





Herring Seller and Boy

Gerrit Dou
(Leiden 1613 – 1675 Leiden)

ca. 1664
oil on panel
43.5 x 34.5 cm
signed, lower center, below window: “GDou” (GD
in monogram)
GD-106

How to cite

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In this small panel, an old woman and a young boy, gesturing to a shallow tub of fish, stand framed in an arched stone opening. Although the exact nature of their exchange cannot be determined, they are apparently discussing the herring she holds in her right hand.^[1] The boy's blue felt hat and brown *pj* (frock) worn over a red woolen *hemtrock* (waistcoat) and white shirt identify him as a fisherboy.^[2] Consequently, it appears that the boy has brought the fish for the old woman to sell; he's the purveyor for rather than the customer of this herring seller.^[3] She sports a red jacket, blue apron, ruffled collar, and white headdress of the type worn by many of the elderly women of a certain class that appear in Gerrit Dou's genre scenes.^[4] Her stern glance—is it dissatisfaction?—allies her to the common stereotype of fishwives as raw, coarse women.^[5] It is tempting, therefore, to interpret the action in the painting as an illustration of the contemporaneous expression “to give someone a *bokking* (a smoked or salted herring),” which meant to shame them with a sharp remark.^[6] Whatever the nature of the exchange between the boy and the woman, the disparity in their ages and their physical proximity allow Dou to contrast the wrinkled skin of the elderly with the smooth fresh face of youth.

The window surrounding the figures is a compositional device Dou developed to enhance the illusionistic character of his genre scenes. Here, it serves many functions. It not only frames the two protagonists, but also provides a view to the interior of the shop while simultaneously defining the picture plane. On the window's deep ledge lies an assortment of still-life elements that display the artist's astounding ability to render each texture, surface, reflective quality, and material with careful yet varied brushwork visible only by attentive looking. Among these objects are a large head of cabbage, the curled edges of its leaves echoing the ruff of the woman's collar; a bunch of carrots, their greens rendered with bravura flicks of the brush; some spring onions; and a frayed piece of cloth. The items are positioned so that each one protrudes beyond the ledge into the viewer's space, blurring the distinction between the painted and actual worlds. In addition to the illusionism and beautiful surfaces, the small dimensions of Dou's works were a ploy to attract, engage, and seduce the viewer.

The illusionistic effect in *Herring Seller and Boy* is heightened by the strong illumination streaming in from the upper left—like a spotlight placed close to the front of the picture. The lighting causes the objects on the sill to throw shadows onto the wall below, thereby heightening their tactile quality. The distorted shadows of the scales hanging from a nail at right emphasize the strong, directional, and theatrical quality of the light. The “outside” wall below the scales is marked by carefully observed cracks in the stone. Dou's prominent signature is rendered as though it were chiseled into the wall below the ledge.

Comparative Figures



Fig 1. Jost Amman, “Apotecarius. Der Apoteker.” (The Pharmacist), in *Panoplia omnium illiberalium mechanicarum* (Book of Trades), engraving, 148 x 90 mm, British Museum, 1904.0206.103.14, © Trustees of the British Museum



Fig 2. Gerrit Dou, *Grocery Shop*, 1647, oil on panel, 38.5 x 29 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. no. 1215, photo: Hervé Lewandowski, © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY



The artist uses both light and handling to differentiate the foreground from the background elements. Whereas the figures in the foreground are carefully delineated—every wrinkle and ruffle described—the women in the back are more cursorily painted, their features barely indicated, and their unspecified transaction conveyed solely by the posture and proximity of their bodies. As X-radiographs indicate, in addition to other adjustments, Dou made small changes to the placement of these figures while he was working.^[7] A diffuse light envelops them from a second light source emanating from the two rows of leaded windows in the left-hand wall of the shop.^[8]

The format Dou chose is fitting for a shop scene, as it recalls the arch-shaped window behind which several of the tradesmen are shown working in illustrations by Jost Amman (1539–91) for the *Ständebuch* of 1568 (fig 1).^[9] The parallel does not end there. Outside the craftsmen's arch-shaped windows in these prints is often found a table pushed flush against the wall that functions as a ledge to display their wares. Dou's deep sill provides a comparable ledge, one that, as noted, displays his painterly prowess and virtuosic craftsmanship.

