals a man deep in thought; the concentration on his face and his expression emphasize our experience of his emotions.

Rembrandt van Rijn (and Workshop?), Dutch, 1606–1669, *The Apostle Paul*, c. 1657, oil on canvas, 131.5 × 104.4 (51¾ × 41⅞), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Widener Collection

Dutch Artists of the Seventeenth Century



BIOGRAPHIES

Hendrick Avercamp

(Amsterdam 1585 – 1634 Kampen)

Hendrick Avercamp was born to an educated, professional family. His father, Barent, practiced various occupations, including teacher at the Kampen Latin School (where he married Beatrix Veke-mans, the daughter of the head-master), town apothecary, and physician. Documents related to Hendrick’s apprenticeship and his mother’s last will make reference to the fact that he was deaf and without speech. The will makes provision for Beatrix’s unmarried, “mute and miserable” son who was to receive an extra allowance of 100 guilders for life from the family trust.

Avercamp studied in Amsterdam with history and portrait painter Pieter Issacsz (during which time he was known as “de stom tot Pieter Isacqs”—Pieter Isaack’s mute). There he was influenced by the Protestant Flemish landscape painters who settled in the city after fleeing Antwerp, which came under Spanish control in 1585. Avercamp was the first painter of the northern Netherlands to specialize in winter landscape scenes. These scenes

usually depict numerous small but well-delineated figures enjoying wintertime leisure activities such as skating and sledding. Also apparent is the mixing of various classes in these open, public settings. Wintertime landscapes had been explored by Flemish artists of an earlier generation, such as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, whose usage of a high, panoramic vantage point Avercamp adapted. Avercamp produced a modest oeuvre of paintings and many more drawings—studies of figures and more finished landscape drawings that he sold—in the pen and ink medium he favored. His style is considered individual and outside the Dutch mainstream, possibly because of his isolation in Kampen, located in Overijssel in the less populous northeastern portion of the country, where his family had moved shortly after his birth and to which he returned following his training in Amsterdam. His work commanded high prices in his day, and his nephew, Barent, studied with him to become a painter of similar scenes.



Gerard ter Borch II

(Zwolle 1617 – 1681 Deventer)

Gerard ter Borch was destined to become an artist. His father, and namesake, Gerard ter Borch I, was a draftsman and initiated the younger Ter Borch’s artistic training early. The elder Gerard clearly had a presentiment about his son’s talents; he proudly inscribed Gerard *de Jonge*’s name on his son’s drawings from the time the boy was eight and carefully preserved them for posterity (they are now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam). While Ter Borch copied the work of artists such as Hendrik Goltzius (see p. 120) and others who addressed biblical and historical themes, he exhibited an early interest in everyday, vernacular scenes. An early sketchbook he kept (also in the Rijksmuseum) shows images of ice-skaters, markets, landscapes, and soldiers.

By 1635 Ter Borch had completed his artistic training. He went to Amsterdam and then Haarlem to work in the studios of other artists as his skills progressed—and submitted a painting for his acceptance as a master to the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke at age eighteen. Later

Gerard ter Borch II, Dutch, 1617–1681, *Self-Portrait* (detail), c. 1668, oil on canvas, 62.7 × 43.6 (24 $\frac{3}{16}$ × 17 $\frac{1}{8}$), Mauritshuis, The Hague

that same year, he began to travel. Arnold Houbraken's account of Ter Borch's life relates subsequent trips to Italy, Spain, France, and the southern Netherlands. In 1645 Ter Borch traveled to Münster, Germany, where peace negotiations between the Dutch Republic and Spain were under way. He acted as a retainer to Adriaen Pauw, who was the negotiator on behalf of the state of Holland, and painted Pauw's portrait as well as the famous *Treaty of Münster* (see p. 16). During this time he received portrait commissions from the Spanish court and began exploring genre scenes.

Ter Borch lived in Amsterdam, The Hague, Kampen, and Delft during the early 1650s. In 1654 he married Geertruid Mathys, who was his stepmother's sister (Ter Borch was the eldest son of his father's first wife), and settled in Deventer, in the state of Overijssel in the eastern part of the Dutch Republic. He became a *gemeensman*, or adviser to the town council, and later received the status of *oude burgerrecht*, or ancient citizenship, which made him a member of a privileged class. He continued to maintain contact with his family in Zwolle, in the northern part of Overijssel, and frequently incorporated his

family into his various domestic genre scenes, especially his sister Gesina, who was also a painter (they were to collaborate on one of the last paintings he completed).

Ter Borch painted one of the first high-life genre scenes depicting the daily life of a well-heeled milieu. Despite the turn to portraits and images of the wealthy, his work is known for its quiet, low-key atmosphere, which captures an intimate, personal exchange between people. Even when the subject matter contained moralizing lessons and persons of ill repute, such as prostitutes, Ter Borch exercised restraint and subtlety. His technique was that of the *fijnschilder*, with smooth surfaces and almost without visible brushstrokes. He was celebrated for his representations of fabric, especially satin, and was also widely known for painting miniature portraits on copper. He pioneered the full-length portrait for nonaristocratic persons and the device of painting figures with their backs to the viewer. Until the end of his life, the artist enjoyed the favor of many patrons, including European nobility, and he painted commissions for King William and Mary Stuart of England (this portrait is now lost) and Cosimo de' Medici III, who requested a self-portrait from Ter Borch.

Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder
(Antwerp 1573 – 1621 The Hague)

Bosschaert's family was among the many Protestants who fled the southern Netherlands after 1585 to seek religious freedom in the Dutch Republic. He was a major progenitor of the flower still life. Middelburg, the capital of the Dutch state of Zeeland where the artist's family settled, was home to an important regional office of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). The VOC imported many exotic fruits and flowers to the region, some of which came to be planted in botanical gardens. Bosschaert probably visited the Middelburg botanical gardens and may have been commissioned by the resident botanist to create detailed images for use in cataloguing the various rare blooms.

The artist later lived in Utrecht and Breda, where his mature style set the standard for the highly popular and salable flower still-life genre. Bosschaert's small, brightly colored paint-

ings often featured symmetrical floral arrangements set in a clear glass vase. He frequently set the arrangements in illusionistically painted architectural niches opening to the sky or a fictive landscape, which signaled timelessness. Each flower and color was carefully selected, often for its symbolic or allegorical meaning, while he also included details such as snails, butterflies, insects, and droplets that signified the transitory pleasures offered by the bouquet—and life.

Bosschaert was highly esteemed by his fellow artists and by patrons throughout his life. His three sons, Johannes, Ambrosius the Younger, and Abraham, as well as his brother-in-law, Balthasar van der Ast, learned and continued in the painting tradition Ambrosius the Elder had defined, albeit with less distinction.

Jan Both

(Utrecht 1615/1618 – 1652 Utrecht)

Jan Both was one of the most important of the Dutch painters who specialized in Italianate landscapes. After training in the studio of Gerrit van Honthorst in Utrecht between 1634 and 1637, Both joined his brother Andries, also an artist, in Rome, staying about four years. There they collaborated with the French Claude Lorrain and the Dutch Herman van Swaneveldt, both painters of classical landscapes. Like these artists, Both gave his landscapes depth by arranging his compositions along diagonal lines and infusing them with the warm, golden light of the Italian countryside. While he was in Italy, Both also painted many low-life genre pictures, but after his return to the Netherlands, apparently in 1641, he focused exclusively on Italianate landscapes. He retained the scenery and glowing light of the south but painted with the refined technique and naturalistic detail derived from



his Dutch heritage (it is his attention to detail that most distinguishes Both's work from that of Claude and Swaneveldt). Though inflected by an arcadian sensibility, his scenes have the look of a particular place and time—an early biographer recounted that Both liked to paint during different hours of the day—and were based on sketches and studies he brought back from Italy.

