



*The Princes Maria, 1st Rate Warship of the Amsterdam Admiralty,
on the IJ off Durgerdam,
flying the standard of Prince William of Orange*

A painting by Ludolf Bakhuizen



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AMSTERDAM 1987



Ludwig Schickel: Selbstporträt, ca. 1769.
Ludwig in 1769 als junger Mann. Archiv der Historischen Museen

LUDOLF BAKHUIZEN, MARINE PAINTER PAR EXCELLENCE

The critical appreciation of the work of the seventeenth-century painter Ludolf Bakhuizen has undergone some considerable ups and downs. In his own day, and up to the second half of the nineteenth century, Bakhuizen was considered to be the best marine painter in Holland next to Willem van de Velde the Younger, and his paintings were in great demand. Around the 1850s his fame began to wane, until finally he even came to be despised for his dramatic rendering of shipwrecks and storms, the very subjects he had been most renowned for in his day. In the last ten or twenty years the tide has again turned in Bakhuizen's favour and his work is now more getting the attention it deserves.

Very little is known about Bakhuizen's early years. Born in the German town of Emden in 1631, he moved to Amsterdam with his family in 1652. Then he started his career as an apprentice to the famous merchant firm of Borsdaet & Co. and, although intelligently and serious of mind and taste, an art form in which he was particularly proficient. It was not very long before he had the firm's trust as an architect solely on art, in particular the drawing of ships.

As a draughtsman, and later as a painter, Bakhuizen seems to have been largely self-taught. The grisailles (or pen paintings as they are usually called in Dutch) he made in the 1650s show the influence of Willem van de Velde the Elder, but we do not know for certain if Bakhuizen was ever his pupil.

Impressed with his talent a number of artists pressed him to take up painting in oils. Bakhuizen apparently made a habit of visiting painters' studios regularly, where he learned by looking carefully and asking questions. Most of this time thus spent was in the studios of Albert van Everdingen and Hendrick Dubbels, though he stayed with neither long enough to suggest that he was a regular pupil of either. Although Bakhuizen's earliest painting is dated 1658, it was not until February 1663 that he was admitted to the painters' guild of St. Luke.

His reputation as a marine painter must have grown rapidly, for in 1665 the Burgomasters of Amsterdam commissioned him to paint a large view of the harbour of Amsterdam as a gift for Hugues de Lionne, minister of Louis XIV to France. By the standards of the day Bakhuizen was very well paid, receiving 1275 florins and a good ducat for his wife. The fact that he was awarded this important commission proves that he was rated as highly as Willem van de Velde the Younger, who was still working in Amsterdam at the time. The painting is now in the Louvre in Paris.

According to Arnold Houbraken, Bakhuizen's biographer of the early eighteenth century, his fame as an artist was widespread, and among his international clientele he numbered the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the King of Prussia, the Elector of Saxony and several other German princes. Great Peter the Great of Russia also seems to have been a great admirer of his work. Bakhuizen's career as a painter doubtless without interruption until his death in 1708. Right from the beginning his paintings sold well, and after the Van de Velde's moved to London in 1673 he became the foremost marine painter in Holland.

He was a prolific master and it is not without awe that Houbraken tells us: "If it were possible to see all the works of art by his hand in one room, one would be astonished at his work." Some six hundred paintings have come down to us. This figure needs to be revised however, as it is based on the now cancelled catalogue of 1918 by H. de laide de Cresset. Bakhuizen usually painted on canvas. A lot of his work is of a notably large format and sizes of 100 x 150 cm and larger are more a rule than an exception. He is very rarely strict in spelling out names, sometimes writing CK, and sometimes a Y instead of an I. There seems to be a connection between the different signatures and the six periods in his career. For instance, from the 1680s onwards he spells his name with a K only. His subjects vary from sea and river scenes to showpieces based on historical fact or fantasy, often with a staffage of colourfully dressed people on board the ships or in the foreground, and the storms and shipwrecks for which he was renowned. He painted very few sea battles. Apart from marines he made a number of portraits and the occasional allegory and town scene. Besides oils he left drawings and engravings.

