

“Ellective Affinities: collecting Dutch art in America”

Walter Liedtke

It is a VERY GREAT PLEASURE for me to be here in the new Rijksmuseum, in celebration of our collegial organization CODART. It seems relevant to my subject today - collecting Dutch art in America - that many young Dutch scholars have worked in American museums, especially with Arthur Wheelock in Washington and with me in New York. A good example is Esmee Quodbach, who was a research assistant to Arthur Wheelock in Washington, and then to me in 2006.

MMA Bull
cover

my Dutch
cat. vols

At my request, she wrote the Metropolitan Museum's Bulletin for summer 2007, called "The Age of Rembrandt," which together with my catalogue of the 230 Dutch paintings in the Met Museum accompanied the exhibition of all of them. (Normally, only the top 100 or so are on view). Esmee is now Assistant to the Director at the Center for the History of Collecting (in the Frick Collection, New York), which next year will publish symposium papers on the collecting of Dutch paintings in America.

COVER DESIGN

Hollandse Meesters

I'd also like to remind you that some of us have given a great deal of attention to this subject before, in the exhibition "Great Dutch Paintings from America," 1990-91 [recall essays by me, Edwin Buijsen, Susan Kuretsky and Peter Sutton; catalogue mostly by Ben Broos].

Another one of my research assistants in the Metropolitan Museum was our chairwoman today, the Dutch & American director of the Mauritshuis, Emilie Gordenker

Cover Rdt/Not

(her first museum job was helping me create the exhibition, "Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt" at the typical New York pace of five months flat). Finally, I might remind you that the founding director of CODART (and next speaker) is the American scholar, publisher, novelist and blogger Gary Schwartz, with whom I share a few distinctions,

Gary PJS Walter

such as youthful publications devoted to that quintessentially Dutch artist Pieter Saenredam, and also being, in the opinion of the Rembrandt Research Project (here it is), one of the two most irritating people in the world of Dutch art.

Gary Ernst Walter
v d W

In a broader view, however, Gary and I are among the many Americans who share a great affection for the Dutch people, and a high regard for Dutch cultural values, a tradition that goes back to Nieuw Amsterdam and Dutch settlements in the Hudson Valley during the 1600s . . . ,

New Amsterdam Declar of Indep
by Trumbull 1817

but which really flourished in the years around the American Revolution during the 1770s [ID IMAGES]. Sympathy for the Dutch in the eighteenth century actually had very little to do with Dutch colonies or Dutch families in America, but with the American perception of [SLOW] similar values in the Netherlands: such as freedom from tyranny, freedom of religion, a democratic form of government, and all the values that are now described (especially by American politicians) as Middle Class, which implies hard work, social mobility, and a sense of equality that seems to reside more naturally in the mind of the average burger than in the heart of a nobleman, or in the aching bodies of the poor.

Goethe his book

In my title I describe these shared values as “Elective Affinities,” which is the usual English translation of Goethe’s title in 1809, Die Wahlverwandtschaften, a novel in which he compares sympathetic relationships between people to the same sort of sympathy in chemistry. (This is an Enlightenment version of the Renaissance concept of bodily humors, which affect personality). In the late 19th century Max Weber, quite in contrast to Karl Marx, wrote of “elective affinities” between different nationalities as based upon similar historical, social, and cultural values, such as what he called the “Protestant Work Ethic.”

Dutch work	Amer. work
Luyken	W. Homer

Whether or not it is distinctly “PROTESTANT,” the virtue of HARD WORK - in the home, on the land, or in business - has been one of the qualities Americans (since the 17th century) have claimed to share with the Dutch, along with the idea that hard work could lift an ordinary person to wealth and social prominence (today’s “American Dream”). This is one of the themes addressed in John Motley’s Rise of the Dutch Republic (New York, 1852), where the history of the Netherlands serves as a metaphor for the rise of the United States, and from which one would imagine that everyone in the early Dutch Republic was Protestant, democratic, hard-working, and a good family man. Forty years before Motley, in 1814, the critic George Murray, reviewing an exhibition of mostly Dutch pictures in the Pennsylvania Academy, asked his readers, “Who were the patrons of the artists? Merchants and other wealthy citizens - men of PLAIN AND SIMPLE manners, possessing taste without affectation.”

