– THE STROSSMAYER GALLERY THROUGH WORDS AND IMAGES –

7

THE LANDSCAPES OF OLD MASTERS

Ivana Gržina
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The Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts | The Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters

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PREFACE

We are presenting the first booklet from the publication series *The Strossmayer Gallery through words and images*, conceived of as a series of popular editions on specific subjects from the area of the history of style, iconography, painting techniques, and conservation, illustrated through examples of selected works from the holdings of the Strossmayer Gallery. Therefore, this publication could also serve as a kind of guide through the Gallery's permanent collection, as well as through its temporary exhibitions. Although we would like this edition to be interesting and useful to the widest possible audience, it is primarily intended for high school students and their teachers. Younger visitors to the Gallery will, however, require help from more experienced persons in order to interpret its contents. The text of this edition is based on selected expert and scientific literature, whose subject matter is relevant for this purpose. Where methodology is concerned, it is modeled after similar editions by renowned museums from around the world, as well as after various educational materials and resources for teachers offered on their websites. Readers especially interested in this topic are invited to peruse the select bibliography.

If we were to play around with words that mean 'landscape' in the widest possible sense, we could say that the landscape of the Strossmayer Gallery abounds in paintings by the Old Masters, which include numerous landscapes. This edition will, therefore, shape a partial image of the Gallery's landscape, as it will deal with landscape paintings from its holdings. Based on examples from the permanent collection, as well as on certain artworks unavailable to the general public, the text will interpret the history of landscape painting through a time span from the first decades of the 15th to the final decades of the 19th century.

An anecdote about the genesis of landscape painting, found in an English treatise from the 17th century, tells the story of an art lover from the City of Antwerp who visited his friend, a painter, on his journey home from the Duchy of Liege and the Forest of Ardennes, recounting tales from his travels. His friend the painter was so enamored by the descriptions of the landscapes he had encountered, the mountain ranges, old castles, and other structures on the way, that he created a painting of those lands, based on his friend's stories. His painting was even more evocative than the stories themselves. The image was so convincing that his friend felt as if he had accompanied him on his journey. The painting brought fame to the painter, causing others to imitate him...
Let this intriguing story serve as an introduction to our joint exploration of the landscapes in, and of, the Strossmayer Gallery!

Fig. 1 / Unknown Dutch painter, 17th c. / *Crossing the river* / oil on panel, 41,4 × 48,7 cm / inv. no. SG-548

INTRODUCTION

It is a complex matter to simply and unambiguously define the meaning of the concept *landscape*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "all the visible features of an area of land, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal". In the field of geography, this term denotes a natural area of land that stands out from the rest of the environment due to its specific characteristics. The term is also used for visual representations (paintings, prints, or reliefs) of "observed excerpts" from nature. Throughout history, the term has denoted painted backgrounds of narrative scenes presenting religious, historical, mythological, or allegorical subjects (or even just individual motifs from nature included in these compositions), as well as stand-alone artworks, which we today refer to as landscapes. For these reasons, the debate on the temporal and spatial precedence of these so-called pure landscapes is still ongoing. Investigating historical written sources – theoretical texts on art, art collection inventories, various records, letters, personal documents – does not often enable us to determine with certainty whether they refer to elements of scenery or backgrounds, or to "real" landscapes. Furthermore, the latter, even when completely leaving out the human form, are not necessarily mere "copies" of a real or imaginary landscape,

fully void of any narrative content. During their iconographic and iconological analysis, we are often limited by the fact that we are not able to recognize the meanings behind visual symbols used by the painter, which were fully transparent to his contemporaries, causing concern that we will miss some possible meanings hidden behind an apparently pure landscape. An example of this kind is the ongoing issue of the meaning of the painting *Crossing the river*, painted by an unknown Dutch painter in the 17th century (Fig. 1), although attempts have been made to decipher a moral lesson from an analysis of the symbolism behind individual motifs (an old oak, the gliding of the boat, swans, flying birds, water).[1]

The issues related to landscape painting are also present in the historical dispute about the relative superiority of some types of art over others which viewed painting in relation to sculpture, poetry, and music. The narrower issue of the hierarchy of painting genres is an interesting dispute as well. Landscape painting is a manifestation of the dual nature of man's attitude toward nature: on the one hand, we dread the terrible, wild, uncultivated landscape; on the other hand, the idea of an environment undamaged by human intervention appeals to us as an image of pure harmony and order. Debates on these issues started in the mid-16th century and lasted for two centuries. They are best described by designations given to landscapes, coined by theorists as well as artists: rustic, picturesque, fantastic, sublime, heroic, idyllic, Arcadian, pastoral, etc.[2] Related to this is the issue of topography: is the landscape real or imaginary. Regardless of this issue, we differentiate landscapes based on the geographical character of the area they represent, on whether they include architectural elements (Fig. 2), or whether they are completely void of manmade constructions. Furthermore, we distinguish between urban and rural *vedute*, mountainous landscapes, marine scenes, among which we can further distinguish between subtypes, like views of seaports (Fig. 3), sea storms, shipwrecks, and many other landscape subtypes. Other parameters for distinguishing between landscapes are seasons of the year, weather conditions, or the time of day: a special group, for example, is comprised of nighttime landscapes (*notturni*). As a curiosity, it is worth mentioning that there was also a sub-specialization of landscapes representing scenes on ice, scenes of fire, etc.

