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Abraham Bloemaert's (1566-1651) *Drunken Artist (Figure 1)* is a sepia drawing which depicts an artist drunkenly relaxing after painting a landscape portrait outside. Its date is unknown as it was unusual for an artist to date a drawing such as this. By focusing on the execution, detail and content of *Drunken Artist* this study will make a case this drawing comes from the latter part of Bloemaert's oeuvre. Bloemaert's life and career spanned a major transition within the art world as Mannerism was slowly phased out in favor of the Baroque style. The introduction of the Baroque influenced numerous artists who adapted their styles in response to this major transition taking place. Abraham Bloemaert's life spanned this transitory phase, as a young boy he was taught in the Mannerist style and his major works early on in his career are reflective on this upbringing as their subject matter solely centers on religious and mythological scenes. Around 1615 Bloemaert's style shifted as his subject matters broadened to include everyday scenes, landscapes and nonreligious stories. Bloemaert's transition into the Baroque significantly altered his style creating two distinct halves to his career. As posed earlier this study will argue *Drunken Artist* comes from the latter half of Bloemaert's career, when he adopted a Baroque style. This study will focus on the detail and treatment of this drawing in comparison to other drawings from Bloemaert's career, as well as the subject matter of a drunken artist which would be unheard of in Mannerism.

Bloemaert used preparatory drawings throughout his career to help guide his painting; he also created study drawings which were never intended to be used for paintings. Even as Bloemaert entered into a phase where he was heavily influence by Caravaggio, in the 1620's, he still continued to creat drawings until the end of his career in 1651.¹ Bloemaert and the school he developed in Utrecht highly valued creating preparatory drawings as evidenced by the plethora of drawings in existence attributed to Bloemaert. In the early stage of Bloemaert's career drawings seemed to

¹ "Bloemaert, Abraham" The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists. Ed Ian Chilvers. Oxford University Press 2009 Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press.

hold a higher value for him as they were his main source of artistic practice. Abraham's main instruction came when he was sent to Paris from 1582-1585 to study with Master Herry and Hieronymus Francken.² In 1591 Bloemaert produced his first major piece, *Apollo and Diana Punishing Niobe by Killing Her Children*. From 1585-1591 Bloemaert utilized drawing heavily to practice his skills as he was awaiting his first major commission. Early in Bloemaert's life, drawings served as a tool to hone his artistic skills.

Jaap Bolten has identified a group of drawings which have been attributed to this early period in Bloemaert's career when he worked through drawings to sharpen his skills (1585-1591).³ This group depicted mainly landscape drawings from inside Utrecht and the surrounding farmlands. These drawings have been carefully constructed as Bloemaert was thinking about shading and light, along with structural forms. *Figure 2* highlights the detail and time Bloemaert has put into the creation of these early drawings. The varied degrees of shading around the house door and the light cast by the dead tree indicate that Bloemaert has taken great time to observe and create this scene. Compared to *Figure 1* of the *Drunken Artist*, light is not a major consideration as shadows appear sporadically. A second major difference between the two drawings is the detail of texture and form put into the drawings. In *Figure 2, Farmhouse and Yard*, a wide variety of textures ranging from piled hay to a shingled roof appear; almost every surface has its own distinct texture. *Drunken Artist* lacks this attention to detail as numerous surfaces' textures are not considered at all and are given a scribble to fill the space. *Drunken Artist* does not belong to this group of early Bloemaert drawings as it lacks the same detail and attention which this early group of drawings received. This

² Walter Liedtke, *Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. Metropolitan Museum of Art: New York, 2007, 40.

³ Jaap Bolten, "The Beginnings of Abraham Bloemaert's Artistic Career" *Master Drawings* Vol. 36, no. 1 (Spring, 1998): pp 17-25.

group of early drawings displayed how Bloemaert was honing his skills, as texture and light were major focuses. The focus within *Drunken Artist* is centered on the subject matter, not on the execution and form.

Later into Bloemaert's career he was appointed as the dean of the painter's guild in Utrecht, where he took on the role of teacher for many art students.⁴ His role as dean made preparatory art drawings very important, as students needed them to study. After his death his son published a collection of his drawings which would continue to be used as an instructional book until the nineteenth century. The demand for his drawings caused him to create a wide variety of drawings, to display a large variety of imagery for his students. His studies extended from landscape scenes, to Utrecht's architecture and the human form. This wide variety of imagery opens up the possibility that *Drunken Artist* could fit into these types of drawings; however there are some other factors which would make it seem unlikely it was intended for study. *Figure 3* shows a typical preparatory drawing by Bloemaert. This drawing would be used as a tool for young artists because it displayed important aspects of the human form; the multiple angles stress Bloemaert's focus on form and shape. Comparatively *Drunken Artist* only displays one angle. This would not be unique for a landscape study, however the emphasis of the drawing is not placed on the landscape; most of the attention is put into rendering the reclining artist. The lack of detail put into the piece along with its size would make it unlikely it was intended to be grouped amongst other drawings intended for study by students.

