

Sabbatical A Leave Report for Spring 2018

Maureen Moore

17th Century Dutch Masters at the Crocker Art Museum

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Abstract

During the Spring 2018 semester I completed a sabbatical leave which included sixteen weeks in the European Union and the United Kingdom. My goal was to research the lives of twenty Dutch artists whose works are held in the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento. The artists' works are in the European wing of the museum and include: Gerrit van Honthorst, Pieter van Bloeman, Thomas Willeboirts (Bosschoert), Andries Dirckszoon Both, Hendrickszoon Bogaert, Nicholaes Maes, Pieter Janszoon Quast, Cornelius Lelienbergh, Jan Davidszoon de Heem, Maria van Oosterwijck, Klaes Molenaar, Simon de Vlieger, Wouter Knijff, Adrien van de Venne, David de Heem I, Willem Claeszoon Heda, Pieter Brueghel the Younger, Frans Francken the Younger, Jan Brueghel the Elder and Jan Brueghel the Younger.

As a result of this sabbatical, I have accomplished all of my goals: 1) to survey and gather primary and secondary information about 17th century Dutch artists whose works are held in the Crocker Art Museum; 2) to produce a resource for students and the community to enhance understanding about the original collection of Dutch artists held at the Crocker Art Museum; and 3) to revitalize my teaching through primary and secondary source research on the Dutch artists held at the Crocker, and to incorporate that research into my Humanities courses (particularly HUM 310).

The information obtained through this sabbatical project is presented online via a blog and in my Humanities courses via lecture and Canvas, the learning management system. Due to the volume of materials gathered, I will continue to add to the online and lecture aspects of this project in the weeks, months and years ahead. Additionally, I am scheduled through the Professional Development Committee to present a workshop on my research during Flex activities in January 2019. At present I am working on a monograph about the relationship between Margaret Crocker and Maria van Oosterwijck, one of the subject artists and the only female artist in the original collection of twenty artists.

Overview

Context: In the 1870s, Margaret Crocker, wife of Judge E.B. Crocker of early Sacramento fame, began collecting art while on a series of Grand Tours of Europe. Included amongst the 700 paintings, porcelains, sculptures and textiles that Crocker initially purchased was a large grouping of 17th century Dutch paintings, some painted by well-known artists such as Nicolaes Maes, who studied under Rembrandt van Rijn, and Gerrit van Honthorst, who established himself in the patronage system by working for illustrious patrons such as Cosimo II de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany and Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia, sister of King Charles I of England.

In the 1870s when Margaret Crocker was purchasing these works, a new artistic style known as Impressionism was emerging on the world stage. Impressionism was a compelling style that elbowed out the older portraiture and still-life images by the 17th century Dutch masters. Additionally, a war between France and Germany – the Franco-Prussian War – was just concluding. Artists and their agents were selling art at fire sale prices. As a consequence, Crocker was able to purchase grand works at bargain rates. These paintings by the Dutch masters served as the foundation for the Crocker collection.

Today, Margaret Crocker's collection is housed in the Crocker Art Museum at 3rd and O Streets in downtown Sacramento. This is a world class museum, upgraded recently by an expansive new wing which has allowed many older works in the museum's collection to be brought out of the basement and placed on display for the first time in many decades. It is a fine museum that the Sacramento region takes great pride in.

For more than 20 years, I have been requiring students in Humanities 310 classes to visit the Crocker Art Museum. Typically, I teach three sections of this course each semester and with course enrollment at 45 students, about 270 students each year are required through my Humanities curriculum to attend this museum. Their assignment is to locate one work of art in the European collection, of which the 17th century Dutch collection is a significant part. After viewing the work of their choice, each student is required to perform research on the artist and then write a summary of their visit and the research

they performed. Over the years, I have discovered that although the Dutch artists are well known internationally and their art is a popular choice with the students, very little has been written about many of these artists that can effectively serve as a resource for the research/writing portion of this activity. Students are stymied by the lack of information and it diminishes their overall experience at the museum and the assignment. This project aims to rectify that problem by providing students more information in the form of primary and secondary documents to assist them in their research.

Results of the Project

Objective 1) to survey and gather primary and secondary information about 17th century Dutch artists whose works are held in the Crocker Art Museum:

As proposed, I successfully surveyed and gathered primary and secondary information on twenty artists who originated in the Low Countries region of Northern Europe and whose works are now held in collection at the Crocker Art Museum. This survey included visiting archives such as the Stadsarchief Delft (City Archives of Delft) and the Nederalands Instituut voor

Kunstgeschiedenis, Den Haag (Netherlands Institute for Art History in The Hague), whereby I accessed birth, death, marriage and land records as they related to the artists under study.

Accessing these documents required collaboration with colleagues in the field, including archival staff librarians and academicians fluent in reading early modern Dutch handwriting. In all I performed research at the two institutions listed above as well as Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, Huygens' Hofwijck in Voorburg, Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp, Stadsmuseum Gent in Ghent, and the British Library in London.

