

Dutch Landscapes

Contents

Panoramas	2
Winter	4
Jan van Goyen	9
Salomon van Ruysdael	15
Jacob van Ruisdael	16
Italianate Painters	28
Aelbert Cuyp	32
Beach and Maritime Scenes	39
References	45

The largely flat Netherlands seems an unlikely source of inspiration, but Dutch landscapes showed innovations which were looked upon with pride: the creation of waterways for transport and trade; the taming of sea and rivers to reclaim land; the harnessing of nature's power through mills to manage water and provide the necessities of daily life; and, not least, towering Protestant churches. Landscapes celebrated these vital components of the life and power of the Netherlands. The compositions were highly organised, much more so than previously. They were not always real scenes; Dutch art theorist Samuel van Hoogstraten in 1678 described them as a selective likeness (*keurlijke natuurlijkheid*).

Panoramas

The panoramic view is a unique contribution to art: *"It is Dutch through and through: the vast plain seeming to stretch endlessly, the small towns barely rising above the level of fields (Stechow)"*.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *View of Naarden*, 1647

Early in the century panoramas were painted in a long oblong, divided equally between land and sky. High skies became fashionable in the 1640s as they invoked an air of stateliness. Jacob van Ruisdael shows this expanded sky in his view of the birthplace of his father and uncle, 20km southeast off Amsterdam on the Zuider Zee, which can be seen on the right. The foreground mound starts the diagonal which leads across sunlit fields to the roof of the farmhouse and on to the illuminated ruin of Muiderberg church.

The horizon of these panoramas was rarely pierced. An etching by Rembrandt paved the way for that to change. Amsterdam, seen from the east, bristles against the sky. The Herring Packer Tower (demolished in 1829) and the warehouses of the East and West Indies Companies – sources of great wealth for the Dutch – bracket the Old Church and the windmill on the Rijzenhoofd.

Rembrandt's idea was soon emulated. Jan van Goyen produced a view of The Hague and Jacob a panorama of Haarlem.



Rembrandt, *View of Amsterdam*, 1643 (etching)



Jan van Goyen, *A View of The Hague from the Northwest*, 1647

Jacob's high sky is not simply a response to the taste for stateliness, but mirrors the ground. They recede from the foreground at the bottom and top edges of the painting and converge to emphasise the magnificent (and over-sized) Grote Kerk in Haarlem. Jacob invents the scene, combining the dunes, the cornfields and bleaching fields, windmills, woods and reclaimed land which surround the city – images of all things Dutch. The churches in Haarlem are lit by the sun as if Heaven itself is celebrating this tiny nation's success in casting off the religion and archaic rule of the greatest empire in Europe.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *View of Haarlem*, 1670 (Zurich)

Winter

Winter scenes are another special contribution to art. The Limbourg Brothers and Breughel produced some, but these were invariably part of a calendar series. Dutch painters recorded life on the frozen waterways – a cause of lament for some, an excuse for fun and games in the Netherlands. **Hendrick Avercamp** lived on the eastern side of the Zuider Zee. His works fascinate social historians because they show the activities and dress of all ranks of Dutch society. Hendrick painted scenes with high and low viewpoints.



Hendrick Avercamp, *Winter landscape with Ice Skaters*, 1608



Hendrick Avercamp, *Winter Scene on a Canal*, 1615

Aert van der Neer started painting only in his 30s, when he moved to Amsterdam after being a steward in service. His works didn't fetch high prices and Aert became yet another Dutch Golden Age painter who knew poverty, being declared bankrupt in 1662. The standard of his art was consistently high. Virtually all his paintings are imaginary scenes. Aert's early winter scenes were much like Hendrick's, although the prevalent taste meant his skies were higher. Aert soon moved to much simpler paintings of less glamorous folk, which convey more of a feel for life in winter.



Aert van der Neer, *Frozen River, Evening*, c 1665



Aert van der Neer, *Sports on a Frozen River*, c 1660 (oil on wood)

Evening turns to sunset and a painterly approach with glistening white highlights. This introduces the other strand to Aert's art; nocturnes. He was the only Dutch painter to specialise in them.



Aert van der Neer, *Village and Canal*, 1645 (Rijksmuseum)

While some of Aert's nocturnes might be set anywhere in Europe, this work in the Rijksmuseum can never be mistaken for anything other than a Dutch landscape. In common with the winter scenes, the composition has the banks of the river receding diagonally, but the movement into depth is arrested by horizontals; foreground horses, men fishing in their boats, cattle on a narrow spit and the side-view of a sailing vessel. Local colours, as befits a nocturne, are muted, and the picture dominated by the overall brown-grey tone. All these aspects of Dutch landscapes had been developed two decades earlier by Jan van Goyen and Salomon van Ruysdael.

Jan van Goyen

Jan was born in Leiden, son of a cobbler, and studied under various artists before leaving in 1615 for a year in France, returning to work in the studio of Esaias van de Velde.

