



Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels) would have been so well paired with the *Adoration of the Magi in the snow* (1563; no.65), which is making its first journey out of the Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur, in nearly a century. Interestingly that *Adoration* is instead hung with the *Adoration of the Magi* from the National Gallery, London (1564; no.66), in which Christ is central whereas in the Winterthur picture he is almost lost at the edge of a busy village.

Because the *Fall of the rebel angels* (1562; Royal Museum of Fine Art of Belgium) also did not come from Brussels, there is no section of the show about Bruegel as a 'second Bosch'. So *Dulle Griet* (1563; Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp; no.61) is instead displayed alongside the *Triumph of Death* (Probably after 1562; Museo

Nacional del Prado, Madrid; no.60) in the room on religious paintings, not the context in which they might normally be considered. Yet both are visions of an apocalypse, and the hang lets us consider how Bruegel saw an earth fully consumed by catastrophe. Both works are newly cleaned, and their brighter colours and clearer sense of spatial depth give a true sense of place – *Dulle Griet* extending fire and chaos throughout a deep landscape, *Triumph of Death* playing up the contrast between foreground richness and encroaching desolation. Even in death's domain there are moments of hilarity, like the masked skeleton emptying a wine cooler while another, in fool's garb, serves up a skull as dessert. You just have to look very hard to find those tiny details of humour within the horror.

17. Detail of *The battle between Carnival and Lent*, by Pieter Bruegel. 1559. Panel, 118 by 164.2 cm. (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).

1 K. van Mander: *Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilderconst*, trans. H. Miedema, Utrecht 1973, p.190. On dinner parties, see C. Goldstein: *Pieter Bruegel and the Culture of the Early Modern Dinner Party*, Farnham and Burlington VT 2013.

2 *Harvesters* (1565), in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, has not been lent and the panel representing spring has been lost since the seventeenth century.

3 A. Benali, A. van Dongen, K. Lichtert, S. Pénot and L. Timmermans: *Conversation Pieces: The World of Bruegel*, Veurne 2018.

4 *Catalogue: Bruegel: The Master*. Edited by Sabine Haag, with contributions by Elke Oberthaler, Sabine Pénot, Manfred Sellink and Ron Spronk. 304 pp. incl. 320 col. ills. (Thames & Hudson, London, 2018), £42. ISBN 978-0-500-23984-1. The catalogue includes a code that allows it to be downloaded as an e-book or PDF from the Kunsthistorisches Museum's website.

### Adriaen Brouwer: Master of Emotions

Museum Oudenaarde and the Flemish Ardennes  
15th September–16th December

by LUKK PIJL

There is much to enjoy in this marvellous exhibition, which will be seen only in Oudenaarde, the town where Adriaen Brouwer was born. It has been generously sponsored by the City of Oudenaarde and the Flemish Government, who regard Brouwer (c.1605–38) as a trump card to promote their city and the region. The Museum Oudenaarde is housed in the medieval town hall. Despite the challenges of hanging and lighting an exhibition in this building, the curator, Katrien Lichtert, has organised a beautiful and convincing presentation of twenty-seven of Brouwer's sixty-five known paintings, combined with a few works on paper.<sup>1</sup> Although Brouwer worked in a variety of registers, the quality of his finest paintings is comparable to Rubens, Rembrandt and Frans Hals. It is no coincidence that the first two were avid collectors of his work and between them owned the lion's share of his drawn and painted output.

Recent archival research, published in the catalogue, firmly establishes that Brouwer was born in Oudenaarde but that he moved with his family to Gouda when very young. He is recorded in Amsterdam in 1625–26 and subsequently seems to have moved back and forth between there

18. *Peasants celebrating*, by Adriaen Brouwer. 1626–28. Panel, 35 by 53.5 cm. (Kunsthaus Zürich; exh. Museum Oudenaarde).

and Haarlem. In 1631 he was registered as a master in the Guild of St Luke in Antwerp and he remained in the city until his untimely death in January 1638. His extant works were, therefore, made during a relatively short span of time, perhaps little more than a dozen years. Despite this, a strong stylistic development is noticeable; his later works are executed with more subdued colours than before and are noticeably harmonious in effect.

