

life that were far from flattering. By the 1660s, when he executed this small panel, his images had changed considerably. Instead of raucous behavior within taverns that look more like barns than public structures, the peasants here enjoy their leisure hours with exemplary deportment. Despite the presence of beer, tobacco, playing cards, and a backgammon game, none of these peasants has succumbed to vices so often associated with those who have yielded to sensual pleasures: no one has passed out, vomited, or threatened a fellow cardplayer with a knife or jug. The tavern itself is substantial and well kept: the fireplace is large, the leaded windows and ceiling beams in good order.

As the character of his peasants changed during the course of Ostade's career, so did his style of painting. By the 1660s, his technique became more refined as he sought to develop a more subtle use of light and dark. This evolution in style might have developed in conjunction with his extensive work in etching during the 1640s and 1650s. Many of his etchings of interior scenes, for example, explore the subtle effects of various light sources to establish mood. Certainly the smallness of this painting and the delicacy of his touch bring to mind the scale and character of his etchings.

Since the last digit of the date is illegible it is not certain when during the 1660s this scene was actually painted. The general disposition of the interior, however, is comparable to Ostade's 1661 *Peasants in an Interior* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. C200). Not only are the architectural elements similar, but the peasants are likewise organized in two groups, one situated before the hearth and the other around a table set in the background beneath the leaded-glass windows. It thus seems probable that this work also dates from the early 1660s.

Ostade must have composed his scenes with the aid of individual figure studies, of which many exist.³ Although no such study from the 1660s exactly matches any of the figures in this composition, a watercolor from the 1670s, part of a series by Ostade recording earlier studies, depicts the seated man before the fireplace (fig. 1).⁴

Notes

1. Dendrochronology by John Fletcher, Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, Oxford University, 16 November 1979.

2. The provenance information was provided by John Russell Mason.

3. See Schnackenburg 1981. For a discussion of Ostade's use of drawings, see Peter Schatborn in Washington 1981, 79–80.

4. Schnackenburg 1981, 1: cat. 336 (Ashmolean Mu-



Fig. 1. Adriaen van Ostade, *Seated Peasant*, 1670s, watercolor, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum

seum, Oxford, inv. no. P.I. 170/7). Schnackenburg 1981, 1: 42, makes the point that a characteristic of Ostade's late drawings is that they depict motifs from his earlier work.

References

1985 NGA: 295, repro.

1942.9.48 (644)

The Cottage Dooryard

1673
Oil on canvas, 44 x 39.5 (17 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{5}{8}$)
Widener Collection

Inscriptions

At lower left center: *Av. Ostade 1673* (Av in ligature)

Technical Notes: The support is a moderately coarse-textured fabric, tightly woven in a plain weave. It has been lined with the tacking margins trimmed, but cusping visible in the x-radiograph indicates the dimensions have not been altered. The fabric weave is visible through the thick, smooth white ground.

Paint is applied in thin layers with no appreciable brushmarking or impasto. The vehicular pastes of the figures, architecture, and sky give way to fluid opaque washes in the foreground. Lean granular yellows and transparent green glazes are employed in the foliage. A pentimento is visible in the upper left tree. The condition of the painting is excellent. Abrasion is slight, and losses are confined to the edges and an area of flaking around the foreground figures at right.

In 1975 a double lining was removed and the support relined. An aged surface coating was removed.

Provenance:¹ Adriaen Swalmius [1689–1747], Schiedam; (sale, Rotterdam, 15 May 1747, no. 2); Jacob de Roore [1686–

1747], Antwerp; (sale, The Hague, 4 September 1747, no. 84); Pieter and Jan Bisschop, Rotterdam, 1747–1771; Adrian [1709–1781] and John Hope [1737–1784], Amsterdam and London; John Hope, Amsterdam, The Hague, Heemstede; by inheritance to Henry Hope [1736–1811], London; by inheritance to Henry Philip Hope [1774–1839], London (in possession of Thomas Hope [1769–1831], London); by inheritance to Henry Thomas Hope [1808–1862], London; by inheritance to his widow, née Adèle Bichat [d. 1884], London; by inheritance to Henry Francis Hope Pelham-Clinton-Hope, London, by whom lent 1891–1898 to the South Kensington Museum; (Asher Wertheimer, London, 1898–1899); Peter A. B. Widener, Lynnewood Hall, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania; inheritance from Estate of Peter A. B. Widener by gift through power of appointment of Joseph E. Widener, Elkins Park.

