



# ROB KATTENBURG

*Dutch Old Master Marine Paintings, Drawings & Prints*



Bijl-van Urk BV

*Dutch and Flemish Old Master Paintings and Impressionist Paintings*

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# WILLEM VAN DE VELDE, A RISING STAR

Rarely has an artistic family been as blessed with talent as the Van de Veldes. The father was a virtuoso ship draughtsman, and his two sons, his namesake Willem and Adriaen, were brilliant painters, each in his own genre: Willem as a marine artist and Adriaen as a master of bucolic landscapes.

Before the two Willems moved to England in 1672- 1673 (Adriaen had died at the beginning of 1672) it was mainly the father who received one major commission after another. The younger Willem seems to have spent most of his time in the studio making small oil paintings, not for specific clients but for people who came in off the street in search of an attractive 'sea piece' to hang on the wall. That is the conclusion drawn from the small size of most of his pictures prior to 1672, rarely more than half a square metre. He only started making large paintings on a regular basis after going to live in England, and there he went to the other extreme with canvases up to 3 metres wide, such as his huge painting of the *Gouden Leeuw* at the Battle of the Texel in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and the famous work in the Amsterdam Museum, *The 'Gouden Leeuw' on the IJ by Amsterdam* of 1686, which he painted while on a visit to the city.<sup>1</sup>

An artist would only make pictures that big if he was specifically asked to do so. Even the most successful painters would not have set up such a large canvas on their easels unless they knew beforehand that they had a customer for it. Van de Velde's *Dutch fleet assembling before the Four Days' Battle of 11-14 June 1666, with the 'Liefde' and the 'Gouden Leeuwen' in the foreground*, is 202.5 cm wide, making it one of his ten largest pictures, or at least of the ones that have survived. Only three of those ten date from his Dutch period,<sup>2</sup> including the famous ship portrait in the Wallace Collection in London, which also features the *Liefde*.<sup>3</sup>

Given its size, *A Kaag at Sea in a Fresh Breeze, Shipping on the Roadstead of Texel*, can be dated around 1670 when he started to paint large pieces in a storm in his most creative period, shortly before his departure for England. Van de Velde was already anticipating the demand for spectacular seascapes from both his future English patrons and the many collectors of his work.

This time it was not warships in action but an almost impressionistic depiction of the

sea, the line of dunes, the clouds and the ships. The painting must have been admired by art lovers at the time of its creation, wealthy ones that is, because father and son Van de Velde were not inexpensive!

As early as 1652 an intermediary was praising the young artist, just 18 at the time, as 'Master Van de Velde's son, a very good painter [...] in oils of sea pieces and battles'.<sup>5</sup> Nothing came of that particular venture, but there is one other documented commission that certainly was executed. It was for two paintings of incidents in the Four Days' Battle that Willem the Younger made for the Amsterdam Admiralty, as recorded in its resolutions for 30 September 1666: 'to come to an agreement with Willem van de Velde to make two paintings of the two glorious battles against England'. Both of them are now in the Rijksmuseum and must have been completed at the end of the 1660s, in roughly the same period as the *Dutch fleet assembling before the Four Days' Battle of 11-14 June 1666, with the 'Liefde' and the 'Gouden Leeuwen' in the foreground*

The painting of the *Liefde* and the *Gouden Leeuwen* marks a new stage in Van de Velde's development. Not only did he start working on a larger scale around 1670, but his style was also evolving. He had previously excelled in sublime, calm seas and coastal waters, but now the elements are playing a far more tempestuous role. This is an unusual kind of scene for Van de Velde's Dutch period. In England he quite often depicted ships battling the elements like this.

The Van de Veldes moved to England in the year 1672. In Dutch history, the year 1672 has from that time, to present been known as "*Het Rampjaar*" (The Disaster Year).

So many catastrophes and calamities befell the Dutch Republic in that year, which to the Dutch of that day and later, the whole year merited the description "Disaster." It almost meant the end of the Republic.