The combination of “wealthy” with “plain and simple” suggests someone like this

Man	B. van der Helst
1647	

(one of the portraits in the Met Museum’s founding purchase of 174 mostly Dutch pictures, in 1871)

Stuart bros. 1638	hold
Van Dyck NGL	

. . . and not people like these. Similar comparisons were made by the liberal French traveler, Alexis de Tocqueville, in his still impressive book, De la démocratie en Amérique, of 1835. He observes that Americans don’t read much because they’re too busy, and because of their general suspicion of the arts and literature, and of the type of people who pursue those pastimes. In art and architecture, De Tocqueville writes, Americans “will habitually prefer the useful to the beautiful, and they will require that the beautiful be useful.”

Monticello	Shaker arch
1789-1809	
interior	interior

About 35 years later, the American novelist Henry James

v d Heyden

James

wrote about a typical townscape by Jan van de Heyden, in his essay, "The Metropolitan Museum's 1871 Purchase," that the picture, with its careful description, "tells more of Dutch conscience" than any other painting on view, especially

"one by Guardi"

whose style was "debauched, as it were, by the grace of his daily visions." The Italian artist "dispenses with effort and insight, and trusts to mere artifice and manner." The Dutchman, by contrast, with his "fidelity and sincerity," "feels that unless he is faithful, he is nothing."

In making these remarks, James follows the line of his art history professor at Harvard, Charles Eliot Norton, a friend of John Ruskin and a descendant of Protestant Ministers. James himself wrote about Norton (1909) that while Norton was "the most liberally emancipated and initiated [person]" ever to breathe "the New England air," he "could still plead most for substance when proposing to plead for style."

Jefferson

Catherine the Great

["Signer" of Declaration, governor of Virginia, Ambassador to France, Secretary of State to George Washington, U. S. President 1801-9, Enlightenment scholar, multi-lingual, inventor of practical devices (swivel chair), a great farmer, and **COLLECTOR OF 6500 BOOKS AND NO PAINTINGS (except family portraits)**; Jefferson's contemporary, **CATHERINE THE GREAT - COLLECTOR OF COLLECTIONS from France, Germany and England**].

Before we say anything more about cultural values, I'd like to touch on some practical questions - in particular, the historical circumstances that set Americans apart from European societies, and from European collectors, including the Dutch.

We heard this morning about Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and noble collectors in St. Petersburg

We could also mention Philip IV of Spain and his relatives in Brussels, Maria de' Medici as Queen of France . . . ,

Maria

Cosimo III

the equally attractive Florentine, Cosimo de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany (who in the late 1660s visited the studios of Dou, Schalcken, Rembrandt, etc., and probably Vermeer); and of course several princes, French noblemen, and many aristocratic English collectors. The English court not only collected Dutch and Flemish pictures during most of the 17th century, but also employed Dutch and Flemish painters, e.g.

Daniel Mijtens

Charles I, 1629

Steenwijck

palace view

Rubens (Whitehall)
1633-34

Eq P of Ch I Van Dyck
1633

and received GIFTS of Dutch art from the Dutch princes and (in 1660) from the city fathers of Amsterdam.

gift to Ch. I: "Rembrandt"

H M Q

from English emiss. to NL

Saenredam gift to Ch. II

Edinburgh

IN 1622, when the Prince of Orange was decorating the Palace of Honselaarsdijk and the Stadholders Quarters at The Hague, and Rubens was painting the Maria de' Medici cycle of 22 large canvases for the Palais du Luxembourg, and Van Dyck was flattering the noble families of Genoa . . .