Cornelis van Poelenburgh, Dutch, 1594/1595–1667, *Portrait of Jan Both*, seventeenth century, oil on copper, 14 × 12.4 (5½ × 4¾), Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Jan de Bray

(Haarlem c. 1627 – 1688 Amsterdam)

Jan de Bray lived and worked in Haarlem most of his life. He is best known for sensitively painted portraits, which make up about half his known output, for *portraits historiés*, and for grand canvases with historical and biblical themes. His father, Salomon de Bray, was a noted painter who addressed similar subjects in his own work and also painted landscapes; in addition, the elder De Bray was a draftsman and architect who took a keen interest in civic life and the built environment of Haarlem. Salomon was a member of the Saint Adriaan civic guard and helped reform the Guild of Saint Luke in Haarlem in the 1630s to orient it toward fine art rather than the crafts. Jan's mother, Anna Westerbaen, was also from a family of artists in The Hague. Jan absorbed many influences from this intellectual and artistic environment.

De Bray successfully pursued his own career in Haarlem, where he received numerous commissions and was elected *deken* (dean) of the Guild of Saint Luke in the 1670s and 1680s. He was considered the successor to the well-known Haarlem artists Frans Hals and Johannes Verspronck, who both died during the 1660s. He remained close to his family and represented them in a number of paintings, including a dramatic

portrait historié featuring his parents as Antony and Cleopatra. While Jan's career progressed steadily most of his life, he suffered the loss of his parents and four siblings to the plague during 1663 – 1664. Furthermore, De Bray was married three times, in 1668, 1672, and 1678, each time to Catholic women from wealthy families. He lost his first two wives, Maria van Hees and Margaretha de Meyer, to illness, and the third, Victoria Magdalena Stalpert van der Wielen, to childbirth. Maria's image is included in another *portrait historié* that De Bray painted of himself and his wife as Penelope and Ulysses (see p. 107), while Victoria's image was captured as Mary Magdalene in a portrait of 1678. Litigious disputes followed the death of each wife over De Bray's entitlement to an inheritance; he ended up declaring bankruptcy in 1678. This blow also cost him his social standing and led him to relocate to Amsterdam. There, he continued painting and was granted citizenship after a few years, indicating that he had been able to recover some of his earlier success. However, the work he completed during this time is considered less original and more formulaic. De Bray died in Amsterdam, but his body was returned to Haarlem for burial.



Aelbert Cuyp

(Dordrecht 1620 – 1691 Dordrecht)

Aelbert Cuyp's father, Jan Gerritsz, was a successful portrait painter and trained Aelbert to follow in his footsteps. The young Cuyp gained practical experience by painting in the landscaped backgrounds of his father's portrait paintings. He later came to focus exclusively on land- and seascapes, genres in which he achieved considerable success and influenced other painters.

Cuyp's scenes of rural and seafaring life are placid and dignified, rather than coarse or rowdy, as were some popular tropes of depicting the working class. His images frequently include a view of the countryside surrounding his native Dordrecht and are infused with a golden, pastoral light, which was probably influenced by Jan Both. A landscape painter from Utrecht, Both visited Italy and introduced classical

Jan de Bray, Dutch, c. 1627–1688, *A Couple Represented as Ulysses and Penelope* (detail depicting the artist), 1668, oil on canvas, 111.4 × 167 (43⁷/₈ × 65³/₄), Collection of The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky

elements in his own work and that of other Dutch painters. Cuyp visited Utrecht regularly and probably saw Both's work there, although it is not likely that Cuyp ever traveled to Italy. Cuyp also drew inspiration from his sketching forays around Holland and along the Rhine River. He was known as a religious man, active in the Dutch Reformed Church, and as a person of *onbesproken leven*, or irreproachable character. In 1650 he married Cornelia Bosman, a wealthy widow, and his painting tapered off, possibly because of greater involvement in church activities or the lack of financial pressures.

Gerrit Dou
(Leiden 1613 – 1675 Leiden)

Gerrit Dou was the son of a glazier, and he, too, trained in the art of glass engraving. At the age of nine he was apprenticed to a copper engraver, and by age twelve he was a member of the glazier's guild. Three years later Dou was apprenticed to the studio of the then twenty-one-year-old Rembrandt van Rijn, where he stayed until Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam around 1632. At the studio, Dou closely followed Rembrandt's style. He painted the same subjects and shared models so successfully that early works by Dou have been misattributed to Rembrandt.

Once independent of Rembrandt's studio and proprietor of his own, Dou worked to develop his own style, for which he would become known in Leiden and abroad. Through *fijnschilderij*, or fine painting, Dou sought to create precise detail by applying minute brushstrokes that created a highly resolved, almost photographic image. Dou applied this technique to a variety of subjects, but he may be known best for small-scale domestic scenes depicting, for example, a seamstress or fishmonger, often positioned in a window or other architectural frame that under-



scored the illusionism the painter sought to perfect.

Dou, along with his pupil, Frans van Mieris, who further refined the fine painting technique, commanded some of the highest prices among Dutch artists of the seventeenth century. Such was the demand for Dou's work that an agent paid him 1,000 guilders a year for the right of first refusal to any painting Dou produced. Royal courts internationally sought his work, although Dou seems to have preferred remaining in his native Leiden to serving as an expatriate court painter.

Gerrit Dou, Dutch, 1613–1675, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1650, oil on panel, 48 × 37 (18⁷/₈ × 14³/₁₆), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Hendrik Goltzius
(Mülbracht, Germany 1558 –
1617 Haarlem)

Goltzius, a widely recognized printmaker and painter, was an important figure in the transitional decades between the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. He was born along the border between the Netherlands and Germany, and received his first training from his father, a glass painter. Injured as an infant, he could not fully extend his right hand, but this did not hamper his skill and talent as an engraver. By 1595 he had settled in Haarlem. There he established his own publishing house—the first to challenge the supremacy enjoyed by Antwerp

publishers since the sixteenth century. His engraving technique achieved tonal effects through swelling lines and hatching. Goltzius' prints had wide influence in terms of style and subject matter.

Goltzius was called the “Proteus of changing shapes”; his style evolved several times over the course of his career. Initially he worked with the complex compositions and contorted figures of mannerism, but he adopted the classicizing look of the late Renaissance following a trip to Italy in 1590. Already a famous artist, and with a reputation for secrecy, he traveled incognito. By the end of his career, Goltzius' work had begun to reflect the growing interest in naturalism that arose across the Netherlands around 1600. Also at that time, he took up oil painting, perhaps because of its greater prestige.



Hendrik Goltzius, Dutch,
1558–1617, *Self-Portrait*,
c. 1589, silverpoint on
vellum, 14.6 × 10.4 (5¾ ×
4¼), The British Museum,
London. Photograph
© The Trustees of The
British Museum

Jan van Goyen

(Leiden 1596 – 1656 The Hague)

Son of a cobbler, Van Goyen began his artistic training in his native Leiden at age ten. After spending a year in France he settled in Haarlem. Around 1626 Van Goyen and several other Haarlem painters adopted a monochrome, tonal style and imparted a sense of realism in their work. It was this approach that brought him success and recognition. Well into the 1630s, Van Goyen painted simple tonal landscapes in muted warm colors, mostly of dunes and river views. Small figures only contribute to a sense of quiet loneliness. By the end of the decade his scenes were marked by a greater overall harmony, their wide, low panoramas unified by silvery gray tones. In later paintings, after the mid-1640s, he allowed bits of brighter local color—blues or reds on clothing, for example—to punctuate the misty stillness.

Van Goyen's tonal style allowed him to work quickly. He often left parts of the colored ground visible and, unlike almost any of his contemporaries, used freshly cut trees for his panels. He received very few commissions, however, and most of his work sold for a modest price. Despite his prolific output—some 1,200 paintings and 800 drawings—he died insolvent. He had lost money during the tulip speculation of 1637, and in 1652 and 1654 had to sell his possessions at public auction. Yet his life was not lacking success: he was elected headman of the painters' guild in The Hague in 1638 and received a prestigious commission from the city burgomasters for rooms in the town hall. His daughter married the painter Jan Steen.