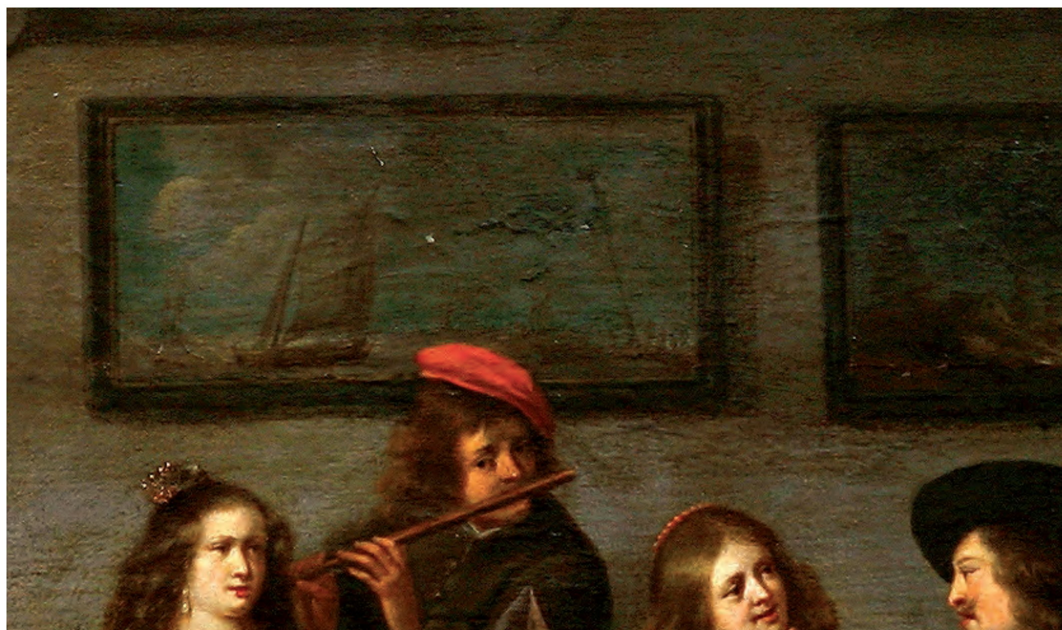
Fig. 2 / Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps (1803 – 1860) / *Landscape with windmills*, around 1840
oil on panel, 22 × 32,5 cm / inv. no. SG-445

Fig. 3 / Eugène Boudin (1824 – 1898) / *The port in Bordeaux* / oil on canvas, 32,4 × 45,9 cm / inv. no. SG-520

Expert literature usually claims that landscapes became a separate type of painting sometime during the 16th century. They flourished during the 17th century, especially in the Dutch Republic, and Spanish Netherlands, today's Netherlands and Belgium, respectively. The local societies, apart from being highly urbanized and having a specific economy structure that vastly differed from the one in southern Europe, were marked by several waves of Protestant iconoclasm – opposing visual images of God, the Saints, etc., and their consequent destruction – causing patron activities of the Church to greatly decline, if not completely cease, in predominantly Protestant areas. Therefore, artists were compelled to turn to the free market, which promoted their specialization at a specific painting type. Apart from being profiled according to genre and characteristics of style, artists also ensured their distinctness by signing their works. Some of them sold their paintings directly in their painting studios, in bookstores, at fairs, or guild exhibitions, but many usually relied on the services of professional agents. Paintings that show the inside of painting shops and middle-class homes testify to the popularity and variability of landscape painting of the time. The permanent collection of the Strossmayer Gallery displays a painting called *The Prodigal Son* (Fig. 4), which – despite presenting a Biblical theme translated into an everyday scene: a merry party gathered around a table, in what seems to be an interior of a wealthier house – demonstrates the kind of interior furnishings and artworks that filled wealthy households in the mid-17th century. The wall behind the table in our painting bears two landscapes in the format of an elongated rectangle, one of which shows ships on a heavy sea. Within Flemish and Dutch painting, similar depictions of both choppy and calm seas sometimes served to stress the painting's central subject, which was probably the case in our own example as well.

Fig. 4 / T. Burg / *The Prodigal Son*, around 1640 / oil on panel, 54,5 × 72,5 cm / inv. no. SG-712

↓ **Fig. 4** / Detail



▲ **Fig. 5** / Giuseppe Cesari known as Cavaliere d'Arpino (1568 – 1640)
Saint George killing the dragon, around 1600 / oil on slate, 51 × 40 cm / inv. no. SG-103

Dutch and Flemish painters were known as master landscape artists. Many of them worked in Italy, often as associates of local painters. A good example is the workshop of the great Venetian painter of the Renaissance, Titian, who commissioned masters from north of the Alps, probably from Flanders. Also, it is well known that the Roman late-Mannerist painter, Cavaliere d'Arpino, collaborated with the Flemish painter Paul Brill on his cabinet paintings of Biblical and mythological subjects, which were very popular at the time. The Strossmayer Gallery holds one such painting (Fig. 5). It is possible that the landscape background in this painting was created precisely by that painter from the north. The great art patron, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, acquired an array of Brill's individual landscapes, along with those by his compatriot and friend, Jan Brueghel the Elder, for his collection. The Cardinal continued to acquire landscapes of this kind even after around the year 1600, when northern landscape artists started to lose their primacy in the Italian art market.[3]

Although it is possible to recognize some hints of forms from nature in the earliest pictorial expressions made by man, the first landscapes as coherent depictions of motifs from the natural environment, appear in the art of cultures from the ancient East. Afterwards, we can find them in Minoan and Etruscan civilizations, mainly as location indicators. The first somewhat independent landscapes come from the Ancient Greeks. Our knowledge of them is indirect, through Roman decorative wall painting and mosaics, either in the form of direct quotes, or in the form of adaptations. With the onset of the Middle Ages, and in line with the time's spiritual climate, the interest in landscapes started to die out. They were reduced to occasional motifs with a symbolic or decorative function. Namely, landscapes that aspired to portray reality more closely were seen as sinful enjoyments based on physical sensations characteristic of this world. The high and late Middle Ages paved the way for the gradual emancipation of landscape painting, which would culminate in the Renaissance. This was slowly achieved through subjects like pictorial translations of the enclosed garden idea (Lat. *Hortus conclusus*) as the image of the Madonna's virtue, and later on as Heaven, through depictions of everyday and courtly life in series of frescos and tapestries, and through depictions of the four seasons and seasonal labors in calendars as integral parts of illustrated prayer books (Fig. 6). A new, more humane vision of faith with interpretations of God being present in all living things, and a growing interest in empirical science, resulted in closer pictorial representations of nature. This was reinforced by a renewed interest in classical authors, both those that glorify the beauty of nature, like Horace, and those that write about landscape painting of their time, like Pliny the Elder and Vitruvius. Experts point to the fact that in considering the popularization of landscapes, one must not neglect the socio-economical context, that is, the growing middle-class and consequent erosion of certain habits tied to the feudal conceptualization of land tenure, which ultimately led to the capitalist attitude toward land, especially land that has not been built upon.[4] Furthermore, it is difficult to disregard the fact that the periods of popularity of landscapes really do coincide with periods of intense urbanization. It is in this context that expert literature stresses that people who lived from farming, or who were exposed to destructive natural forces, were less inclined to romantic visions of nature as a refuge from civilization, and as a place of spiritual refreshment.

