

Family Life in Dutch art of the seventeenth century

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To my parents and my sister Minako

Abstract

Since I begun to study history of art I have become intrigued by seventeenth century Dutch art. Especially, Dutch genre paintings showing various images of family life made me remember my childhood with my parents and sister, evoking a nostalgic contemplation. The depiction of family life seen in Dutch art might not be faithful records of real experiences, but I have come to think there is something inherently appealing to the human morals or ideals toward family life, beyond any cultural differences, underneath seventeenth century Dutch art.

The exhibition, the GLORY OF THE GOLDEN AGE Painting, Sculpture and Decorative Art, now taking place in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inspired me to construct this thesis. My trip to Amsterdam to see the exhibition for the research of this thesis was very useful, and it was a great opportunity to see a large numbers of wonderful works of seventeenth century Dutch art gathered in one place. I was inspired by that the exhibition displays not only paintings and sculptures but also many fine pieces of decorative art. So I attempt that my thesis exhibits a harmonious combination of fine and decorative arts for understanding the subject as a whole.

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Introduction

Family life as depicted in seventeenth century Dutch art tells us more than an impression we usually learn from a family photograph taken in our present time. Dutch art was an important vehicle in developing social beliefs or values toward family life in seventeenth century Holland. In examining Dutch art to learn about family life during this time, it is necessary to leave our present view of family life behind.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a German philosopher and sometimes called the father of the history of art¹, was celebrated as one of the first scholars to view various aspects of Dutch art in his Aesthetics Lectures on Fine Art (1835-8) and he wrote that :

The Dutch have selected the content of their artistic representations out of their own experience, out of their own life in the present,....This citizenship, this love of enterprise, in small things as in great, in their own land as on the high sea, this painstaking as well as clearly and neat well-being, this joy and exuberance in their own sense that for all this they have their own activity to thank, all this is what constitutes the general content of their pictures.²

As Hegel recognises Dutch art from a sociological point of view here, it is very important for us to understand that Dutch art in the seventeenth century was strongly associated with contemporary social and economical conditions.

¹ Gombrich, Ernst. "The father of Art History. A reading of the lectures on aesthetics of G. W. F. Hegel" in Tributes. Interpreters of our cultural Tradition. 1984, pp. 51-69.

² Hegel, G. W. F. Aesthetics Lectures on Fine Art. Knox, T. M. (trans.) Vol. I. 1975, pp. 169.

After a long struggle with the Spanish under the military leadership of the princes of the House of Orange, the provinces of the Northern Netherlands finally gained independence from Spain in the late sixteenth century and consisted of seven provinces : Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland, Overijssel, Friesland, and Groningen. In the reigns of the Princes of the House of Orange in the first decades of the seventeenth century, the United Provinces simultaneously presented the remarkable development of urban industry, commerce, agriculture and overseas trade to the world. By the middle of the century large sections of the middle class, that is the burgher class, had grown and supported Johan de Witt, the representative of the province of Holland, as the leader of the Union for a more peaceful, democratic government. Under De Witt's regime (1653-72) the burgher class became more powerful than before and economic growth and artistic brilliance reached its peak during that part of the century.

Through the century, the new urbanised society brought by the prosperous burgher class led to the change of the family system. The number of extended families had decreased, and a large number of nuclear families emerged instead. Therefore, a typical Dutch family became smaller and more private ; the relationship between husbands and wives and between parents and children became more intimate and warmer ; the family spent more time together at home and enjoyed many family activities and celebrations. However, compared with our family life today, the family life in seventeenth century Holland was more like a public affair and was more based on a patriarchal social order.³ The Dutch family life existed as "the cornerstone of society, historical and contemporary"⁴, and the ideal of the good family was understood as a miniature of

³ Van der Woude, A. M. "Variations in the size and structure of the household in the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" in *Household and Family in Past time* by Peter Laslett, (ed.) 1972, pp. 302.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 300.

the ideal commonwealth.⁵ This view was generally fostered by contemporary family literature written by many Calvinist authors at the time. In the United Provinces of the century the reformed church, Calvinism certainly supported the political identity of an independent Netherlands nation and the domestic spirit of the society. Moreover, the Calvinist moralists tried to establish godly norms of social behaviour and domestic virtue for the country in general, and their thought influenced the Dutch mentality toward family life.

The aim of this thesis is an attempt to investigate various images of family life in seventeenth century Dutch art by identifying socio-economic conditions, contemporary literature and religious ideas. This thesis treats art not as a faithful historical or social document of family life but as evidence of the Dutch beliefs or ideals. Some pieces of decorative art presented in this thesis would celebrate the craftsmanship as equal to the artistic achievement of the paintings, and also would appeal to nostalgia in us when we try to imagine a family life in which the objects were used and cherished by the members of the family a long time ago. The first chapter deals with marriage, in particular with marriage custom, the wedding ceremony and marriage portraiture. Chapter 2 deals with the Dutch interior, from which we are able to understand taste and fashion of furnishing among contemporary Dutch families. The chapter also considers images of the Dutch interior celebrating the ideal order of family household in Dutch painting. Chapter 3 discusses the emergence of the nuclear family and the importance of family portraiture. The final chapter deals with the ideals of family life in focussing the issue of the gender of the beholder, notions of education to children and a family holiday.

⁵ Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches*. 1991, pp. 4.

Chapter I Marriage

Marriage is the first unit of family life. In seventeenth century Dutch civilisation the marriage custom was important, and it was regarded seriously as a significant theme in Dutch art. The Calvinist society of the Dutch Republic wanted a new moral attitude to marriage as the start of the new family ideals. Contemporary authors of family literature were dealing with all aspects of married life as marriage advice appealed to a wide audience at the time. Jacob Cats's *Houwelick (Marriage)* (pl. 1), was first published in 1625; and fifty thousand copies were in circulation by 1655, a remarkable total of twenty-one editions by 1700, and it ranks as the masterpiece of the genre.⁶ Cats describes duties of both men and women within marriage : the woman should supervise the household and the man should earn and instruct his wife. Cats supports Calvinist teaching on marriage which should be based on a godly union of companionship. "At the core of the marriage bond was affection, tender-hearted sentiment, love."⁷

Marriage Custom and Wedding Ceremony

A young woman should be virtuous and wait patiently until she finds her partner. The average age of first marriage for women in 17th century Amsterdam was twenty-four to twenty-eight and eighteen was considered the age of sexual maturity.⁸ Before marriage engagements were normally taking place in the presence of both families. As a formal engagement a couple

⁶ Philadelphia Museum of Art Exhibit. Cat. Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting. 1984, pp. Lxxv. Robinson, William W. "Family Portraits of the Golden Age". Apollo CX2, 1979, pp. 490.

⁷ Schama, Simon. The Embarrassment of Riches. 1991, pp. 421.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 436.

exchanged rings with their first public kiss, and the rings were made sometimes of two parallel circles or engraved with conjugal allegories.⁹ It was also a remarkable custom of engagement for a man to present his bride-to-be with a pair of wedding gloves which she should wear on her wedding day. The Wedding gloves (cat. 1), belonged to Johanna Le Maire who married Pieter van Son in June 1622 in the New Church in Amsterdam, would symbolise marital fidelity and the gloves were taken off when the marriage was sealed with a handshake by the bride and groom in the church. The pair of gloves were preserved together with the Portrait of Johanna Le Maire (pl. 2), painted by Nicolas Elias Pickenoy, which was in the family's possession until the 1970s.¹⁰ The portrait of Johanna clearly shows the presence of the gloves in her right hand. In some districts of 17th century Holland the giving of wedding caskets as an engagement present from the future father-in-law to the bride was particularly common, and the wedding caskets were usually made in silver or gold, filled with scissors, a knife, needles and a mirror as portable workboxes. In Friesland, the small silver Wedding casket (cat. 2) was meant to contain a sum of money wrapped up in a fine linen cloth sometimes embroidered in red with their initials and the date of their engagement.¹¹

The wedding festivities in seventeenth century Holland were extravagant and even a middle-class wedding lasted many days with many guests enjoying music, dancing, and the reading of poems written for the special occasion. Contemporary authors of 17th century cookbooks listed lavish courses of wedding feasts (pl. 3). At the feasts it was customary for the newly wedded couple to drink a cup of hippocras (or brandy, in less wealthy families), usually

⁹ Zumthor, Paul. *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*. 1994, pp. 125.

¹⁰ Rijksmuseum Exhibit. *Cat. The Golden Age Painting, Sculpture and Decorative Art*. 2000, pp. 67.

¹¹ Zumthor, Paul. *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*. 1994, pp. 125.

made from diluted Rhine wine, spiced with cloves and ginger.¹² To limit excessive extravagance police regulations were made for limiting the number of guests and dishes for the banquets. The regulations were even urged to Johan de Witt's father-in-law who was alarmed at the mounting costs (many thousands of guilders which would purchase a modest house) of the presents and parties at his daughter's wedding.¹³ Common wedding gifts from parents and friends at the festivities were furniture, silverware, glass or kitchen equipment. The Glass Dish (cat. 3) with diamond-point engraving was made by the Leiden glass-engraver William van Heemskerck as a wedding present for his son Joost who married Anna Coninck in 1685. The text (Faith, unwavering and steadfast, will make both soul and body last), as Van Heemskerck's wishes for the wedded couple, were engraved on the edge.¹⁴

Marriage Portraiture

For newly wedded couples commemorating their marriage in portraits became very popular in seventeenth century Holland. Marriage portraits began to present a new pictorial expression in Dutch art. Marriage portraiture before the seventeenth century in the north of Europe - such as that of Jan van Eyck (pl. 4) - had emphasised the pictorial formality of the sitters reflecting the ideals of a feudal society in a medieval flavour and a full of symbolism associated with Christian obligations. Dutch marriage portraits in the seventeenth century showed informal expression of sitters and settings emphasising a secular aspect of marriage life. Marriage portraits had been

¹²Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches*. 1991, pp. 186. Zumthor, Paul. *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*. 1994, pp. 127.

¹³Johan de Witt became the leader of the Union of Holland from 1653 (to 72). During his regime it was a period of great economic growth, prosperity and cultural flowering. See Philadelphia Museum of Art Exhibit. *Cat. Masters of Seventeenth-century Dutch Genre Painting*. 1984, pp. LXXVI.

¹⁴Rijksmuseum Exhibit. *Cat.* 2000, pp. 158.

mostly patronised by courtiers or aristocrats in Europe before the seventeenth century, but Dutch portraiture was mainly commissioned by burghers. That is, the burghers, having grown rich through trade and industry in the Dutch society, became great patrons of Dutch art of the 17th century.

