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Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Hendrick Avercamp, *Winter Scene Outside the Walls of Kampen* (detail), c. 1613–1615, oil on panel, private collection

Avercamp, Hendrick

Dutch, 1585 - 1634

BIOGRAPHY

Hendrick Avercamp, born in Amsterdam in a house next to the Nieuwe Kerk, was baptized in the Oude Kerk on January 27, 1585. In 1586 the family moved to Kampen, where Avercamp's father was appointed town apothecary. After his death, his business was taken over by his wife, Beatrix Peters, and by one of their other sons, either Lambert or Pieter. Another son became a physician, and the members of this well-educated family were for many years prominent citizens of Kampen.

For his artistic training, Hendrick went to Amsterdam, where in 1607 he lived with the Danish portrait painter Pieter Isaacks (1569–1625). In that year King Christiaan IV recalled Isaacks to Denmark, and Avercamp appears among the list of buyers at the auction of Isaacks' effects as "de stom tot Pieter Isacqs" (Pieter Isaacks' mute). Various other records testify to Avercamp's disability: a document from 1622 refers to him as "Hendrick Avercamp de Stomme," and his mother's will, drawn up in 1633, instructs that her unmarried, "mute and miserable" son Hendrick should receive, in addition to his portion of the inheritance, an extra annual allowance of one hundred guilders for life from family capital. Avercamp died five months after his mother's remark, so her description of her son as "miserable" may have referred not to his muteness but rather to him being ill at that time.

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In Amsterdam, Avercamp came under the influence of the Flemish painters of mannerist landscapes who were then living in the city, notably Gillis van Coninxloo III (Flemish, 1544 - 1607) and David Vinckboons (Dutch, 1576 - c. 1632). Based on stylistic evidence, it is probable that one or both of these painters was Avercamp's teacher, but no documentation of his apprenticeship exists.

By January 28, 1613, Avercamp was back in Kampen, where he seems to have remained until his death in May 1634.[1] There, in relative isolation from the mainstreams of Dutch art, he devoted himself almost entirely to the painting of winter scenes and specifically to depictions of crowds of people engaging in a wide range of activities on frozen rivers. Avercamp had no important direct followers, although he had several pupils, among them his nephew Barent Avercamp (c. 1612–1679), Arent Arentsz (called Cabel) (1585/1586–1635), and Dirck Hardenstein II (1620–after 1674).

[1] Avercamp must have returned occasionally to Amsterdam, as is suggested by a drawing he made of the Haarlemmerpoort in Amsterdam, which was constructed between 1615 and 1618. See Marijn Schapelhouman and Peter Schatborn, *Tekeningen van oude meesters: De verzameling Jacobus A. Klaver* (Zwolle, 1993), 56, no. 23, repro.

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