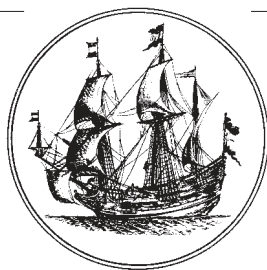




*Dutch Old Master Marine Paintings,
Drawings & Prints*



*One of the most important Marine Paintings
by Jan Porcellis*



*THE DISCOVERY OF AN UNKNOWN
MASTER MARINE PAINTING*

*Shipping on the North Sea
off the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling*

by

JAN PORCELLIS
(ca. 1584-1632)

ONE OF THE GREATEST MARINE PAINTERS
OF THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

*The painting can be regarded as one of the highlights
in Porcellis's oeuvre*



Fig. II
Before cleaning



Fig. III
After cleaning

THE DISCOVERY OF AN UNKNOWN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MASTERPIECE BY JAN PORCELLIS (c. 1584-1632)

PREFACE

When this painting was offered for sale in France it was very difficult to gauge its condition, so I would be taking a big risk to buy it. It was clearly of great class, but was it of museum quality? As a lover of maritime art I decided to take the risk all the same.

It turned out to be a magnificent and unexpected result, so we can now say the painting deserves to be included in a museum or private collection. You have the feeling of being on board one of the ships at sea. It first of all evokes associations with beautifully rendered atmospheric seas and cloudy skies in almost transparent grey tones. The sea with its tidal currents and surge, are masterfully rendered and not surpassed by such marine painters as Simon de Vlieger, Willem van de Velde the Younger and Ludolf Backhuysen. Porcellis's influence on his contemporaries and the generations after him cannot be overstated. With his tonal maritime paintings or monochromatic style of painting, he was definitely as important to the development of the genre as Hendrick Cornelisz. Vroom before him.

Initially he painted in the Mannerist style of Jan Breughel the Elder and H.C. Vroom, but around 1620 Porcellis adopted a new revolutionary style. He abandoned the Flemish color scheme and started working with blue and often threatening skies and silvery waves, as he demonstrates so superbly in this painting.

It reveals his interest in weather conditions and in a natural representation of atmosphere.

Jan Porcellis was acclaimed right down until the eighteenth century as the greatest Dutch marine painter, and was christened the 'great Raphael of marine painters'. Ludolf Backhuysen called him the greatest marine painter as well. Rubens, Jan van de Capelle and Rembrandt owned marines by Porcellis among others. Many important museums today, at home and abroad, do not have a Porcellis of this quality in their collections.

In my 50-year career only two Porcellis of museum quality have come to the art market from auctions or private collections, so now a third has emerged. It is the most important of them, especially because of its measurements, condition and quality. The present work can be considered among the best of what remains of the artist's entire oeuvre.

Rob Kattenburg



JAN PORCELLIS

(Ghent, between 1583 - 1585 - Zoeterwoude 1632)

Shipping on the North Sea off the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling

Canvas mounted on panel, 102 x 158 cm.

Monogrammed on the white of the flag of the boeier on the left side: *IPf*

The remnants of the monogram are visible on the barrel at the front center of the painting: *(I) P*

Dated: c. 1625

Provenance: Pierre Lapeyre collection (1820-1889),
Château du Claux, Naucelles, Cantal; by descent,
Val de Loire collection

A major discovery of a masterpiece of one of the greatest marine painters of the seventeenth century.

The painting can be dated around 1625 because by then he had perfected his revolutionary style.

Previously unpublished.

One of a handful of masterpieces by Jan Porcellis still known to exist.

Probably Porcellis's largest and most ambitious work.

Rembrandt, Jan van de Capelle and Rubens, among others, collected drawing and paintings by Jan Porcellis.

Many museums at home and abroad do not have an important painting by Porcellis in their collections.

We are looking south from the North Sea. On the left is the north-west coast of the island of Terschelling, with the 'Kaapse Duin' and its light beacon. A few ships are at anchor or setting sail off the island in the distance. On the right is the island of Vlieland with the old parish church of the village of West-Vlieland. The village fell prey to the waves in the course of the seventeenth century. The church met the same fate in 1704. There are two three-masters moored close to the shore.

