



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS  
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

**VOLUME TWO**

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand  
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,  
Kathryn Calley Galitz, Alexis Goodin, Marc Gotlieb, John House,  
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James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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## Jacob Henricus Maris

Dutch, 1837–1899

### 208 | Harbor Scene After 1871

Oil on laminate cardboard or paper, mounted on canvas,

19.2 x 26.4 cm

Lower right: J Maris

1955.802

*Harbor Scene* by Jacob Henricus Maris shows a picturesque view of a Dutch town on the water. Brick buildings sit atop a cement foundation that lines the edge of a placid body of water. Two drawbridges create a visual break in the skyline, allowing the viewer to see the buildings behind. The architecture is very regular, almost uniform, except for a building with a conical roof near the water, and a tall, ornate tower in the distance. A dark cloud at the top of the canvas casts a shadow over the buildings closest to the

viewer as well as two sailboats, while the townscape further away is awash in golden light. The light that cascades over this part of town also illuminates the large cumulus clouds directly above.

*Harbor Scene* reflects the artist's knowledge of the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century, such as Jan Vermeer, Jacob van Ruisdael, and Jan van Goyen. Maris began painting in the manner of the Golden Age artists early in his career, but instead of landscapes, he and his younger brother Matthijs painted small genre scenes for the market. It was only when Jacob moved beyond the influence of Matthijs and began to incorporate the techniques of his French contemporaries that he began to paint landscapes. These paintings, which comprise Jacob's mature body of work, made him a leader in The Hague School and remain his best-known images today.<sup>1</sup>

Jacob Maris began his art education at the age of twelve when he apprenticed with Johannes Antoine Balthasar Stroebel (1821–1905). In 1853, Maris entered the Academy in The Hague, where Matthijs

was already a student. Jacob moved that same year to Antwerp with his teacher, Hubertus van Hove (1814–1865), and began evening classes at the Royal Academy of Fine Art. Matthijs moved to Antwerp in 1855 and the two brothers lived together, shared a workshop, and worked together as assistants to the marine painter Louis Meijer (1809–1866). Despite contributing to Meijer's seascapes, Jacob did not put any serious effort into painting his own landscapes until a decade later, after moving to Paris in 1865. While there, Jacob made trips to the town of Barbizon and the forest of Fontainebleau and came to admire Camille Corot and Charles Daubigny.<sup>2</sup> After returning to The Hague in 1871, Jacob began to paint landscapes almost exclusively. In them, he applied the colors of the Barbizon artists to Dutch townscapes and seascapes. Though the exact date of execution is unknown, Maris probably painted *Harbor Scene* after he returned to The Hague.

Fond of the materiality of paint, Maris claimed that he liked to “think” in his medium.<sup>3</sup> *Harbor Scene* exemplifies Maris's tendency to embody to his subjects through rich color and thick paint. Maris also garnered praise for his ability to paint the fleeting meteorological effects of the Dutch sky. According to one anecdote, an acquaintance remarked on the lovely state of the sky above, to which Maris replied, “Oh, it's alright, but I will paint it better.”<sup>4</sup> The arrangement of the clouds in *Harbor Scene* also reveals that Maris borrowed compositional techniques from the seventeenth-century Dutch masters, as it might even recall the shadowed foreground and brilliantly illuminated distance of Vermeer's *View of Delft* (Mauritshuis, The Hague). Maris imbued his painting with a similarly clear, cool atmospheric quality.

Unlike *View of Delft*, which carefully records the city as Vermeer would have seen it, *Harbor Scene* does not replicate an accurate view of a specific city. Maris often incorporated real buildings into his townscapes, but he modified the scenes that inspired him once he was in the studio.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the tower in the background of *Harbor Scene* resembles Amsterdam's Montelbaanstoren, a sixteenth-century defense structure, while the building with the conical roof can be identified as a medieval fortress called the Schreierstoren, which stands nearby. If the Montelbaanstoren is viewed from the inner harbor of Oosterdok, however, looking southwest down the Oudeschans canal, as the image seems to suggest, the Schreierstoren would be out of the frame, much further to the right than it is

represented here. Maris's picture *View of a Dutch Town* (cat. 209), another painting of the Schreierstoren in the Clark collection, shows a different perspective, perhaps from a point further west on the Oosterdok as it narrows and runs under several bridges much like those Maris depicted. KA

**PROVENANCE** James Staats Forbes, The Hague (until d. 1904); Forbes estate (1904–5, sold to Boussod, Valadon, 31 July 1905); [Boussod, Valadon, Paris, sold to Glaenzer, 12 Oct. 1905, as *Maas à Rotterdam* (The Meuse at Rotterdam)];<sup>6</sup> [Glaenzer & Co., Paris, from 1905]; [Knoedler, New York, sold to Clark, 4 Dec. 1920]; Robert Sterling Clark (1920–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

**EXHIBITIONS** Williamstown 1988a, no cat.; Williamstown 1988–89, no cat.; Williamstown 1990a, no cat.

**REFERENCES** Sutton 1986a, p. 341.

**TECHNICAL REPORT** The support is a lightweight gray-brown acidic cardboard or heavy wove paper, glue-/paste-mounted to two moderate-weight linen layers, one possibly original, the other a later lining fabric. The six-member mortise-and-tenon stretcher may be a replacement. Breaks and losses in the support can be seen in the lower right corner under ultraviolet light. The painting was cleaned, revarnished, and inpainted in 1981. At that time, previous solvent damage was noted, including in the very fragmentary signature. Continuing solvent sensitivity of the red passages was also recorded. Inpainting is located primarily in the lower right damage. In reflected light, the paint texture is very evident, and the upper paint stops 2 cm short of the left and 1.6 cm short of the right edge in perfectly straight lines, perhaps suggesting reworking while the picture was framed. The radiograph shows a jumbled repair with losses in the lower right corner and along all edges, especially the right. All four edges of the image are extended, especially the lower one. Although there is no strong evidence for a lower image, the X-ray film recorded the sky as quite murky and thick.

The ground is an off-white layer, possibly commercially applied. No underdrawing was detected. Traces of green on the left and right edges might suggest that the support was cut from a larger work, then reused. The moderately thick paint is applied primarily wet-into-wet using small stiff brushes, creating soft rounded impastos throughout.

1. Gruyter 1968–69, vol. 2, pp. 29–30.
2. Paris–London–The Hague 1983, p. 74.
3. Gruyter 1968–69, vol. 2, p. 30.
4. Paris–London–The Hague 1983, p. 19; originally in De Boer 1905, p. 17n1.
5. Paris–London–The Hague, p. 19.
6. See Goupil Stock Books, book 15, p. 147, no. 28590.