

PRESS RELEASE

PASSION FOR PICTURES: NETHERLANDISH DRAWINGS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

EXTENDED UNTIL 24 MAY 2021

Städel Museum, Exhibition Hall of the Department of Prints and Drawings

Frankfurt am Main, 2 September 2020. The Städel Museum has in its possession nearly 600 Netherlandish drawings of the eighteenth century – and thus one of the most extensive collections of its kind outside the Netherlands and Belgium. From 1 October 2020 to 24 May 2021, the museum will devote an exhibition solely to these works. The show will feature 81 representative drawings by artists of whom many, though little known today, were quite successful in their time. The selection mirrors the structure and artistic quality of the holdings as well as the wide range of subjects they cover. Frequently executed as finished artworks on a par with painting, often in colour, the drawings catered to the enlightened eighteenth-century citizens' passion for pictures, as well as to their thirst for dialogue and information. Art admirers cultivated the pastime of gathering to contemplate and converse about the works.

The exhibition will unite designs for wall and ceiling decorations by Jacob de Wit, book illustrations by Bernard Picart, Netherlandish topographies by such artists as Cornelis Pronk, Paulus Constantijn la Fargue and Hendrik Schepper, atmospherically composed landscape drawings by Jacob Cats, the brothers Jacob and Abraham van Strij, Franciscus Andreas Milatz and others, decorative flower and fruit still lifes by Jan van Huysum and his numerous followers, depictions of exotic animals by Aert Schouman, satirical genre scenes by Cornelis Troost and Jacobus Buys, and much more. These works speak of the emancipation and heightened status of the drawing medium in the eighteenth century, but also of an intense preoccupation with the art of the seventeenth, the so-called Golden Age of Netherlandish art.

This research and exhibition project has been supported by funds from the Stiftung Gabriele Busch-Hauck, which has long been dedicated to supporting the scholarly study of the collection of the Städel Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings. Already twenty years ago, it sponsored the first selective catalogue raisonné of the

**Städelsches Kunstinstitut
und Städtische Galerie**

Dürerstraße 2
60596 Frankfurt am Main
Phone +49(0)69-605098-268
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
presse@staedelmuseum.de
www.staedelmuseum.de/en

PRESSEDOWNLOADS
newsroom.staedelmuseum.de/en

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Pamela Rohde
Phone +49(0)69-605098-170
rohde@staedelmuseum.de

Jannike Möller
Phone +49(0)69-605098195
moeller@staedelmuseum.de

Franziska von Plocki
Phone +49(0)69-605098-268
plocki@staedelmuseum.de

Susanne Hafner
Phone +49(0)69-605098-212
hafner@staedelmuseum.de

Netherlandish drawings of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. The present project draws on that catalogue for its temporally focussed inquiry.

When the exhibition gets underway, the Department of Prints and Drawings will also once again open its Study Room to the public following major construction work.

There visitors can request to view works of their choice from among Städel Museum's collection of more than 100,000 drawings and prints.

“Even if we do not associate eighteenth-century Netherlandish art with well-known masterpieces or famous artist names today, it flourished richly and sparked interest – including that of collectors – even outside the Netherlands. The Städel Museum has been in possession of an art-historically valuable collection of eighteenth-century Netherlandish drawings since the time of its founding. We have now undertaken to present the latest results of our research on these holdings to the museum's visitors in an exhibition and a catalogue. What is more, the launch of our ‘Passion for Pictures’ show will go hand in hand with the reopening of the newly renovated Study Room, making the facilities of the Department of Prints and Drawings once again accessible in their entirety”, Städel director Philipp Demandt announced.

Outside its country of origin, the Netherlandish art of the eighteenth century is far less known and less famous than that of the “Golden Age”. In the century of the Enlightenment, however, art production continued to thrive in the Netherlands, particularly in centres such as Amsterdam, Haarlem, The Hague, Dordrecht, etc. In addition to paintings and prints, artists made drawings in large numbers and at a high level of quality, frequently for sale on the market as artworks in their own right that also attracted the attention of collectors throughout Europe. They were kept in art books or albums in the libraries of well-to-do citizens, whose thirst for art, knowledge and edification they helped to quench. Johann Friedrich Städel (1728–1816), the founder of the Städel Museum, and his friend Johann Georg Grambs (1756–1817) likewise collected eighteenth-century Netherlandish drawings. They were thus purchasing works of their own time and the then-recent past that suited the bourgeois tastes of their time. When Städel died in 1816, his collection became the property of his foundation. The works amassed by Grambs, the first chairman of the Städel foundation's board of directors, entered the museum's holdings just one year later.