The earliest dated genre painting in which Dou used an arched window is his *Grocery Shop* of 1647 in the Musée du Louvre (fig 2), the first seventeenth-century Dutch shop scene.^[10] Although separated by nearly twenty years, *Grocery Shop* and *Herring Seller* have many elements in common, including poppies, a ham hock and, beyond them, candles suspended from the rafters. Scales, a basket of eggs, a pewter tankard (hanging from a shelf behind the eggs in *Herring Seller and Boy* and carried by the young boy in *Grocery Shop*), and shelving holding covered jars and boxes appear in both paintings. In the Louvre picture, a cask similar to the one beneath the candles in *Herring Seller* has a wooden tub atop it. The strong illumination from the upper left is also comparable.

The construction of space in the two works is fundamentally different, however, showing the strides Dou made in rendering spatial recession as he matured as a painter. The form of *Grocery Shop* corresponds roughly to the window depicted. Inside, a table is placed perpendicular to the window ledge, allowing the figures to be positioned on either side of it. Despite the depth of the room, a young boy seems awkwardly squeezed into an indeterminate space behind the servant girl. By contrast, in the later *Herring Seller and Boy* Dou uses the soft light, smaller scale, and monochromatic color of the background figures to suggest the depth of the space. The *mise-en-scène*, with the principal figures now placed close to the picture plane and the subsidiary figures convincingly engaged at the back of the room, announces a more experienced painter.^[11]

The carefully described scene in the Leiden Collection painting does not, in fact,



Fig 3. Gerrit Dou, *A Poulterer's Shop*, ca. 1679, oil on panel, 58 x 46 cm, The National Gallery, London, Bought, 1871, inv. NG825, © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY



Fig 4. Gerrit Dou, *Herring Seller*, ca. 1650–55, oil on panel, 31 x 23 cm, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow



Fig 5. Gerrit Dou, *Herring Seller*, ca. 1670–75, oil on panel, 41 x 30 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



correspond to what we know about the nature of seventeenth-century Dutch shops. These stores tended to carry specific kinds of goods rather than offer the wide variety of wares on display in *Herring Seller and Boy*. The *vettewariër* would have carried butter, ham and candles; the *comenij* sold dairy, eggs and meat products; and the *apoteker* would have used poppies to make syrup with narcotic properties.^[12] Fresh vegetables and fish were available at the market and from street peddlers.^[13] At market, some vendors sold their wares from a window; unlike the hawkers and peddlers, these merchants were required to become members of the shopkeepers' guild.^[14] Shopkeeping, indeed, was a common way for a seventeenth-century woman, especially one from the middle class, to make a living: owning a shop required no technical skills; women were tolerated in the shopkeepers' guilds; and the trade required only some initial financial capital.^[15] Dou's painting may allude to or conflate both the older practice of selling wares from a window and the newer type of shop that specialized in carrying particular goods.

The earliest description of this painting appears in a manuscript catalogue by E. Munich (1773–85) of works in the galleries and cabinets of the Imperial Palace in St. Petersburg:

Gerard Douw.

N.° 534. La Marchande hollandaise.

Elle est vue à demi corps dans sa boutique garnie d'oignons, de carottes, d'une tête de chou rouge et d'un bacquet avec des harangs, dont elle en montre un à un garçon qui semble en avoir grande envie. À la muraille du côté gauche en pendent des balances et tout auprès un panier rempli d'oeufs; au plancher sont suspendus des jambons et un trousseau de tête de pavots; derrière la marchande, dans la demi-teinte, se distinguent deux femmes et contre le mur du fond des planchettes chargées de flacons. Il est peint en 1664.

Cette pièce, que le Comte de Bruhl avait eu de l'Electeur de Bavière et que l'on peut nommer à juste titre un Chef-d'oeuvre, a été gravé par Pierre Etienne Moitte à Paris sous le nom indiqué.

