

The Flourishing of Truth and Beauty

Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting in its socio-historical context

- RMA thesis-

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- Introduction -

Now that the Rijksmuseum has recently been reopened, visitors from around the world can fully admire the museum's acclaimed collection of Dutch Golden Age painting. Just by entering the Gallery of Honor they can behold one of the main characteristics of Dutch seventeenth-century Art: its remarkable degree of specialization. It might even surprise visitors how the simplest things proved interesting enough to function as autonomous subject-matter. One of first masterpieces they encounter is namely a breakfast piece by Floris van Dijck that depicts bread, cheeses and apples.¹ Onlookers might identify these items as very basic, but did seventeenth-century audiences do too?

It is obvious that this piece no longer functions in its original context, so we should ask ourselves why these items once proved interesting enough to depict. Why was this iconography important enough around 1615? An immediate answer to this question is not so easily formulated. We could start by finding out whether the iconography was common or not. Was it meaningful for just one collector or did these simple items appeal to a larger group of people? With reference to the breakfast piece of Van Dijck we can conclude that in the artist's hometown, the city of Haarlem, many similar looking pieces were painted during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. So by the time these pieces were made, still life had already emerged as an independent genre within Dutch painting. The tabletops full of commodities were namely quite remote from the genre's origins: certain props in religious compositions from the fifteenth- and sixteenth century. Think of attributes of saints such as skulls and books, or of the Virgin Mary such as fruit and flowers. In the sixteenth century, Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer painted market and kitchen scenes full of fish, meat and vegetables that began to dominate over the present figures. Only around 1600 were such items given an independent existence and can we speak of still lifes as 'representations of objects which lack the ability to move and which are for artistic purposes grouped into a composition.'²

As the century progressed many more objects were selected by still-life artists, while other objects began to disappear. At the beginning of the century there were only three types of still life: breakfast pieces, fruit- and flower pieces and vanitas pieces. By mid-century the genre was expanded with *pronkstillevens*, game pieces, *trompe l'oeil* pieces and fish pieces, whereas at the end of the century just two categories maintained to do well: flower- and game painting. One immediately

¹ Floris van Dijck, *Still life with cheeses*, 1615, 82 x 111 cm, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; see fig. 1.12.

² Bergström 1956, p. 3. A common denominator can however cover the fact that till approximately 1650 the term 'still life' was not used. Inventories used descriptive terminology instead.

begins to wonder why a certain type of still life, which implies a certain iconography and style, was more favorable at a certain time? It sounds plausible that the iconography and style of still lifes 'kept up' with contemporary developments ever since it emerged as an autonomous genre. This thesis therefore sets out to discover how Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting can be linked to its socio-historical context. How can we link the artistic developments within the genre to the history of the Republic and its society?

In an attempt to answer this question, it was essential to find out what each still-life type comprised of and what they had in common. If there are striking similarities, this might explain why some types simultaneously flourished or disappeared. In an attempt to link the general trajectory of the genre to its contemporary environment, it proved useful to handle a systematic approach. By focusing on three specific reference points in time (1620, 1650 and 1680) I hope to emphasize noticeable differences, possibly even defined stages, within the still-life genre and its context. Each reference point demands an equal treatment, so an entire chapter is devoted to reconstruct contemporary practices. All three chapters will begin with an analysis of the existing types of still life. Who was active and what were they producing? In a second part, the socio-historical context will be analyzed by means of four aspects. In order to emphasize different stages in the history of the Republic, some important historical events and the course of the economy will be briefly set out. A second section will focus on the contemporary conception of art. What was fashionable and what was not? A third section will focus on the functioning of the contemporary art market. Who were buying contemporary art and how competitive was the art scene? Was there a minimum number of artists to sustain a flourishing market? A final section will then focus on interior fashions, since the way people lived changed quite significantly over time. Is there a logical connection between the existing types of still life and changes in the domestic interior? The hypothesis that still-life artists reflect an ongoing search for naturalness will form a connecting thread between the three chapters. This development seems particularly linked to young artists who tended to improve on their immediate predecessors.

In order to conduct this research I used a wide range of available literary sources. Handbooks as well as numerous exhibition catalogues were indispensable to determine the main characteristics of still lifes around 1620, 1650 and 1680. In an attempt to reconstruct the socio-historical context I had to limit myself to a few aspects that have been set out in previous studies. Publications by economic-historians such as J.M. Montias and M.J. Bok, provided me with insights into the functioning of the art market, while art theory and the results of inventories studies helped track changes in taste. The idea to link the trajectory of the still life genre to changing interior fashions is, however, not new. In 1936 W. Martin, already pointed out that the iconography of dead fish did not particularly match the

representative interiors that became common during the last decades of the century.³ How the genre relates to interiors fashions in earlier decades has not been set out yet. The innovative factor of this thesis is its schematic approach that allows checking up with a different generations of artists and art lovers. A small disadvantage might be that developments that took place between the target dates will remain off the radar. On many occasions, however, the work of pupils will be brought up to emphasize a certain development in the preceding decades. Especially with reference to the last target date, when so many types began to disappear, it was essential to highlight the last examples of diminishing types. This will definitely help support my argument that the general trajectory of still life went from modest and analytical, to lavish and disorderly, to sophisticated and highly decorative. In order to emphasize that plausibility and exquisiteness became increasingly important qualities, I will pay attention to Dutch eighteenth-century floral painting in an epilogue.

³ Martin 1936, p. 475, p. 490.

Chapter 1: Still-life painting around 1620

The aim of this chapter is to find out how Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting appears to relate to its context around 1620. Which artists were active and what were they producing? In this chapter we will mostly deal with artists that had been born in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Their work will show that they were far less concerned with realism than future generations. Flower bouquets appear stiff due to their strict symmetry and a lack of overlapping. Likewise, the first laid table pieces are characterized by their odd perspective. In many cases the tabletop fills up half the picture plain and the items on top are orderly displayed. A third type that began to emerge was the vanitas still life, but it would take a decade longer before this type truly began to flourish. A further analysis of each of these types will help determine what exactly the still life genre comprised of around 1620. The images and tables I will refer to can be found in the Appendix.

1.1 THE MAIN TYPES OF STILL LIFE

1.1.1 Flower- and fruit pieces

Around 1620, Dutch flower- and fruit painting was dominated by Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (1573-1621) and his group of followers. Bosschaert's influence can be directly seen in the works of his three sons⁴, contemporary Roelandt Savery (1576-1639) and his son-in-law Balthasar van der Ast (1593/94-1657). Their flower pieces still resemble pieces by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625), who was nicknamed the flower- or velvet Brueghel. Just like Brueghel's bouquets (fig.1.1), most early Dutch flower pieces are characterized by their symmetry along a vertical axis, the use of bright flowers against a dark background, a minimal use of foliage and the focus on individual flowers.⁵ Bosschaert the Elder would introduce and popularize this type in the Republic, after he had emigrated from Antwerp to Middelburg around 1590.⁶ Here he started painting his first flower- and fruit pieces in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Other allegedly practitioners of the genre in a very early phase were Karel van Mander (1548-1606) and Cornelis van Haarlem (1562-1638) although none of their flower pieces are known today. We do know that Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629) painted flower arrangements in the first decades of the century. This is proven by a small number of surviving paintings that strongly resemble the stylistic features of his contemporaries.⁷

⁴ Ambrosius the Younger (1609-1645), Abraham (1612/13-1643) and Johannes Bosschaert (ca.1607-1628).

⁵ The Hague 1992, pp. 14-15, p. 19.

⁶ Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 45.

⁷ Slive 1995, p. 279 & Bergström 1956, p. 42.

Apart from the vertical shafts of flowers in the manner of Brueghel, artists could also opt for more modest versions. An example is *Flowers in a Wan-Li Vase* (1619) by Bosschaert the Elder (fig. 1.2), which virtually reappears in a work by Van der Ast (fig. 1.3). It may not come as a surprise that these paintings are close in date, but it is good to realize that the artists were at completely different stages of their career. The isolated bouquet was painted at the end of the Bosschaert's life, while a young Van der Ast finished his hybrid work shortly after he had registered at the Utrecht guild in 1619.⁸ That same year, the much older Roelandt Savery also entered the Utrecht guild. Prior to his registration he had spent many years abroad including a period at the court of Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. In 1616 he eventually moved back to Amsterdam and in 1618 settled in Utrecht for good.⁹ In Utrecht, he got acquainted with both Bosschaert and Van der Ast and painted flower pieces in line with their style. Savery was nevertheless inventive enough to deviate from the main stream, which earned him a place among the most important early specialists.¹⁰ Like many of his pieces, a dated work from 1620 (fig. 1.4) shows that his bouquets are a bit more crowded and often placed in stone niches.¹¹

With reference to early Dutch fruit painting, we see that around 1620 the fruit is commonly placed on a plate or in baskets; again an idea that could be seen in the works of Brueghel.¹² Balthasar van der Ast was the fruit specialist who set the example for future generations due to his long-term artistic activity and high production rate. His earliest known fruit piece is now in The Mauritshuis (fig. 1.5), which depicts quinces on a porcelain plate surrounded by pomegranates, apricots and grapes. In front there appear to be pears, shells, an apple, a butterfly, a tulip and a vig.¹³ Just like many contemporary fruit still lifes, most specimens were exotic commodities that could not be cultivated in the Netherlands.¹⁴ A few years later, Van der Ast created two pendant pieces (figs. 1.6 & 1.7) that were recorded in the collection of Amalia van Solms (1602-1675) in 1632. Here we can see that the viewpoint is lowered and the subject is brought closer to the picture plain. Van der Ast also tended to highlight the central part of his compositions, whereas they were traditionally evenly lit.¹⁵

⁸ Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 28.