The Van de Veldes moved to England because of the collapse of the art market in the Republic and because Ludolf Backhuysen (1630- 1708) made his best works in this period and he was a distinguished competitor with many more important relations in Amsterdam. The foregoing can be deduced from letters of Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571-1638).

The introduction of turbulent seas by Willem van de Velde the Younger has long been a reason for assuming that there was a close relationship between the Van de Veldes' studio and their fellow townsman Ludolf Bakhuizen, who indeed produced many stormy seascapes around the time of this painting.

Although understandable, that is an incorrect assumption. It is more likely that there was a change in the taste and preferences of the customers, with the result that Van de Velde adopted Bakhuysen's dramatic style but applied it with his own looser manner. Nothing is known for certain about any collaboration with other artists in this period, either as assistants or pupils.<sup>7</sup>

The painting is primarily intended to provide a realistic depiction of a situation familiar to many contemporaries: the manoeuvring of small ships on a turbulent sea and the activity around a tree-master on the roadstead of Texel. It is a very lively and innovative painting intended for the free market where the elements play a substantial role.

*Dr Remmelt Daalder*

1. Greenwich, National Maritime Museum, inv. no. BHC0315, and Amsterdam Museum, inv. no. SA7421, 300 and 316 cm wide respectively.
2. Paintings that are not quite as wide, between 150 and 200 cm, also date almost exclusively from after 1672. With thanks to Sander Bijl for documenting the sizes of the Van de Velde's paintings.
3. London, Wallace Collection inv. no. P137.
4. Remmelt Daalder, *Van de Velde & Son, marine painters. The firm of Willem van de Velde the Elder and Willem van de Velde the Younger, 1640-1707*, Leiden 2016, p. 87ff.
5. Ibidem, p. 110.
6. Another example is a picture in the National Gallery of South Africa; Robinson 1990, p. 832.
7. With the possible exception of Hendrick Dubbels, who may have had a hand in the production of pen paintings and works in oils. However, in this particular case there is no reason to suspect his involvement. See Daalder 2015, p. 50.



Fig. 2  
 T. Smith fec. 1707?, after a painting by Sir Godfrey Kneller  
*Portrait of Willem van de Velde the Younger*  
 Mezzotint, 34.9 x 25 cm  
 Amsterdam, Scheepvaartmuseum inv. no. A.0484(01)



Fig. 3  
Lodewijk van der Helst (Amsterdam 1642-1684)  
*Portrait of Willem van de Velde the Younger (1633-1707),*  
*painter*  
Oil on canvas, 103 x 91 cm  
Unsigned, c. 1670  
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-2236

## WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER

(LEIDEN 1633 - LONDON 1707)

Together with his father of the same forename, Willem van de Velde the Younger was one of the finest marine artists in Europe. The following is a brief outline of his life, which is described in detail by Michael Robinson and others.

Willem van de Velde the Younger was born in Leiden in 1633. The family moved to Amsterdam soon afterwards, settling beside IJ Sound. His father had by then become famous as a skilled and meticulous ship's draughtsman (*scheepsteyckenaer*) and producer of what are called pen paintings, large drawings in Indian ink on vellum, canvas or panel with a white ground, 'prepared in such a way that [they] could be hung out in the wind and rain, and could be wiped clean with a sponge just like an oil painting'.

Van de Velde the Elder (1611- 1693) was the leading artist in this curious though fascinating technique, which was in use for no more than 50 years. His wonderfully composed pen paintings also found buyers abroad, some as far away as Italy. Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici was a particular admirer and patron. It was a very time-consuming technique, so the paintings were extremely expensive. Van de Velde the Elder charged 150 guilders for a small pen painting, whereas a landscape by an artist like Jan van Goyen (1596-1656), for example, might sell for around 50 guilders.

