

DUTCH AND ENGLISH PAINTINGS

Seascape Gallery 1600 – 1850

The art and ship models in this station are devoted to the early Dutch and English seascape painters. The historical emphasis here explains the importance of the sea to these nations.

Historical Overview:

The Dutch:

During the 17th century, the Netherlands emerged as one of the great maritime oriented empires. The Dutch Republic was born in 1579 with the signing of the Union of Utrecht by the seven northern provinces of the Netherlands. Two years later the United Provinces of the Netherlands declared their independence from the Spain. They formed a loose confederation as a representative body that met in The Hague where they decided on issues of taxation and defense.

During their heyday, the Dutch enjoyed a worldwide empire, dominated international trade and built the strongest economy in Europe on the foundation of a powerful merchant class and a republican form of government. The Dutch economy was based on a mutually supportive industry of agriculture, fishing and international cargo trading. At their command was a huge navy and merchant fleet of fluyts, cargo ships specially designed to sail through the world, which controlled a large percentage of the international trade.

In 1595 the first Dutch ships sailed for the East Indies. The Dutch East Indies Company (the VOC as it was known) was established in 1602 and competed directly with Spain and Portugal for the spices of the Far East and the Indian subcontinent. The success of the VOC encouraged the Dutch to expand to the Americas where they established colonies in Brazil, Curacao and the Virgin Islands. The Dutch West Indies Company (WIC) charter was set up in 1621. Not all the activities of the Dutch, however, were laudable. Leaders in the transport of goods of all descriptions, the Dutch dominated slave trading for over a hundred years.

The Dutch society was much more open than the restrictive southern European nations. They were known for their religious tolerance. Leiden University became an important center for the empirical study of botany and anatomy as well as the other modern sciences. Van Leeuwenhoek and others created a center for the study of optics. Willibord Snellius worked in astronomy and mathematics, and Christiaan Huygens established the rotation of the planets and worked out the mathematics of the pendulum clock.

The magnificence of the Dutch navy and merchant fleets is reflected in the painting produced in the Netherlands and in the works of later artists, who were themselves enamored with the achievement both of the Dutch maritime empire and the artists. During the 17th century, in the United Netherlands, what we commonly call Holland, the name of its dominant state, the art of painting enjoyed an incredible renaissance. It was the age of Rembrandt, Frans Hals and Jan Vermeer, but also of countless other Dutch master painters. A combination of the lack of traditional patronage from the church and crown and the growth of the middle class stimulated the development of new subjects in art and a proliferation of artists and painting. In addition to receiving commissions for specific works, artists often painted for the open market. Shopkeepers as well as noblemen bought paintings. Guilds established in each town carefully proscribed the training of painters and jealously guarded the rights of their members to sell paintings.

A guild is primarily a sort of labor union for artists. Only the highest standards of competence and workmanship were demanded. Today, the Masonic Order is a throwback to such medieval guilds. About the age of twelve, boys and their families made a decision as to the trade he would follow. In most cases it was an irrevocable decision. The daily life of a junior painting-apprentice was not pleasant. Such chores might include finding and grinding pigments, and cleaning brushes, and mixing plaster. In becoming a senior apprentice, the talented would-be artist found himself working intimately with the master. After years of training, under the watchful eye of the master, assistants would then complete most of the painting except for faces and perhaps areas involving the human anatomy. The master did these and also completed minor finishing touches or corrections before signing the work and claiming all the credit for himself.

Oil paint is a type of slow-drying [substance](#) that consists of particles of [pigment](#) suspended in a [drying oil](#), commonly [linseed oil](#). The viscosity of the paint may be modified by the addition of a solvent such as [turpentine](#) or [white spirit](#). Indeed the slow drying was seen as a advantage. As public preference for realism increased, however, the quick-drying [tempera](#) (painting medium consisting of and emulsion from a mixture of water and any of the various substances as egg yolks, glue, or gum. A paint prepared by adding pigment to the medium. Very fast drying) paints became insufficient. The pigment is the element in paint which provides its color. Pigments can be made of a wide range of materials, including minerals, natural and synthetic dyestuffs, and other man-made compounds. The ratio of pigment to medium affects the malleability, color and drying time of the paint. Different pigments deteriorate over time in different ways and at different rates. Many pigments in use in the past were very expensive and difficult to acquire. True ultramarine blue for instance, is made from ground lapis lazuli and indian yellow was made from the urine of cows fed on mangos in India, a practice which has been banned as it harms the cow.

