

Dutch Baroque Paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art: A Quantitative Assessment of a Collection

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Overview

This project visualizes metadata related to The Metropolitan Museum of Art's ("the Museum") holdings of Dutch painting from 1600 to 1800. The goal was to create compelling visualizations using Tableau Public software (that facilitate trend detection and sense making with respect to the Museum's acquisition history and the artists represented in the collection).

Methods

Several visualizations of the Museum's Dutch-Baroque-painting collection trajectory were generated using a manually created relational database of the Museum's Dutch-Baroque-painting metadata normalized for the Tableau environment. A blue-color gradient was used throughout to correlate with the hierarchy of genres promoted by art theorists including the German art theorist Joachim von Sandrart (1606-1688) (Gauvin, 2012). Transparency is also rendered to prevent obscuring values, and visual complexity was kept to a minimum as this data is quantitatively and qualitatively intricate (Tufte, 2001; Few, 2009). The blue monochrome of these visualizations also functions as a chromatic ontological cue to The Netherlands, specifically the tin-glazed pottery works that were created in Delft in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Westermann, 2007).

Observations

Of the visualizations rendered, eight were chosen for their legibility and overall insight into the collection. Following the outset of the Museum's establishment in 1872, Dutch paintings were not acquired again until 1888, making this the largest gap in the acquisition trajectory: gaps also exist between 1895 and 1905. The peak year for collecting Dutch paintings was in 1919; this is also the year that witnessed the highest intake of portrait paintings. The outbreak of World War II coupled with the American Great Depression several affected collecting at the Museum, as evinced by the sharp decline of the bar graph values between the second half of the 1930 and the end of the 1940s. The collection grew continuously in the first half of the 1970s, making this portion of the chronology the largest juncture. The Museum has acquired less than 20 Dutch Baroque paintings in the past 10 years, five of which are attributed to three of the five most collected painters--- Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Nicolaes Maes (1634-1693), and Jan van Goyen (1596-1656).

Bibliography

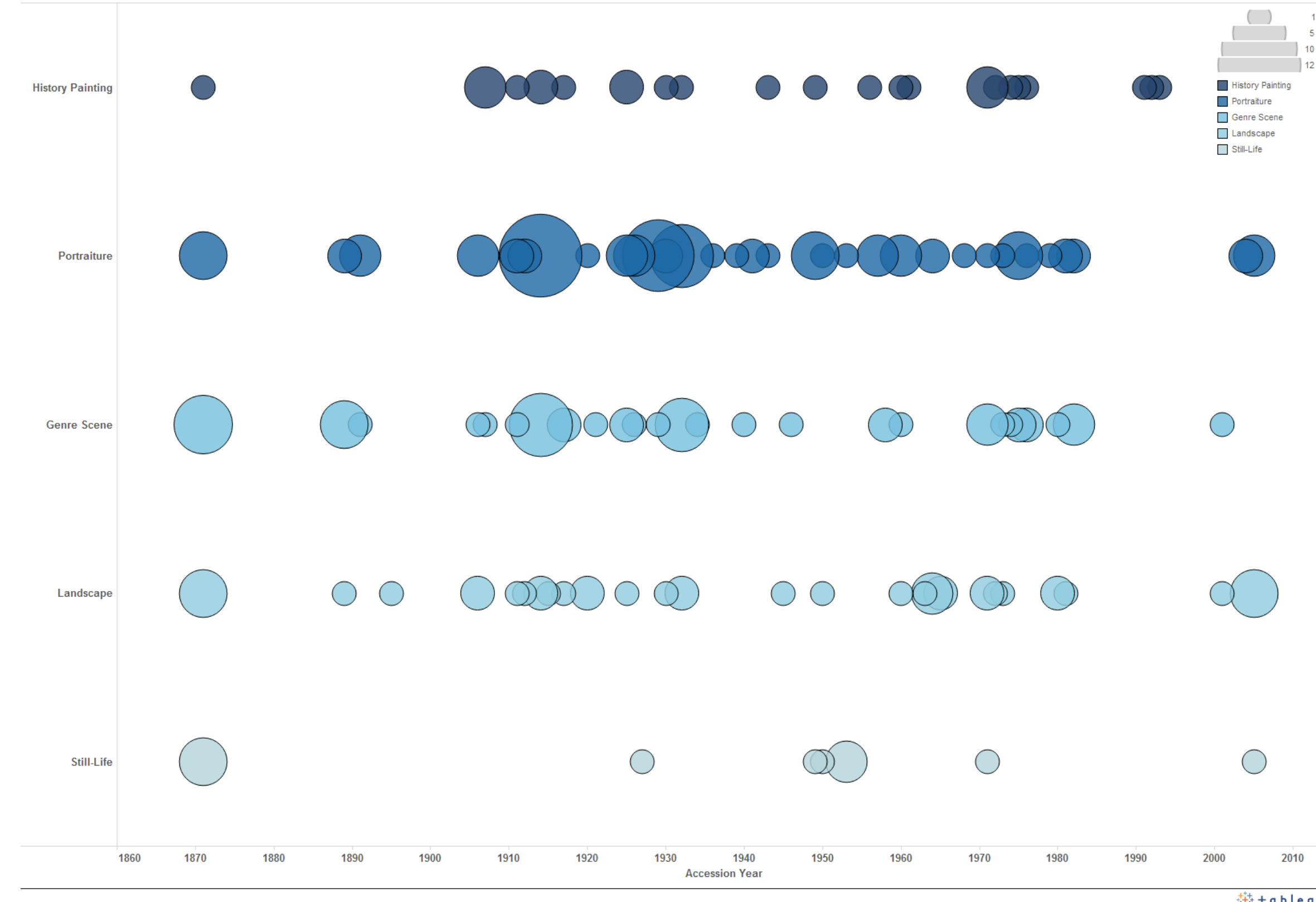
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Image: Johannes Vermeer (Delft 1632-1675 Delft), *Young Woman with a Water Pitcher*, ca. 1662. Oil on canvas. Marquand Collection, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1889 (89.15.21), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Chronology of Acquisitions, by Artist



Chronology of Acquisitions, by Genre



Chronology of Acquisitions of Dutch Baroque Painting at the MMA

