

1974 Broos: 198, note 9.  
1975 NGA: 90–91, repro.  
1975 Reiss: 165, no. 124, repro.  
1976 Walker: 298–299, color repro.

1979 Dumas: 104–105, no. 69, repro.  
1984 Wright: 12, 27.  
1985 NGA: 110.  
1986 Sutton: 306.

## Gerard Dou

1613–1675

GERARD DOU, considered the founder of the Dutch school of *fijnschilderij*, or fine painting, was born in Leiden on 7 April 1613, the son of the glassmaker and engraver Douwe Jansz. and Marytje Jansdr. van Rosenberg. According to Orlers, Dou received his first artistic instruction, in the art of glass engraving, from his father. He was an apprentice with the copper engraver Bartholomeus Dolen-do (c. 1571–active 1629) for a year and a half, beginning in 1622 at the astonishingly young age of nine, and then trained with the glass painter Pieter Couwenhorn for two years. As he was a member of the glaziers' guild from 1625 to 1627, it is tempting to make a connection between this youthful career and the smooth, shiny surface effects characteristic of his later panel paintings.

On 14 February 1628 Dou began his apprenticeship with Rembrandt van Rijn (q.v.), which seems to have lasted until the master moved to Amsterdam some three or four years later. At the time he entered Rembrandt's workshop Dou was not quite fifteen years old and Rembrandt was only twenty-one. Although there are no dated works by Dou from this period, a number of his pictures are so close in style to those of his teacher that they must have been painted at this time. Indeed, early works by Dou have at times been attributed to Rembrandt himself, a confusion in part due to the fact that Dou and Rembrandt shared subjects and models during these years.

After Rembrandt went to Amsterdam, Dou produced ever more finely wrought, highly finished compositions with increasingly smooth, enamel-like surfaces. He also began to employ a range of cooler, paler colors in preference to the warm, darkish browns of his earlier works.

Dou painted a wide range of subjects, including genre scenes, history paintings, still lifes, portraits, and—unusual for a seventeenth-century Dutch

painter—nudes. He also began painting candlelit scenes during the 1650s. His fame quite rightly rests, however, on the meticulously painted, small genre scenes that make up a large portion of his oeuvre. These typically depict one or two figures engaging in some kind of domestic activity, either in an interior or else looking out over a windowsill—a compositional device that Dou was chiefly responsible for popularizing. Many of these works are also open to a considerable degree of symbolic interpretation, containing numerous, if sometimes ambiguous, visual references to well-known contemporary proverbs or emblems.

Dou had remarkable success. From his own lifetime until late in the nineteenth century, his work was considered one of the crowning achievements of Dutch art, and his pictures consistently fetched higher prices than those of Rembrandt. By 1648, when he is recorded as one of the founder-members of the Leiden Guild of Saint Luke, his pictures commanded some of the highest prices of their day, and he had already gained a remarkable international reputation. Pieter Spiering, the agent in The Hague of Queen Christina of Sweden, apparently paid 1,000 guilders per year to secure for his queen first refusal of whatever Dou produced. In 1660 the States General of the Netherlands included several paintings by Dou amongst their gifts to Charles II of England on the occasion of his restoration to the throne. He subsequently invited Dou to travel to England and work at the royal court, an invitation the artist did not accept.

Indeed, it seems that Dou hardly ever left his native Leiden, where his work was as appreciated as it was in the royal courts of Europe. In 1641 the mayor of Leiden, J. J. Orlers, wrote admiringly of Dou's technique in his general description of the city, *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden*, and in 1665 a local collector, Johan de Bye, rented a room in which he

exhibited twenty-seven of the artist's paintings, one of the first recorded occasions of an exhibition devoted to the works of a single painter.

A factor in Dou's enduring fame must be the fascination for the products of extremely painstaking and skillful labor. The time that went into the creation of Dou's minutely detailed works is legendary: one anecdote relates how, when complimented on the patience with which he had painted a tiny broom the size of a fingernail, he replied that he still had three days' work to do on it. He is also said to have spent five days on the underpainting of a single hand in a portrait. Since he charged six guilders an hour for his services as a portrait painter, it is hardly surprising that these do not constitute a large proportion of his oeuvre.