PPR MdM cycle AvD Genoese

in that year of 1622, when many pictures that are now in the Louvre, the National Gallery of London, and other great European museums were painted . . . 347 English settlers in Jamestown, Virginia, were massacred by the "Indians" in a single day (1/3 the population).

Palais du Luxembourg 1615-1622	Jamestown massacre of 1622
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Not surprising - that dabbling in the fine arts was not a priority in Jamestown during the 1600s, or in any of the other small English settlements that lay to the south of Dutch New York.

Plan 17th C NY View

Even in New Amsterdam, where today's Wall Street, near the tip of Manhattan, originally ran along a wall built to keep the Indians out, no one can be said to have collected Dutch art, or anything else. None of the original Dutch families, such as Stuyvesant, Verplanck, and Van Rensselaer, were a factor in America's taste for Dutch art, and indeed, there was very little collecting of any kind of European art until the late 1700s.

Audubon	The Artist in his Museum	C W Peale 1822
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This is probably worth repeating: American interest in Dutch art never had anything to do with Dutch heritage, but with "Elective Affinities": the perception of similar interests and values. In the 1790s and early 1800s, for example, with the elderly Thomas Jefferson (as a scholar), with amateur scientists like Benjamin Franklin, and with artists such as John James Audubon - the famous cataloguer of American birds - and with Charles Wilson Peale and his sons Raphaëlle, Titian, Rubens and Rembrandt Peale,

1795	Titian and	HOLD
C W Peale	Raph. Peale	

. . . their pictures of wildlife and natural specimens, and their portraits of themselves and others as scholars of nature, **RESPONDED** to recent Enlightenment thinking in Europe, and in many cases **recall** Dutch precedents at the same time.

Gilmor USS Constitution 1796

These sources in Europe reflect the fact that Americans started travelling there after the American Revolution and the rise of the economy and foreign trade around 1800. The first important American collector of Dutch art was Robert Gilmor, Jr., who was the son of a Scottish shipper who traded with America before settling in Baltimore in 1770, a few years before his son was born. The elder Robert soon made a fortune by opening American trade with India and Russia; he gave his Robert Jr a large income and the education of a European gentleman, including private tutoring in Amsterdam during 1800. [The ship - USS Constitution, "Old Ironsides" - one of six frigates (fast warships) built in the 1790s to protect trans-Atlantic merchant fleet; went around the world in the 1840s and last sailed in 2012, 200th anniversary of defeating five British ships in the War of 1812]. Gilmor was advised in his collecting by Cornelis Apostool

Apostool

Gilmor

an engraver, draftsman, important government official (ambassador, minister of interior etc) and later, from 1808 until his death in 1844, director of the Royal Museum, Amsterdam, which was renamed the Rijksmuseum in 1815. In Amsterdam, the 26-year-old Gilmor wrote into his diary, "I have become so great a Connoisseur that I can instantly on entering a room point out even from the door all the principal pictures," and during the next 30 years he learned enough to say more sensible things, and to collect 150 Dutch and Flemish pictures, mostly landscape, still life, genre high and low, and architectural ptgs.

Baltimore H. v. Vliet

Gilmor hoped to leave all his pictures to a public institution, but this plan fell apart in the 1830s when he suffered financial reverses. Several characteristics of Gilmor, including the intention of GIVING HIS COUNTRY AN ART MUSEUM, were typical of 19th-century collectors in America:

ALSO TYPICAL:

1. Travel to Europe (95% of ptgs bought abroad before 1900)
2. Close relations with American artists, who were in the vanguard of Americans going to Europe, often for good.

	Port. of	Portrait of
Gilbert Stuart	Ben. West	Ben Franklin by West

[B. West - from Philadelphia to Italy 1760; to London 1763; died there 57 years later, in 1820, thirteen of which were spent as the second President of the Royal Academy, succeeding Joshua Reynolds].