It was probably the elder Van the Velde who first showed his son how to portray a ship accurately, before apprenticing him to Simon de Vlieger (ca. 1601-1653), who taught him the art of painting. This was probably in the late 1640s. De Vlieger moved from Amsterdam to Weesp in 1648, and it is quite possible that the son followed him there,

for in 1652 he married a young woman from that area. However, the marriage was dissolved the following year, and De Vlieger acted as a witness at the divorce. The earliest dated painting by Willem van de Velde the Younger is from 1651. It must have been clear from the outset that he had a remarkable talent. A letter to a foreign patron dated March 1652 indicates that he was then working independently, and by the early age of 18 he was already well known as 'a very good painter ... of oil paintings of seascapes and battles'. Father and son were by now working together, although the latter was apparently able to set his own prices, for the intermediary promised the patron to ask 'as to the lowest price for which De Velde's son is willing to make it'.

These and other details have come to light with the discovery of previously unknown archival material abroad, which will soon be made available in published form.

The immense importance of the Van de Velde's lies not only in the development of marine painting; they are also important as chroniclers of historical events. They were unequalled in their accurate portrayal of ships, rigging and the like, and made the most painstaking and accurate studies from life. The elder Van de Velde sailed with the fleet to record events at sea, and was given his own galliot from which he was able to see the battles unfolding before him. On board he drew sketches, which he later worked up in more detail at home or used them as the basis for a pen painting. His son also used the same sketches for his own paintings. The father was thus the first war correspondent to report from the scene of battle.



Willem van de Velde the Younger followed in his father's footsteps, but did not paint pen paintings. Research has shown that almost his entire oeuvre before circa 1672 consists of relatively small marine pieces in oil, mostly depicting ships at anchor stately in a harbour or in a calm sea. Given his attention to the ship drawing and the ship portrait, it is obvious that he drew from the large collection of drawings that his father had amassed. He set the tone for a new development in marine painting, incorporating atmosphere and the effect of light in combination with a sunlit coloration. His subjects range from small pieces intended for private collections, simple and clear in their design, to large or very large historical and spectacular pieces with more complex compositions. Van de Velde the Younger's work is characterised by accuracy, combined with a subtle rendering of light and reflections on the water and on the sails of ships. This, and his talent for composition, resulted in an oeuvre of paintings that reflect the maritime world of his time like no other. It was mainly individuals and institutions with ties to the navy that ordered the larger paintings. Admirals and other naval officers who wanted to have a picture on a wall in their homes of their exploits or of the ships they had commanded. .

It must have been in the winter of 1672-1673 that the Van de Veldes arrived in England and settled there with their families at the invitation of the English King Charles II. He and his brother James, Duke of York, were delighted to have gained the services of the two leading marine painters of the day. Samuel Pepys's papers include their appointment by Charles II, detailing the decision 'to allow the salary of one hundred pounds per annum unto Willem Vandeverde the elder for taking and making draughts of sea-fights; and the like salary of one hundred pounds per annum unto Willem Vandeverde the younger for putting the said draughts into

colours for our particular use.'

On top of this basic salary the Duke of York promised them a sum of 50 pounds a year with an additional payment of 50 pounds for every painting delivered. Father and son were also given a large house in Greenwich and a studio was built for them in the Queen's House, which could be enlarged if they were working on large projects, such as the designs for a tapestry series of the Battle of Solebay.

At first they had their hands full dealing with the commissions from their royal patrons, and it was only when William III came to the throne in 1689 and their contract was allowed to lapse that they found more time to work for other clients. They then moved from Greenwich to Sackville Street, Westminster, and a street off Piccadilly running down beside Burlington House, which has been the home of the Royal Academy of Arts since 1867. There they lived there in great style.

Charles II clearly understood his protégés' value, for in 1673 he expressly forbade Willem van de Velde the Elder from sailing to view the Battle of Texel for fear that he might be killed.

The father continued to work until his death in 1693, the year of several of his pen paintings. The son remained in England, although he did visit the Netherlands every now and then. During one such stay he painted a majestic view of ships on the IJ that now belongs to the Rijksmuseum collection, although it is on display in the Amsterdam Museum. With his work, Willem van de Velde the Younger laid the foundations for the flourishing of British marine painting in the eighteenth century. For the last two years of his life he lived on Millbank beside the Thames, which is also in Westminster. He died in 1707, and like his father he was buried in St James's Church, Piccadilly.



A memorial stone placed there in 1926 honours these two most eminent Dutch marine artists.

# WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER

Leiden 1633 – Westminster 1707



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## *A Kaag at Sea in a Fresh Breeze, Shipping on the Roadstead of Texel*

Oil on canvas, 130 x 188 cm

Signed: *W.V.Velde* (lower left on the driftwood)

Dated: ca. 1670

### Provenance:

Sales. - Philip's auction. Thos Agnew & Sons, London. Matthews, London 1935. It was sold back from Mathew's widow to Thos Agnew & Sons, London in 1957 as Van de Velde and sold to an Italian Dealer, Gennaro as Backhuysen. Private collection, Italy.

### Literature:

M.S Robinson

*The paintings of the Willem van de Veldes*, Greenwich 1990, Vol II, p. 830, cat. no. 63.2. A. Hoving, A kaag at sea in a fresh breeze. *Scheepshistorie* 29.

### References:

Synney W. Newberry, London, negative no. N70688.



Fig. 4

## INNOVATIVE COMPOSITIONS

Around 1670, there was an important change in the working method and theme of Van de Velde the Younger. Unlike before, he concentrated on painting large-scale works and adopted the style of Ludolf Backhuysen (1630-1708). Backhuysen's style quickly gained popularity and already in 1665, at the beginning of his painting career, he received an important commission from the city of Amsterdam to paint a view of the IJ for the French minister Hugues de Lionne. In 1671 he painted a large canvas, on which a Statesman's yacht is heading for the war frigate of *Delftland* lying at anchor. The convincing way in which the turbulent water and the cloudy sky are depicted and the sought-after contrast between ships lying in the shade and those catching the sunlight are also found in Van de Velde the Younger's work. Whereas Willem van de Velde the Younger concentrates on simplicity and only allows a few vessels to play the leading role, Backhuysen seems to have a kind of fear of empty spaces, by decorating almost the entire foreground and background with ships.

Only in the 1680s and 1690s of the seventeenth century do his paintings become less crowded. Numerous sea pieces were painted, showing barges, state yachts and other 'service vessels' sailing towards a war frigate or company ship that had just been invaded. In some cases it concerns a historical moment and the ships that have just arrived are also identifiable.

Van de Velde de Jonge specifically chose two anonymous service vessels as his main subject in the painting, *A Kaag at Sea in a Fresh Breeze, Shipping on the Roadstead of Texel*. Van de Velde the Younger has innovatively abandoned the obvious composition of his time, in which the service vessels go straight for their target. Thus, on the left-hand side of the canvas there is little action and the viewer's eye is led directly to the brightly lit kayak and lighter. The two ships sail, as it were, to the right 'out of the picture' to the open sea, but due to the strong diagonal effect of the masts and the cloudy sky of the approaching storm, the attention is led to the left and it becomes clear that the skippers, despite being strongly hindered by the strong wind, try to reach the frigate.



Fig.5  
Detail of fig.4

## THE PAINTING

*A Kaag at Sea in a Stiff Breeze, Shipping on the Roadstead of Texel* contains all the elements that made Willem van de Velde the Younger so highly regarded in his day. In his own country, then the Republic of the United Netherlands, but also in England, where he settled in 1672. The work shows how he broadened his repertoire by working in a large format and with much more spectacle than before. We see a risky manoeuvre of two ships on a turbulent sea, not far from a coast, with in the background a vista with other ships and a coastline. It is a crucial moment: the weather is changing; a thunderstorm is about to erupt.

There is a stiff breeze on a turbulent sea, dark thunderclouds are moving into the picture from the right, but a bright sunlight lights up the sail of the ship in the foreground. It won't be long before a squall breaks out, it seems. The main role in this drama is played by the ship in the foreground, a small but sturdy type of inland vessel with one mast, to which a large spritsail and a jib are attached. It is a kaag, or in English 'a dutch packet', a flat-bottomed vessel with leeboards - one of which is clearly visible on the starboard side - a type of ship that could be found throughout the Netherlands, on the inland waterways and on the estuaries, the Zuiderzee and the Waddenzee. The kaag viewed from starboard quarter view is close-hauled on the starboard tack under mainsail and foresail; a sea is braking over the bow. There are seven lacings round the mast from the luff of the kaag's mainsail. On board at least four figures can be distinguished, including a helmsman and a skipper in front of him, who seems to be giving instructions on the course to follow. At the top of the mast flies a flag with a large number of narrow, horizontal stripes, the flag of Vlieland and Terschelling.

