

Raja Yoga Messenger October 1916

MODERN DUTCH ART

By Iverson Harris, Jr.

The Netherlands Exhibition of Contemporary Dutch Art, under the management of Mr. G. E. de Vries, was shown to the public at the Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego from May 15th until July 31st – a period of eleven weeks. It is now on circuit and will be seen in the principal cities of this country. Several groups of the Raja-Yoga students saw the Dutch paintings while they were at the Exposition – among others, some of those who had traveled through Holland with Mme. Tingley in 1913 and had seen the masterpieces of Dutch art in the Amsterdam Museum of Art.

On taking up the catalog of the Netherlands Exhibition and reading the introduction by J. Nilsen Laurvik, Commissioner of Fine Arts for Norway at the P.P.I.E., San Francisco, one feels at once that he is in the company of a distinguished cicerone and critic. For a scholarly and sympathetic review of the Dutch paintings in this collection, one should read Mr. Laurvik's introduction. He thus explains the character of the Exhibition and the School it represents:

Indeed, the general aspect of this collection of paintings brought together by Mr. G. E. de Vries is distinctly light and colorful. Retaining in part the works exhibited in the Netherlands Section in the Palace of Fine Arts at the P.P.I.E., 1915, the additions to this Post-Exposition Exhibition shown at the P.P.I.E. from January 1st to May 1st of 1916, comprise in the main works by younger men of pronounced modern tendencies. Instead of the gray tones of the old palette that served the famous Hague School and their successors, there is a predominance of lighter hues, and here and there, as in the radiant *Early Morning* of Johan Meyer's, we are confronted with the violet shadow and its complementary prismatic accompaniments. These are the bright harbingers of the new day over which the fame of the old still lingers.

Hendrikus van Ingen is the oldest exhibitor in the whole collection, except Matthys Maris, who is no longer actively engaged in his art. He was born in 1846 and did not become known until 1903. He was self-taught and had no artist's influence or academies to help him. And yet today his paintings are admittedly the finest in the whole of the Dutch collection. Perhaps the more radical artists and critics of the present day may regard him as somewhat behind the times in his quiet colors and conservative methods. But van Ingen's cattle and landscapes are as refreshing as are the tranquility of Bach and the sunshine of Mozart and Haydn after listening to the harmonic intricacies of Richard Strauss and Debussy. In looking at van Ingen's paintings – exhibited in America for the first time in this collection – the amateur in art is reminded of Nathaniel Hawthorne's words about music:

Heaven be praised, I know nothing of music as a science; and the most elaborate harmonies, if they please me, please as simply as a nurse's lullaby.

This venerable Dutch artist is represented by six canvases, as follows: *two Dutch Landscapes, Resting, Summertime, At the Stream* and *Head of a Cow*. His treatment of the latter study is so realistic as to make sympathetic observers regret that they have not a handful of nice succulent clover-leaves to give Bess as they pass. Aside

from the admiration which one feels for his beautiful landscapes and contented bovines, one cannot read of his life without feeling the same affectionate regard for him that one feels for the great French naturalist, Henri Fabre. Both were of humble birth; both learned their lessons from their own observation and without the aid of fortune; both stayed at home; both grew old without fame overtaking them; both suddenly became characters of international repute – the Frenchman as the greatest living entomologist, the Hollander as the finest living painter of cattle; both have retained that child state which most of humanity has lost – the same ingenuousness and sweetness of disposition at seventy as they had at seven. How can we help admiring such characters and their works?

n marked contrast to the pastoral repose of van Ingen's paintings are the pulsating pictures of the great modern industries by Herman Heyenbrock entitled *New Building*, *Steel Works*, *Belgian Colliery*, *Factory in Winter*, *Extinguishing Coke* and *Belgian Glass Factory*. These paintings are not only remarkable for the originality of their subjects in the field of art, but also for the way they live; Heyenbrock's coke actually burns, and his steel plates glow. His pictures are as real and true to life as Velasquez's painting of *Las Meninas*. With palette and brush the Dutch artist has expressed on canvas the soul of modern material progress with as much truth and insight as Kipling did on paper with pen and ink when he wrote *.007* and *The Ship that Found Herself*.

Louis van Soest hails from the Dutch East Indies. He was born in Java in 1867, first studied engineering, and did not begin painting until 1891. He is represented by two pictures. *Carnival* and *Winter Evening*. Of the former Mr. Laurvik writes:

The technical virtuosity, the breadth and certainty of characterization, the vivacious play of adroitly harmonized colors, the sense of life and movement in the scene, recall the dash and daring of Hals, but a Hals whose nostrils are filled with the breath of modernity.

