Unforgettable

Unforgettable: Women Artists from Antwerp to Amsterdam, 1600–1750

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HANNIBAL BOOKS

Museum of Fine Arts Ghent

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) has consistently presented groundbreaking exhibitions on historical women artists over its nearly forty-year history, with the aim of promoting awareness of and scholarship on these artists. We are proud to present yet another first: *Women Artists from Antwerp to Amsterdam, 1600–1750*. Exhibitions such as this demonstrate that women artists have been a consistent presence throughout history and pave the way for a broader and more inclusive art history. The inclusion of objects such as paper-cutting, lace, and embroidery, many of which have been created historically by women, serves to question the gendered hierarchies of art. As such, this exhibition reflects NMWA's mission, to recognize the contributions of women artists across mediums and genres. The museum's commitment to upending the traditional canon is evident in presentations of our collection as well as our exhibitions of historical and contemporary art.

The collective contribution of Dutch and Flemish women artists during one of the most dynamic periods in the region's history is a topic that has, over the past few decades, received increasing attention within academia. The driving force behind this project is to bring the work of scholars—as well as new insights by the curators of this exhibition—into the public discourse, further cementing the legacies of the celebrated and unsung women whose work shaped the culture in which they lived. The same is true of the vision of project curators Virginia Treanor and Frederica Van Dam. Their work not only provides engaging and powerful insights into the breadth of women's contributions during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but also highlights the relevance of these artists to our current understanding of the period.

On behalf of the museum's board and leadership, I extend deep appreciation to all the lenders to and sponsors of this exhibition, without whom it would not be possible to present such a diverse array of artists and artwork. This project found significant advocates in Birgitta Tazelaar, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the U.S., and Frédéric Bernard, Ambassador of Belgium to the U.S.

For support in bringing this project to fruition, we are especially grateful to Denise Littlefield Sobel, whose generous gift enabled the English edition of this catalogue. I also extend gratitude to Morgan Stanley and Tara Rudman, as well as Martha Lyn Dippell and Daniel L. Korengold, Lugano, Kay Woodward Olson, Patti and George White, Laurel and John Rafter, Marcia Myers Carlucci, Dutch Culture USA, Jacalyn D. Erickson, Lucas Kaempfer Foundation, Inc., Jacqueline Badger Mars, Geri Skirkanich, The Tavolozza Foundation, VisitFlanders, the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Angela LoRé, Anne L. von Rosenberg, Ilene S. and Jeffrey S. Gutman, The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Charlotte and Michael Buxton, Anne N. Edwards, the Netherland-America Foundation, and Frances Luessenhop Usher.

I would also like to recognize the tireless work of so many of the NMWA staff on this project, particularly Chief Preparator Gregory Angelone, Registrar Catherine Bade, Development Consultant/Director's Office Lucy Buchanan, Assistant Editor Alicia Gregory, Director of Publications Elizabeth Lynch, Foundation and Government Support Officer Ellen Pollak, and Research Assistant Katie Altizer Takata. Thank you also to Catherine Powell-Warren, who is not only a contributor to this catalogue, but also initiated the connection between the National Museum of Women in the Arts and the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent (MSK).

This project has been undeniably strengthened by the support and contributions of its advisory panel: Frima Fox Hofrichter, Elizabeth Honig, Judith Noorman, and Katlijne Van der Stighelen. These scholars and their important work on Dutch and Flemish women artists, patrons, collectors, dealers, and others have paved the way for this exhibition and ensured that the contributions of women to this important period in history are forever a more prominent part of the narrative.

A special thanks to the MSK Ghent for its equal partnership in the planning and execution of this exhibition. Having previously demonstrated a commitment to highlighting the work of historical women artists with the 2018 exhibition *The Ladies of the Baroque: Women Painters in 16th and 17th Century Italy*, as well as consistent programming that promotes diverse voices and perspectives, the MSK is an ideological friend and ally. I would like to thank my counterpart, MSK Director Prof. Dr. Manfred Sellink, who championed this project from the very beginning. His intuitive understanding of the curatorial goals of the project laid the groundwork for a fruitful and genuinely enjoyable collaboration between our institutions.

Susan Fisher Sterling
The Alice West Director
National Museum of Women in the Arts
Washington, D.C.

The MSK's 2018 exhibition, *The Ladies of the Baroque: Women Painters in 16th and 17th Century Italy*, was a statement of the museum's intent to spotlight women artists in the history of European art. It is now widely recognized by museums and academic research alike (rightly so, this male museum director readily admits) that the work, importance, and role of women in art have long been structurally neglected and, as a consequence, fundamentally underestimated. The earlier widely admired (and, for many, surprising) exhibition now has a logical sequel in *Unforgettable: Women Artists from Antwerp to Amsterdam, 1600–1750*, which focuses on the "long" seventeenth century in the Low Countries. While this period, like the Italian Baroque, can rightly be considered one of the most artistically significant in art history, it is sadly telling that until now there has been no museum-level survey devoted to the impact of women artists from our region in general—merely to that of better-known individuals such as Clara Peeters, Michaelina Wautier, Judith Leyster, and Rachel Ruysch.

It has therefore been the MSK's ambition for some time now to follow our earlier spotlight on Southern European women artists by focusing on their counterparts from the Low Countries, not only through exhibitions, but also by bolstering our own collection with targeted acquisitions in this area. It was more than a happy coincidence that Frederica Van Dam learned from Virginia Treanor, curator at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., that her institution had also advanced plans in a similar direction. Proof once more, by the way, of the importance of CODART—the organization representing the global network of museums with holdings of Flemish and Dutch art—of which the MSK has been an active member for many years. The plans of these two inspired curators and researchers swiftly convinced their respective colleagues to join forces for a shared project. The exhibition concept was presented to and intensively discussed by an international scholarly committee of specialist researchers on both sides of the Atlantic (a committee made up, incidentally, almost entirely of women researchers). We sincerely thank all of them for their critical and constructive input, which has greatly benefited the scope of the concept and the wish-list of loans.

Having been tightened up in this way, the exhibition concept proved highly persuasive in subsequent contacts with potential lenders. This was no easy task: on the one hand, we are far from the only museums to have enthusiastically engaged with the work of women artists, while on the other, the institutions in question have proportionately far less work by women than by men. We are especially grateful, therefore, to all the museums and private lenders who have agreed to entrust us with their highly sought-after artworks. With work by more than fifty artists active across all disciplines, we are convinced that our exhibition offers a rich, nuanced, surprisingly multifaceted, beautiful, and high-quality survey of women in the long seventeenth century in the Southern and Northern Netherlands. As a museum that has traditionally placed a great deal of value on thorough scholarly research, we very much hope that the exhibition and this accompanying publication will likewise prove a solid foundation for further study. I firmly believe that a good exhibition is not the culmination of the research process, with all questions seemingly answered, but rather that it raises fresh questions and encourages researchers to take their work further.

It goes without saying that a complex and ambitious exhibition like this is the fruit of the work of many people. First and foremost, I am extremely indebted to Frederica and Virginia, its two curators. I know all too well from personal experience what the combination of coordinating an exhibition and its catalogue—often in parallel with one's "day job"—entails in terms of pressure and effort. For their outstanding collaboration, we thank our partners in crime in Washington, D.C., headed by director Susan Fisher Sterling. My special thanks also go to the MSK project team, who have continuously supported the curators with great dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm: assistant curators Inez De Prekel and Candice Van Heghe, exhibition organizer Jet Peters, restorers and art handlers Sofie Corneillie, Lieven Gerard, and Joost Surmont, and designers Ruud Ruttens and Leroy Meyer. As always, all credit is due to the entire staff at the MSK, who have been a brilliant team to work with: I will miss you all very much! Everyone involved in this initiative—both within and beyond our museums—is listed in full on the Colophon page of the catalogue. I thank them all for their cooperation, commitment, enthusiasm, and professionalism. It is with a heavy heart that I round off what will be my final catalogue foreword as Museum Director. It has been an honor, privilege and, above all, pleasure to have served the public art collection over these past decades.

Manfred Sellink
Outgoing Director
Museum of Fine Arts Ghent (MSK)

History is a discipline of context; it suffers when vast sectors of human experience are treated as separate domains that are appended to, but do not form an integral part of, the enterprise of historical explanation.

Jan de Vries, economic historian, in *Art in History/History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture*[1]

Women Artists from Antwerp to Amsterdam, 1600 to 1750

Virginia Treanor & Frederica Van Dam

By and large, the current public narrative surrounding Dutch and Flemish visual culture of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries has been shaped primarily by blockbuster monographic exhibitions of male painters. Many people are familiar with male artists of this era such as Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Frans Hals (1582–1666), Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), and Johannes Vermeer (1632–75), but few have heard of even the most prominent women artists who worked during this time. While there have been a limited number of important monographic exhibitions on Dutch and Flemish women painters, most notably Judith Leyster (1609–60) and, more recently, Clara Peeters (1587–after 1636), and Michaelina Wautier (1614–89), their names are still relatively unknown to the public.[2] This reflects a longstanding bias in the art historical literature against not only women, but certain mediums, with painting at the top of an artistic hierarchy as it was conceived by art theoreticians in the Renaissance. However, as the quote from Jan de Vries explains, context is key to truly understanding a moment in time, and when only one source, one medium, or one gender is considered, it is impossible to gain an accurate picture of the past.

The selection of works presented in *Unforgettable: Women Artists from Antwerp to Amsterdam, 1600–1750*, therefore, includes not only painting, sculpture and printmaking—traditionally regarded as the pinnacle of the visual arts—but also paper cutting, glass engraving, calligraphy, and textile arts such as lace and embroidery. Grounded in the rejection of heavily gendered material hierarchies (which valued historically male-dominated painting and sculpture above work made by women) this project builds on recent exhibitions such as *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400–1800*, which similarly included a variety of mediums.[3] When the gendered guardrails between "high art" and other works are removed, more women are admitted into the art historical discourse, clearing the way for a truer, more nuanced consideration of their contributions.

Presenting the work of women who helped shape and define the visual culture of the Low Countries[4]—the term used here to denote the region encompassing present-day Flanders (the northern part of Belgium) and The Netherlands—this exhibition demonstrates that Flemish and Dutch women participated in nearly every artistic medium and genre and made contributions in areas of artistic production including painting, drawing, printmaking, lacemaking, embroidery, and more. They were vital participants in the artistic economy, involved in the manufacture and sale of these luxury goods which were essential to the strong economic success of the Low Countries—a success, it must be acknowledged, that was predicated on colonialization and the slave trade. Acknowledging women's contributions provides a fuller understanding of the period, while it also preserves their legacies in the modern historical record. This exhibition draws on the expertise of scholars whose interdisciplinary work over the past few decades has yielded new and important insights into the role of Flemish and Dutch women during one of the most dynamic periods in history.[5] Despite being under separate forms of governance—with Flanders part of the Spanish Netherlands ruled by the Habsburgs, and the Dutch Republic having successfully extracted itself from Habsburg rule in the sixteenth century—the regions are nevertheless united by a shared history, language, and culture.[6] However, it should be noted that there are substantially more Dutch artists than Flemish ones represented in

1 Freedberg/De Vries 1996, p. 249.

2 At the time of writing, the exhibition, *Rachel Ruysch: Nature into Art*, was open at the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. See Robert Schindler *et al*., *Rachel Ruysch: Nature into Art*. 1st ed. (Boston: MFA Publications, 2024).

3 The disparities between how works historically made by men are valued over those made by women is laid out in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1981).

4 On the need to consider Flemish and Dutch art histories together, see Sarah Joan Moran and Amanda Pipkin, *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries*, 1500–1750, pp. 2–3.

5 In addition to expanding upon the few monographic exhibitions on northern women artists, this project builds on important academic research into the subject. Margarita Russell's 1981 article "The Women Painters in Houbraken's Groote Schouburgh," in *Woman's Art Journal* was the first to outline the women mentioned by the so-called Dutch Vasari, Arnold Houbraken. The 1998 publication, *Vrouwen en Kunst in de Republiek*, edited by Els Kloek, Catherine Peters Sengers, and Esther Tobé, remains a treasure trove of information on women in the Northern and Southern Netherlands, including an index of some 237 names of women artists and patrons between 1500 and 1800. Elizabeth Honig's "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century" (2001), also in *Woman's Art Journal*, thoughtfully discusses the range of artistic production among women as well as the gender bias behind ascriptions such as "amateur." More recent resources include Katlijne Van der Stighelen's 2010 *Vrouwenstreken: vrouwelijke schilders in de Nederlanden (1550–nu)*, the 2019 collection of essays edited by Elizabeth Sutton, *Women Artists and Patrons in the Netherlands 1500–1700*, and, in Dutch, the 2020 publication *Gouden Vrouwen* by Judith Noorman and her team of graduate students at the University of Amsterdam. Most recently, the *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek/Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* issued its first ever volume dedicated to women "... as creators, patrons, buyers, and agents of change in the arts of the Low Countries."

