

Jacob Adriaensz. Bellevois

1620/1622–1676

THE MARINE PAINTER Jacob Adriaensz. Bellevois was born about 1620 or 1622 in Rotterdam. His teacher is not known, but the influence of Julius Porcellis (1609?–1645), who worked in Rotterdam, seems apparent in the monochrome tendencies evident in his style. Bellevois presumably lived and worked in Rotterdam at least until after the death of his first wife, Cornelia Vythoecs, in 1653. Three years later he married Maria 't Hert from Gouda. A

document indicates that he was living there in 1671. Around 1673 or 1674 he is mentioned as being in Hamburg. He was buried in Rotterdam on 19 September 1676.

Bibliography

Rijsewijk 1891.

Bredius 1915–1922, 5 (1918): 1648–1650.

Bol 1973: 192–196.

Circle of Jacob Adriaensz. Bellevois

1947.3.1 (890)

Dutch Ships in a Lively Breeze

probably 1650s

Oil on canvas, 122.5 x 147.8 (48¼ x 58¼)

Gift of Mrs. Robert Giles

Technical Notes: The picture support is comprised of two pieces of fabric sewn with a horizontal seam just below the center. All tacking margins were removed when the picture was lined, but cusping at the edges suggests that the original dimensions have been retained. The fabric support sustained damage in the form of a long tear in the upper right, in the sky. A thin, reddish brown ground was laid overall. The sky, the most thickly painted area of the picture, was painted first, followed by the water, then the boats. The paint used for the water and boats is thinly applied. The paint is in fairly poor condition, with extensive abrasions and much repaint. Overpaint covers several centimeters on either side of the seam and the tear, as well as extending beyond the perimeters of the several small, but significant losses in the sky. The varnish is very discolored.

Provenance: Mrs. Robert Giles, Washington.

Exhibited: *Inaugural Exhibition: European Paintings*, Art Museum, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 1969–1970, no cat.

UNDER THE BILLOWING CLOUDS of an expansive sky, a large three-master, carrying the Amsterdam coat of arms on its stern, sails in brisk winds through crowded shipping lanes. While no land is visible, the

mixture of both large and small vessels sailing in a variety of directions suggests that the setting may be one of the broad river estuaries along the coast of the Netherlands that were so important for fostering the Dutch mercantile empire. Nevertheless, given that the ships seem to be generic in character rather than identifiable, it would appear that the scene is a fanciful construction conceived in the artist's workshop.¹

The attribution of this painting is difficult to determine, in large part because the condition is poor and the surface is heavily overpainted. A more essential problem, however, is that the quality of the work is not very high, indicating that the artist was not a master of the first rank. Ships are ill-drawn and do not sit comfortably in the water, the waves are not convincingly rendered, and the composition lacks focus and a sense of cohesion.

When the painting was accepted at the National Gallery in 1947 it was attributed to Abraham Storck (1635–1710), presumably on the basis of an old label that was once attached to the back of the original canvas that read: "Storck Dietsch 1696—Shipping in the Scheldt." Storck, however, was a rather talented marine painter, whose style is quite different. Instead of the elongated, insubstantial forms of the vessels found in this painting, he gave his ships a physical presence. Both through his dense brushwork and effective modeling, for example, he could convey the weight and mass of the sail in a way not remotely suggested by the artist of this work.²

The attribution to Storck was changed in 1964

after Horst Gerson suggested, on the basis of a photograph, that the painting was close to the manner of Hendrick van Anthonissen (1605–1656).³ This Amsterdam marine painter, who studied with his brother-in-law Jan Porcellis (1585–1632), was an effective painter of naval battles, but he never developed Porcellis' compositional sensitivity or achieved the atmospheric qualities that emanated from the older artist's palette. Anthonissen's retardative style is in many ways quite close to that found in this painting, although his mastery of ship details quite surpasses that evident in this work.⁴

A closer comparison, however, can be made with the work of another retardatory marine painter, Jacob Adriaensz. Bellevois. This Rotterdam artist was influenced by Jan Porcellis' son, Julius Porcellis (c. 1609–1645), who practiced his tonal style in that port city. Just as with Hendrick van Anthonissen, however, Bellevois never did develop into an effective tonal artist, in large part because he remained wedded to earlier pictorial traditions, particularly those of Hendrick Vroom (1566–1640).⁵ Whether painting shipwrecks or vessels sailing in a brisk wind along the Dutch coast (fig. 1), he spread his vessels randomly along the breadth of the picture plane rather than uniting them into an integrated whole. While his palette remained largely limited to monochromes of gray and brown, he differentiated between foreground and middle ground with artificially constructed zones of shadow and sunlight rather than with the diagonal compositional schema developed by Julius Porcellis and his father. Also characteristic of his style is that he painted rather loosely, never softening details of the boats or of the riggings so that they merged atmospherically into the broader tonal character of the image. All of these mannerisms are evident in the Gallery's painting.