To the left of this kaag the stern of a second ship can be seen, an inland waterway vessel of a slightly larger type, a wijdschip. The horizon is well below the level of the block of the smalschip's port vang. The red-white-red flag indicates that this vessel originated in Hoorn. Both ships are sailing sharply downwind, but the composition of the painting, which directs the viewer's gaze to the left via the long sprit of the smack sail, suggests that they are about to shift course toward a large three-masted vessel on the left.

The kaag in the foreground and the barge directly behind it catch most of the light and together take up almost the entire right-hand side of the canvas. He has both ships tilted sharply to the left and sailing almost against the wind towards the dark cloud cover of the approaching storm. The stormy wind has created large waves and the painter makes the water splash against the bow of the cutter ship in a spectacular and powerful way. Van de Velde the Younger places the viewer unprecedentedly close to the action, as if he were sailing along on an imaginary third ship in the wake of the kaagschip. Because the two ships threaten to come dangerously close to each other's paths, we also see from close by how the skipper of the kaag points his helmsman in the right direction. Van de Velde the Younger's composition forces the viewer to read the sea piece, as it were; counter clockwise towards the smaller ships on the left half of the painting. In a certain sense, this way of composing, in which the viewer is carried along in the image and made to experience the action.

There, on the left, we get a vista of a coast with low sandy dunes. To the right in the view is off the dune coast a number of three-masters with all their sails down. On the large three-master at the left it is very bustling. Small vessels sail between the ships, perhaps take the remaining crews on board or to deliver a last message from the VOC administrators. They are anchored in a sheltered spot, the roadstead of Texel and protected. The merchant harbour on the east side of Texel was well known throughout the Republic of the United Netherlands.

Fig.6

Detail of the *Nieuwe pascaert van Texel en 't Vlie* (fig.10)

You can see the dunes north-east-east, on the left side of the painting.



In the distance, on the right, the roadstead of Texel with its merchant ships, sheltered from the many storms that sweep across the island from the southwest.

Twice a year, large cargo ships would gather here to sail to distant countries. These were well armed for a possible encounter with opponents and/or foreign powers that wanted to seize the richly laden cargo. The majority came from Amsterdam or one of the towns on the Zuiderzee, such as Hoorn or Enkhuizen or the Noorder quarter. The ships departing from Amsterdam left empty, because their depth was too great and they could not pass the shallows that gave access to the Zuiderzee.

Once they arrived at the roadside of Texel, they anchored to take on provisions and water for a journey that sometimes took a year or more. This is also where the crew came on board. They were brought in on the flat-bottomed boats, called kagen or Texel lighters, from the metropolis of Amsterdam but also from the trading towns of Hoorn and Enkhuizen. Ships of the Dutch East India Company, but also warships, could leave the Texel Gat directly from this location when the wind was right.

Here we see the various moments, which incoming ships could encounter, before they had reached a safe anchorage. For example, on the far left we see how a frigate falls in and tries to lift off with flapping sails. To the right, somewhat more prominently, we see a large three-master, probably a warship, judging by the double row of guns. Almost all the sails are reefed and the ship's crew is busy trying to trim the yard of the jib mast, to bring it into a vertical position. The ship not only becomes more stable and less susceptible to the wind, but also narrower, so that it takes up less space at its final anchorage. The mizzenmast topsail is flapping in the wind and a non-standard sail has been fitted to the campanile deck, which has been fastened to the deck by the corners. Two small sailing barges have come alongside, from which five persons are climbing on deck, and a little further to the left a sloop with men is on its way to the ship.

