



Jan van Goyen  
Dutch, 1596 - 1656

## *View of Rhenen*

1646

oil on canvas

overall: 101.6 × 135.26 cm (40 × 53 1/4 in.)

framed: 127.64 × 161.93 × 5.72 cm (50 1/4 × 63 3/4 × 2 1/4 in.)

Inscription: lower right, VG in ligature: VGoyen 1646

Corcoran Collection (William A. Clark Collection) 2014.136.33

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### ENTRY

This panoramic landscape is so grand and visually compelling that one can almost imagine traveling down the winding road that leads to Rhenen, a medieval walled city on the Rhine River. [1] Jan van Goyen situated the viewer on the Grebbeberg, a small hill to the east of the city—a perfect vantage from which to see Rhenen nestled in the undulating terrain on the north bank of the river as well as the vast sweep of the surrounding Dutch countryside. The Rhine flows past the twin-towered Rijnpoort, one of the city's gates, and continues its meandering course toward the low-lying distant horizon. No less dramatic than the broad sweep of the land is the enormity of the overarching sky, which accounts for almost two-thirds of the painting's composition. Large clouds funneling in from the left toward the majestic tower of the Cunerakerk at the city's core not only enhance the visual impact of this architectural masterpiece but also the atmospheric character of the scene.

*View of Rhenen* has an understated dynamic energy that allows it to pulsate with life. The distant horizon of this expansive landscape is not flat but slopes gently to the left, receding to the point where the Rhine disappears into the distance. Late

afternoon light passing through the billowing clouds creates patterns of light and shade throughout the sky and across the land, defining the topography and enlivening the scene. The artist brought depth to the composition by plunging the foreground into shadow and by bathing the water behind it in sunlight. With his vigorous brushstrokes, Van Goyen captured the windblown nature of the grasses and small shrubs that grow along this sandy, arid stretch of land. Finally, he populated the countryside with animals and humans, among them an elegant group of travelers, including two liveried pages preceding a horse-drawn coach and its equestrian escort, who are heading east toward Wageningen. Nearby, a group of men in a wooden skiff transport goods along a quiet inlet of the Rhine.

With its strategic location on one of Europe's major waterways, Rhenen was a center for trade, an important military outpost, and a well-known pilgrimage site. It received its city rights in the mid-13th century and its protective walls in the 14th century. Throughout the Middle Ages, pilgrims streamed into Rhenen to venerate the relics of Saint Cunera, later housed in the massive Cunerakerk, which was constructed in the mid-15th century, its imposing late Gothic tower completed only in 1531. Around 1630 Rhenen gained added prominence after the King and Queen of Bohemia—Frederick V, the Elector Palatine (1596–1632), and Elizabeth Stuart (1596–1662), who lived as royal exiles in The Hague—built a lavish summer residence, the Koningshuys (Royal House), next to the Cunerakerk.

Nicknamed the “Winter King” due to the short duration of his reign, Frederick chose Rhenen because he was keen on the quality of the hunt available in the region, and because the vistas from the top of the Grebbeberg—the very location Van Goyen adopted for this painting—reminded him of his ancestral home along the Rhine in Heidelberg. The large bluestone-covered table he erected at the summit of the Grebbeberg, where he enjoyed the view of the river valley and surrounding countryside, became known as the Koningstafel (King's Table). An 18th-century traveler's pocket atlas specifically recommends visiting this “high mountain” near Rhenen, “which is frequently climbed to gaze at one of the finest views over the Rhine, as well as onto the Neder-Betuwe, and over the Rheensche Veenen.” [2] One of the distant towns visible from the Grebbeberg was Lienden, and Van Goyen depicted its large stone church rising above the horizon at the far left of his painting. This church is specifically identified in a panoramic print that Steven van Lamsweerde (c. 1620–1686) made from the same location. [3]

When Van Goyen made his way to Rhenen from his home in The Hague in the early 1640s, he traveled along the Rhine, a route that other Dutch artists, both

before and after him, also followed. Van Goyen; Hercules Segers (c. 1589–c. 1638); Aelbert Cuyp (Dutch, 1620 - 1691), who depicted the Koningstafel in one of his views of the river near Rhenen (c. 1646–1648, private collection); [4] Jacob van Ruisdael (Dutch, c. 1628/1629 - 1682); Lambert Doomer (Dutch, 1624 - 1700); Joris van der Haagen (Dutch, c. 1615 - 1669); and Salomon van Ruysdael (Dutch, c. 1602 - 1670) were all drawn to Rhenen because of the city's pictorial beauty and historic importance. [5] Judging from the number of drawings and paintings they created of Rhenen and its environs, a ready market existed for their works.