Jan became the most prominent artist in the development of tonality and the use of diagonals in landscapes. His early works don't hint at this, although a diagonal can be traced from the top of the tree in the right foreground, through the behind the bridge and onto the church spire.



Jan van Goyen, *The Village*, 1625

A work in the same year by **Pieter van Santvoort** featuring a double diagonal (road sweeping upwards, trees and house sweeping down) and an overall brownish-yellow tone is important. This “*somewhat crude but magnificently daring painting occupies a decisive place in the evolution of Dutch landscape painting.*”



Pieter van Santvoort, *Sandy Road*, 1625

The work is far ahead of any work by Jan van Goyen of the same date, but Jan quickly learned the lessons. In his version of *Sandy Road*, the receding diagonal formed by the tree, roof, gables and distant trees meets the rising one of the road. Apart from the delicate mauve blouse and blue trousers, the painting has no local colour but is bathed in brown-green tones.



Jan van Goyen, *Sandy Road with Farmhouse*, 1627

The combination of overall tone and diagonals appears in Jan's panorama scenes. The one of Rhenen again brown-green (with the clouds helping the sweep from the top left); the more famous *Windmill* in blue-green tones.



Jan van Goyen, *View of Rhenen*, 1646

Rhemen is a town southeast of Utrecht on northern bank of Rhine, on the frontier of the seven provinces which made a compact in 1579 to resist Spanish tyranny. As a symbol of the beginning of the struggle for independence, Rhemen was popular in the Netherlands. In common with most Dutch artists, Jan was not often commissioned but usually painted on speculation for the market. He painted at least 26 views of Rhemen, so the scene must have been popular. This *View of Rhemen* has 2/3rd of the canvas devoted to sky; the neatly placed church, The Cunerakerk, divides the landscape horizontally in the same proportion.



Jan van Goyen, *A Windmill by a River*, 1642

Windmill by a River uses a steelyard-balance composition which can be seen many times in Dutch art. Here the large windmill is counterbalanced by the smaller but more prominent man in dark clothing on the left, together with the more distant vertical masts of boats and the town beyond. Jan's painting foreshadows the Classical trend in Netherlands' landscapes, where a motif (not always a building) appears on one side in the foreground, usually enlarged.

Jan's paintings of the 1640s were from a period when he travelled around the Netherlands and the western German states. In 1632 he had settled in The Hague and, as well as painting, worked as a dealer in art, arranging auctions, and in the tulip bulb business. He suffered grave financial losses from these speculations in 1637, and afterwards started his travels, filling sketchbooks with rapid chalk drawings. While in The Hague Jan started his river scenes. Shipping on rivers and canals was decisive to Dutch commerce. The water systems of the Amsterdam-Rotterdam area linked the coast to large internal rivers, notably the Rhine, and were of paramount importance in the 17th century when trade expanded enormously.

Jan's river scenes begin with the same double diagonal recession. The water's edge forming the lower in *The Village* with trees, structures, spire and sails combining to form the upper diagonal.



Jan van Goyen, *The Village*, 1636 (Munich)

Jan's other river landscapes use a single structure to start the broken line of recession, and feature a ferry boat parallel to the picture frame which balances the structure as well as arresting the movement into depth. The motif was first used by Jan's teacher, Esaias van de Velde in his *Cattle Ferry* of 1622.



Jan van Goyen, *The Village*, 1636 (Harvard)

In his later paintings, the structure becomes more prominent, much like his *Windmill by a River* – producing a stateliness common to the Classical landscapes which were to follow. The parallel ferry boat remains.



Jan van Goyen, *The Pelkus Gate near Utrecht*, 1646

Jan painted the gate many times, always a ruin as haven for birds. In this work the light is more golden than in earlier paintings, chiefly through the colour in the sky, which is similar to that in *the View of Rhenen* painted in the same year. The culmination of Jan's stately structures comes in his view of Nijmegen, in a composition identical to *The Village* above.



Jan van Goyen, *A View of the Valkhof at Nijmegen*, 1641 (Museum Het Valkhof, Nijmegen)

Nijmegen, on the Waal River with good view over the Rhine valley, was a popular subject in Dutch landscapes. The uprising of the Batavians (the original inhabitants of the region) against Roman rule was, in the 16th century, equated by the Dutch to their revolt against Spain. Early in the fight against Spain, Maurice, Prince of Orange, leading the United Provinces army and supported by English troops, captured Breda, Deventer (both appearing in Western art) and three other cities from the Spanish in 1590 before laying siege to Nijmegen in 1591. Maurice and his forces drove back Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma from an adjacent fort into the town. The Dutch may well have prevailed anyway, but it was at this point that Philip of Spain ordered Parma to Paris to fight Henry of Navarre [see Farnese Gallery in Italian 17th century notes]. Nijmegen's defences were weakened and Maurice captured the city. For the remainder of the fight against Spain, Nijmegen suffered a number of sieges, but remained in Dutch hands. Quite apart from the historical significance, the site enthused Dutch artists because of its hilly terrain – a unusual treat!