The power of Brouwer's art lies in his successful combination of diverse and often powerful emotions with a wonderful sense of detail and colour. Passages of very free painting are juxtaposed with confidently executed details. His technique can be very precise, but it is never fussy or pedantic. A masterly use of glazes creates a wonderful sense of the plasticity of clothes, woodwork and kitchen utensils. These qualities were recognised early on: the first authors to write about Brouwer's paintings described them as well drawn and

loosely painted.<sup>2</sup> Both the wall texts and the catalogue lay much emphasis on Brouwer's ability to express various type of emotions. The inclusion of four Rembrandt etchings from the late 1620s that explore various facial expressions is therefore justified (cat. nos.42–45).

In the first, rather small, room only one wall was available to hang a fine display of Brouwer's earliest works together with paintings by some of his Flemish predecessors, such as Maarten van Cleve and Pieter Brueghel the Younger. Due to the limitations of space, paintings from Brouwer's years in Antwerp are shown in the second room in combination with paintings by Dutch masters such as Willem Buytewech, Dirck Hals and Esaias van de Velde, who played an important role during Brouwer's formative years in the Dutch Republic. It is generally assumed that his genre pieces, distinguished by sharp angular forms and strong local colours, were

Painted during this period. The slightly awkward perspective of the figures might suggest that these multi-figure works were composed with small paper cut-out sketches of the protagonists. This theory (which is not discussed in the catalogue) is difficult to prove since no drawing – or collage – by Brouwer with a direct relation to any of his paintings is known. The climax of Brouwer's early work, *Peasants celebrating* (no.4; Fig.18), shows an animated party of drunken people around a rough wooden table amid a plethora of glasses, tankards and frying pans. The painting is a fine example of Brouwer's ability to capture a moment in time, as in his depiction of a pot of porridge falling towards the viewer. The composition is reminiscent of paintings of Twelfth Night celebrations, 'The King Drinks', a theme made popular by Jacob Jordaens.

Several institutions have made generous loans. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, has lent



## Exhibitions

its famous *Smokers* (no.39), which includes a prominent self-portrait of Brouwer among his friends and fellow painters Jan Davidsz De Heem and Jan Cossiers. This masterpiece is very successfully paired with a painting of the same subject by Brouwer's follower David Teniers II (c.1640; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; no.40), which shows the central figure in an identical pose. In its execution, depiction of detail and strong emotions the *Tavern scene* lent by the National Gallery, London (no.37; Fig.19), is arguably Brouwer's finest painting. It clearly demonstrates that Brouwer, whose work is usually on a small scale, was fully able to handle larger formats.

Such works had a huge impact on genre painters. The exhibition includes a few fine examples by Joos van Craesbeeck, Teniers, Jan Miense Molenaer and Adriaen van Ostade. It is probably due to the limited space that the organisers have not included

any early paintings by such masters as Cornelis Saftleven and Gillis van Tilborgh, which would have further illustrated Brouwer's powerful influence in both the northern and southern Netherlands.

A small section of the exhibition is devoted to Brouwer's very rare landscape paintings. Like his genre scenes, they have a rowdy, unpolished character. Here three of his landscapes (nos.46–48) are ingeniously linked with a typical landscape by Jan Lievens (c.1640–50; Fondation Custodia, Paris; no.50) and a sublime landscape by Rubens, *The willows* (c.1636; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; no.49). It is clear that these beautiful works originated from these artists' mutual understanding of their aims.

All Brouwer's paintings are on panel – he probably never worked on canvas – with the exception of a handful of outstanding works on copper, a support that suits his delicate handling. Among those

**19. *Tavern scene*, by Adriaen Brouwer. 1634–36. Panel, 48 by 67 cm. (National Gallery, London; exh. Museum Oudenaarde).**

shown here is *Smokers in an inn* (c.1627–30; no.15) from the National Museum, Warsaw. The catalogue does not mention that it was sold at Christie's, London, in 1997 and subsequently returned to the museum when it was discovered that it had been stolen during the Second World War. At the time of the Christie's sale its authorship was doubted, but now, hanging among Brouwer's undisputed paintings, it is obvious that the attribution is correct. The same is true of another small work on copper, *Peasant drinking* (no.15b; Fig.20), from a private German collection, which is here published for the first time.