Fig. 6 / Manner: the Master of Charles VIII / *April, Book of hours Liber Officii Beatae Mariae Virginis*, after 1491
ink and gilding on parchment / inv. no. SG-4, f. 4v, 5r

FIG. 7
MAESTRO DI SAN VERECONDO,
CRUCIFIXION WITH SAINTS, AROUND 1420
TEMPERA ON PANEL, 175 × 145 CM
INV. NO. SG-33

Fig. 8 / Niccolò di Pietro Gerini (around 1340 – 1414-15) / *The temptation of Saint Anthony*, 1390 – 1400
tempera on panel, 22 × 32 cm / inv. no. SG-28

An overview of selected landscapes from the holdings of the Strossmayer Gallery, as a thematic, chronological, and stylistic cross section of the development of this painting genre, clearly articulates the changes of pictorial characteristics, especially those that pertain to the methods and techniques used to render the illusion of space. The landscape in Figure 8, created at the end of the 14th century, acts only as a setting for the religious scene. It represents a kind of transition from medieval depictions placed against abstract gold backgrounds (Fig. 7), which is best seen in the narrow, gold leaf ribbon of sky along the upper edge of the scene. Under candlelight, the gilded surfaces of the painting would shine with a special glow, rendering it an ethereal quality, which was symbolically associated with the sanctity of the depicted figures and scenes.[5] From the 13th century onward, in line with the new understanding of faith, traditional design solutions with rigid figures in schematic and static postures gave way to depictions of emphasized narratives, naturalism, and emotionality. The rocky and mountainous countryside where the drama of Saint Anthony Abbot unfolds, together with various types of trees, in the spirit of late medieval stylization is depicted by using simplified geometric shapes. The figure of the Saint seems too large in relation to its surroundings, that is, to the relatively shallow space that sets him apart from the mountains "in the distance", making it seem as if he were standing in front of a theater backdrop. Its horizontal direction and small format, along with the fact that it depicts a scene from the life of the saint, point to the conclusion that the painting was originally part of a polyptych predella (Fig. 9).[6] Namely, in order to realistically portray an array of consecutive events within a spatially limited pictorial field of a two-dimensional medium, medieval artists developed paintings in several parts, with one or more central images of larger format, and additional smaller panels containing narrative scenes, which completed and enabled the interpretation of the central scene. During the 13th and first three quarters of the 14th century, it was usual for the smaller side panels to flank the central image.[7] Later on, it became more frequent that these smaller panels formed part of a

horizontal band, a predella, spanning below the central painting. Unlike the central image that was intended to be viewed from a greater distance, these smaller scenes were only visible to the officiating priest, or an observer from a smaller distance. Consequently, these kinds of panels allowed painters more artistic freedom in their formal creation, as well as in their content.[8] These solutions became very popular, and survived for a relatively long time, until the very end of the 15th century.

Instead of the traditional style of setting figurative compositions against a gold background, Early Renaissance artists would embed them into a landscape. This had a practical use as well, because the gilding process was very complex and expensive. The application of linear and areal perspective, just like the more skilled use of lighting as a means to unify compositional elements, contributed to a stronger sense of naturalism. Furthermore, open-air vistas with the illusion of a landscape as if seen through a window, added to the greater authenticity of the scene.[9] The painting *Madonna with Child and patron* (Fig. 10) shows a landscape on both sides of the expensive cloth, possibly silk brocade, hanging behind the figures, which points to the elevated status of the painting's protagonists. This so-called cloth of honor was, because of its similarity to fabrics used for draping chairs or canopies of distinguished persons, a frequent part of the scenery in portraits of various dignitaries, which from the 14th century onward also included Christian saints. Even though the figures lack the usual frontal positioning, the oval shaped heads, particularly almond shaped eyes, and elongated noses, evoke Byzantine icons. The same can be said of the certain detachment of the figures, seen in their gaze and posture, which disconnects them from any kind of communication with the convincingly rendered landscape in the distance.

Instead of the usual composite structure, a more convincing depiction of depth enabled the temporal sequencing of scenes within the unified pictorial field. *The birth of Jesus*, attributed to the Florentine painter Foschi (Fig. 11), is a painting in a round format, called a *tondo*. As a rule, *tondi* were made for display in bedrooms, or anterooms, in wealthier houses or palaces. Apart from private worship, as an item of luxury they served the purpose of confirming their owner's social status.[10] The foreground of our painting shows the scene of the Adoration of the Child, a very popular subject from the more general theme of the Birth of Jesus, from the end

Fig. 9
Partial reconstruction of an altarpiece to which the painting *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* supposedly belonged.
According to a schema from: Dulibić, p. 137.

Fig. 10
Bartolommeo Montagna
(around 1450 – 1523)
Madonna with Child and patron
tempera on panel, 68 x 49,6 cm / inv. no. SG-91

Fig. 11
Jacopo di Domenico Foschi (?)
(1463 – 1530)
The birth of Jesus, end of the 15th c.
oil on panel, ø 130 cm / inv. no. SG-49

of the 14th century. A fragment of ancient architecture separates the foreground from the background, which is occupied by a wide landscape with a low set horizon. The landscape incorporates a scene of the Annunciation to the Shepherds on the left, and a scene of the Procession of the Three Kings, including a large cavalry, to the right. The latter took root in the iconography of the scene as an echo of International Gothic.[11] The picturesque background scenes mirror the taste of the time for visual richness and variety, which go along with the optical theory on two-phase observation, popular at the time. This prompted painters to construct their compositions in such a way that the primary visual information is taken in first, followed by the second, extended phase, during which individual elements of the whole are scrutinized.[12]

The 16th century saw the appearance of the first landscapes whose human or animal figures were, in proportion to the whole, reduced to so-called *staffage*, or completely left out. In this sense, there are well known examples of drawings depicting landscapes by the famous Italian artists Leonardo da Vinci and Fra Bartolomeo, as well as watercolors by the German artists Albrecht Dürer and Albrecht Altdorfer. However, these examples are only studies of motifs from nature, which were later inserted into the final painting design. According to the most recent findings, the first "pure" landscapes in oil were painted by Altdorfer in the third decade of the 16th century, although it is questionable to what extent these were really topographically faithful depictions of landscapes *per se*, completely void of any narrative or symbolic content.[13] In the same context, it is worth mentioning that Giorgio Vasari, the architect and painter famous for his book on the lives of artists, in which he often mentions the word *paese/paesi* (in the sense of a painted landscape), did not feel it necessary to define pure landscapes more thoroughly in the book, although he had personally painted a few of them himself.