Exhibited: British Institution, London, 1815, no. 142. *Art Treasures of the United Kingdom*, Museum of Ornamental Art, Manchester, 1857, no. 735. *Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters, and by Deceased Masters of the British School*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1881, no. 106. New York 1909, no. 69. *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting*, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1984, no. 93. *Great Dutch Paintings from America*, Mauritshuis, The Hague; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1990–1991, no. 47.

SITUATED within the earthen courtyard of a vine-covered, rustic cottage is a tender vignette of domestic harmony and tranquility. At the center of the family group is the mother, who busily cleans mussel shells in preparation for the evening meal. While the husband watches from the doorway of the wooden wall at the rear of the courtyard, an older sister cares for her youngest sibling as two other children play with the family dog. No comings or goings, no exceptional confrontations or other unusual circumstances provided motivation for this scene; rather, Ostade celebrated here the peaceful existence of this peasant family tending to daily life.

Arnold Houbraken, while writing about Ostade in the early eighteenth century, marveled at the lively and spirited nature of his peasant scenes. To emphasize Ostade's remarkable naturalism, he compared the artist's images of peasant life to those found in an early eighteenth-century poem about a country kermis.² Houbraken's associations between Ostade's images and poetry are, at first glance, surprising, largely because one does not generally associate poetry with depictions of peasant life. Ostade's scenes, moreover, do not appear to be idealized. In this painting, for example, he not only captured the various attitudes of the members of the peasant family, but also the sense of their home environment, whether it be the earthenware pots scattered here and there, the clothes hanging over the line, the dovecotes, the beehives, or the broken panes of glass

in the upper windows. Their world seems real and tangible; the textures of the bricks, mortar, wood, glass, and cloth are convincingly indicated through subtle nuances of his brush. Finally, his organization of light and shadow helps unify the scene while his selected color accents enliven the image.

Ostade almost certainly composed this work from various studies made from life. Although no preliminary drawings have been associated with this work, throughout his career Ostade made drawings of figures that he then used as points of departure for his paintings and etchings.³ Specific evidence that he composed this work in the studio comes from a comparison with a finished drawing from the same year entitled *Pig Slaughtering in Peasant Village* (fig. 1). While many elements in the two compositions are identical, including the wash hanging on the line, Ostade has modified the building and setting in subtle ways: he changed the leading in the windows and opened the vista to the background to create the sense of a village street rather than a courtyard. One motif, however, has remained the same: the vine clinging to the cottage, a traditional image of fertility and conjugal felicity.⁴

Ostade painted *The Cottage Dooryard* near the end of a long and illustrious career that included numerous drawings and etchings of peasant life as well as paintings (see 1977.21.1). As his style evolved from a relatively dark to a light palette, his attention shifted from depictions of rowdy peasants to those whose lives embodied family values centered around mutual caring and sharing of domestic responsibilities. Peasants in his late work no longer occupy hovels, but rather more substantial structures, which are rustic in appearance and simply furnished.

The stylistic evolution, in many ways gradual and quite understandable in the broader context of Dutch art, does, nevertheless, raise questions about the changing nature of Ostade's image of peasant existence. If, following Houbraken's lead, one views Ostade's images of peasants as poetic evocations of rural life that he has "thought up" rather than as descriptive reality,⁵ then it is important to try to understand his attitudes toward his subject matter. The shift in style and concept may be sociological as well as artistic. Whereas during the 1630s and 1640s there seemed to be widespread assumptions that lower-class people were bestial or vulgar, by the 1670s the rural Dutch, unaffected by the influx of foreign influences and the pursuit of wealth that was so evident in city life, came to embody ideal virtues that were at the foundation of Dutch culture. These, in large part, had been codified in the prolific writ-



