

A Noahide theory

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Figure 1 : Charles Wilson Peale - *Noah and his Ark*

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Introduction

This thesis shows how the tradition of the story of Noah's Ark is still apparent in visual information, although sometimes separated from its original source. The main question of the research was: Do the themes of the flood story play a role in images of boats? This concerns the images of boats that have no apparent connection to the flood story.

The first chapter describes which different themes one encounters in the story and how and why the story is intertwined with our culture and is grounded in our conscience. I will also show that the story is universal by discussing different flood stories.

In the second chapter the different allegories in the images of Noah's Ark are described: how throughout history, up until now, artists express or use the themes in their work.

In the third chapter I will give examples of how the aesthetic experience of images of boats is intensified by three important themes from the flood story.

In my view no one looks at an image with a clean slate. We absorb knowledge of all the stories and images we are confronted with from a young age, often unaware. Part of the knowledge are the universal stories and images we've read and seen. The research of this thesis adopts the standpoint that our values and way of life are greatly determined by Christian stories and morals. With this assumption I want to make clear that certain ideas are in the back of our heads, often without the original stories, when we perceive images.

The starting point for the research was an interview with Johan Huibers, a contractor from the Netherlands who decided to build an arc just like Noah's Ark. The arc lies in Dordrecht and is open for visitors.

For the first arc that I built, I was bound to the measurements that are required when you want to sail through the Netherlands. It had to fit under the Hollandse and the Stichtse Bridge, that are 13 meters high. Then I made the ridge straight, which I never really liked. When I wanted to build a second one, I needed permission from my wife, Bianca. She didn't find the first one very special to begin with. When we arrived in Sliedrecht with the first arc, the major said that I could build my big arc there. How should I tell Bianca? And then on Wednesday a real estate agent phoned me to tell me that he was able to buy big metal containers that I could use to build my arc. But how should I tell Bianca? In the same week on Friday the Rabobank phoned me: "There is so much money in your account. You had 650.000 visitors on your small arc, who all paid five Euros. What are we going to do with the money? Should we buy stocks with it? And then I realised it was a sign of God that I had to start building the large arc. So I bought a big bouquet. In the evening we were sitting on the couch drinking tea when I retrieved my bouquet from the pantry. "What do you want from me?" she asked. "Nothing" I replied. "I just love you". "No you want something". Then I admitted: "I want to build a giant Noah's Ark." "Okay, but only if you build it the way like Bart Smith builds it's toys." So the real model of the Ark. And there is only one model: the one in the Sistine Chapel in Rome. The ceiling there is filled with images that Michelangelo painted,

like the finger of Adam and God. But four out of the seven drawings are made on subjects of Noah's Ark. I still get goose bumps, because Michelangelo painted this in his own vision, on his back, 300 years after Christ. That is the way the Ark must have looked. And there aren't really any older images. And I built it after this trend.



Johan Huibers is a true believer who doesn't concern himself with any interpretations or allegoric meanings, but even though he is unaware of it, he is part of the visual tradition.

The creation of his ark was meant to help spread the Gospel, to bring salvation to the people, like the original Ark brought salvation to Noah and mankind. This is the official reason, but later on in the interview it turned out that he also has a more direct purpose for his ark:

It's a lifeboat. And we will need it again soon, because there are different spots in the Netherlands that are not being worked on. There are eleven crucial points in the Dutch dikes that are being neglected. The money is there, but the contractors no longer want to do it. Rijkswaterstaat wants them to do the job first and then pay them. They used to pay per term for the maintenance that was being done. And I don't trust the Afsluitdijk (the big dam), not one bit.

(...)

I am a bit afraid of this. We won't expect it from the place where it will start. And if that Afsluitdijk goes, we all go.