Van Goyen painted almost 30 views of the city. [6] He depicted Rhenen from the east and from the west, from the water and from land, but none of the artist's other compositions match this painting in scale and dramatic impact, including his smaller depiction of Rhenen from the Grebbeberg now in the Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge. [7] Part of the appeal of the Gallery's painting is the harmonious character of the scene, particularly in the muted tonalities of the broad landscape, which consists mostly of browns and ochers in the foreground and bluer hues in the distance. The off-center location of the tower of the Cunerakerk provides ample space in the composition for the meandering Rhine. Even though this arrangement may have been strictly intuitive, the placement of the tower accords with the golden mean, a compositional concept important for a number of Dutch artists. [8]

It is not known whether Van Goyen traveled with other artists on his trip to Rhenen in the early 1640s, but he must have spent quite some time in and around the city. [9] He carefully studied Rhenen's character, and the drawings he then made formed the basis of paintings done in that decade. While specific drawings related to the Gallery's *View of Rhenen* have not been identified, Van Goyen's thorough knowledge of Rhenen's architecture is evident throughout this work. Aside from the Cunerakerk and the Rhinepoort, Van Goyen depicted a number of other prominent structures that helped create its distinctive city profile. Among these are the Bergpoort, the eastern city gate; the adjacent Huis Trappenburch; the Binnenmolen (Inner Windmill), situated on the northern ramparts; and the Westmolen (West Windmill), located outside the western city walls, along the road to Utrecht. [10] The double-peaked roofline of the Koningshuys, the imposing Renaissance-style palace that the painter and architect Bartholomeus van Bassen (c. 1590–1652) designed for the Winter King and Queen, is visible just to the right of the Cunerakerk.

The distinguished party of travelers in the painting undoubtedly reflects the presence of the court of Elizabeth Stuart in Rhenen. The coach, drawn by four white horses, has an aristocratic appearance, as do the matching liveries of the two pages and the coachman. Their attire, consisting of a distinctive red cape with gold piping, is identical to that worn by the royal couple's staff in The Hague. [11] Elizabeth continued to use her summer retreat and hunting lodge after her husband's death and often entertained guests. She spent time in Rhenen in the 1640s and 1650s, and Van Goyen often depicted elegant carriages such as this traveling along area roads or being ferried across the Rhine. [12] Such visual references to Elizabeth's beloved summer retreat may relate to a buoyant market in The Hague for views of Rhenen, where personal and political connections to the Winter Queen, the sister of King Charles I of England, remained strong. None of Van Goyen's other views of Rhenen, however, have the grandeur of this remarkable painting, which suggests that it may have been commissioned by a patron with close ties to Elizabeth Stuart.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

December 9, 2019

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## NOTES

- [1] I would like to thank Henriette Rahusen for her research and thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this entry.
- [2] "Aan de Westzyde [traveling from Wageningen to Rhenen] heeft men een zeer hoogen Berg, welke veelyds beklommen word, om van daar een der fraaiste Gezichten over den Rhyn, als mede of de Neder-Betuwe, en over the Rheensche Veenen te aanschouwen." Jan Christiaan Sepp, *Nieuwe Geographische Nederlandsche Reise- en Zak-Atlas* (Amsterdam, 1773; facsimile reprint, Alphen aan den Rijn, 1987), 85. For a map that specifically identifies the Koningstafel, see "Map of the Rhine River Valley between Rhenen and Arnhem," from Jan Christiaan Sepp, *Nieuwe Geographische Nederlandsche Reise- en Zak-Atlas* (Amsterdam, 1773; repr. Alphen aan den Rijn, 1987), plate 24. For a depiction of the Koningstafel, see note 4.
- [3] Steven van Lamsweerde, *View of the Betuwe and Rhenen*, c. 1660, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, RP-P-AO-5-51.
- [4] Aelbert Cuyp, *Panoramic Landscape with Travelers Standing at the "Koningstafel,"* c. 1646–1648, oil on panel, private collection.
- [5] For views of Rhenen, see H. P. Deys, *Achter Berg en Rijn: Over boeren*,

*burgers en buitenlui in Rhenen* (Rhenen, 1981). For a depiction of the Koningstafel, see note 4.

