

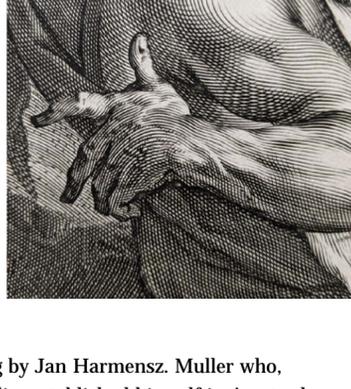
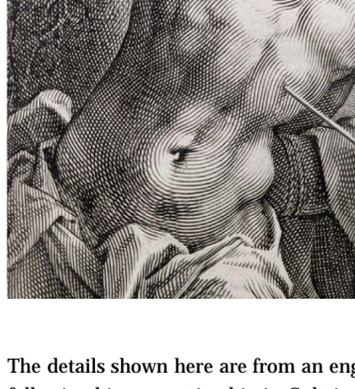
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DEALERS IN FINE ART SINCE 1826

Distraction / Abwechslung

7 May 2021

Our understanding of Dutch Mannerist printmaking is dominated by Hendrick Goltzius and his circle. Goltzius set up his studio in 1582 in Haarlem, a town just twenty miles west of Amsterdam, so close that it is now part of the Amsterdam metropolitan area. The work created in his orbit is therefore often referred to as the Haarlem School of Printmakers. Its principal proponents were Goltzius himself, his stepson Jacob Matham, Jan Pietersz. Saenredam, and Jan Harmensz. Muller. In their engravings, based on designs by Goltzius as well as by such artists as Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem and Bartholomeus Spranger, the printmakers explored the human body in all its forms and shapes, often showing it from unusual and daringly foreshortened angles. To do so, they developed a highly sophisticated syntax consisting of webs of evenly placed, swelling and tapering lines which help to project the corporeality of the figures onto the two-dimensional engraved picture plane.



The details shown here are from an engraving by Jan Harmensz. Muller who, following his apprenticeship in Goltzius's studio, established himself in Amsterdam where his father Harmen Jansz. became the publisher for the majority of his son's prints.



Muller's *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* translates a large altarpiece by Hans von Aachen from 1594 that has survived *in situ* in the Jesuit church of St. Michael in Munich. Muller must have engraved the plate at some point between 1596 and 1603/04. Karel von Mander's *Schilderboek*, published in 1604, serves as a terminus ante quem since it mentions the print which, in turn, played a crucial role for augmenting Hans van Aachen's fame all over Europe and lead to a multitude of painted and engraved copies.

Jan Muller after Hans von Aachen, "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian"



One of those artworks related to the composition could be, at least in our opinion, this small oil sketch, executed on paper. It seems to repeat the posture, expression, and hair of the bound saint—unless, that is, the sketch is a preliminary study for Van Aachen's painting.

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Yet Harlem had already been an artistic center two generations before Goltzius settled there. During the first half of the sixteenth century, its dominant master was Maarten van Heemskerck. Born in 1498 in Heemskerck, a village in the Kennemerland region in North Holland, he received his artistic training in Haarlem and later joined Jan van Scorel's workshop when the latter briefly established himself there upon his return from Italy in 1527. Scorel's Italianate style was completely new to the Netherlands at the time and was eagerly adopted by Heemskerck. In the spring of 1532, Heemskerck himself traveled to Italy, arriving in Rome in early summer. He stayed until the end of 1536 or early 1537 and deeply immersed himself in the study of the city, the ever-present remnants of ancient Rome, and the surrounding countryside. Heemskerck made numerous drawings from nature and sketched the classical ruins. His sheets mark the beginning of the art of the Roman *veduta*. His careful renderings of ancient sculptures provided him with crucial insights into human anatomy. But Heemskerck also studied the visual culture of contemporary Rome, especially the frescoes of Raphael and Michelangelo. Back in Haarlem, he became arguably one of the most important transmitters of both classical and Italian art to his home country.



Dirck Volkertz. Coornhert after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Apostle Paul Baptizing in Ephesos*, 1553,

engraving

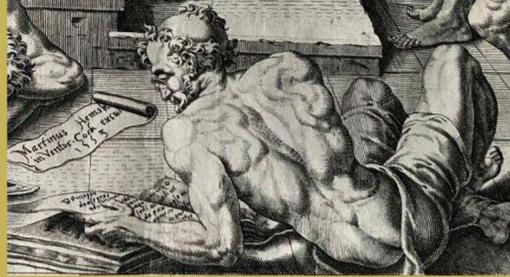
The influence of Heemskerck's art was amplified through the use of prints—despite the fact that he, in all likelihood, did not make any himself. He was, however, one of the first northern artists to instrumentalize printmaking in such a comprehensive and systematic manner. Nearly 600 prints are based on Heemskerck's designs, often comprising narrative sets of both biblical and historical subjects as well as allegories. Collected in albums, they exerted a lasting impact on Northern artists and all other *liefhebber van den kunsten*.

Many of the Latin verses that often accompany Heemskerck's prints were written by the Dutch polymath Hadrianus Junius (1511–1575), also known as Adriaen de Jonghe. He collaborated closely with the artist and provided the material that helped Heemskerck compose the mythological and historical scenes. Junius is also one of Heemskerck's earliest biographers (the first one being Vasari), dedicating two pages to him in his *Batavia*, a composite history of Batavia (i.e. Holland, the historical territory that roughly coincides with the modern westernmost part of The Netherlands).

Junius had worked as a physician for Thomas Howard, third Duke of Norfolk, and was a tutor to Howard's grandchildren. This English adventure came to an abrupt end with the arrest and execution of father and son Howard by Henry VIII in 1547. The Dutchman escaped to Holland unscathed (albeit without most of his library) and settled in Haarlem in 1550, first as a school rector, then as the town's physician. Losing books became something of a leitmotif for Junius, as he lost a new library to a fire in his study in 1554. (We might be forgiven, therefore, that the set of *The Eight Beatitudes* presented in our latest *Kleine Auswahl* have themselves lost their texts . . .)

Junius still managed to publish his *Animadversa* in 1556, a collection of quotations and annotations in the tradition of Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Adagia*, but far more limited in scope. The quite informative Wikipedia entry on Junius characterizes his *Animadversa* as being "crushed under its own weight as a result of its endless strings of quotations and lack of humor"—with the entry thereby proving its very own sense of the latter.

Maarten van Heemskerck



*and the Beginnings of
Dutch Mannerism*

C. G. BOERNER · 2021

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