

Release Date: November 22, 2013

## National Gallery of Art Announces Major Acquisition of Gerrit van Honthorst's *The Concert*, 1623



Gerrit van Honthorst, Dutch, 1592 – 1656

*The Concert*, 1623

oil on canvas, unframed: 123 × 206 cm (48 7/16 × 81 1/8 in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington. Patrons' Permanent Fund and Florian Carr Fund  
2013.38.1

Washington, DC—The National Gallery of Art announces the acquisition of a Dutch masterpiece by Gerrit van Honthorst (1592–1656), considered one of the greatest painters of the Dutch Golden Age. *The Concert*, dated 1623, is an important and historic painting that has not been seen publicly since 1795. The acquisition is made possible by the Patrons' Permanent Fund and Florian Carr Fund.

Honthorst was one of the Utrecht "Caravaggisti," and like many other European artists of his generation, he traveled to Rome, where he was inspired by the radical stylistic and thematic ideas of Italian baroque painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

*The Concert*, the Gallery's first painting by Honthorst, is a vital addition to its collection of Caravaggist work. Visitors will have a rare opportunity to experience a painting so significant in terms of scale, skill, and its place in art history. Measuring more than six-feet wide, this festive scene depicts a group of brightly dressed musicians and singers cheerfully following the lead of a concertmaster.

"Until recently, the influence of Caravaggio on the art of Northern Europe had not been represented in the Gallery's otherwise rich collection of Dutch art," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The acquisition in 2009 of Hendrick ter Brugghen's *Bagpipe Player*, 1624, was a first step in addressing this gap. Together with the Gallery's Italian, French, and Spanish Caravaggist paintings, the works by these two Dutch masters convey the enormous impact of Caravaggio's style in the 17th century."

*The Concert* is on view in a special installation on the main floor of the Gallery's West Building for six months prior to its permanent placement in the Dutch and Flemish galleries.

"The painting is in remarkable condition considering its size and history, and conservation treatment at the Gallery has fully restored it to its former glory. Old layers of varnish were removed, a seam was flattened, and careful inpainting was applied to damaged or abraded areas

---

### AVAILABLE PRESS IMAGES

#### Order Press Images

To order publicity images: Click on the link above and designate your desired images using the checkbox below each thumbnail. Please include your name and contact information, press affiliation, deadline for receiving images, the date of publication, and a brief description of the kind of press coverage planned.

---

### PRESS KIT

#### Press Release

---

### ONLINE RESOURCES

---

### PRESS CONTACTS

Anabeth Guthrie  
(202) 842-6804  
[a-guthrie@nga.gov](mailto:a-guthrie@nga.gov)

Chief Press Officer  
Deborah Ziska  
[ds-ziska@nga.gov](mailto:ds-ziska@nga.gov)  
(202) 842-6353

---

of the composition," said Arthur Wheelock, curator of northern baroque paintings.

### **About the Artist**

After training in his native Utrecht, Honthorst traveled to Italy around 1615, where he embraced Caravaggio's theatrical style, characterized by dramatic gestures and pronounced contrasts of light and dark. As did Caravaggio, the Caravaggisti generally worked directly from posed models and brought their scenes close to the picture plane to suggest that they were an extension of everyday experiences. "Honthorst, in particular, painted with spirit and assurance, employing bright colors and strong chiaroscuro effects, painting scenes illuminated by a single light source," said Wheelock.

When Honthorst returned to Utrecht in 1620 he was already a famous artist, and he was honored with a sumptuous feast in his native city. His enthusiastic embrace of Caravaggism had a great impact on other Dutch artists, among them Jan Lievens and Rembrandt van Rijn. His international renown also appealed to the court of Prince Maurits of Nassau in The Hague. In the early 1620s the Prince of Orange, as Maurits was known, was trying to broaden the reputation of the court by improving his residences, building gardens, presenting musical soirées, and acquiring paintings. After Maurits died in 1625, the subsequent Prince of Orange, Frederick Hendrick, continued to add to the collection to enhance the court's international prestige.

Honthorst's *The Concert* is first mentioned in a 1632 inventory of one of Frederick Hendrick's palaces in The Hague. Although the painting may have been purchased by Prince Maurits in 1623, it may also have been a diplomatic gift to him or to Prince Frederick Hendrick from the exiled king of Bohemia, Frederick I, and his wife Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of King James I of England. The exiled royals had moved to The Hague in 1621 after Frederick's Protestant troops were defeated by Catholic forces. Even in exile, the king and queen of Bohemia actively collected works of art and lived an extravagant lifestyle with funds partially provided by the Princes of Orange. They were great admirers of Honthorst, and he eventually became their court artist. They may have commissioned the painting and then presented it to the Dutch court in appreciation of its financial support.

"*The Concert* was much more than a decorative element in a courtly setting. It also had an underlying political message: harmony in society, as well as in music, exists when the guidance of its leader is followed. This adage would have been appropriate for either the Prince of Orange or King Frederick I of Bohemia," Wheelock said.

*The Concert* remained in the possession of the House of Orange until it was seized by Napoleonic troops in 1795. This masterpiece, along with some 200 other Dutch paintings, was taken to France. It then entered a French private collection where it remained until acquired by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

### **About the Dutch Collection**

The large scale and festive character of *The Concert* captures the essence of Honthorst's artistic genius, but it also reinforces the importance of Caravaggism within the Dutch collection at the National Gallery. *The Concert* wonderfully complements Hendrick ter Brugghen's Bagpipe Player. Although these two masterpieces are sympathetic in subject and similar in date (1623 and 1624), they represent the differing personalities of these two great masters. Ter Brugghen's painting is quiet and reflective and subdued in its palette, whereas Honthorst's large multifigured composition is bright and dynamic, has powerful contrasts of light and dark, and is filled with figures engaged in momentary actions.

### **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 at 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 remain closed for approximately three years for

Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/modern-art-during-renovation.html>.

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site 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 [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.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.

For additional press information please call or send inquiries to:

Press Office  
National Gallery of Art  
2000B South Club Drive  
Landover, MD 20785  
phone: (202) 842-6353  
e-mail: [pressinfo@nga.gov](mailto:pressinfo@nga.gov)

Deborah Ziska  
Chief of Press and Public Information  
(202) 842-6353  
[ds-ziska@nga.gov](mailto:ds-ziska@nga.gov)

If you are a member of the press and would like to be added to our press list, [click here](#).

#### **Subscribe to Our Free E-mail Newsletters**

Stay up to date with the National Gallery of Art by [subscribing to our free e-mail newsletters](#): Web, educators, family programs, fellowships/internships, films, lectures, music programs, and teen programs. Select as many updates as you wish to receive. To edit your subscriber information, please go to our [subscription management page](#).

[About](#) | [Opportunities](#) | [Press](#) | [NGA Images](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Notices](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Audio/Video](#)