The beautifully produced catalogue focuses on the works by Brouwer in the exhibition; those by other artists are not given catalogue entries.<sup>3</sup> Its essays offer new information on Brouwer's biography, the objects he depicted, the paintings' iconography, their





relation to contemporary rhetorical culture and the contemporary buyers of his work. A chapter on Brouwer's materials and technique would have added substance to the publication – for example, a list of the marks visible on the reverse of some of the supports would have been helpful in substantiating the chronology of his works, which is still rather arbitrary.

1 A regrettable absence is *The bitter drink* (c.1636–38; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main). Shortly before the exhibition a controversy about the painting emerged in the press (see, for example, <https://nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/09/12/een-van-deze-twee-schilderijen-is-echt-a1616269>, accessed 6th November 2018). It has been stated that this late work is a copy and another privately owned version is the original, a hypothesis that cannot be substantiated.

2 See, for example, A. van Houbraken: *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, Amsterdam 1718–21, p.323.

3 Catalogue: *Adriaen Brouwer. Master of Emotions: Between Rubens and Rembrandt*. Edited by Katrien Lichtert. 224 pp. incl. 155 col. and b. & w. ills. (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2018), €29.99. ISBN 978-94-6372-620-7.

20. *Peasant drinking*, by Adriaen Brouwer. 1632–34. Copper, 18 by 19 cm. (Private collection; exh. Museum Oudenaarde).

### Siah Armajani: Follow This Line Walker Art Center, Minneapolis 9th September–30th December

by ROBERT SILBERMAN

Throughout his long career, Siah Armajani (b.1939) has been preoccupied with space and place, and yet his work has always been difficult to situate within the art world. His signature combination of architecture, sculpture and site-specific installation is difficult to categorise and challenging to display, and this perhaps limits his audience. Yet there is an Armajani creation that has been seen by a huge number of people, not in its own right but as a backdrop on television: the bridge, tower and cauldron that provided the stage for Muhammad Ali's dramatic appearance lighting the Olympic flame during the opening ceremonies in Atlanta in 1996. Armajani's contribution may have gone

largely unrecognised but the event did satisfy the essentially political nature of his art. Ali's transformation from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali and his refusal of military service because of the war in Vietnam led to him being stripped of his heavyweight crown. To have Ali, once controversial but by then a legendary figure, atop Armajani's structure seems entirely in keeping with the artist's political perspective. This exhibition at the Walker Art Center provides reminders of Armajani's rare ability to unite poetry and politics, mathematics and philosophy, sculpture and architecture.<sup>1</sup>

As a student in Tehran, Armajani made works with sly, subversive references to Mohammad Mossadegh, the democratically elected prime minister of Iran ousted in a coup backed by the Americans and British in 1953. His art is no less political now. His series *Seven rooms of hospitality*, the most recent works in the exhibition, focus on detainees, migrant workers, refugees and other displaced persons (Fig.21). For all Armajani's occasional interest in what might appear purely mathematical or linguistic matters – in 1970 his work was included in the landmark exhibition of conceptual art *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York – his overarching concern has always been with how people are positioned in the world. After leaving Iran for the United States in 1960 he has had a persistent if not necessarily obvious subject – the exile's lot.

Armajani has shown an immigrant's admiration for American democracy and ideals, but he is not uncritical. He has paid tribute to Sacco and Vanzetti, the Italian-born immigrants who became a cause célèbre during the great 'Red Scare' of the 1920s when they were tried and executed for an armed robbery that turned deadly, and to other radicals and resisters such as Emma Goldman and Henry David Thoreau. The bridge Armajani designed to lead from the Walker Art Center's sculpture garden in 1988 spans many lanes of traffic to connect the museum to a city park (Fig.23). The structure is painted in colours taken from the home of Thomas Jefferson, the