



Fig. 3. Roemer Visscher, "Keur baert angst," emblem from *Sinnepoppen*, Amsterdam, 1614

ones that helped usher in the tonal phase of Dutch landscape painting, it may also be that he translated thematic concepts as well. Dilapidated farms and starkly silhouetted dead trees would have been understood in moralizing terms by some of his contemporaries.⁷ The dead tree in *Landscape with Open Gate* may have called to mind Roemer Visscher's emblem "Keur baert angst" [Choosing causes anxiety] (fig. 3), which juxtaposes a rotten and a healthy tree to stress that false appearances and lack of knowledge often lead one to make wrong choices in life.⁸ This

Aert van der Neer

1603/1604–1677

AERT [AERNOUT]. VAN DER NEER was probably born in Amsterdam. Documents from later in his life indicate that he was born in 1603 or 1604; the names of his parents are not known. He spent his youth near Gorinchem in the south of the Netherlands, where he most likely trained with the landscape painter Raphael Govertsz. Camphuysen (c. 1597/1598–1657). By 1632 Van der Neer was living in Amsterdam where he had moved shortly after his marriage to Lysbeth Goverts. The couple's children were all born in Amsterdam. One son, Eglon van der Neer (1634–1703), became a painter.

Because Aert van der Neer did not receive high

tree could also have been seen as a reminder of the transitoriness of life, an idea taken up with even greater force somewhat later in Haarlem by Jacob van Ruisdael (q.v.) (see 1942.9.80).

Notes

1. Dendrochronology by Dr. Peter Klein, Universität Hamburg, 7 January 1987.

2. Two small, out-of-scale figures before the fence have been added by a later hand; they are in the shadows so they do not detract very much from the overall impact of the painting.

3. For a discussion of this drawing, see Schapelhouman and Schatborn 1987, 26, where a date from "the second half of the twenties" is postulated.

4. Slive 1970–1974, 3: 25–26, cat. 42, where the attribution of the landscape to Molijn is first made.

5. Ampzing 1628, 372: "...En van het stout pinzeel en hand'ling van Molijn, die in de schilder-konst twee dapp're meesters zijn." That Molijn would have been so well regarded by 1628 is surprising for no paintings are dated before 1625. For an assessment of Molijn's artistic evolution see Allen 1987.

6. See, for example, Bloemaert's drawing *A Shepherd with Sheep near a Dead Tree* (Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam, inv. no. 11898 A 3740) illustrated in Schapelhouman and Schatborn 1987, 3.

7. For a rather controversial assessment of the moralizing character of Dutch landscapes see Josua Bruyn, "Toward a Scriptural Reading of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Paintings," in Amsterdam 1987, 84–92.

8. Roemer Visscher, *Sinnepoppen* (Amsterdam, 1614), 11, as discussed by Peter Sutton in Amsterdam 1987, 15.

References

- 1983 New Brunswick: no. 85.
1987 Allen: 133, fig. 145.

prices for his pictures, in 1659 he was forced to supplement his income as the proprietor of an Amsterdam tavern, "de Graeff van Hollant." His career as a *wyntapper* failed three years later, and on 12 December 1662 he declared bankruptcy. The inventory of his possessions made at the time indicates the low prices his paintings fetched; most were appraised at five guilders or less. He lived in impoverished conditions during the last years of his life and died in Amsterdam on 9 November 1677.

Van der Neer's earliest known painting, dated 1632 (Národní Galerie, Prague), is a genre scene, a type of subject he did not depict again. During the

early years of his career, he painted realistic tonal landscapes and winter scenes inspired by Camp-huysen, Esaias van de Velde (1587–1630) and Hendrick Avercamp (q.v.). By the 1640s, he had begun to specialize in nocturnes, the earliest known of which is dated 1643. It is with his representations of moonlit landscapes that Van der Neer distinguished himself as one of the most important and innovative Dutch landscape painters. The Dutch cities and villages found in his evocative nocturnal scenes appear extremely realistic, but these views, as well as his woodland and winter scenes, are, in fact, fanciful re-creations of the Dutch countryside.