▲ **Fig. 13** / Attributed to: Lucas Gassel (1480-1500 – 1568/69) / *The Death of Adonis*, 16th c.
oil on panel, 20,7 × 33,4 cm / inv. no. SG-153

The term landscape to Vasari stands for details from nature, or for distant open spaces, as well as for various aspects of decorative scenery for the portrayed topic. This scenery includes architectural elements, as well as lighting. Furthermore, it seems that Vasari finds it common that one painting should include more of these *paesi*, which is a view contrary to our own that sees a landscape as a single space. Moreover, Vasari stresses the importance of naturalism, lighting effects, and the accurate topography of landscapes.[14] In his text, just like in many other texts by his contemporaries, we can notice a level of admiration aimed at the skill of landscape painting exhibited by northern painters. The painting *Flight into Egypt* (Fig. 12) is attributed to the Late Renaissance Southern Netherlandish painter Joachim Patinir, who is widely considered to be the first European landscape painter. He is known for an array of spacious landscape panoramas, which include scenes of religious or mythological subjects that often occupy only a fragment of the entire pictorial field. It is also well known that Patinir collaborated with some of his eminent compatriots as the author of the landscape backgrounds of their compositions. It is difficult to judge whether his expertly composed landscapes only served as backdrops that aided the clarity, or enhanced the overall effect of its symbolic message, or whether the religious or mythological subjects where themselves only a pretext for the realization of the true artistic inclinations of this painter.[15] The foreground of Zagreb's painting depicts the scene of the Rest on the Flight into Egypt, while the landscape background shows several other episodes from the journey, described in apocryphal texts. In the painting *The Death of Adonis* (Fig. 13), we can see how the coexistence of several viewing points, the wide panorama, the basic composition and its building blocks, as well as the relationship between the landscape and its figures, call forth Patinir's solutions. These similarities caused the painting to be attributed to Patinir for a long time in the Gallery's history. However, Patinir places more emphasis on his figures, which are more closely tied to the landscape that surrounds them.[16]

◄ **Fig. 12** / Joachim Patinir (?) (1475-80 – 1524) / *Flight into Egypt*, 16th c. / oil on panel, 68 × 83 cm / inv. no. SG-631

At the beginning of the 17th century, a type of idealized landscape was developed in the circle of Roman painters. Through their form, content, and overall poetic atmosphere, these landscapes embody the fantasy world of perfect beauty and harmony between man and nature. They are descendant from allegorical and idyllic Renaissance scenes painted, for example, by Giorgione from Venice. They were often based on literary sources from Classical Antiquity and the Renaissance. The usual subjects they depicted were landscapes in a perfect season, usually containing a water surface, ruins of Classical architecture, figures wearing costumes from Antiquity, and animals. Although based on open-air studies, these landscapes did not depict a specific area of land, but an imagined one, which did not only serve as background scenery, but was equal to the other elements of the composition – a carrier of meaning in its own right. Depicted characters could embody pastoral themes, heroic or mythological subjects, or Biblical ones. However, in case of the absence of any narrative basis, these types of paintings simply expressed a certain nostalgia for the mythical primordial simplicity of the relationship between man and nature. The Strossmayer Gallery holds several examples of this type of landscape painting. *The Italian Landscape* (Fig. 14), for example, created in the manner of the painter Claude Lorrain. The balanced composition is based on the standard model: an emphasized vertical mass along the edge of the frame, which creates a deep shadow in the composition's foreground, the central plan with a wide central mass, continued by a golden mist of dawn, or early dusk, which envelops the background of the composition. The fluidity of the observer's gaze over the composition space is motivated by details such as a bridge and a winding road, but the composition's main unifying element is light – a fine grading in tones of local colors. Lorrain's landscapes were very popular, even in his own lifetime, and were frequently imitated, even falsified. This prompted the painter to design an album with drawings of his own compositions, in which he noted their date of origin and their destination. His clients included influential and wealthy individuals, rulers and dignitaries of the Church.

Fig. 14 / In the manner of: Claude Gellée known as Claude Lorrain (1604/05 – 1682) / *The Italian Landscape*
oil on canvas, 97,8 × 125,2 cm / inv. no. SG-178

Fig. 15 / Attributed to: Nicolas Poussin (1594 – 1665) / *The Holy family with Elizabeth and Saint John the Baptist*
oil on canvas, 100 × 140 cm / inv. no. SG-708

It is a well-known fact that Lorrain created plen air sketches, and that these sketches served as bases for his composition studies, according to which he finally created his paintings. His first biographer noted that the painter even painted directly from nature. However, this has not been proven by researchers.[17]
The landscape paintings by the equally renowned Nicolas Poussin, Lorrain's countryman, who also worked in Italy for most of his life, capture the same ideals in their form. The latter captured these ideals especially through the creation of his compositions, as all of their components are subordinated to the schema of horizontal and vertical lines, and the rhythmic relations that stem from them, even though they depict the organic world of nature. Experts explain that this kind of imaginary grid of lines crossed at right angles requires the main compositional axis and the picture plane to be parallel. This essentially creates a frontal image, which Poussin overcomes by an array of diagonal axes that lead the viewer's gaze towards the distance, for example by way of a diagonal path that curves in the second third of its length.[18] All of this can be seen in the painting attributed to Poussin held in the Strossmayer Gallery (Fig. 15). Unlike Lorrain's golden light that permeates even the foreground, Poussin's composition is characterized by a clear, bright blue sky. Furthermore, his contours are much sharper than Lorrain's. Gaspard Dughet, Pussin's student and brother-in-law, is also included in this circle of painters. Until recently, he had been credited with painting a landscape with *staffage* figures of unclear iconography (Fig. 16), although the Gallery's catalogues traditionally name it as *Narcisse at the Source*. Under the influence of Poussin and Lorrain, Dughet developed his own painting style, expressed in both easel and wall paintings. He was also influenced by the Italian painter Salvator Rosa, whose landscapes are characterized by – as we shall see – a substantially different view of nature.