Thus, on the left-hand side of the canvas there is little action and the viewer's eye is led directly to the brightly lit kayak and lighter. The two ships sail, as it were, to the right 'out of the picture' to the open sea, but due to the strong diagonal effect of the masts and the cloudy sky of the approaching storm, the attention is led to the left and it becomes clear that the skippers, despite being strongly hindered by the strong wind, try to reach the frigate.

The composition of the ship in the left background being shown wide-rode in a weather-going tide is a detail of seamanship that would have been known to Van de Velde. He has given equal attention to the rendering of the natural atmosphere as well as the vessels. All details and especially of the kaag, without any mistakes in perspective, has been observed meticulously.



Fig.7  
Detail of the kaag and the smalship (fig.4)



## KAGEN AND LIGHTERS

In some nineteenth-century descriptions of Van de Velde the Younger's sea piece, the brightly lit ship in the foreground is identified as a *kaag* or a *kaagschip*, or in English 'a dutch packet'. *Kagen* or *kaagschepen* were flat-bottomed vessels that were used in the seventeenth century inland navigation and on the Wadden Sea to transport people and freight. Unlike seagoing cargo ships, *kagen* carried a gaff, a long spar that was fastened to the foot of the mainmast and slanted out so that the sail remained open. The two leeboards provided course stability and the rounded stem made it easier to work against the waves. The *kaagskipper*s also maintained turnaround services, transporting passengers and small quantities of freight from town to town, but also from the mainland to the Wadden Islands. The *kagen* intended for passenger transport were often slightly less wide and hollow than the *kagen*, which only carried cargo and were used as lighters.

The generic term 'barge' actually referred to any ship that took over the cargo or artillery of a merchantman or man-of-war that was unable to sail across the shallows of the Wadden or Zuider Seas on its own. We rarely see kayaks on seventeenth-century sea pieces, however, but almost always the sturdier *wijd- en smalschepen* (wide and narrow-bodied) ships engaged in this transshipment work. The difference between the two types of ships is so small that the distinction is hardly noticeable on sea pieces.

The *wijdschip*, with a standard width of 20 feet (ca. 5.60 m) and a length of 70 feet (ca. 19.5 m) was about 2 metres longer than a narrow boat, but both ships were otherwise almost identical in shape and rigging. The main difference, which also gave them their name, was the width of the ship. The name Narrow Ship was given to ships narrower than 16 feet and 16 inches (4.68 m) that were able to pass through the Donkere Sluis at Gouda, which lay on a major inland waterway route connecting Amsterdam and northern France. As mentioned earlier, on sea pieces it is almost impossible to distinguish between the two types of ships, and it is also impossible to determine whether the ship sailing up the *kaag* is a narrow or a wide ship.

## THE PILOTAGE

There is little doubt that the *kaag* in the painting by Van de Velde the Younger must be regarded as a service vessel that was put into action after a fleet had broken up. We cannot entirely exclude the possibility that we are dealing with a barge transporting people to the other side, but the barge in the vicinity of the *kaag* rather suggests that the men were aiming at the frigate in trouble. Pilots were under all circumstances obliged to assist the incoming ships.