Unforgettable: Women Artists from Antwerp to Amsterdam, 1600–1750. This is due to a number of factors, not least of which is the difference in urban development. Whereas art in the North experienced widespread secularization owing to the Reformation and the lack of a central ecclesiastical authority, in the South the tradition of religious commissions was given a new impetus by the Counter-Reformation, the overwhelming impact of Rubens and his workshop, and the predominance of the Antwerp school of painting. Moreover, in the second half of the century, following the deaths of Rubens and Van Dyck, a discrepancy becomes apparent between the relative decline of Flanders as an artistic center and the abundance of work produced in the Dutch Republic during the same period. Research has also played a role in the North–South imbalance, as scholarly attention in recent decades has more strictly focused on Dutch women artists rather than on their Flemish counterparts.

Organized into thematic sections that allow for the consideration of multiple mediums by different makers across the 150-year span considered herein, this exhibition catalogue comprises wide-ranging thematic essays as well as "cluster entries" on the objects in the exhibition. This format provides the opportunity to discuss—across medium, geography, and social status—the training, innovations, networks, and legacies of women artists, thereby demonstrating that women were not working in obscurity or isolation in a male-dominated world, but were integral to the production, sale, and consumption of luxury goods. Women artists of this period were many, with unique, multifaceted lives; these individuals come into full view when considered in context with one another and the world in which they lived.

Identity

The first theme, "Identity," provides evidence, both textual and visual, for the public acclaim and recognition that many women received during their lifetimes. As discussed in Virginia Treanor's essay, important contemporary publications, such as Arnold Houbraken's 1715 (first edition) *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters and Paintresses), record the names of women working in a variety of artistic fields. The work of some of those named has been lost or remains unknown, which has led to their invisibility in the art historical evaluation of contributions by Dutch and Flemish women.[7] Taken together with those whose work is extant, as well as those such as lacemakers and embroiderers, whose work may survive yet whose names were rarely recorded, the aggregate of known women artists is increased exponentially. The example of sculptor Maria Faydherbe (1587–after 1633), detailed by Klara Alen, provides insight into this artist's tenacity and skill, while the entries in the "Identity" theme illuminate the visual representation of many women during their lifetimes ("Portraits of the Artist") and the various materials, genres, and styles in which they worked ("Tradition and Ambition").

Choices

The choices available to women artists in this period depended largely on their social class. Although some women of the Low Countries were able to attain a degree of artistic freedom, opportunities for artistic advancement varied greatly, based on family connections and socioeconomic status. Frederica Van Dam's essay looks at the decision of three women in the Southern Netherlands to become "spiritual daughters," which enabled them to focus on their pursuits without the expectation that they would marry and have children. Lower-class workers, who made up the majority of lacemakers and embroiderers, are the subject of the essay by Elena Kanagy-Loux, who details the conditions in which many worked and how their labor was essential to the industry.

The entries in this theme delve into the training and status of those who made the objects featured in the exhibition,

6 See note 4.
7 There are, however, exceptions such as those pointed out by Honig.

emphasizing the many different paths women followed to obtain instruction, and how those choices were affected by their social positions ("Family Ties"). The expectations placed on women as artists, daughters, wives, and mothers, and the different ways in which they navigated these social norms, are considered in the entry "Social Expectations."

Networks

Women were crucial to the artistic economy of the Low Countries, and female labor was a significant factor in the unprecedented expansion of trade and the thriving market for art and luxury goods in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Painters and printmakers catered to the art market just as their male counterparts did, innovating and adapting along the way. Women were also prominent in the marketplace as retailers and consumers of such goods. The case studies of three women in the Dutch Republic by Marleen Puyenbroek demonstrate that women could and did act as purveyors of paintings and other materials, such as textiles, that were often intertwined with the painting trade. Judith Noorman looks at the role of women in purchasing art, whether via commission or on the open market. Through accounting books kept by wealthy women, Noorman outlines the calculations, both financial and moral, they had to make when considering their expenditures.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic became a nexus for scientific thought, exploration, and innovation. Art was essential to the recording and distribution of knowledge, particularly for the nascent field of botany. Many women worked at this intersection of art and science, and the essay by Catherine Powell-Warren describes the network of artists, scientists, and patrons in which these women operated, and how they contributed to the advancement of the field.

The entries "Local Networks" and "Global Networks" highlight various ways in which women and their work circulated within the Low Countries and abroad.

Legacy

This section explores the legacies of women artists, including an examination of the processes by which they have been marginalized in art historical narratives over the last three hundred years, as well as recent advances. Oana Stan's essay looks at the presence of art by Dutch and Flemish women in Dutch and Belgian museum collections and the steps they have taken over the past fifty years to make these artists more visible, including organizing special exhibitions. Frima Fox Hofrichter reflects on the changing reception of Judith Leyster, from the rediscovery of her oeuvre at the end of the nineteenth century to Hofrichter's own role in carving out a permanent place for this artist, whose star is once again on the rise.

The entry for this section ("Value, Memory, Legacy") examines disparities in monetary and social value between the seventeenth century and the present. It demonstrates the impact of gender on an object's value by providing examples of the relative values of items made by women during their own time, as well as in today's art market and cultural institutions. It also delves into reasons for the invisibility of Flemish and Dutch women artists in the modern historical record. The memory of many women has been obscured by misattributions, both unintentional and willful, and by blatant bias. It explores women artists' various approaches to securing their own artistic legacies and posits that recent scholarship and increased interest in women lead to ever more "rediscoveries."

Conclusion: Power in Numbers

Over two hundred objects by more than fifty women: that is the number of works and women represented within this exhibition, and the names of over one hundred others are referenced in the pages of this catalogue. These numbers seem vast when we consider that almost no Dutch and Flemish women artists are commonly known today—only Clara Peeters, Maria van Oosterwijck (1630–93), Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750), and Judith Leyster are typically known to museum visitors, if at all. However, more than two hundred objects comprise only a fraction of the total number of works produced by women in the Low Countries between 1600 and 1750, and hundreds more women artists, both documented and undocumented, were active than are recounted in the pages of this catalogue.

The reincorporation of women artists into the discourse has the power to transform our understanding of Dutch and Flemish art and culture. Part of this work lies in recovering the social and monetary value of the objects women made, and another in uncovering the systemic biases that have led to their erasure from cultural memory.

By reclaiming the lives and legacies of women artists, we can also begin to recover the importance of women to the cultural landscape of the long seventeenth century, and ultimately gain a deeper appreciation of the richness of the visual culture of the Low Countries. The inclusion of women and their contributions can only strengthen our understanding of Dutch and Flemish art and culture and ensure that their presence remains unforgettable from this point forward.

Identity

Choices

Networks

Legacy

Identity

1

One of her art works, which featured an old tree trunk, a spider in its web and further a landscape, was sold for 500 guilders. The trunk, with its bark, knots and moss overgrowth, as also the spider with its fine weaving, were painted so naturally after life that it amazed everyone, all the more as people could not fathom how it was made, which is why the common people said of her that she could do magic.

Arnold Houbraken on juffrouw Rozee in *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters and Paintresses), 1718.

That furthermore, through her own study and the guidance of infallible nature, she has become a true mistress of the most elevated branches of art; being not only wonderfully experienced in painting portraits but histories too. In both, she pleases lovers of art, those impartial judges, most excellently; she excels especially in the purity of the brush, painting everything so meticulously, without the slightest stiffness, that it delights connoisseurs and earns their fullest approbation.

Johan van Gool on Margaretha Wulfraet in *De nieuwe Schouburg der Nederlantsche Kunstschilders en Schilderessen* (The New Theatre of Dutch Painters), 1751.

WEERT-BEFAEMDEN ROEM
Van verſcheyde Nederlantſche JOFVROVWEN Haer ſelven oeffenende inde ſeer edele SCHILDER-CONST.

HIer overt noch een woordt daer al wat ſins in ſteckt
T'gen' oock bedenckingh en verwonderingh verweckt
Aen de weet-lievende Conſt-Minnaers die dit leſen
En hoorende dat : die in Maeghden vrijheyt weſen
(Jn plaets van met de naeld' te volghen haeren naedt
Te vouwen eenen doeck, oft ſpinnen eenen draet)
Stets oeffenen t'verſtandt in Mannelijcke wercken
En daeghelijckx de Kunſt ſijn beſich aen te mercken.
Het leven en Natuer te comen ſeer nae by
Soo alſmen ſpeuren can in d'eelheyt der ſchildry,
Die t'Neerlandts Vrouwen volck weet aerdich af te malen
Waer in ſy weſentlijck *Apelles* achterhaelen,
En thoonen claerlijck dat in't Maeghdelijck verſtandt
Huyſt wetenſchap en gheeſt, waer van ghetuyght de handt.
Cupid' den minnen Godt (die dringht ſijn liefdens ſchichten
Jn al dat aedem voelt) die Coninghen doet ſwichten
Door zijnen brandt en onverbiddelijcke kracht,
Wordt hier ghebannen uyt *Picturas* vry ghedacht,
Daer *Anna Schuermans* med' verkeert en tracht te weten
De diep verholentheyt van haer Pinſeels ſecreten.
Daer ſy ghenucht en luſt, en vreught en ſmaeck in ſchept
Waer door ſy t'minnen mall' uyt haere ſinnen repr.
Als Faem ghenoch verbreydt, niet ſonder vaſte reden
Midts uyt haer vloyt de bron van alle wetentheden.
Die den gheleerden *Cats* oock in ſijn wercken noempt
En ſonderlingh aldus op deſe Jonck-vrouw roempt:

»VVie

1 "The fame of several Dutch ladies who practiced the very noble art of painting," page 557 in Cornelis de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet vande edele vry schilder-const* (The Golden Cabinet of the Noble Liberal Art of Painting), Antwerp, 1662. National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D.C.

The Presence of Women: A Survey of Sources

Virginia Treanor

Representation Matters

In 1699, the German-born, Amsterdam-based artist and naturalist Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717) undertook a lengthy voyage from her home to the Dutch colony of Surinam.[1] She was not completely alone—she brought her nineteen-year-old daughter Dorothea Maria Henrietta Gsell (née Graff) (1678–1743). The purpose of Merian's trip was to satisfy her curiosity as well as the curiosity of many in Europe about the flora and fauna of this new-to-them world. Merian's lifelong interest in the life cycles of plants and insects had already led her to publish multiple volumes on the subject, along with her carefully detailed illustrations. While Merian's own presence in the history of art and science has long been obfuscated by the writers of those histories, and she has only recently received credit for her contributions[2], historians likewise overlook the presence of those upon whom she relied in Surinam. These were the unrecognized enslaved West Africans and Indigenous Arawak and Carib, women in particular, who not only performed the domestic duties that enabled Merian's life in Surinam, but who also shared their knowledge of the natural world around them. One example of this transfer of knowledge from the publication that resulted from Merian's trip abroad, *Metamorphosis insectorum surinamensium* (first published in 1705), is her entry on *Flos pavonis*, commonly known as the peacock flower cat.2. Alongside her depiction of the plant, she records its characteristics and uses as described to her by "the Indians," who, she states, "…are not treated well by their Dutch masters…," and who "…use the seeds to abort their children, so that their children will not become slaves like they are." Merian also writes, "…the black slaves from Guinea and Angola…" threaten not to have children if they are not treated better.[3] Although Merian does not say it explicitly, it was most likely women who shared this information with her, as it has been women across geographies and time who have been the keepers of such knowledge.

This example serves as a reminder that the histories of women, even the enslaved and the unsung, can be hidden in plain sight, and recognition of their contributions should be acknowledged whenever possible in order to impart a fuller and more nuanced understanding of history. Also seemingly hidden in plain sight are the stories, deeds, and accomplishments of many Flemish and Dutch women artists of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, such as Merian.

The absence of women from introductory art history textbooks and exhibitions on the art and culture of the Low Countries has, until recently, gone largely unremarked.[4] While this is common in the histories of many other geographical regions, it is all the more surprising in this area during the early-modern period, where women were not only more present in public life in general, but also had a strong tradition of involvement in every aspect of the artistic economy.[5] Furthermore, many of these women were well known: they were written about in published biographies and panegyrics, and they had their portraits painted and printed. The relatively voluminous contemporary documentation of women and their work only serves to make their absence in modern historiography all the starker. Taken together, these primary sources—which have been used extensively by art historians to research numerous male artists of the period—reveal that far from being dismissed, overlooked,

1 Throughout this volume, the spelling of Surinam reflects common usage during the period being studied.

2 The scholarship on Merian is vast and growing. Works of note include: Stearn, Osmar/Becker/Rücker 1980; Zemon Davis 1997, pp. 140–202; Schmidt-Loske 2020, pp. 61–77; Van Delft *et al.* 2022.