Fig. 16
Unknown painter, 17th c.
Narcisse at the Source
(traditional title)
oil on canvas, 63,9 × 33,6 cm
inv. no. SG-204

Fig. 17
Attributed to:
Salvator Rosa
(1615 – 1673)
Lot with his wife and daughters
oil on canvas,
39 × 35,9 cm
inv. no. SG-146

The painter and poet Salvator Rosa was born in Naples, spending most of his working life in Florence and Rome. He is known for picturesque landscapes, in which he "paints" the faithful representation of nature with a specific atmosphere of discomfort and agitation. His threatening – often savage – landscapes, within which he envelops narratives, mythological, and Biblical scenes, were very popular, especially among the Romantics of the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century. Rosa himself was a kind of synonym for wild nature. The Gallery's permanent collection holds two Biblical themed paintings attributed to this painter. Both paintings exhibit Rosa's characteristic twisted and broken trees, dark rocky shapes, torn dark clouds, and concentrations of light in specific parts of the composition. The foreground of the painting *Lot with his wife and daughters* (Fig. 17) shows the scene of Lot's drunkenness to the right, and in the background, along the left edge of the frame, the figure of his wife turned into a pillar of salt. Far away in the distance we can see Sodom and Gomorrah engulfed in flames. The theatrical gestures of the protagonists contribute to the scene's dramatics, further enhanced by the landscape. A number of Rosa's compositions containing even smaller figures than these, placed in front of a dominating rocky formation, is also known. In one of his satires, the artists noted that during

that year "he had painted nothing but rocks". One scholar concluded that the real protagonists of these paintings are the rocks, or the landscape itself, to which human figures are added only to ensure the minimum of the acceptable thematic features.[19]

Namely, the hierarchy of painting genres promoted by European art academies of the time was originally formulated in Italy in the 16th century. The first place of the hierarchy was occupied by so-called history painting (*istoria*), which included mythological and religious subjects, topics from classical literature, as well as allegories and depictions of historical events, if they were properly represented. These were followed by portraits, and then by *genre* paintings, depicting scenes from everyday life, which were, however, divided into high and low *genre*. High *genre* paintings showed motifs from the world of the wealthier middle class, and its representations "as in nature" met the requirements of refinement and grace, at least up to a point. Low *genre* paintings were filled with motifs from the poor classes of society, the countryside, and the demimonde, represented "worse than in nature".[20] Further down the hierarchy were landscapes and cityscapes, followed by paintings of animals, and at the very bottom, still-life. This division was the result of the basic differentiation between types of art into those that required intellectual exertion, as they "evoked the universal essence of things", and those that merely embodied "the mechanical copying of particular occurrences". From the point of view of technique, history painting was considered to be intellectually the most demanding, since it entailed complex compositions with numerous figures, prowess in painting technique and rules of composing, as well as a comprehensive education.[21]

It seems that this established hierarchy of genres did not in the slightest influence the market popularity of lower ranking painting types in Flanders and The Netherlands. The local clientele bought them at high prices frequently, guided by their own personal taste and sometimes by a calculated investment return. Two development paths of landscape painting in the Netherlands and Flanders should be stressed here: one that favored imaginary landscapes, usually connected to Flemish painting, and the other marked by a more "realistic" view of landscapes

Fig. 18 / Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568 – 1625) / *Saint Margaret*
oil on canvas, 117,5 × 188 cm / inv. no. SG-475

based on the more immediate observation of nature, which was more characteristic of Dutch painting. Flemish mannerist landscapes followed conventions for creating pictorial space based on distinct alternations of light and dark sections, with the foreground usually pronouncedly darkened by an emphasized mass, and clearly delimited from the next, lighter portion. The use of aerial perspective is supposed to create the illusion of depth, which does not arise from optical phenomena as much as from the almost symbolic sequencing of the three picture zones: the brown foreground, the green middle ground, and the light blue background, a solution introduced by the already mentioned pioneer of the landscape genre, Patinir. The underdrawing usually included figures that were intended as an integral part of the composition. Many workshops operated according to the division of labor with respect to the execution of particular parts of the composition. Elsewhere, figures were painted subsequently into the finished landscape by a figure specialist.[22] An interesting case in point is the painting *Landscape with Psyche and Jupiter*, from the Prado in Madrid.[23] This painting has long been considered an example of the collaboration between two master painters: it was assumed that the figures of Psyche and the eagle were simply painted into the "empty" landscape created by Paul Brill. However, technical examinations have shown that the finished painting is the result of modifications made by the great Rubens. He not only painted over the figure of a saint included into the original design, but modified the features of the landscape as well.[24] *Saint Margaret* from the holdings of the Strossmayer Gallery (Fig. 18), a version of the conception by Jan Brueghel the Elder, follows the Mannerist design pattern, although a more precise evaluation would require cleaning the darkened layers of varnish. It is worth mentioning that the described practice of Flemish landscape painters is even more clearly manifested in a cabinet painting on copper plate, which could have served as the template for the painting in Zagreb, but was completely unknown until about fifteen years ago.[25]

Fig. 19 / Jan Wijnants (1632 – 1684) / *Landscape with an Old Castle*
oil on canvas, 44 × 55,6 cm / inv. no. SG-549