- [6] Hans-Ulrich Beck, *Jan van Goyen, 1596–1656: Ein Oeuvreverzeichnis in zwei Bänden*, vol. 2, *Katalog der Gemälde* (Amsterdam, 1973), 182–194, nos. 374–400A. Beck went on to publish two addenda to his two-volume catalogue raisonné: *Jan van Goyen, 1596–1656: Ein Oeuvreverzeichnis*, vol. 3, *Ergänzungen zum Katalog der Handzeichnungen und Ergänzungen zum Katalog der Gemälde* (Doornspijk, 1987), and vol. 4, *Künstler um Jan van Goyen: Maler und Zeichner* (Doornspijk, 1991).
- [7] Jan van Goyen, *View of Rhenen*, c. 1640, oil on panel, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Cambridge, Gift of Peter and Anne Brooke, 2016.240.
- [8] For a discussion of the golden mean (or golden ratio) as an organizing principle in Jan van der Heyden's *An Architectural Fantasy* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1968.13.1), see Ger Luijten, Peter Schatborn, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Drawings for Paintings in the Age of Rembrandt* (Milan, 2016), 25.
- [9] Van Goyen may also have made an earlier trip there in the 1630s as one of his paintings of Rhenen is dated 1636. Hans-Ulrich Beck, *Jan van Goyen, 1596–1656: Ein Oeuvreverzeichnis in zwei Bänden*, vol. 2, *Katalog der Gemälde* (Amsterdam, 1973): 182, no. 374.
- [10] The identity of these buildings is taken from Ariane van Suchtelen's entry on the painting in Ariane van Suchtelen and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Pride of Place: Dutch Cityscapes of the Golden Age* (Zwolle, 2008), 102.
- [11] The Winter King and Queen frequently appear in colored drawings in the album by Adriaen van de Venne (1589–1662), dated 1620–1626, that covers their stay in The Hague. The album, now in the British Museum, London, also includes an image of the carriage of the English ambassador Sir Dudley Carleton. Courtiers or servants in red livery with gold piping are present in several of the depictions of courtly life. See, for example, British Museum inv. 1978,0624.42.10, *Shooting the Popinjay*, and 1978,0624.42.11, *Ambassadeurs*. See also Martin Royalton-Kisch, *Adriaen Van De Venne's Album in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London, 1988), 162–167.
- [12] Her presence in Rhenen is indicated by letters she wrote during that decade. She continued to use Rhenen until 1661, when she moved to England following the restoration of King Charles II. After Elizabeth died in 1662, the palace was inherited by her son Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, who owned it as late as 1679, but who allowed the property to deteriorate. For Van Goyen's paintings of Rhenen that include similar horse-drawn coaches, occasionally being ferried across the Rhine, see Hans-Ulrich Beck, *Jan van Goyen, 1596–1656: Ein Oeuvreverzeichnis in zwei Bänden*,

vol. 2, *Katalog der Gemälde* (Amsterdam, 1973), nos. 382, 383, 385, 386, 392, 393.

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## TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The primary support is a moderately coarse plain-weave canvas that was relined onto plain-weave linen. The tacking margins were removed during a previous treatment; however, there is cusping along all four sides, which suggests that the canvas retains its original dimensions.

The ground layer is of medium thickness and is light beige in color. Under magnification, large white, small black, and earth-brown particles are visible in this layer. There is no indication of an underdrawing or other form of preliminary design with magnification or infrared reflectography (IRR). [1] The paint was applied quickly and thinly, especially in the foreground where the ground is visible throughout. While the color of the ground layer does affect the overall tonality of the sky, this is largely due to abrasion from overcleaning during a past treatment; the paint layer is now thinner than originally intended.

Van Goyen first painted the sky directly on top of the ground. This layer extends partway under the landscape, and it is likely that the river in the far distance is an extension of the sky layer. Afterward the middle ground was thinly painted, wet-into-wet, often leaving small parts of the ground exposed. The buildings were painted in a sketchy manner, first in a dark brown-black paint, and at a time when the paint layer(s) of the sky were still slightly soft and could be distorted by brushwork. The next major stage of painting likely included the lighted rise of ground on the right as well as the bottommost portion of the foreground, which was painted over a thin, streaky base tone that the artist laid down in an earlier session. The general shape and positioning of the figures throughout the foreground were blocked out in dark opaque brown paint on top of the dry background/foreground. Once the brown paint was dry, the details of the figures were painted in muted tones, and lastly small highlights and final touches were painted on the dry layer below. The horses were painted quickly and without much elaboration; their form was sketched with a brown-black painted line and then only a thin scumble of off-white/beige paint was applied in selective places, while the brown landscape paint layers below play a large role in the final form.