The marriage portrait, Abraham Casteleyn and Margarieta van Bancken, by Jan de Bray (cat. 4) exemplifies the new type of Dutch marriage portraiture of the seventeenth century. The couple who are soberly dressed are shown sitting in relaxed poses on a terrace in a domestic environment. It seems they are not interested in showing off their wealth or prosperity, but they seem to celebrate their pure marital companionship. Casteleyn seems to be interrupted at his work by his wife, but she seems to be welcomed by him. Their hands are joined as a symbol of marital fidelity, and she is smiling at her husband who seems to be casually greeting the viewer to introduce his wife as his companion. Some objects, such as books, surrounding the couple, are references to Casteleyn's profession as a printer and founder of the *Haerlemsche Courant*, a leading newspaper of the day.

Frans Hals's Marriage portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen (cat. 5) celebrates a new wave of independent style of 17th century Dutch marriage portraiture. The portrait reveals the spontaneity of Frans Hals's technique shows a certain confidence and pride of both the sitters and the painter. It is also Hals's only double portrait of a husband and wife. The wealthy burghers of Haarlem, Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen, informally posed against a park-like landscape which traditionally had been understood as a garden of love in literature and art since the Middle Ages. Their gestures and facial expressions are momentary : while the husband looks as if he were about to speak to the viewer, his wife is resting her hand on his shoulder and has a engaging smile. In this portrait instead of arranging the husband in the centre

of the composition, Hals places him to the side and Beatrix is positioned at the centre, and it seems that both the husband and wife have equal importance in the pictorial composition. Hals adopted traditional iconographic motifs : the ivy symbolises steadfast love, faithfulness and fertility; the sparkling vine clinging to the tree behind the couple is a symbol of marital love and dependence; the thistle in the lower left corner is a reference to the husband's fidelity to his wife; and the peacocks, usually associated with Juno have already been seen in the embroidery of the gloves (cat. 1), are allusions to the goddess and protectress of marriage.¹⁵ As the symbolic visual vocabulary and the couple's body language show, this portrait expresses the affectionate pleasure of married companionship, which has never been celebrated or cherished by any other European country at the time.

¹⁵ Slive, Seymour. Ed. Exhibit. Cat. Frans Hals. 1989, pp. 165.

Chapter II The Dutch Interior

A Dutch house of the seventeenth century was the important shelter of family life. The interior of the Dutch house would reflect the social or economic status and the taste of the family.

Examining the objects which furnished Dutch houses in the seventeenth century adds to an understanding of the families' life style of the period. To know exactly what the Dutch interiors looked like is not an easy for us now, but there are some sources offering clues to this. Rare seventeenth century doll's houses, for example, would display characteristic interiors of Patrician or burgher-class homes in miniature. From the doll's houses we are able to learn the details of the arrangement of the rooms and the furnishing. Seventeenth century Dutch painting also displayed glimpses of Dutch interiors celebrating the ideal order of family homes as well as with satirising their disruptions. So Dutch paintings might not show faithful records of existing interiors, but they give us an impression of what the interiors were like.

The interior of the houses of patrician and burgher families.

In seventeenth century Dutch family life the first task of the newly wedded couples was to furnish their homes. In rich patrician households the husbands' taste sometimes reflected more than the wives' in the interiors, but in most middle-class households, creating the domestic environments was normally wives' task. Therefore, many objects in the Dutch interiors of middle-class homes were chosen by housewives and would reflect their taste and wealth. Most Dutch patrician or burgher-class women had been educated in furnishing as part of their training

in housekeeping skills from a young age. Their cultivated taste and fashion also reflected in the commissions of doll's houses at the period.

Seventeenth-century Dutch doll's houses were not intended as recreational toys for children because there were filled with very fragile objects, such as porcelain, ivory or glass. They were meant for young women. The doll's house of Petronella Oortman (cat. 6), one of the rare survivals of the seventeenth-century, would exemplify the finest type. The doll's house is constructed like a valuable oak cabinet and is decorated all over with tortoiseshell veneer closely inlaid with arabesques in pewter. It was for a long time thought to have been commissioned by Tsar Peter the Great, who was supposed to have rejected it as too expensive.¹⁶ However, the doll's house was probably made between 1686 and 1690 for the wealthy Petronella Oortman married to the silk merchant Johannes Brandt in 1686, and it was known that Petronella spent almost 20,000 - 30,000 guilders on the doll's house.¹⁷ The painting (pl. 5) by Jacob Appel shows the accurate portrait of the contents during the early eighteenth century, when long curtains could be drawn in front of the glass doors to protect it.

Compared with the furnishings of the doll's house of Petronella Dunois (pl. 6) which was made earlier than that of Petronella Oortman probably in 1677, Oortman's doll's house contains furnishings much lighter and more graceful, influenced by French cabinetmakers. Petronella Dunois's furniture, was most pieces were made of oak or walnut, still remains heavy and massive. In the late seventeenth century when the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 legalised the persecution of Protestants, many French cabinetmakers, such as Daniel Marot emigrated to Holland. He became architect and designer to the Stadholder of Holland, William

¹⁶ Pijzel-Dommisse, Jet. The 17th-century doll's house of the Rijksmuseum. 1998, pp. 8.
Wilckens, Leonie V. The Doll's House An Illustrated History. 1980, pp. 53.

¹⁷ Pijzel-Dommisse, Jet. 1998, pp. 8.

of Orange, later to be William III of England. Thus, the French court style of furnishing became very popular and influenced the taste of the wealthy Patrician and burgher-class households during the period. For instance, the doll's house of Oortman itself was created under the French style the tortoiseshell veneer, the arabesque and the scrolled bracket legs with the H-shaped stretchers were seen in many French writing-bureaus. The Nursery room (pl. 7) on the top right of the doll's house also exemplified a characteristic French style of furnishing : it has decorative windows painted with birds and flowers in a somewhat Chinoiserie manner and a child's bed with a canopy made of yellow silk trimmed with pale blue gathered band.

In seventeenth-century Dutch interior, the basic units of furniture are the table, the chair and the cupboard. These furniture developed a strongly indigenous style, and they flourished to furnish the newly prosperous middle-class houses. They are to be found in most rooms of Dutch households , and are the pride of the housewife and the object of the carpenter's principal decorative efforts.¹⁸ A variety of chairs displayed in these doll's houses would provide certain information about the seat furniture which was in everyday use. The chairs in the Salon (pl. 8) in the Oortman's doll's house exemplify a particular style of comfortable upholstered seat furniture which became popular in the seventeenth century. The chairs with the distinctive legs of turning are made of walnut and are being decorated with elaborate carving on the arms and upholstered with rich silk velvet trimmed with braid and fringe.

In seventeenth century Holland the cupboard was the basic luxury of the household symbolising success, social ambition, wealth and comfort.¹⁹ Like most other Dutch furniture, the cupboard was usually made of oak, but sometimes with a veneer of exotic wood such as ebony or rosewood. A characteristic cupboard was the linen cupboard containing valuables and

¹⁸ Zumthor, Paul. *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland*. 1994, pp. 38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 39.

linen, such as tablecloths, napkins and sheets, a prized possession of housewives. In the wealthy Vrouw Blijenborgh of Dorcrecht, for example, the linen cupboard contained the following items: “sheets from the East Indies, from Haarlem, Flanders, Amsterdam, Alkmaar, Friesland and Emden, arranged to their origin; bonnets, handkerchiefs and neckerchiefs dating back to her grandmother’s childhood; twenty-four dozen shirts, forty dozen tablecloths and napkins set aside for her children’s dowries.”²⁰ The Cupboard (cat. 7), made of oak decorated with ebony and now in the Rijksmuseum, was a typical example of the linen cupboard. It was covered with carvings, which are full of the symbolism of the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Love, which also seems to imply that the cupboard was acquired on the occasion of a marriage. In Dutch painting the cupboard was often depicted as signifying an important part of ideal surroundings of well-to-do burghers. For example, Pieter De Hooch in his painting *Interior with women beside a linen cupboard* (cat. 8) depicted the mistress of the house putting linen back in the cupboard with the maidservant’s help. The cupboard made of oak with inlaid ebony in the painting dominates a large space of the interior as if it exists as a goddess of the household worshiped by the women.

Tiles and the Dutch Middle Classes

The Tableau of tiles showing warriors in a circle (cat. 9) consists of maiolica wall tiles which became popular in Holland from 1580 onwards. In the Dutch interior of the seventeenth century the use of tiles on the walls has become a new phenomenon. The importance of Dutch tiles was strongly connected with the peculiar socio-economic conditions of Holland at the time. Before the seventeenth century maiolica tiles had been used only on the floors of the rich houses as a

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 39.

status symbol for the families, but during the economic boom of the seventeenth century the Dutch middle class shared the great economic wealth and could afford tiles to make their homes more comfortable and attractive. The increasing demand for brick-built houses with tiled roofs in the seventeenth century instead of wooden houses which had been a great fire risk developed the widescale use of the tiles in the Dutch interior. Builders of brick-built houses in Dutch towns started to use tiles for closing the gaps between the floors and plaster-covered walls in order to keep vermin away. Tiles were used in the fireplace (see cat. 15) as a fireproof surface to help to reflect heat into the room as well as being easy to clean.²¹ As Simon Schama discusses the theme of cleanliness²² the use of tiles must have been so relevant to the Dutch mentality of Calvinist teaching on the domestic virtue of cleaning. For example, by introducing tiles into kitchens, Dutch housewives were able to scrub the wall surfaces easily and therefore to keep the kitchen more hygienic. Therefore, using tiles in Dutch houses was inherently practical. Tiles, however, were also used in the entrance hall, passageways and staircases as aesthetically pleasing panelling and decoration in the interiors. The interior of the painting *Maternal Duty* (pl. 9) by Pieter De Hooch gives us an idea of how tiles were used in seventeenth century Dutch interiors. In the painting showing a mother delousing the hair of a child, tiles can be seen on the wainscot on the right hand side of the door. The scene was known as one of the popular images of domestic virtue in Dutch genre painting, and it seems that the tiles match the interior and reveal the domestic tranquility of the ideal modest household. “Under the kind of safe housekeeping depicted here, the home was indeed Christian arcadia : the bed spotless,

²¹ Lemmen, Hans V. *Delftware Tiles*. 1997, pp. 36.

²² Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches*. 1991, pp. Chapter six, pp. 375-397.

unrumpled and without stain or suspicion, the copper bed-warming pan polished to a state of brilliance, the Delft tiles modest and pure.”²³

The tiles (cat. 9) are each decorated with a soldier carrying a lance, musket or drum. These images probably owe much to the style of the engravings of Jacob de Gheyn, and also were influenced by the images came from Prince Maurice’s famous book *Wapehnhandelinghe van Roers, Musquetten en Spiessen* (The Making of Firelocks, Muskets and Pikes) which was published in Amsterdam in 1607.²⁴ There were various themes and subjects in Dutch tiles in the seventeenth century. Excepting the subject of soldiers, Dutch people favoured secular subjects such as local landscapes, townscapes, harbour scenes, flowers and fruits, animals, children’s games, and scenes from daily life.