Landscapes painted of the city show the evolution of Dutch landscapes; the tonal period (Jan's work above); the preference for local colour (Salomon van Ruysdael's below); Classical golden light (Aelbert Cuyp's version later).



Salomon van Ruysdael, *View of Nijmegen*, 1647

Jan van Goyen was the one of the most prolific Dutch landscape artists - 1200 paintings of his survive. Despite this prodigious output, Jan left his widow a pauper. Partly that was because of his various unsuccessful speculations, but the entrepreneurial spirit of the Dutch Golden Age extended to artists; many of the masters we have met had business side-lines. Auctions of Jan's possessions had to be held in 1652 and 1654 so he could repay debts. He had speculated in property for many years and when he died in 1656, the bulk of his estate consisted of mortgaged houses which "*have greatly declined and fallen in price for some time now (Hans-Ulrich Beck, biographer).*" The proceeds of the sale of Jan's paintings, furniture and houses were just enough to satisfy his creditors but his widow spent her last years in Nieuwkoop Almshouse in The Hague.

Salomon van Ruysdael

Salomon, born in Naarden, was a few years older than Jan van Goyen and had a less vivacious temperament. He was influenced by the same teachers, adopting diagonals in his compositions, but often preferred a larger palette than Jan. *Peasants on a Dune* is richer in colour than van Goyen's tonal works and also has more complicated diagonals. Soon, Salomon's love of colour emerges.



Salomon van Ruysdael, *A Landscape with Peasants on a Dune*, 1629



Salomon van Ruysdael, *River Landscape with Ferry*, 1649

In this river scene, Salomon follows Jan by forming a lower diagonal with the water's edge and a broken upper diagonal of trees, spire and sails. Sometimes he did away with trees and relied instead on sailing boats on open water. Salomon shows the skyline of Deventer, one of the conquests of Maurice, Prince of Orange. He enlarges the Grote Kerk (as Calvinists re-named St Lebuinus Church in 1590 after a bout of iconoclasm). The twin towers of St Nicholas's Church (renamed the Mountain Church) are to the left.



Salomon van Ruysdael, *A View of Deventer*, 1657

Jacob van Ruisdael

Salomon must have had a hand in the training of his nephew Jacob, who is regarded as the pre-eminent painter of Dutch landscapes. Salomon and his brother Isaack, who was also a landscape painter (but much less talented), moved from Naarden to Haarlem in 1616. Jacob was born in 1628 or 1629 to Isaack and probably his second wife Maycken, whom Isaack married on 12 November 1628. Jacob's apprenticeship is unclear, but by 1646 at the young age of 16 or 17, he was a member of the Haarlem Guild and signing paintings. The guild ran a closed shop and normally members were not admitted before the age of 20, so Jacob must have impressed. Jacob never married so he could support his father.

To begin with Jacob painted scenes around the dunes of Haarlem, long a popular subject for artists of the city and for which demand was still strong in the 1640s. The Bible and nature were commonly thought to be the twin sources of divine understanding; "*God's goodness appears on every sand-dune's top*", wrote Constantijn Huygens, ace diplomat and Rembrandt's important early supporter. Jacob's *Landscape with a Cottage* is one of his earliest works. Already the trees (pollarded willow, blooming elder bush and oak tree) are done in marvellous detail, much stronger than those of his uncle, and would become a common motif.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Landscape with Cottage*, 1646

Sand dunes and clumps of trees round Haarlem were Jacob's favourite subjects in these years. *Dune Landscape* has the Grote Kerk on a proper scale, in contrast to the magnified version in his panorama seen earlier. Jacob's feeling for trees continues, here forming a balanced central mass in conjunction with the clouds. A year later the same pollarded willow appears in golden light as the storm breaks.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Dune Landscape near Haarlem*, 1647



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Storm on the Dunes*, 1649



Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Ruins of the Castle of Egmond*, c 1652

During the 1640s Jacob made short trips to Naarden (the view of which was shown at the start), Alkmaar and Egmond. The castle of Egmond was occupied by Spanish troops during their invasion in 1573-4. When they left, the castle was destroyed on the command of the Prince of Orange to prevent the Spanish from using it again. There is no hill behind the ruin, but Jacob's invention allows a descending diagonal which crosses the one formed by the receding ruined wall. The marvellous touches of white on the terracotta bricks echo the foreground birch. The only touch of bright colour appears on the shepherd's tunic, common attire on the Netherlands/German States border. *Castle of Egmond* starts Jacob's fascination with monumental structures. In the early 1650s he toured the border region, visiting Utrecht, Rhenen and Bentheim in Westphalia.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Castle of Bentheim*, 1653 (National Gallery of Ireland)

At least a dozen of Jacob's landscapes feature Bentheim Castle, but the one in the Beit Collection in Ireland is the most celebrated. Once again Jacob makes a very low hill into a mountain, which is mirrored in miniature by the rocks in the foreground with plants rendered with a wealth of detail. A sawn-off birch appears which will recur.