Overall, the painting is in good condition. There is a fine network of cracks throughout and a few scattered small losses. In the bottom left quadrant there is a deep vertical scratch in the paint layers that is approximately 5 centimeters in length. The painting was treated in 2017.

Dina Anchin, based on the examination report and treatment notes by Michael Swicklik and the examination notes and technical entry by Melanie Gifford in *Antiquities to Impressionism: The William A. Clark Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art* (Washington, DC, 2001).

December 9, 2019

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## TECHNICAL NOTES

[1] Infrared reflectography was carried out using a Santa Barbara Focalplane InSb camera filtered to 1.5–1.8 microns (H filter).

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## PROVENANCE

“Collection of a Gentleman of Nottinghamshire,” (his sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 1846).[1] probably acquired 1878 by H. Smith Wright, Nottingham. Thomas Wright [1773-1845], Upton Hall, between Southwell and Newark, Nottinghamshire. Dr. Abraham Bredius [1855-1946], Amsterdam. Sir George Donaldson [1845-1925], London; purchased 1906 by William A. Clark [1839-1925], New York;[2] bequest 1926 to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington; acquired 2014 by the National Gallery of Art.

[1] Information about the 1846 sale, which has not yet been positively identified, is given in Dana H. Carroll, *Catalogue of Objects of Fine Art and Other Properties at the Home of William Andrews Clark, 962 Fifth Avenue*, Part II, Unpublished manuscript, n.d. (1925): 219, no. 317; original manuscript in The Corcoran Archives, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University Libraries, Washington, DC; copy in NGA curatorial files.

[2] The fact that Clark purchased the painting in 1906 from Donaldson is given in

the Carroll manuscript (see note 1). However, in a letter of 18 November 1906 to Corcoran director Frederick B. McGuire, Clark mentions that he has had a letter from the previous owner of the work, "Dr. Bredius" (The Corcoran Archives, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University Libraries, Washington, DC: COR RG 2.0, Director's Records, transcription and summary in NGA curatorial files). This was Dr. Abraham Bredius, whose name is not mentioned in the Carroll manuscript. The exact nature and chronology of Clark's purchase has still to be determined.

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## EXHIBITION HISTORY

1878 Nottingham, 1878, no. 48.

1906 Loan to display with permanent collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 1906-1909.

1909 The Hudson-Fulton Celebration: Collection of Paintings by Dutch Masters of the Seventeenth Century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1909, no. 18 (three publications; entries in 2 vol. 1909 catalogue and 1910 catalogue include reprints and have the dimensions of no. 19, NGA 2014.136.34).

1959 Loan Exhibition: Masterpieces from the Corcoran Gallery of Art, A Benefit Exhibition in Honor of the Gallery's Centenary, Wildenstein Galleries, New York, 1959, catalogue without checklist.

1961 25th Birthday Exhibition: Treasures in America, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 1961, catalogue without checklist.

1963 Masters of Landscape: East and West, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica; Rochester Memorial Art Gallery, 1963, no. 23.

1978 The William A. Clark Collection: An exhibition marking the 50th Anniversary of the installation of The Clark Collection at The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 1978, catalogue without checklist.

1987 Masters of 17th Century Dutch Landscape Painting, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987-1988, no. 37.



## NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART ONLINE EDITIONS

*Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*

1991 Great Dutch Paintings from America, Royal Cabinet of Paintings Mauritshuis, The Hague; The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1991, no. 23 (shown only in San Francisco).

2001 Antiquities to Impressionism: The William A. Clark Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 2001-2002, catalogue without checklist.