The interior in Dutch painting and a Peepshow

The painting Portrait of a family in an interior (cat. 10) by Emanuel De Witte shows an example of the richly furnished interior of a Dutch burgher family in the seventeenth century. Emanuel De Witte depicted the interior including gilt leather wallpapers covering the walls, a painting and a mirror hanging on the walls, Chinese vases standing on the marble mantle, an oriental carpet covering the table and marble tiles on the floor. Gilt leather became very popular for wall-hangings as a luxurious item during the seventeenth century. It was in fact made with skins (of calves) that were faced with tin-foil and were embossed by pressing into a wooden mould carved in intaglio with a pattern.²⁵ The surface of the pattern reflects the light and it creates a luminous atmosphere in the interiors. In seventeenth century Dutch interiors hanging paintings

²³ Ibid., pp. 396.

²⁴ Jonge, C. H. Delft Ceramics. 1970, pp. 22.

²⁵ Thorton, Peter. Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England France & Holland. 1980, pp. 118.

was an essential part of domestic furnishing. As some scholars claim that “it was not unusual to find 100 or even 200 pictures in a modest household,”²⁶ Dutch middle class families purchased many pictures from free markets for decorating their own homes. Dutch people, as we can see from the painting by Emanuel De Witte, seem to favour simple black frames in small sizes which were generally expected to be hung, at least about eye-level for the viewer within the room.

The marble floors with black and white tiles depicted in De Witte’s painting were in fact quite rare in seventeenth century Dutch interiors, which means that Dutch interiors depicted in paintings were often illusion created by artists for the artists’ sake. From the Dutch artists’ point of view depicting such an interior with marble floors with tiles arranged in complicated patterns attempted to show their skills in painting perspective.²⁷ Therefore, it is important for us to recognise that somehow our images of Dutch interiors provided by such works of art were created by the artists. Samuel Van Hoogstraten in his Peepshow with View of the Interior of a Dutch House (cat. 11) suggested the process of artists picturing the world and fitting it into a box and providing it to the viewer who looks in through the peepholes. The domestic interior (pl. 10, 11) in the peepshow was a miniature representation of Van Hoogstraten’s home and his possession. It is furnished with paintings, chairs, mirrors and marble tiles on the floor, viewed within perspective illusion. The peepshow presents Van Hoogstraten’s skill at “fooling the eye” as a possession which offer access to honour, wealth, status, and ultimately dominion over the entire visible world.²⁸

²⁶ Price, J. L. *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic During the 17th century*. 1974, pp. 133.

²⁷ Rijksmuseum Exhibit. Cat. 2000, pp. 153.

²⁸ Brusati, Celaste. *Artifice and Illusion The Art and Writing of Samuel van Hoogstraten*. 1995, pp. 177. Also see Alpers, Svetlana. *The Art of Describing Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*. 1983, pp. 76.

Chapter III Individualism and Independence

“Dutch homes were, on average, smaller, more tightly organised and more independent of extended family intervention than elsewhere in seventeenth century Europe.”²⁹ Van der Woude’s collected data concerning the size and structure of the household in the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century would prove this view.³⁰ The size and structure of the family changed rapidly in Dutch society at the time. Almost half of the population of Holland, 54 %, was already living in towns in 1622 and only a third still worked in agriculture.³¹ It meant that the province of Holland was dominated by advanced urban people, and family life there must have been heavily urbanised. In fact, in the seventeenth century the number of nuclear families increased. ‘Nuclear families’ are here understood as containing married couples with or without children, widowed people with or without children, or unmarried heads of households.³² The average size of a household during this period in Gouda, for example, was 4.3 in 1622 and 3.6 in 1674, very much smaller than the English mean household size of 4.75, and the average number of children in any such household would have been two.³³ This low rate of the number of children also indicates a fact that many children died young. However, the data of average size of household seems similar to that of present households in developed countries. From these facts, it can be presumed that in urbanised Dutch society in the seventeenth century, family life must have been more intimate and an attitude of

²⁹ Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches*. 1991, pp. 386.

³⁰ See Van der Woude, A. M. “Variations in the size and structure of the household in the United Provinces of the Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”, in Laslette, Peter, ed., *Household and Family in Past Time*. 1972, chapter 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 302.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 310.

³³ Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 386.

individualism and independence prevailed which could not be found elsewhere in Europe at the time.

However, the attitude of individualism and independence should be distinguished from “the egoism and individualism of the modern nuclear family”³⁴. The appearance of the nuclear family in seventeenth century Holland is related to the social conditions of the period. As the system of marriage was already examined in the chapter II, Dutch marriage only took place when people reached a certain mature age in appropriate circumstances. Unlike the sexual freedom of our age sexual restraint or discipline existed in Dutch society where social control was very firm.³⁵

So, what does ‘individualism and independence’ really mean in the seventeenth century Dutch nuclear family ? It must be defined within the economic conditions, religious beliefs and intellectual pursuits of the newly prosperous middle-class society in seventeenth century Holland, and it is particularly well represented in seventeenth century Dutch family portraiture.

Dutch family portraiture

Family portraits had become extremely popular in seventeenth century Holland, and hundreds have survived from the year 1625-1700.³⁶ We have already mentioned the increasing demand of marriage portraiture within the burgher-class families in chapter II and the family portrait in a richly furnished interior by Emanuel de Witte (cat. 10) in the previous chapter. The growing demand for family portraits encouraged new pictorial innovations which have been discussed in art-historical studies as an important factor which led to the evolution of the conversation piece,

³⁴ Van der Woude, A. M., pp. 301.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Robinson, William W. “Family Portraits of the Golden Age” in *Apollo*, 1979, pp. 491.

the type of informal collective portrait which is normally associated with eighteenth century England.³⁷ Dutch family portraits of the seventeenth century were becoming far more informal, including not only their children, but also their leisure pursuits and everyday surroundings. Behind this change was perhaps “a growing acknowledgement of the moral value of Nature and the material world”³⁸ and Huizinga has also characterised the new “importance of all earthly things.”³⁹

The family portrait by Bartholomeus van der Helst (cat. 12) shows Pieter van de Venne, a wealthy burgher of Amsterdam, with his wife Anna de Carpentier, the daughter of a high-ranking official of the Dutch East India Company, and their child, two-year-old Lucas. In this portrait the child, wearing red satin clothes and ostrich feathers on his head and holding a crystal teething-ring on a gold chain, is depicted almost at the centre of the composition as the focal point of the family. Depicting children on their own had become a new phenomenon in the seventeenth century, which would indicate that in the emergence of many nuclear families in Holland of the period social attitudes to children had changed, and the small number of children in each household allowed for each to have more of their parents’ attention. A child had become a proper member of the family, and such a portrait of an individual child (pl. 12) had come to be very popular. The portrait would signify the recognition of her individuality and a degree of independence as a person.

Another type of family portrait shows the patron’s place of work , and the family portrait by Nicholas Maes (cat. 13) shows Job Cuijter, a ship’s captain and also the owner of a number of merchant vessels, surrounded by his wife and children on a dock in Dordrecht harbour.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

Seventeenth century Holland was an urbanised mercantile society, and its great economic wealth was based on sea and river trade and colonial expansion in the East and West Indies.

“Navigation was strongly rooted in the society, and after the sixteenth century it became one of the most important modes of employment.”⁴⁰ The Dutch merchant marine was larger than that of any other European country at the time. Job Cuijter shakes hands with his wife, which conventionally symbolises marital fidelity (chapter II) and also here seems to more indicate that Cuijter thanks his wife and family for supporting the success of his career. The portrait also shows a parental duty to children : in seventeenth century Dutch society parents were obliged by law to ensure that their children learned some kind of trade.⁴¹ The motif of a family standing on the harbour, the departure of Dutch world trade, would allude that the economic prosperity of seventeenth century Holland was deeply rooted in a close band of love between a family in Dutch society. The portrait also commemorated the souls of deceased children by having them fly over the living as angels in heaven.⁴² William van den Kerckhoven and his family (pl. 13) by Jan Mytens also shows the similar expression of deceased children at the top of the painting. Small children in both paintings are also probably understood as an intimate expression of grief by those who had survived longer.⁴³ The appearance of the dead children would prove that the children were no longer generally considered as inevitable losses.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Van der Woude, A. M., pp. 303.

⁴¹ Dekker, Rudolf. *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland*. 2000, pp. 8.

⁴² Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 518.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Aries, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood*. 1962, pp. 38.

Chapter IV Ideals of family life in seventeenth century Dutch art

Seventeenth century Dutch art reflected various images of ideals of family life that were shaped by a firmly established social system of beliefs and values about family life. Paintings functioned as representations of the well-ordered family, the virtuous housewife and devout father, and their obedient children. Seventeenth century family literature like Jacob Cat's *Houwelick* especially seems to have played a very important role in shaping Dutch social attitudes toward family life. This was partly related to the impact of the writings of the disciples of the spiritual movement known as Pietism who believed that the Reformation had only purified the true Christian faith from Catholic heresies and who attempted to transform society through the co-operative efforts of church, state and family.⁴⁵ The literary descriptions of the roles and duties of family members influenced the development of themes of ideal family life in seventeenth century Dutch painting.

The gender of the beholder and the role of the housewife and the mother

In chapter III, the Dutch interior, we have considered that paintings were an important part of the household decoration and furnishing of the interior was generally the housewife's task. Franits Wayne discusses a point of view stressing that unlike a traditional European history painting which presumes the male as the public beholder, the gender of the beholder in Dutch art was not defined as male but defined as mainly women who purchased the family's paintings.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Franits, Wayne. "The family saying grace : a theme in Dutch art of the seventeenth century" *Simiolus* Vol. 16. 1986, pp. 37.

⁴⁶ Franits, Wayne (ed.) *Looking at seventeenth-century Dutch Art Realism Reconsidered*. 1997, pp. 193-195.

Therefore, paintings were made “to appeal to their ideals, their gazes, their tastes. They had to have qualities that a woman would wish to integrate into the domestic world that she controlled and inhabited.”⁴⁷ The Lace-Maker (cat. 14) by Casper Netscher would be one of the most characteristic examples to be seen by women. The painting shows a modestly dressed young woman concentrating on her task, making lace, within the plain interior. The woman turns toward the wall on which a print is attached as if she tries to shut out any interaction with the viewer. But, the gaze of the viewer is still held by the figure within the composition. The image of the woman would be regarded as ideal domestic virtue, and it would also would test the beholder’s own projected self-image against that which is presented, and able her to find pleasure in what is seen.⁴⁸

As Casper Netscher’s painting represents the ideal domestic virtue, Dutch art, especially genre paintings, depicted virtuous women engaged in a variety of tasks, sewing and spinning, cleaning, the supervision of servants and the care of their children. The images of the industriousness of Dutch women can be seen in the engravings of Geertruyd Rogman(pl. 14). One of her engravings shows, for example, a woman spinning which was considered a virtuous female occupation, usually associated with the Virgin’s role as a spinner.⁴⁹ Moreover, Biblical passages in Proverbs 31 also describe a virtuous woman as one who “ chooses wool and flax and toils at her work...she holds the distaff in her hand, and her fingers grasp the spindle.”⁵⁰ It is known that Seventeenth century foreign visitors to Holland were surprised by the industriousness of Dutch women : the Frenchman Jean Nicolas de Parival, who had lived in Holland since 1624,

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 194.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 195.