It is amazing after 350 years these painting remain to be beautiful, considering that they were created under primitive circumstances and from sketches and memory and ship builder's plans. Realize there was no photography until 1839. Also the artist had to make their own brushes, and mix the pigments and oils. Painting on wood was preferred because it was light weight and rigid. Sky, clouds, and water played a great role in Marine paintings.

Dutch marine art, both for the 17th century Dutch citizen and the modern viewer, recalls the glories of the Dutch naval forces, whose fierce sea battle could sometimes be heard from the shore. The paintings also glorify the Dutch towns and harbors, beaches and commercial maritime business. Dutch marine artists pointed to serve a demanding citizenry and marker wishing to relish in the glory of their society as they knew it. Thus, many of the paintings on display depict events well known to the Dutch but unfamiliar to us. The detail with which so many of these ships are drawn was praised by contemporaries who enjoyed their precision. To us this detail allows us to understand the design and use of Dutch boats and ships, all of which are now long gone. The Dutch were internationally famous for their shipbuilding. Even Peter the Great studied with them as an ordinary shipwright, yet we have no written plans of vessels. The Dutch marine artist offers us a priceless record of the design development and use of sturdy sailing ships in their formative years. These ships were to continuously evolve until steam brought a revolutionary change in the 19th century.

The Dutch Golden Age had reached its peak around 1672. Thereafter, they plunged into political instability. The Kingdom of Holland was set-up by Napoleon Bonaparte as a puppet Kingdom for his brother Louis Bonaparte in order to control Holland. Louis did not meet Napoleon's expectations. He served the Dutch interests instead of his brother. He was forced to abdicate July 18, 1810.

The emperor sent an army to invade the country and dissolve the Kingdom of Holland. It became part of the French Empire until 1813, when Napoleon was defeated in the battle of Leipzig, and was forced to withdraw his troops.

1815: Kingdom of the Netherlands was established by the last stadhouder Prince of Orange-Nassau who became the ruling Prince of The Netherlands. Till today: House of Orange-Nassau (Queen Beatrix)

In forming the Kingdom of the Netherlands Belgium was included to create a strong country in defense of France. Belgium rebelled and gained independence in 1830.

Sources:

The Dutch Republic and the Evolution of Maritime Art by Harry L. Nelson, jr.;
Volunteer Docent Lenny Stevens; Volunteer Docent and Artist Ed Cristal



Zuiderzee: How a sea became a lake.

For many centuries, the Zuiderzee was the throbbing heart of Holland. Its turbulent waters brought prosperity to many fishing and trading towns in the 17th century. Fishing boats went back and forth with an abundance of fish. The ship of the VOC (United East Indian Company) brought back magnificent materials, spices, tea and gold from their long voyages to exotic destinations. Of course, not all was well in those long-gone days. The force of the water was responsible for many floods, while storms and wars caused grief.

Ever-larger and heavier ships were built; these deep-drawing vessels could no longer sail the shallow Zuiderzee. After many setbacks, a plan was developed at the beginning of the 20th century to tame the dangerous sea. On May 28, 1932, the final opening in the IJssel Lake Dam was closed. (the closing dike is 80 km long) This is the end of the Zuiderzee, now known as IJssel Lake. Enclosing the sea and turning it into a lake robbed the many fishing villages of the livelihood they had known for so long. The population was forced to look for other sources of income. Today it is turning into farmland and urban expansion. The 12th Province was created as the water was pumped out of the lake, by the name of Flevoland. Large rivers empty out in the IJellmeer since 1932 with the result that salt water was replaced with sweet water. Life of sweet water fish exist.