A Tour of the Exhibition

The exhibition “Passion for Pictures: Netherlandish Drawings of the Eighteenth Century” is divided into five thematic sections. The first is devoted to works reflecting the international orientation of Netherlandish art in the early eighteenth century and demonstrating not only the broad spectrum of drawing techniques employed by

artists of the time, but also the multifarious functions of the drawing medium. It served a preparatory purpose, for example in figural and compositional studies or highly detailed preliminary drawings for large-scale Baroque wall and ceiling decorations, but also as small-scale book illustrations. Jacob de Wit (1695–1754), arguably the most well-known decorative painter of his day, combined the Flemish tradition of Rubens (1577–1640) and van Dyck (1599–1641) with the Italian aesthetic to arrive at what might be called a “Netherlandish Rococo”. He executed numerous studies and preliminary drawings, creating a carefully kept store of images that themselves became coveted collectors’ items over the course of the century. One example on view in the exhibition is his *Ceiling design: Flora and Zephyr* (ca. 1725). Other international trends of the time also echo in the drawings on view in this section: in mythological scenes such as *Aeneas Rescuing Anchises from Burning Troy* (1687) by Willem van Mieris (1662–1747) and the arcadian classical and Italianate landscapes by Jan van Huysum (1682–1749), for example *Landscape with ancient temple in a storm* (ca. 1721). Works by such artists as Abraham Rademaker (1677–1735) and Isaac de Moucheron (1667–1744), for their part, exhibit above all a French-influenced brand of neoclassicism.

In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, a preoccupation with the native country came into play alongside the international orientation. Artists began citing seventeenth-century Netherlandish traditions, which they combined with an objectively empirical recording of reality. The second section of the show revolves around drawings depicting noteworthy Netherlandish sites. These topographies served people as a new means of reassuring themselves of their homeland and its history. The artists would begin by visiting the sites and precisely recording what they saw there in sketches they then used as the basis for printed illustrations or drawings with a high degree of finish. Cornelis Pronk (1691–1759) became a leading artist in this genre. The Städel Museum has in its collection an elaborately executed and exceptionally large-scale drawing by Pronk of the *Binnenhof in The Hague* (after 1741), the building complex housing the Dutch parliament and, in those days, the residence of the stadtholder. Not only professionally trained artists such as Pronk and his pupils Abraham de Haen (1707–1748) and Jan de Beijer (1703–1780) carried out topographies of this kind, but also affluent amateurs, among them Hendrik Schepper (1741–1794), whose works meet the highest standards of quality. The *View of a Dutch City* (1790) by Johannes Huibert Prins (1757–1806) is in a category of its own: the individual elements of the scene can be retraced to the artist’s stock of motifs he drew on site in real places, but the overall composition is a product of his fantasy.

The eighteenth-century yearning for knowledge was eclectic. People not only kept albums – so-called atlases – of depictions of native sites, but also collected artistic and natural objects of all kinds. Drawings of flora and fauna were in demand not only as artworks but also as instructive illustrations. In the century of the Enlightenment, the symbolic and religious meaning of artistic depictions so important in the seventeenth century receded into the background in favour of empirical scientific exactness, art-historical interest and sensory pleasure in colours and textures of all kinds. Herman Henstenburgh's (1667–1726) splendid *Bouquet of Flowers* (1700), the work ushering in the section "Flowers, Fruits and Animals", stands for the characteristic combination of decorative effect and almost palpable naturalistic presence. Aert Schouman (1710–1792) produced not only decorative wall paintings and drawings of birds in idealized park landscapes, but also and above all a large number of zoologically accurate renderings of individual animals such as *A Roseate Spoonbill (Platalea ajaja)* (ca. 1760–1780). Owing to the exactness of their execution and the virtuoso draughtsmanship they exhibit, these drawings held as much appeal for natural science buffs as for art admirers and collectors.

