

Jan Lievens

A Dutch Master Rediscovered

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Chronology

Friends and Rivals: Jan Lievens and Rembrandt

1606/7

Respectively, Rembrandt van Rijn and Jan Lievens are born in Leiden, a university town and textile center in seventeenth-century Holland

1615

At the age of eight, Lievens studies with Leiden figure and landscape painter Joris van Schooten

1617–19

Lievens moves to Amsterdam for two years to study with renowned history painter Pieter Lastman, under whom Rembrandt will apprentice for six months in 1624/25

1620

Rembrandt enrolls at Leiden University but soon withdraws to study with local painter Jacob Isaacs van Swanenburgh

1620–24

New scholarship suggests that Lievens is in Utrecht between 1620 and 1624; his work shows the profound influence of the Utrecht Caravaggisti, especially Gerrit van Honthorst, Dirck van Baburen, and Hendrick Bruggen (cats. 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15)

1624–25

Rembrandt returns to Leiden and sets himself up as an independent master; the earliest works attributed to him are datable to these years

Late 1620s

Lievens and Rembrandt certainly know each other and may share a studio during this period

1628/29

Lievens meets and insists on painting a portrait of Constantijn Huygens, secretary to Frederik Hendrik, the Prince of Orange; Huygens helps Lievens attain diplomatic and courtly commissions. Lievens paints Rembrandt's portrait; Rembrandt uses Lievens as a model

1628–31

Constantijn Huygens prompts Lievens and Rembrandt into a friendly competition that results in many parallel works between 1628 and 1631: *Samson and Delilah*, *The Raising of Lazarus*, *Christ on the Cross*, and an old man sitting alone in contemplation—Rembrandt's *Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem* and Lievens' *Job in His Misery*. Rembrandt seems to backdate some paintings, making it appear as though he were the initiator rather than the follower (cats. 15, 25, 31, 32)

Huygens praises the work of Lievens and Rembrandt in his autobiography: "Rembrandt is superior to Lievens in judgment and in the representation of lively emotional expression, but Lievens has greater grandeur of invention and boldness than Rembrandt."

1631/32

Rembrandt moves to Amsterdam to begin a successful career as a portrait painter; the remainder of his long career takes place in Amsterdam

1632–35

Lievens visits London, where he works as a portrait painter at the court of King Charles I; Lievens probably serves as one of Anthony van Dyck's assistants, but none of his portraits from this period are known

1634–35

Van Dyck leaves the English court for commissions in the Southern Netherlands, but returns to London after one year and resumes position as court painter

1635–44

Lievens leaves London for Antwerp, perhaps feeling displaced by Van Dyck's return. In the Southern Netherlands, Lievens is influenced by both the subjects and styles of Peter Paul Rubens and Adriaen Brouwer (cats. 35, 36, 37, 39, 40)

1635

Rembrandt produces a group of four tronies based on prints Lievens published in Antwerp, suggesting that Lievens and Rembrandt are in contact after Lievens arrives in Antwerp

1639

Lievens receives commission for *The Magnanimity of Scipio* for the council chamber of the town hall in Leiden; Lievens painted this Rubens-inspired work in Antwerp (fig. 19, on p. 17; original destroyed in 1929)

1639–40

Lievens visits Leiden and resumes contact with Huygens, whom Lievens portrays in a black chalk drawing (cat. 103). Upon completion, Lievens paints *The Sacrifice of Isaac* based on Rembrandt's version of the same subject (cat. 41)

Lievens acquires Antwerp citizenship and marries in a Catholic service, suggesting a conversion to Catholicism during his stay in Antwerp

1642

Rembrandt paints *The Nightwatch*

1644

Perhaps due to financial difficulties, Lievens moves to Amsterdam and produces fashionable portraits that show the influence of Van Dyck

1647

Lievens is invited to participate in the decoration of Huis ten Bosch, a small summer palace of Prince Frederik Hendrik near The Hague. Lievens contributes a large allegory of *The Five Muses* as part of a memorial for the prince (fig. 22 on p. 20)

Late 1640s/early 1650s

Rembrandt's dark, highly personal style continues to fall from favor, while Lievens increasingly attracts illustrious Amsterdam sitters such as Adriaen Trip, Anna Maria van Schurman, and René Descartes (cats. 44, 45)

1653–54

Lievens moves to Berlin to participate in the decoration of the Schloss Oranienburg in Bützow for Frederick Wilhelm von Hohenzollern, Elector of Brandenburg (cat. 50)

1655

In The Hague, Lievens continues to receive important commissions, including one for a lunette painting depicting *Brinio Raised on a Shield* for a chamber in Amsterdam's town hall. Other artists who received commissions for the same room include Govaert Flinck, Jacob Jordaens, Ferdinand Bol, and Rembrandt; Rembrandt's work apparently did not satisfy the burgomasters, because it was installed but removed shortly afterwards (figs. 25 and 26 on p. 23)

1657/58

Rembrandt faces bankruptcy and sells off much of his property and private art collection to pay debts

1659

Lievens returns to Amsterdam for the last time and is recorded there as a citizen in 1660

1664

Lievens travels to Cleves; little is known of this trip or of his work after the mid-1660s

1666

Lievens is once again living in Amsterdam; he begins to suffer from financial difficulties

1669

Rembrandt dies a pauper in Amsterdam

Early 1670s

Lievens returns briefly to The Hague and to Leiden

1674

Lievens dies in poverty in Amsterdam