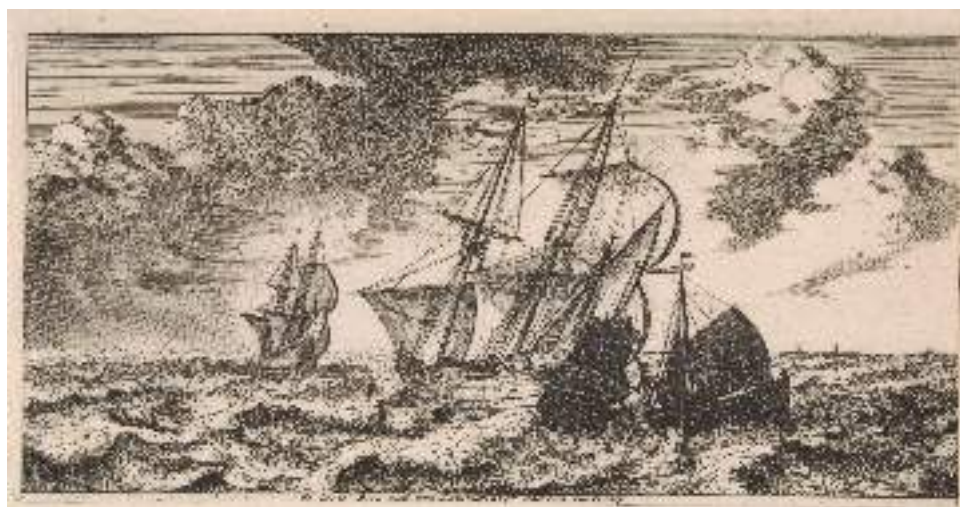


Fig.8  
Joost van Geel, A  
pilot climbs aboard  
(ca. 1665). Etching.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum, RP-P-  
1885-A-9469.

The skippers of the lighters and the pilots were usually lying on the beach at Huisduinen, Petten and Den Helder ready to set sail as soon as a squadron of warships or a merchant fleet was spotted at the Texelse Gat.

It was strictly forbidden for a captain or skipper to attempt to manoeuvre through the regularly shifting sandbanks without a qualified pilot on board. In 1673, the English ambassador William Temple wrote accordingly: *'The entrance of the Tessel, and passage over the Zudder-Sea, is more dangerous than a Voyage from thence [Texel] to Spain'* and wondered how it was possible that Amsterdam had been able to develop into the most important trading centre in the world.

Pilotage of ships through the Texelse Gat to the roadstead of Texel, the Vlie or to one of the Zuiderzee towns was traditionally strictly regulated. In order to prevent unqualified fishermen from posing as pilots, even though they were the experts on the location of the channels and sandbanks, anyone wishing to carry out pilotage work had to be examined first. As early as 1615, the States General established a *Commissie tot de Pilotage benoorden de Maaze* (commission for the Pilotage North of the Maaze), with Petten, Den Helder and Huisduinen, Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling and the Dutch Zuiderzee ports as its areas of operation.

Their own committee supervised the sea channels of South Holland and the waterways in the Maas region. A new 'Ordinance on Pilotage' was published regularly, either for the Texelse Zeegat or for the Vlie. The two areas of operation were strictly separated and a pilot who had brought the ship to Texel had to hand over his ship to a pilot from the Vlie if the ship had to be piloted further through the Vlie to Terschelling or Vlieland or to one of the Zuiderzee harbours. In the ordinances, a distinction was also made between outward pilots, who piloted the ships through the Texelse Zeegat or into the Vlie, and inward pilots, those who brought the ships from the harbours to the sea harbours and vice versa. The flag of the combined islands of Vlieland and Terschelling that flies on the kaag of Toledo's painting may be an indication that the frigate in the background is taken over by the pilots of the Vlie.

The pilotage was led by the '*Commissie tot de Pilotage*', consisting of four members appointed by the States of Holland and West Friesland. The commissioners of the "Pilotage North of the Maaze" held almost without exception a mayor's post or otherwise worked in the city government of one of the four associated cities: Amsterdam, Hoorn, Enkhuizen and Medemblik. One of the commissioners was also receiver-general, usually the commissioner of Amsterdam. He was responsible for the collection of the fire and beacon dues, a levy that all ships entering Texel or the Vlie had to pay for the maintenance and construction of the fire beacons. The commission members were not only responsible for the maintenance of the coastal fires, the buoyage and beaconing of the sea lanes, the gauging of the depths in the waterways and the preparation of maps, but also for the examination of new pilots. The examinations were held in the places where most candidate pilots came from, such as Den Helder, Petten or one of the villages on Texel, Vlieland and Terschelling. The committee usually made a round trip to the various places in the spring to conduct the examinations, taking the opportunity to check the beacons and buoyage on the way. Since many of the candidates were seamen themselves, those who had missed the examination committee could go to Amsterdam in the autumn to get their pilot's licence.

## AN ODE TO WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER

The representation on this painting must have appealed to many people. Because of the way Willem van de Velde the Younger composed his painting with the kaag, this work still attracted the interest of English marine painter William Turner 125 years later. In 1796 he had made his debut with his first painting in oil entitled *Fischerman at Sea*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, where he had also received his training. Here he learned to draw from antique examples and the model, but he learned to paint by studying the work of the old masters of the seventeenth century. When picking up a print after a painting by Van de Velde, he is said to have exclaimed: 'This made me a painter'.

