

Neer, Aert van der

Also known as

Neer, Aernout van der

Dutch, 1603/1604 - 1677

BIOGRAPHY

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 Rafael 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 there. One son, Eglon van der Neer (1634–1703), became a painter.

Aert van der Neer's pictures did not fetch high prices, and therefore in 1659 the artist was forced to supplement his income by working as the proprietor of an Amsterdam tavern called "de Graeff van Hollant." His career as a wyntapper failed three years later, and on December 12, 1662, he declared bankruptcy. The inventory of his possessions made at the time indicates that most of his paintings were appraised at the low price of five guilders or less. He lived in impoverished conditions during the last years of his life and died in Amsterdam on November 9, 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 Camphuysen, Esaias van de Velde I (Dutch, c. 1590 - 1630), and Hendrick Avercamp (Dutch, 1585 - 1634). By the 1640s, Van der Neer had begun to specialize in nocturnes, the earliest known of which is dated 1643. It is with his representations of moonlit and snowy 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.

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