⁹ Taylor 1995, p. 142.

¹⁰ Amsterdam/Den Bosch 1982, p. 26.

¹¹ Bergström 1956, p. 91.

¹² Ember 2011, p. 41.

¹³ The Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis, The Hague

<<http://www.mauritshuis.nl/index.aspx?FilterId=974&ChapterId=1163&ContentId=14523>>.

¹⁴ Amsterdam/Braunschweig, p. 35.

¹⁵ The Washington National Gallery of Art

<<http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.76208.html>>.

An important similarity between early flower- and fruit specialists is their working method: they used preparatory sketches or watercolors of individually observed specimens to paint their arrangements. This way, painters could depict fruits and flowers from different countries and with different blooming seasons. It also allowed painters to work all year around and to paint very minutely since real fruits and flowers would have faded long before a piece was completed.¹⁶ The flowers that were used were seldom wild flowers, but cultivated ones that were 'fashionable'. In this context that often means they were rare specimens, meaning expensive and sought-after collectibles themselves. Some flowers like hyacinths, crown imperials, cultivated tulips and roses were conceivably so exclusive that there was no point in bringing them into your home for just a brief moment of delight. Generally speaking, the iconography of both the early fruit- and flower still lifes shows that artists were selecting rare specimens and even collector's items. The compositions are characterized by their symmetry and their encyclopedic approach. The objects are often seen from a high viewpoint, evenly lit and obviously displayed against a neutral background. A description that in fact also concerns another basic type of still life that enjoyed great popularity: the early breakfast piece.

1.1.2. Breakfast- and banquet pieces

It appears that the years around 1620 were important for the future development of the breakfast- and banquet piece. In the first place because active artists showed a wide range of possibilities: on some occasions the figure scene had not been left out completely, others were depicting the type of laid tables that had been in use since ca. 1610, while the work of a younger generation marks the beginning of a new phase. In terms of iconography, the early breakfast and banquet pieces are characterized by their depiction of simple food products such as cheeses, bread and fish (fig. 1.8). During the succeeding monochrome phase we see beer and herring frequently return, while butter, cheese and apples has disappeared from the table.

In the Northern Netherlands, the earliest laid table pieces were developed and popularized in Haarlem between circa 1610 and 1625.¹⁷ The three artists that played a crucial role in this development were Nicolaes Gillisz. (ca. 1580-1632), Floris Gerritsz. van Schooten (ca. 1585-1656) and Floris Claesz. van Dijck (ca. 1575-1651). Their work shows strong resemblances with pieces from the Southern Netherlands; either with that of their direct contemporaries or with the sixteenth-century artists Pieter Aertsen (ca. 1508-1575) and his pupil Joachim de Beuckelaer (ca. 1530-ca. 1573). Market and kitchen scenes by the latter two artists are said to be essential for establishing displays of food as autonomous subject-matter, for they reduced the importance of the figure scenes in benefit

¹⁶ Bergström 1956, p. 51.

¹⁷ Haak 1984, p. 124.

of the various still life motifs (fig. 1.9).¹⁸ In a subsequent development, however, the figures are left out completely as was demonstrated in Haarlem. A kitchen still life such as one by Van Schooten (fig. 1.10) would shortly be no longer part of the repertoire of still life painters.¹⁹ Instead, the typical breakfast pieces around 1620 resemble the works of Antwerp contemporaries Osias Beert (c.1580-1623) and Clara Peeters (1607-c. 1621).²⁰ See how a plate with cheeses and a porcelain dish are present in a piece by Peeters (fig. 1.11) as well as in pieces by Van Dijck and Gillisz (figs. 1.12 & 1.13). Apparently the market was large enough for the two fellow townsmen to create such similar looking tabletops. Most of them are characterized by their rectangular shape and high viewpoint, while a lack of visible table edges hinders the illusion of an existing atmosphere.

Yet at the same time and at the same place, the early work of two young artists would soon mark a second phase within the Dutch banquet- and breakfast pieces. The first young artist was Pieter Claesz (1596/97-1660) who had moved from Antwerp to Haarlem in 1621. Given his impressive debut on the Haarlem art scene he probably got trained in Antwerp where he could have personally met Peeters and Beert.²¹ If we compare the earliest surviving piece by Pieter Claesz from 1621 (fig. 1.14) to an even later piece by Floris van Dijck from 1622 (fig. 1.15), we see that the former reduced the size of the tabletop, made the left table edge visible and lightened up the background; all features that can be seen as a prelude for the monochrome breakfasts of the 1630s and 1640s. A breakfast piece by the second young artist, Willem Claesz Heda (1594-1680), exemplifies how impressive the outcome would be (fig. 1.16). The focus on less objects and the use of less bright colors helped create a more elegant and cohesive design. How successful their new approach was, is proven by contemporaries who quickly adopted a similar style; in Amsterdam Jan Jansz Van Uyl and his pupil Jan Jansz Treck (1605/06-1652) followed their example.²² Even nowadays the names of Claesz and Heda are foremost associated with the Dutch breakfast- and banquet pieces from the first half of the century. But let us not forget that they both painted a different type as well: vanitas pieces.

1.1.3 Vanitas pieces

Around 1620, both Pieter Claesz and Willem Heda probably began painting vanitas pieces in Haarlem. For a long time there appeared to be clear evidence in the form of a painting from 1621 by Heda (fig. 1.17). The date was however altered into 1628 after the painting was restored in 1955; leaving us

¹⁸ Bergström 1956, pp. 22-24.

¹⁹ Biesboer 2006, p. 15.

²⁰ Auckland 1982, p. 65 (cat. nr. 4).

²¹ Biesboer 2006, p. 16.

²² Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, pp. 198-199.

with little information about vanitas paintings around 1620. It now appears that it would take at least a decade longer before they were being produced in any substantial numbers.²³ An isolated vanitas piece painted before the 1620s is the well-known *Vanitas* (1603) by Jacques de Gheyn (fig. 1.18) in New York. Its strength is the simple composition scheme that is kept 'to the point'. The central bubble that is enclosed by stone versions of the laughing and weeping Greek philosophers, Democritus and Heraclitus, and the prominent skull are clear markers that this particular type of painting is meant to communicate a moralizing message. Sometimes the message is emphasized by a Latin phrase, which is useful but seldom necessary to understand the artist's intentions. Of all the types of still-life painting the meaning of vanitas pieces is namely the most explicit: be aware of the inevitability of death and be cautious for the vanity of earthly goods. It also helps that artists were very consistent in their use of symbols. The brevity of human life is traditionally represented by human skulls, clocks and hourglasses, burnt-out candles or soap-bubbles, whereas artists used books, musical instruments, jewels and smoking utensils to warn against the vanity of earthly existence.²⁴

The true flourishing of the genre coincided with the monochrome phase in Dutch painting. Between circa 1620 and 1650 the main artistic centre of (early) Dutch vanitas painting was the city of Leiden, where David Bailly (1584-1657), his pupils Harmen (c.1612-c.1656) and Pieter Steenwijck (c.1615-c.1656) and Pieter Potter (1597/1600-1652) were leading artists.²⁵ Jan Davidz de Heem also spent time in Leiden from the mid-twenties to the early thirties and added the type to his repertoire (fig. 1.19). His series of still lifes with piles of worn-out books was his own invention and is seen as admonition against the vanity of scholarly life.²⁶ Paintings by De Gheyn's pupil David Bailly are much scarcer. We do know he belonged to a group of early practitioners thanks to a surviving pen-and-ink drawing signed and dated 16 July 1624 (fig. 1.20).²⁷ His earliest known vanitas painting dates however from 1651. Pieter Potter worked in Leiden between 1628 and 1631 which probably inspired him to take a change on still-life painting. A vanitas piece from 1636 (fig. 1.21) is worth mentioning, for it demonstrates how under the influence of the Leiden vanitas painters the theme gradually lost its intense character. Compared to pieces from the late 1620s such as one by Claesz (fig. 1.22), the moralizing message becomes noticeably less piercing in the '30s and thereafter. Compositions are

²³ Van Leeuwen 1982, p. 44.

²⁴ Bergström 1956, p. 154.

²⁵ Slive 1995, p. 282.

²⁶ Utrecht/Braunschweig 1991, p. 24.