1.The Flood Story

Summary of Genesis VI-IX

A few generations after creating Adam and Eve God found the increasing number of people to be corrupted, and wanted to erase his creation. God spared the only just human, Noah, by warning him about the coming flood, which he unleashed in his wrath against the sins of humanity and the corruption of the earth. He asked Noah to build an ark that would carry two of all species of animals in the world. Noah obeyed the lord and he, his family and the animals survived the flood. After 150 days God remembered Noah, stopped the rain and sent a wind that landed the ark on Mount Ararat. Noah sent out birds to see if there was dry land out there. After the third try a dove returned with an olive branch. God commanded Noah to come out of the ark and bring his family and the animals. Noah built an altar for the Lord and sacrificed some of the animals. God then blessed Noah and his sons and told them to reproduce. He gave them a set of rules to follow but also promised them that never again the earth would be destroyed by a flood. As a proof of their covenant he made a rainbow appear.

The story in a wider context

Beside the biblical story of Noah, there are many other flood myths found in all parts of the world: The Mesopotamian stories of a great flood that are between 2000 and 2500 years old. They all have the same plot: A god or goddess sends a deluge to destroy the world, but one wise man is warned to build a ship so that he and his family survive. After the flood the water goes down and the earth is repopulated. The most famous flood myth from Mesopotamia was found in the epic of Gilgamesh, where Utnapishtim builds a boat that resembles a chest. As the water descends the boat lands on mountain Nimush (close to mountain Ararat). Utnapishtim sends out a dove, a swallow and a raven to find proof of dry land. (Dalley 2008) The tablets were translated in 1857, and the discovery of the deluge myth gave great excitement, especially its resemblance to the well-known biblical version.

The Islam tells the story of Nuh in the Koran. The story is almost the same, but with two exceptions: Nuh has a son who didn't want to go into the ark and drowned. The legend also describes how another son is punished because he had intercourse onboard: He and his offspring are turned black. The devil survived the flood, by hiding on the Ark in the form of a snake.

In Ovid's Metamorphoses we find one of the most famous ancient Greek stories of a flood. Hermes and Zeus, who are disguised as strangers, visit the old couple Philemon and Baucis. After Zeus and Hermes have been refused at a thousand doors, the old couple let them in and offer them a meal. Afraid that it is not



Figure 2: Rashid al-Din - *Jami' al-tawarikh*

enough, they also attempt to slaughter their only animal, a goose. After this the gods decide to flood the whole neighbourhood, but to spare Baucis and Philemon and to grant them a wish. Philemon and Baucis wanted to be priests in the temple of the gods and expressed the wish to die in the same hour. When the time was right, they died together and turned into an oak- and a lime tree. (Calder 1988)

Another story in the Metamorphoses speaks of Deucalion and Pyrrha, who play the role of Noah and his wife. The outline of the story is pretty much the same as in the bible. Zeus sends a flood to punish mankind, but Deucalion is warned by his father Prometheus. He builds an ark and he and Pyrrha survive the flood. They then create the new human race.

Irish flood tales attribute an important role to women. They involve water that bursts forth due to a woman's negligence, an attack on woman dwelling in a well, and queen Cesair, who is said to be the granddaughter of Noah. In one of the versions of the stories she was denied entry into the Ark and therefore fled in a boat to Ireland with fifty women and only three men. Two men died and the last man didn't know how to cope with all the women and decided to flee. Cesair died of sorrow, whereupon the Ireland was flooded (Breatnach 2004)

A great birthplace of flood stories is Mesoamerica. In Aztec and Totonac stories a man and sometimes a woman are warned by god/ Tezcatlipoca and hide in a hollow tree to survive the flood. After the flood the survivors become hungry and decide to cook fish. The gods smell the fish and go down to earth to punish the survivors by turning them into dogs or monkeys (the stories vary a bit). In Otomí and Yucatán a small group of people survive the flood with an ark. In Quito and Tlapanecs the repopulation of the earth is done by human survivors and animal survivors, respectively a macaw and a dog. They discover the animals through the smell of their cooking. A noticeable difference is that the preparation of food plays a big role in a great deal of the Mesoamerican flood myths. (Horcasitas 1953)

The list of flood stories is endless, containing origins like India, Cameroon, Kenya, the Philippines, China, South America and many more. All stories carry the theme of redemption but also more trivial themes like the release of the dove are commonly found.

