

Hobbema, Meindert

Dutch, 1638 - 1709

BIOGRAPHY

Meindert Hobbema, viewed today as one of the most characteristic and highly valued Dutch landscape painters of the seventeenth century, is not mentioned in a single seventeenth-century literary source. The earliest reference to his work occurs in Johan van Gool's 1751 lexicon of Dutch artists, where Hobbema is mentioned in passing as having painted "modern landscapes."

Born to Lubbert Meynerts and Rinsje Eduwarts, Hobbema was baptized as Meyndert Lubbertsz in Amsterdam on October 31, 1638. Although he signed his name M. Hobbema on paintings as early as 1658, he used only his baptized name on legal documents until 1660. His reasons for using the name Hobbema are unknown. In July 1660 the landscape painter Jacob van Ruisdael (Dutch, c. 1628/1629 - 1682) testified that Hobbema had "served and learned with me for a few years." The apprenticeship may have begun around 1658, shortly after Ruisdael moved to Amsterdam. Nevertheless, the impact of Ruisdael's work on Hobbema is not apparent until after 1660. Hobbema's earlier work seems more closely related to the lighter and more delicate landscapes of Jacob's uncle Salomon van Ruysdael (Dutch, 1600/1603 - 1670).

Hobbema's relationship to Jacob van Ruisdael must have remained close during the 1660s, both personally and professionally. Many of Hobbema's compositions produced during this period evolve from those of his master, and in 1668 Ruisdael was a witness at Hobbema's marriage to Eeltien Vinck. Vinck was a kitchen maid to Lambert Reynst, a burgomaster of Amsterdam, and through this connection Hobbema seems to have been awarded the well-paid position of wine gauger for the Amsterdam *octroi*, or civic tax collectors. After his marriage he painted relatively infrequently. He outlived his wife and five children and was buried a pauper at the cemetery of the Westerkerk, in Amsterdam, at the age of seventy-one.

Although Brouhiet attributes about five hundred paintings to Hobbema in his monograph, many of his attributions cannot be defended. A number of the paintings he gives to Hobbema are by contemporaries who painted in similar

styles, as for example Jan van Kessel (Dutch, 1641 - 1680). Others are probably nineteenth-century imitations painted at a time when Hobbema's style was extremely fashionable. Nevertheless, a range of quality does exist in paintings whose attribution to Hobbema seems justifiable. Although we have no documentary evidence about his workshop practices, it seems likely that he had assistants working under his direct supervision, producing variations of his compositions. He also may have employed a number of staffage specialists to paint small figures in his landscapes.

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April 24, 2014

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To cite: Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Meindert Hobbema," *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, <http://purl.org/nga/collection/constituent/1398> (accessed April 24, 2014).