Bibliography

- Houbraken 1753, 3: 172.
HdG 1907–1927, 7 (1923): 323–473.
Stechow 1966: 96–98, 176–182.
Bachmann 1966.
Bachmann 1970.
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Brown/MacLaren 1992: 275.

1990.6.1

Moonlit Landscape with Bridge

probably 1648/1650
Oil on walnut, 110.2 x 78.4 (43 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 30 $\frac{7}{8}$)
Patrons' Permanent Fund

Inscriptions

At lower right (in ligature): *AvdN*

Technical Notes: The support is a single piece of thin, horizontally grained walnut cut across the entire tree trunk width.¹ All sides of the back are beveled, and the panel is slightly bowed. The wood grain is plainly visible through the smooth, extremely thin white ground. The thick fawn-colored imprimatura is incorporated as a mid-tone in the foreground and sky.

Paint is applied in thin layers. Brushwork is prominent in the sky, and stippling was employed in the foliage and lawn. Slight cupping has formed along the wood grain. Judiciously applied retouching covers scattered small losses and local abrasions.

Provenance: Jacob van Beek Fredsz.; (sale, De Vries, Amsterdam, 2 June 1828, no. 49); Engelberts.² F. Tielens, Brussels. J. Walter, London. Baron Bentinck Thyssen, London;³ (Galerie Sanct Lucas, Vienna, by 1989).

THIS EVOCATIVE LANDSCAPE is one of the most masterful of all of Van der Neer's night scenes. Here he has captured the subtle atmospheric effects of the

Dutch landscape illuminated by the glow of a moonlit sky. The light of the full moon, somewhat diffused by the varied cloud formations that enliven the sky, is nevertheless intense enough to create strong reflections in the water of the slowly moving river that skirts the city and on the windows of buildings lining the shore. This light brings to life the gnarled tree trunks at the left and accents the uppermost leaves on the graceful trees that arch over the water. It reveals piles, paths, and bridges, picks out the family returning home over the stone bridge with their dog, and highlights the elegant couple standing in the shadows of the trees at the right.

Van der Neer, in conceiving this image, was more interested in creating the mood of nature than in recording an actual setting. The large dwellings to the left are similar to those found in Amsterdam where the artist lived most of his life, but the church adjacent to the dwellings and the houses beyond are reminiscent of those found in smaller cities and towns. The building complex in the background on the opposite shore of the river appears to be (the ruins of?) an ancient small castle or country house surrounded by a high wall of a type traditionally situated in country settings.⁴ Likewise, the elegant couple on the right stands before a stone gate similar to those that served as entrances to country houses, particularly along the river Vecht. The setting, thus, is a composite of various aspects of city and country life that Van der Neer has brought into a harmonious whole.

Although few of Van der Neer's paintings are dated, broad patterns within his stylistic development suggest that he executed this work near the end of the 1640s. It stands at the culmination of a period when his nocturnal scenes depicted the reflections of a full moon in the quiet waterways of the Dutch countryside.⁵ This painting exhibits a number of remarkable techniques that Van der Neer developed for conveying his atmospheric effects. He suggested the translucency of the clouds, for example, by allowing the reddish ochre ground covering the walnut panel to remain visible through thinly applied bluish gray paint. In the foreground, he has articulated a number of objects with light contours. Sometimes he highlighted them with paint applied with a brush and sometimes by scratching the wet paint with an instrument to reveal the ground layer.⁶

Interest in moonlit landscapes in the Netherlands can be traced to engravings Hendrick Goudt (1585–1648) made after paintings by Adam Elsheimer (1578–1610) in the second decade of the seventeenth century. One of the few Dutch painters to venture into this new domain was Raphael Govertsz. Camp-