
BY BRANDY MCDONNELL

Inspired by Italy

The 17th century in the Netherlands is called the Dutch Golden Age, when the Dutch East India Co. was the largest commercial empire in the world, and the economy, arts and sciences all were flourishing.

The Dutch Italianates, as they were later defined by art historians, specialized in landscapes inspired by Italy, the epitome of the Renaissance and home of so many master painters, sculptors and architects.

Throughout the century, Dutch artists took the exoticism in a way, either over the Alps or by sea. Most waited until they had returned to Holland to create their paintings; often never traveled to Italy but took inspiration from the work of artists who had. They filled their canvases with Italy’s warm light, ancient ruins and rugged mountains, quite a change from the scene from the Netherlands’ cloudy skies and rolling plains.

“These paintings were somewhat eccentric to the Holland market,” Klos said.

“They are beautiful unlike the landscapes of the world and controlling the trade...” said Prada Klos, photographer of the exhibit.

“The landscapes tend to fall a little bit more Italian, but if you look closely at the figures and sometimes the animals, they will actually appear much more Dutch,” she said.

Fulling out of favor

When Sir Peter Francis Bourgeois, a painter and art dealer, and his business partner, linen trader and art dealer Aelbert Cuyp were exiled, they waited until they had returned to Holland to create their paintings; others never traveled to Italy but took inspiration from their homeland, with the landscape, clothing, figures and sometimes the animals, they would actually appear much more Dutch, she said.

One of the great gods of art, the famous Dutch painter Adriaen van Ostade was exiled. When Dulwich Picture Gallery, the first public art gallery in England, was founded in 1811 through Bourgeois’ initiative, the collection included the Dutch Italianates works.

While the images remain, their popularity proved less enduring. "Nicolaas Berchem was the first of the group to appear much more Italian, but if you look closely at the figures and sometimes the animals, they will actually appear much more Dutch," she said.

In 1790 from the king of Poland, the collection in- cluded the Dutch Italianate exhibit of the London gallery's Dutch Italianates; "They're a perfect example of framing in a way a form of nationalism, because they're proud to buy these worldly paintings," Prada Klos said.

But the paintings also retained a certain element of their homeland, with the artists portraying peasants, hunters and shipwrights, usually dressed in Dutch dressing gowns and clothing.

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"They would have commissioned a frame maker in London to make the frames for the pictures in the current taste and fashion of the times," said Tom Proctor, the gallery’s frame conservator, in a phone interview. "They are a perfect example of framing in England of that period."