During the 1580s and 1590s, many Flemish painters, including landscape artists, moved to the Northern Netherlands in search of refuge from the retaliations that followed the rise against Spanish rule. Their new environment did not prevent them from following the traditional patterns of creating compositions, but with greater emphasis on the foreground, which consequently began to occupy a larger part of the composition. In order to avoid monotony caused by a limited color palette, painters resorted to a finer differentiation between their tones. From around the 1620s in The Netherlands, these imaginary landscapes started to give way to depictions that reflected the local landscape more convincingly. Apart from a limited color spectrum, they are characterized by a more subtle implementation of aerial perspective, resulting in the effect of a gradual spatial recession. Because of a thin foundation layer used to prepare panels for painting, many such examples show visible parts of the panel wood here and there. Their underdrawings are usually sketch-like, and do not include figures. Therefore, figures are not planned as an integral part of the composition, which points to their secondary nature in the totality of the painting design.[26] This kind of practice culminated in the so-called tonal phase of Dutch landscape painting. But, apart from this specific group, 17th century Dutch landscape painting also included so-called classic landscapes, which were more monumental and richer in color, usually structured around clearly defined focal points and not necessarily oriented horizontally, as well as paintings inspired by the idyllic landscapes of their Italian contemporaries.[27] It seems that the most ardent landscape collectors were members of the growing middle class, who were not educated in the Humanities, nor spoke Latin and French like the intellectual elite. How much Dutch landscapes were a reflection of aspirations to propagate the national identity of the young Republic is, however, still a matter of debate. The literature states that the word *lantschap* (landscape) had a very broad meaning around the year 1600, encompassing a wide array of sub-specializations. The most frequent among these are depictions of “wilderness” (*woestyjne*), hunting (*jacht*), harvest (*oogst*), mountains (*geberchten*), fishing (*visserij*), beach (*strand, zeestrand*), ruins (*ruzjnen*), moonlight (*maenschijin*), forests (*bos, bossagie*), pastoral (*pastorelle*), winter landscapes, ice-skating promenades (*qjsgangh*), dawn (*morgenstond, dagerat*), evening (*avondstond*), dunes (*duijnen*), river (*rivier*), and panorama (*verschiet*). The drainage of large areas of shallow sea (so-called polders) along the coast, and the construction of a system of canals in the northern Netherlands during the 17th century, resulted in a total geographic transformation of its landscape. It main characteristics are an exceptionally flat terrain dominated by horizontal lines. A frequent motive of Dutch landscape artists is precisely this kind of landscape, with scant vegetation whipped by the wind, a low horizon, and wide expanses of usually cloudy sky, mirrored in water surfaces. It is an interesting fact that Dutch people differentiate between four words that mean 'horizon'.[28] The Strossmayer Gallery holds several landscapes of this type. For example, the already mentioned unattributed *Crossing the river* (Fig. 1), and *Landscape with an old castle* (Fig. 19) attributed to Jan Wijnants. Their main compositional arrangement is similar; both paintings have a tree placed in the foreground, along the right edge of the frame, which frames the scene and diverts the viewers gaze into the distance, functioning as a so-called *repussoir* (from Fr. *repousser*: to push back); both paintings include *staffage* figures. However, the first painting is characterized by a more modest color palette, and softer contours. Wijnants is known for landscapes with sand dunes, the likes of which extended from his home town, Haarlem, to the sea, although there is no evidence that any of his landscapes depicted a real location. It is also known that he collaborated with painters of different specializations, making it possible that one of his permanent associates also created the figures in the painting from Zagreb.

Exactly how realistic Dutch landscapes of the time were can be seen in the depiction of climate and weather conditions, especially clouds. Findings from research conducted in collaboration with meteorologists show that, despite the broadening of the range of depictions of weather conditions, which had become more convincing and closer to nature than ever before, the Dutch still narrowed them down to a few basic types. Most paintings represent a summer landscape and favorable weather conditions, but the sky is never clear and without clouds. Rare examples show threatening clouds in the distance. Depictions of storms are also infrequent, except as a subtype of seascapes, and they usually represent either a forthcoming storm, or one that has passed. Winter landscapes, as a rule, portray only the season's pleasant side, and it is interesting that water surfaces depicted in those landscapes are always frozen. As a usual element of Dutch landscapes, clouds faithfully portray their counterparts from nature in basic form. However, painters often distort them and/or place them in constellations

Fig. 20
Antonio Francesco Peruzzini (1643-46 – 1724) and Alessandro Magnasco (1667 – 1749)
Landscape with travelers by the stream, first decade of the 18th c.
oil on canvas, 130 × 99 cm
inv. no. SG-682

impossible according to the laws of physics. Depending on the requirements of their composition, clouds that are in nature formed in higher altitudes are placed too low, or clusters of clouds are placed too close to each other considering the different temperature and pressure conditions required for their respective formation. These kinds of distortions are not necessarily and always planned, but can be the result of optical illusions, which caused the painter to experience the clouds differently from how they actually appeared, seeing them from below. It seems that these kinds of clouds are equally the result of personal observation of weather conditions, and of borrowing conventional solutions circulated among painters as motifs, such as a path containing a fork in the road, a shallow river ford, or dunes with figures of observers. In some cases, this makes it possible to follow the journey of these "templates" stemming from older master painters, like the already mentioned Brill and Rubens, for half a century or more in the works of landscape artists who modify them according to their own needs, relying on their personal observations from nature, since meteorology was at the time only a scientific discipline in the making.[29] In accordance with the instructions of theorists stating that landscape artists should spend time in nature and create studies *naar het leven* (from life), the established practice was that painters recorded what they have seen in sketchbooks. However, out of many preserved drawings of this kind, only a few seem to be actual preparatory drawings for specific final compositions. It would seem that they actually served as "tools" intended to "train the artist's eye", as well as being catalogues of motifs that could be used in various studio works.[30] It is interesting, however, that many drawing examples do not show clouds at all, or if they do, they are only casually sketched. At the same time, clouds are the dominant feature of finished paintings that are surely based on these drawings. Experts emphasize that similar processes of "selecting, stereotyping, and altering" can be observed in painters who specialized in still life with flowers, creating assemblages of botanical species that blossomed at different times of the year. Painters of *vedute* also integrated structures that were, in reality, found in very different locations.[31] From the point of view of meaning interpretation – if we exclude examples in which the landscape clearly explains, comments on, or reinforces the meaning of the "plot", depictions of sea storms, and a few other paintings whose interpretation is generally accepted – it is questionable to what extent Dutch landscapes of the time included metaphorical or religious connotations.[32]

Landscape with travelers by the stream (Fig. 20) is a creation by the Italian Baroque landscape artist, Antonio Francesco Peruzzini, who lived and worked at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. His body of work – completed through research conducted during the last several decades – is characterized by deep, dynamically rendered forest landscapes, with background *vedute* of villages with turrets and a bridge, within which the artist places *staffage* images of religious, mythological, and pastoral themes. Zagreb's painting belongs to the latter. The figures were painted by Peruzzini's longtime associate, Alessandro Magnasco, and are characterized by dramatic gestures, pronounced muscularity created through the heightened contrast between light and shadow, as well as oversized feet and hands. Therefore, we can easily understand why the literature points to Magnasco's characteristic "naturalism with a humorous tone"[33], and an "expressively pathetic characterization of figures, which often seem grotesque and caricature-like".[34] Because of the oddity of his figures, and the frequent difficulty in fathoming their iconography, Magnasco became popular among collectors very early. His fame resulted in a kind of oblivion of landscape master artists, causing many of their mutual works to be attributed to Magnasco as the single author. Peruzzini is recognizable by his expressive brushwork, often characterized by visible, sometimes even "lumpy" brushstrokes.[35] A bright chromatic scale and mellow atmosphere bring this landscape closer to the Rococo style. However, we can recognize the echo of the already mentioned Salvator Rosa in the rocky bed and foamy river rapids, and notice the link with the heavy seas of the Dutch landscape artist working in Italy, known under the nickname il Tempesta (the storm).[36]