²⁷ Bergström 1956, pp. 160-161.

zoomed out and the addition of books, instruments etc. distracts attention from the skull, 'the most undisguised symbol of human mortality', if it had not yet been left out completely.²⁸

So although it proved difficult to find examples dated around 1620, the given overview will prove useful to discuss the genre's status around 1650. For now it is good to determine that the earliest vanitas paintings were painted in monochromatic tones. The ones containing the least objects and the simplest composition are conceivably the most powerful in conveying their message. The choice of symbols is said to derive from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century representations of Saint Jerome in his study. The common *memento mori* objects were gradually isolated to form a symbolical still life.²⁹

1.2. SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

1.2.1 Historical introduction: politics and economics

By 1620, the most important regions that our nation consists of had been in war for almost half a century. What once started as a revolt of no less than seventeen provinces against the Habsburg Empire, became a war of independence for the self-proclaimed Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. An important first step towards official recognition was the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621) that allowed the Republic to function as an autonomous state outside the context of war.³⁰ It is commonly known that the Republic's military leader Prince Maurits of Orange (1567-1625) was not too enthusiastic about the intermission of warfare and came into conflict with his political companion Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619). Van Oldenbarnevelt's death in 1619 after a forged trial shows how much authority the stadholder derived from his military control and how important it was to maintain it. Shortly thereafter, the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648) would continue. Yet even then the immediate threat of war had been absent in several provinces since circa 1580. Particularly, the local economy in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland had profited from this situation and showed early signs of a long-term upward movement.³¹ During these decades The Republic also became the dominant European trading power that controlled the trade routes to the Baltic, the Mediterranean and eventually Asia and Africa.³²

Many scholars will agree that the expanding trading industry was one of the key catalysts of the prosperity of the Dutch Golden Age. With reference to still-life painting one scholar in particular, Julie Berger Hochstrasser, attached great value to the general course of the Dutch economy and its

²⁸ Auckland 1982, p. 189 (cat. nr. 38) & Vorenkamp 1933, p. 96.

²⁹ Bergström 1956, p. 14, p. 188.

³⁰ Slive 1995, p. 2.

³¹ Haak 1984, pp. 162-163.

³² Israel 1997, p. 450.

influence on this particular branch of painting. At the beginning of her book *Still Life and Trade in the Golden Age* (New Haven & London 2007) she states how it once struck her that still-life painting emerged as an autonomous genre right around the time the ongoing prosperity led to the birth of a consumer society. By investigating the Republic's trade history she sought to demonstrate that the development of seventeenth-century still lifes is connected to the material culture of trade.³³ Although I do not agree on everything she writes, her elaborate analysis of the history of Dutch trading products proved valuable to discuss. She namely demonstrated that the objects depicted on laid tables during the first decades of the century are often domestic commodities. Not only were they consumer products, they were also important trading products that played a significant role in the prosperity of the contemporary economy. Hochstrasser sets out that certain products are important products of successful national industries: cheese and butter of the dairy industry, herring of the fishing industry and beer of the brewing industry. Bread was also part of the Dutch diet, but as Hochstrasser notes, the required grain was not cultivated in the Republic. Instead, it was imported from the Baltic and distributed over Europe through the port of Amsterdam, thus in that sense also important for our economy. She is also convinced that the audiences for these paintings were somehow involved in the trade industry and could 'readily identify the significance of objects in still life as trade commodities.' This is said to be proven by inventory studies.³⁴ Nevertheless, her implications that the early laid tables reflect 'the pride of Dutch in their newly founded nation' and 'a nationalistic claim to goods' are difficult to prove. It is more plausible to assume that these products reflected 'a level of accomplishment in terms of achieved prosperity', since items such as butter and cheese were often too expensive for the lower classes. Audiences could thus take pride in having reached a certain comfort level although it does not appear to be much more than just the basics.³⁵

1.2.2 The contemporary conception of art

In order to regard any type of painting in its proper context, it is inevitable to establish the contemporary conception of art. Essentially, this means that we need to recover the contemporary taste, something which is certainly not as concrete as facts and numbers. Luckily there are sources that can help us out such as production numbers, inventory studies, and more directly, thoughts expressed by art theorists. Hence it is valuable to give a brief overview of what can be derived from these sources.

³³ Hochstrasser2007, p. 1.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 16.

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 33-34, p. 40.

First of all, inventory studies can help reconstruct contemporary collecting practices. The relative number of subjects found in households over time informs us what was fashionable and what was not. Montias' key-publication *Artists and Artisans in Delft* (Princeton 1982) paved the way for future inventory studies that on the basis of statistical analysis provide insight into changes in taste among the art-buying public. An overview of subject preferences in Amsterdam, Delft, Dordrecht and Leiden based on inventories between 1600 and 1699 informs us that still lifes were collected ever since they emerged as an independent genre (Appendix: table 1). It appears that their numbers increased steadily since the beginning of the century, but only began to drop after 1680. Also note that still lifes never earned a dominant position in these art collections, since they are always outnumbered by landscapes, portraits and history paintings. Especially the latter genre makes up around forty percent of all paintings in private collections around 1620.

For more accurate assumptions about the popularity of still-life painting it is much better to study the course of each individual category. This is surprisingly absent in many studies. The only inventory analysis I came across that does deal with separate types is published in the exhibition catalogue *Still-life painting from the Netherlands 1550-1720* (Zwolle 1999) and is based on Haarlem inventories 1620-1689 (table 2).³⁶ It is understandable that tabletop still lifes will be (over-) represented in local collections, but apart from that the general course of popularity is similar to the development sketched in textbooks. In the column '1620-29' we see that for that time period flower- & fruit-, laid table pieces and kitchen scenes are the only types present in inventories.

A second indicator of the contemporary conception of art is to find out what is written on art in that particular period. Art theory appears to be a good starting point, but it turns out that there were not yet any theoretical writings that dealt explicitly with the still-life genre around 1620. One can of course think of Karel van Mander's *Book on Painting* (1604), of which a second edition was published in 1618.³⁷ It is known as the first theoretical treatise on painting written in Dutch, but at the time of writing the word 'stilleven' was not yet used. Instead, Van Mander used descriptive terminology to indicate existing types. Similar to what we see in inventories from the first half of the century. Fruits, flowers and kitchens were certainly common categories around the turn of the century, but 'banketjes' (banquet pieces) or 'ontbijtjes' (breakfast pieces) as popularized in Haarlem are understandably not mentioned. It may also be good to point out that of the circa twenty accomplished living Dutch painters at least three artists painted still lifes: Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck,

³⁶ Loughman 1999, p. 102.

³⁷ Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* (*Book on Painting*) consists of roughly three parts: an instructive poem which forms its theoretical core, biographies of artists and a rather separate section dealing with iconology.

Cornelis van Haarlem and Jacques de Gheyn. Van Mander describes kitchen pieces by Van Rijck, a flowerpot by Van Haarlem and sets out how De Gheyn painted a flower piece that was bought by Emperor Rudolf II.³⁸ At first sight their biographies do not contain clear criticism on their painting practice, but as Guido Jansen rightfully highlights, Van Mander saw it fit to emphasize that De Gheyn's '*hoogsten lust was tot Figueren*' (greatest pleasure was to depict figures).³⁹ Figure painting was namely a highly recommended occupation given that history painting was seen as the best way artists could enhance their status. In the eyes of Van Mander, subjects that are too much of a direct imitation of nature lack the possibility to show audiences how inventive or intellectual artists could be. For that simple reason all other genres become subordinate to history painting, while Van Mander does not specifically state that the non-history genres are put into a hierarchical system among themselves.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Van Mander must have known what made still life so appealing: they showed desirable objects that would survive the ravages of time in the form of painted fictions. At the same time, the display of technical virtuosity as demonstrated by the artist's ability to render objects so lifelike must have been an appealing factor since the genre's emergence.⁴¹ There certainly was a growing market for still-life paintings around 1620.

1.2.3. The contemporary art market

Taking a closer look at the functioning of the contemporary art market is useful to understand under what circumstances paintings were produced. By 1620, the market for paintings had namely experienced a rapid growth since the 1580s. According to economic-historians a mass market for paintings had emerged due to an increase in consumer power and artistic innovations that helped increase production.⁴²

The most solid factor is certainly the positive effect of an increase of consumer power among the Republic's townsmen. It is widely known that the expanding prosperity made it possible that larger groups of people could join the art-buying community. Most art-buyers belonged to the population of prosperous cities and were either patricians, wealthy merchants, civil servants (think of lawyers and notaries) or independent retailers.⁴³ Around 1620, they were part of a society that can be described as rather heterogeneous and highly mobile in terms of social stratification.⁴⁴ Yet besides wealthy townsmen, foreign courts as well as the court in The Hague were also collecting Dutch still-

³⁸ Van Mander 1604, fol. 198v, fol. 292v and fol. 294v.

³⁹ Jansen, 1999, p. 51 & Van Mander 1604, fol. 294v.

⁴⁰ Jansen 1999, p. 51.

⁴¹ Loughman 1999, p. 88.

⁴² Bok 1994, pp. 97-130.

