

# Gallery texts first floor permanent collection The Mesdag Collection

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## Staircase

### Mesdag and The Hague's artistic community

#### Opening of the 30<sup>th</sup> exhibition of the Dutch Drawing Society (Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij), 1905

The Hague Municipal Archives

Hendrik Willem Mesdag was one of the founders of the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij in 1876. This society organised annual sale exhibitions of watercolours. From left to right seated: Sientje Mesdag-van Houten, Jozef Israëls and Hendrik Willem Mesdag; and standing: Albert Roelofs, Johan Hendrik van Mastenbroek, Willem Roelofs Jr., Bernard Blommers, Jan van Essen, Willem Maris, Herman van der Weele, Frederik van Rossum du Chattel, Floris Arntzenius and Isaac Israëls.

#### Mesdag with a group of people at the Pro-Boer exhibition, 1902

Mesdag and Jozef Israëls initiated the extensive, international pro-Boer exhibition that was held in Scheveningen in 1902. Close to 5000 works were on view at this lottery-exhibition. The proceeds went to the widows and orphans of the South-African Boers who were killed in the Second Boer War (1899-1902). After the exhibition, Mesdag (at the back on the right in the photo) bought August Allebé's painting *An old friend*, which is hanging to his right. It is still in The Mesdag Collection.

#### Queen Wilhelmina and the French president Armand Fallières, 1911

The Hague Municipal Archives

The Dutch queen Wilhelmina and the French president toured The Hague during a state visit in July 1911. Their itinerary included a visit to the Mesdag Museum.

#### The Funeral of Jacob Maris, 1899

The Hague Municipal Archives

Jacob Maris (1837-1899) was one of the leading painters of the Hague School. Mesdag bought several works by him. When Maris died in August 1899, Mesdag – as chairman of the artists' society Pulchri Studio – gave a funeral oration. From left to right: Hendrik Willem Mesdag, Floris Arntzenius, Taco Mesdag and Jozef Israëls.

## Hallway

Windowsill

### Vases, undated

earthenware

China

The remarkable colour of these three Chinese vases is a result of the flambé technique, in which two layers of glaze flow together to create a flaming pattern. One layer includes copper, giving the vases a special glow. This kind of Chinese pottery became extremely popular in Europe in the late 19th century. The vase at the far right features in several of Sientje Mesdag's still lifes.

Display case at righthand:

Theo Colenbrander (1841-1930)

**'Green pattern' turban lidded vases and cups, 1888**

Theo Colenbrander (1841-1930)

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**Plate, 1888**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**'Cabbage' plate, 1886**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**Two 'Black ground', swan-necks, 1888**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**Plate with stylized thistle decoration, 1886**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

Display case at lefthand

**Vase, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

bronze

Japan

**Vase, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

bronze

Japan

**Seated figures, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

brass alloy

**Trivet, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

brass alloy

**Dish, second half 19<sup>th</sup> century**

cloisonné

Japan

**Dish, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

cloisonné

Japan

**Incense burner, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

bronze

Japan

**First Gallery**

## Dutch art

Mesdag collected primarily art by Dutch painters of the Hague School, to which he also must be counted. This is the name given to a group of artists, who in the last decades of the 19th century ventured from their hometown, The Hague, into the countryside, to record the unspoilt landscape and traditional village life.

Following the lead of the French Barbizon School painters, whom they greatly admired, these artists too regularly worked out of doors. With a muted palette and loose brushwork, the Hague School artists captured the atmosphere evoked by the landscape as well as the effects of light of a given moment.

### **Practising the signal, 1881**

Isaac Israels (1865-1934)

oil on panel

### **Sentry, 1880**

George Hendrik Breitner (1857-1923)

oil on canvas

As a young artist Breitner was fascinated by the military exercises held in the dunes outside The Hague. He sketched the mounted artillery in action, and also made more static studies of horsemen and their steeds, like this work. The artist clearly had a gift for painting horses. Mesdag asked him to portray the animals in his *Panorama*, a year later, in 1881.

