



Jan Steen's Histories

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- For the first time in book form, a selection of historical scenes by Jan Steen
- 17th century paintings from the Dutch Golden Age
- Contributions by Ariane van Suchtelen, Wouter Kloek and Mariët Westermann

Jan Steen, one of the most popular painters of the Dutch Golden Age, is known for his humorous depictions of dissolute households, tavern interiors, quacksalvers and love-sick young women. He was unrivalled in poking fun at every conceivable human weakness and vice. A lesser known fact is that he also painted historical scenes: pieces based on episodes from the Bible, apocryphal writings and mythology – stories full of excitement, drama and passion. As with his genre pieces, Steen devoted a great deal of attention in his history paintings to the interaction between the figures, and was keenly aware of the satirical possibilities in every story. In contrast with his later image, Jan Steen was a versatile and ambitious artist with a profound knowledge of art history and literature: knowledge that comes to the fore in his history pieces. This richly illustrated publication, written by experts on Jan Steen, focuses on a little-known part of the artist's oeuvre.

Contents: Introduction, followed by three essays on Jan Steen's history pieces, and a selected catalog of the most important paintings featuring biblical and mythological subjects.

The book will be published to accompany the eponymous exhibition at the Mauritshuis, The Hague, the Netherlands.

Ariane van Suchtelen, curator at the Mauritshuis, is the author of an introduction to the life and work of Jan Steen, in which she discusses the place occupied by history painting in his (otherwise humorous) oeuvre. Which themes did he prefer? What were his sources? For whom were these paintings intended? Wouter Kloek, former curator at the Rijksmuseum, writes about the form and content of Steen's history paintings, and the thin line that separates representations of biblical and mythological themes from scenes of everyday life. Mariet Westermann, executive vice president of the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, writes about Steen's exceptional ambition as a history painter. Her essay clarifies the national and international context in which these paintings originated.