3 Translation taken from Schiebinger, 2004, p. 1.

4 For scholars who made significant contributions to this field, see the article by Margarita Russell in *Woman's Art Journal* (Russell 1981), which first drew attention to the women mentioned in the book of the so-called "Dutch Vasari," Arnold Houbraken. *Vrouwen en Kunst in de Republiek* (Kloek/Peters-Sengers/Tobé 1998a) contains a wealth of information about women in both the Northern and Southern Netherlands, including an index with 237 names of female artists and patrons between 1500 and 1800. Elizabeth Honig's essay "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century," also published in *Woman's Art Journal* (Honig 2002), discusses the artistic production of women and also the gender bias of attributions such as "amateur." More recent sources include Van der Stighelen 2010; the collection of essays Sutton 2019, and in Dutch, Noorman 2020, edited by Judith Noorman and her students at the University of Amsterdam.

5 See the contributions by Van Dam, Noorman, and Puyenbroek in this volume, pp. 76–91, 160–65 and 152–59 respectively.

or working in obscurity during their lifetimes, many women were acknowledged for their talents and contributions. While many of these women are discussed in the following pages, along with examples of their work, the focus here is mostly on those for whom no work is known, as a way of incorporating their names and existence into the discourse. Far from being an exhaustive account of every mention of women in contemporary sources, the examples here underscore the fact that women consistently appear in records throughout the period, attesting to their undeniable presence.

A Firm Tradition

While the present exhibition focuses on the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it is important to note that by that period, both in the south and the north, the Netherlands already had a history of women working in the artistic economy.

As discussed in the entry "Portraits of the Artist," Catharina van Hemessen (1527/28–after 1567) of Antwerp was a painter, and the first European artist, male or female, to depict herself at work in front of an easel. While Van Hemessen's self-promotional savvy in irrefutably claiming her identity as an artist ensured her reputation, she was also acknowledged by others for her accomplishments. In 1567, the Antwerp-based Italian merchant and historian Lodovico Guicciardini published *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* (Description of All of the Low Countries), in which he describes how Van Hemessen, along with her husband, who was an organist, was invited to the Habsburg court at Madrid by Mary of Hungary, who also ensured that the couple received a large pension for the rest of their lives upon the monarch's death.[6] Van Hemessen, however, was not the only woman artist mentioned by Guicciardini. He also notes the Flemish artists Anna Coblegers (?–before 1560), Clara de Keysere (1470–1545), Susanna Horenbout (1503–45/54), Anna de Smytere (1520–66), Lavina Teerlinc (1510/20–76), and Mayken Verhulst (1518–1600). Horenbout and Teerlinc, both the daughters of miniaturist painters, worked at the English court of Henry VIII thanks, in large part, to their international fame.[7] De Keysere was also a miniaturist, although not the daughter of an artist. Verhulst came from a large family of painters and married fellow artist Pieter Coecke van Aelst. Even though Verhulst operated as a printer and publisher, Guicciardini only mentions her as a painter. Details are sparse for De Smytere and Coblegers in Guicciardini's text, which does not include specific information about the types of art they practiced.[8]

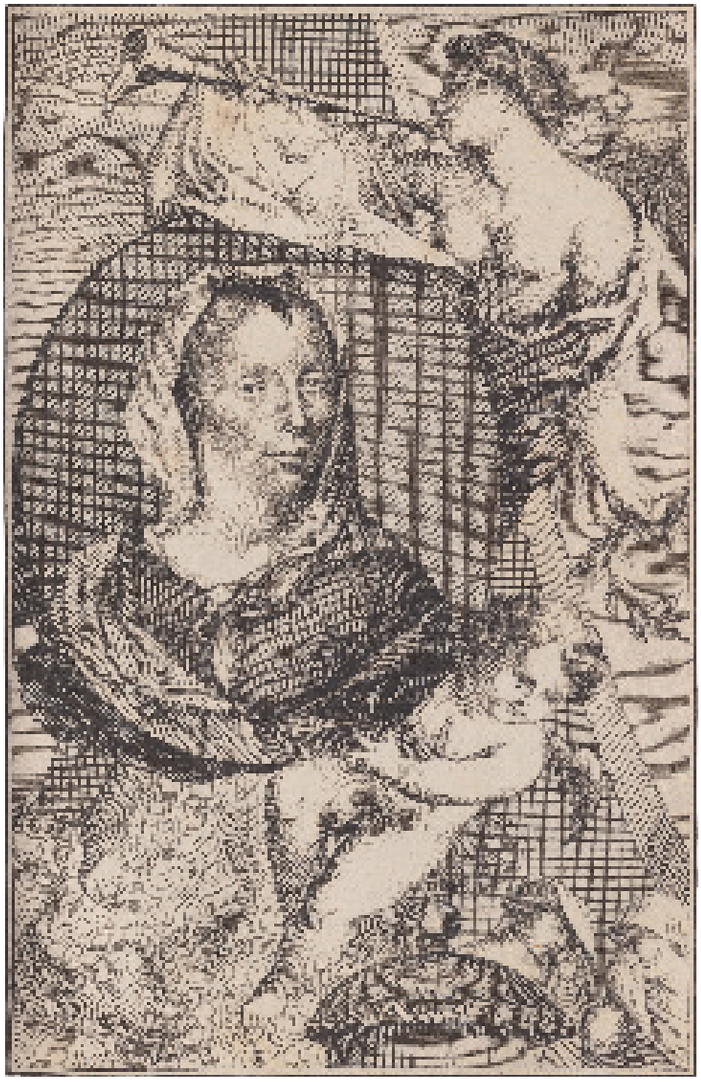
Horenbout and De Smytere are also mentioned in *Den spieghel der Nederlandscher audtheyt* (The Mirror of Netherlandish Antiquity) published in 1568 by Marcus van Vaernewijck. The same year, five Flemish women: Anna Coblegers ("Seghers"), Van Hemessen, Horenbout, De Keysere, and Teerlinc are named in the widely published 1568 edition of *Vitae* (Lives) by the Italian Giorgio Vasari (1511–74), arguably the most influential compendium of artist biographies upon which later volumes were modeled.

The following century, and the beginning of the next, was an unprecedented time of artistic florescence in the Low Countries, and the veritable heyday of publications on artists—and women were included in many of them. The first major publication in the Netherlands on art and artists at the dawn of the seventeenth century was Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* of 1604. Karel van Mander (1548–1606), who was born in the Flemish town of Meulebeke but emigrated to the Dutch Republic due to religious turmoil, was the first Netherlandish writer to compile biographies of artists in the vein of the Italian precedent set by Vasari. Van Mander includes mention of two women: one is Anna de Smytere (previously mentioned by Guiccardini and Van Vaernewijck), the wife of the sculptor Jan d'Heere and mother to the artist Lucas d'Heere, who was one of Van Mander's teachers. Van Mander was therefore well-informed about Anna de Smytere. He states that she was a miniaturist painter and that one of her works, a scene of a windmill in a landscape

6 For Guicciardini's description of Van Hemessen and other women, see Buitenhuis 2019.
7 Buitenhuis 2019, p. 29.
8 Van Mander gives more details regarding Anna de Smytere. See note 4.

2 Maria Sibylla Merian, *Peacock Flower (Caesalpinia pulcherrima)*, Plate 45 in *Dissertatio de generatione et metamorphosibus insectorum Surinamensium* (Dissertation in Insect Generation and Metamorphosis in Surinam), 1719. National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay.

3a *Portrait of Anna Maria van Schurman, Rembrandt van Rijn and Jacob Adriaensz Backer*, in Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of the Netherlandish Painters and Paintresses), 1721.
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D.C.



3b *Portrait of Johanna Koerten*, in Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of the Netherlandish Painters and Paintresses), 1721.
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D.C.

3c *Portrait of Maria Sibylla Merian and David van der Plas*, in Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of the Netherlandish Painters and Paintresses), 1721.
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, D.C.

4 Maria Faydherbe, *Crucifix*, 1625–50.
Museum Hof van Busleyden, Mechelen.

Chiseled with Confidence: The Mechelen Baroque Sculptor Maria Faydherbe (1587–after 1633)

Klara Alen

Writing in his two-volume *Histoire de la Peinture et de la Sculpture à Malines* (History of Painting and Sculpture in Mechelen) in 1876, Emmanuel Neeffs noted of the sculptor Maria Faydherbe: "We have no information whatsoever regarding her life, her talent or her work."[1] Today, by contrast, Maria Faydherbe's identity is carved in stone. Four small sculptures recently acquired by museums enable us to describe her definitively as a talented Baroque sculptor.[2] Furthermore, an exceptional petition from 1633 testifies to the confidence and determination with which she worked in a male-dominated world. Ongoing archival research is steadily uncovering the outlines within which she practiced the art of sculpture as a woman.[3]

Mechelen remained a pre-eminent center for the production of small-scale sculpture in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Small, polychromed statues from the city were eagerly sought after on the local and international market. The output of Mechelen sculptors, who worked at well-organized studios, was rarely signed,[4] but Maria Faydherbe was an exception. She sold work under her own name, signing some of her sculptures in full, others with a monogram, whether on the front or hidden away on the back. Ready indeed to be rediscovered almost 400 years later.

Signed Works

The *Virgin and Child* from the museum M Leuven is signed "MARIA FAYDHERBE ME FECIT" (Maria Faydherbe made me) at the bottom of the base at the front cat. 6. Mary is shown in a contrapposto stance, tenderly holding her son at her hip. Jesus stands on a high pedestal, in the form of a herm with a cherub's head. The palmwood statuette, measuring just under 6 in. (15 cm) in height, was first cited in the art historical literature as early as 1932 and long remained the only known signed work by Maria Faydherbe.[5] Before it was donated to M Leuven in 2017, it belonged to a Belgian private collection and was only rarely exhibited.[6]

Another Virgin and Child in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is a near-mirror image of the Leuven sculpture. The monogram "MF.S" on the back lower right cat. 7 shows that this too is the work of Maria Faydherbe.[7] Measuring 15 ¾ in. (40 cm) in height, it is carved in alabaster—a stone that resembles marble but is much softer. It can be readily worked with a light mallet and fine chisel. The compositions of the two sculptures are very similar, but their execution is surprisingly different. In the alabaster work, Mary has no head covering or jewelry, and her hair is worn up in two braided buns on either side of her head. Her son holds a globe in his left hand and looks downward. He is dressed in a simple robe that covers his whole body apart from the toes of his left foot. His mother wears a gown in a heavy fabric trimmed with a refined fringe, a length of which she drapes casually over her arm. The S-shaped folds fall centrally toward her left foot. The statuette was intended for a niche or to be mounted on a wall, as indicated by the back of the piece, which is barely elaborated other than with a few subtle folds in Mary's gown.

A second palmwood figurine—a crucified Christ in Museum Hof van Busleyden in Mechelen, the cross of which has been lost—speaks to the extraordinary expressive power of Maria Faydherbe's sculpture cat. 4. Christ's crucified body hangs with its feet together, the toes cramped in agony and the hands high in the air, almost in

1 Neeffs 1876, II, p. 157; "*Nous ne possédons aucun détail ni sur sa vie, ni sur son talent, ni sur ses œuvres.*"

2 We do not pay attention here to the more than twenty small sculptures attributed to Maria Faydherbe. See in this regard, among others, Van Doorslaer 1939; Müller 1965; Jansen 1988/89; Trusted 2014.

3 Maria Faydherbe's life and work were the subject of Birgit Onzia's Master's thesis, supervised by Katlijne Van der Stighelen, at KU Leuven: Onzia 2012. See also Alen 2015. Maria Faydherbe was added to the *Nationaal Biografisch Woordenboek* in 2020: Alen 2020.

4 Marks such as the five or six-pointed star on the base or back are more indicative of a particular workshop where several people contributed to a sculpture rather than of an individual "master." See Van der Jeught 2013 and Van der Jeught 2014.

5 Van Doorslaer 1932.

6 Brussels 1977, pp. 116–17, no. 80; Mechelen 1997, p. 126, no. 2; Antwerp/Arnhem 1999–2000, p. 144. Since its donation, the piece has been displayed in M Leuven's permanent collection and several exhibitions, including *Alabaster* in Leuven and the Louvre (Paris), and *Ingenious Women: Women Artists and their Companions* in Hamburg, 2023–24. The catalogue accompanying the Leuven exhibition included essays on the medium of alabaster, which have proved extremely valuable to researchers. It also paid attention to Maria Faydherbe's work. See Leuven 2022–23, pp. 42–43.

