



Unequal Lovers

Date

ca. 1650

Primary Maker

Pieter de Grebber

Medium

oil on canvas

Description

Both the subject matter and artist of this comic and highly theatrical painting have long eluded scholars of seventeenth-century Dutch art. Likely produced in the circle of Haarlem painter Pieter de Grebber, an artist who worked for the Dutch court in The Hague, this painting depicts “unequal lovers,” a popular satirical subject in northern European art and literature. Here the mismatched lovers are an old woman (not a nun) and a

young, foolish man, although most typically such images pair an old man with a young woman. With moralizing as well as comic intent, works with this subject expose the folly of those who seek inappropriate sexual partners. The older figures in these parodied relationships desire youth and beauty, while the younger partners are generally characterized as interested only in money, as contained in the chest held by the man in the painting.

Dimensions

Sight: 57 3/4 x 42 in. (146.7 x 106.7 cm) Framed: 57 3/4 x 42 in. (146.7 x 106.7 cm)