

= Jacob van Ruisdael =

Jacob Isaackszoon van Ruisdael ( Dutch pronunciation : [ ʔjaʔkʔp fʔn ʔrʔyzdaʔl ] ; c . 1629 ? 10 March 1682 ) was a Dutch painter , draughtsman , and etcher . He is generally considered the pre @-@ eminent landscape painter of the Dutch Golden Age , a period of great wealth and cultural achievement when Dutch painting became highly popular .

Prolific and versatile , Ruisdael depicted a wide variety of landscape subjects . From 1646 he painted Dutch countryside scenes of remarkable quality for a young man . After a trip to Germany in 1650 , his landscapes took on a more heroic character . In his late work , conducted when he lived and worked in Amsterdam , he added city panoramas and seascapes to his regular repertoire . In these , the sky often took up two @-@ thirds of the canvas . In total he produced more than 150 Scandinavian views featuring waterfalls .

Ruisdael 's only registered pupil was Meindert Hobbema , one of several artists who painted figures in his landscapes . Hobbema 's work has at times been confused with Ruisdael 's . There is difficulty in attributing Ruisdael 's work , which has not been helped by the fact that three members of his family were also landscape painters , some of whom spelled their name " Ruysdael " : his father Isaack van Ruisdael , his well @-@ known uncle Salomon van Ruysdael , and his cousin , confusingly called Jacob van Ruysdael .

Ruisdael 's work was in demand in the Dutch Republic during his lifetime . Today it is spread across private and institutional collections around the world ; the National Gallery in London , the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam , and the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg hold the largest collections . Ruisdael shaped landscape painting traditions worldwide , from the English Romantics to the Barbizon school in France , and the Hudson River School in the US , and influenced generations of Dutch landscape artists .

= = Life = =

Jacob Isaackszoon van Ruisdael was born in Haarlem in 1628 or 1629 into a family of painters , all landscapists . The number of painters in the family , and the multiple spellings of the Ruisdael name , have hampered attempts to document his life and attribute his works .

The name Ruisdael is connected to a castle , now lost , in the village of Blaricum . The village was the home of Jacob 's grandfather , the furniture maker Jacob de Goyer . When De Goyer moved away to Naarden , three of his sons changed their name to Ruysdael or Ruisdael , probably to indicate their origin . Two of De Goyer 's sons became painters : Jacob 's father Isaack van Ruisdael and his well @-@ known uncle Salomon van Ruysdael . Jacob himself always spelled his name with an " i " , while his cousin , Salomon 's son Jacob Salomonszoon van Ruysdael , also a landscape artist , spelled his name with a " y " . Jacob 's earliest biographer , Arnold Houbraken , called him Jakob Ruisdaal , and claimed the name resulted from his specialty in waterfalls , namely the " ruis " ( rustling noise of water ) falling into a " daal " ( dale ) where it foams out into a pond or wider river .

It is not known whether Ruisdael 's mother was Isaack van Ruisdael 's first wife , whose name is unknown , or his second wife , Maycken Cornelisdochter . Isaack and Maycken married on 12 November 1628 .

Ruisdael 's teacher is also unknown . It is often assumed Ruisdael studied with his father and uncle , but there is no archival evidence for this . He appears to have been strongly influenced by other contemporary local Haarlem landscapists , most notably Cornelis Vroom and Allaert van Everdingen .

The earliest date that appears on Ruisdael 's paintings and etchings is 1646 . Two years after this date he was admitted to membership of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke . By this time landscape paintings were as popular as history paintings in Dutch households , though at the time of Ruisdael 's birth , history paintings appeared far more frequently . This growth in popularity of landscapes continued throughout Ruisdael 's career .

Around 1657 , Ruisdael moved to Amsterdam , by then a prosperous city which was likely to have offered a bigger market for his work . His fellow Haarlem painter Allaert van Everdingen had already

moved to Amsterdam and found a market there . Ruisdael lived and worked in Amsterdam for the rest of his life . In 1668 , his name appears as a witness to the marriage of Meindert Hobbema , his only registered pupil , a painter whose works have been confused with Ruisdael 's own .