Turner was a promising painter and, in consultation with the Duke of Bridgewater, the Younger was allowed to paint a 'modern' counterpart to Van de Velde's sea piece that is known in ancient art literature as *'The Bridgewater sea piece'*. It was completed in 1801 and was first exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts before being placed next to the Van de Velde de Jonge.





Fig.9

J. M. William Turner, *Dutch Ships in a Storm*, also known in older art literature as *The Bridgewater Sea Piece* (1801). Oil on canvas, 162.5 x 221 cm. Dated: '1801'. London, National Gallery. On loan from the Capricorn Foundation. inv.no. L297

Turner's sea piece can stand on its own, but was also an ode to the work with the kaag by Van de Velde the Younger, which, as mentioned earlier, contained a certain asymmetry and therefore lent itself perfectly to a counterpart. Despite the fact that Turner made no attempt to equal the technically almost perfect ship painter Van de Velde the Younger, he respected the work of the old master by using the same colouring in any case. Nor did he allow himself to be tempted to paint an exact mirror copy, but concentrated on the most important visual elements. In the foreground, he opens his sea piece with a convincing white foaming sea of waves, on which a kaag is trying to keep course, accosted by small fishing boats that are trying to get their fish on board. Like Van de Velde de Jonge, Turner also placed the scow in the full light. He allows a strong wind to blow from the left and because the ships swerve to the right and the thunderstorm front in the distance becomes increasingly narrow to the right, the viewer's eye is led to the right half of the canvas. There we find, just as in Van de Velde the Younger, the silhouette of a frigate at anchor in the open sea. Still further behind is a dune coast with a silhouette of a city and two smaller frigates off the coast.

Whether both works, despite the difference in painting style, formed a sort of organic unity compositionally, could not be determined properly due to the lack of good visual material. Turner's sea piece, which was by now considered national heritage, had been on loan to the National Gallery in London since around 1900 and was bequeathed to the museum by its owner in 2016. The counterpart by Van de Velde de Jonge was sold by the heirs in 1979 and acquired by the Toledo Art Museum in Ohio. Both works were briefly brought together again in 2009 and 2010 in the travelling exhibition 'Turner and the Masters'.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although the provenance of Willem van de Velde the Younger's recently 'rediscovered' painting of a kaag goes back no further than 1935, when it was in English possession, one can conclude from the admiration for its English sister painting that the sea piece was considered one of his very best works. In fact, during Van de Velde's lifetime, at least three versions of this format were produced at the studio, based on this particular painting of *A kaag at sea in a stiff breeze, Shipping on the Roadstead of Texel*, which was painted by the master himself. This can be deduced on the facts that this painting besides signed *WVV* on a piece of driftwood in the lower left-hand corner. Moreover it is more vivid, spontaneous and sketchlike. The painting is exceptionally fluently painted with a convincing sky in many shades and a vividly painted rough sea with beautiful highlights on the turbulent waves. During the restoration of the of this version, furthermore, a number of pentimenti, corrections in the paint layer, were found, including in the Dutch flag and the mizzen sail of the ship in the background. This may indicate that the artist, possibly in consultation with the client, made adjustments. This is usually the case with a first version, where the artist is still searching for the correct representation.



Fig.10

The Location of the *Kaag at sea in a stiff breeze, Shipping on the Roadstead of Texel*

Jan Luyken, Claas Jansz Vooght (author) Johannes van Keulen (publisher)

*Nieuwe pascaert van Texel en 't Vlie*

Copper engraving, contemporary hand colouring on paper, 55.3 x 64.24 cm

Amsterdam 1681

Amsterdam, Amsterdam Museum, inv. no. A 5120

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*This painting is a joint acquisition of Gallery Rob Kattenburg BV, Dutch Old Master Marine Paintings, Drawings & Prints and Bijl-van Urk BV Old Master Paintings*