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## Jan Lievens' Enigmatic Career And Relationship with Rembrandt Van Rijn Are Reconsidered in an Exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, October 26, 2008–January 11, 2009; Traveling to Milwaukee and Amsterdam



Jan Lievens, Dutch (1607 - 1674)  
*Self-Portrait*, c. 1629-1630  
oil on panel, 42 x 33 cm (16 9/16 x 13)  
Private collection

Washington, DC—The life and career of Jan Lievens (1607–1674), one of the greatest yet most enigmatic Dutch painters of the 17th century, is finally brought to light in the exhibition *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered*, on view at the National Gallery of Art in the West Building from October 26, 2008, through January 11, 2009.

## **Venues and Organizers**

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with the Milwaukee Art Museum, where it will be on view from February 7 through April 26, 2009, and the Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam, where it will be seen from May 17 through August 9, 2009.

"History has not been kind to Jan Lievens, and this intriguing exhibition invites a serious reconsideration of his place in the annals of art history," said Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art. "The Gallery is grateful for the outstanding loans from private and public collections in Europe and America, and we hope that general visitors and scholars alike will find this show to be an eye-opener."

## **Overview**

This exhibition and its accompanying catalogue will present an overview of the full range of Lievens' career. More than 130 of the artist's finest works will be presented, including 54 paintings, 39 drawings, and 39 prints.

Lievens was a child prodigy, whose early works in Leiden were highly praised by his contemporaries and valued by princely patrons. His later career was marked by important civic and private commissions in Amsterdam, The Hague, and Berlin. Nevertheless, his name today barely registers in the public consciousness. This exhibition and catalogue suggest that his posthumous reputation waned after many of his works were mistakenly attributed to other masters—especially Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), with whom he had a somewhat symbiotic relationship—and because he worked in a remarkable range of styles, reflecting multiple influences from the various cities in which he lived.

## **Exhibition Support**

The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation is the national sponsor of the exhibition.

The exhibition is made possible by the generous support of Isabel and Alfred Bader and anonymous donors in honor of George M. Kaufman.

Early support for curatorial and conservation research has been provided by Mrs. George M. Kaufman and the Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation.

## **The Exhibition**

The exhibition, arranged chronologically, includes such noteworthy paintings as Lievens' youthful and penetrating *Self-Portrait* (c. 1629–1630); *The Feast of Esther* (c. 1625), which demonstrates his connection to the Utrecht Carravaggisti; *Bearded Man with a Beret* (c. 1630), an expressive character study of the type Lievens made during his Leiden period; *Job in His Misery* (1631), one of his finest and most important works; *Prince Charles Louis with His Tutor, as the Young Alexander Instructed by Aristotle* (1631), painted for the king and queen of Bohemia; *The Lamentation of Christ* (c. 1640), an Antwerp period altarpiece that reflects the influence of Anthony van Dyck; and *Brinio Raised on a Shield* (1660), an oil sketch/modello of an important commission for the Amsterdam Town Hall, now called the Royal Palace.

Among the works on paper are *The Raising of Lazarus* (1630-1631), an etching Lievens made after a painting of the same subject (also in the exhibition), and *Village Street with a Windmill* (c. 1650s), one of a number of Lievens' landscape drawings from his Amsterdam period.

## **Lievens and Rembrandt**

Lievens and Rembrandt were born in Leiden just over a year apart, studied with the same master, Pieter Lastman (1583–1633), and lived near one another until about 1632. Many parallels exist between the works that each produced in Leiden in the 1620s and early 1630s. Even though Lievens' career began before Rembrandt's, he was often wrongly described as a follower or student of the latter. It is proposed in this exhibition and catalogue that, in many respects, Lievens was the initiator of the stylistic and thematic developments that characterized both artists' work in the late 1620s.

Lievens' late work has been consistently neglected, partially because earlier historians believe that he lost his way after leaving Rembrandt's orbit, and succumbed to the countervailing influence of the great Flemish master Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641) upon his move to London in 1632 in search of courtly success. In fact, after he moved to

Antwerp in 1635, where he thoroughly adapted the prevailing taste for Flemish modes of painting, Lievens achieved the international renown he so desperately sought. After his return to the Netherlands, he received important commissions in Amsterdam, The Hague, and Berlin.

Among the reasons Lievens' later years have been overlooked was that his frequent moves kept him from fitting into historical assessments of the period, which generally focus on the stylistic character of the time. Finally, there are critical gaps in our knowledge of his art, as many of his most important documented works are lost, and those large-scale commissions that survived are all but inaccessible to most visitors. Consequently, it is challenging to reconstruct the evolution of his painting style and the radical decisions he made over the course of his career. It was not until the mid-20th century that Lievens' body of work began to be reassessed and a number of important works, wrongly attributed to Rembrandt and other artists, were recognized as being by his hand. Many of these paintings, as well as some recent discoveries, will be in the exhibition.

## **Curators**

The exhibition is organized by Arthur Wheelock, curator of northern baroque painting at the National Gallery of Art, in conjunction with Laurie Winters, curator of earlier European art at the Milwaukee Art Museum; Bob van den Boogert and Jaap van der Veen from the Rembrandthuis; and Lloyd DeWitt, assistant curator of European paintings before 1900 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Wheelock made the final selection of works of art, in close consultation with Stephanie Dickey from Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, for the prints; and Gregory Rubinstein, head of old master drawings at Sotheby's London, for the drawings.

## **Catalogue**

The catalogue *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* will be published by the National Gallery of Art in association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London. The 256-page catalogue is edited by Wheelock with essays by Stephanie Dickey, Melanie Gifford, Gregory Rubinstein, Jaap van der Veen, and Lloyd DeWitt,

and includes 190 color and 30 black-and-white illustrations.

Early support for curatorial and conservation research has been provided by Linda H. Kaufman and the Joseph F. McCrindle Foundation.

The catalogue will be available in October 2008 from the Gallery Shops for \$65 (hardcover) and \$45 (softcover). To order, call (800) 697-9350 or (202) 842-6002; fax (202) 789-3047; or e-mail [mailorder@nga.gov](mailto:mailorder@nga.gov).

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## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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