The story of the giant flood is so widely spread and found in so many different cultures that the Hungarian psychologist Geza Roheim¹ claimed that the archetypal myth was to be explained through unconscious dreams about drowning, which he contributed to sleeping with a full bladder. Roheim believed that the primary source for folktales and myths are dreams.

Nowadays it's commonly presumed that a giant flood actually took place. In 1997 the scientists William Ryan and Robert Pitman published evidence that around 5600 BC a massive flooding of the Black Sea took place. As glaciers were melting

¹ Roheim, Geza - *The Gates of the Dream* - New York, 1952

the amount of water pouring into the Mediterranean Sea increased. Changes in hydrology made the overall water level rise. At a certain moment the water from the Mediterranean broke through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea. According to Ryan and Pitman the event flooded 155,000 square kilometers of land and expanded the Black Sea shoreline to the north and west for the course of thirty to ninety days. Every day forty cubic kilometers of water poured through. While it is agreed that the sequence of events described occurred, there is debate over the suddenness, dating and magnitude of the events. (Lipworth ,2002)

Textual effect

Many bible analogists believe that Genesis is a composite narrative consisting of two or more sources, which they show through inconsistencies in the storyline. A logical explanation for this could be the oral tradition in the historic culture of the basic source material. The variation is noticeable through inconsistencies within the entire Genesis, as well as Genesis VI-IX.

Interesting to note is also that the story is a palinostrophe; a narrative that is written in a mirror-model. This is done so that emphasis is made on the middle of the story: “And then God remembered Noah”. The first half of the story resembles a movement towards Chaos, the second half moves away from the chaos, towards the new creation.

(Wenham 1978) The analysis above is important to mention, since it shows how themes already unfold themselves in the way the story is written: The movement towards and away from chaos, the moment of remembrance. The way the entry and the leaving of the animals is an opposite.



Figure 3: From Wenham, 1978

2. Images and interpretations

A chest

No original Babylonian or Sumerian images have been found. As Jews don't depict Gods creation, the first images of the Biblical Noah are found with the early Christians. The image of Noah's Ark belongs to the oldest and most common early Christian signs. The images have been found on frescos, sarcophaguses or ivories, dating back



Figure 5: Catacomb of Saint Marcel and Peter, Rome, Italy. 3rd century AD

from the third century. (Goosen 1990)

In those times we find Noah portrayed in a

chest, which follows an ancient tradition where the hero who is escaping a precarious situation is portrayed in a chest. Sometimes the dove is with him and sometimes he is alone. The Hebrew word for Ark is Teba, which also means box or chest. Also the measurements that are given of the ark in the bible suggest a shape that is like a rectangle: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. (Genesis VI:15)

A just human - lawgiver

In early Christian imagery Noah is also found holding the ark in his hands, so he has the leading role in the image. Noah himself stands for the just human: he was chosen by God since he was the most righteous human alive. In Jewish literature he stands for the seven Noahide commandments: Do not deny God, Do not blaspheme God, Do not murder, Do not engage in incest and adultery, Do not steal, Do not eat of a live animal, Establish courts. In Israel these commandments were taken as the basis for legislation. The idea expressed in the third commandment is the incomparability and inviolability of human life. It is one the fundamental principles of Israelite philosophy, and the ramifications of this principle pervade every aspect of Israelite law and distinguish it dramatically from the other Eastern legal systems with which it otherwise has so much in common. In Israel, capital punishment is