⁴³ Boers 2012, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Adams 2007, p. 167.

lifes or better said: fruit- and flower pieces. This type namely matched the contemporary interest in *naturalia* as part of the encyclopedic collecting trend at European courts.⁴⁵ Prince Frederik Hendrik and his wife Amalia van Solms for instance only owned still lifes of fruits and flowers, including the two pendent pieces by Balthasar van der Ast (figs. 1.6 & 1.7).⁴⁶

More problematic is what economic-historians have to say about the artistic innovations since 1580. Bok for instance sets out that the innovation factor was twofold: one the one hand it consisted of *process innovation* and on the other hand of *product innovation*. In his framework *process innovation* refers to the introduction of painting techniques that allowed artists to produce works with less labour costs, whereas *product innovation* refers to the development of a personal style or specialisation that allowed artists to establish their own market. Especially a combination of these two innovations enhanced a standardized production process that led to lower prices and a greater variety in products.⁴⁷ A frequently cited example of *process innovation* is the change in tonal effects in the 1620s. The fundamental thought is that the use of fewer pigments speeds up the production process, which was necessary to keep up with the increasing demand for paintings. The fact that practitioners within several genres, such as the landscape painters of Van Goyen's generation, began to handle a monochrome palette made it inevitable that this development was tackled in general terms. In the case of Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) it is certainly conceivable that he reduced his palette to yellows, greens and brown in the late 1620s to achieve a higher production rate, but his quick brush strokes certainly helped.⁴⁸ With reference to still-life painting, describing the monochrome phase as a mere technical strategy is more troublesome. A painting by Heda (fig. 1.16) is certainly not meant as a quick turnover, or painted less minutely than still lifes prior to the monochrome phase. Here, a reduced palette seems to be an artistic solution meant to tackle existing artistic problems; for instance the lack of elegance or the lack of cohesiveness in colour in the works of his predecessors. In combination with other novelties such as a better three-dimensional effect and the use of fewer objects, it becomes clear that Heda and his colleague Claesz were in fact surpassing their contemporaries on an artistic level. It is here that the concept of artistic emulation comes to mind; the notion that artists surpass the imitated examples. Why and when exactly artistic emulation takes places is not something you can calculate or entirely explain. It certainly takes creative minds, which are able to come up with something new and desirable. Yet is also takes a certain art market, a certain artistic climate that could function as a catalyst.

⁴⁵ Brusati 2007, p. 148.

⁴⁶ Loughman 1999, p. 91.

⁴⁷ Bok 1994, pp. 116-117.

⁴⁸ Slive 1995, pp. 186-189.

The latter statement is certainly proposed by the concept of a 'critical mass' as formulated by Montias. This concept refers to 'a number of individuals large enough to preserve the intensity of interaction necessary to keep a community of artists from drifting apart'.⁴⁹ The term is said to imply that a minimum number of artists is needed to generate artistic competition at a local level and to sustain a flourishing art centre with its own characteristic traditions.⁵⁰ Haarlem anno 1620 certainly had a flourishing art market where artists were driven to compete with each other. The monochrome palette as used by Heda and Claesz could thus also be seen as an attempt to surpass their successors. The fact that their monochrome breakfasts proved successful for over two decades may confirm that audiences were in favour of something new. It is also said that once Claesz. gained recognition with his new pictorial mode, he soon experienced little competition from his older colleagues. If there was still any mutual influence in the late 1620s, it was the other way around. According to Sam Segal, Nicolaes Gillisz would adopt ideas of his younger townsmen to create more monochrome and natural looking tabletop pieces toward the end of his career.⁵¹

Another factor that fueled the rise of a mass market for paintings was the upcoming trend to decorate homes with paintings. This practice is of course closely connected to an increase of consumer power. Given the fact that the majority of Golden Age paintings ended up in the home, it will be useful to check to which extent considerations of display are arguably connected to the development of still-life painting. Where did buyers hang their acquisitions and how do they relate to contemporary interior fashions?

1.2.4. Interior fashions

It makes sense that an increase in consumer power stimulated the practice to invest in luxury products. As such, decorating homes with paintings became increasingly fashionable throughout the seventeenth century.⁵² Yet the way people decorated their homes changed significantly over time. This section will therefore focus on the domestic interior in the first half of the seventeenth-century. Around 1620 we can assume that the ground floor consisted of a few connected spaces: the *voorhuis*, the *binnenhaard* and (optional) a kitchen and/or *achterkamer*. Each of these rooms had several functions, given the fact that they all included box-beds during the first decades of the

⁴⁹ Montias 1982, p. 181.

⁵⁰ Bok 1994, p. 46.

⁵¹ Delft/Cambridge/Fort Worth, p. 121.

⁵² Boers 2012, pp. 23-24.

century. The interior itself appeared to be very sober. Even around mid-century most walls were still simply whitewashed and the floors made of wood.⁵³

Inventory studies can subsequently provide valuable information on the original distribution of paintings per room and by subject-matter. An important study based on Amsterdam inventories (1600-1679) is *Public and Private Spaces. Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Dutch houses* (Zwolle 2000). Loughman and Montias have namely shown that ‘the *voorhuis*, as the first space encountered on entering the house, was also an important area for the display of works of art, particularly during the first half of the century, before it was reduced in size.’⁵⁴ They also hoped to discover a connection between the subject-matter and the room where the work was hung, but in relation to still lifes they did not succeed in pinning down a particular habit. The authors were disappointed ‘that there was no significant surplus of still lifes and kitchen scenes in the various kitchens’. It appears that the different genres did not have a specific place in the house and could be hanged in practically every room.⁵⁵ Oddly enough, a similar analysis of Leiden inventories by Willemin Fock does indicate a tendency to hang still lifes of food and kitchen pieces in the kitchen.⁵⁶ At first it might seem strange to hang paintings in the kitchen, but during the first half of the century this room was used as bedroom and as main living area.⁵⁷ A definite answer to where people preferred to hang their still lifes is thus difficult to formulate. A study of Pieter Claesz has at least shown that his work was usually hung in the *voorkamer*, which does inform us that tabletop pieces were certainly not unworthy of hanging in the best room for paintings.⁵⁸

1.3 Conclusion

We have seen that around 1620, the Republic had already begun to prosper due to the absence of any immediate war threat. The economic prosperity had led to a noticeable increase in consumer power that made it possible to invest in luxury products and to decorate houses with paintings. Inventory studies show that still lifes were collected ever since the genre’s emergence as an independent subject-matter, but also that history painting was still the dominant genre in private collections. The preference for history painting certainly tied in with contemporary art theory that did not specifically deal with the still-life genre.

⁵³ Fock 2006, pp. 65-69.

⁵⁴ Loughman & Montias 2000, p. 30.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 69.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 42.

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 23-26.

⁵⁸ Gregory 2006, p. 108.

We have also seen that the increasing demand for paintings had fuelled the mass market for paintings that at some point met the criteria of Montias' concept of a critical mass. Especially Haarlem appeared to have a flourishing and competitive art market around 1620. It sounds very plausible that in the 1620s the intensity of interaction led to artistic emulation which resulted in a new (monochrome) phase in still-life painting. There certainly did seem to be a pattern of young artists who were inclined to handle things differently. Within flower- and fruit painting, a young Balthasar van der Ast would lower his viewpoints and step away from the evenly lit compositions. Within the tradition of the tabletop piece, Pieter Claesz and Willem Heda certainly improved on the use of perspective and the lack of coherence between the systematically displayed objects. The fact that other artists quickly imitated their new features might show that audiences were equally ready for something new. Leiden became another artistic centre for still-life painting that began to flourish due to a group of artists that simultaneously committed themselves to the same subject-matter. Their tabletop settings full of attributes would become a starting point for future generations.

In terms of the iconography, it appears that the earliest breakfast pieces reflected a certain comfort level that had set in among the prosperous townsmen. Not only could they now afford items such as butter and cheese, they could also decorate their homes with painted fictions of their level of accomplishment. Still these works do not appear to be too extravagant since they depict obtainable objects. A similar form of modesty is reflected by the quite basic interiors. A reconstruction of the contemporary interior reflects that there was not yet a particular wish for representative rooms. Most rooms, including the kitchen, had multiple functions and could be decorated with paintings.

A somewhat different line of reasoning must be applied to the fruit- and flower pieces of which the content appeared more precious than the tabletop or vanitas pieces. A plausible explanation might be that such pieces were originally collected by a wealthier group of eminent patrons. Pieces by Bosschaert the Elder, De Gheyn, Savery and Van der Ast were sold for high prices to European courts where Kunst- und Wunderkamern reflect a scientific interest in *naturalia*. An inventory from 1632 shows that Frederik Hendrik and his wife only owned still lifes of fruits and flowers and none breakfast- or vanitas pieces. The flower pieces in 'ordinary' homes thus appeared to be made by second-rate artists, who could provide a copy of the highly grossing genre. The fact that the arrangements of top-heavy flowers from different seasons were highly fictive did not seem to bother prospective buyers or art theorists. In the following two chapters we shall see how this gradually began to change.

