

Recent acquisitions (2006–20)
at the Mauritshuis, The Hague



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THE ROYAL PICTURE GALLERY MAURITSHUIS in The Hague is often likened to a jewellery box that contains nothing but precious diamonds. Over the past fifteen years the museum has continued to search for outstanding works that would further enhance its rich collection of Dutch and Flemish old master paintings. A director who wants to make worthwhile additions to a collection of such quality must aim very high indeed. The acquisitions discussed here were made during the directorship of Frits Duparc, who in January 2008 retired as Director after seventeen years at the museum, and his successor, Emilie Gordenker, who earlier this year left the Mauritshuis for a position at the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. The present Director of the Mauritshuis, Martine Gosselink, aims to continue their active acquisition policy, and details of her first acquisition were made public at the end of June of this year (see Fig.23). It is a commonplace that a static collection is doomed to gradually lose its appeal, and that one must constantly review and improve it in order to be able to present a faithful picture of a particular period, a particular form of art or one or more artists. This process is essential because of changes in taste, and more importantly, because of developments in our knowledge.

The museum actively focuses on strengthening the heart of the collection and filling in the gaps, by loans from other collections, private or public, or by acquisitions, a prerequisite always being a painting's high quality and good condition. It is also necessary for a painting to fit in well with the museum's intimate character, as the collection is housed in a city palace that dates from 1644. The Mauritshuis does not strive for completeness; above all, it wants to share with the public the best of seventeenth-century painting of the Northern and Southern Netherlands. Naturally this includes the great masters, but the Mauritshuis also upholds the tradition of displaying the very best work of lesser-known artists of the Dutch Golden Age, such as Dirck de Bray's *Still life with a bouquet in the making* (Fig.7), or the only known painting by Johannes Thopas (Fig.6).

Purchases for the Mauritshuis completely depend on the support of others, foremost two very faithful private sponsors of the museum, the

1. Paintings by Nicolaes Berchem reunited at the Mauritshuis. (Photograph Ivo Hoekstra).

BankGiro Lottery and the Rembrandt Association, as well as individual benefactors, notably Mr H.B. van der Ven, who has helped the museum time and again. That the privatised Mauritshuis – an independent foundation since 1995 – benefits from private generosity is proved by a great many gifts, including seventeenth-century Dutch landscapes by Jacob van Geel (Fig.5) and Cornelis Vroom (Fig.4), as well as works from the eighteenth century: a still life by Adriaen Coorte (Fig.2) and a portrait of a Dutch sitter by the French travelling artist Jean-Baptiste Perronneau (Fig.16). New acquisitions are also supported by numerous other foundations and funds, all mentioned in the credit lines of individual works. Occasionally the State of the Netherlands supports an acquisition, as in the case of the most expensive acquisition of the last fifteen years, *Seascape with ships*, by Jan van de Cappelle, a purchase supported by many different parties (Fig.3). The Mauritshuis owns only a handful of marine paintings, and this was without doubt the most beautiful of Van de Cappelle's marines still in private hands, of a quality that matches, or even surpasses, that of the artist's works in major museums in the United Kingdom. In 2019 the Mauritshuis acquired a still life by the lesser known painter Simon Luttichuys (Fig.25) thanks to the *successieregeling*, the Dutch acceptance in lieu scheme. Last but certainly not least, the support of the Friends of the Mauritshuis has been instrumental in bringing about many important acquisitions. The purchase in 2012, for example, of *Still life with cheeses, almonds and pretzels*, by Clara Peeters (Fig.10), one of the most important female artists working in Flanders in the first decades of the seventeenth century, was made possible by a substantial contribution from the Friends. This important Flemish still life, and the equally significant *Mountainous landscape with St Jerome*, by the Antwerp-born Paul Bril (Fig.9), were both purchased during the major renovation and expansion of the museum building in 2012–14, which connected the Mauritshuis with the premises across the street via a luminous underground foyer. The museum doubled in size, yet retained its small scale and intimate atmosphere.

