



Willem de Poorter

(Haarlem? 1608 – after 1648 Haarlem?)

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The son of a Flemish émigré, Willem de Poorter was likely born in Haarlem in 1608.^[1] The circumstances of his training are not clear. It is often proposed that he studied with Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69) in Leiden, about 1629–30.^[2] That training, however, may have occurred in Amsterdam as late as the mid-1630s, thereby constituting not a student-pupil relationship so much as a mid-career supervision.^[3] By 1633 De Poorter's name appears in the Haarlem city archives, where he is listed as a member of the Guild of Saint Luke by 1635.^[4] Although he was documented as being in the village of Wijk bij Heusden in 1645, he seems to have spent his career largely in Haarlem, where his name continues to appear in the city's archives until 1648.^[5] The date and location of his death are not known.

According to Arnold Houbraken (1660–1719), De Poorter was a specialist of history and still-life painting, though only a few of the latter survive.^[6] Today he is best known for his religious and mythological works, some of which bear stylistic affinities to the early work of Rembrandt as well as to that of Rembrandt's teacher, Pieter Lastman (1583–1633). Like Rembrandt and Lastman, De Poorter set his scenes in large, dark interiors with a central grouping of figures differentiated through animated expression and pose. Scholars have attributed these similarities to the proposition that De Poorter studied with Rembrandt in Leiden around 1629–30.^[7] As David De Witt and Adriaan Waiboer have argued, however, De Poorter also took artistic cues from his fellow Haarlem artists.^[8] His smooth manner of execution, figure types, and use of bright localized colors against a monochrome background are closely reminiscent of the work of Hendrik Gerritsz Pot (ca. 1585–1657) and Pieter de Grebber (ca. 1600–52/53). Particularly in his early career, De Poorter was also known to freely adapt from compositions by Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617) and Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574).^[9] Waiboer notes that De Poorter's work begins to exhibit Rembrandtesque qualities only in the mid-1630s, after he was recognized as an independent painter, thus suggesting he was likely a follower, rather than a student, of the Dutch master.

- Alexandra Libby, 2017

Endnotes

1. Hans Vollmer, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler* (Leipzig, 1933), 27: 259.
2. Ben Broos, "Poorter, Willem de," *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online*, accessed September 27, 2016.
3. Adriaan Waiboer, "Willem de Poorter: Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt Pupil." *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2013.5.2.12> (accessed October 13, 2016).
4. Adriaan van der Wiligen, *Les Artistes de Haarlem* (Haarlem, 1870; rev. ed., Nieuwkoop, 1970), 245.
5. David De Witt, *The Bader Collection: Dutch and Flemish Paintings* (Kingston, 2014), 250; Hans Vollmer, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler* (Leipzig, 1933), 27: 259.
6. Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 3: 61.
7. See note 2. For a summary of the scholarship devoted to De Poorter's student-pupil relationship with Rembrandt, see Adriaan Waiboer, "Willem de Poorter: Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt Pupil." *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2013.5.2.12> (accessed October 13, 2016).
8. Adriaan Waiboer, "Willem de Poorter: Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt Pupil." *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2013.5.2.12> (accessed October 13, 2016); David de Witt, *The Bader Collection: Dutch and Flemish Paintings* (Kingston, 2014), 250–51.
9. Adriaan Waiboer, "Willem de Poorter: Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt Pupil." *JHNA* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.5092/jhna.2013.5.2.12> (accessed October 13, 2016).

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