

## = The Wedding Dance =

The Wedding Dance ( sometimes known as The Dance Village ) is a 1566 oil @-@ on @-@ panel painting by the Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder . Owned by the museum of the Detroit Institute of Arts in Detroit , Michigan , the work was discovered by its director in England in 1930 , and brought to Detroit . It is believed to be one of a set of three Bruegel works from around the same time , The Wedding Dance , The Peasant Wedding ( 1567 ) and The Peasant Dance ( 1569 ) .

The painting depicts 125 wedding guests . As was customary in the Renaissance period , the brides wore black and men wore codpieces . Voyeurism is depicted throughout the entire art work ; dancing was tabooed at the time by the authorities and the church , and the painting can be seen as both a critique and comic depiction of a stereotypical oversexed , overindulgent , peasant class of the times .

## = Background =

Pieter Bruegel the Elder completed The Wedding Dance in 1566 . It is believed to have been lost for many years , until discovered at a sale in London in 1930 by William R. Valentiner , the director of the Museum Detroit Institute of Arts at the time . Valentiner paid \$ 35 @,@ 075 for The Wedding Dance through a city appropriation . It is still owned by the museum .

The Peasant Wedding ( 1567 ) and The Peasant Dance ( 1569 ) are also by Bruegel which share the same wedding theme and elements and were painted in the same period in Bruegel 's later years . They are considered to be a trilogy of works by Bruegel . In all three of the paintings , there are pipers playing the pijpzak ( bagpipes ) , they also exude pride and vanity , for example in The Peasant Dance the man seated next to the pijpzak player is wearing a peacock feather in his hat .

Robert L. Bonn , an author , described these trilogy of works as " superb examples " of anthropological paintings , and states that " in three genre paintings Bruegel stands in marked contrast both to painters of his day and many others who followed . " Thomas Craven summarises The Wedding Dance as " One of several celebrations of the joys of gluttony painted by Brueghel with bursting vitality " . Walter S. Gibson , an art historian , also views the paintings as a " sermon condemning gluttony " and " an allegory of the Church abandoned by Christ . "

## = Description and themes =

The popular painting shows a group of 125 wedding guests wearing clothing from the times , presented in the canvas in an apparently chaotic way in an outdoor party surrounded by trees . The brides wore black as it was the Renaissance period and the men wore codpieces , which were an important part of their clothing at the time . Voyeurism ( spying on people engaged in intimate behaviours ) is shown throughout the entire work amongst almost all of the people .

Each guest 's positioning in the painting has its own meaning . In the foreground there is a dancer wearing the colours of that time period and there are many peasants in that area . In the middle there is the bride dancing with an older man , her father . On the right of the work , there is a musician playing on a pijpzak , who is watching the dance from the side . Judging by the writing utensils hanging on his belt , he is a writer or possibly a middle @-@ class painter . Behind him is a hanging tablecloth decorated with a crown and beneath it is the bride 's table . Before her table , money collectors can be seen digging trenches while the wedding guests sit down and eat .

The movements of the people show that their behaviour is inappropriate or a caricature of rustic buffoonery , but its representation of fertility and reproduction is presented in a joyful manner . Indeed , the painting reflects a degree of ambiguity in that it can both be seen as an attack on the stereotypical oversexed behaviour of the lower orders as well as evoking a comical picture . In the sixteenth century , when this was painted , dance was subject to a strict code and regarded by the authorities and church as a social evil . People could not swing their arms or legs or laugh too loud , as that would be considered a type of rudeness to many people . The painting therefore " expresses

the peasants ' liberation from the stricter limits of upper classes " by failing to adhere to the expected social standards of the times .

The author of *The Theme of Music in Northern Renaissance Banquet Scenes* , Robert Quist , has said that the painting was part of a series of *Seven Deadly Sins and Virtues* and that the paintings " attest to [ Bruegel 's ] moral devotions " . He says " While dancing may appear innocuous or natural for peasants , it poses a palpable threat to the human soul . Its [ dancing ] usefulness in characterizing the peasantry as wild and unruly undoubtedly derives from the moral opprobrium in which dancing was held by religious and civil authorities alike . Ray Brock , on the contrary , has described Bruegel as a " hard @-@ drinking , hard @-@ living Flemish peasant who packed his forty @-@ four years of life bursting with merrymaking and furious painting ? which he regarded as sheer joy " . This indicates that Bruegel , despite having a moral compass and being acutely aware of the expected standards imposed by the church state at the time , was likely to have enjoyed similar festivities in his own life .