Chapter 2: Still-life painting around 1650

In line with the first chapter, the aim of this chapter is to find out how Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting appears to relate to its context around 1650. Interesting about the second target date is the fact that all seven categories of still-life painting were practiced. The following evaluation will thus focus on types had been popular since the first decades of the century, types that emerged between 1620 and 1650 and types that actually began to flourish around mid-century. It is also good to point out that some of the prominent specialists around mid-century were actually born around the first target date; think of Jan Baptist Weenix (1618/19-1659), Willem Kalf (1619-1693), Abraham van Beijeren (1620/21-1690) and Otto Marseus van Schrieck (1619/20-1678). An analysis of their works and that of their contemporaries will show that by 1650 the boundaries between the several types began to fade. Other general characteristics are the reintroduction of color and the fact that many changes can be interpreted as signs of an ongoing search for naturalness.

2.1 THE MAIN TYPES OF STILL LIFE

2.1.1. Flower- and fruit pieces

It appears that flower- and fruit painting was practiced since it emerged as an independent genre. A considerable difference between 1650 and 1620 is the fact that members of the previously discussed Bosschaert dynasty no longer played an active role in the art scene. In the first place, because most of them did not live long enough to witness the Peace of Westphalia: Ambrosius the Elder died in 1621 and his sons Ambrosius II, Abraham and Johannes in 1645, 1643 and 1628 respectively. The only member who did live past mid-century was Van der Ast by whom we generally only know of works dated between 1617 and 1628. Works that can be dated hereafter are doubtful attributions and rare.⁵⁹ The influence of Bosschaert and his circle could of course live on through a succeeding generation. In this regard Jan Davidsz de Heem (1606-1683/84), who was likely a student of Van der Ast in Utrecht, makes an interesting case. Whereas his earliest known fruit pieces are strongly influenced by Van der Ast, his pieces around 1650 are quite something else. Two pieces in The Mauritshuis, one by the teacher (fig. 2.1) made round 1620 and one by his pupil (fig. 2.2) made around 1650, demonstrate how much the fruit piece had changed. In this example, De Heem combined musical instruments, glasswork and a pulled-up curtain with numerous species of fruit; we see grapes, peaches, lemons, pomegranates and sliced melon. Everything is loosely piled up on a table and even on top of a jewel box the piling continues.

⁵⁹ Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 28. In addition to this list: Roelant Savery died in 1639.

Another prominent figure around mid-century was Willem van Aelst (1627-1683), who made numerous contributions to the further development of Dutch still-life painting. The Delft born artist was trained by his uncle Evert van Aelst (1602-1657) and entered the local guild in 1643. Hereafter he travelled to France and Italy and would return to the Republic in 1656. A year later Van Aelst finally settled in Amsterdam where he remained till his death in 1683. Just like De Heem he began making decisive steps during the 1640s that would influence an entire generation of painters in the Republic. A fruit piece which he possibly made on commission of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, demonstrates how luxurious the subject could be handled (fig. 2.3). Several types of ripe fruits such as peaches and grapes are placed on a marble plain which is decorated with a fringed drapery in a clear blue color. The general course of the fruit piece seemed however set out by De Heem, whose fully loaded and hybrid compositions enjoyed great popularity in the following decades.⁶⁰

In connection to flower painting, Van Aelst's efforts proved more influential. Along with Otto Marseus van Schrieck (1619/1620-1678), with whom he had spent time in Italy, he gradually stepped away from the traditional symmetry and began to paint bouquets along a diagonal axis.⁶¹ An early example from 1651 (fig. 2.4) can demonstrate a development that would set the tone for the following decades. Instead of arranging a vertical column of flowers, Van Aelst chose a crosswise axis that runs from the bottom left to the top right. De Heem is accordingly credited for introducing the extensive use of foliage and heavy light contrasts to Dutch floral painting after he also began to paint flower pieces around 1650.⁶² A piece in Innsbruck, demonstrates how the bouquet became more loose and colorful (fig. 2.5). Characteristic of the artist's manner are the flowers that plunge beyond the neck of a glass vase and fill up the entire picture plain. Another common feature is the wheat stem that falls over the edge of the table, which we will also see in the work of his followers. The asymmetrical or S-shape bouquets by Van Aelst had also set an example worth following. In a piece by Simon Verelst (1644-1710/17) we clearly see a diagonal line from the top left to the bottom right (fig. 2.6). Verelst enjoyed a good reputation with his 'Dutch' flower pieces after his immigration to London in 1669.⁶³

So around mid-century, the fruit- and flower pieces are characterized by their more luxurious appeal and still contained rare fruits and flowers. The arrangement of the flowers is no longer strictly along a vertical axis, but more loosely assembled and evidently more natural looking. The use of Chinese

⁶⁰ Amsterdam/Braunschweig 1983, p. 70.

⁶¹ The Hague 1992, p. 22.

⁶² Taylor 1995, p. 166.

⁶³ Ember 2011, p. 251.

porcelain had also decreased and flowers are more often placed in glass or metal vases. Traces of the style popularized by Jan Brueghel the Elder are, however, still noticeable: nearly all arrangements include bright colors set against a dark background. Another characteristic of this period is the fact that boundaries between the several types of still life began to fade. De Heem was known for his endless variation and demonstrated how both fruit and flowers can be put together on luxuriously laid tables or in garlands, festoons and cartouches.⁶⁴ His stay in Antwerp from the mid-1630s up until 1665 provided him ample opportunity to incorporate these design ideas; especially through the work of Daniel Seghers (1590-1661). In Antwerp De Heem also discovered how Frans Snyders (1679-1657) and Adriaan van Utrecht (1599-1652) combined all sorts of food into a feast of abundance.⁶⁵ Within just a few years his own invention skills helped him create one of the first examples of a different type of still life: a *pronkstilleven*.

2.1.2. Pronkstillevens

More than any other type of still life, the *pronkstillevens* demonstrate the diminishing boundaries between the separate categories. *Pronkstillevens* can namely be described as a combination between fruit- and banquet pieces supplemented with fine examples from the applied arts.⁶⁶ Given their lavish appeal, foreign scholars are inclined to handle the term 'sumptuous still life' for the Dutch laid table pieces made between circa 1640 and 1670.⁶⁷

Its starting point appeared to be the monochrome breakfast piece that emerged in the 1620s. The earliest practitioners of this type, Pieter Claesz and Willem Heda, would still paint such pieces around mid-century. Yet at the same time, their oeuvres betray that they could not ignore contemporary developments within their branch of painting. A large composition with fruit and banquet elements, as well as a draped curtain by Claesz (fig. 2.7) shows the direct influence of the most significant innovator at that time: Jan Davidsz de Heem. For again, this master is credited for a major development within still-life painting; the upscaling of the existing theme with the laid table. The way his work gave expression to the central theme of abundance would inspire an entire generation of artists. Even the other two prominent *pronkstilleven*-specialists around mid-century, Abraham van Beijeren and Willem Kalf, show traces of De Heem's influence. On the other hand, both artists were talented enough to put their own mark on this specialism. The work of this trio will help define the most common variations in style and iconography around mid-century.

⁶⁴ Amsterdam/Braunschweig 1983, p. 70.

⁶⁵ Bergström 1956, p. 196.

⁶⁶ Utrecht/Braunschweig 1991, p. 18.

⁶⁷ Delft/Cambridge/Forth Worth 1988, p. 15.

To start with Jan Davidsz de Heem (1606-1683/84), who was about thirteen years older than Van Beyeren and Kalf. When he registered in the Antwerp guild in 1636 he was thirty years old and already an experienced still-life painter. Prior to his departure from the Republic he had painted vanitas pieces as well as monochrome breakfasts. Two examples from the 1630s (figs. 2.8 & 2.9) show that De Heem already experimented with luxurious objects and with the reflections of metal ware on a modest scale. Four years after his arrival in Antwerp, he would produce his first *pronkstilleven* (fig. 2.10) on a scale unknown in the Northern Netherlands. Characteristic new features include the architectural multi-layered setting, the large draped curtain and the free-standing table.⁶⁸ On the table there are multiple dishes with colorful fruits, a pastry and fine glassware. Even some familiar Leiden vanitas motifs such as books and a globe are depicted in the top right corner, as well as a musical instrument left to the table. Around mid-century De Heem's hybrid and abundant new compositions had certainly reached Dutch artists, as is proven by a piece (fig. 2.11) by the Leiden based artist Pieter de Ring (ca. 1615-1660).⁶⁹ De Ring's entire composition is heavily indebted to De Heem's first *pronkstillevens*; in this particular piece he even included an exotic green Parrot on the top right.

Abraham van Beijeren (1620/21-1690) would however show that artists could also opt for a less direct form of imitation. De Heem probably inspired him to paint richly laid table pieces, but his compositions are less crowded and the use of color more restrained. Certain features such as the red lobster (fig. 2.12) were copied from the older master, but Van Beijeren's objects tend to blend in with the overall brown tonality. A *pronkstilleven* in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 2.13) stands out in contrast to a piece by his Flemish colleague Adriaen van Utrecht (fig. 2.14) in the same collection. Living animals and musical instruments were wasted on Van Beijeren, just as impeccable detailing.⁷⁰

Willem Kalf (1619-1693) would simultaneously give his own spin to the *pronkstilleven*. He is particularly known for his still-life pieces made in Amsterdam between 1653 and 1680. Prior to 1653, Kalf lived in Hoorn and his native Rotterdam after he had spent a few years in Paris (between circa 1642 and 1645). In France he had painted barn scenes and the first few *pronkstillevens*. What, or if, Kalf painted between 1644 and 1653 remains unclear, since we do not know of any dated works from the intervening years.⁷¹ We do know that Kalf drastically altered his game once he moved to the Republic's main artistic centre. Pewter jars were replaced by silver dishes made by Dutch goldsmiths, an architectural setting became an undefined space, and popular Amsterdam trade products such as

⁶⁸ Bergström 1956, p. 198.