During this jaunt to the border, Jacob saw the water mills near Singraven in Overijssel. He painted them several times, but changed the landscape – once again adding hills (how Dutch artists must have yearned for them!) - and even the mills. This experience and the practice Jacob gained from it turned out to be fortuitous: “*the rushing cascades falling from the broad open sluices in these pictures show that by the early 1650s, Jacob was a master at portraying powerful torrents and seething foam – an ability that stood him in good stead toward the end of the decade when he began to paint motifs he had never seen: Scandinavian waterfalls (Slive).*”



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Two Watermills near Singraven*, 1651 (London)

Watermills became a favourite subject of Jacob's most talented pupil **Meindert Hobbema**, who painted more than 30 pictures of those he had seen in the eastern Netherlands. In some of Meindert's paintings the scene is closed but in others he opens up a view into the distance.



Meindert Hobbema, *A Watermill*, 1663 (Wallace Collection)

In 1656 or 1657 Jacob moved from Haarlem to Amsterdam where he remained for rest of his life. He soon noticed and exploited trends in the art market there. Allart van Everdingen had spent 1644 travelling in Norway and Sweden and after he returned produced paintings of Scandinavian waterfalls. The earliest is dated 1647. By the time Jacob moved to Amsterdam, Allart had established a strong market for these scenes. In the inventory of an Amsterdam collector in 1669, one of Allart's works was valued at 60g, about three times the price of any of the other landscapes and paintings in the collection. Jacob's three waterfalls in that collection were valued at 42g, 42g and 36g while a panoramic *View of Haarlem* (not the one shown at the start, but similar) was rated at 24g. Jacob adopted Allart's formula of castle on a mountain across from trees with water rushing over rocks in the foreground, but his art was much more skilful and expressive.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Landscape with Waterfall and Castle*, 1665

Jacob used this composition in a group of Scandinavian scenes which form the largest category in his art. He also produced scenes which include Dutch features – the church, houses and shepherds (as well as the now-familiar double diagonal of Netherlandish landscapes). These characteristics of home become more marked in the 1670s when Jacob resorted to a horizontal format for his waterfalls: windmills glistening in the distance.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Waterfall near a Village*, c 1667 (London)



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Landscape with Waterfall*, late 1660s (Rijksmuseum)

Jacob also responded to the enormous demand for topological views that blossomed in Amsterdam. He made six drawings from which the prolific Amsterdam printmaker Abraham Bloteling produced etched copies. *The Blue Bridge* and *The Windmill by Blue Bridge* are shown below.



More notably, Bloteling etched two drawings Jacob made of Beth Haim, the cemetery used by the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam at the village of Ouderkerk on the Amstel River. The cemetery was a tourist attraction. John Evelyn, who travelled widely in the Netherlands and marvelled at the demand for paintings even among small shopkeepers, spent four days in Amsterdam in August 1641. On his first day he visited places for relief of the poor, the Town Hall and the Kloveniersdoelen militia company HQ (missing by a year Rembrandt's *Night Watch*). But he began his day with a visit to the Synagogue of the Jews which filled him with wonder and thence to Ouderkerk to a 'spacious field' for their dead.



In the background of Jacob's drawing is St Urban's Church at Ouderkerk, the spire of which appears in Rembrandt's *Stone Bridge*. Jacob used three of the tombs (those belonging to Dr Eliahu Montalto, Hakam Issak Uziel and Israel Abraham Mendez) for the main group in his famous *Jewish Cemetery*. There are two very similar versions. The large ruin in the Dresden version is the remains of the Castle of Egmond, in the Detroit version (probably) the Romanesque Abbey of Egmond. Goethe saw the Dresden version and thought the scene was optimistic, "light is about to conquer the rain squall". That mood is stronger in the Detroit painting, which is brighter and includes a rainbow as sign of promise and resurrection. Goethe said, "the trees with their green foliage, grass and flowers make us forget that we are on a burial-ground."



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Jewish Cemetery*, c 1653 (Detroit)



Jacob van Ruisdael, *A Cornfield with the Zuider Zee*, early 1660s (Museum Boijmans van Beuningen)

From the start Jacob also enjoyed corn fields, he painted over 20 scenes of them, usually with sunlight illuminating the crop. The abundance of grain in the Netherlands' climate allowed much to be exported.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Wheat Fields*, c 1670 (Met)

Jacob's *Wheat Fields* can be seen only in the Met, as it is part of Benjamin Altman's bequest of paintings, who stipulated that none of them could be lent. The open landscape with receding road is said to have influenced Meindert Hobbema's most famous work (although much earlier Aelbert Cuyp painted a similar line of trees in *The Avenue at Meerdervoort*).