⁴⁹ Stone-Ferrier, Linda A., and Foresman, Helen. Exhibit. Cat. Dutch Prints of daily life : mirrors of life or masks of morals ? : essays and catalogue. 1983, pp. 59.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 60.

described the women as “they scrub the floor almost everyday and scour it with sand, until it is so clean a foreigner hardly dare spit on it”⁵¹.

As Jacob Cat’s *Houwelick* emphasises, the important role of the mother is in the responsibility for the child’s rearing until it is at least 7 years old,⁵² and bringing up children in seventeenth century Holland was the theme of many writings of the time. Among her duties, breast-feeding was regarded as the most important. Since the Middle Ages, the hiring of wet-nurses had been a widespread phenomenon in Europe among the elite and artisans ; however, in Holland, maternal breast-feeding had been advocated since the sixteenth century especially among Dutch Reformed authors.⁵³ Dutch physicians also emphasised the importance for the child in forming its good character, and it was believed that breast milk, as a white blood, not only contained nourishment, but also conveyed the mother’s morals to child.⁵⁴ Seventeenth century Dutch art developed the positive image of the nursing mother. Pieter de Hooch’s A Woman Nursing an Infant with a Child and a Dog (cat. 15) exemplifies how ordinary mothers now were portrayed breast-feeding their babies in everyday surroundings. The fall of light looks almost like a halo on the mother and the infant, and the image seems to remind us the timeless image of Madonna and Child. Pieter Fransz. De Grebber’s *Mother and Child* (pl. 15), now in Frans Hals Museum, also shows the image of a secular Madonna and Child. These images would probably indicate that breast-feeding was seen to be the mother’s Christian duty, as the woman who “refuseth this office and duty of mother is declaring to be very unthankful to God.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ Worcester Art Museum Exhibit. Cat. Judith Leyster A Dutch Master and Her World. 1993, pp. 55.

⁵² Brown, Christopher. *Scenes of Everyday Life - Dutch Genre Painting of the 17th Century*. 1984, pp. 58.

⁵³ Dekker, Rudolf. *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland from the Golden Age to Romanticism*. 2000, pp. 91. See also Franits, Wayne. *Paragons of Virtue*. 1993, pp. 113, 114.

⁵⁴ Dekker, Rudolf., pp. 92.

⁵⁵ Franits, Wayne., pp. 113.

The caged bird above the mother may possibly allude to the “sweet slavery of (marital) love” which is echoed by the cupid, symbolic of love, appears on the pilaster of the fireplace.⁵⁶

Upbringing of children

Bringing up a child did not merely concern the infant’s physical need, but also required attention to his moral and spiritual guidance. The Pietists advocated that “families were to be oriented to ethical values based on scripture and dedicated to raising children who would then perpetuate the stability and morality of society as godly adults.”⁵⁷ The theme of the family saying grace became very popular in seventeenth century Dutch art. It depicted normally a family seated at a table during meal times and the children folding their hands to say grace (pl. 16). It is imagined that seventeenth century Dutch households at meal times were like little churches. At the table parents taught children how to pray in the most appropriate language and manner, and this practice also would contain scripture readings, theological instruction and edifying discussion. Prayer was led by the father as an important part in educating children.⁵⁸ These practices were also promoted by many contemporary prints, many of which are inscribed with verses which were spoken by the parents and children (pl. 17).⁵⁹ This theme was also depicted in many Dutch genre paintings. In Jan Steen’s Grace before meal (cat. 16), the father is the only person seated, in accordance with an old custom,⁶⁰ while the meal is served by his wife. The smaller child folds her hands in prayer, while her brother holds his hat respectfully and probably folds his hand beneath it. In the contrast to the good behaviour of the children who have been

⁵⁶ Sutton, Peter C. Pieter de Hooch, 1624-1684. 1999, pp. 120.

⁵⁷ Franits, Wayne. “The family saying grace : a theme in Dutch art of the seventeenth century”. 1986, pp. 38.

⁵⁸ Franits, Wayne. 1986, pp. 43.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Aries, Philippe. Centuries of Childhood. 1996, pp. 348.

properly reared by their parents, the dog in the foreground licks a dinner pot like the untrained animal in Plutarch's Parable of Lycurgus. Many Pietists, as their writings prove, were familiar with Plutarch's story and often quote the parable when discussing the significance of educating children in order to emphasise training modifies behaviour for the better.⁶¹ The motif of the dog licking the pot is repeated in Jan Steen's other work, *Prayer before the Meal* (pl. 18). The popular emblematic motif depicted in Dutch painting would suggest that the Dutch did believe good training was vital for children to shape their characters into virtuous adults.

The importance of educating children would require Dutch parents to invest money, time, and love in their children in seventeenth century Holland. The father in Adriaen van de Venne's print *Moeder from Cats's Houwelijck* (pl. 19) wears the bonnet-crown in celebration of the birth of his child, which is regarded as the first image of a domesticated father. Here he teaches his son to write, and the artistic tools in the foreground would indicate that the father teaches the other academic skills too. Another print from J. H. Swildens (pl. 20) shows the father pointing a map of Netherlands at his child. Simon Schama states that it attempts "to associate the world of children with their future as virtuous republican citizens"⁶², and it contains the message that "Netherlands is your fatherland"⁶³, as the letter N for Netherlands is depicted on the print. The view is perhaps correct, and Rembrandt's drawing, *Two Women and a Child* (cat. 17), would show that the Dutch did view the children as the future hopes or special virtues of the Dutch Republic. Rembrandt himself as a new father depicted his child walking forward supported by the mother and the grandmother. The drawing represents the three-generations of his family, and the mother seems to point in the direction of the future world toward the child

⁶¹ Franits, Wayne. 1986, pp. 46.

⁶² Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 494.

⁶³ Ibid.

and the grandmother seems to represent the past. The child in the middle holds tightly to their hands promising the unity between the future and the past of the Republic without any interference.

In Adriaen van de Venne's print (pl. 19) it shows the mother suckling an infant and two daughters, one of whom makes lace and the other one plays with a doll, while the father teaches academic skills to his son. This indicates that another parental duty was to find suitable professions for their offspring appropriate to their character and sex. From this print it is clearly shown that male superiority was unquestioned and girls were prepared for domesticity and motherhood. Nicolas Maes's A woman scraping Parsnips watched by a Child (cat. 18) shows that the child is learning to perform the domestic skill by watching her mother or a housemaid.

Family holidays

As Christmas is still one of the biggest family feasts in Western countries today, in seventeenth century Holland the feast of St Nicholas, the ancestor of Christmas, was already celebrated as one of the most important family holidays. The feast of saint Nicholas (cat. 19) by Jan Steen shows the emphasis of the event was on the family and the social character of the occasion rather than its sacramental character; therefore, it became one of the popular family themes to be celebrated in seventeenth century Dutch art. Steen depicts the evening of 5 December Saint Nicholas when the parents are helping the children to find toys or sweets which they have hidden all over the house. On this occasion toys and sweets are usually given to the good children as showing the little girl in Steen's picture who holds a doll and a bucket filled with toys and sweets. The tearful child on the left has probably received a switch, a bundle of twigs which is

symbolic of a beating, which is traditionally given to naughty children.⁶⁴ Dutch parents were regarded as soft-hearted, but to keep their children under control parents used to threat them. Some moralists advised to avoid corporal punishment as Blankaart had already recognised that “children could, at times, be little devils, opposed such punishment on the grounds that it made children grow up obdurate and self-necked.”⁶⁵ Nicolaes Maes’s *The Naughty Drummer* (pl. 21) shows the mother only has to threaten her noisy son with the birch branch to start him sobbing. Van Beverwijck recommended the fear of a beating rather than its administration.⁶⁶ The family feast would also suggest the parents’ opportunity to give “a sweet admonition”⁶⁷ to their children to lead their thoughts to better way.

⁶⁴ Rijksmuseum Exhibit. Cat. *The Golden Age Painting, Sculpture and Decorative Art*. 2000, pp. 173, 174.

⁶⁵ Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 556.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

Seventeenth century Dutch art as well as contemporary literature proves the importance of family life at that time. Many pictures or objects associated with themes of family life appeared to display contemporary social beliefs and values toward family life, and indeed they would seem to also convey religious concerns. The Dutch sustained their marriage as an important public or social affair, but the emphasis of their marriage was on personal affection, love and companionship, supported by Calvinist teaching of the day. A great numbers of pictures as well as other furnishings in Dutch interiors signify a wealth of the middle class and the Dutch consumerism in the seventeenth century. The economic growth certainly changed the life style of family in a more practical and sophisticated way. Dutch family had become smaller size in urbanised society and more aware of their care and upbringing of their children, and Dutch art and literature demonstrated a real concern for how children were raised in seventeenth century Dutch households. The increasing numbers of themes of family life in Dutch art was the result of the increased wealth and the humanist trend for utilising the mundane for didactic purposes. It is the humanist influence to be the principal motivation for producing an abundance of images of family life in seventeenth century Dutch art.

In our present time the theme of family life in Western art become less important as family life today become less and less a public affair. However, seventeenth century Dutch art still would appeal some universal morals and ideals of family life which we perhaps need to concern today.

Glossary

Arabesques -- Intricate surface decoration based on rhythmic liner patterns of scrolling and interlacing foliage and tendrils.

Diamond-Point engraving -- A technique for decorating glass. It probably started in Venice in the 16th century and culminated in central and Northern Europe during 17th and 18th century. It is a process of scratching of the glass.

Hispano-Moresque pottery -- Pottery made in Islamic Spain from the 8th century to the fall of Granada in 1492. They were normally decorated with floral motifs, inscriptions or figure in green, yellow, white and black.

Inlay -- Decorative technique for making a pattern consisting of different coloured woods or other materials, notably ivory or horn, is inset into solid wood of carcass.

Maiolica -- Italian name for tin-grazed earthenware.

Tortoiseshell -- A hard brittle, translucent material of mottled yellow, and brown colour which may be moulded under heat and will take and retain a very high polish. It was first used in Europe by the ancient Romans as a furniture veneer. It was used again on furniture by Boulle and his imitators.

Trompe-l'oeil -- A French term applied to a painting that is intended to deceive the spectator into thinking that it is a real object rather than a two-dimensional representation of it.

Turning -- A method of carving the legs of chairs, tables, cabinets much in use until the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was executed on a foot-operating pole lathe which revolved the wood while the turner cut it to the required shape with a chisel.

Veneer -- A very thin lamina of the wood applied to the surface of furniture.

