

MMFA

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

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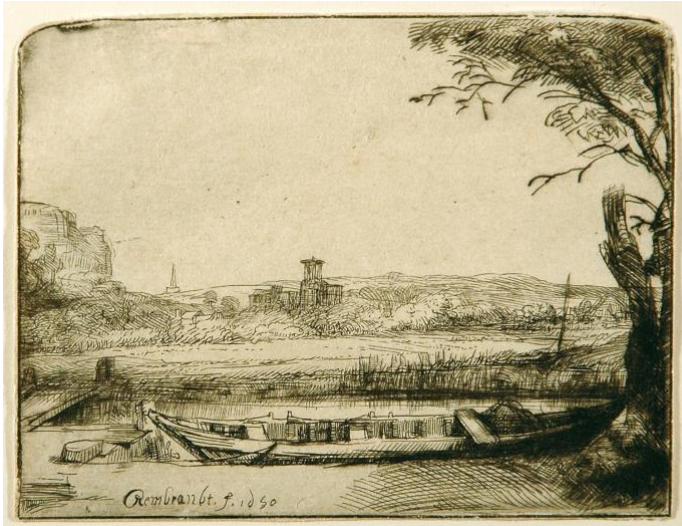
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Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts announces the special exhibition
The Golden Hour: Rembrandt's Etchings and Societal Transformation in the Seventeenth Century
On View February 13 through April 19, 2020

Exhibition casts a new light on the work of a great master artist.

Montgomery, AL – Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669), recognized as one of the great master painters of European art history, was also a well-respected printmaker. Rather than focusing on the maestro's creative and technical virtuosity, *The Golden Hour: Rembrandt's Etchings and Societal Transformation in the Seventeenth Century* looks at Rembrandt's images as windows onto the people, culture, and landscape of the Netherlands in the 17th century—known as that country's Golden Age. Rembrandt's prints capture the faces and character of the Netherlands' great experiments in modern society building, and are some of the most significant of the works of art produced in 17th-century Europe, reflecting the most dynamic culture of his era. *The Golden Hour* is sponsored by Joan Loeb with additional support provided by sponsors Winifred and Charles Stakely and co-sponsors Laura and Michael Luckett.

The exhibition explores the Golden Age through four distinctive lenses—the landscape, the rise of urbanism, the growing divide between wealth and poverty, and the powerful influence of rising Protestantism. The prints included in *The Land of Sea and Sky* speak to the Netherlands'

success as a nation of traders with roots in its strong relationship to the sea and agriculture. For these images, Rembrandt wandered rural areas on foot, capturing drawings of the flat and fertile landscape. He depicts the channels that are everywhere in the lowlands, and particularly where the land has been reclaimed by the pumping action of windmills. Inevitably because of the flatness of the landscape itself, skies play an equally important role in the depictions of the land, focusing on the perceived balance between the earth of man, and the heavens of God.

The imagery of *Urban Centers and the Rise of the Middle and Professional Classes* expands the story of the country's commercial superiority. In the 1600s, over half of the population of the Netherlands lived in towns or cities—many in the nation's Low Countries which provided its merchant fleets easy access to international trade routes. The rise of the *burghers*—town or city dwellers who formed a solid middle class that flourished due to local and international trade—provided a ready market for the work of artists such as Rembrandt. Broad segments of society, profiting from the economic boom, suddenly had enough money to buy luxury products such as art, especially portraiture.

Rembrandt's Images of the Poor demonstrates that the artist's interest in capturing the likenesses of the Dutch citizenry extended far beyond the growing burgher classes. Then as now, while the larger economy thrived, many, particularly immigrants, hovered consistently around the subsistence level. The artist's empathetic renderings of the poor and those on the lowest rung of his society is sometimes interpreted as projecting the belief that all mankind is dependent on the benevolence of God.

The Dutch and "Scriptural Identity" broadens this the exploration of belief and spirituality in Netherlandish culture. In the wake of establishing their own independent nation and freeing them themselves from the rule of the Spanish Habsburgs and enforced Catholicism, Old Testament stories of the Jews' quest for a homeland in Israel struck a particularly responsive chord. For Rembrandt, the Bible was an anthology of human drama that reflected realities he captured from his contemporary world.