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The museum takes pride in having acquired these and other important Flemish paintings, including attractive still lifes by Savery, Van Hulsdonck and Seghers (Figs.12–15). Works by seventeenth-century Flemish masters have long formed the nucleus of the collection, assembled in the eighteenth century by the Dutch stadholders and princes of Orange, Willem IV and, more notably, Willem V. The Mauritshuis collection still bears their imprint. Genre paintings by Jan Steen were among the favourites of Willem V, but until the acquisition of *Moses and Pharaoh's crown* (Fig.8) the Mauritshuis lacked a history painting by his hand, or for that matter, a representative biblical scene by Rembrandt's teacher, Pieter Lastman (Fig.18). Also, the stadholder had no particular interest in still lifes, a genre now represented in the museum by a great number of paintings, many acquired in the twentieth century. An impressive number of important still lifes have been added in the past fifteen years, including a rare painting dated to 1562 by a Westphalian artist who worked in Antwerp

for a long time, Ludger tom Ring (Fig.13), a forerunner of the many other flower still lifes in the Mauritshuis. The Mauritshuis has added a great number of works by true pioneers, including an extremely rare 'merry company' by Willem Buytewech (Fig.17), a key work in the development of early Dutch genre painting, as well as pioneering works in their respective genres by Peeters or Brill. For each one of these paintings, the Mauritshuis collection provides the perfect context.

Recently the Mauritshuis has been able to reunite paintings that had been separated from one another. In 2018 Berchem's series of the Four Seasons, made for a house in Amsterdam and dispersed at the end of the nineteenth century, were reunited in the Mauritshuis, where one of the four canvases has been on display since 1992 (Figs.19–22). Earlier this year, after more than a century apart, pendant portraits of a couple painted by the German artist Bartholomäus Bruyn the Elder were reunited – they are now joined forever in their new frame (Fig.24).

2. *Still life with five apricots*, by Adriaen Coorte (active c.1683–1707). 1704. Oil on canvas, 30 by 24 cm.

Anonymous gift, 2006 (inv. no.1154).

Like his predecessors as Director, Frits Duparc had a wish list for the Mauritshuis collection. The most important consisted of well-known gaps in the collection, including a still life by Adriaen Coorte, a long-ignored artist rediscovered in the 1970s and now firmly belonging to the canon of Dutch painting. After acquiring Coorte's *Still life with strawberries* in 1995 as a gift from Mrs E. Speelman in memory of her husband, a decade later the museum was fortunate to receive another still life by the master, again as an unexpected gift from a private individual. Coorte's bright illumination lends the still life with five apricots a magical quality. In the spring of 2008, both paintings were included in the retrospective exhibition *Ode to Coorte* in the Mauritshuis, organised as a farewell gift to Duparc.



3. *Seascape with ships*, by Jan van de Cappelle (1626–79). c.1660. Oil on panel, transferred to canvas, 89 by 114 cm.

Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery, the Mondriaan Foundation, the National Art Collections Fund, the bequest of Mrs A.C. van Agtmaal, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the VSB Fund Foundation, the Friends of the Mauritshuis Foundation, the Rembrandt Association (with support from the bequest of Mr and Mrs Kamerbeek-Walenkamp) and the SNS-Reaal Fund, 2007 (inv. no.1155).

Jan van de Cappelle's seascapes are among the most beautiful products of Dutch marine painting. This composition is characteristic of the master's work, grouping together ships of different sizes and types lying at anchor while using a modest palette, consisting of cool, silvery-grey tones for the sea and sky and shades of brown for the ships. The magnificent cloudy sky produces a monumental scene that appears larger than it is. With the purchase of this painting from a private German collector, the artist is represented in a Dutch public collection at the highest level for the first time. The acquisition of this masterpiece by the Mauritshuis was a personal triumph for Frits Duparc, who had set his heart on acquiring it many years ago.

4. *River landscape, seen through the trees*, by Cornelis Vroom (c.1591–1661). c.1638–39. Oil on panel, 50 by 67 cm.

Promised gift of Mrs G. de Koster-Burgersdijk, 2007 (inv. no.1156).

Haarlem artists figured prominently in the development of the naturalistic landscape in the Dutch Golden Age. With his views of rivers and woods, Cornelis Vroom made an important contribution to this new concept of landscape painting. He and other artists working in Haarlem in the 1630s and 1640s favoured a highly subdued, almost monochrome palette. Contemporaries appreciated landscapes of this kind for their connotations of unspoiled country life.

5. *Imaginary wooded landscape*, by Jacob van Geel (c.1585–in or after 1637). c.1636. Oil on panel, 15 by 25 cm.

Gift from the Hertzberger Collection, 2008 (inv. no.1157).

On the occasion of Frits Duparc's retirement as Director, the museum was presented with this rare painting, which had been on loan from a private donor for over a decade. Jacob van Geel was a little-known artist active in Middelburg, Delft and Dordrecht, whose talent has long been underrated. This wooded landscape is a fascinating addition to the holdings of Dutch landscape painting, as the artist was not intent on producing realistic scenes but continued in a highly personalised fashion a tradition of imaginary landscapes that was Flemish in origin.