Gerard ter Borch II, Dutch, 1617–1681, *Portrait of Jan van Goyen*, c. 1652/1653, oil on panel, 20 × 16 (7⁷/₈ × 6¹/₄), Liechtenstein Museum, Vienna

Frans Hals

(Antwerp 1582/1583 – 1666 Haarlem)

Frans Hals' father was a cloth worker who transplanted his family to the northern Netherlands in 1585 after Antwerp fell to the Spanish. Relatively little documentation exists of Hals' life until he joined the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke in 1610. It is known that his wife Annetje Harmansdr died in 1615, leaving him with two young children. He remarried in 1617 and had at least eight children with his second wife, Lysbeth Reynier. Reynier apparently had a volatile temperament and was reprimanded by city authorities for brawling.

Hals' specialty was portraiture, and he achieved a level of recognition in Haarlem that brought him many commissions, including high-profile group portraits of civic-guard members and regents of charity concerns, who were usually wealthy and esteemed in the community. Hals' style and brushwork are much freer and looser than those of some of his contemporaries, who cultivated a painting technique with a higher degree of finish. He also introduced a more informal

portrait style. The spontaneity of his brushwork complements the lively and direct nature of his portraits, which capture the sitters in a single moment, as if they had just arrived to their sitting and were possibly talking with Hals as he set up his easel. This spontaneity is especially felt in the civic-guard portraits, where one can imagine all the members crowding and jostling into the "frame," as people posing for a photograph would. Hals influenced painters of the subsequent generation, including Johannes Verspronck, his most famous acolyte, as well as Judith Leyster and her husband Jan Miense Molenaer (c. 1610–1668). Additionally, nearly a dozen members of Hals' family, including brothers, sons, and nephews, became artists.

Despite his successes, Hals suffered financial difficulties throughout his life, likely because he supported a large family. In addition, his output was not substantial and therefore did not generate a consistent income. Moreover, toward the mid-seventeenth century, his loose style was not considered sufficiently fashionable or elegant and attracted fewer patrons. Hals later sacrificed all his household goods and several paintings to settle a debt with a baker. Thereafter, and until his



death, he was sustained by payments from the burgomasters of 150 guilders a year, increased to 200 in 1663, three years before his death. Hals was largely forgotten after his demise, and interest in his work only revived more than two hundred years later as realist and impressionist artists and their patrons became intrigued by his bold brushwork. Today, the Frans Hals Museum in Haarlem is devoted to his work and that of other artists of the northern Netherlands.

After Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1650, oil on panel, 34.3 × 25.4 (13½ × 10), Indianapolis Museum of Art, The Clowes Fund Collection

Willem Claesz Heda

(presumed Haarlem 1593/1594 –
1680 Haarlem)

Little extant material documents Willem Heda's early years and training as a painter. His mature paintings and affiliation with the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke, in which he was active from 1631 and elected to the positions of *deken* (dean) and *hoofdman* (head), trace the outlines of his life and his creative output.

Up until the mid-1600s, Heda was one of the main practitioners, with Pieter Claesz (see p. 89), of the monochrome still-life genre.

A stylistic trend that developed during the 1620s, the “monochrome” works were not actually done in one color, but instead focused on a limited range of tones such as brown, gold, green, and silver. Heda and Claesz also developed the category of *ontbijtje*, or breakfast pieces, featuring everyday foods such as herring, bread, cheese, and beer, served with inexpensive pewter and glassware. More elaborate later works, known as *banketje*, or banquet pieces, depicted luxury food and goods such as oysters, exotic fruits, ham, wine, mince pies, and gleaming silver tableware. Heda's

work is known for its refined brushwork and the unerring capture of textures and reflections. His career was successful, and Peter Paul Rubens owned two of his paintings. Heda's son, Gerrit Willemsz, followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a member of the Guild of Saint Luke in 1642. Gerrit's paintings, as well as those of Heda's other pupils, are so like Willem's that they have at times been mistakenly attributed to him.

Jan Davidsz de Heem

(Utrecht 1606 – 1683/1684 Antwerp)

Jan de Heem received his training from his father, David de Heem the Elder, also a painter, and later was apprenticed to Balthazar van der Ast, brother-in-law to Ambrosius Bosschaert, who at that time was establishing the conventions of flower still-life painting. De Heem later moved to Leiden, where he married. There he followed the style of David Bailly, a painter of solemn monochromatic still lifes with *vanitas* themes. These included various items symbolizing life's fleeting nature and the passage of time, for example skulls, hourglasses, and books.

In 1635 De Heem, a Catholic, elected to move to Antwerp with his family, where he joined the Guild of Saint Luke. Over time and under the influence of other artists, his still lifes became exuberant and vivid, featuring bounteous arrangements of flowers, fruits, and vegetables in an active

spiraling composition rendered in illusionistic and flawless detail. He also painted rich and luxurious still lifes known as *pronkstilleven* that showcased gold and silver tableware, Venetian glass, and shells, in addition to fruit and flowers. De Heem remained interested in allegorical content, selecting colors and flowers with clear Catholic associations.

Throughout his life, De Heem traveled back and forth between Antwerp and Utrecht, spending extended periods of time in each place. From 1667 to 1672, he lived in Utrecht, where he established a workshop and took on students. The most famous of these was Abraham Mignon (1640–1679), a German-born still-life painter. De Heem's son, Cornelis, also became an accomplished painter of flower still lifes, incorporating into his work the same lush compositions of fruit, flowers, and dinnerware that his father employed.



Jan Davidsz de Heem, Dutch, 1606–1683/1684, *Self-Portrait*, 1630–1650, oil on panel, 24 × 19 (9⁷/₁₆ × 7¹/₂), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Meindert Hobbema

(Amsterdam 1638 – 1709 Amsterdam)

Meindert Hobbema was the son of a carpenter; he was baptized Meyndert Lubbertsz. Why he changed his name is not known, but he signed paintings “Hobbema” by age twenty while continuing to use his given name on legal documents until 1660. Hobbema and his siblings were sent to an orphanage in Amsterdam in 1653. It is not known whether the family became impoverished or if both parents died. By 1658 he was the protégé of landscapist Jacob van Ruisdael, to whom he was apparently close for much of his life. Hobbema was influenced early on by the work of Jacob’s uncle, Salomon, and then by Jacob himself (some of Hobbema’s

paintings closely resemble Jacob’s). Later, he cultivated his own approach and focused on a limited range of subjects that he painted repeatedly, including wooded scenes and water mills. His views are local rather than sweeping or topographical. Tranquil, golden-lit waterways and winding roads with craggy trees and billowing clouds predominate, populated by staffage or small accenting figures (often painted in by other artists). Only once is Hobbema known to have painted a more urban scene, a canal in Amsterdam. His most productive period was the 1660s, during which time his canvases became more confident.

Together, Ruisdael and Hobbema are considered the premier landscapists of the Dutch seventeenth century. However, Hobbema did not achieve the level of renown and success of

some of his contemporaries during this period of high demand for painting. He was omitted from Arnold Houbraken’s encyclopedia of biographies of Dutch and Flemish artists, and mentioned only in a 1751 compendium of Dutch artists as having painted “modern landscapes.” Hobbema’s reputation was elevated in the nineteenth century in part because at that time British artists such as John Constable and J.M.W. Turner and their collectors became interested in Dutch landscapists. In 1850 a British collector bought Hobbema’s work *The Water-Mill* (Wallace Collection, London) in The Hague for 27,000 guilders, a record price for a painting at that time.

Gerrit van Honthorst
(Utrecht 1590 – 1656 Utrecht)

Gerrit van Honthorst was born in Utrecht, a city with a largely Catholic population. There, he studied with Abraham Bloemaert, a prominent history painter who was, like Honthorst, a practicing Catholic. A combination of factors—an identification with his faith, the already established practice of northern painters finishing their training in Italy, and the esteemed status of artists in a highly developed art-patronage system—probably led him to Rome in 1610. There, already an accomplished painter at age twenty, he became acquainted with the work of Caravaggio di Merisi (1571–1610) and his followers, whose stylistic innovations wielded a huge influence on artists across Europe. They included Honthorst’s contemporary Hendrick ter Bruggen, also a Catholic from a wealthy Utrecht family who went to Rome in 1604. The *Caravaggisti*, as they were known, developed iterations of the dramatically lit, dynamic scenes focused on a few central figures placed in a dark, shallow space. These scenes, often related to the lives of saints, were staged not with idealized figures, but with ordinary people in contemporary

dress. Honthorst’s work in this vein was celebrated in Italy and earned him the name “Gherardo della Notte,” after the dark, candlelit settings of his paintings. Some of his patrons—noblemen and church figures—had supported the work and livelihood of Caravaggio himself.