Curator Margaret Lynne Ausfeld noted that, "the Museum's etchings by Rembrandt are some of the foundational treasures of our collection. As works of significant age and fragility, we exhibit them rarely. Making such a large group of them available gives the community and our visitors an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the works of a great master of European art history."

Noting that the works on view are all drawn from the Museum's Weil Print Collection, Director Angie Dodson added "Adolph 'Bucks' Weil, Jr., was one of the United States' notable collectors of Old Master and nineteenth-century prints, building his collection for more than 30 years. He took great pleasure in collecting fine works by the great masters of printmaking—Dürer, Rembrandt, Callot, and Whistler—among them. He also delighted in sharing his collection with others, and, at his death in 1995, bequeathed the bulk of his collection to his alma mater, the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, and to his hometown Museum here in Montgomery."

Rembrandt Harmenzoon van Rijn

Few artists are as widely known as Rembrandt van Rijn. As a draftsman, painter, and printmaker he possessed both creative and technical virtuosity and was as respected in his own era as he remains today. Unlike earlier artists who made prints as reproductions or as illustrations, Rembrandt's prints are independent works of art. In a period of nearly forty years he made well over 200 compositions that proved to be a reliable and steady source of income for the artist, and helped to spread his reputation throughout the continent of Europe.

MMFA Background

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts was founded in 1930 by a group of local artists as a place for both exhibiting art and space for art education. The original intentions of our founders—to exhibit and teach—continue to inspire and inform every action and activity here at the Museum which, since 1988, has shared the 277-acre Blount Cultural Park with our partners across the lake at the celebrated Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Today's MMFA visitors stroll art-studded grounds and permanent collection galleries. They see compelling changing exhibitions and learn about art by playing in our interactive gallery, ArtWorks, making art in its bustling studios, or by participating in other engaging events and programs.

While the Museum's collection is still home to the art of many of the regional artists who first established it, over time, it has become known for its strength in American art and Old Master Prints. Recent, important acquisitions of art made by African American and Asian artists and works inspired by images and themes related to the experiences of these groups represent the breadth and depth of the lives and concerns of those who now call Montgomery and the River Region home. Through the exhibition of this work as well as the programs and events that help connect our communities with it, the MMFA is recognized as a leading arts and cultural resource here in the state and Southeastern region.

The MMFA is a department of the City of Montgomery and is supported by funds from the City of Montgomery, with additional funds from the Montgomery County Commission and the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts Association. Programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

General Information

What: *The Golden Hour: Rembrandt's Etchings and Societal Transformation in the Seventeenth Century*

When: On View February 13 through April 19, 2020

Where: Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts

Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park
One Museum Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

Information: www.mmfa.org or 334.625.4333
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Hours:

Galleries,
Sculpture Garden,
and Terrace

Tuesdays–Saturdays, 10 AM–5 PM
Thursdays, 10 AM–9 PM
Sundays, Noon to 5 PM

ArtWorks

Tuesdays–Saturdays, 10 AM–5 PM
Sundays, Noon to 5 PM

Café

Tuesdays–Saturdays, 11 AM–2 PM

Museum Store:

Tuesdays–Saturdays, 11 AM–4 PM
Sundays, Noon to 4 PM

Admission: Free! With ample, free parking.

Image credit lines:

Left: Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669), *Jan Asselyn, Painter (Krabbetje)*, ca. 1647, etching and drypoint with engraving on Japanese paper mounted to a second sheet, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, Alabama, Gift of Jean K. Weil in memory of Adolph “Bucks” Weil, Jr., 1999.7.103

Right: Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669), *Canal with a Large Boat and a Bridge (Het Schuytje Op De Voorgrondt)*, 1650, etching and drypoint on cream laid paper, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery, Alabama, Gift of Jean K. Weil in memory of Adolph “Bucks” Weil, Jr., 1999.7.110

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