Sur bois. haut 11. V. Large 7 ½. V.

This source notes that Count Brühl acquired the painting from the Elector of Bavaria; that it is rightly called a masterpiece; that it was engraved by Pierre Etienne Moitte in Paris; and that it was painted in 1664.^[16] Although no date now appears on the painting, the composition and execution are most directly comparable to Dou's *Poulterer's Shop* in the National Gallery, London, dating to around 1665–70 (**fig 3**).

^[17] A date of around 1664 for the *Herring Seller and Boy*, which is mentioned in



Munich's catalogue, is therefore most likely.

The Leiden Collection painting is not the sole representation of the subject of a herring seller in Dou's art, though it is the most elaborate and the only one that shows the shopkeeper buying rather than selling fish. The *Herring Seller* in the Pushkin from about 1650–55 (fig 4) depicts only two figures.^[18] They are placed close to the picture plane, standing next to each other in a window. The young boy in a broad-brimmed hat grasps the fish tub and points into it while looking at the old woman. She, in turn, displays a herring with one hand and holds the other palm outward, as though expecting payment. Onions, herring's traditional accompaniment, are the only still-life elements on the window sill. Dou's other rendition of the theme, now in the Hermitage (fig 5), is a late work, dating about 1670–75.^[19] Here, an old woman and a beret-wearing boy, placed much farther back in space, are joined by a snarling dog splayed on the window ledge. This painting, which also includes the basket of eggs, scales, tattered cloth, and tub of herring found in the Leiden Collection picture, actually depicts the boy paying the woman for the herring she holds. Although not conceived as a series, these three compositions featuring a transaction between an old woman and a boy around a herring show three distinct episodes—delivering, choosing, and paying for herring—three pictorial solutions, and three moments in the artist's career.

Dou's *Herring Seller and Boy* appears to have been a very popular composition, much more so than the other two related images.^[20] Some twenty-three versions and copies of the work are known. Moitte's mid-eighteenth-century engraving of the painting, made when it was in the collection of Count Brühl, was evidently used as the model for those copies of the painting that reproduce the subject in reverse.^[21]

- Ronni Baer, 2017

Endnotes

1. Herring was extremely important to the Dutch economy of the seventeenth century both as an export industry and for local consumption. It was used creatively as a subject by Dutch artists, serving, for example, as the interpretive pivot of a still life by Joseph de Bray (*In Praise of Pickled Herring*, 1656, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden) and a portrait by Frans Hals (*Portrait of Pieter Cornelisz. van der Morsch*, 1616, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh); further, P. J. J. van Thiel, “Frans Hals’ portret van de Leidese rederijkersnar Pieter Cornelisz. van der Morsch, alias Piero,” *Oud Holland* 76 [1961]: 153–72). Dou’s genre paintings featuring herring likely inspired artists with Leiden connections, such as Gabriel Metsu, Godefridus Schalcken, and Quiringh van Brekelenkam, to treat the theme as well.
2. E-mail correspondence from Marieke de Winkel to the author, 13 August 2012. His clothing is comparable to that worn by Frans Hals’s fisherboys. Furthermore, a similar hat is worn by the boy with a pipe who appears behind the fish seller in Jan Steen’s *Old Man Selling Fish* in Bridgewater House (Franklin Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu: A Study of His Place in Dutch Genre Painting of the Golden Age* [New York, 1974], fig. 90) and by the old mussel man in Hendrick Sorgh’s *Fish Market* in the Rijksmuseum (Liesbeth M. Helmus, ed., *Fish: Still Lifes by Dutch and Flemish Masters* [Exh. cat. Utrecht, Centraal Museum; Helsinki, Amos Anderson Art Museum] [Utrecht, 2004], no. 60).
3. There is no indication of a monetary transaction; it is therefore highly unlikely that he wants a herring. The wooden vessel to which he gestures contains a clearly delineated herring as well as painted dots of white, reddish-taupe, and gray, implying the glistening skins of others. Such vessels were used not only to keep fish alive for some time but also as a measure; see Eddy de Jongh, “The Symbolism of Fish, Fisherman, Fishing Gear, and the Catch,” in *Fish: Still Lifes by Dutch and Flemish Masters*, ed. Liesbeth M. Helmus (Exh. cat. Utrecht, Centraal Museum; Helsinki, Amos Anderson Art Museum) (Utrecht, 2004), 333.
4. See Ronni Baer, “The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675),” 3 vols. (PhD diss. New York University, 1990), no. 58 (the old woman with a basket listening to *The Quack*); no 94 (*Old Woman with a Jug at a Window*); no. 98 (the old woman who brings the urine sample to *The Doctor* in Copenhagen).
5. Elizabeth Honig, “Quirijn Gerritsz. van Brekelenkam, *De Visverkoopster*,” in *Leidse Fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge, 1630–1760*, ed. Eric Jan Sluijter, Marlies Enklaar, and Paul Nieuwenhuizen (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), no. 2.
6. For this expression, see Pieter J. J. van Thiel, “Frans Hals’ portret van de Leidese rederijkersnar Pieter Cornelisz. van der Morsch, alias Piero,” *Oud Holland* 76 (1961): 153–72.
7. He also seems to have changed the shape of the old woman’s outer sleeve and the position of the tankard in the right background. Infrared reflectography reveals broad blocking-in strokes, especially in the old woman’s apron. I am grateful to Annette Rupprecht for discussing the results of her 2012 technical examination of the Leiden Collection painting with me. These findings shed light on the artist’s working