Dou never married. He was buried in the Pieterskerk at Leiden on 9 February 1675. His pupils included Godfried Schalcken (1634–1706) and Frans van Mieris (1635–1681), as well as a number of less well-known painters, such as his nephew Domenicus van Tol (c. 1635–1676), Abraham de Pape (c. 1621–1666), Carel de Moor (1656–1738), and Godfried Matthijs Naiveu (1647–c. 1721).

#### Bibliography

- Orlers 1641: 377, 380.  
De Piles 1706: 428–430.  
Houbraken 1753, 2: 1–3.  
Smith 1829–1842, 1 (1829): 1–47.  
Martin 1902.  
HdG 1907–1927, 1 (1907): 337–470.  
Martin 1911.  
Martin 1913.  
London 1980.  
Sumowski 1983, 1: 498–607; 5: 3088–3089.  
Philadelphia 1984: 181–188.  
Leiden 1988: 96–115.  
Amsterdam 1989: 23–64.  
Brown/MaClaren 1992: 105.

1960.6.8 (1560)

### *The Hermit*

1670  
Oil on oak, 46 x 34.5 (18 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 13 $\frac{5}{8}$ )  
Timken Collection

#### Inscriptions

On book strap: *GDou 1670* (GD in ligature)  
On right page of book: *GDou* (GD in ligature)

**Technical Notes:** The original support is a vertically grained oak panel with an arched top. At a later date it was squared

off with a horizontally grained oak board attached with a half-lap joint that overlaps the arched area on the back of the original panel. Both the original and extension panel are attached to a cradle.

Paint is applied over a smooth, thick white ground in successive thin layers with low brushmarking and transparent glazing. A broad, wide-aperture, drying craquelure, most prominent in dark passages where a black underpaint layer is found, is absent in the later addition where no original paint or ground is found. The black layer serves as a base for translucent shadows, and is found over underlayers in the hands, suggesting reworking by Dou. Other artist's changes visible in the x-radiograph and as pentimenti are the shifting of the arched ruin to the right and repositioning of the book, which tilted upward at the rear, perhaps held by the hermit.

An area of severe abrasion along the bottom edge has been repainted, and foliage from the later extension has been continued on the original panel. An aged varnish layer is present, covering remnants of earlier coatings and possible reglazed dark passages. No conservation work has been carried out since acquisition.

**Provenance:** Probably Kurfürst Karl Albrecht, Munich, by 1742. Kurfürstliche Galerie, Munich; Alte Pinakothek, Munich, by 1829; deaccessioned in 1927;<sup>1</sup> (Galerie van Diemen, New York and Berlin); William R. Timken [1866–1949], New York; by inheritance to Lillian S. Timken [d. 1959], New York.

WITH CLASPED HANDS resting on a well-thumbed page of the open Bible, an old hermit dressed in a Franciscan habit kneels before a crucifix. He is situated in an outdoor setting before a grotto-like edifice consisting of large brick arches. The book and crucifix lie on a large rock that is covered by a frayed cloth woven from brightly colored threads. At the base of the crucifix is a human skull and beside it an hourglass. The crucifix itself leans against a large wicker basket, which in turn rests against an old moss-covered tree stump that arches over the scene. The stump appears dead, although sprigs with green leaves emerge from its withered form. Hanging from the stump, above the crucifix, is a lantern, its door opened and the candle within it extinguished. In the foreground right grows a large thistle from the marshy soil. Lying on the ground is a waterpouch, an overturned earthenware jug, and the remains of a horse's skull.

The intensely spiritual gaze on the hermit's face and the fervor with which he clasps his hands as he stares toward the crucifix indicate that he is contemplating the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection. Dou has reinforced his message with reminders of the brevity of man's life: the skull, hourglass, and extinguished light of the lantern. He has alluded to the hermit's constancy in his devotions with the thistle, a common symbol for this virtue in Dutch painting.<sup>2</sup>