Also consistent with his style is the lack of weight felt in the material of the sails and, perhaps most tellingly, the distinctive staffage figures that populate the ships. The figures in Bellevois' paintings are quite schematically rendered and almost always wear hats with wide, flat brims.

The one mitigating feature in any effort to attribute this work to Bellevois is that the quality level is perhaps lower than his standard. His whitecaps tend to be more softly rendered and integrated into the waves than they are in this work. Likewise, the three-dimensional qualities of his ships are usually more convincing than they appear here. Whether this range of quality is acceptable within his work is uncertain given our fragmentary knowledge of his life and work. Little is known of the evolution of his style, thus one cannot say whether this painting would date early or late. Perhaps Bellevois had a workshop, or perhaps the problems noticed here are exacerbated by the painting's poor condition. At this time too many unknowns exist to be able to establish a firm attribution for this work.

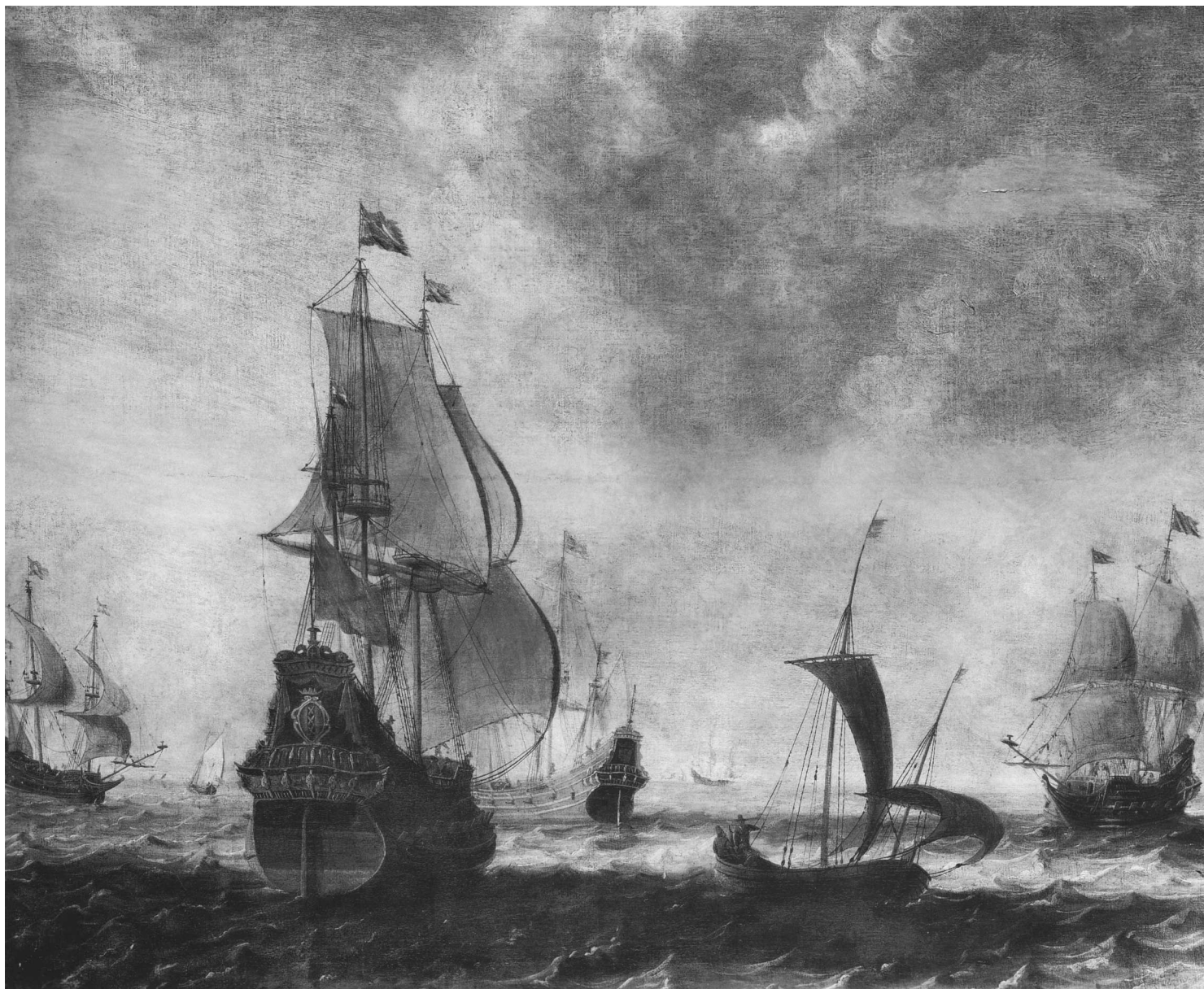
Notes

1. Margarita Russell memo, in NGA curatorial files, suggests that the prominent ship in the foreground is "an East Indiaman."