### **Building the new harbour at Enkhuizen, 1885-1886**

Hendrik Willem Mesdag (1831-1915)

oil on canvas

In this expansive picture, Mesdag depicted the area in Enkhuizen where a railway link to Amsterdam and a harbour for the ferry to Stavoren were being constructed in 1885-1886. The minutely rendered labourers, groups of onlookers and steam trains underscore the painting's documentary character. Mesdag painted this – for him exceptionally – contemporary subject in a modern technique, using both matt and transparent paint.

### **On the beach, 1869**

Alfred Verwee (1838-1895)

oil on canvas

The Belgian animal painter Verwee made this painting on commission for his friend Mesdag. However, the latter was not entirely pleased with the result: 'The white horse has some good qualities, but I feel its head and neck are too large in proportion to its hindquarters.'

### **The kitchen princess, 1872**

Matthijs Maris (1839-1917)

oil on canvas

### **Fish Market, c. 1884-1885**

Anton Mauve (1838-1888)

oil on canvas

### **The thaw, before 1891**

Constant Gabriël (1828-1903)  
oil on canvas

### **Alone, c. 1880-1881**

Jozef Israëls (1824-1911)  
oil on canvas

Jozef Israëls submitted to the Paris Salon this large and gripping scene of a devastated man seated near his deceased wife. The clock at the right, and the Bible and extinguished candle on the shelf above the head of the widower symbolise the finiteness of life. Such a highly narrative painting is an exception in the Mesdags' collection.

### **Scheveningen woman, undated**

David Artz (1837-1890)  
oil on panel

Along with her two children, a fisherman's wife stands on a dune gazing out to sea, probably waiting for her husband to come home. Village life was an important theme for David Artz. This deftly painted panel is an impression of daily existence in the fishing community, which was never free of the fear that the men might not return.

### **The peat barge, c. 1874**

Constant Gabriëls (1828-1903)  
oil on canvas

### **On the lookout, c. 1878**

Jacob Maris (1837-1899)  
oil on canvas

### **The Bride, 1868-1869**

Matthijs Maris (1839-1917)  
oil on canvas

The flat and stylised rendering of this bride makes her seem intangible and far removed from reality. Maris probably wanted to emphasise the girl's innocence and give expression to her inner world. The subdued palette and the transparent layers of paint contribute to the delicacy of the image.

## **Hallway**

Display case:

Theo Colenbrander (1841-1930)

### **'Rose' covered vases, 1886**

earthenware  
Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

### **Lidded vases, 1886**

earthenware  
Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**Vases, 1886**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**Hibachi braziers, 19th century**

bronze

Japan

**Plates, 1886**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**Dish, 17th century**

brass alloy

Flanders

**Vases, undated**

brass alloy, enamel

China

**Flower pot, 1895**

Sam Schellink (1876-1958)

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

Theo Colenbrander (1841-1930):

**Bowls, 1886**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**'Star' bowl, 1888**

earthenware

Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, The Hague

**Ritual Vessel, 19th century**

geelkoperlegering

China

Windowsill**Vases, second half 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware

Japan

Second display case:

Theo Colenbrander (1841-1930)

Top, left to right**Incense burner, 19th century**

bronze

Japan

**Sake flask, second half 19th century**

earthenware

Japan

**Tea bowl, 1818-1842**

Raku earthenware

Japan

**Tea bowl, 18th century**

earthenware

Japan

**Bowl, second half 19th century**

earthenware

Japan

**Incense burners, second half 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware

Japan

**Helmets, 18th century**

iron, lacquer, silk, silver

Japan

**Dagger, second half 19th century**

ivory, brass, steel

Japan

**Incense burners, second half 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware

Japan

**Dish, second half 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware

Japan

**Box, 19th century**

Kyoto Satsuma earthenware

Japan

**Vase, second half 19th century**

earthenware

Japan

**Ritual staff of a dervish, undated**

iron alloy

Iran

### **Bowls, 19th century**

Aode Kutani porcelain  
Japan

### **Bowl, second half 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware  
Japan

### **Pot, second half 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware  
Japan

## **Second Gallery**

### **Moors at Vries, before 1899**

Taco Mesdag (1829-1902)  
oil on canvas

Taco Mesdag, Hendrik Willem's older brother, was also a collector and painter. He spent the summers painting in Vries, a village in the province of Drenthe, where he had a farm. The village church is visible in the distance at the right in this sweeping heathland. Anton Mauve made his painting *Near Vries* in the same area (on view on the second floor).