Meindert married in 1668 and took up a well-paid position in Amsterdam, assessing and collecting taxes on wine. He virtually stopped painting after he married, so *The Avenue* was long thought to have been painted in 1669. The "8" was uncovered during cleaning. This date was confirmed by the discovery that the trees were planted only in 1664 and the beacon (just visible beyond the barn) was put up in 1682.



Meindert Hobbema, *The Avenue at Middelharnis*, 1689

The windmill was a very popular but Jacob painted only about 15 windmill scenes. He largely gave up on windmills in the 1650s but they appear again in winter scenes painted from the late 1660s.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *Winter Landscape with a Windmill*, 1675-1680 (Birmingham)

Jacob's most famous work, *The Windmill at Wijk* is like Jan van Goyen's *A Windmill by a River*, but simplified and more powerful. Diagonals converge on the boat which forms a beautiful contrast in a steelyard-balance to the windmill. The windmill is enlarged as hero. In emblem books, the miller's dependence on the wind to grind his grain is similar to the dependence on the spirit of the Lord for life; windmill as image of divine power. Everything is subordinate; the 15th century Archbishop's Castle to the left is reduced in size, the squat tower of the Church of St John the Baptist is pushed into the depths and the wall around the town is omitted. The main entrance into the town, the Women's Gate, is replaced by three small female figures.



Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Windmill at Wijk bij Duurstede*, 1668-70 (Rijksmuseum)

Jacob was gravely ill in 1661 but recovered and the *Windmill at Wijk* shows his renewed strength in the second half of 1660s. Despite his marvellous talent Jacob was never rich, but was secure - remarkable, then, among 17th century Dutch masters. He died in Amsterdam in March 1682, and was buried in his favourite church of St Bavo in Haarlem.

The Windmill at Wijk reflected the taste of the Dutch for heroic images with vigorous contrasts; solid forms against the sky, light against shade and cool against warm colours. This marks the Classical phase of Dutch landscapes. That partly refers to the august buildings in the works of Claude and Poussin. But for the Dutch, the heroic symbol was not a classical piece of Italian architecture. In their lives there were more appropriate subjects. Jacob chose a windmill; Aelbert Cuyp chose cattle. Whatever was used, the hero provided solidity and structure to the whole design. The back of Aelbert's standing cow forms a strong profile which is repeated in the distant country.

Compositions were more powerful in this phase, but atmosphere was important. Classical also reflects the use of southern golden light seen so often in Italian landscapes. Aelbert Cuyp's scene is influenced by that – much more so than Jacob. Before turning to Cuyp, a look at the Dutch painters who influenced his art.

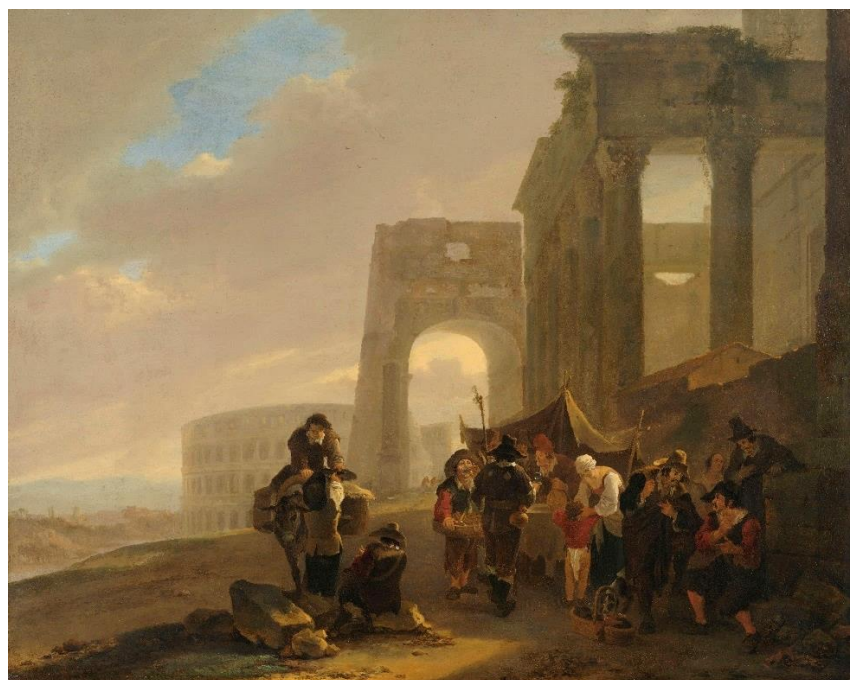


Aelbert Cuyp, *Young Herdsmen with Cows*, 1655-60

Italianate Painters

Dutch artists followed their international counterparts and went to Italy to study. Their Italian scenes were more popular with collectors in the 18th and early 19th centuries than the works of Jan van Goyen and Jacob van Ruisdael. Indeed, histories of German and British landscape painting were riddled with references to Dutch masters of Italian scenes. However, by the 20th century indifference set in.