On returning to Utrecht from Italy in 1620, Honthorst joined the Guild of Saint Luke and later served in the position of *deken* (dean). In Holland, there was little demand for the religious subjects he had painted for patrons in Italy, and he focused his efforts on portraits, genre pictures of musicians, and mythological and allegorical works, which were attractive to wealthy patrons. His success and associations with other successful artists such as Peter Paul Rubens led to prestigious appointments as court painter in England, Denmark, and The Hague.



Cosimo Mogalli after
Giovanni Domenico
Ferretti, Italian,
1667–1730; Italian,
1692–1768, *Gerrit van
Honthorst*, c. eighteenth
century, engraving.
Photograph © Private
Collection/The Stapleton
Collection/The
Bridgeman Art Library

Pieter de Hooch

(Rotterdam 1629 – 1684 Amsterdam)

Pieter de Hooch specialized in domestic interior and courtyard scenes that may be compared to the work of Johannes Vermeer, De Hooch's contemporary in Delft, where he lived during the 1650s. The occupations of De Hooch's father, Hendrick Hendricksz, a bricklayer, and his mother, Annetje Pieters, a midwife, suggest a working-class upbringing. Arnold Houbraken's compendium of biographies relates that De Hooch was apprenticed to the landscape painter Nicholas Berchem in Haarlem, whose Italianate scenes evidently had little influence on De Hooch's development. By 1653, De Hooch was recorded in Delft, working both as a painter and as a servant to a successful linen merchant and art collector, Justus de la Grange,

to make ends meet. Inventory records show that La Grange had eleven of De Hooch's works in his collection. In 1654 De Hooch married Jannetje van der Burch, with whom he had seven children. The artist's fortunes improved by the end of that decade, as he refined his style and subjects, mainly toward exploring the effects of light and space in an ordered rectilinear interior or enclosure. He was later associated with other Delft artists working in the second half of the seventeenth century, including Emanuel de Witte, Nicolaes Maes, Carel Fabritius, and Johannes Vermeer, who were united by a focus on spatial effects.

De Hooch's placid domestic scenes of middle-class households are a stark contrast to the bawdiness and disarray of Jan Steen's interiors. Rather, they seem to exemplify the world of the virtuous, modest wife and homemaker

whose life did not, perhaps, extend much beyond her interior courtyard. The proper role of men and women in the family was expounded upon in Jacob Cats' 1625 influential book *Houwelijk* (Marriage), which detailed the various duties of women throughout the stages of life. The images created by De Hooch and others reaffirmed those values. In the early 1660s, when he settled his family in Amsterdam and depicted a wealthier, more refined milieu, De Hooch's style moved closer to the smooth finesse of Leiden *fijnschilderen* (fine painters) such as Dou. By the late 1660s, however, his output became uneven and his palette grew darker. Details of his final years are not abundant, but it is known that he died in the Amsterdam *Dolbuis* (insane asylum) in 1684.

Judith Leyster

(Haarlem 1609 – 1660 Heemstede)

Judith Leyster's father, Jan Willemisz, operated a Haarlem beer brewery, one of the industries that contributed greatly to the city's prosperity in the seventeenth century. The family name was derived from the name of their brewery, which means "lodestar." Later, Judith Leyster would even sign some of her paintings in shorthand, "L★."

Little is known of her artistic training; however, her artistic endeavors are mentioned in Samuel Ampzing's poem "Description and Praise of the Town of Haarlem," published in 1628, when Leyster would have been nineteen years old. The portrait painter Frans Pietersz de Grebber is mentioned with her in the poem, and historians speculate that she may have trained in his studio. That same year, the artist moved with her family to the town of Vreeland, near Utrecht, where she may have encountered the work of the *Caravaggisti* Gerrit van Honthorst and Hendrick ter Bruggen, artists who had traveled to Rome and absorbed the Italian painter's innovative style. This may have contributed to her interest in realism, reflected in her choice of subject—illuminated night

scenes and people of common character—as well as the directness and vibrancy of her work. At this time, it is also thought that Leyster worked in Frans Hals' studio, based upon what appear to be close adaptations of three works by Hals, *The Jester*, *The Lute Player*, and the *Rommel-pot Player* (Rijksmuseum, Musée du Louvre, and Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, respectively). Leyster's brushwork also resembled Hals' spontaneous and bold style. In 1633, at age twenty-four, Leyster was admitted to the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke, the first woman with a documented body of work to have achieved master level in her profession.

When Leyster's work fell out of favor after her death and there was little interest in documenting her artistic output, many of her works were misattributed to Hals because she addressed many of the same themes and subjects, such as merrymaking, musicians, and children. Only during the twentieth century have scholars begun recovering the histories of women artists such as Leyster, Clara Peeters, and Rachel Ruysch.



Judith Leyster, Dutch, 1609–1660, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1630, oil on canvas, 74.6 × 65 (29³/₈ × 25³/₈), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss

Adriaen van Ostade

(Haarlem 1610 – 1685 Haarlem)

Adriaen van Ostade was an influential figure in the development of genre and low-life scenes, which he painted the entire duration of his long and productive career. He was incredibly prolific, and today some 800 paintings and 50 etchings exist, along with numerous drawings. He may have trained in the studio of Frans Hals, alongside the Flemish genre painter Adriaen Brouwer (see p. 80). He seems to have absorbed more influence from Brouwer's handling of low-life subjects than from Hals' portrait work. While the peasant subjects from the early part of his career were cast in rowdy tableaux, in later works they assumed a more noble simplicity. In addition to peasant and rustic interiors, Van Ostade painted single figure studies and contributed the figures to the works of other painters, including Pieter Saenredam. Among Van Ostade's students were probably his younger brother Isack and possibly Jan Steen. Already successful and prosperous, Van Ostade acquired substantial wealth from his second wife, a Catholic from Amsterdam, but continued to paint. In 1662, after serving as *hoofdman* (headman) of the Guild of Saint Luke, he became dean.



Hals depicted fellow artist Adriaen van Ostade as the successful painter and gentleman that he was, dressed fashionably and with right glove off, which may have been understood as a sign of friendship and that the artist was a man of decorum. The portrait may have been painted in honor of Van Ostade's election to the position of *hoofdman* of the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke in 1647.

Frans Hals, Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666, *Adriaen van Ostade*, 1646/1648, oil on canvas, 94 × 75 (37 × 29½), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew W. Mellon Collection

Jacob van Ruisdael
(Haarlem c. 1628/1629 –
1682 Amsterdam)

Jacob van Ruisdael came from an artistically inclined family: his father, Isaak de Goyer, was an art dealer and maker of picture frames, and his uncle, Salomon van Ruysdael, was a painter of town- and landscapes. The Ruysdael name (only Jacob spelled it “Ruisdael”) was adopted by Jacob’s uncle and later by his father after the name of a castle near Blaricum, a village in the province of Holland where the elder De Goyer/Ruysdaels were born. Jacob likely received artistic training from his family because there are no records of other apprenticeships. Jacob’s first dated painting is from 1646, and he is known to have joined the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke as a master in 1648.

Some evidence exists that Ruisdael also received medical training and was a doctor. Arnold Houbraken writes that Ruisdael was learned and a surgeon in Amsterdam. A register of Amsterdam doctors includes a “Jacobus

Ruijsdael” who received a medical degree from the University of Caen in Normandy in October 1676; it seems unlikely that this is the painter Ruisdael, who would have been nearly fifty years of age, but is not out of the question. A painting sold in the eighteenth century was listed as by “Doctor Jacob Ruisdael.”

