

Neer, Aert van der

Also known as

Neer, Aernout van der

Dutch, 1603/1604 - 1677

BIOGRAPHY

Aert (Aernout) van der Neer was probably born in Amsterdam. Documents from later in his life indicate that he was born in 1603 or 1604. He spent his youth near Gorinchem in the south of the Netherlands, where he worked, likely as a steward, for Wilhelmina van Arkel, the widow of the city's highest town official. It is not known when Van der Neer left the Gornichem area or where and with whom he trained. However, by 1629 he was living in Amsterdam and identified as a painter, according to his marriage certificate to Lysbeth Goverts, who he married in Amsterdam's Nieuwe Kerk on March 16 of that year. The couple's six children were all born in Amsterdam. One son, Eglon van der Neer (1634–1703), became a painter.

Although there is no record of an amount paid for even a single painting by Aert van der Neer, it has long been believed that he did not command high prices, as in 1659 the artist began to supplement his income by working as the proprietor of an Amsterdam tavern called "de Graeff van Hollant." His career as a *wyntapper* failed three years later, and on December 12, 1662, he declared bankruptcy. The inventory of his possessions made at the time indicates that most of his paintings were appraised at the low price of five guilders or less. He lived in impoverished conditions during the last years of his life and died in Amsterdam on November 9, 1677.

Van der Neer's earliest known painting, dated 1632 (Národní Galerie, Prague), is a genre scene, a type of subject to which he never returned. During the early years of his career, he painted realistic tonal landscapes and winter scenes inspired by Rafael Govertsz Camphuysen (1597/1598–1657), Esaias van de Velde I (Dutch, 1587 - 1630), and Hendrick Avercamp (Dutch, 1585 - 1634). By the 1640s Van der Neer had begun to specialize in nocturnes, the earliest known of which is dated 1643. It is with his representations of moonlit and snowy landscapes that Van der Neer distinguished himself as one of the most important and innovative Dutch landscape painters. The Dutch cities and villages found in his evocative nocturnal

scenes appear extremely realistic, but these views, as well as his woodland and winter scenes, are, in fact, fanciful re-creations of the Dutch countryside.

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr.

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