Jan Both is regarded as the most gifted of the group. As late as 1875 a picture by Jan Both fetched £4725 (more than ten times as much as a splendid maritime scene by Jan van de Cappelle in the same auction); 18 years later it was sold for £1134; nobody knows where it is today.



Jan Both, *Street Scene among Roman Ruins*, 1640s

Jan was born in Utrecht and stayed in Rome from 1638 to 41. The vast majority of his known works are painted after he returned to Utrecht in the ten years before his premature death. His *Street Scene* shows he felt the influence of *bamboccianti* under Pieter van Laer [see 17th century Italy] but had also absorbed the Dutch receding diagonal. The golden light in his paintings prompted a widespread vogue for Italianate landscapes in Holland. *Italian Landscape*, regarded by de Groot as Jan's most important work, skilfully combines the lovely sunshine of Southern Italy with what might be a Dutch scene, in an excellent composition.



Jan Both, *Italian Landscape with a Draughtsman*, 1650-52 (Rijksmuseum)

Nicolaes Berchem had long and prolific career. Born in Haarlem, entering the Guild there in 1642 and then touring Italy for 3 years sketching and making studies which he used for rest of career. He painted all genres, but it was for his landscapes which he achieved fame. They were more pastoral than those of Both; shepherds and buxom shepherdesses tend flocks, herdsman guard cattle; lively figures set under dazzling blue skies with vivid clothing against the cool greens of the landscapes.

Nicolaes was extremely popular and well paid during his lifetime and in the 18th century when pastorals became all the rage his fame increased. His works drew the ire of Constable who, in a lecture in 1836 railed: "*Both and Berchem, who by an incongruous mixture of Dutch and Italian taste, produced a bastard style of landscape, destitute of the real excellence of either ... their reputation kept up by dealers, who continue to sell their pictures for high prices.*" In the audience one man said; "*I suppose I had better sell my Berchems*", to which Constable replied; "*No sir, that will only continue the mischief, burn them!*"

One can see Constable's point in *Shepherdess*; Italian scenery and atmosphere with Dutch cattle, shepherdess and diagonal (cunningly emphasised by the entirely natural angle of herdsman's staff). Also evident is the charm that attracted 18th century collectors.



Nicolaes Berchem, *A Shepherdess carrying a Kid across a Ford*, 1658 (Hampton Court Palace)

In some of his Italian landscapes, **Adam Pynacker** exhibited the same pastoral charm. He was famed especially, for his prominent white birches.



Adam Pynacker, *Landscape with Sportsmen and Game*, 1665

Adam painted many coastal and harbour scenes, but the best painting of an Italianate Harbour was produced by **Jan Asselyn**, perhaps most famous for his *Threatened Swan* of 1650, allegory of the Dutch Republic being protected through some dramatic times by Johan de Witt (and for his pains was later literally ripped apart by a mob).

Asselyn's harbour is populated by folk familiar to the East and West Indies Companies: Levantine, Chinese and Negro with a Dutch merchant near his boat pointing to distant shores, all set in a gorgeous Italian light.



Adam Pynacker, *Southern Hilly Coast*, 1657



Jan Asselijn, *A Coastal Ruin in Italy*, 1640-52 (Rijksmuseum)

Aelbert Cuyp

Aelbert was born and lived in Dordrecht; indeed, in the 17th century he was virtually unknown outside the town despite his art and later prominent social position. Dordrecht was an important city at the confluence of Rhine, Maas and Merwede from where ships could get to the North Sea or far into the European hinterland. Described in 1649 as “*the capital of Holland – Mother and Queen of the cities in this lovely landscape*”, the English traveller, John Ray, visiting in the late 1660s said the elegantly paved streets of this large well-built city were so clean “*that a man may walk them in slippers without wetting his foot in the midst of winter.*”

The city was given the privilege of staple in 1299: wine, grain, wood and other goods were unloaded at Dordrecht and assessed for duties before being allowed to travel onwards. In the 17th century traders increasingly used cheaper ports like Rotterdam. The Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-9 codified Reformed Church worship and ordered the translation of the bible into Dutch. The States Bible was published in 1637.



Aelbert Cuyp, *Scene with Distant Windmills*, 1640 (oil on oak)

Although Cuyp was influenced by Italianate painters, he began with Jan van Goyen's tonality. He relied on light and colour rather than compositional devices (the by-now-well-flogged diagonal, for example) to achieve depth; stronger and darker tones in the foreground give way to lighter ones. *Distant Windmills* is done with a broad brush, which is even more painterly and used to brilliant effect in an early *View of the Maas*. Zwijndrecht is shown on the left, the Grote Kerk of Dordrecht dominates the right.