Figure 4: Roman fresco Catacomb of the Giordani, Rome, Italy. 3rd-5th century AD



Figure 6: Theophanus the Greek - Noah. Church of our Saviour, Ilyin Street, Novgorod, Russia

reserved for the direct offense against God and is never invoked for offenses against property. The inverse is also true: the prime offense in Israel is homicide, which never can be compensated by the payment of a monetary fine and can only be rectified by the execution of the murderer. (Frymer-Kensky 1988) This is one example of how the story of Noah is still alive in today's beliefs and uses. Beside Israelite law Hugo de Groot also based his Natural Law on the basis of the commandments. Hugo de Groot escaped his prison, Castle Loevestein in 1621 by hiding in a chest. A chest saved his life, just like Noah's. On the Christian burial El Bagawat in El Kharga (Egypt) a mural of Noah has been found where the ark is portrayed as a canoe



Figure 7: El Bagawat, El Kharga, Egypt



Figure 8: Old Testament miniatures with Latin, Persian and Judeo-Persian inscriptions. Paris, France

with columns. (Goosen 1990, p. 198)

The story of the great flood is often told in different scenes and can be found in manuscripts as well as on murals of Roman basilicas, although from the latter a lot were destroyed.

Later on we see that the different episodes of the story form themes on their own and are depicted as scenes separated from the story as a whole.

The ark as a church and as salvation

The motivation of portraying the story of the ark could differ from arousing fear in the worshippers to a more positive outlook: to rejoice in the positive aspects of the biblical story. An example of this rejoicing is found in Jan Brueghel's vivid painting of nature's wonders, in which he invites the viewer to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. (Faber Kolb, 2005) In general, the entering of the animals into the Ark usually resulted in the image of as many animals as possible, as seen in paintings of Edward Hicks, Francesco Bassano and Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione.

In some cases (like Brueghel's) these paintings were part of the positive celebrating that was typical for the Catholic Counter Reformation. During this

period the church was seen as the only salvation and therefore the ark was very relevant as a metaphor for the church. The people in the church were saved, just like the people and animals on the ark. In many paintings the ark was a popular symbol for the church and Noah the prefiguration of Christ. (Porter, 2007)



Figure 9: Jan Brueghel the Elder - *The entry of the animals into Noah's Ark*. 1613, Belgium

As mentioned above, one of the reasons for Huibers to build his ark was to spread the Gospel. In that sense his ark is also a symbol for the church:

The plan came up to go to Rio de Janeiro, to the Olympics. So I had my book translated in Portuguese. Four billion people will watch the Olympics, if they all see the Ark it would be a great opportunity to show them what the Ark looks like and so they will understand that the story in Bible did actually happen.

Retribution

Part of arousing fear into the worshippers was the theme of retribution. In all the flood stories we find ritual misconduct of humans, which unleashes the wrath of a supreme being. The deluge serves as a punishment and also represents the cleansing of sins. There are many



Figure 10: Anonymus. 1599 Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

paintings that have the ark in the background, so the attention is drawn to the sinners who will be punished with death. (Goosen 1990)

In the interview Johan Huibers had the following to say about retribution:

Everything is possible in the Netherlands. If you're a Russian homosexual, you will immediately receive asylum in the Netherlands. That is a type of privilege. I mean, then every refugee will claim that he's gay and he will receive a status? So this country has gone mad with new stuff: euthanasia or abortion. You can do anything in the country; you can even build an ark. Where is that still possible? You can't just

do that in Germany, Sweden or Norway. But you can do it in the Netherlands. I also pray for the government that they will find wisdom in the decisions that they have to make. It's a very difficult world. We have to deal with all types of religions. In that way, it resembles Noah's time. And it won't be possible to turn the tide. Ow we also decide to go to Syria and Irak to bomb them. We are proud that as the Netherlands we have performed 1100 out of 5500 bombings. So, one in every five bombings is done by our hands. How do we think of this?! I don't even know these people. And why don't we just take out the leaders of ISIS on the spot? Because it's connected to God's plan. The whole world will be drawn to the Middle East. I find this very interesting, it's written in Ezekiel 38. And this is going on right now. And in the end Israel will be the capital of the world. The Bible is the blueprint for God's plan. Or actually, it's the Tora, since that is the oldest story. But combined with the New Testament, because it contains Jesus Christ. And He tells us a lot about the time that we are living in right now. Do we have ourselves to blame? Of course, we received this 'free will' to make a choice for God, or to make it against Him. And if you don't want to listen to this, then we won't be okay. It's an enormous master plan: He gives you free will, but He also knows how it will end.



