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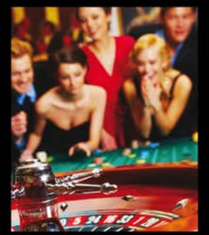

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"Monkeys playing cards", 1650
David Teniers the Younger (1610- 1690)
Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia

Text: Arthur Flowers and Anthony Curtis
Photos: Huntington Press

Of all the Teniers family of Flemish painters, David Teniers the Younger is best known. Born in Antwerp, Belgium, he was trained by his father, David Teniers the Elder. Chiefly influenced by Adrian Brouwer and his "low-life" genre paintings, Teniers the Younger became most recognized for his depictions of peasant life, landscapes, and religious scenes. Much of his work portrayed peasants entertaining themselves in taverns, playing cards, dice, and skittles.
The artist was way ahead of the curve with regard to the portrayal of animals engaged in gambling; "Monkeys Playing Cards" predates the other four such images in this volume by nearly 250 years.
It's likely that Teniers was lampooning the ubiquitous gambling in Europe during the period,
drawing an insulting intelligence comparison between monkeys and gamblers.

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