⁶⁹ Utrecht/Braunschweig 1991, p. 44.

⁷⁰ Delft/Cambridge/Forth Worth 1988, p. 172.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 188.

Chinese porcelain, lemons and Persian rugs become prominent features (figs. 2. 15 & 2.16).⁷² Also characteristic of his new works are the upright compositions with just a few visually attractive objects. The beauty of shimmering reflections from glass and metal could already be seen in the works of his Amsterdam colleagues Jan Jansz den Uyl and Jan Jansz Treck. The beauty of inanimate objects before a dark background had already been demonstrated by Simon Luttichuys (1610-1661), who Kalf personally knew.⁷³ The Influence of De Heem is most prominently present in an early Parisian still life that heavily relies on a composition by the older master.⁷⁴ Once in Amsterdam, the artists would soon generate his own formula that would inspire both younger and older artists. Willem Claesz Heda would for instance experiment with darker background and the use of Persian rugs from the 1650s onwards (fig. 2.17).⁷⁵ Younger followers include Jurriaen van Streeck (1632-1687) and the celebrated flower- and game specialist Willem van Aelst whose tabletop pieces will be discussed in the next chapter.

So around mid-century the traditional theme of the laid table had undergone a make-over. De Heem initiated the new focus on abundance in the early 1640s that would soon replace the sober breakfast pieces. Exotic fruits such as figs, apricots and melons that were thus far only known from flower- and fruit painting were added to the table as well as fine silverware and glass work. Willem Kalf's pieces are perhaps the most reminiscent of the monochrome breakfast pieces due to his focus on a small amount of objects, but he employed a completely different iconography and style. Like the other *pronkstillevens* his pieces are no longer a reference to a meal, but to material wealth.⁷⁶ In London, the Haarlem born Pieter van Roestraeten (1630-1700) demonstrated that costly objects themselves were certainly interesting enough to function as autonomous subject-matter. When the portraitist arrived in England between 1663 and 1665, he would not portray the English aristocracy but their possessions.⁷⁷ Dutch artists on the other hand, might also have managed to get hold of some costly items through patrons. Some would perhaps have owned a few items or stood in close contact with antiquaries. Especially the work of Willem Kalf betrays that he only had disposal of some items for a restricted period of time. Given the fact that he used a limited amount of Persian rug patterns, he might have owned a few carpets himself. It was moreover common to place these carpets on top of tables in the way Kalf did, only in court circles was it common to place them on the floor.⁷⁸

⁷² Gaba-Van Dongen 2006, p. 28-33.

⁷³ Meijer2006, pp. 96-97.

⁷⁴ Rotterdam/Aachen 2006, pp. 74-75 (cat. nr. 14).

⁷⁵ Meijer 2006a, p. 152.

⁷⁶ Vorenkamp 1933, p. 52.

⁷⁷ Hochstrasser 2007, p. 149.

⁷⁸ Gaba-Van Dongen 2006, pp. 32-33.

2.1.3 Vanitas pieces

In the previous chapter it was set out how the character of the Dutch vanitas pieces changed under influence of a group of Leiden specialists. The adding of more objects and the secure placement of the items into an eye-catching composition gives away that pictorial quality became increasingly important within this sub-genre.⁷⁹ By mid-century this development went even further: all sorts of precious objects make their entrance. Stylistically the use of colors and light reflections brightened up the theme. A piece by Harmen van Steenwijck can demonstrate the status of the genre around 1650 (fig. 2.18); in terms of iconography we see that collector's items such as a sea shell and a Japanese sword are added to common vanitas objects. In terms of style, the atmosphere becomes lighter by colorful fabrics and the light stream that is added for contrast. Van Steenwijck cleverly used the light effect to emphasize that this painting is still meant to convey the familiar message. Yet as the century progressed it becomes clear that the focus on the skull diminishes. In some cases it even looks a bit lost among the piles of rarities. Vanitas could namely also be combined with flower-painting or even game-painting as Petrus Schotanus demonstrated around 1650 (fig. 2.19). Schotanus was a Frisian painter with family living in Leiden; by these means he may have gotten acquainted with the art of his city's group of vanitas-painters.⁸⁰

The painters themselves had by then dispersed over different cities. Pieter Potter had moved to Amsterdam in 1631 or 1632 and later on to The Hague. The brothers Steenwijck returned to their native Delft after their study in the late 1620s and early 1630s.⁸¹ David Bailly did remain in Leiden but died in 1657. Around mid-century he had produced at least two remarkable vanitas pieces, both of a large format and with figures. The first is a *Vanitas with a donor portrait* held up by a black servant (fig. 2.20). A complete range of vanitas motifs is placed on a round table and some bubbles are flying around. All in all, this piece differs quite a lot from that of Bailly's contemporaries. Perhaps it is the outcome of a particular commission.⁸² A second noteworthy piece is a vanitas in The Lakenhal (fig. 2.21). The identity of the male sitter was long debated: was it a patron or was it the artist himself? Nowadays, the work is seen as a biographical document. The sitting figure represents Bailly as a youth who holds up a contemporary self-portrait. The female portrait is that of his late wife, which is surrounded by the objects that earned him his good reputation. Certainly more traditional is a piece by Jacques de Claeuw (1623-1694), who in contrast to his slightly older contemporaries would move to Leiden in 1651. De Claeuw painted foremost still-lives including vanitas pieces (fig. 2.22). This

⁷⁹ Bergström 1956, p. 178.

⁸⁰ Sullivan 1984, p. 75.

⁸¹ Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003 p. 163.

⁸² The Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell

<<http://museum.cornell.edu/collections/view/vanitas-still-life-with-portrait.html>>.

particular piece appears so traditional because of its sober tonality and the diagonal composition with a globe. This is certainly reminiscent of the earliest pieces by the Leiden specialists, yet the added flowers and dramatic drapery are more in line with contemporary developments. Likewise, the *Allegory of the death of Admiral Tromp* (ca. 1655) by Pieter Steenwijck shows that the fashionable Persian rug had also found its way into vanitas-painting (fig. 2.23).

2.1.4 Game pieces

So after having dealt with the still-life types that to some extent were already known around 1620, we will now focus on a few new types. We shall see that most of these types were first practiced in the 1630s or 1640s, but underwent a metamorphosis around mid-century. This certainly goes for the first type under discussion: the game piece. Around 1650 the genre became increasingly popular and changed significantly in form and content; kitchen accessories were rapidly abandoned and often replaced by hunting implements.

The first game pieces showed game animals primarily in a culinary context. Kitchen supplies as well as human figures are present in the work of Elias Vonck (c. 1605-1652). Vonck is said to be the first Dutch master to specialize in this genre and was probably active in Amsterdam between 1639 till his death in 1652.⁸³ One of his earliest known paintings (fig. 2.24) serves as an example for the game piece in its early stage: the composition is kept simple and dominated by a brown monochrome palette. The game is placed on a wooden surface next to some carrots and a dead partridge hangs next to animals' entrails. A painting by Philips Angel (1616-c.1682) shows that prior to 1650 figures could still be present in the scene (fig. 2.25). The present motif of a young boy paying attention to the laid table could be seen in the work of Flemish artists Frans Snyders (1679-1657) and Jan Fyt (1611-1661).⁸⁴ The culinary context is still reminiscent of the genre's predecessor: the late-sixteenth-century market and kitchen scenes by Beuckelaer and Aertsen.

After mid-century the genre slowly transformed into a subject associated with hunting. At first, kitchen accessories were rapidly abandoned and game would more frequently be placed on a stone table set against a stone niche. An increase in monumentality is then attributed to Jan Baptist Weenix (1618/19-1659), who experimented with larger and more interesting compositions. His paintings with dead swans certainly fit into this category, which would set the tone for game pieces in succeeding decades. A *Dead Swan* (fig. 2.26) from 1650 is accompanied by a rifle, while it is placed on a stone table with drapery. The sudden shift in focus is interesting since hunting was still reserved for the nobility and not accessible for a large group of game-piece-buyers. Art historians are now

⁸³ Sullivan 1984, p. 24.