Eighteenth-century draughtsmanship also focussed on the then present, for example in the satirical depictions by Cornelis Troost (1696–1750), one of the era's most original Netherlandish artists. His genre compositions characterize the people of his day – and poke fun at them, as in *Suijpe Stein* (1742). Apart from the genre and theatre scenes in the fourth section of the exhibition, many of the often large-scale drawings there testify to a reversion to the art of the "Golden Age". It was a phenomenon of the eighteenth-century Netherlands that collectors commissioned artists to copy paintings of the seventeenth century so they could have much-admired artworks from other collections at their own disposal, as it were. In this context, the picturesque peasant scenes by Adriaen van Ostade (1610–1685), the domestic genre depictions by Gerard Dou (1613–1675), and the portraits by the Haarlem painters Frans Hals (1582/83–1666) and Cornelis Verspronck (1601/1603–1662) were especially popular.

The final section of the show focusses on an ever-recurring theme of Netherlandish art – the landscape. Both Johann Friedrich Städel and Johann Georg Grambs had a special penchant for landscape drawings. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, a shift came about in artists' approach to this genre: their depictions began to exhibit an increasing awareness of the country's history and art history. Rural life and quaint farmhouses of the kind seen in *Landscape with Farmstead and Cattle* (1788) by Jacob Cats (1741–1799) or the works of Egbert van Drielst (1745–1818) clearly reflect the influence of the "Golden Age". And the seventeenth century also

echoes in the seascapes by Hendrik Kobell (1751–1779) of Rotterdam – for instance *An Antwerp Pleit and Other Ships between Noord-Beveland and Wolphardsdijk* (1775) – and Martinus Schouman (1770–1848) of Dordrecht. The appeal of landscape drawings now came to bear on several levels: as a confirmation of the beauty of the homeland, a form of reflection on the great history of the art of the Netherlands and its paintings, and a manifestation of the masterful command of different drawing techniques.

The Department of Prints and Drawings – The New Study Room

The Städel Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings has in its holdings more than 100,000 drawings and prints ranging in date from the Late Middle Ages to the present. Thanks to the high quality of its works, this collection is one of the most important of its kind in Germany. In addition to examples by such artists as Dürer, Raphael and Rembrandt, the highlights include drawings by the Nazarenes, by representatives of eighteenth and nineteenth-century France, Max Beckmann and the German Expressionists around Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and exponents of post-1945 American art. These holdings are presented in changing exhibitions and can be viewed individually in the Study Room during special opening hours.

For the first time in more than fifty years, the Study Room of the Department of Prints and Drawings as well as the areas devoted to curatorial and research work, have undergone structural alterations and renovation. This refurbishment ensures the presentation of the department's collection in keeping with present-day standards, while also providing for improvements in air quality and the safety precautions against fire and burglary.

PASSION FOR PICTURES: NETHERLANDISH DRAWINGS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Exhibition dates: 1 October 2020 to 10 January 2021 – extended until 24 May 2021

Curator: Annett Sandfort (A former research associate of the Department of Prints and Drawings and the holder of a fellowship from the Stiftung Gabriele Busch-Hauck, Annett Sandfort carried out a thorough art-historical reappraisal of the eighteenth-century Netherlandish drawings in the Städel Museum collection.)

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de

Visitor services: +49(0)69-605098-200, info@staedelmuseum.de

Opening hours: Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat, Sun + holidays 10.00am–6.00pm, Thu 10.00am–9.00pm

Special opening hours: Sat, 3 Oct., 10.00am–6.00pm; Thu, 24 Dec., closed; Fri, 25 Dec., 10.00am–6.00pm; Sat, 26 Dec., 10.00am–6.00pm; Thu, 31 Dec., closed; Fr, 1 Jan. 2021, 11.00am–6.00pm

Opening hours Study Room of the Department of Prints and Drawings: Wed, Fri 2.00–5.00pm, Thu 2.00–7.00pm. To ensure compliance with the safety measures in place to prevent the spread of

the coronavirus (Covid-19), previous registration by e-mail to graphischesammlung@staedelmuseum.de stating the date, arrival time and length of stay is required.
Admission: 14 EUR; free for children under 12

Catalogue: A comprehensive exhibition catalogue written by Annett Sandfort and published by Sandstein Verlag, Dresden will be available. With a foreword by Philipp Demandt. In German. 264 pages, 34.90 EUR (museum edition), 44.90 EUR (bookshop edition)

Supported by: Stiftung Gabriele Busch-Hauck

@staedelmuseum on social media: #Staedel on Instagram / Facebook / Twitter / YouTube / Pinterest

Städel Blog: Background, stories and more about the collection and the special exhibitions at blog.staedelmuseum.de / Don't miss a post; subscribe to blog.staedelmuseum.de/blog-abonnieren (in German)