For a landscape artist , it seems Ruisdael travelled relatively little : to Blaricum , Egmond aan Zee , and Rhenen in the 1640s , with Nicolaes Berchem to Bentheim and Steinfurt just across the border in Germany in 1650 , and possibly with Hobbema across the German border again in 1661 , via the Veluwe , Deventer and Ootmarsum . Despite Ruisdael 's numerous Norwegian landscapes , there is no record of him having travelled to Scandinavia .

There is some speculation that Ruisdael was also a doctor . In 1718 , his biographer Houbraken reports that he studied medicine and performed surgery in Amsterdam . Archival records of the 17th century show the name " Jacobus Ruijsdael " on a list of Amsterdam doctors , albeit crossed out , with the added remark that he earned his medical degree on 15 October 1676 in Caen , northern France . Various art historians have speculated that this was a case of mistaken identity . Pieter Scheltema suggests it was Ruisdael 's cousin who appeared on the record . The Ruisdael expert Seymour Slive argues that the spelling " uij " is not consistent with Ruisdael 's own spelling of his name , that his unusually high production suggests there was little time to study medicine , and that there is no indication in any of his art that he visited northern France . However , Slive is willing to accept that Ruisdael may still have been a doctor . In 2013 , Jan Paul Hinrichs agreed that the evidence is inconclusive .

Ruisdael was not Jewish . Slive reports that , because of Ruisdael 's depiction of a Jewish cemetery and various biblical names in the Ruisdael family , he often heard speculation that Ruisdael must surely be Jewish . The evidence shows otherwise . Ruisdael requested that he be baptised at the Calvinist Reformed Church in Amsterdam , and he was buried in the Saint Bavo 's Church , Haarlem , a Protestant church at that time . His uncle Salomon van Ruysdael belonged to the Young Flemish subgroup of the Mennonite congregation , one of several types of Anabaptists in Haarlem , and it is probable that Ruisdael 's father was also a member there . His cousin Jacob was a registered Mennonite in Amsterdam .

Ruisdael did not marry . According to Houbraken this was " to reserve time to serve his old father " . It is not known what Ruisdael looked like , as no known portrait or self @-@ portrait of him exists .

The art historian Hendrik Frederik Wijnman disproved the myth that Ruisdael died a poor man , supposedly in the old men 's almshouse in Haarlem . Wijnman showed that the person who died there was in fact Ruisdael 's cousin , Jacob Salomonszoon . Although there is no record of Ruisdael owning land or shares , he appears to have lived comfortably , even after the economic downturn of the disaster year 1672 . His paintings were valued fairly highly . In a large sample of inventories between 1650 and 1679 the average price for a Ruisdael was 40 guilders , compared to an average of 19 guilders for all attributed paintings . In a ranking of contemporary Dutch painters based on price @-@ weighted frequency in these inventories , Ruisdael ranks seventh ; Rembrandt ranks first .

Ruisdael died in Amsterdam on 10 March 1682 . He was buried 14 March 1682 in Saint Bavo 's Church , Haarlem .

= = Work = =

= = = Early years = = =

Ruisdael 's work from c . 1646 to the early 1650s , when he was living in Haarlem , is characterised by simple motifs and careful and laborious study of nature : dunes , woods , and atmospheric effects . By applying heavier paint than his predecessors , Ruisdael gave his foliage a rich quality , conveying a sense of sap flowing through branches and leaves . His accurate rendering of trees was unprecedented at the time : the genera of his trees are the first to be unequivocally recognisable by modern @-@ day botanists . His early sketches introduce motifs that would return in all his work : a sense of spaciousness and luminosity , and an airy atmosphere achieved through

pointillist @-@ like touches of chalk . Most of his thirty black chalk sketches that survive date from this period .