Figure 11: Michelangelo Buonarroti – Freco of the Sistine Chapel, Vatican City, Italy

Rebirth, renewal and creation

After the retribution came the possibility for a second start. Therefore the story of Noah's Ark symbolises rebirth or renewal. The idea of retribution and renewal was basis for the grimmer outlook on the myth. This slightly serious or even cruel portrait of the deluge we find in paintings from very different painters like Michelangelo, Hieronymus Bosch, Jan Nagel, Poussin and Gustave Doré.

The idea of a second start reminds us of the first start: the story functions as a second creation. To illustrate this we can look at the biblical text, where, as the water descends, the dry earth is emphasized: "By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry. By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry." (Genesis VIII: 13-14). The same ritual is emphasized in the

creation: “And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.” (Genesis I: 9-10) [interview Huibers: retributie]

Baptism

The water is seen as cleansing, or as baptism, as the ark stands for the church, and the story of the deluge is seen as a rebirth. Baptizing is the salvation of the Christian people, as the ark was also the salvation of the (Christian) people. (Goosen 1990, p. 198)

The end of the world

The apocalyptic seascape (the actual flood) was either portrayed as a desperate landscape of drowning people and animals (Jan Nagel and Francis Danby), or as a dangerous seascape with wild waters (John



Figure 12: Francis Danby - *The Deluge*. 1837

Martin). There are many more paintings like these, all from different times and made with different motives.

The drowning people of course had a high dramatic effect and emphasized again the retribution, but also the devastation of the merciless ending for a big part of the population. Both type of paintings show that the deluge was irreversible and complete. It also refers to the relation between humans and the water,



Figure 13: John Martin - *The Deluge*. 1826

which has been an ambiguous from the beginning of times: dangerous on the one hand, and a blessing on the other.

Also contemporary artists use the Ark as a metaphor for the ending of the world, to draw attention to themes like pollution or war. Again it is merciless, but now god has been replaced by nature. Here we see the first transition of the themes of the Ark into more mainstream or modern interpretations.



Figure 14: Cai Guo-Qiang - Shanghai's Power Station



In this painting we see six identical men, laughing with their eyes closed. As in all of his work, Yue portrays himself laughing. Since the painting has the title *Noah's Ark*, we can assume that we are looking at the end of the world. Nothing is left except for water and a boat

filled with six versions of himself. The cynical laugh is very appropriate, since the rest of the population is dying and Yue is the only one surviving. With this painting he captures the bittersweet dilemma of survival of the species versus the end of life as we know it.

Figure 15: Yue Minjen - *Noah's Ark*

The story is often perceived as a happy tale that is suitable for children's toys and books (also mentioned by Johan Huibers in the first part of the interview), neglecting to mention the idea that a lot of people were murdered by God's wrath.



Peace

The image of the dove returning with an olive branch as proof that the



Figure 17: Gerhard Marcks - *Noah*, 1954

earth had begun drying, was a sign that God had not abandoned the people. The dove has become a motive on its own. (Laarhoven 1992, p. 14) The image of the dove has always been a popular

image throughout the ages. From early Christianity through the modern times, it

Figure 16: Byzantine mosaic from San Marco Basilica, Venice, Italy

functions as a symbol for peace: an end to the destruction of the flood.