7 Trusted 2014. The figurine belonged to a British private collection and was acquired by the museum on the art market in 2013 "with the assistance of the Hildburgh Bequest and the Murray Bequest, as well as internal Museum funds." This piece too was exhibited in Leuven in 2022: Leuven 2022–23, pp. 42–43.

5 Signature, "MARIA FAYDHERBE ME FECIT," detail of cat. 4.

6 Maria Faydherbe, *Virgin and Child*, *c.*1632.
M Leuven.

7 Maria Faydherbe, *Virgin and Child*, 1630–40.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

in her brothers' business in around 1620 and was jointly responsible for its financial management. Her contribution to the family studio might have increased after Hendrik's death in 1629.

Maria Faydherbe formed part of the family's large artistic network, which extended beyond Mechelen. She would have known Lucas Franchoys through his sister Cornelia, who was married to Hendrik Faydherbe. Franchoys was a painter who served six times as dean of the Mechelen Guild of St. Luke between 1613 and 1640. Following Hendrik's death, Cornelia married the sculptor and polychromer Maximiliaen Labbé (*c.*1590–1675), who was one of the eight who signed the petition in 1633. As the stepfather of Hendrik's son Lucas Faydherbe (1617–97), Labbé is assumed to have played a major role in his career, as Lucas would become the family's best-known sculptor and architect.[26] Despite the thirty-year age difference, the work of his aunt Maria and uncle Antoon must have influenced Lucas when he left for Antwerp to enter Rubens's studio in late 1636 or early 1637. When he returned to Mechelen in 1640, he enjoyed commissions and several exemptions, including from municipal and military levies, duties on beer and wine, and personal taxes.[27] Maria and Antoon would no doubt have benefited too. The continuity of the family business is clear from the registration of a certain Jan Dooms who was "learning to sculpt under Anthoni Faydherbe on 16 May 1651" and later, in 1653, became a pupil of "Lucas Faydherbe after the death of Anthoni."[28]

Commissions

It cannot be inferred from the 1633 petition precisely why Maria Faydherbe turned to the aldermen of Mechelen on 7 December and then dismissed the signatories as "hack workers" on 20 December. She had the confidence to engage in a dialogue and to complain to the aldermen. The urgency with which she approached the town council twice in quick succession suggests that her complaint was prompted by the award or otherwise of a contract.

A contemporary account of the inauguration of the new Jesuit chapel in Mechelen in 1633 offers a clue as to which commission might have been at stake:

> Yet the most important ornament of the Mary Chapel is Mary herself. The statue is, of course, made of the whitest marble and is roughly the size of an average person. The little boy [Jesus], with a cherub at his feet, laughs merrily while leaning upright against his mother's arm. He looks at his mother, who gazes back at him attentively. All the lines of the body, the hair, the nails, even the veins are expressed with such natural strokes of the chisel that the spark of life alone is missing. The statue has no need of external aids or additional color to bring out its beauty: it is, in itself, pure beauty, color, decoration, clothing, everything…[29]

A Madonna and Child currently located in the north transept of the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Mechelen, as part of a late-Baroque altar by an unknown architect, perfectly matches the description of the Madonna statue from the chapel fig. 6.[30] The work displays similarities in style and composition with both Maria Faydherbe's signed and dated palmwood version of 1633 and her monogrammed alabaster Madonna. Were these figurines made shortly after the commission, or did they serve as models for the large sculpture? The marble statue was consecrated in September 1633, which would mean—given its large dimensions—that it would already have been in production in December 1632, when Maria Faydherbe made her appeal to the aldermen. Perhaps it was envy that prompted the eight guild members to challenge the commission before the deans of the corporation. If this hypothesis is correct and Maria had indeed secured the commission, she would have

26 Mechelen 1997.
27 See Duverger 1977 regarding his time with Rubens. See Duverger 1977, p. 270, regarding the exemptions.
28 Mechelen, City Archives, Guilds, Archive of the painters', sculptors', and gilders' guild, no. 3, *Inschrijvingsregister van leerjongens in het schilders-, beeldhouwers- en verguldersambacht (1550–1696)* (Register of apprentices in the painters', sculptors', and gilders' guild [1550–1696]) (18th century), fol. 25; *"leert beelsnijden bij Anthoni Faydherbe den 16 Meij 1651"* (learning sculpture with Anthoni Faydherbe on 16 May 1651); *"by Lucas Faydherbe na de dood van Anthoni"* (with Lucas aydherbe after the death of Anthoni).
29 See Alen 2015, p. 99, n. 92, for the original Latin text.
30 This hypothesis is also presented in Alen 2015, pp. 91–92. The church was being restored at the time.
31 Fortunati/Graziani 2008.
32 Regarding the use of materials by women sculptors, see Sterckx 2007.
33 Van Schurman 1684, pp. 26–27; "[…] *veel dingen moest uitvinden die ze van niemand kon leren"* and "[…] *met een gemeen mes (dewijl' er geen hulpe of raat van een ander werktuig of meester voor handen was).*"
34 Van der Stighelen 1987b.
35 The *Crucifix* has been protected since 18 October 2022. The *Virgin and Child* at M Leuven has been on the Flemish Masterpiece List since 10 January 2023. Women artists are still heavily underrepresented on the list. The Masterpiece List includes works by Hildegard von Bingen, Agnete Carlier, Agnes van den Bossche, Catharina van Hemessen, Clara Peeters, Michaelina Wautier, Maria Faydherbe, Katharina Pepijn, the Capuchin sisters of Antwerp, Virginie Loveling, Elisabeth de Saedeleer, and Germaine Richier. See Huet 2023 in this regard. The *Crucifix* was shown at the exhibition "Rare and Indispensable: Masterpieces from Flemish Collections" in 2023 at the MAS in Antwerp. See Pelgrims 2023, pp. 188–91.

fig. 6 Maria Faydherbe, *Virgin and Child*, 1633. Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Mechelen.

had nothing to lose by approaching the local bench of aldermen twice in less than a fortnight. At worst, it would have resulted in a heated dispute with the signatories of the January 1633 petition. Another possibility is that the guildsmen had disputed or cast doubt on her qualities with the commissioners of the statue, the Mechelen Jesuits. In that case, it would have been very much in Maria's interest to prove the contrary and address the aldermen twice in a short space of time. Otherwise, she ran the risk of losing the prestigious commission and being saddled with a half-finished sculpture and expensive materials.

Her Own Voice

It was very unusual for a woman in the seventeenth century to receive official public commissions, such as the one for the Mechelen Jesuits, and there are barely any documented precedents. A rare exception is the appointment of Properzia de' Rossi (*c.*1490–1530) by the Fabbriceria di San Petronio in Bologna to sculpt sibyls, angels, and several bas-reliefs in marble.[31] Maria Faydherbe was an outsider, a female sculptor in a man's world. Although women were active in seventeenth-century sculpture, this was mostly confined to the domestic sphere, far from the world of the guild, which regulated professional art production and trade.[32] Practical considerations often led women sculptors to choose soft materials such as clay, alabaster, or palmwood and to work on a miniature scale, as illustrated by the portraits of Maria Faydherbe's contemporary Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–78). The latter wrote in her autobiographical *Eucleria* how, in order to sculpt, she had been obliged "to invent many things she could not learn from another." She described how she had carved three palmwood (*bosboom*) figures "with a mean knife (no assistance or advice from another tool or master being to hand)": one of her mother, Eva van Harf cat. 8, a second of herself cat. 9, and a third of her brother.[33] Van Schurman also made a self-portrait in wax that she "fashioned" (*gebootseert*) in thirty days in front of a mirror, and she is likewise said to have carved bust portraits in ivory.[34]

Maria Faydherbe is the only professional Baroque woman sculptor by whom signed sculptures have been preserved. All four of these sculptures have belonged to museum collections since 2023. Two of them are on the official Flemish Masterpiece List, which means they are recognized and protected as "rare and indispensable" objects that must not be lost.[35] Maria Faydherbe's voice has never resonated more loudly.

Appendix

Mechelen, Municipal Archives (*CC Uittreksels van het stadsarchief en andere bronnen, SI, Chronologische Algemynen Aenwyser*). Transcript of the petition submitted to the aldermen of Mechelen on 12 January 1633 by François van Loo, Rombaut Verstappen, Peeter de Cael, Rombout Rigouts, Lieven van Eegem, Baptiste van Loo, François Delva, and Maximilliaen Labbé (see below for an English translation).

Alsoo maria fijderbe Anthonis Dochter bij zekere haere Requeste vanden 7. Decemb[er] 1632, aen mijn heeren Schepenen deser Stede gepresenteert seer vermetelijcken en[de] beroemijl[ijk] vanteert dat zij soo goeden meesterse inde conste der beeldsnijden zoude wesen datter geen meester int ambachte vant tselve wesende haer en zoude connen beschamen ververschende en[de] versterckende dit beroemelijck spreken ook bij haar geschrifte van [den] 20. December daernaer met dese woorden dat zij de voors[ijde] meesters int wercken niet schuldic[g]h en is maer en extimeert voor dozijnwerckers Jae soo ist dat de ondergesh[revenen] meesters Suposten van den Schilders Ambacht hunlieden rapport gedaen wesende vant gealligeerde vande voors[ijde] maria fijderbe bijde Dekens vanden zelven Schilders Ambacht sij lieden qualijck v[er]dragen connende dese onwaerachtige ende v[er]metelijck positie die hun ook te zeer

8 Anna Maria van Schurman, *Portrait of Eva van Harf*, *c.*1632–37. Museum Martena, Franeker.

9 Anna Maria van Schurman, *Self-Portrait*, *c.*1632–38. Museum Martena, Franeker.

Choices

2

45 Pieter Cornelisz van Slingelandt, *The Lacemaker,* 1662–73.
Villa Vauban – Musée d'Art de la Ville de Luxembourg.

Spinning a Life: Lacemakers, *Linnennaaisters*, and Laundresses in the Low Countries

Elena Kanagy-Loux

Early-modern paintings from the Low Countries are rife with women in domestic settings, gazing upon distaffs, laundry barrels, and lace pillows with expressions of tranquil contemplation cat. 45. While these images seemingly offer a glimpse of reality, the impression of women's work as a solitary practice produced for use in the home speaks more to the projections of the artists. Women and girls in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Holland and Flanders lived dynamic and varied lives at all levels of society. They were responsible for highly skilled and paid labor, managing independent businesses, and producing coveted textiles that were essential to the local economy. Although their wages were often suppressed and they were sometimes prevented from joining or organizing guilds, some women managed to beat the odds, building successful careers that sustained themselves and their communities. Beyond Europe, lacemaking spread via trade networks, taking root in Asia and the Americas, and developing into cherished traditions. In historical portraits, it is easy to appreciate the beauty of the lace that bursts forth from the collars and cuffs of the elite like otherworldly blossoms, but what is not immediately visible are the stories of the makers involved in its creation and maintenance.

The Technical Development of Lace

Although technically distinct, needle and bobbin lace developed in tandem in the early sixteenth century, often imitating each other to compete with the current fashion. Needle lace developed from cutwork and drawnwork embroidery, wherein the pattern was marked onto plain-weave linen fabric and threads were cut and pulled out of the design, after which the voided areas were embellished with buttonhole stitches. Due to the wasteful process of discarding so much linen thread, the base fabric was eventually done away with entirely and the stitches were worked directly on a pattern base. After heavier threads were couched around the pattern motifs, filling stitches were worked back and forth in rows between the outline threads without piercing the base. When the pattern was completed, the lace could be released by snipping away the couching stitches on the back. In contrast, bobbin lace developed out of multi-strand braiding techniques related to *passementerie*: ornamental trimmings made of silk and metallic threads that were applied to the surface of clothing and furnishings.[1] The increasing complexity of these braids necessitated winding the individual threads onto bobbins to keep them organized. Pairs of cylindrical bobbins—typically made of wood or bone—were hung onto pins on a firm base and moved over and under each other either in the cross direction (left over right) or the twist direction (right over left) to create an endless variety of patterns.

The etymology of lace terms in different languages provides insights into its development and early uses. In Dutch, lace is widely referred to as *kant,* meaning a side or edge, while the French *dentelle* translates to little teeth, both terms indicating the early form of lace as narrow, pointed trimmings.[2] The first word clearly referencing bobbin lace in Dutch is *braynaed*, meaning braid, which appears in the archive of the Plantin family textile business in Antwerp in the 1560s.[3] In the Northern Netherlands, bobbin lacemakers were called *speldewerksters* (or pin workers) to distinguish their craft from that of *naaisters* (or seamstresses).[4] Early bobbin lace was tightly

1 For a more thorough definition of *passementerie* and related terms, see Westman 2019, pp. xii–xiii.
2 Earnshaw 1982, p. 43.
3 Sorber *et al.* 2021, p. 33.
4 Wardle 1983, pp. 3 and 9.