Catalogue of Works of Art

1. Wedding gloves

C. 1622

White leather with embroidered cuffs, l. 24 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. BK-1978-48

The gloves are made of thin white leather. The embroidery on the cuffs consists of multicoloured silk with gold thread, peals and sequins, displaying various symbolic motifs of marriage. Between the gold threads some birds including a peacock which usually attributes to Juno, the goddess of marriage, symbolising the married state and faithfulness, and a partridge. In the bowl of fruit embroidered at the top of cuff a pomegranate, making great number of seeds, symbolises fertility. The violet is recognised as a symbol of virginity and the rose alludes all-conquering love. In the first half century of the Dutch Republic such elaborate embroidery with gold thread was largely applied for costume of members of the nobility and fashionable society. The embroidered picture with designs of birds and flowers was influenced by Southern Netherlands. As a result of the religious persecution preceding the revolt against Spain, numbers of professional embroiderers from the Southern Netherlands came to the north at the period.

PROVENANCE: Made for the marriage of Johanna Le Maire, c. 1622 ; E.G. Coles, London, c.1880; the latter's wife, 1913; purchased by her son-in-law N.Tritton for his wife Ruth, nee Coles; inherited by her nephew, 1972; sale London (Sotheby's), 28/VII/1978, no. 43.

EXHIBITIONS: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, No. 39.

LITERATURE : Exhibit. Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, pp, 66.



2. Wedding Casket

Second half seventeenth century

Silver, h. 5.7 cm ($2\frac{1}{4}$ in), w. 7 cm ($2\frac{3}{4}$ in).

Mark crowned O

London, Victoria and Albert Museum

M113-1923

It is engraved with various scenes, including Tobias and the angel, Jacob's Dream. During the first half of the seventeenth century Dutch silver was highly pictorial by applying engraving.

The small wedding casket, known as *knottekistje* in Dutch, is a traditionally Frisian type of silver and a refinement of the knotted handkerchief in which the man made a engagement present of money to his betrothed.

EXHIBITIONS : National Gallery London 1976, No. 148.

LITERATURE : Exhibit. Cat. National Gallery London 1976, pp. 112. Hutt, Julia 1998 No. 433, pp. 9.



3. Dish with diamond-point engraving by William Jacobsz van Heemskerk

1685

Clear glass, diam. 32.3 cm

On the edge : Bestand'ge noit-besweken Trouw, Werkt lyvelijk-en seel-behouw.; in the middle : IVHAC (Joost Van Heemskerk Anna Conink), beneath a crown in which the same letters are repeated; below the monogram : Iuste & Syncere; on the back, in the crown :

W.V.H. Aes 72

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. NG-NM-764

The dish on which Van Heemskerk engraved his wishes for the wedded couple was made in the Venetian manner. When glass engraving became very popular in seventeenth century Holland engravers adopted the Venetian method of diamond point, capable of engraving delicate decoration on hard glass. Engraving with the diamond point would be understood as a part of contemporary literature and culture. This technique was often used to engrave glasses with literary tags in very high quality of calligraphy. A large number of amateurs cultivated the technique of calligraphy, and William Jacobsz van Heemskerk was also one of them. He was professionally a clothe-merchant and during his life he created a group of individual calligraphic glasses. Van Heemskerk was probably influenced by the engravings of Anna Roemers Visscher who lived in Leiden at the time Van Heemskerk engraved his first glass, even though his

inscriptions were usually in Dutch while Visscher engraved Italian verses and often employed Greek lettering.

PROVENANCE : Van Heemskerk family, Leiden; sale Leiden, 2/IX/1771, no. 192; Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden, The Hague, 1875 ; Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst, The Hague; in the Rijksmuseum since 1885.

EXHIBITIONS : Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, no. 105.

LITERATURE : Exhibit. Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, pp. 159.



4. Jan de Bray (1627 - 1697)

Abraham Casteleyn and Margaretha van Bancken

1663

Canvas, 84 X 108 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. A 3280

Casteleyn and his wife had their portrait painted in an informal setting with their hands joined.

Jan de Bray depicted Casteleyn seating on his chair with his leg spread apart characterising the informality Frans Hals introduced to Dutch portraiture (Cat. 5). Some objects surrounding the couple are books, a globe and a bust of Laurens Janszoon Coster, titular patron of Dutch printers.

These objects are references to Castelyn's profession as a printer and founder of the *Haerlemsche Courant*, a leading newspaper of the day.

PROVENANCE : Bequest of FE Blaauw, 's-Graveland, 1939

LITERATURE : Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 1995, pp 43. Slive, Seymour 1995, pp. 258. Schama, Simon 199, pp. 425, 426.



5. Frans Hals (1582/1583 - 1666)

Wedding Portrait of Issac Abrahamsz Massa and Beatrix van der Laen

C. 1622

Canvas, 140 x 166.5 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. SK - A -42

The couple, Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen, had this life-size portrait painted by Frans Hals on the occasion of their marriage on 26 April 1622. Isaac was at the age of 35 when he married 30-year-old Beatrix, daughter of Gerard van der Laen, a former burgomaster. Massa was a merchant who traded with Russia where he had been educated, and he also served diplomatic missions there for the States General.

Massa was known as one of close friends of Hals's : Massa was a witness at the baptism of one of Hals's children. Thus, the informality of this portrait probably had to do with the close friendship between the artist and the sitter. The casual poses of the couple, sitting by a tree in a garden, with Hals's vigorous and fluid brushstrokes made the portrait lively and momentary.

The rest of the landscape is depicted by the traditional three-colour scheme which was found in works of such artists as Titian and other Renaissance painters : warm browns in the foreground, cooler greens in the middle ground and shades of blue in the background.

Restoration of the painting mostly in the lower half of the picture was undertaken at the Rijksmuseum in 1984. The light greyish tones of mound upon which Massa is seated reveal after the restoration, and from small remains of brown pigments in the area the mound was known as that this was originally painted brown.

PROVENANCE : Sale Jan Six, Amsterdam, 6/IV/1702 (withdrawn); sale H. Six van Hillegom, Amsterdam, 25/XI/1851, no. 15; acquired in 1852.

EXHIBITIONS : London 1929, no. 64; Haarlem 1937, no. 10 ; Amsterdam 1945, no. 31; Brussels 1946, no. 38 ; New York, Toledo & Toronto 1954 -5, no. 28 ; Haarlem 1962, no. 10; Haarlem 1986, no. 20; Amsterdam 2000, no. 13.

LITERATURE : Slive, Seymour 1989, pp. 162-165. Schama, Simon 1991, pp. 426, 427. Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 1995, pp. 45. Exhibit .Cat. Amsterdam 2000, pp. 32



6. The doll's house of Petronella Oortman

C. 1686-1705

Cabinet, oak, veneered with tortoiseshell and pewter, h. 225 cm, l. 190 cm, w. 78 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. BK-NM. 1010. Cat. 358

The cabinet itself is the most lavishly decorated piece with tortoiseshell veneer and engraved pewter. It was probably created by the maker who had apparently worked at the French court before moving to Amsterdam. There are initials, B and O, of Johannes Brandt and his wife Petronella Oortman on the sides of the cabinet.

In the doll's house there are three floors and mainly two rooms, separated by a small room, consist of each floor. On the ground floor, a narrow kitchen, entirely devoted to the preparation of food, is situated at the centre. To the left of the kitchen is the 'best kitchen' where a large porcelain cabinet is displayed. The room was rather the family's main living room where people spent much time of the day. The tapestry room on the right contains the walls completely covered in hangings embroidered in the zigzag pattern known as Irish stich. There is a cabinet decorated on the outside to imitate Oriental lacquer and it displays a collection of shells. On the first floor the salon, the reception room, is decorated with costly landscape wall paintings by Nicolaes Piemont. The chimney piece is also decorated with a park-like landscape painting by William van Royen. The rich furnishings of the salon displays the wealth and status of the owner of the house. The lying-in room on the right is designed for the birth of a child. A bed with velvet hangings is situated into a recess, and the walls are expensively panelled with

rosewood. On the second floor there are the nursery room and a linen room for washing, bleaching and drying linens. The interiors of the all rooms are created by the gathering of the highest workmanship of woodworks, chimney pieces, panelling and painting. The house also contains many fine items such as dishes of Dutch silver, porcelain from the Far East, glass and books.

LITERATURE : Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 1995, pp. 99. Exhibit. Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, pp. 153. King, Constance E. 1977, pp. 156-59. Pijzel-Dommisse, Jet. 1998, pp. 8-28. Wilkens, Leonie V. 1980, pp. 53, 54.



7. Cupboard

C. 1630-1650

Oak decorated with ebony, h. 212 cm, l. 160 cm, w. 78 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. BK-NM-11448, Cat. 101

The cupboard is decorated with caryatids, female figures in the form of pillars. Usually linen was kept in such cupboards which were entirely under the control of the mistress of the house as the most important household possession. The female figures symbolise the virtues Faith, Hope and Charity. The carved frieze shows St. George defeating the dragon and Marcus Curtius rescuing Rome. The small relief on the doors show the bible story of the chaste Susanna. This cupboard illustrating such virtuous topics was probably a wedding gift.

LITERATURE : Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 1995, pp. 102.



8. Pieter De Hooch (1629-1684)

Interior with women beside a linen cupboard

Signed and dated lower right : PdHOOCH/ 1663

Canvas, 70 x 75.5 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. SK-C 1191

Pieter de Hooch was born in Rotterdam in 1652 and settled in Delft. After he moved from Delft to Amsterdam in 1661 he executed this painting. He depicted two women storing linen in a massive cupboard of oak and inlaid ebony, while a child plays *kolf* in the doorway. He also depicted a well-appointed interior, complete with the marble floor, fluted pilastered windows and doorway, classical statuette and paintings. The tonality of the interior contrasts with the daylight of the open door and the glimpse to a canal. In making the composition of the painting de Hooch applied geometrical lines and forms and rules of perspective. He also carefully observed and depicted the different types of light such as the subdued light in the foreground, light falling into the stairwell on the right and bright daylight seen in the background.

PROVENANCE : Baron Lockhorst, Rotterdam, 1726 ; sale Amsterdam, 8/VI/1763, no. 138; sale Rendrop, Amsterdam, 16/x/1793 and 9/VII/1794, no. 25; Smith; Stanley, 1828; Six family, Amsterdam, 1833-1928; sale Six, Amsterdam, 16/X/1928, no. 15; purchased by the Rembrandt Society for the city of Amsterdam; on loan from the city of Amsterdam since 1928.

EXHIBITIONS : Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, No. 140.

LITERATURE : Exhibit. Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, pp. 203, 315. Brown Christopher 1984, pp. 149.

Sutton, Peter C. 1999, pp. 45. Simon Schama, 1991, pp. 395, 396.