In the centre of the painting are two English three-masters flying the pennant of St George, and a Dutch three-master coming from 't Vlie, the passage to the Wadden Sea between the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling. This was a busy sea route to and from the North Sea. The ships seen in the distance are sailing in convoy because of the treacherous waters of the Wadden Sea and the North Sea. For the most part it is an English merchant fleet approaching from the Vlie. Perhaps a deliberate choice, since Porcellis lived and worked for some time in England.

It is possible that back on the mainland he still had a short line of communication with the English art trade and the English buying public, so it is quite possible that the painting was a commission from a wealthy English patron.

The ship on the far left is an early type of *boeier*, a Dutch merchant and inland vessel with a tow boat. This one has its bow almost to the wind. There was a vigorous tidal current here as a result of the strait of the Vlie meeting the North Sea.

On the right, there is a small *vracht-kaghe*. There are also three porpoises heading to the deeper waters. Further on is a small fishing vessel, with a sailor wielding a boathook. He is pulling in a barrel although it remains out of view in the painting. That they are in the process of placing barrels in the fairway may explain why a barrel can be seen directly behind the vessel as well as in the middle of the scene. Since several maps of the Vlie show that even far from the coast of the islands there were concrete markings to indicate shallows and channels, it is possible that Porcellis (in addition to the sailing of the merchant fleet) also wanted to use the *wijdschip* and the *kaag* to represent the activity and bustle of the channel. Even the little barrel in the middle is therefore appropriate and not exclusively intended to create more depth.

One of the highlights of Dutch marine painting of the seventeenth century



THE LOCATION AND VANTAGE POINT OF THE ARTIST

The position that Jan Porcellis took up is shown on the map of Lucas Jansz. Waghenauer van Enchuijsen below. This area provided him with a good view from the North Sea to the South.

From the North Sea with on the left (1) Terschelling with the ‘Kaapse Duin’ and the light beacon (the northwest side) and on the right (2) Vlieland with the Old Westerkerk. In the middle (3) the shipping route to get from Vlie into the North Sea.



Fig. IV
Detail of fig. VI



Fig. V
Jan Porcellis
A boeier, from the series of twelve engravings of *Icones variarum navium hollandicarum quarum usus maximè in aquis interioribus regionis. Notatae à famosissimo Navium Pictore Iohanne Percelles.* (Illustrations of various Dutch sailing vessels) with the address of B. Cleynhens, Haarlem excudit
Engraving, 17.5 x 25 cm.
Rob Kattenburg Collection

