

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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NATIONAL GALLERY SHOWS 17th-CENTURY DUTCH DRAWINGS AND PRINTS FROM AMERICAN COLLECTIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. January 25, 1977. The beginning of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands saw a burst of social and economic activity resulting from that country's newly acquired independence from Spanish domination. As the Dutch rose to a position of world power, their burgeoning self-confidence soon manifested itself in artists' drawings, prints and paintings, in what was to become the outstanding period in Dutch art.

A special loan exhibition revealing the extraordinary range of expression in Dutch drawings of the seventeenth century will go on view January 30 at the National Gallery of Art. Among the exhibition's highlights are fifteen religious and secular drawings by Rembrandt van Rijn, including The Healing of Tobit and View over the Amstel from the Rampart. Lent from public and private collections in the United States, the eighty-seven drawings will remain on view at the Gallery through March 13.

To give a comprehensive view of the activity in graphic arts in the Netherlands during the 1600s, the drawings on loan are being supplemented by an additional eighty prints, a number of related drawings, and several books, organized by the National Gallery primarily from its collections.

The drawings and prints are installed to suggest chronological and thematic relationships within a broad range of subject matter, including

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landscapes, low-life genre scenes, still lifes, and late genre and figure studies.

The mannerist style, the elongated and exaggerated forms found in sixteenth-century European court art, dominated the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century. Distinctive examples of this style include Abraham Bloemaert's Ritual Washing of the Israelites and Jacob de Gheyn II's A Cross-Bowman Assisted by a Milkmaid. In addition, a number of prints by Hendrick Goltzius, who was considered unsurpassed during this period in his virtuosity in the art of engraving and woodcut prints, supplement this part of the exhibition.

Another significant achievement of seventeenth-century Dutch art was the discovery of the native Dutch landscape and its subtleties. This heightened awareness resulted in natural portrayals of the land by Hendrick Avercamp, Esaias van de Velde and Jan van Goyen. Later landscape artists, such as Jacob van Ruisdael and Aelbert Cuyp, added a grandiose, dramatic quality to their views.

Scenes of Dutch peasant life were accurately depicted by a number of Dutch artists, including Adriaen van Ostade, whose prints and drawings of village life portray picturesque environments.

The last decades of the century showed an increasing interest in the classical norms of beauty, and Dutch artists returned for sources to classical antiquity and Renaissance art to recreate idealized images of the human form. Among the genre and figure studies in the exhibition are works by Jan de Bisschop, Adriaen van de Velde and Frans van Mieris the Elder.

The seventeenth century was also a period of intense interest in the natural sciences. Many of the Dutch still-life drawings, while

scientifically rendered, convey a sense of the beauty of the flora and fauna, as seen in examples by Pieter Withoos, Jan van Huysum and Herman Saftleven.

Seventeenth Century Dutch Drawings from American Collections was selected by Franklin W. Robinson, Professor of Art at Williams College, a specialist in Dutch art. It is circulated under the auspices of the International Exhibitions Foundation and supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. After closing at the National Gallery, the exhibition will travel to the Denver Art Museum and the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. A fully illustrated catalogue, written by Professor Robinson, accompanies the exhibition.

Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., Curator of Dutch and Flemish Art at the National Gallery, organized the supplementary exhibition and served as curator for the drawings exhibition at the Gallery.

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