9. Tableau of tiles showing warriors in a circle

C. 1580-1620

Majolica, 108.5 cm x 81.5 cm

Amsterdam Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. BK-1955-154

The tiles can be classified distinctly according to the manner and style which was brought from Antwerp where the art of making maiolica potter had been brought from Italy in the sixteenth century.. In the economic decline of Flanders during the second half of the sixteenth century many skilled craftsmen moved to Holland and settled in such places as Haarlem, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where they established some of the earliest workshops producing maiolica tiles and pottery. The earliest maiolica tiles in the workshops were produced in a style under the Hispano-Moresque influence which reserves a four-colour geometrical corner pattern, but at the beginning of the seventeenth century Dutch tiles developed its own style representing a simple rosette or flower unrelated to the central motif which can be found in the tiles.

LITERATURE : Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 1995, pp. 96.



10. Emanuel De Witte (C. 1616-1691/1692)

Portrait of a family in an interior

Canvas, 68.5 x 86,5 cm

Lower left : E. De Witte Ao 1678

Munich, Alte Pinakothek

Inv. No. FV2

Emanuel de Witte is mainly celebrated as a painter of church interiors, but in this painting he portrayed his own family in a richly furnished interior.

The rose at the lower right probably indicate a deceased member of the family, perhaps a dead child. The rose also symbolises transient nature of life.

The painting on the wall in the background is from one of his existing paintings depicting the interior of Amsterdam's old church, which now to be found in a private collection in South Africa. The painting of the Old church in the background would indicate symbolically the state of a well-to-do burgher family in ideal surroundings.

PROVENANCE : (?) Sale Hobbs, London, 9-10/V/1763, no. 14; F. Gibson, 1852; in any case until 1963; in the collection of the latter's grandson Lewis S. Fry; art dealer Terry-Engell, London, 1970; acquired in 1972.

EXHIBITIONS : Amsterdam 2000, no. 110.

LITERATURE : Exhibit. Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, pp. 164, 340.



11. Samuel Van Hoogstraten (1627-1678)

A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House

C. 1655-60

Oil and egg tempera on wood, 58 x 88 x 63.5 cm.

London, National Gallery

NG 3832

The peepshow is one of six perspective boxes which are known to have survived from the second half of the seventeenth century Holland. Perspective pictures and various other forms of *trompe l'oeil* were painted by many artists in the seventeenth century. Samuel van Hoogstraten was one of them, and his interest of perspective was probably influenced by Carel Fabritius when he was a fellow-pupil of Carel's in Rembrandt's studio.

The peepshow consists of a rectangular wooden box ; the interior is painted on three sides, as well as on the top and bottom. The sixth side is open and is now fitted with a translucent plastic panel. There are viewing holes in the two shorter sides which offer multiple views into the house's nine separate rooms and spaces, plus glimpses of an outside world beyond.

It functions as a self-representation of Van Hoogstraten's own home, furnished with various landscapes and history paintings such as Christ blessing children on the left-hand side and the contest of Apollo and Marsyas before King Midas on the right-hand side. There is also a full of action of light : a shadow cast by the broom, the reflected image of the window, the fragmented image of the tiled floor and the shining surface of the mirror hanging.

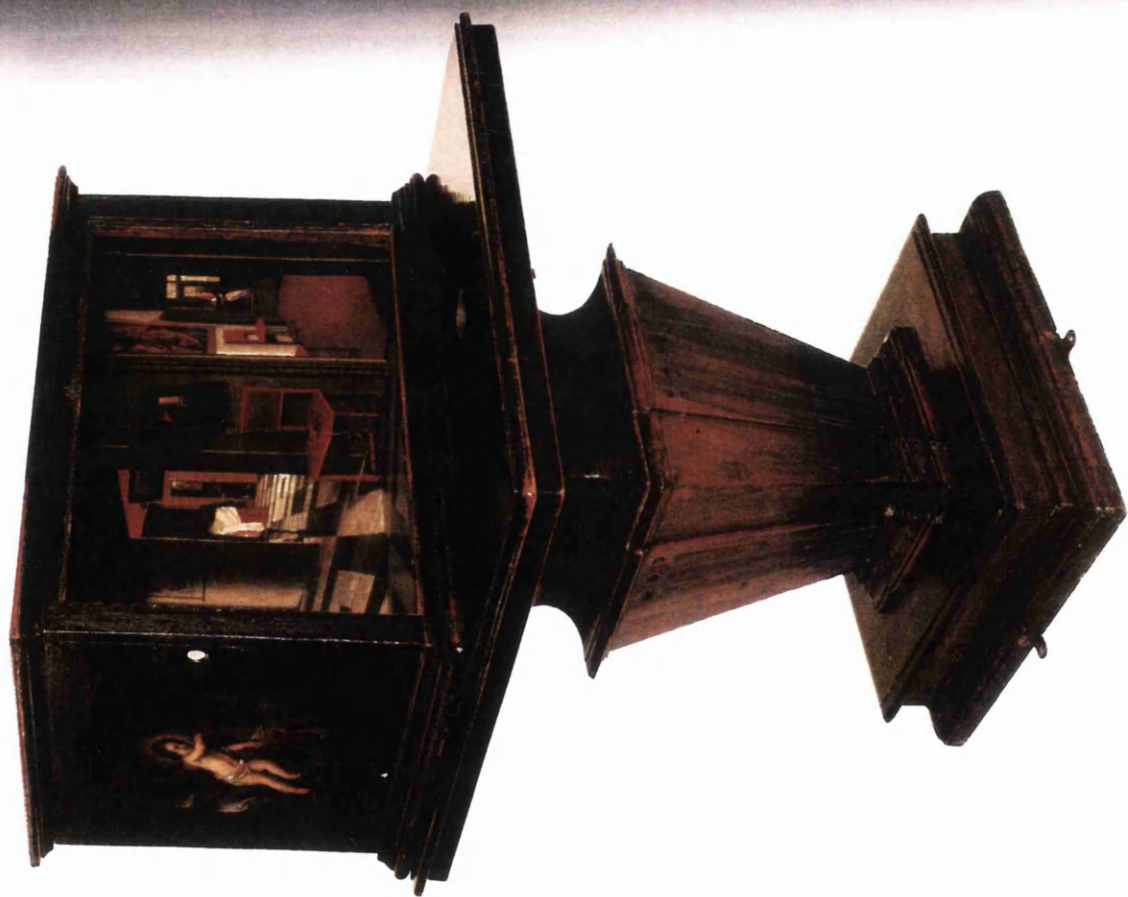
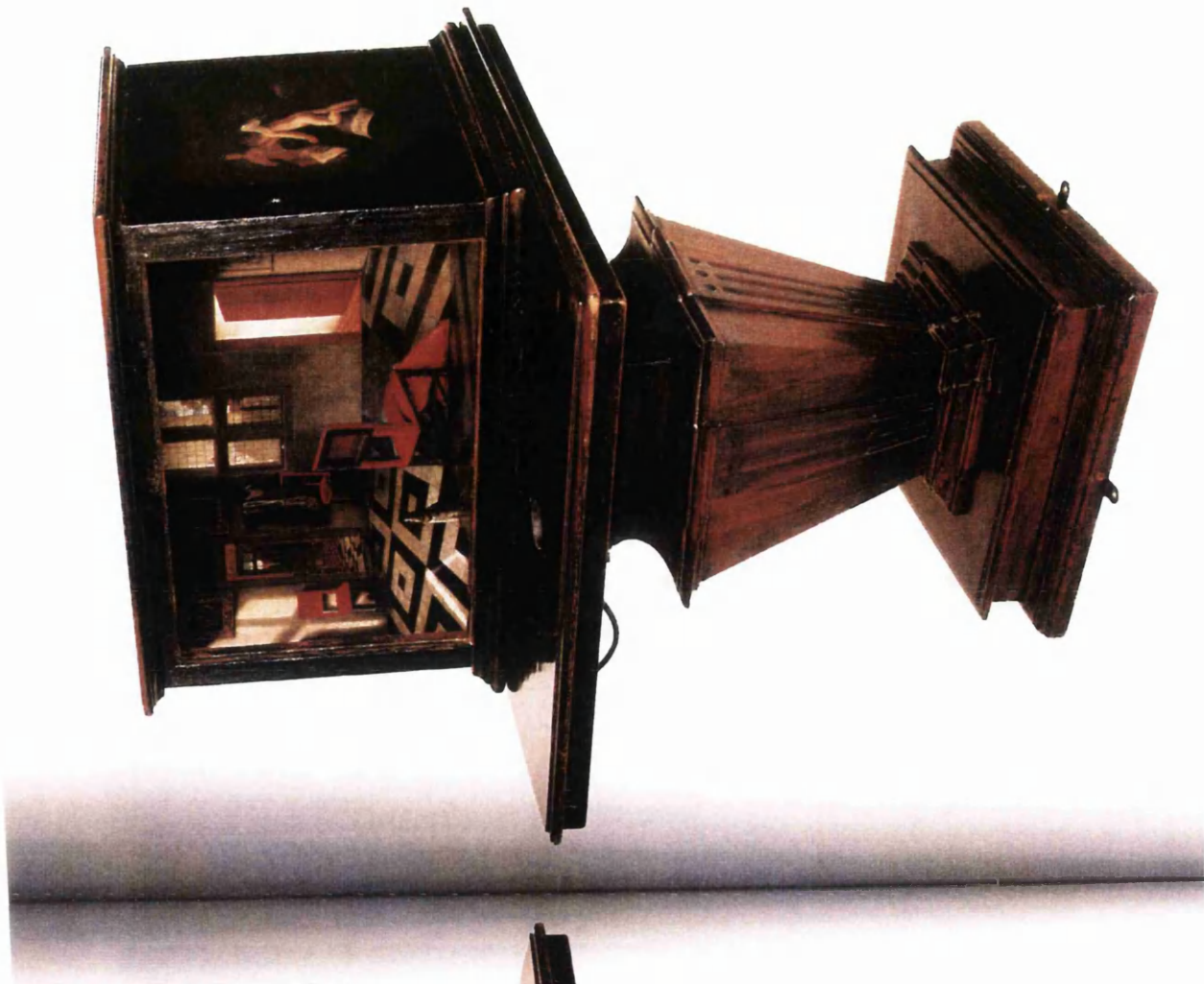
The exterior of the box is decorated with allegorical paintings symbolising Love of art, Wealth and Fame, which correspond to the subjects of the chapters in Hoogstraten's book on painting, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst : anders de Zichtbaere Werelt*, published in 1678. Love of wealth as a motivation for the artist is depicted with a putto holding a cornucopia on the long side. Love of art and of fame as the subject of the painting are illustrated on the short sides, while an allegory of physical love with Venus and Cupid in bed is decorated on the top.

The peepshow was cleaned and restored in 1984-7.

PROVENANCE : Possibly in the sale, London, 6 July 1861 (lot 126A). In the collection of Sir Henry H. Howorth, London, from 1893. Sale, London, 14 December 1923 (lot 97), bought by R. Langton Douglas. Presented by Sir Robert and Lady Witt in 1924.