Adriaen van Ostade, *The Cottage Dooryard*, 1673. 9.48

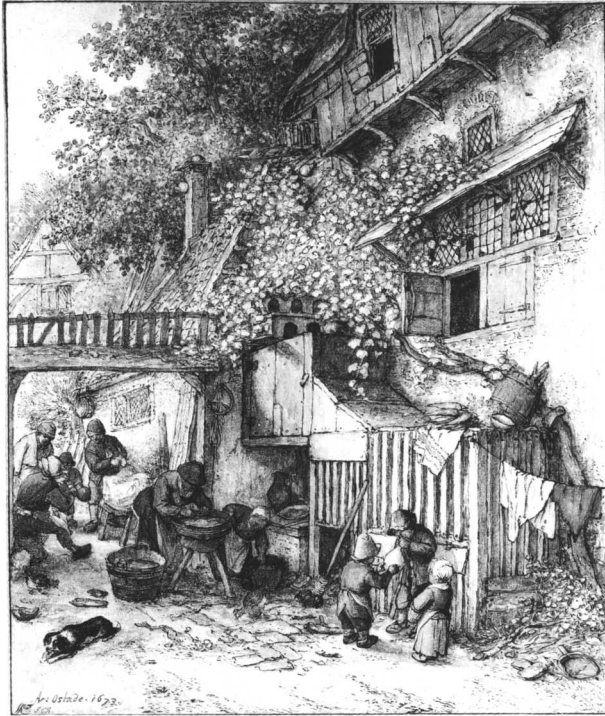


Fig. 1. Adriaen van Ostade, *Pig Slaughtering in Peasant Village*, 1673, pen and ink and watercolor, London, British Museum

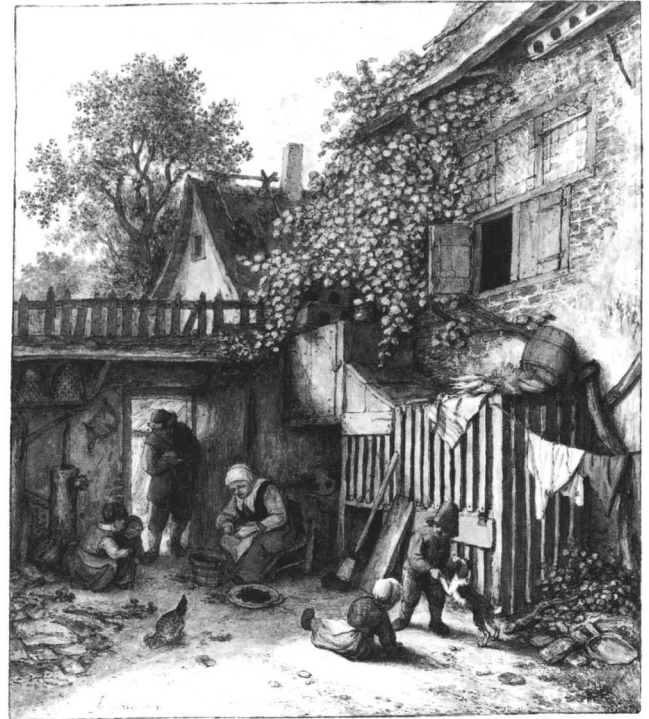


Fig. 2. Adriaen van Ostade, *The Cottage Dooryard*, 1673, watercolor, Amsterdams Historisch Museum, Museum Fodor, Legacy Collection

ings of Jacob Cats, whose work was frequently republished throughout the century, and would continue to be so until the mid-nineteenth century. The domestic tranquility and homey virtues found in Ostade's depictions of lower-class households during the latter part of his career thus represent a view of peasant existence seen through a veil of nostalgia for a simpler, less complex way of life, one that incorporated values that had been at the essence of Dutch society. In this regard, it is interesting that Ostade created this idyllic scene of *The Cottage Dooryard* the year after he had fled Haarlem because of the French invasion of the Netherlands.⁶