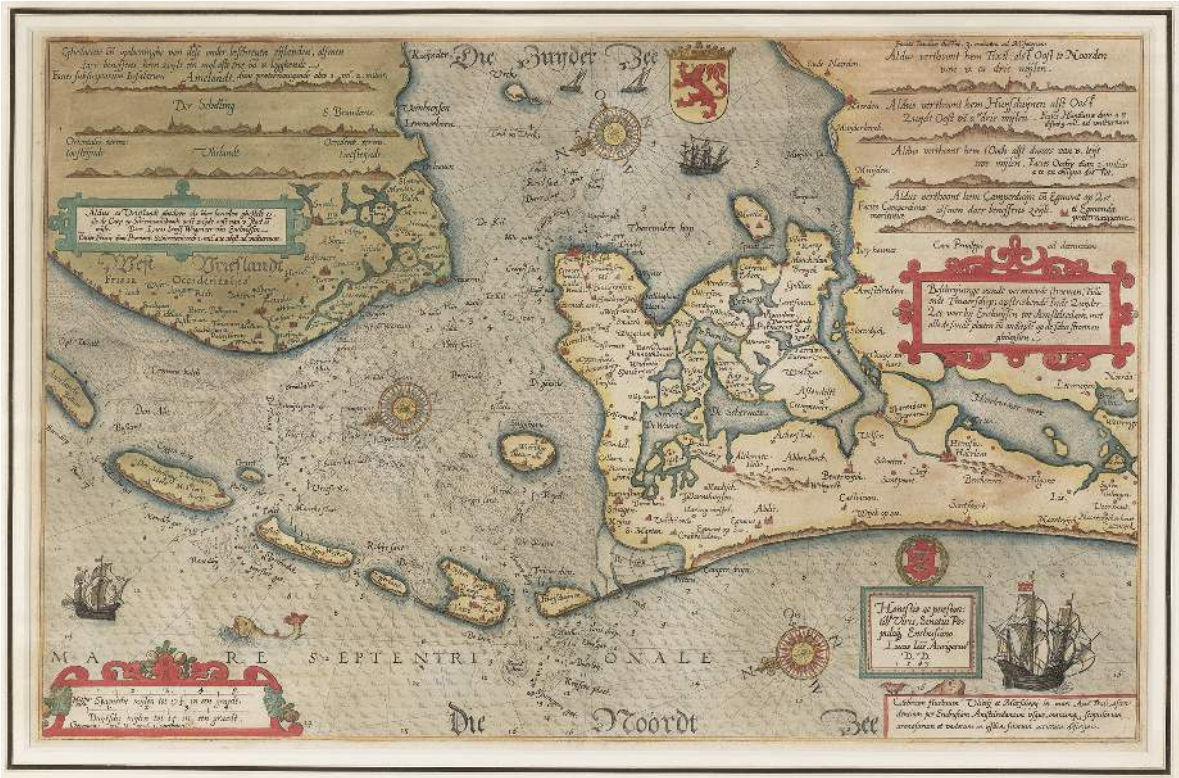


Fig. VI
Lucas Jansz. Waghenauer van Enchuijsen
First engraved chart of the Zuiderzee, 1583
Copper engraving: 330 x 514 mm
Engraved by: Joannes van Doetechum (1558 – 1630)
Rob Kattenburg Collection



Fig. VII
Willem Jansz. Bleau
HOLLANDIA | COMITATUS [1634]
Rob Kattenburg Collection

Jan Porcellis opted for a high horizon in the painting so as to properly display the choppy sea with its tidal currents. He brilliantly captured the atmosphere of the wild sea and fast-changing clouds in stormy weather using subtle shades of grey and a harmonious symphony of browns and silvery whites. Sky and water are united by a silvery-grey tone that almost tangibly conveys the atmosphere saturated with moisture and light. The painting gives the impression of a huge maritime expanse extending beyond the edges of its canvas.

This masterpiece sums up the accomplishments of Jan Porcellis, that great pioneer of seascape painting, and explains why he was hailed as the foremost marine painter of his day. It can be dated around 1625 because in this painting, he has perfected his revolutionary style. *‘Shipping on the North*

Sea off the coasts of the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling’, previously unrecorded, is probably one of Porcellis’ largest and most ambitious works, a major rediscovery in the artist’s oeuvre and an important addition to our knowledge of Dutch maritime activity in the 17th century.

The painting on canvas was mounted on panel according to the dendrochronological analysis of the panel by Prof. Dr Pieter Klein of the University of Hamburg between 1616 and 1629.

The painting is called a major rediscovery of the “greatest maritime painter” by Prof. Gerlinde de Beer and will be included in her forthcoming monograph.

JAN PORCELLIS (Ghent 1580- 1632 Zoeterwoude)

Jan Porcellis was born in Ghent as the son of Captain Jan Purchelles or Porcellis and Anne van Vaernewijk, and had at least five brothers and sisters. His father took part in the anti-Spanish rebellion, and after the Duke of Parma recaptured the city of Ghent the family decided to emigrate to the Northern Netherlands. They settled in Rotterdam, but not much is known about his early years. Jan Porcellis is first mentioned on the occasion of his marriage to Jacquemijntge Janz. in Rotterdam in 1605, with whom he had 4 children. There are a few artists who could have been his tutors, among them

H.C. Vroom or Adam Willaerts (1577-1664), but this is not documented in contemporary records.