Although from a historical viewpoint Bakhuizen is less accurate than the Van de Velde's, there is nothing wrong with the way he depicts ships. It is clear from his paintings that he understood the different types of ship very well, and they lie convincingly in the water. Sails and rigging are rendered faithfully. One only has to look at the work of lesser marine painters to realise just how difficult it is to depict this subject realistically and convincingly.

Bakhuizen's artistry however, was not confined to technical mastery. Artistically he was on a level with the best, and his greatest works – of which there are quite a few – emanate with an atmospheric quality, a wonderfully luminous colour scheme and a happy composition, and are on a par with the best paintings of Van de Velde the Younger.

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As in the case with almost every successful painter, the great demand for his paintings inevitably led to the occasional loss of quality, and routine tended to creep in. From the 1680s onwards, especially, Bakhuizen produced a number of less inspired though very competent paintings. However, many works remain to fully justify his reputation as one of the best marine painters Holland has ever known, as can be seen from a tour of some of the great museums of the world, such as the Rijksmuseum and the Maritime Museum in Amsterdam, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the National Gallery in London and the Louvre in Paris.

As an artist of superior standing, Bakhuizen had considerable influence on his contemporaries and later generations. Some of the Van de Veldes of the 1670s have been mistaken for Bakhuizen's. Although he is not known to have been his pupil, Abraham Storck was also influenced by Bakhuizen. There are certain similarities in their work which are too marked to be the result of coincidence.

Later generations of marine painters, such as J.C. Schotel, still turned to Bakhuizen for inspiration.

It is to be regretted that a definitive biography and catalogue of Bakhuizen's paintings has yet to appear. The Bakhuizen exhibition held in the Maritime Museum in Amsterdam and in the Landesmuseum in Fribourg in 1985, together with the accompanying catalogue, was at least a step in the right direction, but a lot still remains to be done.



*Ladolf Holmbom.
The Private Maria
on the off
Dorset,
ca 1680-1692.
Oil on canvas,
106 1/2 x 119 cm.
Signed L. HAN F.*

THE PAINTING

On the right we see the *Princes Maria*, flying the standard of William III of Orange, with the inscription 'PRO RELIGIONE ET LIBERTATE'. The ship lies with the wind abeam, to enable it to embark or disembark passengers or supplies.

The *Princes Maria*, also called the *Princes van Oranje* or just plain *Princes*, was a 92 gun first rate ship of the line belonging to the Admiralty of Amsterdam, and could carry a crew of 500. She was one of the largest ships the Dutch ever built, and one of 36 warships to be built in the 1680s by order of William III in order to withstand a maritime attack by the French. Simon Jansz Lix of Amsterdam started building the *Princes Maria* in 1683.

In 1688 William III embarked for England at the invitation of the English to dethrone his father-in-law, the Roman Catholic King James II, and to reinstate the Protestant religion in that country. James fled and eventually sought refuge with his ally, King Louis XIV of France. In 1689 William III and his wife Mary Stuart were crowned King and Queen of England. War with France could not now be averted. Seconded by a delegation of the Dutch States General, and the five Admiralties of the United Provinces, William insisted that a combined Anglo-Dutch fleet should strike before the French had time to bring their fleet to readiness.

In 1690 the combined fleet put to sea. In April of that year the *Princes Maria* was the first ship to be lifted over the mudbank of Pangras near Amsterdam by means of a 'carruel'. This experiment was a success, and from then on ship carrels were widely used.

Flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Gillis Schey, the *Princes Maria* first saw action at the Battle of Boesiger (Beachy Head) in July 1690, in the course of which this 'most gallant' of Dutch warships, as a contemporary source put it, was heavily damaged. The Dutch fought the French bravely, but at the crucial moment were let down by their English allies. The English, who later apologized for their behaviour to the States General in The Hague, took it on themselves to pay for the necessary repairs and for the building of twelve new ships.

MEMORIE

Voord' Oudeg. van Schipde

PRINCES MARIA

aan Roubthout en Loopende en staende Wandt, in de
Batalie op den 16 July 1694. gesinden.

Volgen de M'Gee van des Van Aemstel. N. C. H. B. V.

Roubt' Oudeg.