Ruisdael is one of the premier landscape artists of the seventeenth century, adept in many modes of landscape—winterscapes, dune and beach scenes, and panoramic townscapes, to name a few. His landscapes do not seem to contain specific allegorical or moralizing content, and instead appear to reflect on the cycles of nature and the passage of time, conveying a sense of nature’s power and nobility. The work is convincingly naturalistic, but not always strictly based upon actual topography. Ruisdael seems to have synthesized various influences from his travels and encounters. During the 1650s, he traveled to Westphalia near the Dutch-German border with his friend Nicholaes Berchem, who created landscapes in the classically infused Italianate style.

This trip seems to have affected Ruisdael’s work, as imagery from the areas they visited appears in subsequent paintings. By 1656 Ruisdael had settled in Amsterdam, where he took on his most renowned pupil, Meindert Lubbertsz, later known as Hobbema. In Amsterdam, Ruisdael also encountered the work of Allart van Everdingen, who had traveled to Scandinavia and observed pine forests and waterfalls, motifs that Ruisdael began incorporating into his works. Ruisdael was moderately successful during his lifetime. He lived over the shop of a book dealer near the Dam, Amsterdam’s main public square. He was highly prolific, creating nearly 700 paintings, 100 drawings, and thirteen extant etchings.

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn
(Leiden 1606 – 1669 Amsterdam)

Rembrandt van Rijn's numerous painted, etched, and drawn self-portraits make him the most recognizable artist of the seventeenth century, and this may be one of the reasons why he is so well known to us today. He was one of the most versatile artists of the period, exploring an entire range of portrait types and genres of painting, including history paintings, group portraits, commissioned portraits, *portraits historiés*, and studies of character types. Whatever the subject, his work captures a sense of individual spirit and profound emotional expressiveness—qualities for which he was celebrated in his time.

Rembrandt was born in Leiden to Harmen Gerritsz, a miller, and Neeltgen van Zuytbroeck. As the youngest sibling of at least ten, he was not expected to follow in his father's footsteps, that duty having been dispatched by an older brother. As Harmen was prosperous, he was able to send the young Rembrandt to the Leiden Latin School, where he received a classical and humanist education taught in Latin; he also studied Greek, the Bible, and the authors and philosophers of antiquity. This education was



Rembrandt van Rijn, Dutch, 1606–1669, *Self-Portrait Drawing at a Window*, 1648, etching, drypoint, and burin, sheet 15.9 × 13 (6¼ × 5⅛), National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection

the standard preparation for entry to Leiden University, where Rembrandt enrolled in 1620 at age thirteen. However, he soon exhibited his affinity for painting and drawing and his parents removed him from the university. He was apprenticed to a painter in Leiden, with whom he studied for three years before advancing to the studio of Pieter Lastman in Amsterdam, who was then the most prominent history painter there.

Like many painters of his generation, Lastman had traveled to Italy and absorbed the classical styles and subjects of Renaissance art he saw in Rome. As his trainee, Rembrandt initially copied Lastman's compositions and subjects, but because he was also able to draw upon his rigorous education in classical and biblical subjects, he soon developed original interpretations of mythological and biblical stories, rendered

in a more naturalistic style than Lastman's conventional and formally posed figures. Into these early paintings, Rembrandt began inserting his own portrait as a bystander or participant in the scene, initiating a lifelong pursuit of self-portraiture, in addition to other portraiture. Today nearly 80 existing painted self-portraits are attributed to the artist (the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, includes one painted, nineteen etched, and one drawn self-portrait).

By age twenty-one, Rembrandt had established his own studio and had taken the first of his many students, Gerrit Dou. Later students included Samuel van Hoogstraten, Carel Fabritius, and Govaert Flinck. The quantity of work the studio produced and the number of students who may have contributed to paintings completed under its auspices (under guild rules, Rembrandt could sign these works himself) have prompted ongoing debates concerning the attribution of these works to Rembrandt, the artists cited above, and other followers.

Rembrandt achieved an almost unprecedented level of success during his lifetime. He had highly placed supporters, including the influential Constantijn Huygens, personal secretary to stadholder Frederick Henry, and Jan Six, a sophisticated art patron and magistrate whose family had made its fortune in silk and dyes and became one of Rembrandt's most important patrons. In 1633 Rembrandt married Saskia van Uylenburgh, the niece of his business partner, an art dealer. Saskia was from a wealthy family, and her image is familiar from the many sensitive portraits Rembrandt made of her. Rembrandt purchased an expensive house in Amsterdam, where they lived, but financed a large part of the purchase, a decision that later affected his financial stability. Saskia died in 1642, leaving Rembrandt to care for their son Titus, their only child to survive infancy. Despite his bereavement, this was also the year Rembrandt painted his most famous work, the *Night Watch* or *The Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch* (see p. 57). Later, Rembrandt took up

with Titus' nursemaid, a relationship that ended acrimoniously, and then with his housekeeper Hendrickje Stoffels, also known through Rembrandt's many depictions of her. Rembrandt never married Hendrickje; a clause in Saskia's will would have made remarriage financially disadvantageous. When Hendrickje became pregnant with their child, she suffered public condemnation for "living with Rembrandt like a whore." Their daughter Cornelia was born in 1654.

While Rembrandt continued to receive portrait commissions in the 1650s and 1660s, he could not meet his financial obligations and also suffered personal setbacks when both Hendrickje and Titus died of the plague during the 1660s. He was financially dependent on Cornelia during the last years of his life and even sold Saskia's grave site at the Oude Kerk to pay his debts. Rembrandt died in 1669 and was buried in an unknown grave in the Westerkerk, Amsterdam.

Pieter Jansz Saenredam

(Assendelft 1597 – 1665 Haarlem)

Pieter Jansz Saenredam was the son of Jan Saenredam, who was considered one of the finest engravers in Holland alongside his teacher, Hendrik Goltzius. Jan primarily made engravings based on the other artists' art and designs, including maps. He was also a successful investor who left his family financially well-off upon his death at age forty-two in 1607. At that time, Pieter moved with his mother to Haarlem, where he trained in an artist's studio as an apprentice from the age of fifteen. It is presumed that he developed his interest in architecture, which remained his specialty throughout his career, through his contact with a mathematician and surveyor, and a circle of painter-architects he associated with, including Jacob van Campen, who designed the Mauritshuis in The Hague and the Amsterdam town hall (see pp. 50–51). Van Campen also rendered this portrait of Saenredam, in which he appears hunchbacked and stunted in his growth. Saenredam never practiced as an architect, confining himself to artistic renderings of existing buildings and sometimes imagined renderings of foreign edifices described by friends, but which he himself never visited. In so doing, he pioneered a new artistic genre. He concentrated exclusively on

architectural subjects and is likely to have had other artists working in his studio, among them Adriaen van Ostade and Jan Both, to paint in the figures (staffage) in his works. This was not unusual under artist guild rules, whereby the studio's master could claim primary authorship of collaborative works produced there.

Saenredam's method was precise and painstaking, entailing the use of construction drawings and drawings he made on site to capture the perspective lines and proportions. Despite the exactitude with which he practiced his craft, Saenredam also subtly enhanced his compositions—considered to be influenced by the refinement of his father's work, with its elegant and attenuated lines. He made preliminary drawings and underdrawings for his canvases, sometimes taking years between preliminary drawings and a finished painting. As a result, his lifetime output was relatively small, numbering 50 paintings and about 150 drawings. One critic wrote that the “essence and nature” of the churches, halls, galleries, and buildings he captured, from the inside and outside, “could not be shown to greater perfection.” Such accolades led to Saenredam being known as the painter of “church portraits.”



Jacob van Campen, Dutch, 1595–1657, *Portrait of Pieter Saenredam*, c. 1628, silverpoint, 14.6 × 10.4 (5¾ × 4¼), The British Museum, London

Jan Havicksz Steen

(Leiden 1625/1626 – 1679 Leiden)

Jan Steen's father, Havick Steen, was a grain merchant and later proprietor of a brewery that he inherited from his father. The family was Catholic and solidly upper middle class. Jan was likely educated at the Latin School, which was open only to students of affluent families, and enrolled at Leiden University in 1646. His tenure there did not last long; in 1648 he is known to have registered as a master painter in the newly established Guild of Saint Luke. The nature of Steen's training and apprenticeship is not confirmed, although Arnold Houbraken, biographer of Dutch artists, claimed Steen had studied with landscape painter Jan van Goyen in The Hague and possibly with Adriaen van Ostade in Haarlem before that.