He was an extensive traveller, and was in London for a while before moving to Middelburg and later to Ghent. The paintings *Battle between English and Dutch ships* (Fig. VIII) and *The Dutch four-masters Hollantsche Tuyn and Rode Leeuw* (Fig. IX) are examples of early works by Porcellis and can be dated to his Middelburg period. They display a clear debt to H.C. Vroom in style, subject matter and colouring.



Fig.VIII
Jan Porcellis, *Battle between English and Dutch ships*
Oil paint on panel, 49.5 x 76 cm, Monogrammed in flag: *IP*
Formerly Rob Kattenburg Collection

Porcellis is first mentioned as a painter in Antwerp, where he became a master in the Guild of St Luke in Antwerp. He lived there for several years. Most of the paintings he made during that period were swiftly executed in several versions and were sold on the open market. His time in Antwerp had an impact on his artistic development, which mainly consisted of sea battles, storms and harbour views.

His earliest dated paintings are from the 1620s. In 1622 he moved to Haarlem, where he married his second wife, Janneke Flessiers, daughter of the painter and publisher Balthasar Flessiers. Haarlem was the centre of marine painting at the time, numbering such masters as Hendrick Cornelisz. Vroom (1562-1640), C.C. Van Wieringen (1577-1633) P. Mulier (1610-1659) and C. Verbeeck (1585-1637). It was here that Porcellis found fame and fortune with his realistic atmospheric paintings, which revolutionised marine art. He abandoned the rigid symbolism of the preceding period and used monochrome grey tones to brilliant effect to suggest the atmosphere of light, water and air. He enlivened his grey

and brown palette with white highlights to mark the crests of the waves or to suggest light filtering through the fast-changing clouds of the moist air. He created a sense of depth with a band of shadow in the foreground and a band of light behind it, and by painting the ships in the distance with less paint, again to create more depth and so veiled the scene in a translucent atmosphere. The animated interplay of light and shade and the integration of the sky into the composition were other innovations of his.

The clouds, waves, wind and weather conditions are carefully observed from nature. He also accurately portrayed the different types of vessel with their sails, rigging and the like. All this can be seen in our painting *Shipping on the North Sea off the coasts of the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling* (Fig. III). After his Haarlem period he moved to Amsterdam where he stayed for some time before going on to Voorburg and Zoeterwoude, close to Leiden. He died in 1632 as a wealthy man with the resounding reputation of being 'The great Raphael of sea painting'.

THE ARTIST JAN PORCELLIS

Little is known about Jan Porcellis's early apprenticeship. He grew up in Rotterdam but the city was not noted as a centre for the arts. He probably began his career as a graphic artist, and may have worked for the Rotterdam-based engraver and publisher Jan van Doetechum. The latter's wife was related to the British publisher Geoffrey Whitney, which may explain why Porcellis spent some time in London. The name of his teacher is not known, but Houbraken does say that he was a pupil of Hendrick Cornelisz. Vroom (1562/3-1640).¹

After Porcellis's bankruptcy in Rotterdam he went to Ghent and then to Antwerp, where he is first mentioned as a painter and became a member of the Guild of St Luke in 1617.

He may have developed his rapid manner in Antwerp, where entered into an arrangement with Adriaen Delen, a cooper, to make two paintings a week or three in two weeks. In his formative years, he must have seen the work of Vroom ('the father of marine painting') at first hand, or at least in print, and read about his adventurous life in Vroom's biography in Karel van Mander's *Schilder-Boeck*.

At the beginning of his career, he painted in Vroom's Mannerist style with its prominent greens, and he was also clearly influenced by Jan Breughel the Elder (1568-1625).

Around 1620 he started to develop his own revolutionary style, replacing the Flemish colouring with silvery waves and skies, thus creating a totally new palette. He switched from Vroom's illustrative marines to realistic seascapes, and from paintings of events to atmospheric works. He modified Vroom's schemes with an increasing naturalism marked by more varied techniques of rendering waves and foam and by an emphasis on the sky, atmosphere, and rich modulations of light as a means of communicating emotion.