2008 Pride of Place: Dutch Cityscapes of the Golden Age, Royal Picture House Mauritshuis, The Hague; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2008-2009

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- 1907 Hofstede de Groot, Cornelis. *Beschreibendes und kritisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten holländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts*. 10 vols. Esslingen and Paris, 1907-1928: 8(1923): 55, no. 210.
- 1909 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Catalogue of a collection of paintings by Dutch masters of the seventeenth century*. The Hudson-Fulton Celebration 1. Exh. cat. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1909: 19, no. 18, repro.
- 1910 Breck, Joseph. "L'Art hollandais à l'exposition Hudson-Fulton à New-York." *L'Art Flamand et Hollandais* 13 (June-July 1910): 59.
- 1910 Valentiner, Wilhelm R. *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of Paintings by Old Dutch Masters Held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Connection with the Hudson-Fulton Celebration*. New York, 1910: 85, no. 18, repro.
- 1925 Carroll, Dana H. *Catalogue of Objects of Fine Art and Other Properties at the Home of William Andrews Clark, 962 Fifth Avenue*. Part II. Unpublished manuscript, n.d. (1925): 219, no. 317.
- 1928 Corcoran Gallery of Art. *Illustrated Handbook of the W.A. Clark Collection*. Washington, 1928: 42.
- 1932 Corcoran Gallery of Art. *Illustrated Handbook of the W.A. Clark Collection*. Washington, 1932: 41, 47, repro.
- 1955 Breckenridge, James. D. *A Handbook of Dutch and Flemish Paintings in the William Andrews Clark Collection*. Washington, 1955: 21, repro.
- 1959 Corcoran Gallery of Art. *Masterpieces of the Corcoran Gallery of Art*. Washington, 1959: 11, repro.
- 1961 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. *A brief chronicle of the 25th Birthday Celebration and Catalogue of the Anniversary Loan Exhibition*,

- Treasures in America, at the Museum from January 13 to March 5 of 1961.* Richmond, 1961: 63, repro.
- 1963 *Masters of Landscape: East and West.* Exh. cat. Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica; Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester. Utica, 1963: 30, no. 23, repro.
- 1966 Dobrzycka, Anna. *Jan van Goyen, 1596-1656.* Pozna, 1966: 111, no. 164.
- 1966 Stechow, Wolfgang. *Dutch Landscape Painting of the Seventeenth Century.* Kress Foundation Studies in the History of European Art 1. London, 1966: 41, 482, no. 71, repro.
- 1973 Beck, Hans-Ulrich. *Jan van Goyen, 1596-1656: ein Oeuvreverzeichnis.* 4 vols. Vol. 2: Katalog der Gemälde. Amsterdam, 1973: 2:188-189, no. 387, repro.
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- 1987 Sutton, Peter C., et al. *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting.* Exh. cat. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Philadelphia Museum of Art. Boston, 1987: 329-330, no. 37, color repro.
- 1990 Broos, Ben P. J., ed. *Great Dutch Paintings from America.* Exh. cat. Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The Hague and Zwolle, 1990: 245-248, no. 23, repro.
- 1992 E. de Jongh. "Nationalistische visies op zeventiende-eeuwse Hollandse kunst." In S. C. Dik and G. W. Muller, eds. *Het hemd is nader dan de rok: zes voordrachten over het eigene van de Nederlandse cultuur.* Assen and Maastricht, 1992: 74-75, no. 10, repro.
- 1993 Buijsen, Edwin, ed. *Tussen fantasie en werkelijkheid. 17de eeuwse Hollandse landschapschilderkunst / Between Fantasy and Reality: 17th Century Dutch Landscape Painting.* Exh. cat. Tokyo Station Gallery,

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- 1994 Sutton, Peter C., and John Loughman. *El Siglo de Oro del Paisaje Holandés/The Golden Age of Dutch Landscape Paintings*. Exh. cat. Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 1994: 118, no. 26, repro.
- 2001 Coyle, Laura, and Dare Myers Hartwell, eds. *Antiquities to Impressionism: The William A. Clark Collection, Corcoran Gallery of Art*. Washington, DC, 2001: 23, 66, repro.
- 2001 Spolsky, Ellen. *Satisfying Skepticism: Embodied Knowledge in the Early Modern World*. Burlington, 2001: 147-148, no. 7.5, repro.
- 2008 Suchtelen, Ariane van, and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. *Pride of Place: Dutch cityscapes of the Golden Age*. Exh. cat. Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague; National Gallery of Art, Washington. Zwolle, 2008: 114-115, 224, no. 19, repro.
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**To cite:** Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., “Jan van Goyen/*View of Rhenen*/1646,” *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, <https://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/139354> (accessed October 15, 2024).