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staende Wandt

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Koekken fracken geboosene

Terlijst de M'Gee van des Van Aemstel.
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Zekken en de linge Gassen

Schieten de linge Gassen.
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Kragt verhooren

Lijst de M'Gee van des Van Aemstel.

Deoden en Gassenen

De M'Gee van des Van Aemstel.
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*Familia Remigii de damage tenoned by the Princess Maria
during the Battle of Beachy Head in 1690
Nederlands Historisch Schiedkundig museum, Amsterdam*



Portrait of Vice-Admiral Gille Sobey, 1691, J. Weeser
 The Princesse Maria can be seen in the background
 Nieuw-Saarsdamsche Schiepscheepvaerden
 Amsterdam

Early in 1691 the *Princesse Maria* formed part of the squadron of Lieutenant-Admiral-General Cornelis Tromp. Tromp, famous rival of Michiel de Ruyter in earlier days, died within a few weeks of his elevation to this rank, and was succeeded by Philip van Almonde.

In 1692 the *Princesse Maria* took part in the Battle of La Hogue against the French. This time the combined fleet emerged victorious. Once more the *Princesse Maria* was the flagship of Gillis Schey, who had been promoted Vice Admiral for his brave conduct during the Battle of Beachy Head.

The *Princesse Maria* achieved her greatest fame in the early years of the war with France, but she did not have a very long life. She was last mentioned as being on active service in 1696, and was sent to the breaker's yard in 1728.

On the richly decorated stern of the *Princesse Maria* can be seen the arms of the seven United Provinces of the Netherlands; with those of Holland at the top of the taffrail and the other six below (the windows of the stateroom). Below them is the name *Princesse Maria*, flanked by the arms of the City of Amsterdam and an oval shield with what appear to be two crossed swords and the initials W and M, no doubt standing for William and Mary. Behind the stateroom windows a company of elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen raise their glasses in a toast.

The large red, white and blue flag and pennant at the main suggest that the commander of the fleet is on board. A salute is being fired, possibly in honour of a VIP who has left the ship to be conveyed to town in the rowing yacht seen in the middle foreground, which is flying two flags with the arms of Amsterdam.

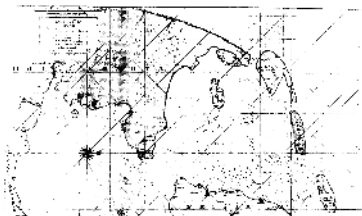
Next to the *Princesse Maria* is a large transom yacht with standing gaff rig and leeboards, lying head to wind and firing a salute. Yachts were either official vessels belonging to the States General, the Provincial States, the Admiralties or the East and West India Companies. They came in several varieties, the largest and most luxurious being very comfortable with a transom stern, a stateroom aft, another room amidships and a galley and pantry in the forecabin. As they were fast ships, they gradually came to be used by the rich for pleasure.

In the foreground on the extreme right a *boeijs* with standing gaff rig is running before the wind. *Boeijs* were used to carry cargo, but could also be pleasure craft with a stateroom, as the one on this painting appears to be. *Boeijs* came in different shapes, depending on where they were built and how they were used.

In the left foreground a Frisian *baag* is running free. Featuring in almost every painting by Bakhuizen, the *baag* was one of the most common inland vessels for ferrying people and goods, and was often used for transferring cargo from seagoing ships. It had a broad rudder operated by a tiller, and a deck house. Sometimes there was a galley below deck. The little boat close behind is delivering sails.

A little further to the left is a spritsail-rigged *waterschip*, flying the flag of the town of Zwolle. The *waterschip* was a common and well-known sight on the Zuyder Zee in those days, where it was used for fishing and for towing larger ships over mudbanks such as the Pampus.

In the background from left to right are a tripartite, partly hidden by the *waterschip*, a yacht, and to the right of the *baag* another *waterschip* and a fluit, the foremost sailing vessel of the seventeenth century, with its characteristic shape of a very wide hull with sides narrowing sharply at the stern. On the horizon to the left is the village of Dordrecht, while between the yacht and the *Procyon Maria* is the characteristic square tower of the church of Ransdorp.



Vincent Willem's *nocturne* chart showing the navigable channels to the North Sea from Amsterdam via the Pampus and the Zuyder Zee.