He also moved the main focus to views of open water and a constructed spatial depth, which he adopted from Breughel, one of the latter's greatest achievements in landscape painting. Porcellis transferred the creation of spatial depth on water to scenes of simple one-masters and coastal and inland sailing boats. He observed the standard elements of nature, the sea and shipping at first hand from a boat in which he travelled the waterways, thus anticipating the later practice of Willem van de Velde the Elder and Younger.²

Around 1621/22 he moved back to the city of Haarlem in the Northern Netherlands, an epicenter of artistic innovation that saw great revolutions in painting at the beginning of the Dutch Golden Age and was the birthplace of Dutch marine painting.



Fig. IX
Jan Porcellis, *The Dutch four-masters Hollantsche Tuyn and Rode Leeuw*
Oil on panel, 51 x 71 cm
Signed with monogram: *JP*
Formerly Rob Kattenburg Collection

The market for marines in Haarlem was dominated by H.C. Vroom, Cornelis Claesz van Wieringen and Cornelis Verbeeck, but Jan Porcellis saw and took his chance.

He perfected his revolutionary realist style even further, with his depictions of sky and water gaining greater prominence based on the “pearl grey skies of Holland”. This was to develop into an almost monochrome palette with

some of the painters of the next generation, such as Simon de Vlieger and, in the extreme, with Jan van Goyen. In Haarlem he created the first of the atmospheric compositions that made him famous.

Within a few years he had financial success and was acclaimed in the words of his contemporary, the Haarlem city chronicler Samuel Ampzing: as the “the greatest ship artist”.

*Soo sy Porcellis mee ter deezer plaetz gedacht
De grootste konstenaer in schepen recht geacht.*



Fig. X

Jan Porcellis, *Fishermen hauling in their catch in heavy seas; a rainbow overhead*
Signed with initials, Oil on panel, 32.3 x 39 cm
Van Otterloo Collection, on loan to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

DRAWINGS & PRINTS

During the 1620s he also explored the stock themes of the maritime landscape in 15 drawings and a series of 20 etchings featuring fisherman on the shore, which were published as *Verscheyden stranden en water gesichten*, Haarlem, c. 1620.

In 1627 Claes Jansz Visscher published a series of 12 etchings in Amsterdam titled *Icones variarum navium Hollandicarum*, based on the designs by Jan Porcellis, which illustrate various types of small working vessels, realistically observing the changing conditions of wind and water (see fig. V, a *boeier* or boyer).

The prints were appreciated not only as a catalogue of ship types but also as a collection of modern seascapes. The prints were unprecedented in their variety of light and darkness and the treatment of the elements. The color scheme of the print medium, with its white, grey and black color

scheme, might in turn have inspired him to use it in his so-called monochromatic paintings.

In addition to the paintings, there are around 15 surviving drawings, but he obviously made many more. There was an auction on 22 April 1626 “on the Rozengracht” in Amsterdam “at the request of Johannes Paracelsus (Jan Porcellis)” to put a substantial number of his own drawings up for public sale, comprising 34 lots.

Two copperplates, six prints, one book of drawings, and 91 other drawings were sold to buyers whose names and the prices they made were carefully noted in the records.³ Six drawings were bought by “Hendrick Aertz., knecht van Paracelsus,” confirmation that Porcellis had an apprentice in Amsterdam, Hendrick van d’Anthonissen, his only documented pupil.⁴



Fig. XI
Jan Porcellis
Chippy Sea
Oil on paper, 220 x 335 mm.
Signed: *IP*
Formerly Rob Kattenburg Collection



Fig. XII
Jan Porcellis, *Fisherman*
Pen and brown ink on prepared brown paper,
88 x 83 mm
Signed: *IP*
Formerly Rob Kattenburg Collection

THE GREAT ‘RAPHAEL’ OF SEA PAINTING

Porcellis was regarded as the greatest marine painter of his day, and his works mark the transition from the busy and brightly colored seascapes of the early 17th century, with their emphasis on the depiction of ships, to monochromatic paintings which are essentially studies of sea, sky and atmospheric

effects. Apart from pioneering ‘tonal’ painting in Haarlem in the 1630s, he inspired the leading Dutch marine painters of the mid-17th century, especially Simon de Vlieger, Jan van de Cappelle and their followers.