Aelbert Cuyp, *A View of the Maas at Dordrecht*, c 1645 (oil on wood panel)

Aelbert was trained by his father, Jacob, who specialised in pastoral landscapes, often featuring animals; hence Aelbert's predilection for cattle. Aelbert preferred yellow tones to Jan's greys and browns, and produced a very different view of Nijmegen. Cuyp goes his own way, with a flatter view across the river, using a small boat as a counterweight to the huge fortress. Aelbert was fascinated by Nijmegen and painted it at least 6 times. This one had a pendant with a view from the East, which is not so good.



Aelbert Cuyp, *Landscape with Cattle*, 1639 (oil on wood panel)



Aelbert Cuyp, *View of Nijmegen*, 1652-4 (oil on wood panel, Indianapolis)

From the late 1640s, golden sunlight bathes his scenes, under the influence of Jan Both. The Treaty of Munster in 1648, which formally recognised the independence of the Dutch Republic and marked the end of the Thirty Years' War brought a good deal of optimism to the Netherlands, which Aelbert's positive views reflect. Dordrecht was the site of catastrophic flooding in 1421, but since then much land had been reclaimed. This was used for agriculture, especially dairy farming, and cattle wading in the shallow water in the spring when rivers around Dordrecht were swollen was a common sight, evoking much delight.



Aelbert Cuyp, *Cows in a River*, c 1650 (oil on oak, Budapest)

The beasts form a group closed by the animal at the rear peering to its left, but are integrated into the scene, continuing the line started from the left of the Grote Kerk which runs across and down to the boats (and is reflected in the underside of the clouds above). Albert painted several versions of cows in shallow water; this is the best. They were an important theme later in his life, when he managed his estate and those of his wife's family which covered vast tracts of agricultural land around Dordrecht (much of it reclaimed) and farmed by dozens of tenants. Cuyp's cattle are the best in Dutch art, gracious and noble. Far superior to those of Paulus Potter, who nonetheless is celebrated for his painting of *The Bull*.



Paulus Potter, *The Bull*, 1647

Cuyp initially used wood panels but from the mid-to-late 1650s switched to canvas. On this medium he painted a series of landscapes, based on sketches he made while travelling between Nijmegen and Cleves along the Rhine in early 1650s. They later sparked a great deal of English interest. There are now more works by Cuyp in England than anywhere else.



Aelbert Cuyp, *River Landscape with Horsemen and Peasants*, 1658-60 (London)

He was slow to appear internationally. Although London auctions were full of Dutch paintings from 1690 onwards, none of his works appeared until 1741. Richard Wilson pointed out the gap when asked who the best landscape painters were; “*Claude for air and Gaspard for composition and sentiment, but there are two painters whose merit the world does not yet know who will not fail hereafter to be highly valued, Cuyp and Mompers.*” In 1764, the 3rd Earl of Bute bought *River Landscape with Horsemen and Peasants* for his new estate at Luton Hoo. John Boydell included an image of the painting in his volume of prints in 1769 with the comment “*the painting is equal to any thing of the like kind ever painted by Claude Lorraine ... Cuyp may with great propriety be styled the Dutch Claude.*”

Bute was a close friend of George III, and his purchase of Aelbert's work exerted an interest in the court, most notably through the Prince Regent (the future George IV) who, while being the most hated monarch in England's history, had a fine eye for art. He bought many works from the Dutch Golden Age, including five landscapes by Cuyp: *An Evening Landscape with Figures and Sheep* was purchased in 1814.



Aelbert Cuyp, *An Evening Landscape with Figures and Sheep*, 1655-9

Cuyp's depictions of well-dressed horsemen (invariably looming over peasants) found favour with the English aristocratic hunting class. He had this appeal back home too. Throughout the Dutch Republic, the old nobility was dying off and new titles were not issued. However, rich city dwellers acquired titles by purchasing estates connected to a noble name. Having obtained a title like this, they claimed the right to hunt, previously a privilege restricted to the court. The States General several times had to expressly forbid from hunting those who had acquired new titles.

The Prince Regent's interest in Cuyp prompted the well-off in commerce or banking to start buying Aelbert's works. Partly this was out of sycophancy, but there may have been an element of speculation too. The Prince Regent was hugely profligate, wasting vast sums on pleasure – his father and Parliament having to pay off his debts did not deter him. His extravagance while English folk were starving during the Napoleonic Wars is the reason he was hated by his subjects. But if one managed to acquire a Cuyp who knows what exorbitant price one might exact from the art-loving wastrel? Perhaps this was the reason Sir Abraham Hume paid unheard of price of £1200 for the *Maas at Dordrecht*?



Aelbert Cuyp, *The Maas at Dordrecht*, 1650 (Washington DC)

JMW Turner saw this painting at the British Institute Exhibition of 1815 and copied the composition (reversing it) in *The Dort* of 1818. Aelbert's painting may show the Dutch fleet at Dordrecht in July 1646. Officials, one of whom is wearing Dordrecht's colours of red and white on a sash, are boarding ferry boat to set the mark for the fleet's departure. The work repeats the format of the early tonal river view, but the ferry is even larger. A rather more august vessel is the focus for the Kenwood House work.



