



Hendrick de Clerck, *Moses Striking the Rock*, ca. 1610, tempera on oil panel, 170 x 133 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

*Moses Striking the Rock* (ca. 1610) was created by Hendrick de Clerck (ca. 1560–1630), a Catholic Flemish painter at the court of Archdukes Albert (1559–1621) and Isabella (1566–1633) in Brussels. This painting showcases the important shift towards the mythologization of the Bible after the Renaissance, which made this religious artwork suitable for display in a dining room rather than in a nave of a church. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is fortunate to have two works on the same subject executed by De Clerck, as they show the development of the artist's style over the decades. The first work is dated to 1590, while this one was completed around

1610. Featuring more vivid colours than the earlier picture, this image is crowded with figures in an imaginary bucolic environment. Despite stylistic changes, the content of the two paintings have much in common: both include the motif of breastfeeding, matronly yet opulently dressed mothers and half-naked men gathering water in exquisite jars. However, the camels that De Clerck includes in the earlier work to heighten the sense of exoticism are absent here. The solemn figure of Moses and his brother Aaron, the first High Priest of Israel, are situated in the middle ground of the first painting and are rendered as clearly as the other figures, whereas in this work the two men appear further in the distance and are not immediately noticeable. Thus, the striking aspect of the second version of *Moses Striking the Rock* is its exaggerated emphasis on sumptuousness and prosperity. Despite the formal differences between the two works, they both encourage viewers to express gratitude toward God for their daily sustenance and overall well-being.

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