### **Landscape with sheep, 1870**

Charles Emile Jacque (1813-1894)  
oil on carton

### **In the stable, 1860**

Anton Mauve (1838-1888)  
oil on panel

## **Artistic affinity**

Paintings from the Hague School and the French Barbizon School form the centre of gravity of Mesdag's collection. The Dutch painters followed in the footsteps of their French colleagues and shared with them a preference for straightforward, unaffected impressions of nature.

Mesdag demonstrated the ties between the two schools by hanging their paintings side by side on the wall. He disliked convention, preferring to follow his own taste. For example, he placed rapidly executed studies next to finished canvases. Mesdag sought the affinity between the artists in terms of their palette, subject matter and technique. The presentation in this room follows Mesdag's principles.

### **Souvenir of the fortifications of Arras, c. 1865-1870**

Camille Corot (1796-1875)  
oil on panel

### **View of the Mediterranean, at Maguelonne, 1858**

Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)  
oil on canvas / Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

(Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

### **At the farm, Noorden, 1880**

Willem Roelofs (1822-1897)  
oil on canvas on panel

### **Lakes near Kortenhoef, c. 1880**

Willem Roelofs (1822-1897)  
oil on canvas on panel

This oil sketch by Mesdag's former teacher Willem Roelofs was clearly made out of doors. It is swiftly and loosely painted. Moreover, the little holes left by the nails with which the canvas was tacked to the portable paint box are visible along the edges. This work gives an informal impression of a crisp day in a vast lake district.

### **Mill, 1879**

Jacob Maris (1837-1899)  
oil on canvas

Jacob Maris was one of the leading painters of the Hague School. With this work he aligned himself with the 17th-century tradition of windmill painting. Due to the low vantage point, the mill stands out strongly against the sky as an imposing structure in the middle of the flat landscape.

### **The Ru de Valmondois, c. 1870-1875**

Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878)  
oil on canvas

### **The poacher, c. 1857-1858**

Alexandre Gabriël Decamps (1803-1860)  
oil on canvas

### **In the forest of Fontainebleau, c. 1865-1870**

Díaz de la Peña (1807-1876)  
oil on paper on panel

### **An old friend, 1870**

Augustus Allebé (1838-1927)  
oil on panel

This painting is only half of the original panel, which August Allebé presumably sawed in two himself. In this part we see a museum attendant. The other part, showing museum visitors, is in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Allebé depicted the texture of the marble, the feather duster and the shoes of the man very precisely and convincingly.

### **Felling timber, 1868**

Hippolyte Boulenger (1837-1874)  
oil on canvas

### **Fisherman's wife, c. 1848**

Jean-François Millet (1814-1875)  
oil on canvas

**Thunderstorm, 1881**

Théophile de Bock (1851-1904)  
oil on canvas

**Brook in the dunes, c. 1854**

Camille Corot (1796-1875)  
oil on panel

**A stable, n.d.**

Charles Emile Jacque (1813-1894)  
oil on panel

**Morning in the dunes at Heist, 1869**

Alfred Verwee (1838-1895)  
oil on canvas

The animal painter Alfred Verwee usually painted along the coast of Belgium. He made this canvas - commissioned by Mesdag - in the dunes near Heist. Verwee's rendering of the wool of the sheep is very realistic. However, the artist was dissatisfied with the result, and from then on painted mostly cows.