An exemplar of Ruisdael 's early style is Dune Landscape , one of the earliest works , dated 1646 . It breaks with the classic Dutch tradition of depicting broad views of dunes that include houses and trees flanked by distant vistas . Instead , Ruisdael places tree @-@ covered dunes prominently at centre stage , with a cloudscape concentrating strong light on a sandy path . The resulting heroic effect is enhanced by the large size of the canvas , " so unexpected in the work of an inexperienced painter " according to Irina Sokolova , curator at the Hermitage Museum . The art historian Hofstede de Groot said of Dune Landscape : " It is hardly credible that it should be the work of a boy of seventeen " .

Ruisdael 's first panoramic landscape , View of Naarden with the Church at Muiderberg in the Distance , dates from 1647 . The theme of an overwhelming sky and a distant town , in this case the birthplace of his father , is one he returned to in his later years .

For unknown reasons , Ruisdael almost entirely stopped dating his work from 1653 . Only five works from the 1660s have a , partially obscured , year next to his signature ; none from the 1670s and 1680s have a date . Dating subsequent work has therefore been largely based on detective work and speculation .

All thirteen known Ruisdael etchings come from his early period , with the first one dated 1646 . It is unknown who taught him the art of etching . No etchings exist signed by his father , his uncle , or his fellow Haarlem landscapist Cornelis Vroom , who influenced his other work . His etchings show little influence from Rembrandt , either in style or technique . Few original impressions exist ; five etchings survive in only a single impression . The rarity of prints suggests that Ruisdael considered them trial essays , which did not warrant large editions . The etching expert Georges Duplessis singled out Grainfield at the Edge of a Wood and The Travellers as unrivalled illustrations of Ruisdael 's genius .

= = = Middle period = = =

Following Ruisdael 's trip to Germany , his landscapes took on a more heroic character , with forms becoming larger and more prominent . A view of Bentheim Castle , dated 1653 , is just one of a dozen of Ruisdael 's depictions of a particular castle in Germany , almost all of which pronounce its position on a hilltop . Significantly , Ruisdael made numerous changes to the castle 's setting ( it is actually on an unimposing low hill ) culminating in a 1653 version which shows it on a wooded mountain . These variations are considered by art historians to be evidence of Ruisdael 's compositional skills .

On his trip to Germany , Ruisdael encountered water mills which he turned into a principal subject for painting , the first artist to ever do so . Two Water Mills with an Open Sluice , dated 1653 , is a prime example . The ruins of Egmont Castle near Alkmaar were another favourite subject of Ruisdael 's and feature in The Jewish Cemetery , of which he painted two versions . With these , Ruisdael pits the natural world against the built environment , which has been overrun by the trees and shrubs surrounding the cemetery .

Ruisdael 's first Scandinavian views contain big firs , rugged mountains , large boulders and rushing torrents . Though convincingly realistic , they are based on previous art works , rather than on direct experience . There is no record that Ruisdael made any trip to Scandinavia , although fellow Haarlem painter van Everdingen had travelled there in 1644 and had popularised the subgenre . Ruisdael 's work soon outstripped van Everdingen 's finest efforts . In total Ruisdael produced more than 150 Scandinavian views featuring waterfalls , of which Waterfall in a Mountainous Landscape with a Ruined Castle , c . 1665 ? 1670 , is seen as his greatest by Slive .

In this period Ruisdael started painting coastal scenes and sea @-@ pieces , influenced by Simon de Vlieger and Jan Porcellis . Among the most dramatic is Rough Sea at a Jetty , with a restricted palette of only black , white , blue and a few brown earth colours . However , forest scenes remain a subject of choice , such as the Hermitage 's most famous Ruisdael , A Wooded Marsh , dated c . 1665 , which depicts a primeval scene with broken birches and oaks , and branches reaching for the

sky amidst an overgrown pond .

= = = Later years = = =

During Ruisdael 's last period he began to depict mountain scenes , such as Mountainous and Wooded Landscape with a River , dateable to the late 1670s . This portrays a rugged range with the highest peak in the clouds . Ruisdael 's subjects became unusually varied . The art historian Wolfgang Stechow identified thirteen themes within the Dutch Golden Age landscape genre , and Ruisdael 's work encompasses all but two of them , excelling at most : forests , rivers , dunes and country roads , panoramas , imaginary landscapes , Scandinavian waterfalls , marines , beachscapes , winter scenes , town views , and nocturnes . Only the Italianate and foreign landscapes other than Scandinavian are absent from his oeuvre .