EXHIBITIONS : London, Royal Society, 9 May 1900; BFAC, Winter 1908; London, Royal Society, 15 June 1921, No. 6 ; London. NACF, 1945-6, NO. 113; Birmingham 1950, No. 31; London 1976 No. 63.

LITERATURE : National Gallery Cat. 1991, pp. 204-206. Brusati, Celeste 1995, Chap.V. National Gallery Technical Bulletin Vol. II, 1987, pp. 60-76. Alper, Svetlana. 1983, pp. 76.



12. Bartholomeus van der Helst (1613-1670)

Pieter Lucaszn van de Venne with Anna de Carpeniter and child

1652

Canvas, 187.5 cm x 226.5 cm

St Petersburg, Hermitage

Lower left : Bartholomeus van der Helst

Inv. No. 860.

Van der Helst was one of artists who established Van Dyckian family portraits, which begun to be popular in Dutch art about 1640. Van der Helst had settled Amsterdam by 1636 for his marriage, and in the early years in Amsterdam he was commissioned to paint huge civic guard group portraits. He took Van Dyck's dazzling style of colouring and lighting on costume of the sitters in the family portrait. The portrait celebrates Van der Helst's sophisticated skill to create an impressive harmony with only a few figures within a simple setting.

PROVENANCE : acquired by Empress Catherine II before.

EXHIBITIONS : Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, No. 111

LITERATURE : Exhibit. Cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam 2000, pp. 165, 346.



13. Nicolaes Maes (1634-93)

The Family of Job Cuijter in Dordrecht Harbour

1659

Oil on canvas, 113 x 156 cm

North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

It is known that Maes painted the family as a partial payment for a house he purchased from Cuijter. In the distance there is a ship owned by Cuijter, and people on the boat on the right hand side must be Cuijter's employees.

LITERATURE : Robinson, William W. 1979, pp. 496. Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 518, 519.



14. Caspar Netscher (c. 1635/9-84)

The Lace Maker

1662

Canvas, 33 x 27 cm

Signed, on the print : C. NETCHER 1662

London, Wallace Collection

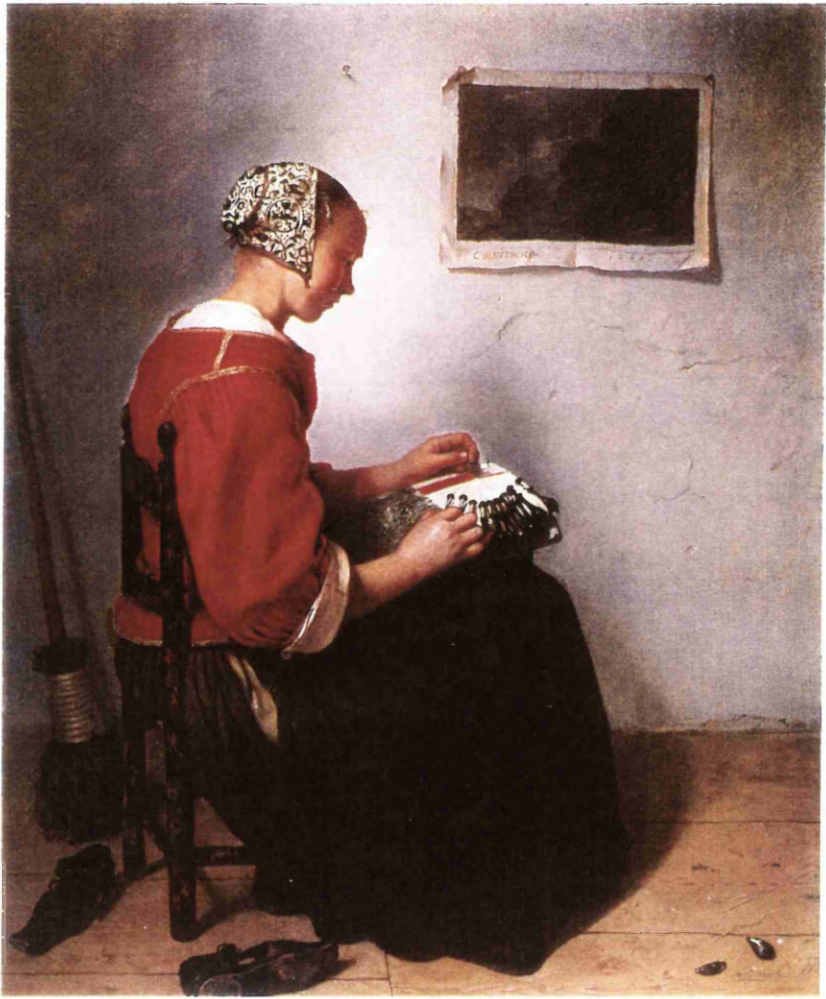
Inv. No. P237

This painting is celebrated as one of Netscher's most famous works. It shows a young woman engaging in a domestic duty, making lace, in a humble interior. The woman wears a red bodice, a dark-green skirt and a white bonnet with a black embroidered pattern. There are a landscape print pinned on the wall and mussel shells on the bottom right of the floor. In this painting Netscher was probably influenced by Ter Borch in its miniature-like representation of the small full-length figure in a subdued tonality of the interior.

PROVENANCE : Dorchester House inventory 1842 ; seen in Hertford House by Waagen 1854 ; Hertford House inventory 1870.

EXHIBITIONS : BI 1818 ; Bethnal Green 1872-5.

LITERATURE : The Wallace Collection Cat. 1992, pp 245-246, Franits, Wayne. 1993, pp. 1-3. Slive, Seymour. 1995, pp. 163.



15. Pieter De Hooch (1629-1684)

A Woman Nursing an Infant with a Child and a Dog

C. 1658-60

Remnants of a signature on the foot warmer

Canvas 67.8 x 55.6 cm

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Palace of the Legion of Honor

Inv. No. 61-44-37

This is one of celebrated images of the beauty of motherhood and domesticity. It shows a peaceful domestic interior in which a mother nursing an infant and a child feeding a family pet. The warm colour scheme, chiaroscuro and pictorial composition is also similarly found in De Hooch's painting, *Woman peeling Apples, with a Child* of 1663, now in the Wallace collection.

PROVENANCE : Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, 1961.

EXHIBITIONS : Philadelphia / Berlin / London 1984, cat. 54, pl. 104 ; The Hague, Mauritshuis, and Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 1990-1991, no. 34, ill.

LITERATURE : Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 543. Sutton, Peter C. 1999, pp. 120



16. Jan Steen (1626-1679)

Grace before Meal

C. 1655

Signed bottom left : Jsteen (JS in monogram)

Canvas, 44.8 x 37.5 cm

London, National Gallery

Inv. No. NG 2558

Jan Steen himself was a Catholic, and as a storyteller with a passion for drawing moral conclusions he created a number of religious pictures based on Proverbs and the Psalms. This painting was probably inspired by the Psalm 128 or 127 in Catholic usage.

PROVENANCE : Salting Bequest, 1910.

LITERATURE : Franits, Wayne. 1986, pp. 45. Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 485. Aries, Philippe. 1996, pp. 348.



17. Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606-69)

Two Women teaching a Child to walk

C. 1635-7

Red chalk on rough grey paper. 103 x 128 mm

London, British Museum

No. 1910-2-12-187

This is probably one of sketches done from life in red chalk. The theme of a standing child held by its mother is a common one in the drawings of Rembrandt. The hat which the child wears is known as a protective hat of a common type to prevent injury from falls.

PROVENANCE : J. C. Robinson ; his sale, Paris, 7-8 May, 1868, lot 62 ; bequeathed by George Salting, 1910.

EXHIBITIONS : London, Royal Academy, 1899, no. 154 ; British Museum, 1910, p. 5, slope III ; 1912, no. 166b ; 1938, no. 5 ; 1956, p. 15, no. 10 ; 1984, no. 5.

LITERATURE : Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 493. Royalton-Kisch, Martin. 1992, pp. 65-66.



18. Nicolaes Maes (1634-93)

A Woman scraping Parsnips, with a Child standing by her

1655

Signed, bottom right : N. MAES 1655 (MAE in monogram)

Oil on oak, 35.6 x 29.8 cm

London, National Gallery

NG 159

This is one of characteristic Maes's domestic subjects. Maes, as a pupil of Rembrandt, depicted aspects of his master's tenderness and intimacy with the use of warm chiaroscuro and strong colour harmonies of black, red and white in the painting.

PROVENANCE : Sale, Amsterdam, 28 August 1817, bought by de Vries. Exhibited at the BI, 1821, lent by Sir Charles Long. Lord Farnborough Bequest, 1838.

EXHIBITIONS : BI 1821, NO. 62 ; Arts Council 1945, No. 17 ; Birmingham 1950, No. 38 ; London 1976, No. 69 ; London 1978-9, No. 19.

LITERATURE : Brown, Christopher. 1984, pp. 142-143. National Gallery Cat. 1991, pp. 240-241. Schama, Simon. 1991, pp. 560.



19. Jan Steen (1626-1679)

The feast of Saint Nicholas

C. 1665-1668

Lower right : Jsteen (JS in ligature)

Canvas, 82 x 70.5 cm

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Inv. No. SK-A-385

This is one of versions of the Feast of St Nicholas Jan Steen painted (at least six versions of the subject are known as painted by him), and is celebrated as the finest one. Steen carefully constructed the composition for binding ten members of the family together. He depicted various gestures, glances and expressions of the figures with the brilliant colouristic effect to make the painting look lively and vivid.

PROVENANCE : Sale Seger Tierens, The Hague, 1743, no. 178 ; Hendrick van Heteren, The Hague 1743-49 ;

Adrian Leonard van Heteren Gevers, The Hague and Rotterdam, 1809 ; acquired with the latter's cabinet.

EXHIBITIONS : Amsterdam, 2000. No. 117.

LITERATURE : Aries, Philippe. 1996, pp. 347. Slive, Seymour. 1995, pp. 173. Exhibit. Cat. Rijksmuseum 2000, pp. 173, 310.



