European Masters

Pieter Bruegel

The Elder

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"The Painter and The Buyer", 1565. Pen and black ink on brown paper, 255 x 215 mm Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna. This is thought to be a self portrait of Pieter Bruegel, the Elder.

Pieter Bruegel
The Elder

Born: 1525

Died: 9 September 1569

Style: Flemish Renaissance

Pieter Bruegel was a Dutch Master known for his landscapes. He painted scenes that featured peasants in every day life, for example working the fields, having meals, attending dances and festivals. His paintings have given us a good insight into what life would have been like for ordinary folk during the 16th century.

Pieter Bruegel (the Elder) had two sons who also became painters: Pieter (the younger) and Jan.

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The Census at Bethlehem

Date Completed: 1627/28
Medium: Oil on panel
Dimensions: 115.5 × 163.5 cm (45.5 x 64.4 in)
Location: Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium.

Bruegel painted the Bible story of Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem for the Census.

Interestingly, Bruegel has painted what he imagined this event would look like in his own modern day village.

Can you see Joseph leading the donkey carrying Mary?

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Barn Dance

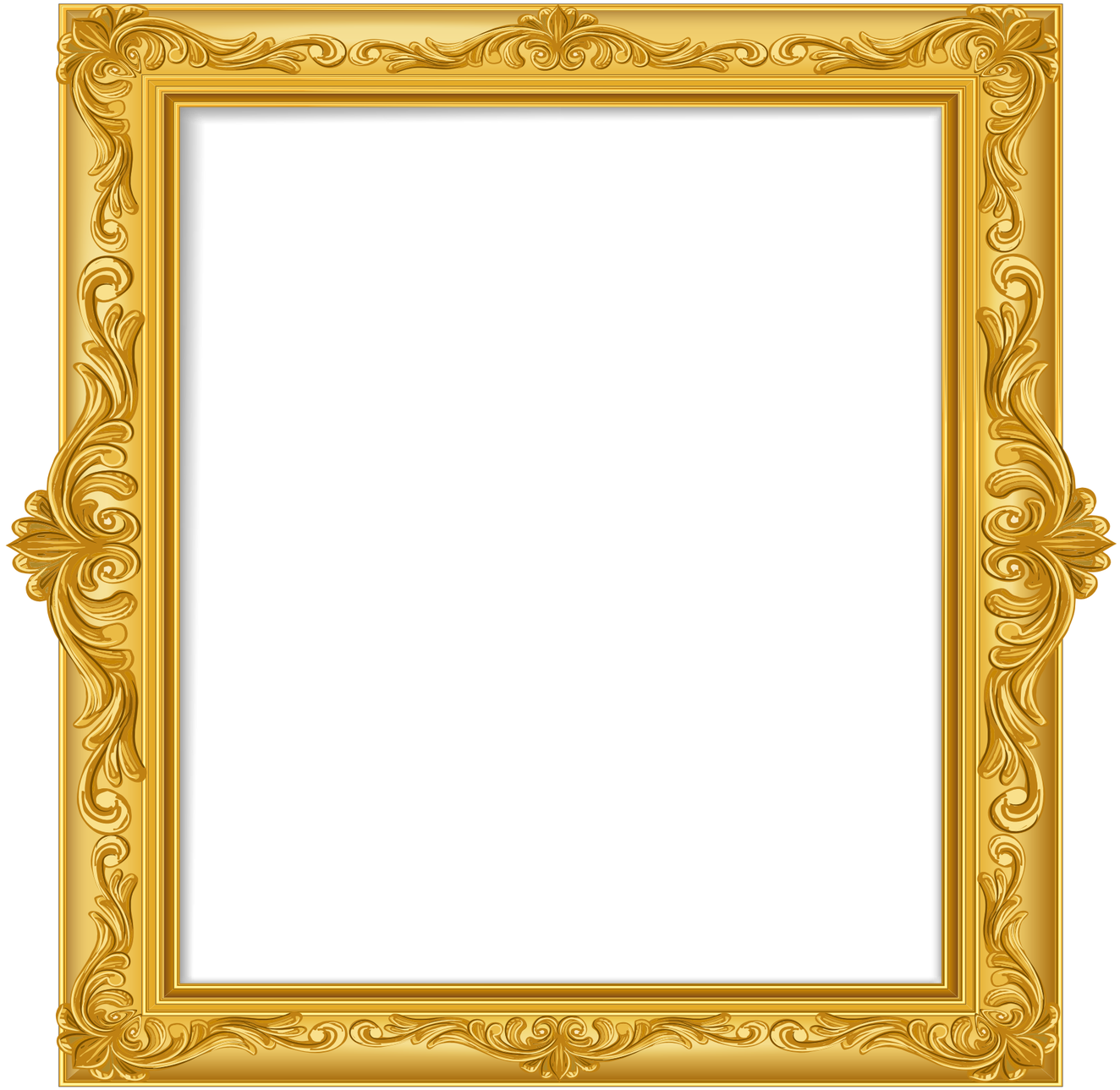
Completed: 1482

Medium: Oil on oak panel

Dimensions: 114 x 164 cm (44.9 x 64.6 in)

Located: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Bruegel was nicknamed "Peasant Bruegel" because he used to dress in peasant clothing in order to blend in at peasant weddings and celebrations. This enabled him to attend unnoticed and gain inspiration for his paintings!



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Portrait of an Old Woman

Completed: 1564
Medium: Oil on wood
Dimensions: 22 x 18 cm (8.7 in × 7.1 in)
Located: Alte Pinakothek, Munich

This old woman is wearing peasant clothing that would have been common in the late 1400s. This small painting was probably painted as a study, in preparation for a larger painting. Bruegel's paintings were usually full of expressive characters.

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