

ABRAHAM BLOEMAERT. THE DRAWINGS – fact sheet

The Artist

Abraham Bloemaert (c. 1565 – Utrecht – 1651) was one of the leading Dutch painters of the last decade of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century.

His considerable fame continued throughout the 18th century but wilted afterwards, when his alluring art was thought to fall short of the cultural identity in which late 19th-century Holland took pride. But Bloemaert's drawings never stopped being avidly coveted by the collectors of old master drawings and by the curators of the great print rooms.

Marcel Roethlisberger's 2-volume catalogue of Bloemaert's paintings and of the prints after his work, published in 1993, restored the artist's reputation and put his significance in its right national and international perspective. For the first time, all the drawings by Bloemaert are now being published in a critical catalogue, supplementing the historiography of the art of drawing of the late Dutch mannerists, the most important of which – apart from Bloemaert – were Hendrick Goltzius, Jacques de Gheyn ii, Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem and Joachim Wtewael.

The author

Prof. em. Dr Jacob Bolten (1934) studied history of art and archaeology at Groningen university and started working as a curator of the Groningen Museum. In 1966 he became a curator of the print room of Leiden university, where he also taught the history of the graphic arts.

Among his publications are *Dutch Drawings from the Collection of Dr C. Hofstede de Groot* (1967), *Method & Practice, Dutch and Flemish Drawing Books 1600-1750* (1985), 'The Portraits of Abraham Bloemaert' (*Delineavit & sculpsit* no. 10, June 1993), *Dutch Banknote Design 1814-2002, a Compendium* (1999) and an English translation and critical edition of the original French text of David Pierre Giottino Humbert de Superville's *Essai sur les Signes inconditionnels dans l'Art*, in *Miscellanea Humbert de Superville* (ed., 2 vols, 1997-98).

The author started his research on Abraham Bloemaert already in the 1950ties, and has maintained close contact with his colleague prof. Roethlisberger. From the start, he has worked on the project from the perspective of the print room curator, striving after a solid balance between connoisseurship and versatility with art theory.

The book

Abraham Bloemaert, the Drawings is a 2-volume oeuvre-catalogue of the drawings of Abraham Bloemaert. The volumes each contain over 500 pages; the first part holds the text: introduction, a catalogue with over 1600 numbers, bibliography and registers, the second part contains over 2000 black-and-white illustrations and a quire with colour plates. Regardless of their standing or oblong format, all the illustrations are positioned in their vertical orientation. The volumes have a buckram-bound hard cover and a full-colour dust-jacket. The book will actually go to press in February 2007.

The expected destination of the book would be the great international libraries, universities, art museums, print rooms, private collectors, art historians and art dealers. For various reasons, the book has been produced and will be published by the author himself, the most important of these being the combination of the relatively limited edition and the disproportionate share of the selling price that regular publishers and/or distributors are used to claim for themselves. A reference work like this is not a coffee-table book, and the correspondingly modest circulation of only a few hundred copies brings about a high enough price as it is. Another reason is the often disappointing way of purely commercial publishing from aesthetic and material points of view, caused by a hasty and too economical production process.

In the case of this book, much attention has been paid to a modestly stylish design and solid material execution. The author has already successfully seen various books through the press. Also, measures have been taken to ensure an adequate distribution.