Slive finds it appropriate that a windmill is the subject of one of Ruisdael 's most famous works . Windmill at Wijk bij Duurstede , dated 1670 , shows Wijk bij Duurstede , a riverside town about 20 kilometres ( 12 mi ) from Utrecht , with a dominant cylindrical windmill . In this composition , Ruisdael united typical Dutch elements of low @-@ lying land , water and expansive sky , so that they converge on the equally characteristic Dutch windmill . The painting 's enduring popularity is evidenced by card sales in the Rijksmuseum , with the Windmill ranking third after Rembrandt 's Night Watch and Vermeer 's View of Delft . Windmills featured throughout Ruisdael 's entire career .

Various panoramic views of the Haarlem skyline and its bleaching grounds appear during this stage , a specific genre called Haerlempjes , with the clouds creating various gradations of alternating bands of light and shadow towards the horizon . The paintings are often dominated by Saint Bavo 's Church , in which Ruisdael would one day be buried .

While Amsterdam does feature in his work , it does so relatively rarely given that Ruisdael lived there for over 25 years . It does feature in his only known architectural subject , a drawing of the interior of the Old Church , as well as in views of the Dam , and the Panoramic view of the Amstel looking toward Amsterdam , one of Ruisdael 's last paintings .

Figures are introduced sparingly into Ruisdael 's compositions , and are by this period rarely from his own hand but executed by various artists , including his pupil Meindert Hobbema , Nicolaes Berchem , Adriaen van de Velde , Philips Wouwerman , Jan Vonck , Thomas de Keyser , Gerard van Battum and Jan Lingelbach .

= = = Attributions = = =

In his 2001 catalogue raisonné , Slive attributes 694 paintings to Ruisdael and lists another 163 paintings with dubious or , he believes , incorrect attribution . There are three main reasons why there is uncertainty over whose hand painted various Ruisdael @-@ style landscapes . Firstly , four members of the Ruysdael family were landscapists with similar signatures , some of which were later fraudulently altered into Jacob 's . This is further complicated by the fact that Ruisdael used variations of his signature . This typically reads " JvRuisdael " or the monogram " JVR " , sometimes using a small italic ' s ' and sometimes a Gothic long ' s ' , such as on Landscape with Waterfall . Secondly , many 17th century landscape paintings are unsigned and could be from pupils or copyists . Finally , fraudsters imitated Ruisdaels for financial gain , with the earliest case reported by Houbraken in 1718 : a certain Jan Griffier the Elder could imitate Ruisdael 's style so well that he often sold them for real Ruisdaels , especially with figurines added in the style of the artist Wouwerman . There is no large @-@ scale systematic approach to ascertaining Ruisdael 's attributions , unlike the forensic science used to find the correct attributions of Rembrandt 's paintings through the Rembrandt Research Project .

= = = Legacy = = =

Ruisdael has shaped landscape painting traditions from the English Romantics to the Barbizon school in France , and the Hudson River School in the US , as well as generations of Dutch

landscape artists . Among the English artists influenced by Ruisdael are Thomas Gainsborough , J. M. W. Turner , and John Constable . Gainsborough drew , in black chalk and grey wash , a replica of a Ruisdael in the 1740s ? now both paintings are housed in the Louvre in Paris . Turner made many copies of Ruisdaels and even painted fantasy views of a nonexistent port he called Port Ruysdael . Constable also copied various drawings , etchings and paintings by Ruisdael , and was a great admirer from a young age . " It haunts my mind and clings to my heart " , he wrote after seeing a Ruisdael . However , he thought Jewish Cemetery was a failure , because he considered that it attempted to convey something outside the reach of art .

