

Weenix, Jan

Dutch, 1642 - 1719

BIOGRAPHY

Jan Weenix was born in Amsterdam in 1642, the son of the Italianate painter Jan Baptist Weenix (1621–1660/1661) and Josina de Hondecoeter.[1] He spent his early childhood in Amsterdam without his father, who left for an artistic sojourn in Italy just fourteen months after Jan's birth. Jan Baptist returned to Amsterdam in 1647, and shortly thereafter the family moved to Utrecht. By 1657 they had settled in a large house outside of the city, the "Huis ter Mey," where the younger Jan became a pupil in his father's studio.

After Weenix joined the Utrecht painter's guild in 1664, he painted Italianate genre scenes in the manner of his father.[2] He probably moved to Amsterdam in the early 1670s, although the first official record of him in that city was not until October 1679, when he married.[3] In Amsterdam Weenix abandoned the painting of Italianate scenes in favor of extravagant game pieces, a genre that had gained popularity since the 1650s, thanks in part to Weenix the elder's success in painting such scenes.[4] Jan Weenix had only one known pupil, Dirk Valkenburg (1675–1721), who closely imitated his master's style.

Weenix's paintings, which were sought after by wealthy Amsterdam burghers, typically depict dead game set against lush landscapes with dramatic views into the distance. He often combined these scenes with classical elements, including antique urns and statues. At the turn of the century, his reputation attracted the attention of Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz, the German Elector Palatine in Düsseldorf, for whom he produced numerous game pieces and large still lifes from 1702 until about 1714.[5]

[1] Arnold Houbraken, *De Grootte Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen*. 3 vols. (The Hague, 1753; reprint: Amsterdam, 1976), 2:78.

[2] Christine Skeeles Schloss, "The Early Italianate Genre Paintings by Jan Weenix," *Oud-Holland* 97 (1983): 71, as cited in S. Muller, *De Utrechtsche Archieven, I. Schilders-Vereenigingen te Utrecht, Bescheiden uit het Gemeente-Archief* (Utrecht, 1880), 33.

[3] Adrianus Daniel de Vries "Biografische Aanteekeningen betreffende Voornamelijk Amsterdamsche Schilders," *Oud-Holland* 4 (1886): 300. "Ondertr. 7 Oct. 1679. Johan Weenix, van ouders doot, geass. Abram Hondecoeter, syn oom, en Pieternelle Backer, van A., out 2- jaren, op de Fluwelen Burghwal, geass. Haer vader Jan Pietersz Backer." Christine Skeeles Schloss, "The Early Italianate Genre Paintings by Jan Weenix," *Oud-Holland* 97 (1983): 71, states that the Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst van Amsterdam lists the date as October 13. Weenix became a burgher of Amsterdam on March 23, 1688.

[4] Scott A. Sullivan, *The Dutch Gamepiece* (Montclair, NJ, 1984), 62. The genre had also gained popularity as a result of the works of Elias Vonck (1605–1652), Willem van Aelst (Dutch, 1627 - 1683), and Melchior d'Hondecoeter (1636–1695).

[5] Peter Eikemeier, "Der Jagdzyklus des Jan Weenix aus Schloss Bensberg," *Weltkunst* 48 (1978): 296–298.

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