The English:

The history of England concerns the study of the human past in one of Europe's oldest and most influential national territories. The region has numerous remains from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age, such as Stonehenge and Avebury. In the Iron Age, England, like all of Britain south of the Firth of Forth, was inhabited by the Celtic people known as the Britons. In AD 43 the Roman conquest of Britain began; the Romans maintained control of their province of Britannia through to the 5th century.

The end of Roman rule in Britain enabled the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain, which is often regarded as the origin of England and the English people. The Anglo-Saxons, a collection of various Germanic peoples, established several kingdoms that became the primary powers in what is now England and parts of southern Scotland. They introduced the Old English language, which displaced the previous English language.

The United Kingdom as a unified sovereign state began with the political union of the kingdoms of England, which included Wales, and Scotland on 1 May 1707 in accordance with the Treaty of Union, as ratified by the Acts of Union 1707. The Union created the United Kingdom of Great Britain, which shared a single constitutional monarch and a single parliament at Westminster. Prior to this, the kingdoms of England and Scotland had been separate states, though in personal union following the Union of the Crowns in 1603, with political, administrative and cultural institutions including representative governance, law systems, and distinguished contributions to the arts and sciences, upon which the United Kingdom was to be built. On the new, united kingdom, historian Simon Schama said "What began as a hostile merger would end in a full partnership in the most powerful going concern in the world... it was one of the most astonishing transformations in European history." A further Act of Union in 1800 added the Kingdom of Ireland to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Great Britain became a major power worldwide with the defeat of France in the Americas in the 1760s and the conquest of large parts of India. However, Britain lost much of its North American colonies after the American Revolution. The industrial revolution started in Britain around the 1750s with the patenting of the steam engine. Despite its modest beginnings in the 18th century, it would radically change human society and the geology of the surface of the earth.

In the early 18th century, there were roughly 10 million people living in England.

English Art

Although medieval English painting, mostly religious, had a strong national tradition and was at times influential on the rest of Europe, it was in decline from the 15th century. The Protestant Reformation, which was especially destructive of art in England, not only brought the tradition to an abrupt stop but resulted in the destruction of almost all wall-paintings. Only illuminated manuscripts now survive in good numbers.

The artists of the Tudor court in the Renaissance and their successors until the early 18th century were mostly imported talents, often from Flanders. In the 18th century, English painting finally developed a distinct style and tradition again, still concentrating on portraits and landscapes, but also attempting, without much success, to find an approach to history painting, regarded as the highest of the hierarchy of genres. Portraits were, as elsewhere in Europe, much the easiest and most profitable way for an artist to make a living, and the English tradition continued to draw of the relaxed elegance of the portrait style developed in England by Van Dyck, although there was little actual transmission from his work via his workshop. Leading portraitists were Thomas Gainsborough; Sir Joshua Reynolds, founder of the Royal Academy of Arts; George Romney; and Sir Thomas Lawrence. Joseph Wright of Derby was well known for his candlelight pictures, George Stubbs for his

animal paintings. By the end of the century, the English swagger portrait was much admired abroad, and had largely ceased to look for inspiration abroad.

The early 19th century also saw the emergence of the Norwich school of painters. Influenced by Dutch landscape painting and the landscape of Norfolk, the Norwich School were the first provincial art-movement outside of London. Short-lived due to sparse patronage and internal faction prominent members include 'founding father' John Crome, John Sell Cotman notable for his water-colours in particular and the promising but short-lived maritime painter Joseph Stannard.

In 1672 the Dutch marine painter Willem van de Velde and his son, also named Willem, emigrated to London at the invitation of King Charles II and were installed in a studio at the Queen's House in Greenwich, charged with "taking and making off Draughts of Sea Fights." The paintings and drawings the van de Veldes produced proved influential for a nascent English school of marine painters, who introduced depictions of coastal and river shipping as well as naval battles. Peter Monamy was one of the first English artists to become known primarily as a marine painter; his work "An English Royal Yacht standing offshore in a calm" is featured in the exhibition.