



Nicolaes Maes, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1658, oil on panel, 59.4 x 87 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Best known for his genre and portrait paintings, Nicolaes Maes (1634–1693) developed his early realist style under the instruction of fellow Dutch Golden Age painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669). *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (1658), which bears strong similarities to Rembrandt's *Adoration of the Shepherds with Lamps* (1654), reflects the preference for biblical scenes over iconic images of Christ during the Protestant Reformation. The absence of iconic or celestial elements, such as halos or angels, and the naturalism of the figures' movements firmly situate Christ's birth within the earthly realm. Nonetheless, the warm glowing light illuminating the interior of the stable lends a spiritual quality to this scene of an intimate and joyous gathering of family and friends.

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