- method, which is important considering that no compositional drawings by Dou are known. For more on Dou's working methods, see Ronni Baer, "The Life and Art of Gerrit Dou," in *Gerrit Dou, 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (Zwolle., 2000), 39–40; Annetje Boersma, "Dou's Painting Technique," in *Gerrit Dou, 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt* (Exh. cat. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art; London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (Zwolle, 2000), 54–63; Jørgen Wadum, "Dou Doesn't Paint, Oh No, He Juggles with His Brush: Gerrit Dou, a Rembrandtesque 'Fijnschilder,'" *Art Matters: Nederlands Technical Studies in Art 1* (2002): 62–77; Ronni Baer, "A Dou for Boston," in *Collected Opinions: Essays on Netherlandish Art in Honour of Alfred Bader*, ed. Volker Manuth and Axel Rüger (London, 2004), 21–22.
8. The same combination of lighting—spotlight for the foreground figure and light from an adjacent window for the background—occurs first in Dou's painting *Woman with Fruit*, dated 1657, at Waddesdon Manor (Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou [1613–1675]," 3 vols. [PhD diss. New York University, 1990], no. 70). In the Leiden Collection painting, however, the soft atmospheric effect of the second light source may reflect Dou's awareness of contemporary artistic production in Delft, especially that of De Hooch and Vermeer. See further Ronni Baer, "Dou and the Delft Connection," in *Face Book: Studies on Dutch and Flemish Portraiture of the 16th–18th Centuries: Liber Amicorium Presented to Rudolf E.O. Ekkart on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. Edwin Buijsen, Charles Dumas, and Volker Manuth (Leiden, 2012), 279–84.
 9. Eric Jan Sluijter ("Gerrit Dou, *Violoospeeler*," in *Leidse Fijnschilders: Van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge, 1630–1760*, ed. Eric Jan Sluijter, Marlies Enklaar, and Paul Nieuwenhuizen [Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal] [Zwolle, 1988], no. 10, n. 3) noted the resemblance of Dou's "windows" to Amman's illustrations of the trades and remarked that Amman's series would have been known and appreciated—given Jan Jorisz van Vliet's early seventeenth-century print series of the trades—in Dou's Leiden artistic circles. Amman's pharmacist (20), whose confections and remedies in canisters of different sizes and shapes line the wall of his shop, is most pertinent to this discussion (see Figure 1).
 10. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. (PhD diss. New York University, 1990), no. 47.
 11. The marked contrast between the figures in the foreground and background, as well as the dramatic lighting and frozen action, may indicate a connection to contemporary *rederijker* theater, in which the protagonist delivered his soliloquy from the apron while the action took place behind him on the stage. See Stephanie Sonntag, *Ein "Schau-spiel" der Malkunst: Das Fensterbild in der holländischen Malerei des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2006), 229–34. I do not agree, however, with Sonntag's assessment (163–64) that this painting has sexual connotations.
 12. A. C. J. de Vrankrijker, *Mensen, leven en werken in de Gouden Eeuw* (The Hague, 1981), 79; "Frans van Mieris de Jonge, *De apotheek*," in *Leidse Fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge*,



