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# Weissenbruch family

Annemieke Hoogenboom, Fransje Kuyvenhoven and Geert-Jan Koot

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Dutch family of artists . The first generation of the family included the amateur painter and collector Johannes Weissenbruch (1787–1834) and his brother, the engraver Johan Daniël Weissenbruch (1789–1858), three of whose sons were also artists: (1) Jan Weissenbruch, who was widely known for his sun-drenched townscapes, the lithographer Frederick Hendrik Weissenbruch (1828–87) and the engraver Isaac Weissenbruch (1826–1912). Johannes's son (2) Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch was a watercolour painter of landscapes and beach views and is regarded as one of the masters of the Hague school ; a younger son, Frederik Adrianus Weissenbruch (1826–82), was an engraver. The third generation included Jan Hendrik's son Willem Johannes Weissenbruch (1864–1941), who was also a painter.

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## (1) Jan [Johannes] Weissenbruch

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Annemieke Hoogenboom

(*b* The Hague, March 18, 1822; *d* The Hague, Feb 15, 1880).

Painter and printmaker . He studied at the Koninklijke Academie van Beelden de Kunsten in The Hague and was also a pupil of Salomon Leonardus Verveer. Like Verveer, he chiefly painted town views, favouring the small towns along the Rhine and the Lek. His earliest works, such as the *Oude Kerk at Scheveningen* (1843; priv. col., see Laanstra, no. 43-2), show the influence of the currently fashionable Romantic style, with its brown tone, rather viscous touch, rounded shapes and contrasts between light and shade strongly recalling the work of Wijnand Nuyen. Weissenbruch's watercolours of this period, such as *View of the Bant Windmills on the River Senne at Brussels* (Amsterdam, Hist. Mus.), are also Romantic in feeling. However, the *Dunne Bierkade in The Hague* (ex-William II col., The Hague, see Laanstra, no. 47-4) shows increased attention to the treatment of surfaces and an intimate, calm atmosphere that is characteristic of Weissenbruch. With *View of the St Catharine-Gasthaus in Arnhem* (c. 1850; St Petersburg, Hermitage) he completely abandoned Romantic colouring, choosing a light, bright palette that would distinguish him for the rest of his career: clear blue sky, white plasterwork, beaming sunlight, warm red roofs and red accents in the figures' clothing are all typical of his later works.

Weissenbruch made lithographs of many of his paintings for the periodical *Kunstkronijk*. His first lithographs date from 1841 and show his admiration for English and French lithographers very clearly. The fine, five-colour lithograph *Suburb* (1859; e.g. Amsterdam, Rijksmus.) shows the influence of J. D. Harding's coloured lithographs. Weissenbruch also adopted Samuel Prout's strictly linear

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compositions, as in *View of the Rotterdam Fish Market* (1849); the cross shape also dominates many of his paintings and watercolours. His etchings are generally less rigidly composed. Weissenbruch began etching around 1846, and in 1848 he founded the Haagse Ets club with a few colleagues. Forty-nine of his etchings have been recorded: they include such townscapes as *View of the Schenkweg in The Hague* (1849; e.g. The Hague, Gemeentemus.), some figure subjects and portraits. Weissenbruch had a large collection of old prints, and borrowings are evident in some etchings, for example *Rembrandt's Studio* (n.d.; e.g. The Hague, Gemeentemus.).

Weissenbruch's painting technique changed little after 1850, although it is difficult to determine precisely when his works were produced, as they are seldom dated. Detailing gradually made way for a flatter treatment of surfaces, as in *View of the Korte Voorhout in The Hague* (c. 1860; Enschede, Rijksmus. Twenthe). The composition also becomes more daring, with an increasingly abrupt treatment of space in such works as *Town Gate at Leerdam* (Amsterdam, Rijksmus.) and the *Prinsengracht in The Hague* (The Hague, Gemeentemus.).

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## (2) Jan Hendrik [Hendrik Johannes] Weissenbruch

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Fransje Kuyvenhoven and Geert-Jan Koot

(b The Hague, June 19, 1824; d The Hague, March 24, 1903).

Painter, cousin of (1) Jan Weissenbruch. He referred to himself and signed his work as Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch. From 1840 he attended drawing lessons with the Norwegian painter Johannes Löw, and from 1846 he was taught by Bartholomeus J. van Hove at the Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten in The Hague. His early paintings clearly show the influence of van Hove and Andreas Schelfhout, although it is uncertain whether he was actually taught by the latter. His father, an avid collector, owned works by both artists.