Steen most often painted unruly low-life tableaux rife with dancing, music-making, and miscreants whose activities and surroundings revealed layers of moralizing innuendo. The artist's sources include the sixteenth-century Flemish scenes of peasant life; the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, a broad, slapstick enter-

tainment played by itinerant actors throughout Europe; and Dutch *rederijkerskamers* (rhetorician's chambers), a form of literary society where amateur writers and often artists acted out allegorical, religious, comic, and amorous genre plays.

Steen himself led an itinerant life, even after marriage to Van Goyen's daughter Margaretha in 1649, with whom he fathered six children. They lived together in The Hague for some years, followed by a stint in Delft, where Steen took up the family brewing business—at least until the devastating arsenal explosion there in 1654, which put an end to the venture. Then it was off to Warmond, a town near Leiden where Steen was influenced by the work of the *fijnschilders* such as Dou's pupil Frans van Mieris. In 1661 Steen settled in Haarlem and joined the Guild of Saint Luke there. During this time, he painted many of his best-known works. He also adapted to the changing tastes of the art market, replacing peasants and low-life types with well-to-do figures, who nonetheless continued to demonstrate comic misbehavior or poor judgment. Later, he also addressed religious and allegorical subjects in his painting, having remained a Catholic his



This serious self-portrait contrasts with Steen's usual depictions of himself as a drunkard or merryman.

Jan Steen, Dutch, 1625/1626–1679, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1670, oil on canvas, 73 × 62 (28¾ × 24¾), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

entire life. By 1672, following the death of his wife and his father, Steen returned to Leiden and opened a tavern there; the market for luxury goods and for art had fallen off with the French invasion of the Netherlands in 1672. Steen continued to paint until the end of his life and he was prolific; approximately 350 of his paintings are extant.

Johannes Vermeer
(Delft 1632 – 1675 Delft)

Johannes Vermeer is today one of the most famous European artists of all time. He was born and died in the city of Delft, with which he is strongly associated. His father, Reynier Jansz Vermeer, was a weaver of fine cloth, which provided the family a comfortable living. In 1631, the year before Johannes was born, his father joined the Guild of Saint Luke as a picture dealer, which undoubtedly influenced Johannes' choice of career.

Little is known about Vermeer's early artistic training and apprenticeship—neither where nor with whom he trained is recorded, but documentation pinpoints several major life events of the early 1650s. In 1653 he registered as a master painter with the Guild of Saint Luke. He had also inherited Reynier's art-dealing business the previous year. In April 1653 he married a Catholic, Catharina Bolnes, whose mother, Maria Thins, exerted significant influence in Vermeer's life. She is likely to have required Vermeer, born a Reformed Protestant, to convert to Catholicism, which was practiced secretly in two hidden churches in Delft. Johannes and Catharina eventually moved into Maria's house and named their first child Maria.

Vermeer's early ambition was to become a history painter,



as this was considered the most esteemed type of painting that could be practiced. By the mid-1650s, however, he had turned to domestic scenes, at which he excelled, and began to express his interest in various techniques and devices that could aid him in creating convincingly lifelike effects. Other artists working in a similar vein—Gerard ter Borch, Carel Fabritius, and Pieter de Hooch—were present in Delft at this time; the nature of their interactions with Vermeer is unknown, although it seems certain they influenced each other's work. It is clear, however, that

The painter with his back to the viewer is presumed to be Vermeer. No authenticated frontal portraits of the artist are in existence.

Johannes Vermeer, Dutch, 1632–1675, *The Artist's Studio*, c. 1665/1666, oil on canvas, 120 × 100 (47¼ × 39¾), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Vermeer did pioneer the use of the camera obscura, a pinhole device used since the Renaissance to project an image onto a wall surface with the aid of a lens. The device exaggerated spatial effects, but the resulting projected image was probably not very sharply focused. Vermeer is considered to have noted these blurring effects, which he adeptly translated into

details of objects and persons that are rendered not in minute detail, but with an expert stroke of a highlighting color or glaze.

Because of his painstaking techniques, Vermeer's lifetime production was very small; today, only about 35 authentic paintings are known. Much of Vermeer's work was collected in his time by a single patron, Pieter Claesz van Ruijven. He paid the artist for the first right of refusal over any new work, which may have had the effect of suppressing publicity about the artist's talents. Van Ruijven is known to have had 21 paintings in his possession at the time of his death, according to his estate documents. Vermeer was certainly well-regarded as an artist and was elected *hoofdman* (headman) of the Guild of Saint Luke on several occasions. Nonetheless, he struggled financially,

raising eleven children and witnessing an economic downturn in the Dutch Republic in the 1670s because of the French-British invasion.

After Vermeer's death, his wife was forced to declare bankruptcy, and the works in her possession were auctioned off under the guidance of Anton van Leeuwenhoek (see p. 30), the executor of the estate. Vermeer's name was largely forgotten until the late nineteenth century—so much so that the iconic *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (Mauritshuis, The Hague) was sold for only 2 guilders and 30 cents in 1882. A nineteenth-century French art critic stirred a revival of interest in Vermeer's work.

Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck
(Haarlem 1606/1609 – 1662 Haarlem)

Johannes Verspronck was the son of painter Cornelis Engelsz, to whom he was probably apprenticed, and was also possibly the student of Frans Hals. In 1632 he joined the Guild of Saint Luke in Haarlem, where he remained until the end of his life.

Verspronck is known as a portrait painter, and about 100 of his works are extant today. The earliest date from 1634. From that point, he maintained a remarkable consistency in his work, with only slight variations and new elements emerging over the course of many years, one being the use of a graduated tone in the background of his portraits. Many comparisons are made between Verspronck's work and that of Frans Hals; however, Verspronck's brushwork is more controlled and his sitters are more static or formally posed.

Verspronck's work was commissioned rather than produced for the open market. His most productive years were between 1640 and 1643, when he painted several group portraits, including *The Regentesses of Saint Elisabeth Hospital*, 1641, a pendant to Hals' *The Regents of Saint Elisabeth*

Hospital, also 1641 (both Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem). Groups of regents, guilds, and other community societies commissioned these portraits, which were inspired by Haarlem militia portraits developed during the sixteenth century. Verspronck also completed twenty individual commissions during this period, including *Girl in Blue* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), one of his best-known images. Like the National Gallery painting, *Andries Stilte as a Standard Bearer* (see p. 56), it features brightly colored clothing uncharacteristic of the somber Calvinist black-and-white dress Verspronck's subjects typically preferred for their portraits.

Verspronck remained a bachelor throughout his life, living with his parents in young adulthood, and then with a brother and unmarried sister in his own household once his improved financial circumstances permitted him to purchase his own home. He was likely a Catholic, as were many of the well-to-do families who commissioned his portraits. He is not known to have run a studio or to have had any students.

Joachim Wtewael
(Utrecht c. 1566 – 1638 Utrecht)

Joachim Wtewael's (whose name may also appear as Uytewael, or in other slightly different spellings) career spanned the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His paintings reflect both older styles from the southern Netherlands and the busy, brightly colored compositions with fantastical or artificial settings and figures of mannerism. But in what would seem the opposite approach, he also explored a peculiarly Dutch type of realism based upon everyday life. Trained at his father's glass art studio in Utrecht until the age of eighteen, he assisted in making paintings on glass, a painstaking decorative art applied to devotional objects, and later, furnishings such as mirrors and cabinet doors for the homes of the wealthy. Following that apprenticeship and several years of work in the studio, he traveled for four years in France and Italy under the auspices of an artistic patron and absorbed influences from the elaborate history paintings he saw.

