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Oud Holland presents a new issue with three articles that show how important international networks were for the development and dispersal of Dutch art. The authors discuss paintings and prints from Antwerp to Stavanger in Norway, and from Haarlem to Saint Petersburg.

Christiaan Vogelaar & Abbie Vandivere

'Lucas van Leyden's Triptych with Christ healing the blind man of Jericho (1531): A reconstruction of its history and original appearance'

Summary:

Lucas van Leyden's triptych of 'Christ healing the blind man of Jericho' (1531, State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg) was praised by Karel van Mander as one of the master's most important works, and was also his last. Over the past three centuries, its appearance and format have been drastically altered. This study sought to determine how the painting might have looked prior to these interventions and restorations. Art-historical research has led to a deeper consideration of the history of the triptych: specifically, its original location and provenance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and its unusual subject matter that reflects emerging humanist and Lutheran ideas that took root in Leiden in the 1520s. Heraldic shields on (what would have been) the outer wings connect the triptych with the Van Montfoort-Boelens family. Recent research suggests that the original location of the triptych was a family chapel in the Sint Magdalenakerk (Saint Magdalene's Church) or the Dominican monastery church of the White Nuns in Leiden, where it remained until the late sixteenth century. The provenance and physical changes to 'Christ healing the blind man of Jericho' are traced through the next three centuries. The most significant physical intervention, which turned the folding triptych with wings into a continuous scene on a single rectangular panel, took place sometime before 1755. A digital reconstruction of the original appearance of the interior and exterior of the triptych incorporates new measurements, as well as material-technical and historical information. The turbulent history of 'Christ healing the blind man of Jericho' connects it to a triptych of the 'Last Judgment' (1555, Valenciennes, Musée des Beaux-Arts) by Aertgen van Leyden. The Valenciennes triptych likely had the same format and framing, and probably was intended to serve as a pendant, or even replace the Saint Petersburg triptych. The significance of 'Christ healing the blind man of Jericho' within the oeuvre of Lucas van Leyden is attested to by a partial copy (after 1531, Aachen, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum), which has a stronger connection to his workshop than previously assumed. The Saint Petersburg triptych should be (re)considered as one of his most significant altarpieces.

Guy Tal

'Witchcraft and pipe-smoking devils in a print (1626) by Jan van de Velde II'

Summary:

This article explores Jan van de Velde II's 'Sorceress' of 1626 as a moralizing print and identifies the tobacco pipe as its most intriguing and innovative component. Inspired by the visual tradition of witchcraft, particularly the prints of Pieter Bruegel I and Jacques de Gheyn II, Van de Velde incorporated in the Sorceress standard tropes of witchcraft including a cauldron, a magic circle, and a billy goat, and applied the concepts of inversion and deception. Curiously, Van de Velde portrayed the devils enjoyably smoking tobacco, drinking beer, and playing cards in allusion to revelers in Dutch genre paintings, particularly merry company and tavern scenes. Such a festive atmosphere attenuates the ominous effect of witchcraft, consistent with the prevailing skepticism toward witchcraft in the Dutch Republic and the associated cessation of witch trials at that time. Moreover, the devils' pursuits and the witch's attractive guise echo the cautionary inscription beneath the image about the vanity of leisure and the transience of life. The five pipes depicted in the 'Sorceress' – three puffed on by devils and two inserted by the airborne devil into his anus – highlight tobacco smoking as the novel and prevalent pastime in early seventeenth-century Dutch society. The context of witchcraft and devilry invites reflection on these pipes from moral, pharmacopoeial, and demonological perspectives. Enhancing the print's moral message, the pipe smoking serves as a symbol of 'vanitas' and embodies the vices of Gluttony and Sloth. These pipes also stimulate debates regarding tobacco consumption as discussed in emblem books, satirical poems, and medical treatises, while also engaging with demonic iconography and witchcraft beliefs. The 'Sorceress' showcases Van de Velde's skills as a printmaker, particularly in depicting landscapes and capturing the effects of smoke, light, and shadow. This article attributes the invention of the 'Sorceress' to Van de Velde himself, challenging previous claims that credited Adam Elsheimer. Therefore, the print not only demonstrates Van de Velde's technical proficiency as a printmaker but also underscores his originality as an artist.

Charlotta Krispinsson

'Copying Peter Paul Rubens: Religious painting after prints in Norway (1630-1650)'

Summary:

During the seventeenth century, Norway experienced great economic progress, and the population more than doubled. As a consequence, the market for immigrant painters grew and more than three hundred new church buildings were built. They included new interiors and altarpieces according to the latest Protestant requirements – often decorated with religious paintings after Dutch and Flemish engravings that reached Norway through well-developed trade relationships with places such as Amsterdam.

This article explores the dominant practice of copying for the production of seventeenth-century Norwegian religious paintings. Two painters, Gottfried Hendtzschel (c.1600-c.1648) and Elias Fiigenschoug (d. c. 1660) decorated dozens of parish churches, especially altarpieces, using prints after Rubens' compositions. Fiigenschoug, who exclusively copied prints after Rubens, practiced a collagelike method of composing scenes from different print sources. Hendtzschel reused the same prints as a template in a way that resembles a serial production-approach to painting. Neither their style nor designs can be seen as original or inventive. On the contrary, their artistic production reflects a standard working method of composing and repeating motifs by copying prints. Thanks to the medium of prints, local Norwegian painting production was able to develop and flourish. This article therefore contributes to our knowledge about the importance of prints for art historically marginalized regions, as well as to recent research on how a global visual culture was

shaped by print culture in the seventeenth century.

Reference:

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