

Pieter Molijn

1595–1661

PIETER MOLIJN, born in London of Flemish parents, was baptized on 6 April 1595. He became a master of the Haarlem guild of painters in 1616. It is not known when he left England or where and with whom he studied painting. There is no evidence to support the tradition that he was a pupil of Frans Hals (q.v.), although it is quite likely that he received his instruction in Haarlem.

In 1624 Molijn joined a Haarlem civic guard company, and from 1630 to 1649 he was also a prominent figure in the administration of the guild. He held office as either *boofdman* or *deken* in 1630, 1633, 1637, 1638, 1645, and 1649. Little else is known of his professional career, except that he seems to have remained in Haarlem until his death in 1661. His pupils included the genre painter Gerard ter Borch (q.v.) and probably also the landscapist Allart van Everdingen (1621–1675).

During the course of Molijn's long career, Dutch landscape painting underwent rapid and dramatic changes. Until 1625 his work was inspired by the mannerist, Flemish tradition of landscape painting practiced in the Netherlands by artists such as Roelandt Savery (q.v.). Perhaps through the inspiration of his fellow Haarlem painter Esaias van de Velde (1587–1630), however, Molijn helped forge the way for a new mode of landscape during the latter half of the 1620s with compositions unified by a sweeping diagonal. These small landscape views, executed with a limited palette, anticipate the tonal style that Jan van Goyen (q.v.) and Salomon van Ruysdael (1600/1603–1670) refined during the late 1630s and 1640s. Molijn was also a talented draftsman and graphic artist.

Bibliography

- Schrevelius 1648: 389–390.
Houbraken 1753, 3: 183–184.
Van der Willigen 1870: 18, 21, 27, 225–227, 229.
Granberg 1883.
Granberg 1884b.
Stechow 1966: 23–28.
Amsterdam 1987: 374–376.
Allen 1987.

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Landscape with Open Gate

c. 1630

Oil on oak, 33.6 x 47.9 (13¹/₄ x 18⁷/₈)

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund and Gift of Arthur K. and Susan H. Wheelock

Technical Notes: The support, a single, horizontally grained oak board, has several minor cracks parallel to the grain. Dendrochronology has determined a felling date between 1628 and 1634, with the most plausible date being 1630.¹ The back is wax-coated and the edges beveled. The double ground consists of a lower white layer and an upper light brown layer. The smooth, thin ground masks the wood grain and is extensively incorporated into the design. The fluid, brush-applied strokes of the extensive underdrawing, which is more agitated and oblique than the final composition, are readily visible to the naked eye as well as with infrared reflectography. The two small foreground figures, which do not appear in the underdrawing, seem to be later additions.

Translucent paint is applied thinly and rapidly, with slightly impasted highlights and stiff brushwork in the sky. Frequently the ground is merely glazed over lightly or highlights applied to exposed underdrawing lines, as in a quickly executed sketch. Discolored retouching covers scattered small losses and reinforces lines in the gate and the figures to its right. Remnants of aged varnishes indicate past selective cleaning.

Provenance: Private collection, France; Arthur K. and Susan H. Wheelock, Washington, in 1980.

Exhibited: *Haarlem: The Seventeenth Century*, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1983, no. 85 (as "Attributed to").

THIS SMALL WORK, so evocative of the windswept terrain near the dunes along the Dutch coast, captures the essence of early seventeenth-century landscape painting. With free and fluid strokes, Molijn has created a vigorous and animated scene, where sea breezes, which have so molded the craggy form of the dead, vine-covered oak and the wood slats of the gate and fence, rustle the leaves of trees surrounding the farm. The painting does not have a composed feeling, but appears as though it were a view suddenly happened upon along a sandy road. From the low vantage point, nature rather than man takes precedence. The road, gate, and craggy tree are boldly depicted, while the only figures Molijn included, a shepherd returning with his sheep just