Among the Luxemburg paintings the portraits were perhaps the best and most attractive feature. In the Netherlands Exhibition, on the other hand, portraits are conspicuous by their scarcity. On the whole, the Dutch paintings are more pleasing to the eye – at least to the eye of an amateur. The colors are brighter, the subjects are more joyous, and nature is more affectionately delineated. Take for instance the fresh bright faces in *The Looking Glass* and *The Springtime of Life* by Professor Nicolaas van der Waay; Tjerk Bottema's distinctly modern pictures. *Loading Hay*, *The Drinker* and *Harvest Time*; Eugene Lucker's *Blooming Apple Tree* with its fresh pure color; A. M. Luyt's *Peasant Festival*, Zeeland; van der Maarel's lively treatment of children playing *On the Beach*; Antoon Mauve's *Returning Home*, *Sheep Shearing* and *A Warm Day*; Fritz Mondrian's *The Golden Autumn*, a rich warm canvas; *The Land of Tulips* by Willem E. Roelofs Jr.; C. Vreedenburgh's *Unloading Peat on the Edge of a Canal* and *In the Meadow* revealing "a blythe nature in love with clear skies and sunlit fields"; Mme. Vreedenburgh's *Slum in the City of Hattem*; and all of van Ingen's works.

Notable contributions to Dutch genre painting in this collection are: *Domestic Cares* by J. S. H. Keever; *Feeding the Chickens* by Anna E. Kerling; *Faggot Gathering* by J. Kleintjes; *Interior of a Dutch Home* by Betsy Repelius; *Before the Open Door* and *Cleaning Vegetables* by Jacob Snoeck; *Preparing Fodder* and *longshoremen Navuing* by Jacob Zon; and *Waiting* by Frans Oerder.

Conspicuous among the paintings of the Luxemburg Exhibition were the war pictures. But Holland is still neutral except for a single picture, *Caring for the Wounded*, by Piet M. van Walchren. However the Dutch collection is rich in a field of which the French exhibit was practically barren. The Luxemburg paintings gave a very slight picture of France itself; whereas the Netherlands Exhibition takes one right to the land of William the Silent and Grotius. The following partial list will serve to illustrate this point: *The Old Cottage* and *Road on the Heath* by Miss C. F. Balwe; *Dutch Landscape* by Bernardus Antonie van Beek; *On the Banks of a Dutch Lake* by Ludolph Berkemeyer; *In the Garden of the Castle* and *The Edge of the Forest* by Gerard J. de Boer; *Volendam* and *Volendam Fisherman* by Joan Collette; *Amsterdam* by A. Le Comte; *In the Kempen Country* by G. de Groot; *Sheep on the Dunes* by Willem Hamel; van Ingen's two *Dutch Landscapes* previously mentioned; *Spring Morning on the Dunes* by Jan Jans; *Repairing Fishing Nets in Katwyk* and *Girl from Ierseke, Zeeland* by Miss M. Robert Janssen; *Dordrecht* and *Siotis Hill, Nymegen* by Eugene Lucker; *Mill at Nigtevecht* by P. P. Schiedges; *Country Road in Overysse* by Johan Vlaanderen; *Village of Blokzyl* and *Village of Nieuwkoop* by C. Vreedenburg; *Ancient Part of the Hague City* and *Moonlight in Dordrecht* by Cornelis Anthony van Waning; and *The Mill* by Jan van Vuuren. Certainly the American descendants of one-legged Peter Stuyvesant and old "Diedrich Knickerbocker" can rejoice that the traditions of Rembrandt, Rubens and van Dyke are not yet forgotten in the land of their forebears.

Of a little canvas so captivating that we wanted to take it home with us, Mr. Laurvik remarks:

The ebb and flow, the actions and reactions that keep the tide of art ever moving, is exemplified in Willem van den Berg's *Boy with Bowl of Fruit*, a strongly designed, vigorously painted, rich yet subdued color ensemble, which, in its pattern no less than in its color, so strongly recalls Vermeer of Delft as to appear to derive therefrom. We note a similar love of citron yellow and a somewhat similar appreciation of the essential value of the background, in this instance, as so often in Vermeer, a grayish wall that at once harmonizes the color and accentuates the pattern. Moreover, it has the same curious and tantalizing combination of modernity and old masterish qualities which makes Vermeer a contemporary of Degas and Corot whilst he remains essentially of his own time.

... So much real ability combined with such profound admiration for what is vital in tradition as is shown here should go far toward accomplishing the high aims revealed in this striking little canvas.

This artist also has a larger canvas, entitled *Persian Blue*, in which a boy stands in front of a large vase of that color. The same criticism as to the excellence of his color ensemble applies equally well to this study; in fact, you know at once that this is a van den Berg canvas.