INVENTOR OF MONOCHROMATIC PAINTING

Porcellis was the pioneer of the tonalist and atmospheric or grey school. His tone and mood of painting were revolutionary in that the atmosphere was all-important, ship actions being sublimated to the tonal painting of sea and sky. He adopted this system of fairly low-key, closely knit tonal values based on the whole of the “pearl grey skies of Holland”.

He might have been fascinated by the medium of print with its white, grey and black tones, the color scheme that he in turn used for his paintings. Painters who belonged to the

so-called grey school were S. de Vlieger, H. van Anthonissen, H. Goderis, J. van Diest, W. van Diest, C. Stooter, H.M. Sorgh, H. Staets and his son Julius Porcellis. He also influenced the working methods of the infrequent marines of Jacob van Ruysdael, P. Wouwerman, P. van de Croos and Jan Van Goyen. methods of the infrequent marines of Jacob van Ruysdael, P. Wouwerman, P. van de Croos and Jan van Goyen.

THE ARTIST’S WORKING METHOD

There is a long anecdote in Hoogstraeten’s treatise of 1678 which is the only account of Porcellis’ method of working. The author recounts in a chapter devoted to “Handling or the manner of Painting” as an example of speedy execution. “I must tell you about a competition between three especially gifted painters François Knibbebergen, Jan van Goyen and Jan Porcellis to paint in a single day a picture that would be judged by connoisseurs. The third was our Parselles (Porcellis), the great Raphael of sea-painting! He was forming the whole

design of his work in his imagination before he put his brush into the paint. But the outcome showed very well that this is the correct method; for although he worked slowly, he did everything with sureness and knowledge, and by evening he was just as finished with his work as were his competitors. He worked *alla prima*, as there is no evidence of preparatory drawings or underdrawings on the paintings themselves. The work of Porcellis showed more discriminating naturalness [keurlijker natuurlijkheit] and extraordinary skill and he was



Fig. XIII
An early painting by Jan Porcellis, *Ships in a gale*, c. 1620,
Oil on panel, 47 x 71 cm
Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum

proclaimed winner.⁵ He formed the painting as a mental picture in his mind before he started to work, but the actual execution of the painting was very quick [vaerdigheyt].⁶ This method, alongside the fact that he used very thin layers of paint especially in the middle to convey spatial depth, may account for the small number of paintings by Porcellis which remain today.”

The Porcellis’s surviving oeuvre is small and only around 51 paintings have been identified, with varying degrees

of certainty. We must assume that most of his works were lost because of his quick way of operating. There are also a great many marines that have been incorrectly attributed to Porcellis. Marines by Jan Porcellis of museum quality are exceptionally rare, only three paintings of this standard resurfaced on the art market in the past 50 years (see fig. I, fig. X and fig. XIII).

CONCLUSION

The painting ‘*Shipping on the North Sea off the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling*’ can be regarded as one of the highlights in the oeuvre of Jan Porcellis. He precisely observed nature with its changing elements with an emphasis on sky,

atmosphere and rich modulations of light. He used nuances in clouds, light, water and waves which resulted in a realistic interplay of sea, sky and ships.

1. Samuel Ampzing, *Beschryvinge ende lot der stad Haerlem in Holland* (Haarlem, 1628), p. 372.
2. Walsh, J.J. Jr., *Jan and Julius Porcellis: Dutch marine painters*, (diss. University of Columbia) Ann Arbor [MI], 1974. p. 45
3. Erfh. Weeskamer, Amsterdam; Bredius, K-I, II, pp. 614-15.
4. Walsh, J.J. Jr., *Jan and Julius Porcellis: Dutch marine painters*, p. 39
5. Walsh, J. Jr., The Dutch marine painters Jan and Julius Porcellis-II Jan’s maturity and ‘de jonge Porcellis’. *Burlington Magazine* 116 (1974), pp. 737-8. “The account of Porcellis’ method of working” In; Samuel Hoogstraten’s treatise: *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichtbaere werelt*, Rotterdam 1678.