Notwithstanding the many different titles that have been given to this painting in the last two centuries, suggesting that it depicts an actual historical event, there is no conclusive evidence to support this. On the contrary, the common factor in all the descriptions given in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century auction catalogues is that something can be said against each of them.

The assumption that this painting may rather have had a symbolic meaning seems to be justified by the fact that the *Princess Maria*, the pride of the Amsterdam Admiralty, took part in actions that were of major historical importance, and that she moreover flew the flag of an officer who became one of Holland's naval heroes, albeit not as famous as Tromp or De Ruyter.



*Adriaan de Lelie
The art gallery of
Jan Gildemeester
Javot, or his house
on the Herengracht
in Amsterdam,
1790-1795. Rijksma-
ceus, Amsterdam
At top left is
Bakhuizen's
painting.*

AN ILLUSTRIOUS PROVENANCE

In 1771 the painting of the *Princeess Marie off Dargerdam* by Ludolt Balchuisen was bought at an Amsterdam auction by Jan Gildemeester Jansz, the Portuguese agent and Consul General of the Netherlands, like his father before him.

Born at Lisbon in 1744, Gildemeester, whose family had made a fortune as merchants, came to Amsterdam with his parents in the 1750s.

Jan Gildemeester, who remained a bachelor all his life, started collecting paintings at an early age, and managed to acquire some 300 works of the highest quality, mainly by seventeenth and eighteenth-century Dutch artists. His collection included paintings by Rembrandt, Hals, Vermeer, Steen, the Ostades, Teniers, Wouwerman, Terbeeck, Adriaen and Willem van de Velde, Dox, Metsu, Potter, Van Hoysum and Rubens. Gildemeester bought a number of these himself at auctions, but also acquired many paintings through his friend, the famous Amsterdam art dealer Pieter Fouquet. He also collected drawings and prints.

Gildemeester, himself an amateur painter and draughtsman, was a kind and hospitable man who liked nothing more than to show his collection to visitors. Though his main gallery was situated on the first floor of his magnificent residence on the Herengracht, his paintings hung all over the house, even in the servants' quarters. He also had some sixty paintings in his summer retreat 'Frankendard' near Amsterdam. Gildemeester was much admired for his taste, and his collection became widely known in Europe. After his death in 1799 his paintings were put up for auction, in accordance with his will.

A considerable number of his paintings are now in famous collections, such as the Wallace Collection and Buckingham Palace in London, and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

In 1794 Gildemeester commissioned Adriaen de Lelie to do a painting of himself showing a company around his gallery in his house on the Herengracht in Amsterdam. At top left is Balchuisen's painting of the *Princeess Marie*.

LUDOLF BAKHUIZEN

(Furden 1631 – Amsterdam 1728)

The 'Princess Marie' on the If off Dordrecht, flying the standard of Prince William of Orange

Oil on canvas, 138.5 x 159 cm

Signed L. BAK H

Provenance:

Sold Pieter Leendert de Nizville, Amsterdam, 19 June 1765, lot no. 4 (Dfl. 600 to Nieuwenhoven)

Anonymous sale, Amsterdam, 25 July 1771, lot no. 17 (Dfl. 400 to Gildemeester)

Sold Jan Gildemeester Jurisz., Amsterdam, 11 June 1822, lot no. 7 (Dfl. 200 to Westervorst)

Sold Simon Colvix and George Hilbert, Christie's, London, 15 May 1822, lot no. 60 (255 gns to the Earl of Breadalbane)

John Campbell, 4th Earl (1st Marquess from 1831) of Breadalbane (1762-1834), Taymouth Castle, Perthshire

His son, John Campbell, 5th Earl and 2nd Marquess of Breadalbane (1796-1862), Taymouth Castle, Perthshire

The sister, Lady Elizabeth Phipps (d. 1878), Langton House, Berwickshire

Her daughter, the Hon. Mrs R. Dalrymple Hamilton (d. 1912), Langton House, Berwickshire

Her sister, Magdalen, Lady Hervey (d. 1915), Langton House, Berwickshire

Her grandson, Col. the Hon. T.C.H. Murray-Crawford (d. 1965), Langton House, Berwickshire

His daughter, Lady Louisa

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