Delighting in the Everyday: Dutch Golden Age Painting and Prints

La Salle University Art Museum

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Delighting in the Everyday:
Dutch Golden Age Paintings and Prints

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Lehigh University Art Museum
Lower Level Olney Hall

Monday - Friday 11AM - 4PM
Sunday 2 - 4PM
Delighting in the Everyday: Dutch Golden Age Paintings and Prints

The Dutch Republic won independence from Spain in 1609, ushering in the period now commonly referred to as the Dutch Golden Age. With independence came growth in industry and commerce, making the Netherlands one of the richest and most powerful nations. A large part of the population lived in cities, where economic prosperity was widespread. Known for their religious and social tolerance, the Dutch were also exceptionally literate.

Perhaps the most distinctive quality of this culture, however, is the art it produced. The wealthy citizens of the Republic spent money on art and the art market blossomed. Celebrated today for its unprecedented realism and attention to the details of everyday life, the art from this period also treated a broad range of themes from landscape to religious scenes, portraiture, still-life and genre. A sampling of this varied output is on display here. Further examples from La Salle University’s collection can be seen in the seventeenth-century gallery.
**Town and Country**

Landscape flourished in the Dutch Republic, and, by the mid seventeenth century, it was the most widely produced and collected category of both paintings and prints. Such scenes could focus on towns, the countryside or idyllic views of Italy. Most original in this period, perhaps, is the attention artists gave to celebrating what was characteristic about the Dutch landscape.

1. **Anthony Waterloo (1609?-1676?)**
   **The Village next to the Canal**
   **Etching**

Born in Lille about 1610, little is known about Waterloo’s training and it is possible that he was self-taught. Though few of Waterloo’s paintings are known, from the considerable body of surviving drawings and prints it is clear that he was primarily active as a landscape artist. Seen from a bird eye’s perspective, *The Village next to the Canal* focuses the viewer’s attention on a small hamlet by a canal surrounded by prosperous farmland. With its low horizon lines and abundance of waterways, Waterloo highlights characteristics of the Dutch landscape.
2. Herman van Swanevelt (c. 1600-1655)
*Funeral of Phocion*
Etching
Gift of Georgette Most

Like his contemporary Nicholas Berchem whose work is shown in the section of this exhibition devoted to the pastoral, van Swanevelt specialized in idyllic views of the Italian countryside. Yet, whereas Berchem's main interest within this tradition was the shepherd and his flock, van Swanevelt's was in picturesque visions of decaying antiquities.

3. Pieter van Laer (c. 1592-1642)
*Travelers Resting at an Inn*
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Van Laer arrived in Rome in 1630, where he inspired a school of artists known as the *Bamboccianti*. The group received its name after van Laer's nickname "Il Bamboccio" (puppet or large baby), probably on account of his deformed body. Focusing on low-life genre scenes in Italianate settings and using dramatic caravaggesque lighting, van Laer's paintings caused a sensation in his day.
4. **Frans Brun (act. 1627-1648) after David Vinckboons (1576-c.1632)**

*The Family of Prince Frederik Hendrik of Orange and the Family of Frederik V of Palatinate, 1627*

Engraving

5. **Simon Wynhoutsz. Frisius [or de Vries] (c. 1580-1628) after Hendrik Hondius the Elder (1573-c.1649)**

*Landscape with the Adoration of the Magi*

Etching

Simon Frisius, or De Vries, was born in the Frisian town of Harlingen and probably came to Amsterdam as an apprentice. De Vries was a successful and prolific printmaker; at his death in 1629, he left an oeuvre of 230 prints, mainly etchings. Famous as a calligrapher, Frisius also produced portraits, landscapes and depictions of historical scenes. This print embeds the visit of the three kings into a larger landscape setting whose topography and architecture suggests the idea of the Dutch landscape.
Articles of Faith

Despite Protestant suspicion of images for religious worship, the Dutch Republic produced a large body of pictures based on biblical history. Rembrandt and his followers in particular interpreted biblical themes in terms of palpable human emotion. The power of these images frequently resides in their close observation of details from everyday life.

6. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)
   *The Flight into Egypt*, 1654
   Etching and drypoint

During the 1650s Rembrandt turned to the Bible as a source of inspiration for his etchings. His treatments include scenes not just from the Old Testament and the Apocrypha but also stories found in the New Testament, particularly those centered on the life of Christ. His works consistently reveal a profound understanding for the human dimension of these narratives.
7. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)  
*The Adoration of the Shepherds with a Lamp*, 1654  
Etching

This intimate portrayal of the *Adoration* focuses on the lowly circumstances of Christ’s birth.

8. Gerrit Dou (1613-1675)  
*The Hermit*  
Oil on panel  
Private collection

Active in Leiden, the site of Holland’s first university, it is appropriate that Dou incorporated printed texts into many of his paintings. Though it is impossible to make out the exact text the hermit in this picture is reading, in others the written letters are legible and are frequently related to articles of the Protestant faith.

9. Jan de Bisschop (1628-1671)  
*after Bartholomeus Breenbergh (c. 1599-1659)*  
*Joseph Distributing Grain in Egypt*  
Etching, state i/ii
The cornerstone of Dutch prosperity was seafaring and trading. As merchants and traders, the Dutch were keenly aware of celebrating ideas of abundance and the virtues of frugality. The subject of this print, which shows the biblical hero Joseph distributing grain to the Egyptians when their seven fat years were followed by seven lean ones, would have found particular appeal among the merchant class.

10. Hendrick Goudt (1585-1630) after Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610, German) 
Tobias and the Angel, 1613 
Engraving

Goudt made seven etchings after the well-known German artist Adam von Elsheimer. A member of lesser aristocracy, it is not known how Goudt learned to etch, yet his prints are among the most influential in seventeenth century Holland. Goudt’s night-time scenes generated a new fascination with the blackness of the page.

11. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) 
The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight, 1654 
Etching and drypoint
Early seventeenth-century printmakers’ quest for dark tonalities culminates in Rembrandt’s night pieces. The nocturnal setting of this print allows Rembrandt to explore the expressive capabilities of the medium, drawing attention to the heavy physical and psychological burden the disciples experience at Christ’s death. One of the figures holds a torch to Christ’s face, while another, who assists in bringing the body down, teeters dangerously close to a steep embankment.

Depictions of the Self and Others
Dutch portraiture is linked to a growing interest in defining the individual. Most portraits, however, especially painted portraits, were meant for public display, and for this reason depict the individual less as he/she was and more as he/she wanted to appear.

12. Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)  
Self-Portrait with Raised Sabre, 1634  
Etching

Probably the most famous painter and printmaker of Holland’s Golden Age, Rembrandt created countless self-portraits. This print, executed in 1634 when his career was beginning to take off,
reflects the artist in a mood of buoyant self-assurance and optimism. Brandishing a sabre and cloaked in ermine, Rembrandt relies on props from his studio to impersonate a kind of warrior king.

13. Jan Joris van Vliet (c. 1610 - after 1635) after Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)
*Bust of a Man Laughing*
Etching

Born in Delft or Leiden around 1610, little is known about the artist except that he studied with Rembrandt. From 1610-1635, he produced numerous engravings after his master’s work. Though reminiscent of Frans Hals’ grinning subjects, this print was made after a drawing by Rembrandt and shows Rembrandt’s interest in exploring the less than ideal qualities of the individual.
**Pastoralism**

A voluminous genre of pastoral scenes, depicting hunters as well as shepherds with their animals, records Dutch use of the land. Game shown in Dutch still-lifes or in association with hunting points to the abundance of the Dutch countryside. Similarly, the cattle-breeding and dairy industries had become sources of income and pride, and viewers were likely to see images with cows and milk ewes as markers of wealth and prosperity.

14. **Cornelis Bloemaert (1603-c. 1684) after Abraham Bloemaert (c. 1564-1651)**  
*A Hunter Resting by a Tree*  
Engraving

Executed after a drawing by his father Abraham Bloemaert, this print by Cornelis Bloemaert belongs to a series of sixteen prints *Pastorals*, and depicts a hunter resting after catching a rabbit. As an inscription below suggests, the print celebrates ideas of rest and ease.

15. **Nicholas Pietersz. Berchem (1620-1683)**  
*The Seated Shepherd*, 1652  
Etching and engraving
Berchem is well known as a painter of Italian views. While his subjects suggest he spent time in the south, there is no firm evidence to prove such a trip. His prints, like this one here with a shepherd piping and shepherdess spinning wool, treat pastoral subjects and suggest the lazy warmth of sun-drenched days.

16. **Adriaen van de Velde 1636-1672**

*Mercury and Argus*

Etching and aquatint

Van de Velde specialized in small landscapes with figures and animals. The etching, which depicts the ancient mythological characters of Mercury and Argus is related to the artist’s painting of the same subject in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and is related to Dutch fascination with the pastoral, even as it pertained to ancient mythology. According to the myth, Jupiter was in love with the nymph Io, but his wife Juno discovered this and, in her rage, turned Io into a heifer. She handed the animal to the hundred-eyed giant Argus, to guard. Mercury, Jupiter’s more astute and skilful son, was sent to kill the giant.
Wine, Woman and Smoke:

Most genre paintings construct and/or critique ideals of courtship, marriage and the home. Their subjects seem to center mostly on drinking, smoking and gambling, and are set in counterpoint to the virtues of moderation and a stable domestic life.

17. Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1684)
*The Empty Jug, 1653?*
Etching

Van Ostade was born in Haarlem in 1610 and studied with Frans Hals. Successful as an artist specializing in depictions of peasant scenes, van Ostade was a prolific printmaker and between 1647 and 1679 produced about fifty etchings. This humorous print cautions viewers of the temptations of alcohol and the life spent drinking and carousing outside the home. Gazing with evident disbelief into his empty pitcher, this drinker can hardly believe the drink's all gone.
8. Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1684)
*Drinkers and Smokers, 1663*
Oil on panel
Private Collection

By the mid seventeenth century, tobacco smoking was widespread throughout Europe. Introduced initially for its medicinal properties, by the 17th century, it was used for recreational purposes. Ambivalent attitudes existed towards smoking. Opposition to the use of tobacco resulted from its connection with alcohol and sensual indulgence. Van Ostade's treatment of the scene seems less hostile to drinking and smoking, however.

19. Jan Steen, *Lovers in an Arbor*
Oil on canvas
Private Collection

Daily life was Jan Steen's main pictorial theme. Many of the scenes he portrayed are lively to the point of chaos and lustfulness, and a *Jan Steen household (een huishouden van Jan Steen)*, became a Dutch proverb, meaning a messy scene. Indications in his paintings seem to hint that Steen meant to warn the viewer rather than invite him/her to copy this
behavior. In this particular, subject a young woman seems to be the object of an older man’s unwanted advances. Emboldened by drink, an older man leers lecherously at a younger woman, who coyly holds her hands in her lap. This, the artist seems to suggest, is not an appropriate way to court a woman.

20. **Cornelis Bega (1620-1664)**  
**The Young Hostess Caressed**  
Etching

A pupil of van Ostade, Bega was a specialist in scenes of peasant life and especially low-life taverns. In this scene, two men fondle a young woman. Contrasting the woman’s fresh face with the anonymity of the two males, one senses that Bega is critical of the men’s uncouth behavior, whose vices include gambling and smoking.

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