46 Cover in bobbin lace, *point d'Angleterre*, Southern Netherlands, 1730–50.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Mrs. Albert Blum, 1953.

47 Nicolaes Maes, *Lacemaker*, *c.*1656. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam, 1931.

48 Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Interior with a Woman Teaching Three Girls Lacemaking*, 1654. Private Collection.

Family Ties

Inez De Prekel &
Virginia Treanor

When the lawyer and art collector John G. Johnson (1841–1917) purchased *A Young Woman Drawing* cat. 50—a small and enigmatic painting now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art—it was thought to be the work of Gesina ter Borch (1631–90).[1] This attribution was set aside, however, when the canvas was bequeathed to the city of Philadelphia in 1917. The painting shows a domestic interior with a young woman sitting on a chair. She has a stack of sketching paper on her lap, on which she is drawing a human figure in black chalk, while several more sketches are scattered on the table in front of her. Learning to draw was seen as a foundational skill for painters and an essential part of their training. Before pupils were allowed to take up a paintbrush, they first had to learn to draw, and to do so according to a long-established method of instruction.[2] The first step was to copy two-dimensional models, such as paintings by the master or prints kept on hand in the studios for this purpose. Students were then permitted to draw three-dimensional examples, such as original sculptures or plaster models. This stage of the learning process was rounded off by drawing live models in order to master human anatomy. The young woman in the painting appears to have reached this final phase, although this raises a question: How accessible would such training have been to women during the long seventeenth century?

It is generally assumed that the guild system formed the basis for visual arts training in the early-modern period. Art historical research in this field, mostly focusing on guilds in the Southern Netherlands, has expanded in recent years, deepening current understanding of the subject, including the degree of female representation.[3] The proportion of women guild members was extremely low in the seventeenth century: approximately one percent in Antwerp's Guild of St. Luke and 0.5 percent in the painters', goldsmiths', and glassmakers' guilds in Brussels.[4] The majority of these enrolled women consisted, moreover, of *wijnmeesters*, the term used for children of an existing guild member.[5] There is little documentary evidence of women artists trained in the studio of a guild master to whom they were not related. In the period 1629–1719, for instance, only two women registered as apprentices in the Guild of St. Luke in Antwerp: the *plaatsneyster* (engraver) Clara van der Sanden and the *afsetser* (print colorist) Catharina Goutier.[6] The Mechelen *Leerjongensboeck* (a register of apprentices for the period 1550–1700) includes just one woman, Anneken Sterde.[7] There are a few examples in the Northern Netherlands of women who were trained in a painter's studio (usually that of a male master), among them Judith Leyster, Maria van Oosterwijck, and Rachel Ruysch. All the same, this career path seems to have been very much the exception to the rule and one that was only open to those who could afford it. This essay demonstrates that women's access to artistic training depended primarily on their social backgrounds and family connections.

The Lower Middle Class

While women of all classes were expected to be proficient in the basics of sewing and embroidery, those of the lowest classes were able to use these skills to support themselves—by bringing in additional income through their work, or employing their skills while serving in the homes of the upper classes.[8] Despite the relative wealth of the Low Countries in the seventeenth century, the majority of the population belonged to the lower classes—defined here as those who had to work for subsistence wages. Most poor women were involved in textile production, including lacemaking.[9] The wealth generated by shipping companies in Antwerp and Amsterdam from global trade (including that of enslaved people) enriched the aristocracy and the merchant class, who in turn funded charitable institutions. The latter were often associated with a local Catholic or Protestant church and ranged from orphanages, such as the Maagdenhuis in Antwerp, to correctional facilities, such as the Spinhuis (Spinhouse) in Amsterdam. In institutions of this kind, many girls and women were trained in embroidery and lacemaking, providing them with a useful skill with which they might one day support themselves and their families or find work in domestic service. The products they made there could be sold to help fund these charities.[10]

The Maagdenhuis in Antwerp, founded in 1552, was a home for orphaned girls where they could acquire the skills to find work as adults. The regent of the Maagdenhuis, Franciscus van Hildernissen, commissioned three monumental paintings from the artist Johannes de Maré (*c.*1640–1709), one of which shows Van Hildernissen and his wife, Catherina de Coninck, in the foreground of a room full of girls cat. 49. Most of the youngsters have a sewing cushion on their laps on which to rest their needlework. A group in the upper left corner is making lace, while a much smaller group in the upper right sits with their books open opposite a man who is presumably their schoolteacher. Education formed part of the children's lives in homes like this, but priority was often given to the production of textile goods such as lace and embroidery,

1 Nicole Cook, "Where are Women's Histories in Art Museums?," *PMA Stories*, https://blog.philamuseum.org/where-are-womens-histories-in-art-museums, 23 March 2023. *The Last Drop* (see cat. 125), a key work in the rediscovery of Judith Leyster and her work, also belonged to John G. Johnson's collection. See the contribution by Hofrichter in this volume, pp. 227–35.
2 De Meyere 2015, pp. 60–61; Noorman 2021, pp. 343–44.
3 More information on guilds in the Southern Netherlands can be found in, among others, De Munck 2007; Martens/Peeters 2006; Brosens *et al.* 2019; Brosens/De Prekel 2021. The broader historical study of creative training in the Northern Netherlands was based primarily on apprenticeship contracts. See, in this regard, De Jager 1990 and Helmus 2006.
4 Brosens *et al.* 2019, p. 540; De Prekel 2024, p. 174.
5 *Wijnmeesters* paid lower dues to the Guild of St. Luke when registering as a master. The precise origin of the term—literally "wine master"—is not known, but it might date back to a guild ordinance of 1610, which stipulated that sons of registered guild masters only had to "pay four guilders for the wine." This was a third of what masters' sons were generally charged at the time. See Brosens/De Prekel 2021, p. 134.
6 FAA, Gilden en Ambachten, 2574#202, fols. 85r and 89v. Van der Sanden, who was registered as an apprentice in 1675, eventually qualified as a master in 1688 (FAA, Gilden en Ambachten, 2574#202, fol. 145v). Having enrolled as an apprentice in 1674, Goutier disappeared from the accounts of the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke.
7 Alen 2015, p. 85.
8 Lanza 2013, p. 286.
9 Van den Heuvel 2007, p. 89. See the contribution by Kanagy-Loux in this volume, pp. 93–99.
10 Moffitt Peacock 2012, p. 466.

49 Johannes de Maré, *Portrait of Franciscus van Hildernissen and His Wife Catherina de Coninck and Orphans in the Maiden's House*, 1676. Maagdenhuis, Antwerp.

50 *A Young Woman Drawing*, 17th century.
Philadelphia Museum of Art. John G. Johnson Collection, 1917.

financial resources meant they could call on an established artist to this end. Princess Louise Hollandine of the Palatinate (1622–1709), for instance, was trained by the renowned painter Gerard van Honthorst (1592–1656), an obvious choice since he was the favorite painter of her parents, Frederick V of the Palatinate (1596–1632) and Elizabeth Stuart (1596–1662), who had been living in exile at the court in The Hague since 1621.[44] Van Honthorst's sketch *The Drawing Lesson* fig. 27 shows the intimate setting in which the painter instructed Louise Hollandine and one of her sisters. She went on to become an exceptionally talented portraitist, painting her relatives figs. 15, 50 and other courtiers in works mostly intended to maintain social ties.[45]

Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750) and her younger sister Anna (1666–after 1741) were also trained by a renowned master painter. They belonged to a wealthy upper-middle-class family: they were daughters of the prominent and influential Amsterdam physician and scientist Frederik Ruysch (1638–1731), and granddaughters of Pieter Post (1608–69), court architect to the House of Orange in The Hague.[46] Rachel and Anna were also related to the Haarlem painter Frans Post (1612–80), which might explain why, when the sisters' aptitude for drawing and painting became apparent, their parents agreed to let them become pupils of Willem van Aelst (1627–83), the famous Amsterdam still life specialist. Anna Ruysch's oeuvre is less substantial than Rachel's, but her *Floral Still Life with Peonies, Carnations, Tulips and Other Flowers* cat. 64 nevertheless demonstrates the artist's attention to detail, evident in the tactility of the tablecloth and fringes, and in the tulips on the brink of wilting. All these effects are comparable with her more famous sister's harmoniously balanced compositions and realistic rendering of fruit and flowers cat. 65.[47] Anna appears to have given up painting in her early twenties, but Rachel carried on more or less uninterrupted for decades, gathering fame and fortune along the way.[48] Unlike women artists from the very highest echelons of society, Rachel Ruysch sold her work, something that her artistic family and her social status—somewhere between the middle and the upper class—may have rendered more acceptable.

It is not yet known from whom Catharina Backer (1689–1766) received her artistic instruction,[49] but her family possessed a rich art collection and evidently saw the value in providing her with professional training. Backer's surviving work offers an exceptional insight into her apprenticeship. The Amsterdam Museum has several loose sketches with anatomical studies of mouths, noses, eyes, and even feet cats. 66a–c, as well as an album with 205 pasted-in drawings, which were probably bound sometime around 1722 cats. 66d-p. As well as anatomical studies, the album contains sketches of sculptures and reliefs (possibly from her father's collection), which enabled Backer to experiment with representing male nudes—something that was unusual for women in this period. The final part of her album contains several floral studies, which she drew in preparation for her painted flower still lifes cat. 77. The album testifies to her interest and skill in a variety of genres, including mythology and still life, although all that has survived of her painted oeuvre today are two completed floral pieces.

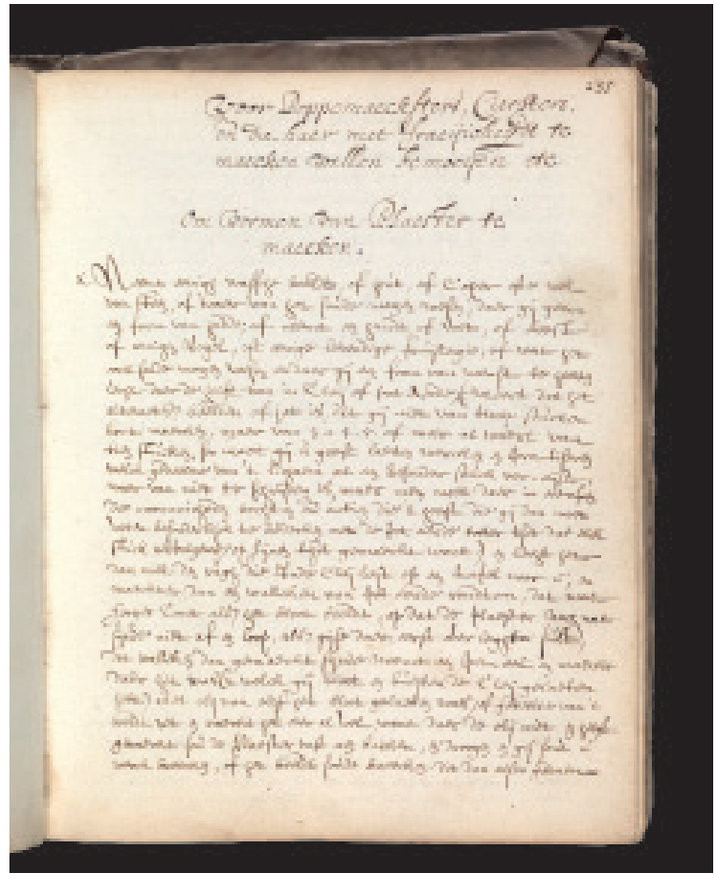
Artistic instruction under an established artist was not the only option for young, upper-class women to become proficient in a particular form of art. Given the multitude of skills an artist was expected to acquire (quantity rather than quality was the watchword for social status), self-study was very much the order of the day. Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–78) wrote in her *Dissertatio* cat. 83 that she experimented with a variety of art forms in order to familiarize herself with them, mostly without assistance.[50] The only area in which this was not the case was printmaking, in which Van Schurman was instructed by Magdalena van de Passe. Wealthy women could turn to all manner of contemporary treatises on art techniques to support their self-study.