1630–1760, ed. Eric Jan Sluijter, Marlies Enklaar, and Paul Nieuwenhuizen (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), no. 31.

13. The citizens of Dou's hometown of Leiden were especially proud of their fish market, located behind the city hall on the quays of the Nieuwe Rijn. The town chronicler, Jan Orlers, described how the fish were brought there "frequently with such number and abundance that it is a delight to behold"; *Beschrijving der Stadt Leyden* (Leiden and Delft, 1641), 275. According to Bianca du Mortier, "eighty-one percent of the stallholders in the [Leiden] fish market were women, and this figure rose to 96 percent in the Penshal, a market where meat products such as bacon, sausages, and salt meat were sold"; "Costumes in Gabriel Metsu's Paintings," in *Gabriel Metsu: Rediscovered Master of the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Adriaan E. Waiboer (Exh. cat. Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art) (New Haven, 2010), 140. In early modern Leiden, the permits for stall holding or street vending were issued by the city government, often in cooperation with the guild that governed the particular trade; see Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship: Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands, c. 1580–1815* (Amsterdam, 2007), 92-3. According to Van den Heuvel, as opposed to the sale of textiles or hardware, the sale of meat, fish, and vegetables in the seventeenth century stayed in the marketplace and did not transfer to shops. This is corroborated by Jan de Vries, who reported that retail shops gained widespread acceptance only by about 1700, at which time they supplemented markets and hawkers and peddlers; *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600–1750* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 187.
14. Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship: Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands, c. 1580–1815* (Amsterdam, 2007), 149.
15. Historians disagree about the predominant marital status of these female shopkeepers. Van den Heuvel remarks that "Van Deursen argues that they were mainly widows, Wijsenbeek suggests that the majority of [these] women were single, and Van Nierop, De Vries and Van der Woude, and Vos classify it as a trade that was (also) very often practised by married women." Danielle van den Heuvel, *Women and Entrepreneurship: Female Traders in the Northern Netherlands, c. 1580–1815* (Amsterdam, 2007), 137 n. 3.
16. This handwritten catalogue is housed in The Hermitage. I am indebted to Irina Sokolova for this information.
17. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. (PhD diss. New York University, 1990), no. 117.
18. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. (PhD diss. New York University, 1990), no. 60.
19. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. (PhD diss. New York University, 1990), no. 126.
20. It would be interesting to explore whether there is a correlation between those of Dou's paintings that were reproduced in print and those of his paintings that are known in numerous copies. Not every



painting of which a print was made is known in numerous copies, but there are many versions and copies of *Violinist* in the Liechtenstein Princely Collections (Ronni Baer, “The Paintings of Gerrit Dou [1613–1675],” 3 vols. [PhD diss. New York University, 1990], no. 63) and *Old Woman Watering Flowers* in Vienna (Ronni Baer, “The Paintings of Gerrit Dou [1613–1675],” 3 vols. [PhD diss. New York University, 1990], no. 94), both of which were known through prints.

21. Although the print was published in Dresden, Moitte executed the engraving in Paris. See Vivian Lee Atwater, “A Catalogue and Analysis of Eighteenth-Century French Prints after Netherlandish Baroque Paintings,” 3 vols (PhD diss. University of Washington, 1988), 656 (no. 358).