On his return to Utrecht around 1592, he joined the saddler's guild, to which painters of the period belonged (in 1611 he was a founding member of the newly established Guild of Saint Luke there). His work consisted mainly of biblical and mythological scenes in the mannerist style, subjects that were



of particular interest to wealthy art patrons in mostly Catholic Utrecht (although Wtewael was a staunch Calvinist). Wtewael also absorbed influences from artists such as Hendrik Goltzius, whose muscular, spiraling figures were inspirational to him. He also worked in portraiture and painted some genre scenes, rendered in a more realistic style, which illustrated the moral dilemmas of daily life. In addition to his art career, Wtewael was a successful flax and linen merchant who also became involved in town and Calvinist politics as a regent. He probably divided his time fairly equally among his civic, religious, and artistic pursuits. He married Christina van Halen (see p. 103), with whom he had four children. Wtewael's legacy is varied and seems to demonstrate no particular stylistic direction or evolution, although his history paintings were influential in sparking the Dutch interest in classical themes.

Joachim Anthonisz Wtewael, Dutch, c. 1566–1638, *Self-Portrait*, 1601, oil on panel, 98 × 73.6 (38 7/8 × 29), Collectie Centraal Museum, Utrecht



Chronology

- 1566**
Destruction of religious images by Protestant reformers against Spanish-Catholic rule throughout the northern and southern Netherlands
- 1568**
William of Orange starts the revolt against Spain and begins the Eighty Years' War
- 1579**
Seven Dutch provinces join William of Orange and declare their independence from Spain
- 1584**
Death of William of Orange
- 1588**
Maurits, Prince of Orange, becomes the new leader (stadholder)
- 1604**
Karel van Mander's *Het Schilderboek* is published, a manual of art history, theory, and practical advice for painters
- 1609 – 1621**
Twelve-Year Truce with Spain
- 1624**
The first Dutch colonists settle on Manhattan Island
- 1625**
Death of Maurits, Prince of Orange; his brother Frederick Henry becomes stadholder
- 1626**
The Dutch buy Manhattan from the Indians for 60 guilders' worth of goods, and found New Amsterdam (later New York)
- 1629**
Frederick Henry takes 's-Hertogenbosch, Catholic frontier city
- 1636**
Anna Maria van Schurman is the first woman allowed to attend a Dutch university
- 1647**
Death of Frederick Henry; his son William II becomes stadholder
- 1648**
Treaty of Münster establishes the Dutch Republic as independent nation
- 1649 – 1650**
William II in conflict with states-general and Amsterdam
- 1650**
Death of William II; birth of William III, future stadholder
- 1651**
Abolition of stadholder position in five provinces
- 1652 – 1654**
First Anglo-Dutch War, largely an English success
- 1664**
New Amsterdam is taken by the English and renamed New York
- 1665 – 1667**
Second Anglo-Dutch War, mostly a Dutch success
- 1672**
French invasion of the republic; reestablishment of stadholder office, given to William III
- 1672 – 1674**
Third Anglo-Dutch War
- 1673**
Defeat of French army
- 1677**
William III marries Mary Stuart, daughter of the English king
- 1678**
Samuel van Hoogstraten's treatise on painting, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst (Introduction to the noble school of painting; or The visible world)*
- 1689**
William and Mary assume the English throne
- 1702**
Death of William III, beginning of second stadholderless period

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Internet addresses are current as of September 2007.

Dutch Language

Pronunciation

How to pronounce the names of Dutch artists of the seventeenth century

http://essentialvermeer.20m.com/dutch-painters/twenty_dutch_masterpieces.htm#How%20to

Everyday Dutch

Overview of basic Dutch vocabulary and pronunciation, with audio files

<http://homepage.mac.com/schuffelen/Dutch1.html>

New Netherland and Colonialism

Charter for New Netherland

Text of the 1629 document

<http://www.multied.com/documents/NewNetherlands.html>

New Netherland curriculum

Lessons on the social, historical, and scientific context of New Netherland for fourth and seventh grades, incorporating original documents and worksheets. Based on New York state curriculum standards

www.halfmoon.mus.ny.us/curriculum.htm

New Netherland Project (NNP)

Sponsored by the New York State Library and the Holland Society of New York to complete the transcription, translation, and publication of all Dutch documents in New York repositories relating to the seventeenth-century colony of New Netherland
www.nnp.org

A virtual tour of New Netherland

NNP's virtual history tour of New Netherland sites, with extensive commentaries and illustrations
www.nnp.org/vtour/regions/map.html

History of the Netherlands

Historic cities of northern Europe

City histories for all major cities of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany

http://historic-cities.huji.ac.il/north_europe/north_europe.html

History of the Netherlands: primary documents

The charter of the Dutch West India Company and seventeenth-century maps of the Netherlands
http://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/History_of_the_Netherlands:Primary_Documents

Memory of the Netherlands

An extensive digital collection of Dutch illustrations, photographs, texts, and film and audio clips from the sixteenth century to the present, organized by the National Library of the Netherlands. Not all content available in English

<http://www.kb.nl/webexpo/geheugen-en.html>

Dutch Culture

The Albany Institute of History and Art
Dutch foodways transplanted to New Netherland

<http://www.albanyinstitute.org/Education/archive/dutch/dutch.newworld.foodways.htm>

Dutch love emblems

Illustrations and explanation of Dutch love emblems from 1600 to 1620 that instructed about the proper conduct of courtship and marriage. With a guide for teachers and students, in English and Dutch

<http://emblems.let.uu.nl/index.html>

Dutch cartographers

Historic maps of cities in the Netherlands and New Netherland
<http://grid.let.rug.nl/~maps/>

Museums Online
(all available in English)

*National Gallery of Art,
Washington*

Commentaries and in-depth examinations of Dutch art, including works in the NGA collections and guides to past special exhibitions

<http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/dutch.shtm>

Go inside a typical Dutch home in this interactive game

<http://www.nga.gov/kids>

*Amsterdams Historisch Museum,
Amsterdam*

City history from 1350 to present with documents and cultural artifacts

<http://www.ahm.nl/>

Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem

Offers overview of Dutch painting at its peak in the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century, particularly that of Haarlem native Frans Hals

<http://www.franshalsmuseum.nl/>

Mauritshuis, The Hague

A collection of Dutch and Flemish painting originally based on the collection of Stadholder William v, and turned over to the Dutch state in the nineteenth century

<http://www.mauritshuis.nl/>

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The world's most extensive collection of art and cultural artifacts of the Dutch Golden Age

<http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/>

Stedelijk Museum of Lakenhal, Leiden

A museum of Dutch urban culture, focused on Leiden, from the sixteenth century to the present

<http://www.lakenhal.nl/>

Slides and Reproductions

Dimensions are given in centimeters followed by inches; height precedes width.

slide 1 (p. 73)

Ludolf Backhuysen

Dutch, 1631–1708

Ships in Distress off a Rocky Coast, 1667

oil on canvas

114.3 × 167.3 (45 × 65⁷/₈)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund

slide 2 and reproduction (p. 79)

Gerard ter Borch II

Dutch, 1617–1681

The Suitor's Visit, c. 1658

oil on canvas

80 × 75 (31¹/₂ × 29⁹/₁₆)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

slide 3 (p. 106)

Jan de Bray

Dutch, c. 1627–1688

Portrait of the Artist's Parents, Salomon de

Bray and Anna Westerbaen, 1664

oil on panel

78.1 × 63.5 (30³/₄ × 25)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Gift of Joseph F. McCrindle in memory of my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Feder

slide 4 and reproduction (p. 19)

Aelbert Cuyp

Dutch, 1620–1691

The Maas at Dordrecht, c. 1650

oil on canvas

114.9 × 170.2 (45¹/₄ × 67)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

slide 5 and reproduction (p. 98)

Frans Hals

Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666

Portrait of an Elderly Lady, 1633

oil on canvas

102.5 × 86.9 (40³/₈ × 34³/₁₆)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

slide 6 and reproduction (p. 99)

Frans Hals

Dutch, c. 1582/1583–1666

Willem Coymans, 1645

oil on canvas

77 × 64 (30¹/₄ × 25)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

slide 7 and reproduction (p. 90)