A unique example in this regard is the art recipe book compiled by Jacoba van Veen (1635–after 1687) who came from a family of magistrates and artists. Her grandfather was the brother of the painter Otto van Veen (1556–1629), and her aunts, besides being "spiritual daughters," were also active as amateur painters.[51] Jacoba's recipe book cat. 62 was never published, even though this might have been the intention, and it has been in the collection of the Royal Library in The Hague since 1937. The manuscript bears the apt motto *Nemo artifex nascitur* (No one is born an artist),[52] by which Van Veen referred not only to her intended readership of amateur artists, but also to the highly varied content of the manuscript. She discusses a range of techniques, from mixing paint and laying down an underdrawing to creating stained glass, while also sharing domestic and cosmetic tips. The most striking chapter in the book focuses on

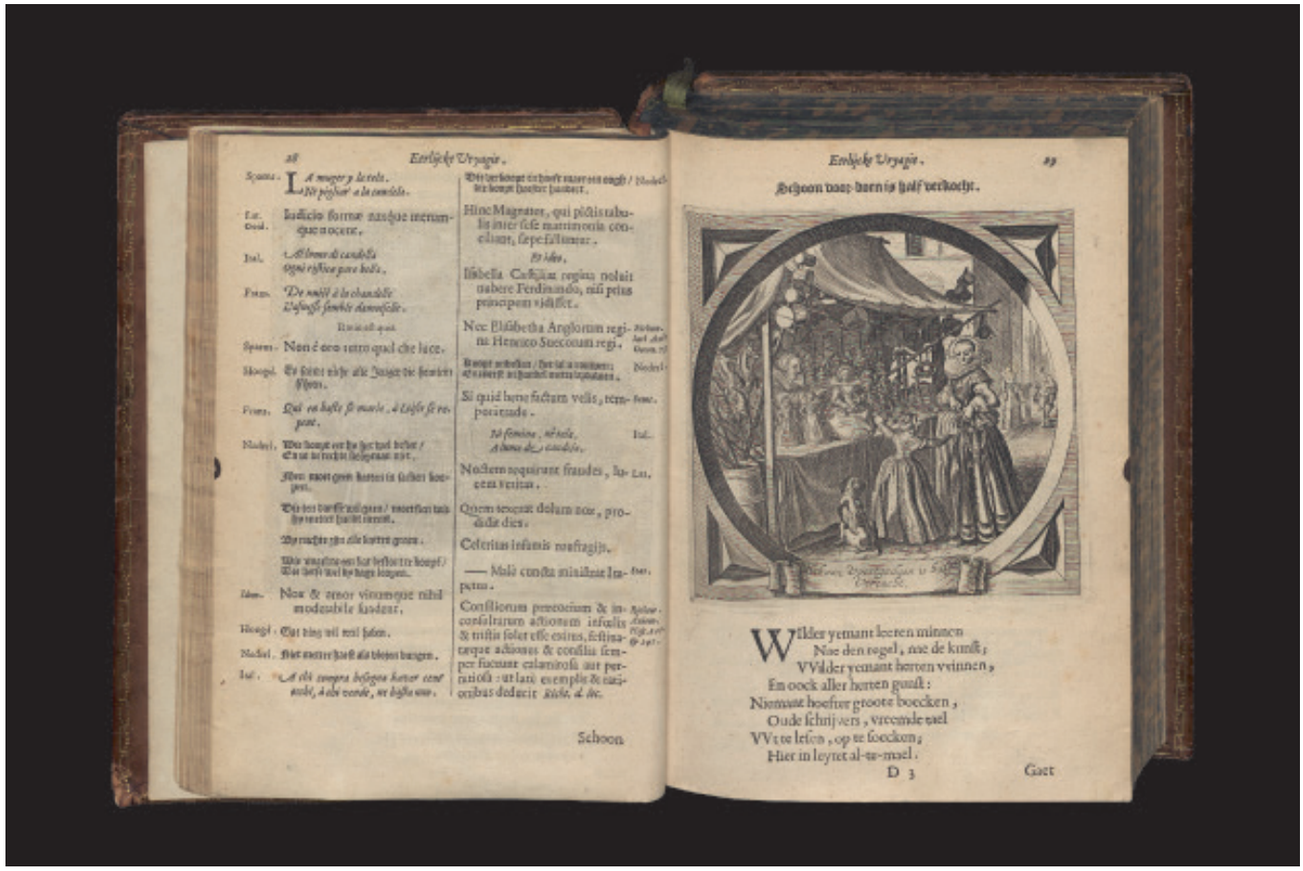
44 Leerintveld 2024, pp. 181–82.
45 Leerintveld 2024, pp. 184–87. In his article, Ad Leerintveld discusses a letter from Constantijn Huygens, in which he thanks Louise Hollandine for a grisaille painting.
46 Bauman 2020, p. 115; Kooijmans 2004, pp. 327–29.
47 Meijer/Buijen 1998.
48 Anna is generally assumed to have stopped painting after she married the Amsterdam merchant Isaak Hellenbroek (1664–1749). Fred Meijer thinks this is highly unlikely, however, given the development of her style over the years and the many paintings by her that she left to her children.
49 The Backer family's social circle included several artists whom art historians have already suggested as Catharina Backer's teacher, among them Rachel Ruysch, Justus van Huysum (1659–1716), and his son Jan van Huysum (1682–1749). See Reid 2020, p. 17.
50 Dekker 2020, p. 122.
51 Vogels 2001, pp. 5–7.
52 Vogels 2002, p. 99.

fig. 26 Maria Theresia van Thielen, *Flowers in a Glass Vase*, 1650. Current whereabouts unknown.

fig. 27 Gerard van Honthorst, *The Drawing Lesson*, *c.*1640.
Teylers Museum, Haarlem.



62 Jacoba van Veen, *De wetenschap ende manieren om alderhande Couleuren van Saij of Saijetten te verwen etc.* (The knowledge and the methods for dyeing all kinds of colors of silk or silk fabrics, etc.), fol. 235, second half of the 17th century.
KB National Library of The Netherlands, The Hague.



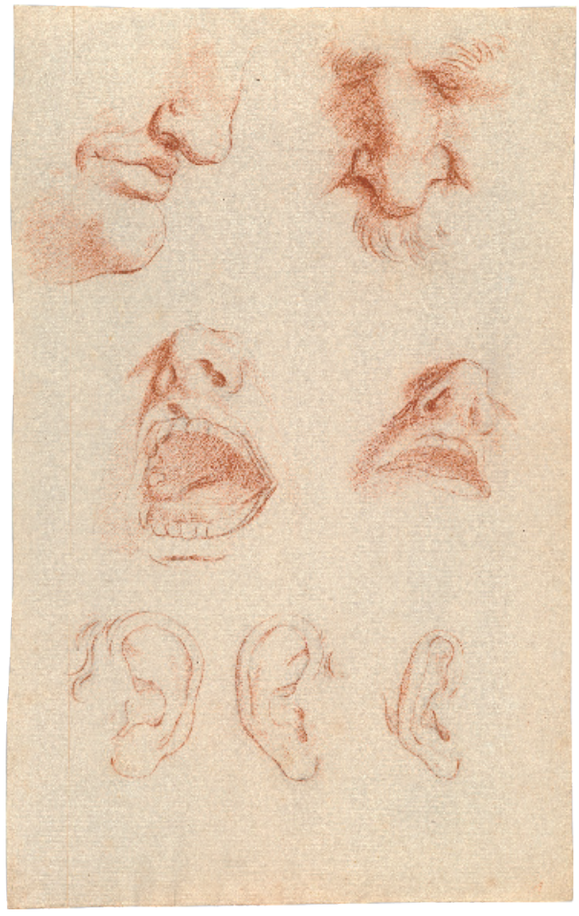
63 Adriaen van de Venne, Mother Buying Doll for Her Daughter or "Schoon voor-doen is half verkocht," emblem in Jacob Cats, *Spiegel vanden Ouden ende Nieuwen Tijt* (Mirror of Old and New Times), 1635.
Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library, Antwerp.

64 Anna Ruysch, *Floral Still Life with Peonies, Carnations, Tulips and Other Flowers.*
Courtesy Y.D.C.

65 Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Cherries, Grapes and Peaches*, 1684.
Bijl-Van Urk Master Paintings, Alkmaar.

making dolls. It is titled "For doll-makers, ornamental craftswomen and those who wish to occupy themselves making beautiful things, etc." The feminine forms (*poppemaecksters* and *ciersters*) make it clear that the author is addressing a female audience, something unique for manuals of this kind.[53] The techniques she discusses include making dolls from plaster or wax. Wax dolls were immensely popular in the long seventeenth century cat. 63: in the Low Countries they tended to be made in a domestic setting, while in Germany they were produced on a large scale.[54]

53 Vogels 2002, p. 108; Noorman 2024b, p. 200. "*Voor Poppemaecksters, Ciersters, ende die haer met fraeyicheydt te maecken willen bemoeijen, etc.*"
54 Vogels 2001, p. 93.



a

b

c

66 a–c Catharina Backer, Anatomical Studies, 1706–22.
Amsterdam Museum. Long-term loan from Foundation Backer.

evidently achieved international fame courtesy of prestigious commissions from the likes of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and the dissemination of her work in print form. She died unmarried in 1689 at the age of seventy-five, leaving all her possessions to her brother Charles.

The Dutch flower and still life painter Maria van Oosterwijck (1630–93) deliberately chose to live as a single woman, even (according to the artists' biographer Arnold Houbraken) turning down a proposal of marriage from her fellow flower painter Willem van Aelst. Her reputation and her family's wealth enabled her to develop her career while remaining unmarried. Van Oosterwijck did not come from an artistic background—her father was a minister—but her family did enjoy close contacts with several artists, including Abraham van Beijeren, connections that are sure to have helped her develop her talent for painting in Jan Davidsz de Heem's studio.[42] The characteristically balanced compositions, naturalism, and symbolic interpretations found in works such as Van Oosterwijck's *Flower Still Life* cat. 87 and *Vanitas Still Life* cat. 88, show affinities with her teacher's oeuvre, while also displaying her own virtuosity.[43] Van Oosterwijck moved in similarly exalted circles as Michaelina Wautier and was held in high esteem by influential patrons. The *Vanitas Still Life*, which she sold to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I around 1668, marked her international breakthrough.

As an affluent single woman with a home and studio of her own, Maria van Oosterwijck employed domestic staff to help her keep house. We know the name of one of her maids, Geertgen Wyntges (1636–1712), also called Geertje Pieters. Interestingly, besides her domestic duties, Wyntges helped prepare paint in Van Oosterwijck's studio and also received artistic instruction from her employer,[44] enabling her to study and imitate the latter's work at close hand. She signed her *Flowers in a Glass Vase Before a Landscape* fig. 28 in full as "Geertruid Wynties." The sunflower harks back to Van Oosterwijck, but Geertgen also added elements of her own, such as the landscape in the background. Compositions of this kind were later adopted by painters such as Jan van Huysum (1682–1749).[45]

42 Houbraken 1718–21, vol. 2, p. 215. Houbraken's statement that Van Oosterwijck was a pupil of Jan Davidsz de Heem in Utrecht has yet to be substantiated by primary sources.
43 Utrecht/Braunschweig 1991, no. 49, pp. 220–21.
44 Aerts 2020, pp. 18–19.
45 Aerts 2020, pp. 41–43.

fig. 28 Geertgen Wyntges, *Flowers in a Glass Vase Before a Landscape.* Private Collection.

Networks

3

Hail to you, O youthful flower,
whose bright mind I gladly honor,
whom I respect and hold so dear,
as my friend, whom I revere.

Anna Roemersdr Visscher on Anna Maria van Schurman,
in *Gedichten* (Poems), 1620.

The great Rachel Ruysch,
    immortal Minerva of the IJ!
Who, with mere canvas and paint,
    wonders could multiply,
helped Pomona and Flora
    neither wilt nor grow wild,
through the blossoms and fruit
    she so naturally styled;
enriched by her art,
    like a jewel in the crown,
of the empire's great stage
    of mercantile renown.

Arnold Houbraken on Rachel Ruysch in *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters and Paintresses), 1718.

fig. 29 Leonard Bramer, *Paintings for Sale*, from the series "Street Works," *c.*1650–55. Leiden University Libraries, PK 3605055.

Women in the Art Trade: Three Versatile Female Dealers in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam

Marleen Puyenbroek

Foreign visitors to the bustling Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century invariably commented on the entrepreneurship displayed by the women there and the role they played in commerce.[1] A century earlier, the Italian merchant Lodovico Guicciardini had already noted that women in the Low Countries were not only responsible for running their homes but were active in business, too. And writing in 1696, the English traveler Sir William Montagu expressed his surprise that Dutch women seemed to outnumber men in shops and other businesses: "They have the conduct of the purse and commerce, and manage it rarely well, they are careful and diligent, capable of affairs, (besides domestick) having an education suitable, and a genius wholly adapted to it."[2] These various observations are confirmed by modern historical research, which shows that women actively traded in a variety of goods, from textiles to furniture and food.[3] Paintings are strikingly absent from the list: Given the general level of female entrepreneurship, one might expect women to have been involved in the art trade, too. Little research has been performed in this regard, however, perpetuating the idea that dealing in art was an exclusively male domain.