Safe Haven

Throughout the world the term 'Ark' is used as a name for a safe harbour. The idea of salvation and the church have been taken out of their religious context into the more common approach of a safe place. In the fifties, president Tito, the communist leader of Yugoslavia, built a bunker that would safeguard the ruling class in case of a nuclear attack. He named the bunker 'The Ark'. The project took 26 years, cost almost three billion and was complete one year before Tito died. The bunker could allow up to 350 people living and working for about six months. The bunker is now a contemporary art gallery. (Biennial Foundation, 2015) Another type of bunker, the vault that harbours all the seeds in the world, also received the nickname 'Food Ark'. The vault can be found on the Island

Spitsbergen and is situated inside an old coalmine.



In the interview Huibers says the following about the term 'Ark' as a form of salvation:

Ark is the Hebrew word Teba, which is a lifeboat. The same word Teba is used for Moses' basket that the

princess finds. We translated the word into Ark, but the original meaning is lifeboat. Lucas speaks of this in Lucas 21: The waves of the sea will bring terror to the people. Later on in the Revelations it's also stated. We are living in this time now: the people will become terrified of the waves of the ocean. The water level keeps rising and I hope we will be able to stop it, but we are talking about the force of nature.



The TV show *Noah's Arc* was a soap series from the U.S that ran in 2005 and 2006. The lead character's name is Noah and the story evolves around him and his friends: a group of black and Hispanic gay men. The episodes deal with their love life,

friendships and the challenges that they encounter. They deal with issues like bigamy, discrimination, HIV and fidelity. The term *arc* has the meaning of a safe haven. Modern life confronts the men with all kinds of problems, but they have a safe place to fall back on.

This tour through history illustrates that the story of the Ark is still an inspiring source in- and outside art. The following part of this essay is an attempt to show the possibility that, because of the history and tradition described above, the themes of the Ark are present in the back of our heads when we look at images of boats, where there is no obvious connection. Again, this is with the assumption that no one looks at an image with a blank slate. This stems from the idea of Hans-Georg Gadamer² that the meaning that people attribute to something, doesn't depend on the thing itself, but on their own presuppositions (something Gadamer calls *Vorurteile*). The consequence is that meaning is not objective, but depends on the observer and thus as a rule, is subjective. Also it strongly depends on history since the perspective of an observer is always bound to the historical context in which this person lives and thinks. In other words: because we exist within a certain historical tradition we will always be trapped in a horizon of our own culture and history. Gadamer states that this horizon determines our observation, experience and understanding of the things around us. Our understanding of the world doesn't come from nothing: it is always preformed by conventions and traditions that come before the understanding (hence the term *Vor-urteile*).

As mentioned in the introduction, the meanings that we carry with us have often become detached from the original flood story. As an example you can think of the dove: A white dove with an olive branch reminds us of peace but not everyone will link this to Noah's Ark. The dove symbol has been used in numerous cartoons, logos and artworks; it has become a thing on its own.

To keep chapter three clear and persuasive it is divided in the three most important themes from the images of Noah's Ark:

- Rebirth or Renewal
- Salvation, safe haven, preservation
- Intervention, punishment, retribution

3. Relation to images of boats

² Hans-Georg Gadamer – *Warheit und Methode* – Germany, 1960

Rebirth and Renewal



Tim Eitel- *Boat*

In this painting Eitel depicts two people heading towards the end of the horizon, into a white (virgin-like) new world. The image therefore relates to the second creation: the story of the flood as rebirth. The two people in this image are rowing towards their new, unknown destiny, into the new world.

Wolfgang Tillmans - *Slachtensee*

Wolfgang Tillmans is known for his photography of young men, who he shows in different places, different angles and in different ways. In *Slachtensee* we see a man who is faced to the water, he is still wet from swimming, a towel is covering the lower part of his body. His body and his skin look perfect. The image reflects on the idea of the water as a mean of cleansing, or more traditional: means of baptizing. The man appears to be naked and undamaged, cleansed of his sins. He reborn like a brand new baby.



is

Massimo Sestini – (Word Press Photo 2nd prize singles, general news 2015)

The news photo depicts a group of boat refugees on their way to Greece. Since the photographer is literally attached to the helicopter and thus the moment of the photo is identical with the moment that they realize that they will be rescued.