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6. Portrait of a deceased girl, probably Catharina Margaretha van Valkenburg, by Johannes Thopas (c.1630–c.1700). c.1682. Oil on panel, 59 by 71 cm.
Purchased by the Friends of the Mauritshuis Foundation, 2008 (inv. no.1159).

This girl seems to be asleep, but she will never wake up. It is the only known painting by Johannes Thopas, and one of the most beautiful portraits of a dead child in Dutch painting. It remained in the Van Valkenburg family's possession for centuries before it became Emilie Gordenker's first purchase for the Mauritshuis. In 2014 she wrote about it in *Director's Choice*: 'As the first female director of the Mauritshuis, my first acquisition was of this painting. It seems horribly inappropriate, but this picture was acquired on its own merit and in spite of the gruesome subject'.

7. Still life with a bouquet in the making, by Dirck de Bray (c.1635–94). 1674. Oil on panel, 41 by 36 cm.

Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery, the Rembrandt Association and Mr H.B. van der Ven, 2011 (inv. no.1166).

This painting differs from other still lifes of flowers because the bouquet is not yet finished – some of the flowers still lie on the table. Another highly unusual feature for a seventeenth-century Dutch still life is that these flowers are all from the same season: this is a true spring bouquet. Few works by Dirck de Bray survive, but this still life shows that he was a very talented painter. The painting has become a favourite with the public.



8. Moses and Pharaoh's crown, by Jan Steen (1626–79). c.1670. Oil on canvas, 78 by 79 cm.

Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery, 2011 (inv. no.1167).

The Mauritshuis has a splendid collection of paintings by Jan Steen, but it long lacked a history painting by his hand. This work depicts an apocryphal story from the infancy of the prophet. After smashing Pharaoh's crown to pieces, Moses is put to the test and, in his innocence, takes a burning coal and puts it in his mouth. Steen portrayed the story as a farce, paying great attention to the crying toddler. The purchase was part of a major exhibition in the Mauritshuis highlighting Steen as a history painter, *Jan Steen's Histories* (2018).

9. Mountainous landscape with St Jerome, by Paul Bril (1553/54–1626). 1592. Oil on copper, 26 by 33 cm.

Acquired with support from the BankGiro Lottery, the Rembrandt Association (thanks in part to her A.M. Roeters van Lennep Fund) and Mr H.B. van der Ven, 2013 (inv. no.1204).

Painted in 1592, this is the earliest known independent landscape painting by Paul Bril, an influential Flemish landscape painter working in Rome. Despite its small dimensions, the vast, rugged mountain landscape is full of intriguing details. The smooth surface of the copper plate provided a suitable support for Bril's meticulously executed paintings. The well-preserved acquisition fits in perfectly with the other Flemish paintings in the Mauritshuis and also provides a welcome link to the seventeenth-century Dutch landscapes in the museum's collection.

10. Still life with cheeses, almonds and pretzels, by Clara Peeters (active c.1607–21). c.1615. Oil on panel, 35 by 50 cm.

Acquired with the support of the Friends of the Mauritshuis Foundation, the BankGiro Lottery, the Rembrandt Association (thanks in part to her A.M. Roeters van Lennep Fund, Fonds Utrecht & Gooi Circle and Caius Circle) and Mr H.B. van der Ven, 2012 (inv. no.1203).

During the major renovation and expansion of the museum building, the Mauritshuis acquired a particularly appealing still life by a female painter from Antwerp: Clara Peeters. It includes large cheeses, pretzels, cracknels and figs, together with costly objects such as a Venetian glass and a Chinese dish. Peeters' still lifes of meals exerted a great deal of influence, on Dutch painters as well as Flemish. This purchase provided the impetus for the exhibition *Slow Food: Still Lifes of the Golden Age* (2017), focusing on the genesis of Dutch and Flemish meal still lifes, and thus revealed the pioneering role of Peeters' work.



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11. *Transforming still-life painting after Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, Vase with flowers in a window*, by Nick and Rob Carter. 2009. Video in a frame, 71 by 58 cm. *Gift of the artists, 2013 (inv. no.1208).*

It is highly unusual for the Mauritshuis to acquire a work by a living artist, or, in this case, an artist couple. Nick and Rob Carter made a video based on one of the highlights of the museum: a flower painting by Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder of c.1618. This video has been given a place in the lobby outside the director's office. Anyone waiting there can see time passing in Bosschaert's flower still life.



12. *Roses in a glass vase*, by Jacob van Hulsdonck (1582–1647). c.1640–45. Oil on copper, 35 by 28 cm.