Working with primary source documents such as these is part of an emerging field of study known as the Digital Humanities, which includes accessing and interrogating old documents in new ways. Also, there is a spatial dimension to performing this research which integrates the information obtained in land records, for example, and locating those places in space as they exist today. This is a form of geo-spatial primary source gathering, for which examples on Maria van Oosterwijck can be found here <http://pinnaclesandthepedestrian.blogspot.com/2018/01/meet-maria-van-oosterwijck.html> and here <http://pinnaclesandthepedestrian.blogspot.com/2018/01/maria-van-oosterwijck-part-2.html> and here <http://pinnaclesandthepedestrian.blogspot.com/2018/01/a-summary-at-three-weeks-part-ii->

[study.html](#). Van Oosterwijck, in particular, is an interesting artist for several reasons: she is one of only a handful of independent female artists producing art for a living in the 17th century Holland; extensive and well-kept primary source documents have allowed me to determine where she lived in Delft, Nootdorp, Voorburg and Amsterdam and through geo-spatial methodology I was able to locate buildings where she lived and worked and went to church, some of which honor or designate her contribution to this day. Because there is an extensive body of primary source documents on Van Oosterwijck and her family, I continue to research and evaluate these materials with a plan for publishing a collated version in a monograph in 2020. The work I did regarding Maria van Oosterwijck could not have been completed without the assistance of Noud Janssen, art historian and biographer.

Along with locating primary source documents and pursuing geo-spatial recognition of sites, I also conducted interviews with museum curators, academics, linguists and, in a couple of instances, volunteers at regional museums. These interviews provided a wealth of secondary source information, much of it later corroborated either through other interviews, literature review or archival documents. Transcribing interviews and synthesizing the information obtained in those interviews with the primary source documents has led to many pleasant surprises and a few overturned theories. One example of the re-interrogation of previously held knowledge can be found here <http://pinnaclesandthepedestrian.blogspot.com/2018/03/more-about-pieter-janszoon-quast.html> .

Objective 2) to produce a resource for students and the community to enhance understanding about the original collection of Dutch artists held at the Crocker Art Museum:

As proposed, I produced an online resource for CRC students and the community by way of blogging, which begins here <http://pinnaclesandthepedestrian.blogspot.com/2017/12/art-cheese-and-walk.html> . This resource aims to acquaint students and the community with the artists and the places where the artists lived and worked. In some instances, I also used oral interviews and newspaper archives, along with the archives that I accessed in the Low Countries. One example of my integration of newspaper archives with the subject can be found here <http://pinnaclesandthepedestrian.blogspot.com/2018/01/tourism-and-crocker-mosaic-table.html> . As I continue to evaluate and employ the materials I gathered, I have plans to produce a website featuring the twenty artists from the Crocker, along with relevant information about where they

lived, worked and died. The biggest hurdle to completing this aspect of the work is my own deficiencies with technology. Meanwhile, several future blog posts are planned, including an interview with the curator of the house of Constantine Huygens and another with the pastor of the church Maria van Oosterwijck attended as a child. This aspect of the sabbatical project – the online resource – is most certainly a work in progress.

Objective 3) to revitalize my teaching through primary and secondary source research on the Dutch artists held at the Crocker, and to incorporate that research into my Humanities courses (particularly HUM 310):

Participation in this research has revitalized my teaching, particularly in HUM 310 which is a class containing a unit that features Dutch artists in the 16th and 17th centuries. As recently as last week I was lecturing to classes about some of the artists I researched during this sabbatical, most notably the Brueghel family and their prominence as Flemish Mannerists in the post-Protestant Reformation period. As a result of this research in the cities where the Brueghels lived and worked, and a review of the literature (which can be found here <http://pinnaclesandthepedestrian.blogspot.com/2018/01/a-note-about-sources.html>), I am confident that I am more capable of delivering quality instruction to our students in this field of art history. As reported previously, I will be sharing some of my research with faculty at a flex workshop in January 2019.

Summary of the Sabbatical Leave Results and Critique of the Leave

This sabbatical leave has been of benefit to me as it provided an opportunity to spend a semester engaged in primary and secondary research on twenty Dutch artists whose works are held at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento. Some of the research I performed is currently available online; other aspects of the project are being disseminated in my classes this semester, and will continue to be presented in future semesters; while still other portions of my work are forthcoming either online or through publication. Students have greater access to information regarding the artists they research at the Crocker. As well, students are exposed to ideas about travel as research and the value of primary source research through this project. This project has benefitted students by providing them with thorough and accurate information about the daily lives of twenty artists. It models research techniques and activities for students in a field work environment. It provides students with inspiration to pursue life-long learning, thereby enhancing the quality of lives far beyond the degree or major a student receives. This project also broadens CRC students' understanding of an important community resource – the Crocker Art Museum – and aids students in deeper interactions with that community resource. And, finally, this project has strengthened CRC's collaboration with the Crocker Art Museum as I continue to work in the archives of the Crocker, transcribing the letters and documents of Margaret Crocker in preparation for a monograph publication in 2020.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to CRC President Ed Bush and the Professional Standards Committee for granting this sabbatical project. Without their support this research, and the collegial relationships I made with colleagues in the EU and UK, would not have been possible. Thank you.