**Hallway**

Display case righthand:

**Kettle, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

bronze  
Japan

**Kettle, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

bronze  
Japan

**Vase, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

brass alloy  
China

**Vaas, ongedateerd**

brass alloy, iron alloy  
Iran

**Vase, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

bronze  
Japan

**Vase, undated**

brass alloy  
Iran

**Vaas, 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw**

geelkoperlegering

China

**Small spoon, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

brass alloy

**Small bowl, n.d.**

iron alloy, gold

**Sprinklers, n.d.**

iron alloy, gold

**Portable brazier, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

brass alloy

Japan

**Kettle, n.d.**

copper alloy, pewter

Iran

windowsill

**Vase, n.d.**

earthenware

**Tiles, 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century**

Damascus earthenware

Syria

Second display case

**Tea pot, second half 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Satsuma earthenware

Japan

**Ewer, second half 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Satsuma earthenware

Japan

**Tea pot, 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933):

**Vase, 1901-1905**

glass

**Vase, 1896-1900**

glass

**Bowl, second half 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Satsuma earthenware

Japan

Imura Hikojirō:

**Bowl, c. 1890**

Yokohama Etsuke earthenware  
Japan

**Bowl, second half 19th century**

earthenware  
Japan

**Vase, 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware  
Japan

**Bowl, second half 19th century**

Aode kutani porcelain  
Japan

**Incense burner, second half 19th century**

Satsuma earthenware

**Bowl, 19th century**

Kutani porcelain  
Japan

## Third Gallery

### French art

Over the years Mesdag assembled an extensive collection of 19th-century French art, which to this day is the largest and most important of its kind outside France. Its core consists of masterpieces of the Barbizon School. This was an important artists' colony located southeast of Paris and named after the village of Barbizon, which had grown into a centre of artistic innovation in the years 1830-1840.

The painters of the Barbizon School shared an aversion to the type of idealised landscape favoured by their precursors. They preferred to capture a personal, everyday image of the landscape and peasant life and worked mostly 'en plein air' – outdoors – in order to record their impressions directly.

**Still life, c. 1860-1865**

Jean-François Millet (1814-1875)  
oil on canvas

**A path in St.-Cloud, 1862**

Camille Corot (1796-1875)  
oil on canvas

Camille Corot painted this intimate and personal interpretation of a shady path with a fleet handling of the brush. The stylised rendering of the trees, built up of layers of transparent paint, is distinctly modern. Corot's palette, too, can be considered progressive. He applied dabs of paint in primary colours, such as red in the tree trunk in the foreground.

### **Massacre of the Innocents, 1847**

Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867)

oil on canvas

While out on a walk, Rousseau came upon woodchoppers cutting down large, ancient oak trees. The outraged artist made a sketch of this scene on the spot, which he worked out into this large painting in his atelier the following day. In the end, he never completed the painting but kept it in memory of the 'massacre' in the forest.

### **Still life with apples, 1872**

Gustave Courbet (1819-1877)

oil on canvas

### **Return from the market, c. 1859-1860**

Constant Troyon (1810-1865)

oil on canvas

### **Brook in the forest of Fontainebleau, 1849**

Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867)

oil on panel

### **Landscape with an angler, c. 1865-1870**

Camille Corot (1796-1875)

oil on canvas on panel

### **Three windmills, c. 1814-1843**

Georges Michel (1763-1843)

oil on canvas

Mesdag was one of the first to appreciate the work of Georges Michel. As the Dutch art critic Vosmaer wrote in 1888: 'Mr Mesdag is probably the only person in the Netherlands to own a work by Georges Michel, who died in 1842 [sic], the forerunner of the new French landscape painters, long unknown and only later recognised as a pioneer'. This dramatic expanse under a threatening sky recalls 17th-century landscapes by Jacob van Ruisdael.

### **Landscape with a horseman, c. 1865-1870**

Camille Corot (1796-1875)

oil on canvas on panel

### **Le Crottoy, 1865-1872**

Jules Dupré (1811-1889)

olieverf op doek

### **Cliffs near Villerville-sur-Mer, 1864-1872**

Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878)

oil on canvas

### **Banks of the Oise, 1872**

Charles-François Daubigny (1817-1878)

oil on panel