⁸⁴ Ibid. The same goes for the motif of a dog sniffing the birds on the table.

inclined to link the genre's modification to contemporary social changes. In particular to the group of wealthy burgers, who after the Peace of Munster allegedly bought a game piece as a sign of their rising social status.⁸⁵ This notion is supported by the fact that the separate elements in these images are often unrelated. The depicted (capture-) utensils do not always match the species on the table, which would likely not bother people who are not allowed to hunt. If most buyers were indeed interested in the prestige connected to hunting, it might explain why they were perfectly happy with a global demonstration of the sport.⁸⁶ On the other hand, we must not forget that game pieces were also popular among noble men. Willem van Aelst would for instance paint two pendant game pieces in 1652 for the Cardinal Giovan Carlo de' Medici during his stay in Italy. The first shows a ram's head and the other game birds with a hunting horn and game bag (fig. 2.27).⁸⁷ This piece is in fact an early example of the refined and elegant game pieces Van Aelst would continue to paint for the burgher-elite in Amsterdam.

2.1.5 *Trompe l'oeil* pieces

Besides the hunt-related game pieces there was a different variant known around mid-century: the *trompe l'oeil* game pieces. *Trompe l'oeil* literally means 'deceive the eye' and its basis principle is closely related to a widespread anecdote by Pliny the Elder. As the legend goes, the Greek painter Zeuxis was so skilled in the art of painting that birds would mistake the grapes on his canvas for real ones. His colleague Parrhasius on the other hand, would triumph over Zeuxis by tricking his colleague to pull away a painted curtain. So based on this story from ca. 77-79 AD, it appears that *trompe l'oeil* painting was centuries old. It would nevertheless be around 1650 that the same principle found proper following in Dutch art, including still-life painting.⁸⁸ A well-known game *trompe l'oeil* is *Dead Partridge hanging from a nail* (ca. 1650-52) by Jan Baptist Weenix (fig. 2.28). It can rightfully be called a *trompe l'oeil*, because it looks as if the main artistic aim was to create a convincing optical illusion. The deception is extra forceful because it depicts something that could be seen in real life; dead birds were similarly hung on kitchen walls. Likewise, the lifelike appearance suggests that artists made these paintings after life.⁸⁹ This particular type of *trompe l'oeil* emerged around 1650 and is characterized by game (mostly birds) hanging before a monochrome wall or placed in a stone niche (fig. 2.29). In a somewhat later piece, Cornelis Lelienburg depicts a hanging black rooster and two

⁸⁵ Sullivan 1984, p. 41.

⁸⁶ Sullivan 1984, p. 40.

⁸⁷ Houston/Washington 2012, pp. 110-113 (cat. nrs. 8 & 9).

⁸⁸ Auckland 1982, p. 146 (cat. nr. 25).

⁸⁹ Sullivan 1984, p. 69.

rabbits in a niche. The flawless shadow effects and falling feather help enhance the optical illusion.⁹⁰ Other practitioners were known specialists such as Melchior d'Hondecoeter, followed by William Gowe Ferguson (1632/33-1695). To a lesser degree there was also a market for *trompe l'oeil* of hunting implements, which was considered a separate genre with separate specialists.⁹¹

Another type of *trompe l'oeil*-painting is the so-called 'letter-rack piece' that would flourish shortly after mid-century. These pieces depict various domestic objects such as letters, writing implements and prints bound by strings to a flat surface. Among the better-known practitioners are Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678), Wallérand Vaillant (1623-1677) and Cornelis Gijsbrechts (?-1684), although the latter is never recorded in the Northern Netherlands. With reference to the other two, it seems that around mid-century Van Hoogstraten was in Dordrecht and Vaillant in Amsterdam. Van Hoogstraten had just returned to his native city after his training period in Amsterdam, but would soon leave for Vienna and Rome in 1651.⁹² The Lille born Vaillant had probably just moved from Middelburg to Amsterdam and actually painted the earliest dated letter-rack painting known today (fig. 2.30).⁹³ In Vienna, Van Hoogstraten painted several illusionistic pieces which earned him a medallion by patron Emperor Ferdinand III. He would later include the piece of jewelry on his letter-racks, such as one he painted in London (fig. 2.31). This piece was possibly painted as a present for important patrons. Van Hoogstraten included his address as well as his medallion to emphasize his popularity at court.⁹⁴ *Trompe l'oeil*-painting was namely highly popular in court circles in the third quarter of the seventeenth-century; Gijsbrechts painted a large portion of *trompe l'oeil* pieces in the 1660s when he was a court painter in Hamburg and Copenhagen.⁹⁵

In terms of iconography, the pin board-still lifes are often related to the artist and to the time and place the artist found himself. The chosen items could easily be painted after life since they were already flat. Game *trompe l'oeils* often depict partridges or cocks because these animals were probably at hand and known for their attractive range of coloring. Partridges in particular were seen as noble animals and food for the elite. A single painted partridge could therefore also be considered as a hunting trophy.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Auckland 1982, p. 139 (cat. nr. 24).

⁹¹ Sullivan 1984, p. 70.

⁹² Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 112.

⁹³ Battersby 1974, p. 145 & Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 200.

⁹⁴ Dordrechts Museum <<http://www.dordrechtmuseum.nl/ontdek/hogstraten-s-van/trompe-loeil-stilleven>>.

⁹⁵ Auckland 1982, pp. 145-147 (cat. nr. 25).

⁹⁶ Ibid, pp. 139-141 (cat. nr. 24).

2.1.6 Fish pieces

Just as the seventeenth-century public was not appalled by the sight of dead game animals, they were neither averse to piles of dead fish. Still it would take a while before fish appeared interesting enough to function as an independent subject-matter. Prior to circa 1635, still lifes of fish were only present in kitchen and market scenes that were indebted to the Aertsen-Beuckelaer tradition.

One of the first artists who specialized in autonomous fish pieces was Pieter de Putter (c.1600-20/1659), who was active in The Hague.⁹⁷ An early fish piece in the Hermitage (fig. 2.32), can exemplify how the genre began with simple monochrome compositions that could include a few kitchen utensils such as a jar and knife. A family relative would follow in his footsteps and became the most productive and well-known artist within the genre: Abraham van Beijeren. Van Beijeren married a niece of De Putter in 1647 and also worked in The Hague around mid-century. Art historians assume that he painted most of his fish pieces in the 1650s and 1660s, but a lack of dated works makes it difficult to establish a solid chronology.⁹⁸ A piece in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 2.33) datable between 1650 and 1670 demonstrates how relatively plain Van Beijeren kept his pieces. On top of that, his other fish pieces show little variation in style and iconography; the artist favored sea fish placed in baskets with some additional ones in front of it. A basket with a slice of salmon and haddock even returns in a work in Rotterdam (fig. 2.34). This is a clear sign that he used preparatory sketches; a practice that is understandable due to the use of highly perishable products.⁹⁹ Only on a few occasions the artist painted fish set against a sea shore, while maintaining his former composition scheme (fig. 2.35).¹⁰⁰ In the background we see a few fishermen, which indicates that even after mid-century figures were not completely left out. When the figures fulfill a more prominent role, such as in seventeenth-century fish markets, we are inclined to speak of genre painting. The theme of a vendor behind a fish stall resurfaced around mid-century and was practiced by artists ranging from fish- to church interior specialists.¹⁰¹

But to return to fish in still-life painting, it is good to note that Utrecht was a second important artistic centre. Here, Willem Ormea (?-1673) was active as an early specialist as is proven by *Fish on a table in the open air* (1638, fig. 2.36). This piece is a true prelude of his work around mid-century (fig. 2.37) that is characterized by close-ups of fish in front of a sea view. The clear difference in style between the fish and the background is the result of the collaboration with Adam Willaerts (1577-1664) or possibly his sons, who were seascape specialists in Utrecht. Another fish specialist

⁹⁷ Van Sighem 2006, p. 182.

⁹⁸ Bergström 1956, p. 229.

⁹⁹ Auckland 1982, p. 121 (cat. nr. 18).

¹⁰⁰ Ember 2011, pp. 29-32.

¹⁰¹ Van Sighem 2006, p. 181.

was Jan de Bont, who is recorded in Utrecht between 1641 till his death in 1653.¹⁰² De Bont was more versatile than Ormea and painted fish stalls, fishes on the shore and fish on tables (fig. 2.38). The latter piece depicts a basket with plaices, four haddocks and six herrings. The most noteworthy aspect of this painting is the artist's effort to show fishes in different positions and to make them stand out by their shimmering scales.¹⁰³

There were of course fish piece specialists active in different cities, but not in the same quantity and for the same time-span as in The Hague and Utrecht. Moreover, this section is meant to specify the general form of fish still lifes around mid-century, which the given examples illustrate. We can determine that the variety in fish pieces was not spectacular around 1650. Compared to the earliest pieces, artists did try to make the fish appear less stiff, but they often fell back to similar (two-layered) compositions. Due to the given subject-matter monochrome grey's and brown's remain dominant colors. Context wise, it seems that when the fish is placed indoors it is presented as food and placed outdoors it is emphasized as catch of the fishing industry.¹⁰⁴ In terms of iconography, it is said that specialists in Utrecht were inclined to use freshwater fish and the ones in The Hague saltwater fish.¹⁰⁵ This difference would be the result of the city's geographical location, but is certainly not without exceptions. De Putter had even a preference for freshwater fish such as carps and pikes (fig. 2.32) and De Bont used saltwater fish such as haddock and herring (fig. 2.38).¹⁰⁶

All in all, most Dutch fish pieces were produced in the third quarter of the century. Two notable figures that joined the market after 1650 were Isaac van Duynen (1628-1679/80) in The Hague and Jacob Gillig (c.1636-1701) in Utrecht. Their contribution as well as the final fate of the fish piece will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.1 SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1.1 Historical introduction: politics and economics

By 1650, the Eighty Years' War was over and the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands officially independent. The powerful group of burger-elite, generally Amsterdam merchants and regents, got the change to take control of all government functions. After the early death of stadholder Willem II (1626-1650), the patrician oligarchy could even proclaim The First Stadtholderless Era (1650-1672).¹⁰⁷ It even appears that before the House of Orange was officially stripped from its power, the burger-

¹⁰² Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 42.