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Comparative illustrations

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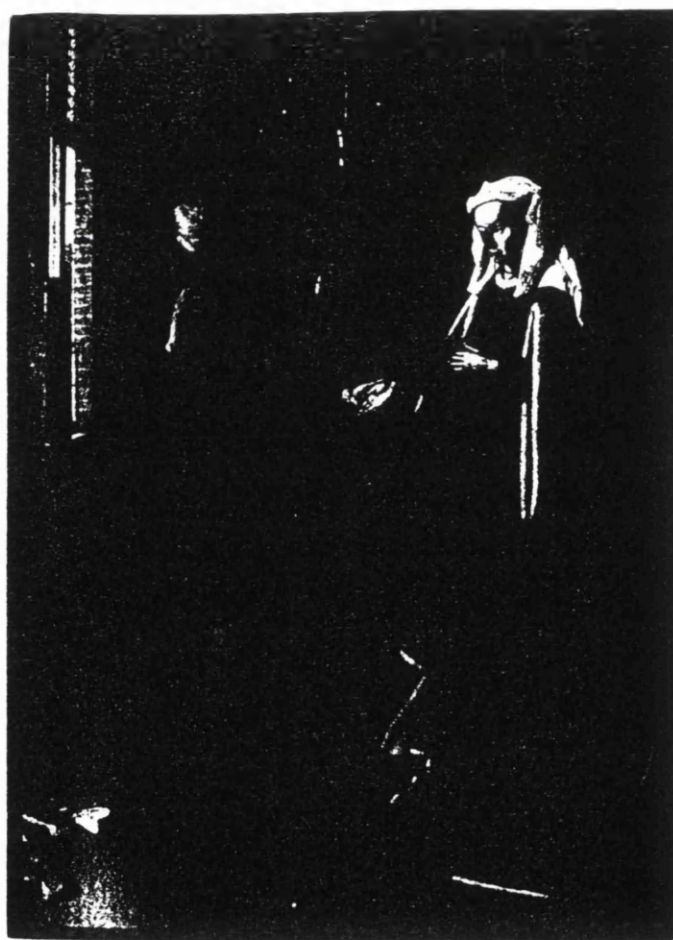
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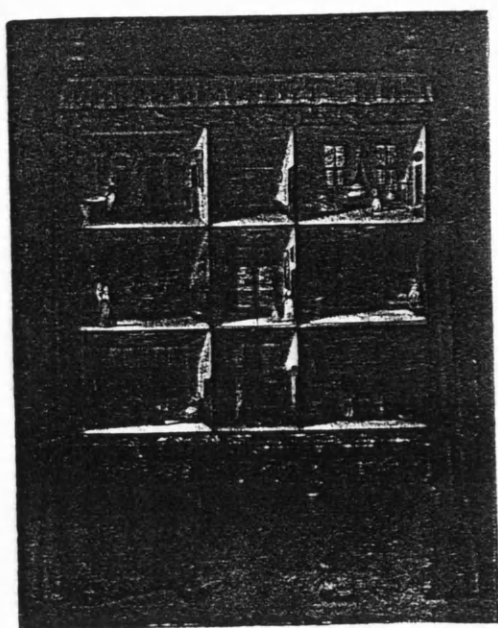
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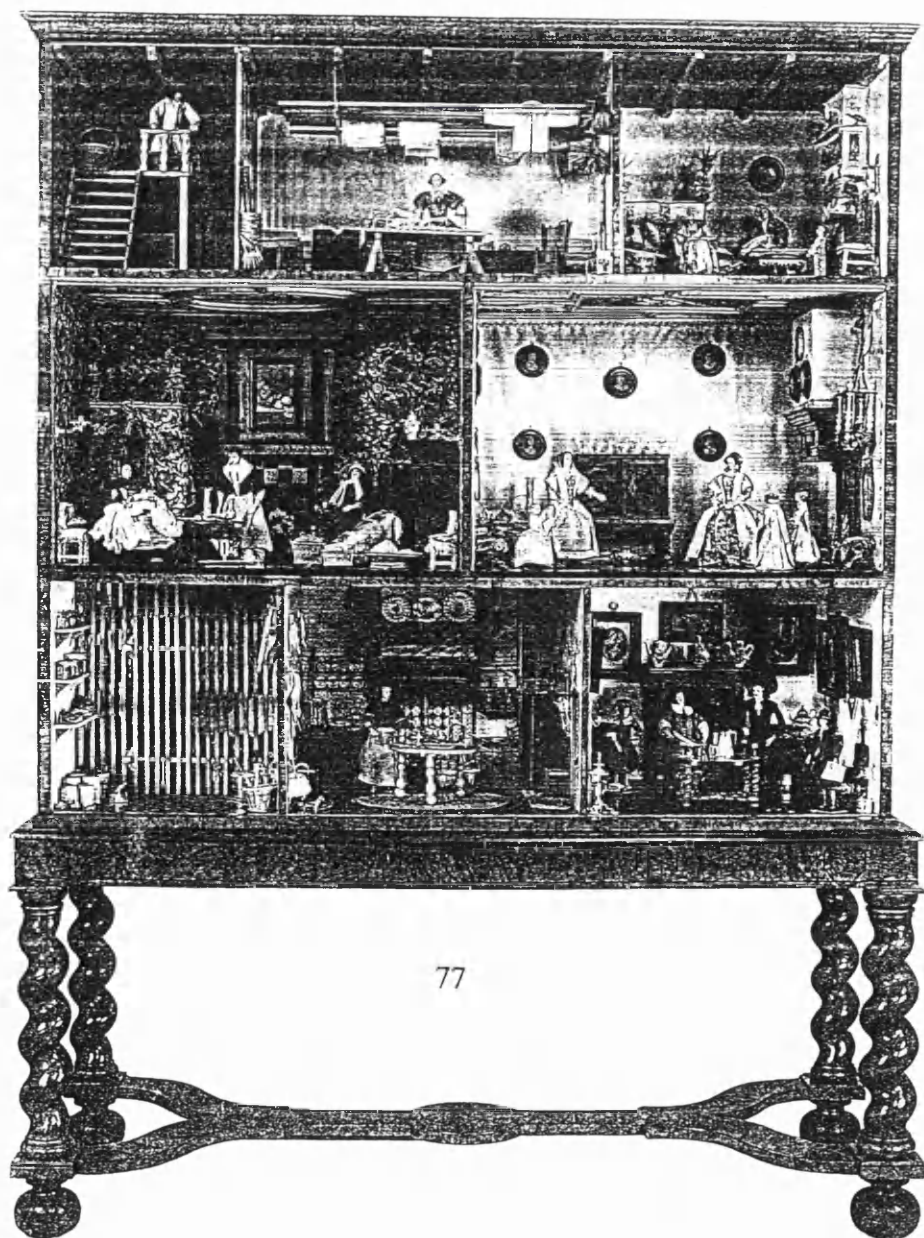
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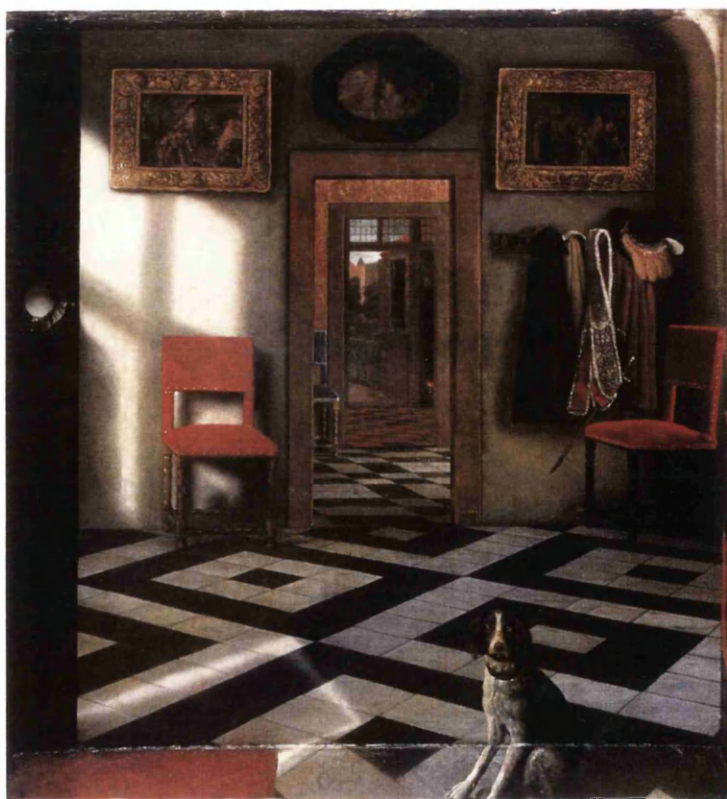
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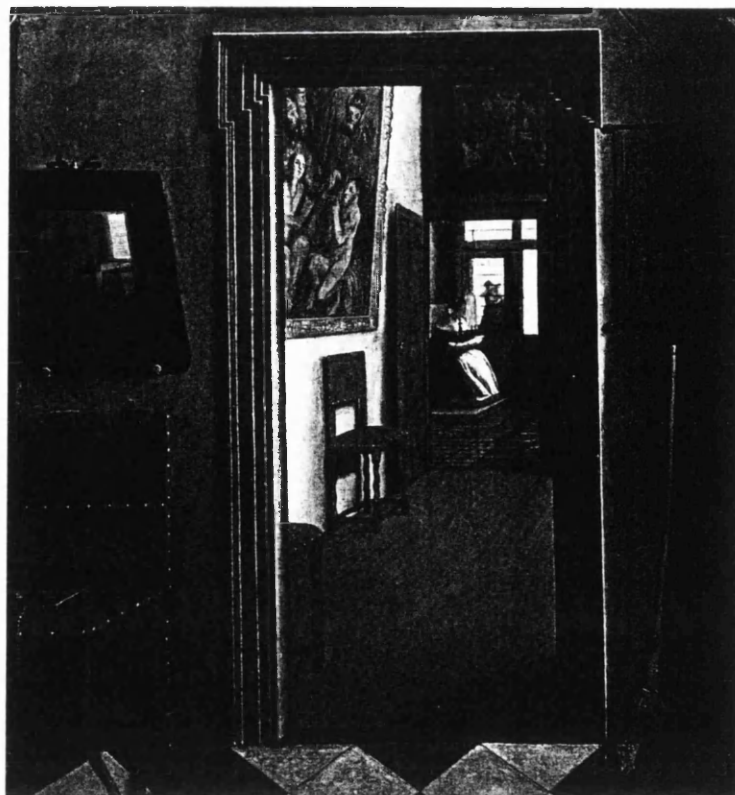
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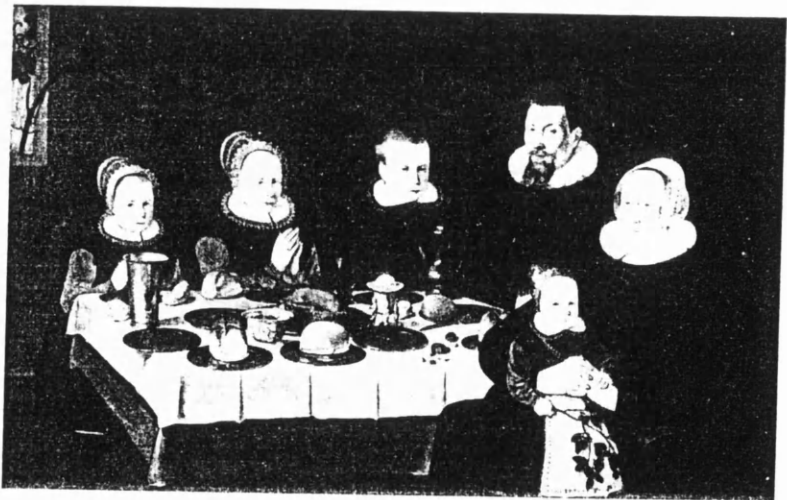


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