Others to Europe: (of the many)	Copley Revere	Durand 1845 Beeches
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This portrait: before going to London, Paris, Italy in 1774; 1775-d.1815 in GB	Durand toured Europe 1840-41
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Durand: admired the ideas of John Ruskin, "Modern Painters"; style of John Constable - then "home" to NATURE, Hudson area

J. Both	HOLD
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BUT composition, etc - surely also Dutch examples

Jos Wright	Forge 1773	Cornfield 1826	Constable
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3. Taste in Europe, painting in England and France (Joseph Wright of Derby; John Constable; the early, Italian Corot

Corot	Narni 1826	Oxbow 1836	Th. Cole
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Cole - made a European tour in early 1830s, especially Italy

In 1826, our collector, Gilmor, wrote to Cole - give up his (18th C) English landscape models - "too much artificial effect." And in 1830 he wrote to him: I prefer real American scenes and compositions . . . Nature, nature, after all, is the great Master in landscape painting."

Gilmor was a great support of the Hudson River School landscapists, Cole, Durand, etc and of American genre painters such as

William Sidney Mount: The Long Story 1837

[19th-C GENRE paintings of everyday people: much of this kind of thing in 19th-century America, and in 19th-century Holland, Belgium, England, France].

4. European art market at the time (John Smith); including
fall-out from French Revolution// stress "SUPPLY SIDE"

5. AND AGAIN - "ELECTIVE AFFINITY" for Dutch society:

Borch	Treaty of	Declaration	Trumbull
	Münster	of Indep.	

middle-class, democratic, self-reliant, hard-working,
students of nature, revolutionaries against foreign kings
(whether Philip IV, George III, or Louis Napoleon).

We find a GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE "SUPPLY SIDE" -
(what was available) in the importance of the French Revolution to a collector like Richard Codman, who lived in Boston and nearby Lincoln, Mass.

R. Codman	Lincoln House
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He went to Europe in 1793, on behalf of the shipping business he ran with his brother John. Codman spent the next four years in London and especially Paris, buying up furniture and paintings - often Leiden School works

Metsu	Housewife	Judith	Teniers
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with certificates from the dealer J.B.P. Lebrun. Codman also bought Dutch landscapes, some still lifes . . .

Heda	Schalcken
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and 18th-century favorites as Poelenburch and Wouwerman.

His son, Charles Russell Codman (who toured Europe 1808-1812), praised one of these paintings as deserving "the closest examination . . . each figure is exquisitely finished, as to give the whole the appearance of enamel."

However, Richard Codman was much less sophisticated and comprehensive a collector than Robert Gilmor, and he never planned to give anything away. In his small, middle-class version of the Cabinet of Willem V, Codman's main goal was to appear as a cultivated European gentleman, something very few wealthy people from Boston ever wanted to be.

Boston gallery

Today there is a GREAT collection of American paintings in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and a comparatively minor collection of European art. When Peter Sutton was curator in Boston, I asked him why there are NO Van Dycks in Boston, as opposed to the eleven in the Metropolitan Museum,

3 x Met Van Dycks

and he said . . . "Boston families have always been satisfied with themselves."

[Whereas in New York:]

NYC house Havemeyers

Another way of saying essentially the same thing is that since about 1870 New York has been the only cosmopolitan city in America - that is, a city similar to the great capitals of Europe in wealth, intellect, and culture. This did not happen gradually over one or two thousand years, as in Rome or Paris, but rapidly and very deliberately in the late 1800s. People like the Havemeyers (monopoly in sugar), with a great deal of money, were conscious - or self-conscious - that New York was not London or Paris, and they were determined to place New York on the same level, with museums, opera houses, public libraries, hospitals, and so on equal to those in Europe. All of these institutions in New York, and in most American cities, are private foundations, to this day.