Purchased by the Friends of the Mauritshuis Foundation, 2016 (inv. no.1214).

Exactly two years after the reopening in 2014, the Friends of the Mauritshuis congratulated the museum in a very special way by giving it, on long-term loan, this flower painting by Jacob van Hulsdonck, a lesser known artist. The bouquets in most seventeenth-century flower still lifes in the Mauritshuis consist of flowers of various species, but here the artist depicts exclusively roses.

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13. *Narcissi, periwinkle and violets in an ewer*, by Ludger tom Ring the Younger (1522–84). c.1562. Oil on panel, 35 by 16 cm.
 Purchased by the Friends of the Mauritshuis Foundation, 2015 (inv. no.1212).
 This sixteenth-century bouquet of narcissi and other flowers in a tall ewer is exceptionally rare: almost no independent flower still lifes painted before 1600 have survived. It was not until the seventeenth century that flowers became a popular subject among painters in the Low Countries. This small panel by the Westphalian painter Ludger tom Ring, who lived in Antwerp for a time, anticipates that development. It is a forerunner of the many other flower still lifes in the Mauritshuis.

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14. *Vase of flowers in a stone niche*, by Roelant Savery (1576/78–1639). 1615.
 Oil on panel, 64 by 45 cm.
 Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery, the Rembrandt Association (thanks in part to her Fund for Seventeenth-Century Painting) and Mr H.B. van der Ven, 2016 (inv. no.1213).
 Roelant Savery was a pioneer of the flower still life in the Northern Netherlands. This painting is one of his most ambitious flower paintings, not only because of its size (it is the second largest of his bouquets), but also because of the meticulous verisimilitude of the details. The Mauritshuis already owned highlights by other pioneers of the genre, such as Jacob de Gheyn and Ambrosius Bosschaert (see Fig.11). A bouquet by Savery had long been on the wish list. This purchase enables the museum to offer an even better overview of the development of the flower still life in the Northern and Southern Netherlands.

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15. *Bust of Constantijn Huygens surrounded by a garland of flowers*, by Daniël Seghers (1590–1661) and Jan Cossiers (1600–71). 1644. Oil on copper, 86 by 63 cm. Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery and Mr H.B. van der Ven, 2018 (inv. no.1216). This flower cartouche displays the astonishing technique of Daniël Seghers from Antwerp. It features, in the centre, a portrait bust painted by Jan Cossiers of the poet, diplomat and scholar Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687). The painting's location was unknown after its removal from the Huygens' family house in 1828, but it resurfaced in 2018, when one of the museum's curators immediately recognised it as a work mentioned in old sources. Following its complete restoration, it is currently displayed on a wall, but in the near future it will be installed as an overdoor. This was its original function in the Huygens house, which once stood next to the Mauritshuis, the perfect home for the painting.

16. *Portrait of Jacob van Kretschmar*, by Jean-Baptiste Perronneau (1715–83). 1754. Pastel, 60 by 45 cm. Gift of jonkheer F.G.L.O. van Kretschmar van Veen, 2018 (inv. no.1217). Private donations of works of art are becoming more and more rare. But thanks to a generous gift, the museum acquired this splendid pastel of a thirty-three-year-old military man, Jacob van Kretschmar (1721–92). Made in 1754 by Jean-Baptiste Perronneau, this pastel had remained in the collection of the sitter's family. The loose, but convincing way in which the artist rendered the details in the powdered hair and jabot (the frill of lace at the neck), demonstrates his great talent. The blue tailcoat edged with gold thread stands out against the light background, where the blue of the paper still shimmers through. It is not only an outstanding example of the work of this French artist, who travelled throughout Europe as a portrait painter, but also a welcome acquisition, because the Mauritshuis collects the art of the eighteenth century as well as that of earlier periods

17. *Merry company on a terrace*, by Willem Buytewech (1591/92–1624). c.1616–17. Oil on canvas, 71 by 94 cm. Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery, 2018 (inv. no.1218). Willem Buytewech is known primarily for his extensive oeuvre of prints and drawings. His paintings are extremely rare – only six have survived, now all in museum collections. They present colourful scenes of young people feasting at tables in interiors or in the open air. *Merry company on a terrace* is a highlight of this small group of paintings, made with astonishing virtuosity and assurance. It is a key work in the development of early Dutch genre painting, exemplifying how various new subjects made their entry into Dutch painting after 1600.