2. Margarita Russell memo, in NGA curatorial files, speculates that the reference to Dietsch [Dietzsch] on the old label was to a member of a prolific eighteenth-century family of Nuremberg painters and graphic artists who produced paintings in the Dutch manner. For Johann Israel Dietzsch (1681–1754) and his family see Thieme-Becker, 9: 275–277; Gerson 1942, 98, 327. Russell's hypothesis is that this painting was executed by a member of the Dietzsch family after a now lost painting by Storck that was dated 1696. Since comparative material does not exist to buttress her arguments, and since nothing in the manner of execution suggests that the painting is eighteenth century in origin, it is perhaps more prudent to conclude that the inscription on the old label



Fig. 1. Jacob Adriaensz. Bellevois, *Two Warships Bringing in a Capture*, 1660s, oil on panel, Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery



Circle of Jacob Adriaensz. Bellevois, *Dutch Ships in a Lively Breeze*, 1947.3.1

is not reliable than to try to base an attribution upon it.

3. Gerson letter, 17 November 1964, in NGA curatorial files.

4. Quite close to Van Anthonissen in style is the work of Aert Anthonisz. (1580–1620), alias Aert van Antum, an Amsterdam follower of Hendrick Vroom (1566–1640) about whom little is known. For both artists see Preston 1974, 2, 65–66; Bol 1973, 11–29, 36–40.

5. For the importance of Vroom for the development of Dutch marine painting, see Russell 1983.

References

1965 NGA: 8, no. 890 (as Circle of Hendrick van Anthonissen).

1968 NGA: 2, repro. (as Circle of Hendrick van Anthonissen).

1975 NGA: 14–15, repro. (as Circle of Hendrick van Anthonissen).

1980 Archibald: 60, repro. 54 (as Hendrick van Anthonissen) (also 1989 2nd ed.: 67, repro. 56).

1985 NGA: 31, repro. (as Style of Hendrick van Anthonissen).

Nicolaes Pietersz. Berchem

1620–1683

NICOLAES BERCHEM was one of the most popular and successful of the Dutch seventeenth-century Italianate landscape painters. Aside from views of Italy, his extensive oeuvre consists of hunt scenes, biblical and mythological paintings, drawings, and etchings. Born in Haarlem in 1620, Berchem received his early training under his father, the still-life painter Pieter Claesz (1596/1597–1661). Houbraken, however, enumerated other teachers, including Jan van Goyen (q.v.), Claes Moeyaert (1592/1593–1655), Pieter de Grebber (c. 1600–1652/1653), Jan Wils (c. 1600–1666), and, somewhat improbably, Berchem's younger cousin Jan Baptist Weenix (1621–1660/1661).

Berchem entered the Guild of Saint Luke in Haarlem in 1642 and took on three pupils in that very year. He married Catrijne Claes de Groot in Haarlem in 1646; three years later the couple made out their wills. In 1650 Berchem made a trip with Jacob van Ruisdael (q.v.) in the area around Bentheim near the German border, and in 1652 and 1653 the artists collaborated on several paintings.

If certain works by Berchem in the early 1650s are close in style to Ruisdael's landscapes, other paintings already demonstrate an awareness of Italianate painters who had returned to the Netherlands in the 1630s and 1640s. The most important of these artists for Berchem's work were Pieter van Laer (1599–1642), Jan Baptist Weenix, Jan Both (c. 1615–1652), and Jan Asselijn (c. 1615–1652). While Van Laer was instrumental in formulating Berchem's figure style, the artist who had the most lasting impact on his landscapes, in particular his harbor scenes, was Asselijn.

Despite the fact that Italianate-style paintings exist in Berchem's oeuvre in the late 1640s and early 1650s, it seems unlikely that Berchem had actually visited Italy by this date. Although no documentary evidence confirms any trip to Italy, recent scholars have postulated, for stylistic reasons, that Berchem may well have been there between 1653 and 1656. By the late 1650s he had developed into one of the most sensitive interpreters of both the pastoral and exotic character of Italy.

Berchem apparently moved permanently to Amsterdam in 1677, although he is mentioned there as early as 1660. In his later years he also painted a number of allegorical scenes and executed designs for maps. He had many pupils throughout his career, including Karel Dujardin (c. 1622–1678), Pieter de Hooch (q.v.), and Jacob Ochtervelt (1634–1682). His pupils Abraham Begeyn (c. 1630–1697) and William Romeyn (c. 1624–1694) emulated their teacher's style quite closely, while other artists copied the master's work. Even more indicative of Berchem's fame was the large number of prints made after his paintings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, by the mid-eighteenth century, he was valued as one of the foremost seventeenth-century Dutch painters.

Bibliography

Houbraken 1753, 2: 109–114.

Schaar 1958.

Blankert 1978a: 147–171.

Amsterdam 1987: 262–268.

Montreal 1990: 55–78.

Brown/MacLaren 1992: 19–20.