

Baroque Tendencies in Northern Netherlandish Painting in the Late Seventeenth Century

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Changing Tastes

From around 1650 within the Dutch aristocracy and grande bourgeoisie (upper-middle classes) there developed an interest in French art, culture and social nature, which was to reach a peak in the eighteenth century. The fashion for well-formed letters and artistic writing thus came from France (Metsu, *Young Man Writing*, Room 5). At the same time, the taste for luxury and ostentation went against the customary restraint in manners. Painting therefore underwent a clearly perceptible Baroque shift.

This urbanization of manners among the upper classes was in keeping with the vogue for town views depicting civilized society in quiet streets by Gerrit Berckheyde (1638-1698) – *The Market Place and the Grote Kerk at Haarlem** (c.1690) of which he painted several versions (fig.1) - and Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712) – *View of a Square with Convent**.



fig.1- Gerrit Berckheyde
The market Place and the Grote Kerk at Haarlem
London, National Gallery
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Flemish Baroque art served as examples to the Dutch in other genres. Still-lives by Willem Kalf (1619-1693) and Abraham Beyeren (1620/21-1675/92) brought together precious objects and rare dishes, as in the works of Jan Davidsz. de Heem (1606-1683/84). The portrait painter Abraham van de Tempel (1622/23-1672) adopted a pompous approach in the manner of Antony van Dyck – his 1667 work* is the portrait of a wealthy bourgeois woman dressed in the austere style of the Calvinists, but to which the ruffled draperies, tactile quality of the flesh tones and the gardens with a balustrade in the background bring a hint of decorum.

*Still-Life with Game** by Jan Weenix (1642-1719), who specialized in still-lives on a hunting theme from 1680, is in the same vein with its fluid, appealing workmanship, its warm, elegant tones, the feeling for materials and the extent of the gardens worthy of a chateau.

Animal Painting and Still-life

The animal painters from Antwerp of the first half of the seventeenth century made a lasting impression on the Dutch from 1650 onwards. In the Northern Netherlands, hunting was the preserve of aristocrats, who decorated their interiors



fig.2- Frans Snyders
Combat dans un poulailler
Bourg-en Bresse, Musée de Brou
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Room
Hondius

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Flemish and
Dutch Painting

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with large ornamental paintings dedicated to their exclusive sport. However, members of the bourgeoisie would also purchase these pictures through social emulation.

Trained in Rotterdam, a city very open to Flemish influence, Abraham Hondius (1625/30-1691) painted hunting scenes typified by vigorous movement, inspired by a Rubens-style dynamism well assimilated by Frans Snyders (1579-1657) and Paul de Vos (1595-1678), both from Antwerp. The colours and sinuous brushwork of the *Wild Boar Hunt** (1675) already belong to the Rococo.

Melchior d'Hondecoeter (1636-1695) is particularly renowned for his paintings of birds, giving him the nickname in the nineteenth century of the "Raphael of the birds". The memory of Snyders and De Vos (fig.2) was probably still in evidence here too. Hondecoeter reworked various motifs, organising them in a different way – the two chicks lying down in *The White Hen** (1660-65) are thus to be found elsewhere (fig.3).

Dutch painter Otto Marseus van Schrieck (1619/20-1678), who grew plants, kept a terrarium and collected dead animals in his Waterrijk estate, was the inventor of the depiction of undergrowth peopled with animals. He drew after nature and on some paintings stuck butterfly wings that have since been lost. *Undergrowth with Butterflies around a Thistle** (1664) is the scene of a battle between two reptiles – symbols of death and evil – fighting over a butterfly that represents the soul, beneath a thistle, the sign of life. Such a painting was probably a metaphorical reference to human tribulations.

In the early stages of his career, Jan van Huysum (1682-1749) painted bouquets of flowers on dark grounds in the seventeenth century tradition. In the 1720s, he developed a style in accordance with the trends of rocaille art which met with an enthusiastic response in Europe – asymmetrical and turbulent arrangements were placed before a light ground : *Still-life with Flowers**, *Still-life with Fruit**, (1730-40). Many carried on his style until the age of Neo-Classicism.

Landscapes at Haarlem

Jan Wijnants (1631/32-1684) specialized in landscapes with dunes following a diagonal composition as pioneered by Philips Wouwerman (Room 5). He made endless variations on this theme in many different and highly decorative versions, with a tree arabesque in the foreground, a prevailing sky with changing clouds, and the vanishing point of a deep diagonal towards the horizon : *Landscape with Hunters** (c.1660-72). The figures were painted by Adriaen van de Velde (1636-1672) (Room 8).



fig.3- Melchior d'Hondecoeter
The White Hen
Private collection
Photograph R.K.D., The Hague