The holdings of the Strossmayer Gallery include a *Storm at sea* (Fig. 21) attributed to the leading French landscape artist of the later 18th century, Claude-Joseph Vernet. After honing his craft in Provence under several master painters of history, or decorative and landscape painting, this painter traveled to Italy, where he spent the next twenty years. On the one hand, his body of work leans on the idealized landscapes from the previous century, like the ones by the already mentioned Lorrain, Poussin, Dughet, and Rosa. On the other hand, it stems from the more studious examination of the environment, more typical of the artist's time, which leaves the impression of his more vivid and authentic experience of nature. During his lifetime, Vernet was very

Fig. 21 / Attributed to: Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714 – 1789) / *Storm at sea* / oil on panel, 18,8 × 25,9 cm / inv. no. SG-156

popular, and his buyers were members of the Italian, French, and especially British social elite. He is renowned for his topographically accurate landscapes, among which *views* of the most important French commercial and military harbors, commissioned by the government, stand out, as well as for his imaginary landscapes and marine paintings. The latter were frequently contrived of as counterparts – in sets of two or four – which were meant to reflect the contrasting aspects of the activities of nature. Vernet's depictions of shipwrecks were especially prized, as they embodied the insignificance of man's endeavors under the constancy of nature's power.[37] Zagreb's small *Storm at sea* could be characterized precisely as such.

At the time when Vernet was actively painting, the practice of creating oil sketches in nature was already widespread. It was originally established in the 16th century, or the early 17th century in the latest. These so-called *esquisses* were quickly painted small-scale works, whose primary purpose was to preserve the painter's initial idea (*première pensée*) for the painting, by outlining the basic composition and coloring. They served as roughly set guidelines for the creation of the painter's final expression, and were not meant to be exhibited. As early as the 18th century, however, more freely formed paintings began to appear, and the effects of spontaneity and originality, which had until then been considered traits inherent to a sketch, started to be appreciated. At the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th century in France, a lively discussion developed on the opposition between the concept of a sketch and that of a finished painting. According to the opinion of conservative critics and artists, drawn and painted sketches and studies are testimony to an artist's genius and originality, "a personal reaction to a subject". But, only by translating those initial impressions into a finished and polished artwork can the artist prove their intellect and painting skill. This kind of understanding, which culminated in

Fig. 22 / Charles-François Daubigny (1817 – 1878) / *Landscape*, 1857 / oil on panel, 21 × 38,5 cm / inv. no. SG-598

the painting practice of Neoclassicism, started to be undermined by the Romantic aesthetic in the 1820s. This new aesthetics uses a painting's color and facture to transmit the immediacy of experience, and the sincerity of emotion. Landscape painting, whose gradual recognition coincided with the affirmation of these new aesthetic values, became the field of the most fervent battle between the opposed viewpoints. In the year 1816, the categories of the prestigious *Prix de Rome* competition – which granted the winner a study trip to Rome for several years, paid for by the French government – included the historical landscape (*paysage historique*). Although the intention of the founder was to restore the former glory of 17th century history painting, the real consequence was a growing interest in landscape painting. Propagating the direct observation of nature through the creation of small studies outside of the studio (*plein air études*) went hand in hand with this and other similar competitions connected to landscape painting. These studies did not serve as composition models for specific painting designs, but were meant to provide a foundation for the basic color tones for specific parts of the landscape (the sky, the ground, water surfaces), depending on the lighting at a specific time. This was the usual practice among academically trained painters, who used these kinds of studies, in polished form, as motifs of imaginary historical landscapes painted entirely in the studio. The studies themselves were often destroyed. However, from the late 1820s, they became ever more appreciated because of their immediate representation of nature, and became frequently exhibited next to the finished landscape.[38] In the middle of the century, Western societies showed marked changes based on a more modern philosophical outlook and technological advances. Expert literature emphasizes that steamboats, the railway, new navigational tools, and photography, enabled the wider accessibility of various and remote landscapes. In the context of the development of landscape painting, the invention of photography in the early 1840s is especially significant, as it "released artists from the need to literally document" the appearance of the environment, enabling them to create more personal visions of the material world – a phenomenon that will culminate in the landscapes from the end of the 19th, and during the 20th century.[39]

The 1840s saw the appearance of an informal gathering of landscape artists, later named the Barbizon School, comprised of painters of different age, artistic training, technique, and style, connected through their shared interest in landscape as an independent subject, and their more personal connection to nature. They spent summer months in the Fontainebleau Forest, recording its diverse landscape (forests, meadows, marshes, and sandy areas) during their outings in the open, spending their evenings in debate and the sharing of experience. They spent winters working in their respective painting studios. Their interest in effects of light and atmosphere,

Fig. 23 / Jean-Désiré-Gustave Courbet (1819 – 1877) / *The stream in Puits Noire,* 1860 – 1870
oil on canvas, 64,1 × 87 cm / inv. no. SG-515

embodied in a freer treatment of form, more expressive brushwork, and a specific sense of color and tone, all render their finished landscapes with a sense of freshness, and with the immediacy of studies *en plein air*. Despite being regularly refused from official competition exhibitions because of their apparent unfinished nature, these paintings were highly prized and sought after among connoisseurs. In step with their market success in galleries and at private auctions, the circle of their admirers among the middle classes gradually expanded. A key step for the further development of landscape painting was taken in the mid-19th century, when artists like Charles-François Daubigny, and Gustave Courbet, started to skip the preparatory stage of creating sketches and studies, and in order to preserve their immediacy, recorded their impressions directly on the painting's canvas. Experts claim that Daubigny was by far the most open member of the Barbizon School towards the immediate visual experience, and least likely to follow "stereotypes and repetitions", bringing his canvases to a "radical degree of completion" outside of the studio.[40] The Strossmayer Gallery holds a smaller river landscape by Daubigny (Fig. 22), painted in the 1850s, at the time when the artist started to direct his interest toward waterways found in the Île de France region, surrounding the Paris basin. In his desire to experience nature more intimately, he hired a boat that served both as his home and painting studio, in order to record his impressions from the journey on a daily basis, cruising along the three rivers of the basin. Therefore, this period saw a rise in his river views with boats and barges, surrounded by familiar vegetation. The literature states that Daubigny abandoned the established Italianate composition design in the late 1840s and early 1850s in favor of elongated horizontal formats with a low horizon, which evoke the Dutch landscape tradition. Apart from this change, Zagreb's painting clearly testifies to the artist's redirected interest, from more monumental depictions to "more humble aspects of the countryside".[41]