In 1847 Weissenbruch entered his first work in the Exhibition of Living Masters in Amsterdam, and two years later he sold one of his paintings to the Teylers Museum in Haarlem. Around 1850 he often painted with Johannes Destrée (1827–88) in the Dekkersduin in The Hague and made working visits to Arnhem and Haarlem. The detailed panoramic drawings (e.g. *Rhine Panorama near Oosterbeek*, 1847; Amerongen, priv. col., see 1983 exh. cat., p. 276) and watercolours Weissenbruch made during these visits clearly reveal his relationship with such Dutch Romantics as Schelfhout and Wijnand Nuyen (1813–39). *View of Haarlem* (c. 1845–50; The Hague, Gemeentemus.) is reminiscent of Schelfhout while differing from the work of the previous generation in its cooler tones and less idealized conception. The influence of Jacob van Ruisdael's *View of Haarlem* (c. 1660; The Hague, Mauritshuis) is noteworthy; Weissenbruch was undoubtedly familiar with it, for he made numerous copies of paintings by Ruisdael, Paulus Potter and Johannes Vermeer in the Mauritshuis. Weissenbruch looked to these three masters for inspiration, unlike other Hague school painters, such as Jozef Israëls and Johannes Bosboom, who were influenced by Rembrandt and Hals. Vermeer's influence can be seen in, for example, *The Kitchen* (watercolour; The Hague, Gemeentemus.).

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In 1866 Weissenbruch joined the Société Belge des Aquarellistes in Brussels. In 1870 the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague bought his *View of the Trekvliet* (1870) from the Exhibition of Living Masters; two years earlier he had painted a smaller version of this view (Amsterdam, Rijksmus.). In 1873 the Museum Boymans-van Beuningen in Rotterdam acquired his *Landscape with Windmill near Schiedam* (1873). During these years Weissenbruch taught Victor Bauffe (1849–1921), Théophile de Bock and Johannes Heppener (1826–98). From 1875 he regularly went to stay near the villages of Noorden and Nieuwkoop in South Holland, where he painted some of his finest waterside scenes. Because Weissenbruch and Willem Roelofs were determined not to make these villages, especially Noorden, into an artists' colony like that of Laren, they corresponded about it in a secret code. In 1882 Weissenbruch resumed contact with Vincent van Gogh, whom he had first met in 1873. Towards the end of the 1880s Weissenbruch began to use a lighter colour scheme. In 1899 the Amsterdam art dealer Frans Buffa & Zn organized a large exhibition that was a financial success and also contributed to the spread of Weissenbruch's fame.

In 1900 Weissenbruch undertook his only journey to Fontainebleau and Barbizon; the artists' resort had become a place of pilgrimage, far removed from the working colony it had been. Weissenbruch's place as a Hague school painter emerges particularly from his use of certain light effects. His landscape watercolours are among the finest works produced by the group. He also painted a number of Hague street scenes; the views of his house and studio (The Hague, Gemeentemus.) in the Kazernestraat and those of the fish stalls around the Grote Kerk in The Hague are among the best-known examples of this genre. In these paintings he altered the scene slightly for the sake of the composition, reducing the proportions and making the roofs taller. With light and sky as their main motifs, Weissenbruch's beach views differ from those of Anton Mauve and Hendrik Willem Mesdag, expressing the stillness of the beach rather than seaside activity. Weissenbruch often made more than one version of a particular scene; at least six variants are known, for example, of his *Beach View* (e.g. 1887; The Hague, Gemeentemus.), while there are four versions of the *Woman by a Farmstead in Noorden* (e.g. Wassenaar, priv. col., see 1983 exh. cat., p. 284) and five of the *View of Haarlem (Souvenir de Haarlem)* (e.g. The Hague, Gemeentemus.).

Like Paulus Gabriël, Weissenbruch constructed his compositions according to mathematical rules, although his sometimes extremely free handling of the brush seems to suggest a less rigorous approach. He used a number of standard formulae (the division of light and dark, the arrangement of the various elements etc), which, applied differently in each case, created a tight structure. He managed to achieve a harmonious spread of light and well-balanced division of the picture plane even in his smaller paintings, as can be seen in the *Shell Wagons* (200×270 mm; The Hague, Gemeentemus.), in which the contrast between light and shadow makes the shell wagons stand out sharply against the sky. He produced his best work when he was in his seventies; his final landscapes—among them the *Beach View* of 1901 (The Hague, Gemeentemus.)—seem almost abstract in nature. He used his subjects merely as a vehicle to render tonalities, touches of the brush and a variety of surfaces. Mondrian was especially interested in these landscape paintings. Weissenbruch was recognized internationally after 1900, when American and Canadian collectors especially began to express an interest in his work.

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