One also wonders whether the exquisite watercolors (fig. 2) Ostade made after this and other similar late paintings spoke to the same need.⁷ The positive response to these late paintings and their related watercolors was immediate and lasting⁸ and may explain much about the widespread appeal of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch art in the Netherlands at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Notes

1. For a detailed discussion of the provenance of *The Cottage Dooryard* see The Hague 1990, 355–359.

2. Houbraken 1753, 1: 348. The poem by L. Rotgans, *Boerekermis* [Country Fair], was published in 1708. The identification of the poem was made by Broos in The Hague 1990, 359.

3. The drawings have been catalogued by Schnackenburg 1981. For a discussion of Ostade's use of drawings see Peter Schatborn in Washington 1981, 79–80.

4. As Robinson has noted in Philadelphia 1984, 289, note 4, the image was inspired by Psalm 128: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the side of thine house: thy children like olive plants round thy table."

5. Houbraken 1753, 1: 347–348. "Als ook de beeltjes in hunne bekleeding, en allerhande bedryven, zoo natuurlyk boers en geestig, dat het om to verwonderen is; hoe hy 't heeft weten to bedenken."

6. Houbraken 1753, 1: 347. Houbraken writes that Ostade left Haarlem for Amsterdam in 1662, but the explicit mention of the French invasion in his sentence makes it clear that he meant to write 1672.

7. Schnackenburg 1981, 1: 41, 73, note 111a, who lists more than fifty such watercolors from the period between 1672 and 1684, suggests that Ostade's technique was influenced by the watercolors of Hendrick Avercamp (q.v.). Broos in The Hague 1990, 359, has noted that the art dealer with whom Ostade stayed in Amsterdam after he had fled Haarlem, Constantijn Sennepart (1625–1703), who purportedly suggested to Ostade that he make such watercolors, owned drawings by Avercamp.

8. Houbraken 1753, 1: 347.

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1829–1842 Smith, 1 (1829): 158, no. 188.
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1990 The Hague: no. 47.

Isack van Ostade

1621–1649

ISACK VAN OSTADE, the youngest of the eight children of Jan Hendricx van Eyndhoven and Janneke Hendriksdr., was born in Haarlem, and baptized on 2 June 1621. He became a member of the Haarlem painters' guild in 1643 and died in 1649, at the age of twenty-eight.

Ostade's first surviving dated painting is from 1639, a mere ten years before his early death. Although his career was very short, his output was prodigious, and his creativity and originality striking. According to Houbraken, Isack was a pupil of his more famous brother Adriaen van Ostade (q.v.), and his early paintings of low-life interiors and peasant scenes are indeed extremely close in style to the work of his brother.

It was not long, however, before Isack began to develop his own distinctive artistic personality and started to paint larger outdoor peasant and village scenes in which elements of genre scenes are combined with an evocative treatment of their landscape settings. These compositions, which typically show travelers or peasants resting in front of inns or houses, are executed with quite subtle atmospheric and seasonal effects. Isack also excelled at depicting winter scenes.

Bibliography

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1942.9.49 (645)

The Halt at the Inn

1645
Oil on canvas, 50 x 66 (19 x 26)
Widener Collection

Inscriptions

At lower right corner: *Isack van Os.../164* []

Technical Notes: The original support was a horizontally grained wood panel composed of two boards joined horizontally just above the grouped figures. A horizontal check extended from the right edge through several of the figures and the head of the brown horse. Prior to 1837, when the painting was in the sale of the collection of the Duchess de Berry, it was transferred from wood to a fine-weave fabric and lined with the dimensions expanded. The transfer canvas has a small vertical tear in the foreground near the gray horse's tail. In 1982 the lining was removed and the transfer canvas marouflaged to a honeycombed aluminum solid support panel consistent with the original panel dimensions.

The artist incorporated a smooth, off-white ground layer into the light tones of the design. He applied paint in thin layers with minimal impasto. Transparent glazes were laid