

# AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE MAURITSHUIS

## Newsletter Spring 2011

Dear American Friends of the Mauritshuis,

This year's recipient of our Fellowship, Lauren Bradley, has completed her six-month internship in the Conservation Department. The Mauritshuis has three conservators responsible for the long-term care and preservation of the paintings. As an intern, Ms. Bradley assisted with routine activities essential to maintaining the collection. This included checking condition of paintings requested for loan in order to assess their suitability for travel, as well as weekly monitoring of paintings on display in the gallery.



### FELLOWSHIP

However, the focus of the internship was the conservation treatment of a 17th century farmyard scene by Gijssbert d'Hondecoeter (1604-1653) depicting a cock and two hens in a landscape. Before treatment, the painting had an extremely discolored varnish and several passages of overpaint obscuring original paint. The darkened varnish distorted the tonal relationships within the painting and made it difficult to see the fine details. During the treatment, a skull and a rabbit in the lower right corner, hidden beneath thick, brown overpaint, were uncovered. This was an exciting discovery as these features of the composition had been previously unknown. The black-and-white rabbit is a fairly common motif in Hondecoeter's oeuvre; however, the depiction of a skull and bones seems to be unique to the Mauritshuis painting. The overpaint in this area was most likely applied to hide the fact that the rabbit's body was truncated when the panel was cut down on the right side, and perhaps also because the skull had lost its *memento mori* appeal to later audiences. The original sky is painted with the pigment smalt and is much grayer than the atypical bright blue later overpaint.



Gijssbert Gillisz. d'Hondecoeter, *Cock and Hens in a Landscape*, inv. 405 (left: before treatment; right: after treatment)

This summer, the painting is scheduled to hang in the Gallery of Willem V. A brief summary of the treatment was published in a recent issue of *Focus*. This fall, Dina Anchin, a student in the Art Conservation Department at Buffalo State College, will follow as our American Friends Fellow in the conservation studio at the Mauritshuis.

## SPRING BOUQUET BY DIRCK DE BRAY



In our last newsletter, we announced the acquisition of Jan Steen's *Moses and Pharaoh's Crown*. Since then, the Mauritshuis has acquired an exceptional painting, [\*Still Life of a Bouquet in the Making\*](#) by Dirck de Bray (c.1635-1694) from a private collection. This spring bouquet is a fine addition to the museum's rich inventory of 17th-century flower still lifes, which forms an important part of the collection. The Mauritshuis is delighted with this acquisition. Not only is this virtuoso flower piece an exceptionally beautiful painting, but it is in superb condition and is also extremely rare', says Emilie Gordenker. The new acquisition was made possible thanks to the support of the BankGiro Lottery, the Rembrandt Society, as well as a private collector.

## SUPPORT THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE MAURITSHUIS

The Board of the American Friends wishes to express its sincerest gratitude to our members and supporters who make all this possible. By joining the American Friends, you become part of a group of patrons who care deeply about the Mauritshuis and are committed to supporting Dutch paintings of the Golden Age. In addition to receiving the American Friends newsletter, supporters receive invitations to museum visits, events, private gallery viewings, and much more. The American Friends is a recognized tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Please become a supporter today!



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