

Journeying among the prints

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My journey to London under the auspices of the Harold Wright and Sarah and William Holmes Scholarships began when my interest in prints and their history was stimulated by participating in the Virtual Print Room subject taught by Professor Jaynie Anderson at the University of Melbourne. This was followed in 2006 by a cultural collections student project with the Baillieu Library Print Collection, during which I catalogued prints ranging from those of Albrecht Dürer (1471–1527) through to artists of the late 19th- and early 20th-century etching revival. It was here that I discovered the importance of the artist Jan van de Velde II to 17th-century Dutch landscape art, and the value of his prints donated by Dr J. Orde Poynton. I applied various theories of interpretation to the van de Velde works, focusing on motifs and symbols that recur in the *Sixty landscapes* and *Six landscapes* series.

My experience as a Harold Wright scholar in 2007 was a great opportunity to develop my connoisseurship of prints in all media and formats by immersing myself in the Prints and Drawings Department at the British Museum. In particular, I identified motifs, themes and techniques originating in 17th-century Dutch landscape art, and followed their transition into the 18th-century British landscape aesthetic. The Dutch works reflected anti-papist sentiment that flowed through images of God expressed through nature. This led me to reflect on the contribution of such prints to British art through the activities of print sellers, publishers, collectors and artists. The Sheepshanks volumes awakened my interest in the history of print collecting. My research into the circulation of 17th-century Dutch landscape prints in London deepened and I was able to link their contribution to the emergence of British landscape art in the following century. Sources of particular value here were annotated auction catalogues, which revealed that a

significant number of landscape prints by Dutch artists, as well as many reproductive Dutch landscape prints by English artist-engravers, were bought and sold on the open market. Likewise, close examination of James Hughes Anderdon's Grangerised volumes of exhibition catalogues of the Society of Artists of Great Britain from 1760 to 1791 shed new light on the critical reaction of many members of the society to Dutch landscape prints.

When I returned to Melbourne I curated an exhibition, *Journeys and places: Landscape etchings of Jan van de Velde II*, held at the Ian Potter Museum of Art in 2009–10. The van de Velde etchings donated by Orde Poynton are technical masterworks, although the exhibition looked beyond descriptive interpretations to the morality of the day, which emphasised the transience of nature, the 'way of God' and the journey of life. In 2016 I completed my PhD thesis, 'Dutch art in the English landscape: Seventeenth-century Dutch landscape prints in the London art market 1740–1800'.

Access to the rich collections of the University of Melbourne and the British Museum, together with online teaching at Melbourne and Mrs Wright's farsighted bequest, all combined to inspire and sustain my deep interest in the fascinating history of prints.

Dr Kathleen Kiernan is an independent scholar of prints, whose current research focuses on iconography and meaning in secular landscape art in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the collecting and trade of landscape prints in 18th-century London.