6. Samuel Hoogstraten’s treatise: *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichtbaere werelt*, Rotterdam 1678, Chapter 10, “Van de Handling of maniere van schilderen,” exemplifying “vaerdigheyt”.
7. Joachim Oudaan, *Joachim Oudaans Poëzy, verdeeld in drie deelen*, ed. David Van Hoogstraten (Amsterdam, 1712), 2:115–16; Lawrence Otto Goedde, *Tempest and Shipwreck in Dutch and Flemish Art: Convention, Rhetoric, and Interpretation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 120.

THE INFLUENCE OF JAN PORCELLIS

Jan Porcellis introduced an entirely new theme in marine painting, using monochrome grey tones to brilliant effect to suggest the atmosphere of light, air and water. He totally abandoned the Mannerism of the preceding period, with its rigid symbolism and stylized green waves and sea-monsters, which was instigated by Hendrick Cornelisz Vroom, the ‘father of marine painting’, and explored new ways to prepare the way for a whole new generation of marine artists.

“The art of his brush excels, especially in the natural depiction of storms at sea, in which the thunderclouds that turn day into night, and the mighty streaks of lightning that emerge from

the massed clouds, flash so naturally against rocks, beaches and the foaming brine that a landsman would be afeared of the sea”, wrote Houbraken in the eighteenth-century.

Porcellis’s significance only becomes fully apparent when one reviews the long line of artists who are indebted to him. They include the greatest artists of the marine genre, such as Simon de Vlieger, Jan van de Capelle, Willem van de Velde the Younger, Ludolf Backhuysen, Jan van Goyen and Jacob van Ruysdael, who in turn inspired the artists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries



Fig. XIV
Jan Porcellis, *Storm*
Oil on panel, 50.5 x 82.5 cm
Signed: *I Persellis*
Formerly Rob Kattenburg Collection



Fig. XV
Simon de Vlieger
Storm with a ship foundering off a rocky coast, a three-master beyond, c. 1635
Oil on panel, 59 x 81 cm
Signed on rock lower center: *S. de Vlieger*
Formerly Rob Kattenburg Collection



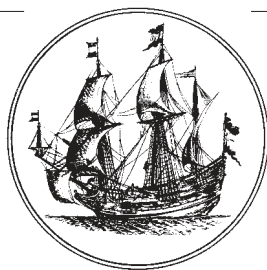
Fig. XVI
Willem van de Velde the Younger
Two English Ships in a Storm near a Rocky Shore ca. 1675
Oil on canvas 32 x 42.5 cm
Rob Kattenburg Collection

Just as during his lifetime so after his death, his works continued to be perceived and admired specifically for their sublime qualities, as described in the long, detailed poem “On a Thunder-storm by Porcellis” by Joachim Oudaan (1628-1692):

*The wind rises higher, the sail swells the rounder with it.
Be careful, helmsman, of the sheet, boasting brought many
To submission, who, with their hearts full of pride
Were ashamed to take in a reef when in distress. Here the waves
are rough
Sailor and master's guest toil so hard they labor
At the rudder and on the deck in order to break the beating waves
on the bows
If one could. The helmsman's pea jacket drowns
While a billow that beats on the stem
Leaps backwards and falls in round droplets,
And makes the sailor's hair like the heads of water-dogs.
A cloud comes from above, which,
Driven on and on by a beam wind, begins suddenly
To pour; it splashes on board and pierces so much the more severely
Through the blue sailor's cap, through boots and rain jackets
Soaking to the skin. To which he pays no heed,
But cries (while the wind roars out so that it booms)
The rudder is forced to leeward, the ship is on a low shore,
Push off, apply your strength. Yet a cool fellow usually sits
On the main deck and watches the game
Although wind punishes and rainshowers beat;
Porcellis likewise does not creep into the forecastle,
But considers the storm calmly (in spite of water, rain, hail and
thunder)
In order to examine in life this raging element,
Which you engrave in thoughts⁷*

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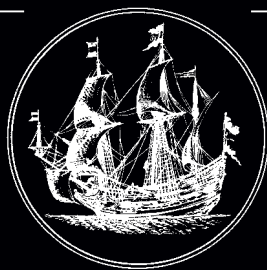
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