In the 19th century , Vincent van Gogh acknowledged Ruisdael as a major influence , calling him sublime , but at the same time saying it would be a mistake to try to copy him . Van Gogh had two Ruisdael prints , The Bush and a Haerlempje , on his wall , and thought the Ruisdaels in the Louvre were " magnificent , especially The Bush , The Breakwater and The Ray of Light " . His experience of the French countryside was informed by his memory of Ruisdael 's art . Van Gogh 's contemporary Claude Monet is also said to be indebted to Ruisdael . Even Piet Mondriaan 's minimalism has been traced back to Ruisdael 's panoramas .

Among art historians and critics , Ruisdael 's reputation has had its ups and downs over the centuries . The first account , in 1718 , is from Houbraken , who waxed lyrical over the technical mastery which allowed Ruisdael to realistically depict water in waterfalls and the sea . In 1781 , Sir Joshua Reynolds , founder of the Royal Academy , admired the freshness and force of Ruisdael 's landscapes . A couple of decades later other English critics were less impressed . In 1801 , Henry Fuseli , professor at the Royal Academy , expressed his contempt for the entire Dutch School of Landscape , dismissing it as no more than a " transcript of the spot " , a mere " enumeration of hill and dale , clumps of trees " . Of note is that one of Fuseli's students was Constable , whose admiration for Ruisdael remained unchanged . Around the same time in Germany , the writer , statesman and scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe lauded Ruisdael as a thinking artist , even a poet , saying " he demonstrates remarkable skill in locating the exact point at which the creative faculty comes into contact with a lucid mind " . John Ruskin however , in 1860 , raged against Ruisdael and other Dutch Golden Age landscapists , calling their landscapes places where " we lose not only all faith in religion but all remembrance of it " . In 1915 , the Dutch art historian Abraham Bredius called his compatriot not so much a painter as a poet .

More recent art historians have rated Ruisdael highly . Kenneth Clark described him as " the greatest master of the natural vision before Constable " . Waldemar Januszczak finds him a marvellous storyteller . Januszczak does not consider Ruisdael the greatest landscape artist of all time , but is especially impressed by his works as a teenager : " a prodigy whom we should rank at number 8 or 9 on the Mozart scale " . Slive states Ruisdael is acknowledged " by general consent , as the pre-@-@ eminent landscapist of the Golden Age of Dutch art " .

Ruisdael is now seen as the leading artist of the " classical " phase in Dutch landscape art , which built upon the realism of the previous " tonal " phase . The tonal phase suggested atmosphere through the use of tonality , while the classical phase strived for a more grandiose effect , with paintings built up through a series of vigorous contrasts of solid form against the sky , and of light against shade , with a tree , animal , or windmill often singled out .

Although many of Ruisdael 's works were on show in the Art Treasures Exhibition , Manchester 1857 , and various other grand exhibitions across the world since , it was not until 1981 that an exhibition was solely dedicated to Ruisdael . Over fifty paintings and thirty @-@ five drawings and etchings were exhibited , first at the Mauritshuis in The Hague , then , in 1982 , at the Fogg Museum in Cambridge , Massachusetts . In 2006 , the Royal Academy in London hosted a Ruisdael Master of Landscape exhibition , displaying works from over fifty collections .

= = = Interpretation = = =

There are no 17th century documents to indicate , either at first or second hand , what Ruisdael intended to convey through his art . While The Jewish Cemetery is universally accepted as an allegory for the fragility of life , how other works should be interpreted is much disputed . At one end

of the spectrum is Henry Fuseli , who contends they have no meaning at all , and are simply a depiction of nature . At the other end is Franz Theodor Kugler who sees meaning in almost everything : " They all display the silent power of Nature , who opposes with her mighty hand the petty activity of man , and with a solemn warning as it were , repels his encroachments " .

In the middle of the spectrum are scholars such as E. John Walford , who sees the works as " not so much bearers of narrative or emblematic meanings but rather as images reflecting the fact that the visible world was essentially perceived as manifesting inherent spiritual significance " . Walford advocates abandoning the notion of " disguised symbolism " . All of Ruisdael 's work can be interpreted according to the religious world view of his time : nature serves as the " first book " of God , both because of its inherent divine qualities and because of God 's obvious concern for man and the world . The intention is spiritual , not moral .

