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Storms and Bright Skies

By Peter Zimonjic, Managing Video Editor and Content Writer, NGC on February 14, 2014

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Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Three Trees* (1643),
etching with drypoint and engraving on laid paper, 21.8 x 28.7 cm; plate: 20.8 x 28 cm. NGC

The [McIntosh Gallery](#) at the University of Western Ontario is hoping a visiting exhibition from the National Gallery of Canada, featuring works by well-known Dutch artists, will bring them a whole new audience.

“If you say Rembrandt, people will come, so we’re using this as an opportunity to bring people here that might not otherwise visit the gallery,” says James Patten, Director and Chief Curator of the McIntosh. “We don’t get a lot of international work coming through London, Ontario, so this is a perfect opportunity for us to bring international content to the community.”

The exhibition *Storms and Bright Skies: Three Centuries of Dutch Landscapes* is organized by the NGC and curated by NGC Assistant Curator of European Prints and Drawings, Sonia Del Re. The exhibition features 65 works on paper, including landscapes by some of the greatest Dutch artists, such as Rembrandt and Jacob van Ruisdael, who “brilliantly contributed to the rise of landscape as a major pictorial genre,” says Del Re.

Most are familiar with Rembrandt’s more famous religious works or portraits, but *Storms and Bright Skies* presents another side of the artist: his skill at depicting naturalistic landscapes. His works on paper also demonstrate just how seriously he took the medium, considering works on paper to be as important as painting.

“Rembrandt’s etched landscapes are skillfully rendered, yet free and personal,” says Del Re.

“Though the views are expansive, Rembrandt has imparted a sense of intimacy to his compositions. The prints in the show, in fact, are based on close observations of identifiable sites, making them as intriguing to seventeenth-century art patrons as they are to contemporary viewers.”

“In bringing together prints and drawings that capture the beauty and character of the Dutch landscape over three centuries, the show demonstrates the significance of landscape to the region’s economic, military and scientific development,” Del Re explains.

Beyond their obvious aesthetic appeal, Patten is hoping the works in the exhibition will interest not just art lovers, but also students of medicine and engineering at Western who are interested in representations of the new technologies that emerged in Holland during its Golden Age.

“Windmills on canals may look quaint to us today, but they were pretty high-tech in their own time,” says Patten. “So we’re engaging our engineering department by offering them tours, and we’re reaching out to all sorts of different groups on campus, and in the community, who will have an interest in this exhibition for different reasons.”

“We’re not a large gallery, and there are certainly many things the National Gallery does that we can’t participate in. But this kind of small, targeted, focused, high-quality exhibition of material that we wouldn’t be able to source in Southwestern Ontario is really a rare opportunity for us,” says Patten.

***Storms and Bright Skies: Three Centuries of Dutch Landscapes* is on view at the McIntosh Gallery at the University of Western Ontario until 5 April 2014.**

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