Gustave Courbet is the most significant representative of Realism in French 19th century painting. He systematically turned his attention to landscape painting only in the mid-1850s, and his landscapes vary greatly in motifs, composition, and color. The Strossmayer Gallery holds a landscape titled *The stream in Puits Noire* (Fig. 23), one in a series of depictions from the 1860s of the mountain spring in the Jura Mountains, in Courbet's homeland, France's eastern Franche-Comté region. Despising his colleagues – "vedutistes", as he called them – who recognized an appealing painting motif in any landscape, Courbet believed that landscape painting should express an intimate, almost physical relationship between the artist and his environment, and that the painter should paint only what he "knows".[42] This period was the peak of the philosophical movement of Positivism, which was based on the conviction that knowledge should stem from sensory experience. Courbet's creations that are similar to the one in Zagreb in theme and time use various motifs of rock, forest vegetation, and water rapids, rendered with dark palette and emphasized texture, which the painter achieved by the yet uncommon technique of painting with a palette knife, a sharpened stick, back end of a brush, a sponge, rag, or his own thumb. Tools like the palette knife, which painters traditionally used for mixing colors on their palette, also enabled Courbet to quickly cover larger areas of the canvas. Courbet's creativity is further expressed in the way he framed and structured his compositions. The painting from the holdings of the Strossmayer Gallery, with its "enclosed" perspective and immediacy of a close view, through which the viewer seems to dive into the depiction, invoke "a photographic way of framing".[43] Namely, Courbet attended workshops in photography, and was one of the first artists who allowed his artworks to be photographically reproduced in the 1850s. Experts have recognized an array of similarities in motifs and aesthetic links between Courbet and landscape photographers of the time.[44] The literature emphasizes that Courbet's close views of rocks with a cavern from whose depth water emerges, replacing sky and open space with solid matter, invert the norms of landscape painting. The coexistence of motifs symbolically attributed with steadiness and strength, and those connected with movement and the passing of time, are usually interpreted as opposing natural phenomena, and as emphasizing the eternal change of natural cycles. Experts have recognized anthropomorphic and zoomorphic shapes in certain details of an array of Courbet's landscapes, especially in his masses of rock and caves. Such is the case with our painting as well: in a rock along the left edge of the frame we can recognize the simplified shape of a man's head.[45]

The philosophical and aesthetic views, and technical innovations of the painters associated with the Barbizon School, and even more so of Gustave Courbet, paved the way for the Impressionists. What they all have in common is a departure from academic formulas, from representative and narrative art, and a shared tendency to observe nature directly. The generally accepted opinion is that the Impressionists had been the first painters to create landscapes directly in nature, finishing them on the spot, although this was not the exclusive practice followed necessarily and always by all artists from the Impressionist circle. The "mode of vision", or the tendency to record the effects of light in a given moment, is much more important than the mere fact of working outdoors and the subsequent part it plays in the finished creation.[46] Guided by contemporary theories in Optics, Impressionists painted by sequencing planes of pure color, exploring their interaction and consequent impact on the eye of the beholder. However, this is a complex topic that chronologically, and problematically, goes beyond the limits of this booklet, determined by the scope of landscapes represented in the permanent collection of the Strossmayer Gallery.

NOTES

1 Cf. Vanđura, pp. 145-146.
2 Cf. Williams, Moore et al., p. 1.
3 Jones, p. 265.
4 Andrews, pp. 20-21, 51.
5 Cf. Perkins, p. 39.
6 Dulibić, p. 132.
7 Dulibić, p. 136.
8 Williams, Moore et al., p. 2; Langmuir, p. 24.
9 Cf. Langmuir, pp. 12, 20.
10 Cf. *Italian Renaissance Learning Resources*, chapter *The Expansion of Viewing Time*.
11 Cf. Dulibić, Pasini, pp. 36-38.
12 See note 10.
13 Andrews, pp. 41-44. Cf. Wood.
14 Goodchild, pp. 25-26.
15 Cf. Andrews, pp. 44-49.
16 Cf. Bujanić, pp. 59-62.
17 Cf. Clark, pp. 62-64.
18 Ibid, pp. 66-67.
19 Salerno, p. 121.
20 Janson, chapter *Cultural Backdrop: Classicism & the Hierarchy of Subject Matter*, p. 3. The author cites *Groot schilderboek* by Gérard de Lairesse (1707). Cf. Kemmer.
21 Ibid, pp. 1, 3.
22 Cf. Gifford, pp. 140-141.
23 Pieter Paul Rubens and Paul Bril, *Landscape with Psyche and Jupiter*, around 1610, oil on canvas, 95 x 129 cm, Madrid, Museo del Prado, inv. no. P001849
24 Pijl, pp. 665-667. Cf. Brown, p. 30; Woollett, pp. 26-29, note 79 (p. 40).
25 Jan Brueghel the Elder, *Saint Margaret and the dragon in a wide river landscape*, around 1595, oil on copper, 26,5 × 35,5 cm, London, Sotheby's, 3rd December 2008, lot. 9, / http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/old-master-paintings-evening-sale-l08036/lot.9.html#.
Cf. Ertz, Nitze-Ertz, cat. no. 309, pp. 644-646.
26 Cf. Gifford, pp. 142-146.
27 Brenner, Riddell, Moore, pp. 74-75.
28 Cf. Janson, chapter *Glossary: Landscape*.
29 Cf. Walsh.
30 Brenner, Riddell, Moore, p. 75. Cf. Bakker, pp. 12-13.
31 Walsh, pp. 109-110.
32 Ibid, pp. 110-114.
33 *Sveto i profano*, p. 259.
34 *Sveto i profano*, p. 256.
35 See note 33.
36 Cf. *Sveto i profano*, p. 258.
37 Cf. Conisbee 2000; Conisbee 2009.
38 Cf. Myers.
39 Williams, Moore et al., p. 1.
40 Amory.
41 Dulibić, Pasini Tržec, Popovčak, p. 196.
42 Morton, Eyerman, p. 39.
43 Dulibić, Pasini Tržec, Popovčak, p. 190.
44 Cf. Morton, Eyerman, pp. 39-53.
45 Cf. Dulibić, Pasini Tržec, Popovčak, pp. 190-195.
46 Clark, p. 89.

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Jan Wijnants (1632 – 1684)
Landscape with an old castle

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