Early on in Bloemaert's career (1591-1615) his works were centered on biblical and mythological stories, as was common in mannerist artwork. This is exemplified by *Adam and Eve* which was created in 1604 (*Figure 4*). This painting exemplifies the mannerist style as it is intended

⁴ Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volumes 1-2, 40

to make the viewer contemplate original sin through a multitude of characters. Both human and animal figures in the image symbolize different aspects of Eve's thought process when taking from the tree of knowledge. This complex arrangement is synonymous with the mannerist style, as it is intended to make the viewer think about not just what is depicted. *Drunken Artist* does not have this same level of complexity, at its core the drawing centers on one figure whose intents are pretty obvious. This would lead one to consider that this drawing was perhaps from the latter period in Bloemaert's career as the intent is radically different.

During the second half of Bloemaert's career (1620-1651) he adopted more Baroque tendencies which include a change in the subject matter of his pieces. In the early part of his career Bloemaert produced only biblical and mythological paintings, however around 1615 and into the 1620's Bloemaert broadened his subject matters and began including locals and non-biblical subjects in his art. One example of this shift is *Head of an Old Man* (Figure 5) which was painted in 1639.⁵ This piece is very straightforward featuring only one subject; this is a breakaway from the mannerist style which focused on complex and intricate images. The portrait is not given a name which could make it possible that Bloemaert created the piece without a specific commission. Another piece which demonstrates Bloemaert's transition is *A Man with a Dog in a Landscape* (Figure 6) which is dated circa 1630.⁶ This work features two ordinary figures of a man and his dog which would be unusual in a mannerist work. Again the influences of the Baroque style are evident in Bloemaert's work as he produced many genre paintings in the second part of his career. *Drunken Artist* would seem to fit into this same style of depiction seen during the latter half of Bloemaert's career, as he began to depict subjects who did not have religious or mythological significance.

Drunken Artist is a piece which features a nameless subject in an ordinary scene. This type of

⁵ "Bloemaert, Abraham" Oxford University Press.

⁶ "Bloemaert, Abraham" Oxford University Press.

depiction does not fit into the mannerist style as subjects were valued by their recognition in mannerist pieces. Nameless actors feature much more prominently in Baroque styled works as the complex symbolism behind the figures no longer became as important. *Drunken Artist's* unflattering depiction of an artist would also be out of place in mannerist works, as prior to the introduction of the Baroque, artist only depicted other artists to elevate either the individual or the skill. Clearly Bloemaert does not intend either of these as drinking was looked down upon in the Dutch Republic. The controversial nature of *Drunken Artist* again makes the case it should belong in the Baroque influenced part of Bloemaert's career. Unlike previous styles the Baroque was often intended to challenge conceptions of what could be depicted in art. *Drunken Artist* was a piece which would have pushed against the notions of what was acceptable to depict.

Bloemaert produced over 1500 drawings during his career which makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly where *Drunken Artist* should be placed in terms of Bloemaert's overall career.⁷ From the beginning until the end of his career, Bloemaert frequently produced study and preparatory drawings of all kinds of subjects. Early on in 1585 Bloemaert honed his art skills by drawing scenes from around his home in Utrecht. These types of drawings were intended to aid in studying; they would continue throughout his career, taking special importance during his time as dean of the art guild in Utrecht. This is evidenced by a collection published by his son who included hundreds of drawings intended to help young artists refine their drawing skills.⁸ This initially does not help when trying to figure out when the *Drunken Artist* sketch was produced. What needs to be considered, however, is that all these aforementioned drawings were study pieces. *Drunken Artist* does not have the same attention to form and texture as other drawings produced by Bloemaert, which means that he most likely did not create the piece to perfect his craft. This leads one to look

⁷ Liedtke, *Dutch Paintings*, 41.

⁸ "Bloemaert, Abraham" Oxford University Press.

at the subject matter of the piece. Early in Bloemaert's career he produced pieces of biblical or mythological origins which coincided with the mannerist style. Later into the 1610's Bloemaert adapted to the Baroque style, specifically Caravaggio which was coming out of Italy. This meant expanding his subject matter. This seems the most likely period to fit *Drunken Artist* into. Genre scenes became more frequent in Bloemaert's productions, as art no longer had to be centered solely on complex biblical narratives. This change allowed artists greater freedom in what they produced. Bloemaert took advantage of this shift to produce *Drunken Artist*.



Figure 1⁹

⁹ Fleming Museum 1956.34.5

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1554326?origin=JSTOR-pdf> *Figure 2*¹⁰

<http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=51&handle=li> *Figure 3*¹¹

¹⁰ Bolten, "Beginnings," 19.

¹¹ "Three Studies of Women" Getty Museum, The J. Paul Getty Trust.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/adam-and-eve-45277> Figure 4¹²

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/head-of-an-old-man-131278> Figure 5¹³

¹² "Bloemaert, Abraham" Oxford University Press.

¹³ "Bloemaert, Abraham" Oxford University Press.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/a-man-with-a-dog-in-a-landscape-204487>
Figure 6¹⁴

¹⁴ "Bloemaert, Abraham" Oxford University Press.