Aelbert Cuyp, *View of Dordrecht*, c 1665 (Kenwood House)

This was Aelbert's last painting. His works were popular among wealthy merchants in Dordrecht, but were not expensive, averaging around 20-30g apiece. Fortunately, he was not reliant on his art for a living. In 1658, he married Cornelia Boschman, the widow of a wealthy Dordrecht regent, after which he rarely painted settling into estate management. When William of Orange (Willem III) was brought back to power in 1672 to deal with the French, he ordered a sweeping change to Dordrecht's government, installing an entirely new regency of a "Hundred Men", which included Cuyp, who by this time had abandoned his career as painter. He served on the judicial tribunal and was active in religious and social activities. At his death in November 1691 Aelbert was one of the wealthiest men in Dordrecht.

Beach and Maritime Scenes

Moving down Dutch rivers to the sea, **Simon de Vlieger** usually depicted in his beach scenes the common sight of folk buying fresh fish from the shallow-draught boats used by many Dutch fishermen. *Beach View* is a famous example. An elegant couple watch from a dune. In the distance their social counterparts use carriage and horses to secure the best of the catch.



Simon de Vlieger, *Beach View*, 1643

Simon has the tonality and high skies of landscapes of the period. He painted simpler, more effective, compositions, like the one below. Diagonals in the crowd and along the edge of the dunes are punctuated by verticals (the masts and distant church create another diagonal).



Simon de Vlieger, *Beach near Scheveningen*, 1633

Scheveningen Beach – a long tract of sand by The Hague - was a popular scene for Dutch painters; all the main landscape artists mentioned so far (apart from Cuyp) produced images of it. The beach was given added prominence when, during the first Anglo-Dutch War, the Battle of Scheveningen took place in August 1653. Thousands gathered on the beach to watch. The Dutch suffered grave losses, but succeeded in forcing the English to withdraw, so ending the blockade which had inflicted an economic collapse and heavy unemployment on the Netherlands. Scheveningen remains popular with holiday-makers today and it was in this vein that **Adriaen van de Velde** painted his famous scene.



Adriaen van de Velde, *View of Scheveningen*, 1658

Maritime scenes had begun in Dutch art as a celebration of battles won against the Spanish [see 16th century notes], depicting fleets in great detail. There were many more victories in the 17th century, over the English predominantly and also the French. However, maritime art moved away from battle scenes, and began to focus more attention on the sea and atmosphere. **Jan Porcellis** marked this shift in 1629 with *Rough Weather* [only a poor copy available] and other works which emphasise overcast skies and choppy seas.



Jan Porcellis, *A Fishing Pink on a Windy Day*, 1631

Jan was considered greatest marine painter of the age; Rembrandt collected his works, and Simon de Vlieger followed his lead.



Simon de Vlieger, *Thunderstorm off the Coast*, 1645-50

Admiral Sir Lionel Preston, who wrote in 1937 about 17th century Dutch marine painting was impressed with Simon's seas; "no one makes the grey North Sea as real as De Vlieger can ... In his pictures we feel the breeze freshening – a Sou'wester brewing – clouds rush past the sun, to throw patches of light on the sea ... there can be no sailor, particularly among those who spent the Great War in the North Sea, who will not appreciate and understand the truth which came from the brush of De Vlieger."

Simon also painted calmer scenes, which had a lasting impact on his successors who generally moved away from stormy seas. Here two men mend a hull at the end of the day.



Simon de Vlieger, *Estuary at Dawn*, 1645

Jan van de Cappelle is regarded by Stechow as the greatest Dutch marine painter. Jan taught himself by studying Simon's works. He painted about 150 seascapes, invariably with calm water, many showing a parade of ships.



Jan van de Cappelle, *The Home Fleet Saluting the State Barge*, 1650 (Rijksmuseum)

Willem van de Velde the younger was taught by Simon de Vlieger. Willem favoured calm water with large sunny skies and in this vein is as Classical as Cuyp: Dutch Man-of-War as hero (which, indeed they were) in *The Cannon Shot*.



Willem van de Velde II, *The Cannon Shot*, 1680

The sails shimmer in sunlight, beautifully edged by mast and rigging and silhouetted against a dark cloud. The smoke from the cannon shot leads to far distance. Willem went to England in 1672 after the French invaded. Charles II gave him and his father incomes. Willem's art in England was not consistently high in quality. He painted sea battles in England, including many versions of the Battle of Solebay in the Third Anglo-Dutch war, sometimes sailing with the fleet and sketching during a battle. He was adored by Turner for his atmosphere: William Gilpin in 1791 noted an old Thames waterman remembered taking Willem out on his boat on the Thames in all kinds of weather to study the appearance of the sky.

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