18. *St John the Baptist preaching*, by Pieter Lastman (1583–1633). 1627. Oil on panel, 60 by 92 cm. Purchased by the Friends of the Mauritshuis Foundation with the support of Mr H.B. van der Ven, 2018 (inv. no.1219). Known today mainly as Rembrandt's most important teacher, Pieter Lastman was one of the leading Amsterdam history painters, portraying a great number of scenes based on stories from the Bible, classical antiquity or other written sources. An appealing work by Lastman was long on the museum's wish list. This panel, showing John the Baptist preaching in a landscape, is signed and dated 1627. The crowded composition, the bright lighting and the vivid colours are typical of Lastman in the period when Rembrandt was his pupil. The timing of this purchase was perfect, as it was first exhibited to the public in January 2019, at the beginning of the Rembrandt Year, commemorating the 350th anniversary of the artist's death.



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19. *Allegory of spring*, by Nicolaes Berchem (1621/22–83). c.1670. Oil on canvas, 94 by 89 cm.

Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery and the Rembrandt Association (thanks in part to her Fund for Seventeenth-Century Painting and her Fund 1931), 2018 (inv. no.1220).

20. *Allegory of autumn*, by Nicolaes Berchem (1621/22–83). c.1670. Oil on canvas, 94 by 89 cm.

Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery and the Rembrandt Association (thanks in part to her Fund for Seventeenth-Century Painting and her Fund 1931), 2018 (inv. no.1221).

21. *Allegory of winter*, by Nicolaes Berchem (1621/22–83). c.1670. Oil on canvas, 94 by 89 cm.

Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery and the Rembrandt Association (thanks in part to her Fund for Seventeenth-Century Painting and her Fund 1931), 2018 (inv. no.1222).

22. The installation of Figs.19, 20 and 21 alongside *Allegory of summer*. (Photograph Ivo Hoekstra, 2019).

Nicolaes Berchem's *Allegory of summer* – a painting that has been on display at the Mauritshuis since 1992 – was originally part of a series of the Four Seasons, made for a house in Amsterdam. Having been dispersed at the end of the nineteenth century, the series was reunited in the Mauritshuis at the end of 2018 thanks to the support of two very faithful sponsors of the museum, the BankGiro Lottery and the Rembrandt Association. In each painting, a medallion shows the personification of the season seated on a chariot, pulled in a procession by a pair of animals. Spring shows Flora, the Roman goddess of spring. Summer is represented by Ceres, god of grain and the harvest. Autumn is personified by Bacchus, god of wine. Finally, winter appears as an elderly man, rather than an ancient god or goddess. Around the medallions, figures and symbols connect the season with the four elements: spring with air, summer with fire, autumn with earth and winter with water. The four reunited works complement each other and form a unique ensemble, which can now be appreciated in its full glory once again. After a temporary presentation in one of the museum rooms, the four canvasses were put on display as overdoors in the Staircase Gallery, doing justice to the original purpose of the series.

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23. *Portrait of Jakob Omphalius (1500–67)*, by Bartholomäus Bruyn the Elder (1493–1555). c.1538–39. Oil on panel (rounded upper edges), 31 by 22 cm. Acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery, the Rembrandt Association (thanks in part to her Schorer Romeijn Grothe Fund and her Theme Fund Middle Ages and Renaissance) and Mr H.B. van der Ven, 2020 (inv. no.1225).

Bartholomäus Bruyn's portrait of Elizabeth Bellinghausen has been on display at the Mauritshuis since 1951, on long-term loan from the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum. Some twenty years ago, one of the Mauritshuis's curators discovered that the panel was originally accompanied by a portrait of Bellinghausen's fiancé, the Cologne lawyer Jakob Omphalius. The portraits were separated at an auction in 1896 and the whereabouts of Jakob's portrait had been lost since 1955. Recently it turned up in the art trade and the Mauritshuis seized this unique opportunity to buy it. The couple has now been reunited in new frames that were copied from the original framing of a portrait diptych by Bruyn in the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne. The new frames are hinged together, so the portraits have become a true diptych again.

24. Bartholomäus Bruyn the Elder's portraits of Jakob Omphalius and Elizabeth Bellinghausen in their new frame.

25. *Still life with Chinese lidded jar, hazelnuts and orange*, by Simon Luttichuys (1610–61). c.1650–60. Oil on panel, 30 by 23 cm.

Acquired by the State of the Netherlands via the *successieregeling*, 2019 (inv. no.1223). The Mauritshuis wants to share with its visitors the best of seventeenth-century Dutch painting. This is not limited to the great names, but also includes the work of lesser known artists such as Simon Luttichuys. It is the first time that the museum has acquired a painting thanks to the *successieregeling*, the Dutch acceptance in lieu scheme.

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