Willem Claesz Heda

Dutch, 1593/1594–1680

Banquet Piece with Mince Pie, 1635

oil on canvas

106.7 × 111.1 (42 × 43³/₄)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Patrons' Permanent Fund

slide 8 and reproduction (p. 95)

Jan Davidsz de Heem

Dutch, 1606–1683/1684

Vase of Flowers, c. 1660

oil on canvas

69.6 × 56.5 (27³/₈ × 22¹/₄)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Andrew W. Mellon Fund

slide 9 and reproduction (p. 70)

Meindert Hobbema

Dutch, 1638–1709

A Farm in the Sunlight, 1668

oil on canvas

81.9 × 66.4 (32¹/₄ × 26¹/₈)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Andrew W. Mellon Collection

slide 10 (p. 82)

Pieter de Hooch

Dutch, 1629–1684

The Bedroom, 1658/1660

oil on canvas

51 × 60 (20 × 23¹/₂)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Widener Collection

slide 11 and reproduction (p. 43)

Judith Leyster

Dutch, 1609–1660

Self-Portrait, c. 1630

oil on canvas

74.6 × 65 (29³/₈ × 25⁵/₈)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss

slide 12 (p. 81)

Adriaen van Ostade

Dutch, 1610–1685

The Cottage Dooryard, 1673

oil on canvas

44 × 39.5 (17³/₈ × 15⁵/₈)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,

Widener Collection

slide 13 (p. 123)

Rembrandt van Rijn

Dutch, 1606–1669

Lucretia, 1664

oil on canvas

120 × 101 (47¹/₄ × 39¹/₄)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Andrew W. Mellon Collection

slide 14 and reproduction (p. 13)

Rembrandt van Rijn

Dutch, 1606–1669

The Mill, 1645/1648

oil on canvas

87.6 × 105.6 (34¹/₂ × 41⁵/₈)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Widener Collection

slide 15 and reproduction (p. 113)

Rembrandt van Rijn

Dutch, 1606–1669

Self-Portrait, 1659

oil on canvas

84.5 × 66 (33¹/₄ × 26)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Andrew W. Mellon Collection

slide 16 and reproduction (pp. 60–61)

Jan Steen

Dutch, 1625/1626–1679

The Dancing Couple, 1663

oil on canvas

102.5 × 142.5 (40³/₈ × 56¹/₈)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Widener Collection

slide 17 and reproduction (p. 85)

Johannes Vermeer

Dutch, 1632–1675

A Lady Writing, c. 1665

oil on canvas

45 × 39.9 (17³/₄ × 15³/₄)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Gift of Harry Waldron Havemeyer and Horace
Havemeyer, Jr., in memory of their father,
Horace Havemeyer

slide 18 (p. 37)

Johannes Vermeer

Dutch, 1632–1675

Woman Holding a Balance, c. 1664

oil on canvas

39.7 × 35.5 (15⁷/₈ × 14)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Widener Collection

slide 19 (p. 56)

Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck

Dutch, 1606/1609–1662

Andries Stilte as a Standard Bearer, 1640

oil on canvas

101.6 × 76.2 (40 × 30)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Patrons' Permanent Fund

slide 20 (p. 49)

Emanuel de Witte

Dutch, c. 1617–1691/1692

The Interior of the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam,

c. 1660

oil on canvas

80.5 × 100 (31¹¹/₁₆ × 39³/₈)

National Gallery of Art, Washington,
Patrons' Permanent Fund

Glossary

Allegory: an extended metaphor in art or literature in which what is represented carries meaning beyond its literal interpretation

Arcadia: a region of Greece celebrated by poets and artists for its pastoral simplicity

Burgher: a member of the urban upper or middle class

Calvinism: strict Protestant denomination based on the teachings of John Calvin (1509–1564). Official religion of the Dutch Republic, practiced by approximately one-third of the population. Calvinists abjured devotional images in their churches and emphasized personal faith and close reading of the Bible.

Camera obscura: an optical device that enabled artists to project an image of the scene or setting before them onto a canvas or flat surface. Certain characteristics of Dutch painting, such as a blurring or softening of edges and compressed space, can be linked to the use of the camera obscura.

Caravaggisti: followers of the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573–1610), known for his realism and dramatic contrasts of light and dark

Civic guard (*schutterij*): a voluntary local militia that assumed civic and religious responsibilities in its community

Classicism: refers to an overall impression of beauty, order, and balance in a work of art. The term comes from ancient Greek and Roman art, which favored physical perfection and idealized forms.

Eighty Years' War: Dutch war for independence from Spanish rule, 1568–1648

Emblem Books: moral guidebooks. Each page featured a proverb accompanied by an explanatory illustration and a poem.

Engraving: a printmaking process in which a drawing is incised on a metal plate that is then covered in ink, wiped clean, and printed, creating a sharp and precise impression

Etching: a printmaking process in which acid is used to cut an image into a plate, which is then inked and wiped clean. Ink remaining in the etched lines produces a fuzzy, more expressive image than engraving.

Flemish: describing the territory of the southern Netherlands (Flanders, now Belgium) that remained under Spanish rule following Dutch independence

Guild of Saint Luke: association of artists that oversaw the training of new artists, regulated quality standards, controlled and protected local commercial markets, and provided social support

Guilder: Dutch currency until 2002, when replaced by the Euro

House of Orange: Dutch aristocratic family associated with the quest for independence. William I (1533–1584) initiated the Dutch rebellion against Hapsburg Spanish rule. He held the title of stadholder and was succeeded by his sons and their heirs, including Maurits (1567–1625) and Fredrick Henry (1584–1647)

Iconoclasm: “image smashing.” Protestant destruction of religious imagery, primarily in Catholic churches and monasteries.

Mannerism: sometimes called the “stylish style,” mannerism is marked by strong and unnatural colors, collapsed space, awkward poses, and exaggerated proportions

Polder: drained land reclaimed for agriculture

Regents: Dutch governing elite who were members of the wealthy middle class. Regents controlled civic and provincial governments and institutions as well as the national assembly (see states-general).

Stadholder: title of the Dutch Republic’s elected military leader, traditionally reserved for a member of the House of Orange, the descendants of William of Orange

States-General: national legislative assembly controlled by regents

Treaty of Münster (1648): the formal end of the Eighty Years’ War and Spain’s official recognition of an independent Dutch Republic

Twelve-Year Truce (1609–1621): a negotiated suspension of hostilities between the United Provinces and Spain, during which Spain recognized Dutch autonomy in Europe and abroad

United Provinces: name by which the seven northern Netherlands provinces were known from 1579 until Dutch independence in 1648

VOC, Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (East India Company): founded in 1602 to develop international trade for the Dutch. The VOC held a monopoly on the world’s major trade routes in Asia and established posts in Indonesia, India, Ceylon, and Sri Lanka. Goods traded included pepper, nutmeg, mace, coffee, and cinnamon. The scope of the VOC expanded over time from shipping to shipbuilding, processing of goods, and missionary activities.

WIC, Westindische Compagnie (West India Company): formed in 1621 to serve Dutch commercial and political interests in the western hemisphere. The WIC’s post in Beverwijck (today upstate New York) was the first Dutch settlement on the East Coast of North America; with other settlements, it became New Netherland.

Dutch words and phrases

Banketje: “banquet piece” or still life featuring foods for special occasions

Fijnschilderachtig: descriptive of smoothly painted surfaces that appear to be almost without brushstrokes

Fluyts: large Dutch merchant ships with massive cargo holds that aided long-distance trade

Gracht: canal

Kermis: village fair

Koekje: cookie

Landschap: landscape

Ontbijtje: “breakfast piece” or category of still-life painting featuring breakfast or ordinary food items

Pleyt: a flat-bottomed Dutch ship commonly used as a ferry because it could sail shallow inland waterways

Pronkstileven: still-life style featuring lavish goods and bright colors

Stilleven: still life

Terms used to describe the source of an artist’s inspiration

Naar het leven: from life

Poetische gheest: from the imagination

Uyt den gheest: from the mind