Provenance

- Probably Maximilian II Emanuel (1679–1726), Elector of Bavaria.
- Count Heinrich von Brühl (1700–63), Chancellor of Saxony, by 1750.
- Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia (1729–96), by 1769.^[1]
- By gift to Count Vladimir Grigorievich Orlov (1743–1831); by descent to his grandson Count Vladimir Petrovich Orlov-Davydov (1809–82); by descent to his son Count Anatoli Vladimirovich Orlov-Davydov (d. 1905), St. Petersburg, until 1905 [Count Orloff Davidoff, Petrograd].
- Henry Blank, Newark, by 1929, until 1940s.
- Sidney van den Bergh, Wassenaar, by 1952.
- Charles Napper (1910–72), London; [to Duits & Co., Ltd. London, for £8,500; to Robert Edgar, April 1961, for £9,000].
- Private collection (Robert Edgar), England; (sale, London, Christie’s, 6 July 2005, no. 93 (as by follower of Dou), withdrawn; sale, London, Christie’s, 6 July 2006, no. 7 [Johnny van Haften, London, 2006]).
- From whom acquired by the present owner in 2006.

Provenance Notes

1. Frans van Mieris’s *A Young Woman Reading a Letter*, now in The Leiden Collection, was also formerly in the collection of Catherine the Great.

Exhibition History

- Detroit Institute of Arts, “Dutch Genre and Landscape Paintings of the Seventeenth Century,” 16 October–10 November 1929, no. 21 [lent by Mr. Henry Blank, Newark].
- Delft, Museum het Prinsenhof, “Kersttentoonstelling, Nederlandse meesters uit particulier bezit,” 21



December 1952–1 February 1953, no. 21 [lent by Sidney van den Bergh].

- Oxford, Ashmolean Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, December 2009–January 2011 [lent by the present owner].
- Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art, “Dutch Treat,” 11 October 2011–6 January 2012 [lent by the present owner].
- Leiden, Museum de Lakenhal, “Gerrit Dou: The Leiden Collection from New York,” 9 March–31 August 2014 [lent by the present owner].
- New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, on loan with the permanent collection, September 2014–May 2016 [lent by the present owner].
- Beijing, National Museum of China, “Rembrandt and His Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 17 June–3 September 2017 [lent by the present owner].
- Shanghai, Long Museum, West Bund, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals in the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 23 September 2017–25 February 2018 [lent by the present owner].
- Moscow, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, “The Age of Rembrandt and Vermeer: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 28 March 2018–22 July 2018 [lent by the present owner].
- Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, “Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age. Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection and the Musée du Louvre,” 14 February–18 May 2019 [lent by the present owner].
- Albany, Albany Institute of History & Art, “Delights of the Senses: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life. Featuring Paintings from The Leiden Collection,” 14 September–31 December 2024, no. 5 [lent by the present owner].
- Amsterdam, H’ART Museum, “From Rembrandt to Vermeer: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 9 April–24 August 2025 [lent by the present owner].
- West Palm Beach, Norton Museum of Art, “Art and Life in Rembrandt’s Time: Masterpieces from The Leiden Collection,” 25 October 2025–29 March 2026 [lent by the present owner].

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Beach, Norton Museum of Art. Zwolle, 2025. [Exhibition catalogue also published in Dutch.]

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Versions

Prints

1. Pierre-Étienne Moitte (1722–80), *La marchande hollandaise* (plate 22 from “Recueil d’estampes gravées d’après les tableaux de la galerie de S. E. M. le Comte de Brühl”), ca. 1754, engraving, 5.14 x 3.5 cm, British Museum, London.

Versions

1. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on copper, 40.6 x 30.5 cm, signed G. Dou, Chatsworth, Collection of the Duke of Devonshire.
2. After Gerrit Dou, *The Fishwife*, oil on canvas, 45.7 x 35.4 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Johnson Collection, no. 548, inv. 1879.
3. Attributed to Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A Herring Woman and a Boy*, oil on panel, 17 ¼ x 14 ½ inches, whereabouts unknown (formerly Barbier Collection, Brussels).
4. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, London, private collection, possibly equivalent to Version 1.
5. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on panel, 42.5 x 33.5 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly in a private collection, Düsseldorf).
6. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, inscribed “G Dow” lower right, support unknown, whereabouts unknown (formerly or still in the Biss Collection, Cardiff).
7. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, signed “G Douw 1665” lower right, oil on panel, 44.2 x 34.5 cm, Wawel Castle, Kraków, inv. no. 946.
8. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, signed and dated “G. Dou 1671,” oil on copper, 45 x 34 cm (formerly in the Hommel Collection, Zurich).
9. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on copper, 44 x 35 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly sale, Vienna, Dorotheum, no date, no. 799).



10. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on panel, 46 x 35.5 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly sale, London, Sotheby's, 6 July 1994, no. 188).
11. Attributed to P. van Slingeland, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on canvas, 45 x 36 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly with T. Hermsen, The Hague, 1936).
12. Attributed to Dominicus van Tol, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on panel, 47 x 36 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly sale, Van Marle & Bignell, The Hague, 28 April 1942, no. 249).
13. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, support unknown, whereabouts unknown.
14. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, support unknown, whereabouts unknown.
15. After Gerrit Dou attributed to the School of Frans van Mieris the Elder, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on canvas, 38 x 48 cm, whereabouts unknown.
16. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, 45 x 37 cm, whereabouts unknown.
17. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, support unknown, whereabouts unknown.
18. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on panel, 34.5 x 25.5 cm, signed, whereabouts unknown (formerly Wilms Collection, 1961).
19. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and Boy*, oil on canvas, dated 1684, whereabouts unknown (formerly W. M. de Vries, Aalst, North Brabant, 1973).
20. After Gerrit Dou, *The Shop Window*, oil on panel, 47 x 36 cm, signed, whereabouts unknown (formerly sale, Glerum, Amsterdam, 9 November 1998, no. 63).
21. Attributed to G. Marselli, *A Fish and Vegetable Seller at a Niche*, signed "G. Marselli," oil on panel, 45.8 x 37.5 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly sale, London, Christie's, 26 September 1996, no. 170).
22. After Gerrit Dou, *An Old Woman Offering Herring to a Youth at a Niche*, oil on panel, 50 x 38.5 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly sale, Christie's, Amsterdam, 8 October 1994, no. 10).
23. After Gerrit Dou, *An Old Woman Offering Herring to a Youth at a Niche*, oil on panel, 50 x 38.5 cm, whereabouts unknown (formerly sale, Christie's, Amsterdam, 8 October 1994, no. 10).
24. After Gerrit Dou, *The Herring Seller and the Boy*, 18th century, oil on panel, 45.72 x 31.75 cm, private collection, Scotland.

Technical Summary

The support is a vertically grained wood panel made from a single plank. When viewed from the front, the thickness of the panel tapers from 0.8 cm on the left to 0.4 cm on the right. The back of the panel has been beveled on the top, bottom, and thicker left side. It appears that the thinner right edge was never beveled. The panel has a very slight convex warp when viewed from the front. Narrow wooden strips have been attached to all four edges. On the left and right sides, the grain of the strips is vertical, but on the top and bottom the grain is horizontal.



The white ground was thinly and evenly applied. In the X-radiograph it is radio-opaque and it accentuates the woodgrain. The paint has been built up in successive thin layers of light over dark. It was applied thinly and smoothly wet-into-wet. Infrared photographs^[1] and the X-radiograph show several artist's changes. The positions of the two figures in the background were adjusted slightly; the folds of the herring seller's skirt were changed and her proper left sleeve was originally larger and more angular; and there was a bell-shaped object below the scale hanging on the right side of the niche. In addition, a pentimento and a corresponding shape in the X-radiograph just below the artist's signature indicate that the signature was originally depicted on a painted piece of paper with the upper corners curled down.

The painting is in good condition, though the paint bears a pronounced craquelure pattern. Drying cracks in the background inside the arch make this area difficult to read. There is also some shrinkage in the paint in patches along the left side of the arch and below the signature. There is a loss to the ground and paint in the upper left corner and a depression in the paint at the top of the arch.

Technical Summary Endnotes

1. Infrared photographs were taken at 780, 850, and 1000 nm.