J. van Essen, born in Amsterdam in 1854, is universally recognized as the greatest modern Dutch painter of animals. An excellent specimen of his work is the *Pelicans* of this collection. He has the great merit of being almost photographic in his realism, without being in any way inartistic. Other interesting animal studies, besides this one and those of van Ingen's already referred to, are: *Cart Horses at the Riverside* by C. J. van Overbeek; *The Beast of Prey* by C. J. Mension; *Geese near the Lake* by C. Koppennol; *Dutch Plowing Oxen* by H. J. van der Weele; *Plowing* by Jacques Geerlings;

and *Sheepfold* by Carel L. Dake, Jr. Mr. Laurvik's comments on the work of "that brilliant young virtuoso of the brush, David Bautz," are particularly apt. He says:

We see that contemporary Dutch art has not strayed so very far from its time-honored traditions. In conception and treatment his *Dead Birds* recalls the vigorous opulence of old Dutch still-life painters with something more of breadth and verve in the handling.

Interesting Dutch character-studies, besides those already mentioned, are: Hobbe Smith's *Fisherman Knitting Nets*; H. M. Krabbe's charming *Little Sis*; Anna E. Kerling's *Diligent Old Woman*; Professor Johannes Christian Addicks' *Mother and Child*; Jacob Dooyewaard's *Meditation*; Miss Bertha Gori's *Old Woman*; J. F. Sterre de Jong's *Waiting for Breakfast*; Professor Nicolaas van der Waay's *Dutch Orphanhouse Girl*; and Otto van Tussenbroek's *The Volendam Sailor*.

It is to be regretted that the lately deceased Israels, Holland's greatest modern painter, is only represented by one small engraving and no paintings at all. *The Dance*, by P. C. de Moor, in its freedom of movement is somewhat suggestive of Louis Loeb's *Temple of the Winds*, though less imaginative. Professor Carel L. Dake's *The Three Holy Kings* is most romantic and striking, and his son's *Chinese Gate, Honkong* is also exceedingly picturesque. Among the many fine canvases of winter scenes may be mentioned those by Martimus Kramer, F. A. Mooy, Pieter Adrianus Schipperus, David Schulman, Louis van Soest, Antoon Mauve and his son A. R. Mauve. Though the winter scenes predominate, there are also some excellent pictures of the harvest season, a few of spring, and one or two of summer.

As for the display of etchings, lithographs and graphic art in general, it might well constitute an exhibition by itself. Unfortunately, it being exhibited by itself in a side gallery, we did not discover these treasures until our visit was drawing to a close; therefore we shall not be able to comment upon them individually, except a few which specially appealed to our fancy. All of Dirk Harting's finely etched plates delighted us, particularly *Amsterdam Lock*, *Steeple Amersfoort*, *Amersfoort I* and *Amersfoort Canal V*. In praise of his workmanship Mr. Laurvik says:

In these impeccably drawn and beautifully bitten plates, in which every tone attains its true value, one is face to face with the underlying spirit not alone in Dutch art but in its life – the prodigious power of taking pains which indeed is akin to genius, if not of the very essence of it, as Carlyle observed. These plates hold and thrill one by the sheer virtue of their craftsmanship, by their amazing grasp of detail which shirks no difficulties, that gives everything its due with a meticulous care that nevertheless avoids being a mere dry assemblage of facts. To be sure, they lack the casual impressionistic quality one is accustomed to associate with etching, and have, on the whole, more the character of steel engravings. . . . His plates are always, however, distinguished by an interesting point of view and by a pictorial sense of light and shade that denotes the real artist interested in the picturesque aspect of his subject.

Harting's work is strikingly individualistic; although hung in different parts of the gallery, nevertheless we always knew one of his etchings the moment it attracted our attention.

The etchings that pleased us most, next to Harting's, were the oriental studies by M. A.J. Bauer, most of all his *Street in Constantinople*. To quote again our entertaining critic and guide:

M. A. J. Bauer stands today as one of the leading exponents of pure etching, of a free, impressionistic style that carries forward the traditions bequeathed by Rembrandt. He may be said to be the first really great etcher that has appeared in Holland since the master of Leyden established his supremacy in this art

Lack of space, as well as of notes referring to the specific titles of many other excellent plates, prohibits our commenting upon them; but we cannot close this appreciation of the Netherlands Art Exhibition without referring to the following: G. C. Haverkamp's well-drawn figures and carefully executed plates; the studied plates by Albert Hemelman; M. van der Valk's finely bitten plates; the striking contrast of light and shade in Jan Poortenaar's versatile studies; the finished draughtsmanship of a single lithograph by Th. van Hoytema; also the choice plates by Josef Israels, Matthew Maris and Tjeerd Bottema.