At this moment they feel their luck has turned, they have been found and they will not drown. In the photo they look up at the sky and know that they are noticed. The moment refers to the key-moment in the bible where God remembers Noah. The story for the people on the boat is about to be reversed, like the biblical story of the ark: From an anxious situation they start the journey on their boat, the chaos is worsened since the boat is too full. After the decisive moment the chaos will be decreased and they will end up in another anxious situation: a refugee camp. Of course there is also a formal resemblance with Noah's Ark: a boat that is so packed that you can hardly believe that it would be possible. This photo relates to the boat as a theme of hope of renewal.

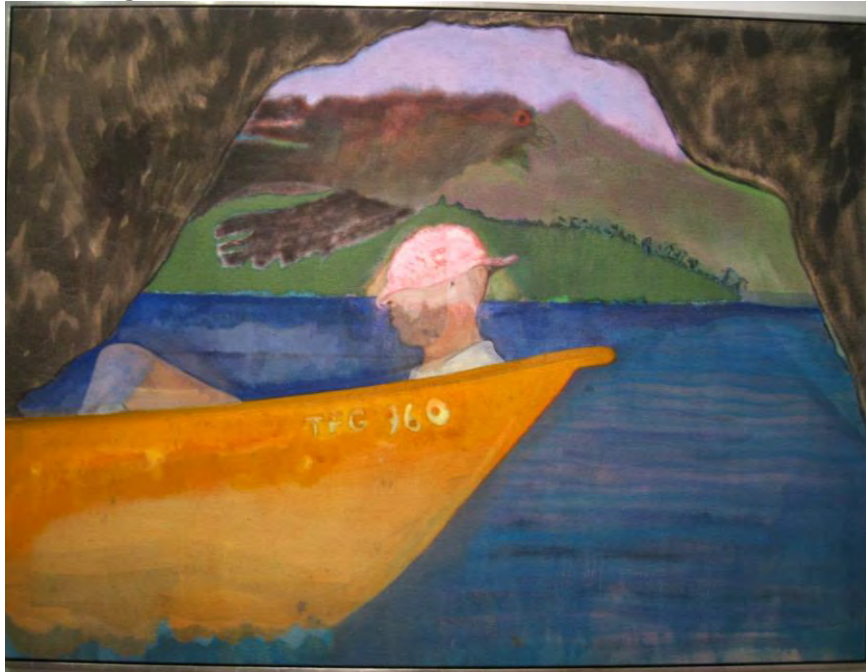


Erwin Olaf – Microsoft and Apple

In this photograph we see two computers on a boat. The world is misty and we can clearly see that it is an early morning: a new dawn, a new day, a new world. The two computers have outlived their creators: the humans. Noah survived the flood since God chose him as a just human, a lawgiver. In a way

Erwin Olaf is saying that computers are better at being people than people are.

Peter Doig –Cave Boat Bird



In this painting we see a person in a boat who seems to be asleep, the boat is sailing in a cave. A giant bird flies over his head. The cave represents the state of not knowing where you are, the world hidden away. The bird

warns the sleeping voyager that there is land, just like the dove tells Noah that there is dry land somewhere.

Salvation/Safe haven, preservation

Peter Martensen – The Catholic

The man in the painting is rowing a small boat, he is neatly dressed, like a good Catholic on a Sunday. The water resembles baptism, as it did in Noah's Ark. It shows the bizarre reality of today's respectable appearance. Even if we are rowing to save ourselves from the apocalypse, we are still neatly dressed. Martensen is known for the Kafkaesque feeling that his paintings convey.



