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Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century

Lodewijk van der Helst, *Portrait of Willem van de Velde II*, c. 1660–1672, oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Purchase November 1906, inv. no. SK-A-2236

Velde, Willem van de, the Younger

Also known as
Velde, Willem van de, II
Dutch, 1633 - 1707

BIOGRAPHY

The son of marine artist Willem van de Velde the Elder (Dutch, 1611 - 1693), Willem van de Velde the Younger was baptized in Leiden on December 18, 1633. The family moved to Amsterdam in the mid-1630s and lived in a house on the Nieuwe Waelseliant near the waterfront by the Montelbaanstoren until 1672. On March 13, 1652, Willem the Younger married Petronella le Maire of Weesp. The marriage lasted no more than fifteen months, and on June 20, 1653, Van de Velde began proceedings against his wife to initiate a separation. On December 23, 1656, he married his second wife, Magdalena Walravens. Of their six children, the three boys—Willem (b. 1667), Cornelis (active 1675–1729), and Peter —would also become painters.

Van de Velde probably received his earliest training from his father before undertaking a period of study with the marine painter Simon de Vlieger (Dutch, 1600/1601 - 1653) in Amsterdam.[1] The length of this study is uncertain, and by 1656 he was documented as “living in Leiden, aged 34, painter, assistant to his father Willem van de Velde in Corte Coninckstraat (in Amsterdam).”[2] In 1672 Van de Velde left the Netherlands for London, followed several weeks later by his father. The move may have been a result of the threat of the French invasion, as well as the prospect of better professional opportunities abroad.

Both father and son received royal appointments from Charles II, as well as from James, the Duke of York. On January 12, 1674, Willem the Elder was appointed for

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"taking and making Draughts of Sea Fights" with an annual stipend of 100, while Willem the Younger also received 100 per annum for "putting the said Draughts into Colours."[3] That same year they established a studio in the Queen's House at Greenwich. After his father's death in 1693, Van de Velde continued to oversee the studio, along with his sons Willem and Cornelis, and, among others, Isaac Sailmaker (1633–1721), Jacob Knyff (1639–1681), and Peter Monamy (1681–1749). Van de Velde died on April 7, 1707, and was buried next to his father in Saint James' Church, Piccadilly.

Van de Velde's paintings, the earliest of which date from the 1650s, demonstrate the influence of his father's precise drawings and pen paintings of ships and battle scenes as well as De Vlieger's atmospheric coastlines. Van de Velde often depicted beach scenes and boats along the coast with an attention to the movement of light and clouds over calm or stormy waters. His subject matter evolved over the course of his career as he received more commissions to record Dutch and English naval battles. Van de Velde's sensitive renderings of the ships and sea made him one of the most influential marine painters of the seventeenth century.

[1] Arnold Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen*. 3 vols. (The Hague, 1753; reprint: Amsterdam, 1976), 2:325.

[2] Aart de Vries, "Biografische aanteekeningen betreffende voornamelijk Amsterdamsche schilders," *Oud-Holland* 4 (1886): 217.

[3] Michael Strang Robinson, *Van de Velde Drawings: A Catalogue of Drawings in the National Maritime Museum Made by the Elder and Younger Willem van de Velde* (Cambridge, UK, 1958), 1:12.

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