[FREELY EXPLAIN]

1. "Gilded Age" prosperity (no income tax until 1913)
2. Social stature through philanthropy
3. Decorating - model of great English and French houses
 Van Dycks in the Country House
 Rembrandt in the City
 (Wallace Collection; Rodolphe Kann in Paris)

Havemeyer Rembrandts
Halses, & "Rdt Room"

Huge Havemeyer Bequest 1929 -extensive in Corot, Courbet, Manet, Monet, above all Degas (via Mary Cassatt), Cezanne;
but also El Greco and Goya

(ENHANCE THEIR PUBLIC IMAGE through PUBLIC GIFTS)

New York Public Library (1895)

ALL THE GREAT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS - ARE PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

Carnegie Hall 1891

Others in other cities, and "Peace Palace" (Vredepaleis)
(Carnegie Halls) in 1903 (gave \$1.3 million)

NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
and Bryan Collection of Christian Art

Thomas Jefferson Bryan (d. 1870) - lived 22 years in Paris;
(Harvard education) to New York early 1850s

1867 Newspaper review: Bryan Gallery was “like visiting a venerable burgomaster in Holland, or a merchant-prince of Florence”

- on view (1867) were 233 European paintings
(101 Dutch or Flemish)

In 1870: bequest to New York Historical Soc. - 380 ptgs,
of which 146 were Dutch or Flemish.

MET MUSEUM BUILDINGS

Met Museum founded 1870 - group of businessmen as “trustees”

First collection 1871 Blodgett
 Family

William Blodgett, collected American art; MMA Vice-President

[DESCRIBE 1871 PURCHASE] - 174 paintings in Paris -
mostly Dutch & Flemish

PARIS in 1871
ruins Fr.-Pr. War

Met Museum
in 14th St

Note - the Van Dyck “St Rosalie” atypical of the group

TYPICAL 1871 WORKS (v Goyen, Ruysdael)

More of 1871: SvR, Teniers,
 M. Haverman

FREE - on question of TASTE FOR DUTCH ART in this generation

1. Background in earlier American collectors, & American art
2. Current European art (Realism, Impressionism, Barbizon)
3. Current collecting in England and France (e.g. Wallace,
and 1871 NG London purchase of Sir Robert Peel collection
= 55 Dutch, 12 Flemish, 10 English pictures)
4. idea of illustrating American values;
also social history, foreign lands
5. Against monarchy, religious art, mythology

Marquand Gallery

Henry Marquand, railroad financier, Met treasurer 1882,
collected American, Barbizon Met President 1889
d. 1902

Marquand Gifts, 1889, 1890
Hals, Vermeer

ASIDE ON VERMEER Met's 5 Vermeers - 5 different
donors

Frick Vermeers

Other U.S. Vermeers

Fry & Valentiner

After Marquand's gifts, very little new at Met until ca. 1905, with curators Roger Fry (1906-10) and
Valentiner,
using money from Jacob Rogers bequest of 1901
(locomotive manufacturer; \$5 million gift, still in use)
earned annual income of \$200,000

Fry - little taste for Dutch art, but bought several

and schooled Burroughs Wolf & Fox Hunt - 1910 purchase
w. Fry, Morgan, Bryson Burroughs

1909 Exhibition Hudson-Fulton org by Valentiner

144 Dutch ptgs -
great inspiration to collectors

BENJAMIN ALTMAN Altman Home
& "shop" private gal 1905

Altman Vermeer,
Rembrandts

Altman landscapes

Altman Gal. now

Altman 3x Hals (w. dealers)

Altman v Dycks

Another "Gilded Age" collector was Collis P. Huntington,
also a major railroad developer (d. 1900); wife Arabella
(d. 1924)

CPH & Arabella

His bequest, 1900
"Subject to life estate," renounced in 1925-26 by son Archer
[recall Havemeyer, d. 1907 -
life estate until Louisine d. 1929]