Andrew Graham @-@ Dixon asserts all Dutch Golden Age landscapists could not help but search everywhere for meaning . He says of the windmill in The Windmill at Wijk bij Duurstede that it symbolises " the sheer hard work needed to keep Holland above water and to safeguard the future of the nation 's children " . The symmetries in the landscapes are " reminders to fellow citizens always to remain on the straight and narrow " . Slive is more reluctant to read too much into the work , but does put The Windmill in its contemporary religious context of man 's dependence on the " spirit of the Lord for life " . With regards to interpreting Ruisdael 's Scandinavian paintings , he says " My own view is that it strains credulity to the breaking point to propose that he himself conceived of all his depictions of waterfalls , torrents and rushing streams and dead trees as visual sermons on the themes of transience and vanitas " .

= = = Collections = = =

Ruisdaels are scattered across collections globally , both private and institutional . The most notable collections are at the National Gallery in London , which holds twenty paintings ; the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam , which holds sixteen paintings ; and the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg , which holds nine . In the US , the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has five Ruisdaels in its collection , and the J. Paul Getty Museum in California has three .

On occasion a Ruisdael changes hands . In 2014 , Dunes by the Sea was auctioned at Christie 's in New York , and realised a price of \$ 1 @,@ 805 @,@ 000 . Of his surviving drawings , 140 in total , the Rijksmuseum , the Teylers Museum in Haarlem , Dresden 's Kupferstich @-@ Kabinett , and the Hermitage each hold significant collections . Ruisdael 's rare etchings are spread across institutions . No collection holds a print of each of the thirteen etchings . Of the five unique prints , the British Museum holds two , two are in the Albertina in Vienna , and one is in Amsterdam .

= = Context = =

Ruisdael and his art should not be considered apart from the context of the incredible wealth and significant changes to the land that occurred during the Dutch Golden Age . In his study on 17th @-@ century Dutch art and culture , Simon Schama remarks that " it can never be overemphasized that the period between 1550 and 1650 , when the political identity of an independent Netherlands nation was being established , was also a time of dramatic physical alteration of its landscape " . Ruisdael 's depiction of nature and emergent Dutch technology are wrapped up in this . Christopher Joby places Ruisdael in the religious context of the Calvinism of the Dutch Republic . He states that landscape painting does conform to Calvin 's requirement that only what is visible may be depicted in art , and that landscape paintings such as those of Ruisdael have an epistemological value which provides further support for their use within Reformed Churches .

The art historian Yuri Kuznetsov places Ruisdael 's art in the context of the war of independence against Spain . Dutch landscape painters " were called upon to make a portrait of their homeland , twice rewon by the Dutch people ? first from the sea and later from foreign invaders " . Jonathan Israel , in his study of the Dutch Republic , calls the period between 1647 and 1672 the third phase of Dutch Golden Age art , in which wealthy merchants wanted large , opulent and refined paintings ,

and civic leaders filled their town halls with grand displays containing republican messages .

As well , ordinary middle class Dutch people began buying art for the first time , creating a high demand for paintings of all kinds . This demand was met by enormous painter guilds . Master painters set up studios to produce large numbers of paintings quickly . Under the master 's direction , studio members would specialise in parts of a painting , such as figures in landscapes , or costumes in portraits and history paintings . Masters would sometimes add a few touches to authenticate a work mostly done by pupils , to maximise both speed and price . Numerous art dealers organised commissions on behalf of patrons , as well as buying uncommissioned stock to sell on . Landscape artists did not depend on commissions in the way most painters had to do , and could therefore paint for stock . In Ruisdael 's case , it is not known whether he kept stock to sell directly to customers , or sold his work through dealers , or both . Art historians only know of one commission , a work for the wealthy Amsterdam burgomaster Cornelis de Graeff , jointly painted with Thomas de Keyser .