The most flagrant example of the persistent blind spot for women in the art trade is a drawing by Leonard Bramer exhibited in 1991 at the Hofstra Museum of Art fig. 29.[4] It shows a woman selling paintings, whom the compilers of the catalogue identify as a long-haired man. The entrenched notion that dealing in paintings was a male preserve is a logical consequence of the lack of female counterexamples in the art historical literature. In *Art Dealers in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands* (1988), for instance, John Michael Montias published a survey of the different types of art dealer, which consisted almost exclusively of men.[5] The only women he mentioned were *uitdraagsters*—second-hand dealers who also sold paintings from time to time—whom he then promptly excluded from his study on the grounds that the works they sold were of such low quality that they barely qualified as "art" at all. As demonstrated below, Montias would revisit this conclusion in later publications. Other art historians have sketched out a more nuanced picture in their surveys of the local or national art market. In addition to the many male art dealers, they mention a few women, although their presence is often limited in these studies to just one or two examples.[6] The most frequently cited name is that of Lucretia de Beauvois, who traveled around the Republic after her husband's death to sell paintings. She had, however, agreed with her stepchildren not to continue with this trade: the sales were merely part of the settlement of her husband's estate. The unintentional upshot of this is to reinforce the image of the art trade as a man's world.

It was not until the late 1990s that the growing interest in women artists prompted greater attention for women in the art trade, too. In 1997, Els Kloek wrote a short section in the *Dictionary of Women Artists* in which she noted that archival sources such as guild registers and artists' biographies provide evidence of women who deal in paintings.[7] A year later, Astrid Waltmans took this research further in her contribution to *Vrouwen en Kunst in de Republiek* (Women and Art in the Republic), of which Kloek was joint editor.[8] Waltmans identified fourteen Dutch women who sold paintings at markets and fairs, but also in workshops and specialist art shops. While this study demonstrated that women had made a modest but real contribution to the art trade, there was no follow-up research, and the individuals cited were not included in later surveys.

1 Kloek 1995, pp. 248–49.
2 Montagu 1696, p. 183
3 See, for instance, the research project *Vrouwenarbeid in Nederland in de vroegmoderne tijd (circa 1550–1815)* and the publications flowing from it by, among others, Ariadne Schmidt, Danielle van den Heuvel, and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk.
4 Barnes/Ten Brink Goldsmith 1991, p. 61. Mentioned in Waltmans 1998, p. 97.
5 Montias 1988, p. 245.
6 See, for example, Delahay/Schadee 1994–95, p. 31; Boers 2012, pp. 51–53, 91, 95.
7 Kloek 1997, pp. 34–35.
8 Waltmans 1998, p. 97.

from Molenaer, but in his absence Leyster acted on his behalf. On 17 October 1657, she appeared before the aldermen of Heemstede, well prepared and fully informed of the case. She told the court that not only was Van der Camp's claim unjustified, he actually owed her the larger amount of 337 guilders and 10 stuivers. Leyster further claimed that she had lent him a cloak. A particularly noteworthy detail, as Ellen Broersen rightly pointed out in 1993, is that she appeared in the lawsuit "with her account book at hand" (*met haer register bij haer hand gehouden*), testifying to her involvement in the financial administration of the household and the art business. Leyster wrote well and was plainly very familiar with her family's finances, and so would certainly have had the necessary skills to take on this complex task.

Leyster and Molenaer also worked together when it came to real-estate purchases. In 1648, Molenaer bought a farmhouse in Heemstede, and in 1655 he acquired a house on Voetboogsteeg in Haarlem through his brother-in-law, Caspar Eijsvoort.[18] It was Judith Leyster, however, who bought a house on Voetboogstraat in Amsterdam.[19] On 9 January 1655, she confidently affixed her signature "Judita Leystar" to the deed of sale, concluding a transaction to the value of 8,200 guilders, 4,200 of which was paid in paintings to be valued by a number of renowned and trustworthy artists. Although some authors—Rahel Müller among them—have suggested that Leyster was responsible for managing rental houses in several cities, such a conclusion seems to go further than the available sources can sustain.[20] Conversely, James Welu underestimates her role when he describes it simply as "supporting" (*het terzijde staan*) her husband in his house purchases.[21] The truth probably lies in between: The houses were jointly owned and Leyster and Molenaer acted as partners in their purchase. While Molenaer acted more often as a buyer, Leyster did so too when she purchased real estate.

Judith Leyster and Jan Miense Molenaer offer a striking illustration of how married couples could work together in the seventeenth-century art trade. Their case study shows that there was much more to a company like this than simply producing and selling paintings: bookkeeping, collecting outstanding debts, and dealing with lawsuits were also essential to the business's success. Any comprehensive picture of the early-modern art market therefore needs to include supplementary income streams and supporting tasks. Also striking, moreover, is the absence of a strict, gender-based division of labor: Leyster and Molenaer did not split their tasks along fixed lines but responded flexibly as circumstances required. This demonstrates the complexity and dynamism of early-modern art dealerships, in which men and women alike were able to play different, shifting roles.

Catharina van den Dorpe and her Business Trips from Amsterdam to Friesland and Flanders

Catharina van den Dorpe (1604/05–74) and her husband, the painter Elias Hoomis (1599/1600–36), ran an art dealership on Koestraat, close to the Nieuwmarkt in Amsterdam. The district was a lively artistic center, with the painters' guild headquartered in the Waag (weighhouse building) and a market square that was regularly filled with stalls selling paintings and other luxury goods fig. 33. Following Hoomis's early death in 1636, Van den Dorpe continued to trade—at first as a widow, then later with her second husband, the artist Anthonie Waterloo (1609–90). All the same, her own role has often been understated: The dealership is generally described in the art historical literature as a joint effort with her husbands, which underplays her independence.[22] In reality, Van den Dorpe was a businesswoman who traveled freely in the city and across the country to sell paintings and other goods.

Elias Hoomis enjoyed close commercial relations with Flanders, where he had relatives active in the art trade, and his widow kept up those connections. She traveled to Antwerp in

18 Stadsarchief Amsterdam (SAA), NA [acc. no. 5075], Not. J. van der Ven, inv. no. 1086, fol. 201v–202, 23–10–1648; Not. D. Doornick, inv. no. 1948, p. 873, 15–05–1655; NHA, ORA Heemstede [acc. no. 184], inv. no. 581, fol. 26, 24 nov. 1648; ORA [acc. no. 3111], inv. no. 322, fol. 323, 21–06–1653.
19 SAA, NA [acc. no. 5075], Not. C. Tou, inv. no. 1445A, fol. 31–32, 9–01–1655.
20 Müller 2023, p. 224.
21 James Welu, in Haarlem 1993, p. 14.
22 Bakker 2008a, pp. 108–11, 206–07, 241–42; Jager 2016, pp. 29, 171, 296.
23 Duverger 1969, pp. 20 and 70.
24 See, for example: SAA, NA [acc. no. 5075], Not. J. van de Ven, inv. no. 1067, fol. 18–19, 06–05–1643.
25 SAA, NA [acc. no. 5075], Not. J. van de Ven, inv. no. 1056, fol. 147–147v, pp. 297–98, 4–4–1640; inv. no. 1059, fol. 28v-29, pp. 56–57, 18–1–1641; fol. 44–44v, pp. 87–88, 11–02–1641.
26 Bakker/Lenders 2016, pp. 24–26.

fig. 33 Isaac Ouwater, *The Sint-Antoniuswaag in Amsterdam*, c.1780–90. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

person, for instance, as noted in the record book of the art dealers Matthys Musson and Maria Fourmenois. On 1 September 1640, "the wife of Elias Hoomis" (*de huysvrou van Elieas Hoomus*) purchased three paintings from them: a "Battle of the Amazons" (*Betaellie van d'Amasolen*), a "Deer Hunt" (*Hertejacht*) and a "Wolf Hunt" (*Wolfsjacht*), for a total price of 54 guilders.[23] It is entirely possible that Van den Dorpe also traveled to the south on other occasions to source paintings: like Hoomis, she herself came from the Southern Netherlands and owned estates there. She journeyed to the region several times to collect rents or sell land.[24] The success with which she continued to run the dealership is apparent from the dowry paid on her marriage to Waterloo, which included paintings to the value of over 3,000 guilders: an impressive sum that testifies to her business acumen and expertise.[25]

Catharina van den Dorpe continued to work as a dealer during her second marriage, albeit focusing now on the northern part of the Republic, as shown by the court cases in Leeuwarden, which Piet Bakker discovered in 2016.[26] In 1657, a batch of paintings she was planning to sell in that city was seized on the grounds that she still owed 26 guilders for small lacquered cases she had bought there. Van den Dorpe challenged the legality of the seizure, appealing to the civic rights in Leeuwarden of her husband Anthonie Waterloo.

Global Networks

Katie Altizer Takata

In 1699, Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717) and her daughter Dorothea Maria Henrietta Gsell (née Graff) (1678–1743) set sail from Amsterdam across the Atlantic to the South American colony of Surinam. A German-born artist and naturalist, Merian undertook this perilous journey in order to study the plants and insects native to Brazil's coast. While there, Merian and her daughter described and cultivated specimens collected with the assistance of enslaved Indigenous women, who traveled with them into the interior jungles and advised them on the uses of the various plants they encountered.[1] In 1701, with drawings and specimens in hand, the pair returned to Amsterdam, where Merian set to work on her magnum opus, *Metamorphosis insectorum surinamensium* cats. 2, 90, 93. This richly illustrated volume depicted and described the flowers, fruits, insects, amphibians, and reptiles that Merian and her daughter had studied on their travels, and found eager audiences among the intellectual elite of Europe.

Positioned at the end of the seventeenth century, in many ways Merian's life and work can be seen as the culmination of a century of European expansion and the ways in which women participated in global networks of economic exchange. Beginning in the late sixteenth century, the Dutch Republic became Europe's dominant naval power and created a monopoly in global trade. In this period, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and Dutch West India Company (GWC) controlled the majority of trade from Asia and the Caribbean respectively. In the Southern (Spanish) Netherlands, goods traveled between Flanders, Spain, and the Spanish colonies of Peru and Mexico. Colonies under both Dutch and Spanish rule were frequently secured through violent means, and their economies sustained through the forced labor of Africans and Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, this brutal and exploitive colonization resulted in a thriving global trade economy in the Low Countries. Colonial trade created unprecedented levels of wealth among the middle classes of Amsterdam, Antwerp, and the surrounding cities, whose citizens used this newfound disposable income to purchase art and luxury goods.

As art historians have come to acknowledge the profound impact of colonialism on seventeenth-century European art and culture, scholars have begun to examine the pivotal role of women artists in global networks.[2] Many women throughout the seventeenth century, such as Maria Sibylla Merian, depicted and imported rare objects from foreign lands, participated in the transmission of knowledge, and benefited from systems that exploited others for economic gain. During this period of rapid change and globalization, women artists made paintings, drawings, decorative objects, and textiles that documented the reception and appropriation of foreign products, fashions, and aesthetics into Dutch and Flemish culture. Furthermore, colonization created new opportunities for women in the commercial sphere as women exported goods to and from these "New Worlds," acting as producers and purveyors of art and textiles for a global market.

Women and Imported Goods

Art by women reflects the cultural transformation of the Low Countries that was brought about by the unprecedented expansion of global trade. As merchants made their fortunes trading agricultural products such as spices, tobacco, sugar, and tea, they also brought back rare and fabulous items that were avidly collected by princes and fellow merchants alike: porcelain, plants, shells, textiles, gems, and animals.[3] For merchant collectors, these objects represented their encounters with faraway lands and the wealth generated through international trade contacts. For courtly collectors, such as the Princes of Orange-Nassau and the Habsburgs, exotic objects were a sign of power and an assertion of status, symbolically legitimizing and extending their sphere of political influence on the global stage. Unsurprisingly, works of art often depicted these rare foreign goods. In particular, botanical illustrations and still life paintings—new genres at the turn of the seventeenth century—document the arrival of rare plant specimens and expensive wares from across the globe into the Low Countries. Like the objects themselves, these paintings and drawings underlined a collector's trade contacts, political influence, and economic power.

Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717), Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750), Alida Withoos (1660/62–1730), and Maria Moninckx (1673/76–1757) produced art for a milieu of collectors who followed cutting-edge developments in art and science; they also played a significant role in the construction and dissemination of scientific knowledge in Europe through the depiction of rare plants from colonial lands.[4] Rachel Ruysch made several paintings focusing almost exclusively on rare botanical specimens, works that must have been made on commission for art collectors with a special interest in exotic plants.[5] Withoos and Moninckx contributed botanical illustrations to the *Moninckx Atlas*, a visual herbarium of the plants grown at the *Hortus medicus* cat. 115, which contained many plants native to Africa.