Hans Aarsman – Waterhuizen (From *Hollandse Tafarelen*), 1989

This is one of the most popular photographs from Aarsman's early work. One of the reasons that it is so popular is because it resembles a famous painting from



Caspar David Friedrich (*On the Sailing Boat*, 1819). The two protagonists face away from us, making us feel as though we are secret witnesses of their journey. The asymmetry of the composition stresses the irregular conditions of their course. In a way it seems as though they are about to sail over

the rest of the world, squashing them in their course. In this picture the "Ark" and the apocalypse are both embodied in a ship.

Andreas Gursky – *Niagara*

Gursky calls his point of view "God's eye view". It allows him to capture his enormous subjects, but also emphasises his distant attitude in his work. He goes to great lengths to make his images, using helicopters, rooftops and cranes. This resembles the idea of the Ark seen by God. The photo also reminds us of the



wild marine painted by John Martin (page 8) that shows the deluge by portraying the ark on a wild seascape, where the ark is a safe haven amongst the complete destruction of the world.

Selfies on boats

Taking a selfie on a boat is a very popular trend. It is a great way to promote yourself: good weather, wealth, holidays, family and friends. Of



course selfies are a long way from Noah's Ark. But



when we look at the photo on the left we cannot ignore the feeling of paradise, a character that seems to be a fortunate soul, a chosen one. The fact that he is there with

his wife and child emphasises his good fortune.

Intervention, punishment, retribution



Bas Jan Ader - *In Search of the Miraculous*

To this day, no one knows whether Ader drowned because of bad weather, was killed by pirates, became disorientated and jumped overboard, or whether, his intention was to make his suicide part of his last work. Bas Jan Ader's work is full of moments where he takes a leap into the unknown. He literally falls down with his bike, from a tree, etcetera. In order to fall, you have to let go, to lose control. By

crossing the Atlantic, Bas Jan Ader again forced himself to let go, to let nature take control of his faith. He surrendered to a greater power, just like Noah did when he was told to build a boat, invite thousands of animals inside, and submissively wait until it started to rain. In a way one could say that he punishes the evil of the world inside himself.

Cornelius Rogge – Armada

This boat is part of the series Armada that Cornelius Rogge made and was bought by the Kröller Muller museum. According to the artist the boats contain different religious

associations, but he wants the viewer to make their own conclusion.

We see creatures of the boat moving towards something



that appears to be fire. The fire can be interpreted as the purgatory, which is a place where wrath and forgiveness of God come together: People have to pay for their sins, but He doesn't want to lose people for good. The boat and the retribution make the connection to the story of Noah's Ark in which God wants retribution, but in the end also loves mankind and accepts that they are born with flaws. He promises to never flood the earth again.

Brian Adam Douglas- The Rain Dogs

The huge black and white piece depicts a pile of people on top of a small boat.



The area is clearly flooded as we can see rooftops in the background rising above the water. It is an allusion to photographs we know from the (U.S.) hurricanes. The Hurricane Katrina made painfully visible in what kind of situation a lot of poor families in New Orleans were living. Many households lacked a vehicle so there was no way to get away. Help came too late or didn't come at all. With

The Rain Dogs Douglas wants to show how the poorest got hit the hardest because they had no means of survival. While Noah was on his Ark, everything outside of it didn't matter. The people in this work have been abandoned by everyone, including God. There is no Ark for them, only this small boat, which will never hold.

Yasuyoshi Chib – Tsunami (Word Press Photo 1st prize stories, people in the news 2012)

Because of the Japanese tsunami the catamaran landed on top of a house. The photo resembles the painting from Jeroen Bosch, in which he painted the Ark that had landed on mount Ararat with the Animals leaving the Ark.



The world around has been destroyed. On the photo we can see destroyed houses and possessions, on the painting we see dead animals and people on the foreground. The world has been punished, survivors walk around, but we can still see the enormous destruction of the flood.



**Figure 18: Hieronymus Bosch -
De Ark op berg Ararat. Ca. 1514**

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