House and Rdts	Arabella
bought 1907	alone 1900-13

ASIDE: ships to Europe ca. 1900-15

SS Olympia

Arabella purchases	Hals Verschuur	1920
	Rembrandt Flora	1909

William Vanderbilt d. 1920 (Bequest)	Noble Slav
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Left 8 paintings (Velde, L de Jongh, "Holbein," Reynolds,
Boucher & Greuze; important French furniture) and - CASH.
(His father, Cornelius Vanderbilt - 700+ Italian and French drawings 1600-1800, in 1880)

Kept a few things for the family (e.g. niece Gloria Vanderbilt)	their homes
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MICHAEL FRIEDSAM (d. 1931)
like Altman, a bachelor Vermeer
partner & successor Rembrandt bequest, 1932

about 100 paintings left to Met: Early Neth, E. Italian,
E. French, German, Dutch, Flemish (Brouwer's Smokers) . . .

his Cuyp

& Ruisdael

quite important for Dutch land-
scape gallery

Should also mention briefly 2 Halses
Stockbroker JULES BACHE (d. 1944) Bache 1949
(major collector ca. 1920-40)

Cleverly persuaded by Duveen to think in terms of bequest,
and therefore buy (overpay) major things

Bequest of about 60 old masters, incl. Rembrandt
ter Borch
fake Vermeer

Rembrandt
Gallery

Bache and other isolated gifts of paintings by Rembrandt
brought total of 20; and 20 "not by Rembrandt"
(Aristotle the only Rembrandt ever bought by Met)
- same is true for Hals, Ruisdael, Ter Borch, etc

Vermeer
Gallery (de Keyser in view)

A small, exquisite group of Dutch paintings from an anonymous collector, Mrs. Charles
Neumann de Vegvar from Vienna, left Austria ca. 1938 for Greenwich, Connecticut -
(widow friendly with John Walsh in 1960s)

"anonymous 1964" Heyden, Keyser,
big van Goyen

OTHER "LATE GILDED-AGE" GIFTS:

Lady w Fan; oval Man;
G de Lairese all Rembrandt

Nielson - Swift "meat-packing" - one painting only
Ellsworth = the painting in Chicago by 1889
(where Bode saw it in 1893)
Robert Lehman (c. 1969) = son of Philip Lehman (d. 1947)
founder of Lehman Bros. banking

Lehman
Galleries

1982 Linsky bequest Linsky
Galleries the last "mausoleum"

Linsky coll. Steen, Rubens
 Borch, Metsu

One of greatest collections post-World War II

Charles & Jayne Wrightsman 2 Rubens,
 Vermeer

7 rooms of French furniture; G. de la Tour; El Greco; etc

 including Sweerts

Still to come Henrietta Maria Van Dyck
 w. Jayne W.

CURATORIAL PURCHASES (20th C):

 P. Brueghel I Rogers Fund, 1919

 Claesz 1949
 Weenix 1950 (& "Aristotle" 1961)

Ted Rousseau - correcting historic neglect of still life.

 Bruggen 1956
 Velazquez 1971 Rousseau recs.

John Walsh purchases (a dozen), plus donations

 Jan Brueghel,
 Bloemaert, de Gheyn

SINCE 1980 (Gifts from Wrightsman, Schickman, Woodner,
 and **Frits Markus**)

PURCHASES:

 F. Post; Ph. Koninck; 1980-81
 Rubens landscape 1990

 Wtewael 1993
 Breenbergh 1991
 De Witte 2001

FAILED ATTEMPTS TO PURCHASE Getty
 Rembrandt

 Honthorst
 LACM

DESIDERATA:

Saenredam
Bosschaert
Jan Both

Supporters

Mo Zukerman (not to post or
publish!)

OTHER PRIORITIES

Other schools of
ptg and departments

DISPLAY; RENOVATION

EXHIBITIONS

PUBLICATIONS

WEBSITE

VIEWERS'
EXPERIENCE.