Women artists also depicted foreign insects and reptiles that were new to European audiences. An album of 116 drawings by Cornelia de Rijck,

1 See Schiebinger 2004.
2 See the contribution by Powell-Warren in this volume, pp. 167–79.
3 See Swan, 2021.
4 See Powell-Warren 2023b.
5 Knaap 2024, pp. 85–91.

(1653–1726) records rare butterflies and beetles from Surinam cat. 116. These meticulous, anatomically precise drawings were made to catalog the extensive butterfly collection of her husband, Simon Schijnvoet. Like De Rijck, Maria Sibylla Merian frequently included butterflies in her works. Many of these she observed on her travels to Surinam; for example, a watercolor by Merian in the Fitzwilliam Collection depicts a blue-striped *Morpho achilles* butterfly perched atop a *Sisyrinchium* plant, both of which are native to northern Brazil cat. 117. Merian did not limit herself to Brazilian plants and insects, however; for example, a watercolor by Merian at the Fondation Custodia, *Apricot Branch with Bananaquit,* includes a rare yellow-breasted bird native to northern Brazil cat. 119.

In addition to rare flora and fauna, one of the products still life artists most frequently depicted was Chinese porcelain. Highly sought after by European collectors, Chinese porcelain used techniques as yet unknown and unmatched by European potters. Southern Netherlandish artist Clara Peeters (1587–after 1636), one of the earliest specialists in still life, frequently included imported porcelain in her art; for example, Peeters's *Still Life with Cheeses, Almonds and Pretzels* in the Mauritshuis, The Hague fig. 47, depicts a rare and expensive porcelain bowl, called Kraak porcelain, which would have been produced in the Jiangxi province of China.[6]

Chinese porcelain is also foregrounded in a rare still life thought to be by Judith Leyster (1609–60).[7] In this work, a Chinese vase holds a vibrant collection of lilies, tulips, carnations, and other flowers, while lemons, apricots, butterflies, and a shell rest on the ledge below cat. 74. This assembly of objects not only reflects the collecting tastes of the day, but also the confluence of European and global trade networks.[8] Chinese porcelain and shells were prized by connoisseurs: shells for their unusual shapes and luminous colors, porcelain for its delicate shapes and refined glazes—both acquired at great cost from distant colonial shores. In contrast, the lemons would have been sourced somewhat closer to home, a culinary delicacy imported in large quantities from the sunny climes of the Mediterranean. Like the work of Clara Peeters, Leyster's painting reflects the centrality of the Low Countries in global trade networks and the new cultural significance of imported goods.

Watercolors by Maria Sibylla Merian and her daughter Johanna Helena Herolt (née Graff) (1668–after 1723), show the continued collectability of Chinese porcelain at the end of the century. In Merian's watercolor of 1695 in the Albertina, Vienna, a delicate Chinese bowl (Wanli) overflows with blackberries, pomegranate, pears, and other fruit, attracting a variety of insects including ants, flies, and a mosquito cat. 118. In Herolt's 1698 watercolor, a porcelain vase, decorated with a Chinese scene, holds a tulip and a crown imperial flower cat. 120. These watercolors, which combine the fruits of commerce with the thriving bounty of the natural world, celebrate and display the national prosperity brought about by the European "discovery" of distant lands.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the market for Asian goods further expanded as European elites increasingly appropriated "Asian" aesthetics, transforming interior design, fashion, and social customs. Mary II's architect and interior designer, Daniel Marot (1661–1752) popularized ornate wall cabinets for the display of Chinese porcelain, which became an important decorative element in domestic interiors. Elites redecorated their homes with Chinese-inspired furniture and fabrics, called "chinoiserie." Chinoiserie motifs also inspired lace designs, as in the intricate lace cloth at the Metropolitan Museum of Art cat. 46. This cover includes such exotic motifs as pineapples and a Chinese man drinking tea under a pergola. While the original function of this lace cover is not known, one can easily imagine how it might have complemented the Asian-inspired aesthetics of a fashionably redecorated Northern or Southern Netherlandish interior.

Closely related to the import of porcelain and chinoiserie fabrics and furniture was the introduction of Chinese teas to Europe. While tea was first imported into the Low Countries around 1610, it was not widely consumed until the 1680s, when taking tea became an especially fashionable social ritual.[9] Both tea and porcelain have pride of place in Cornelia van Marle's (1661–98) *The Tea Party* fig. 48. Dating to 1689, in this painting Van Marle likely depicts fellow artist Aleida Greve offering tea to her circle of artist friends, hinting at the newly important custom of tea drinking among women in Northern Netherlandish society. In this way, the painting illustrates how products imported through colonial trade led to the creation of new social rituals, which in turn became important in establishing social and friendship networks.[10]

Hand-held fans, which had been imported from Asia since the sixteenth century and carried a strong association

6 Antwerp/Madrid 2016, p. 116.
7 This attribution has been supported by recent technical analysis. For further discussion of this painting and its place in Leyster's *oeuvre*, see the contribution by Van Dam and De Prekel in this volume, pp. 126–48.
8 For the relationship between colonial trade and painting, see Hochstrasser 2004.
9 Van Driem 2019, pp. 312–14, 316.
10 Broomhall/Van Gent 2016, p. 251.

fig. 47 Clara Peeters, *Still Life with Cheeses, Almonds and Pretzels*, 1615. Mauritshuis, The Hague.

115 Maria Moninckx, *Purperorchis (Orchis purpurea)*, folio 58 from *Moninckx Atlas* or *Aantekeningen van verscheyden vreemde gewassen, in de medicijn-hoff der stadt Amsteldam* (Notes on various foreign plants, in the medicine garden of the city of Amsterdam), vol. 8, *c.*1699–1709. Allard Pierson, University of Amsterdam.

118 Maria Sibylla Merian, *Bowl of Fruit*, 1695.
Albertina, Vienna.

119 Maria Sibylla Merian, *Apricot Branch with Bananaquit*, *c.*1695.
Fondation Custodia – Frits Lugt Collection, Paris.

120 Johanna Helena Herolt, *Crown Imperial and Other Flowers in a Chinese Porcelain Blue and White Vase,* 1698. Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig.

Exhibited Works

The works are arranged by artist, in alphabetical order and chronological sequence.

Exhibited works that are illustrated in this list are not reproduced in full elsewhere in this volume.

[G] only on view at the Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent
[W] only on view at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

UNKNOWN ARTIST

The Seamstress, 1633
Oil on canvas, 39 × 33 1/8 in. (77 × 84 cm)
Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai, inv. 138
Dating top left: Aetatis suae 24.D.1633
cat. 52 [G]

Portrait of a Young Woman as Pictura, *c.*1695–1700
Oil on canvas, 38 5/8 × 41 3/4 in. (98 × 106 cm)
Vereeniging tot beoefening van Overijsselsch Regt en Geschiedenis (VORG) Collection, Zwolle
cat. 19 [G]

A Young Woman Drawing, 17th century
Oil on canvas, 10 5/8 × 8 7/8 in. (27 × 22.5 cm)
Philadelphia Museum of Art, inv. 506
John G. Johnson Collection, 1917
cat. 50 [W]

Northern Netherlands
Cotton hat with *Zaans* stitchwork, first half of the 18th century
Embroidered cotton, 22 7/8 in. circumference (58 cm)
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. BK 14701
Gift of Mrs. Quarles de Quarles-van Ewijck, The Hague
cat. 126

Northern Netherlands
Embroidered darning sampler, 1761
Silk on linen, 17 3/4 × 17 7/8 in. (45.1 × 45.4 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. 57.122.144
From the collection of Mrs. Lathrop Colgate Harper, bequest of Mabel Herbert Harper, 1957
cat. 136 [W]

Southern Netherlands
Book with bobbin lace samples of the braided lace type, Flemish, 1600–10
Art & History Museum, Brussels, inv. D.089.700
cat. 138 [G]

Southern Netherlands
Women's apron with embroidered details, first half of the 17th century
Linen, 44 1/8 × 69 3/8 in. (112 × 100 cm)
Art & History Museum, Brussels, inv. D.2414.00
cat. 72 [G]

Southern Netherlands
Tablecloth with bobbin lace of the braided lace type, and needle lace of the reticella type, with white embroidery, first half of the 17th century
Linen, 80 3/4 × 39 3/8 in. (205 × 100 cm)
MOMU, Antwerp, inv. T80/87
cat. 137 [G]

Southern Netherlands
Benediction veil in bobbin lace, 18th century
Linen, 31 1/2 × 33 1/2 in. (80 × 85.1 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, inv. 53.162.46
Gift of Mrs. Albert Blum, 1953
cat. 73 [W]

Southern Netherlands (Antwerp?)
Collar in bobbin lace, 1651–75
Linen, 29 1/2 × 9 1/2 in. (75 × 24 cm)
Art & History Museum, Brussels, inv. D.3378.00
cat. 139 [G]

Southern Netherlands, Antwerp
Strip of ribbon lace with deep lobes, *c.*1600
Linen, 50 × 2 1/2 in. (127 × 6.5 cm)
St. Charles Borromeo Church Collection, Antwerp, inv. CK 058
cat. 140 [G]

Southern Netherlands, Antwerp
Strip of braided lace with rounded lobes, 1600–25
Linen, 28 × 3 3/8 in. (71 × 8.5 cm)
St. Charles Borromeo Church Collection, Antwerp, inv. CK 543
cat. 142 [G]

Southern Netherlands, Antwerp
Strip of lace with deep scalloped edge, 1600–25
Linen, 108 5/8 × 2 in. (276 × 5 cm)
St. Charles Borromeo Church Collection, Antwerp, inv. CK 068
cat. 141 [G]

Southern Netherlands, Antwerp
Strip of bobbin lace, first half of the 17th century
Linen, 24 × 6 3/4 in. (61 × 17 cm)
St. Charles Borromeo Church Collection, Antwerp, inv. CK 225A
cat. 143 [G]

Southern Netherlands, Antwerp
Strip of bobbin lace, *c.*1650
Linen, 26 × 2 5/8 in. (66 × 6.8 cm)
St. Charles Borromeo Church Collection, Antwerp, inv. CK 79B
cat. 144 [G]

Tricolor Violet or Viola tricolor L.
Pen, watercolor and opaque paint over black chalk on paper, 13 1/8 × 8 5/8 in. (335 × 220 mm)
Private Collection
Signature bottom right: Alida Withoos
cat. 196 [G]

WOLFSEN, Aleida
Zwolle 1648 – Zwolle 1692

*Portrait of Gertruida Dorothea van Goltstein, c.*1677–83
Oil on canvas, 22 5/8 × 19 1/4 in. (57.5 × 49 cm)
Museum Arnhem, inv. GM 02065
cat. 29 [W]

*Portrait of Johannes Battista Bartolotti van den Heuvel, Lord of Rijnenburg and Hoeckenburg (born 1644), c.*1677–83
Oil on canvas, 22 5/8 × 19 5/8 in. (57.5 × 50 cm)
Museum Arnhem, inv. GM 02066
cat. 28 [W]

WULFRAET, Margaretha
Arnhem 1678 – Arnhem 1760

Courtesan with a Feathered Headdress and a Lap Dog
Oil on panel, 12 × 9 1/2 in. (30.5 × 24 cm)
Adriaen van Doorn Collection
Signature top center: M. Wulfraet
cat. 35

YKENS I, Catarina
Ghent 1615 – Antwerp, after 1665

Still Life with Flowers and Insects, *c.*1660
Oil on canvas, 53 1/2 × 67 3/8 in. (136 × 171 cm)
The Phoebus Foundation, Antwerp
Signature center left, on the column: CATHARINA. YKENS. FECIT
cat. 25 [W]

YKENS II, Catarina
Antwerp 1659 – Antwerp, after 1689

Garland with a Landscape, *c.*1680–1700
Oil on canvas, 35 3/8 × 28 in. (90 × 71 cm)
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, inv. P001902
Signature bottom left: catharina ykens fecit
cat. 40

Garland with a Landscape, *c.*1680–1700
Oil on canvas, 35 3/8 × 27 1/2 in. (90 × 70 cm)
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, inv. P001903
Signature bottom left: Catarina Ykens f
cat. 41

Farmyard Scene with Fowl
Oil on copper, 22 × 25 5/8 in. (56 × 65 cm)
Dr. Koneberg
Signature top right: Catherina Ykens fecit
cat. 39 [G]

Portrait of a Woman Playing the Guitar, Surrounded by a Garland of Fruit and Flowers
Oil on panel, 16 × 10 7/8 in. (40.6 × 27.5 cm)
Private Collection
Signature bottom center: catharina ijkens. Fecit
cat. 61

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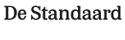

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