¹⁰³ Utrecht 2004, p. 275 (cat. nr. 29).

¹⁰⁴ Meijer 2004, pp. 72-73.

¹⁰⁵ Van Sighem 2006, p. 177.

¹⁰⁶ Meijer 2004, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Slive 1995, p. 3.

elite had enough confidence to make notice of the new political situation. Just eight months after the Peace of Münster (1648) was signed an important ‘physical demonstration’ of their increasing power was under construction: the new Amsterdam town hall. Both the building and its iconography demonstrate the ambition to create something more refined, distinct and precious than was previously known in the Republic.¹⁰⁸ Its architectural style is now referred to as ‘Hollands classicisme’ (literally Dutch classicism), which matched the dominant style at foreign courts. The building also reflects that The Republic experienced a period of great economic growth. The wealth that derived from peace is literally the subject of building’s main fronton. On the backside fronton, the four (known) continents pay tribute to the city maiden, which demonstrates Amsterdam’s position as the world’s trading capital.¹⁰⁹

Then again, it will prove useful to address Hochstrasser’s analysis of trading products in connection to the laid table pieces around mid-century. Hochstrasser is namely convinced that these pieces mirror the general course of the Dutch economy. She points out that still lifes became more sumptuous right round at the time the Dutch economy reached its peak around 1640. Accordingly, imported commodities began to replace domestic products as demonstrated by the emerging *pronkstillevens*. Whereas around 1620 locally brewed beer, North Sea herring and self-made cheeses dominated tabletop pieces, Mediterranean wines, foreign-shore lobster and exotic fruits have virtually replaced the national items around 1650.¹¹⁰ Another interesting remark concerns the use of porcelain. Hochstrasser sets out that the porcelain trade was a hot topic around mid-century, since civil wars in China were disturbing the import of new loads to the Republic.¹¹¹ At the same time, the quality of porcelain had changed after the death of Emperor Wan-Li (1573-1619). The so-called ‘egg-shell china’ (*kraakporselein*) produced during the Wan-Li period had become scarce and was considered a true collector’s item around 1650. All the more interesting it becomes that Willem Kalf on some occasions chose to depict this type of porcelain instead of contemporary variants. Prior to Wan-Li’s death, *kraakporselein* was better available. It was even imported in such quantities that middle-class townsmen could afford a specimen.¹¹² Contemporary order memos inform us that butter- and fruit dishes were imported in the highest quantities during the first decades. This actually corresponds with the laid table pieces made in Haarlem, where the only exotic goods prove to be these two popular porcelain items (figs. 1.12 & 1.13).¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Blankert 2004, p. 49.

¹⁰⁹ Hochstrasser 2007, pp. 18-19.

¹¹⁰ Hochstrasser 2007, p. 3 & Delft/Cambridge/Forth Worth 1988), p. 149.

¹¹¹ Hochstrasser 2007, p. 140.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 122, p. 141.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 134.

2.2.2. The contemporary conception of art

In order to determine how tastes have evolved over a period of thirty years there are two main topics that need to be readdressed: the results of inventory studies and the words expressed by a next generation of art theorists. Table 1 can once again help establish what was fashionable and what was not. In general terms it comes down to an ongoing dropping percentage of history painting and a rising percentage of non-history genres without symbolic significance; a phenomenon that Montias once called the 'secularization of Dutch art'.¹¹⁴ Table 2 confirms that a range of new still-life subjects entered private collections since 1620. These new types still lifes are 'Itemized foodstuffs', 'Everyday objects' (possibly *trompe l'oeil* pieces), Fish, Vanitas and Dead animals. Flower- and fruit pieces have become more popular since 1620, but the theme of the laid table made a sharp drop. Also note that between 1620 and 1629 Breakfast pieces made up circa 64% of all laid table pieces, compared to 22% between 1650 and 1659. This proves that the sober variant with domestic commodities made way for the sumptuous displays with exotic commodities.

It is also striking that many characteristics of the main types around 1650 tie in with what is written on art for that particular period. Two relevant texts are *The Praise of Painting* (1642) by Philips Angel (1616-after 1682) and the *Introduction to the Academy of Painting; or the Visible World* (1678) by Samuel van Hoogstraten. Both authors painted still lifes themselves, but this did not cause that they extensively dealt with the subject in their writings. Angel's text was based on his oration for the painting community in Leiden and does for instance not deal with separate genres. His main concern is to promote the profession of painter and to stress which virtues a good painter should have. Especially the latter section on aimed artistic qualities provides us with an insight into the contemporary conception of art. Virtues that are certainly applicable to still-life painting are 'combining things in a fluent and natural way', 'a pleasingly decorative richness' and 'a proper distinction between [...] stuffs'.¹¹⁵ An expression of these three notions becomes clear once we compare still lifes from 1620 to those from 1650. An increase in overlapping objects and the deviation from symmetrical lines certainly betrays an ambition to accomplish a greater degree of naturalness. The mid-century *pronkstillevens* and vanitas pieces with their increasing variety in objects certainly meet the terms of decorative richness. Finally, the diminishing boundaries between the types allowed artists to show off the maximum potential of their rendering skills. Similar to the practice of the Leiden *fijnschilders*, still-life artists could win the admiration of their clients with their ability to imitate various materials. At the same time, it goes without saying that a combination of

¹¹⁴ Montias 1982, p. 270.

¹¹⁵ Angel 1642, p. 38, p. 39, p. 55. The English quotations are taken from Angel/Hoyle/Miedema 1996.

objects from the sea, land and sky can make up odd looking arrangements.¹¹⁶ Just think of a table full of exotic fruits combined with lobsters, flowers and the occasional parrot. Samuel van Hoogstraten was possibly the first author who would address these unlikely arrangements in his *Introduction*.

First it must be said that Van Hoogstraten's *Introduction to the Academy of Painting* is of a completely different caliber than the oration by Angel. Not only was it written by a widely-read and travelled author, it was meant as a passionate plea to attribute the art of painting a place of honor among the liberal arts.¹¹⁷ The *Introduction* can be considered as Van Hoogstraten's 'magnum opus' which he wrote around the age fifty. Van Hoogstraten likely started collecting material at an earlier age and could always draw from his own memory. Given the fact that the author was born in 1627, he was well able to speak of matters that occurred around mid-century. He was certainly qualified to speak of still-life painting since Van Hoogstraten had personally experienced how the genre could provide a fine income and good status. Nevertheless, his goal to elevate the art of painting prevented the writer-artist from judging still lifes too positively. Also note that his art theory is imbued with classicist ideals that propagate a careful selection from nature in line with the rules of decorum.

What Van Hoogstraten has to say about still lifes is scattered over the book. An important segment is integrated in the third chapter of the third book devoted to the muse Clio, the writer of history. Here the author sets out how painting can be distributed over three steps. On the lowest step he includes 'al wat onder den naem van stil leven begreepen is' (all that goes by the name of still life). The second step is reserved for 'kabinetstukken van allerley aert' (cabinet pieces of all sorts) referring to landscapes, genre and architectural painting. With as expected the 'gedenkwaerdichste Historien' (memorable history scenes), including portraiture, on the third and highest step. In the following chapter it becomes clear that this hierarchical order is based on the idea that nature is similarly divided into three spheres. At the bottom there is the insensible or dead nature, in the middle the sensible or living nature and at the top mankind who is able to think and speak.¹¹⁸ Yet Van Hoogstraten's standpoint remains a bit ambiguous. He explicitly states that paintings from the lowest class can surpass paintings in the other two classes, but shortly hereafter emphasizes that still lifes can never be ranked higher than they are now; even though De Heem, Segers, Zeuxis and Parrhasius executed such deceivingly fine works.¹¹⁹ This last remark is perhaps more important than it first appears, for Van Hoogstraten hardly mentions contemporary artists. The fact that he does mention De Heem, the chief innovator around mid-century, is therefore significant. It shows that he did value

¹¹⁶ Hecht 1992, p. 89.

¹¹⁷ Weststeijn 2009, p. 170.

¹¹⁸ Van Hoogstraten 1678, pp. 85-86.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 87.

his work and above all his ability to create natural looking pieces. On the other hand, it did prove inevitable that still-life painters are referred to as 'gemeene Soldaeten in het veltleger van de konst' (common soldiers in the army of art) in a section on history painting.¹²⁰

Two other significant statements on still life are included in the third chapter of book five. This chapter deals with the arrangement of objects; what artists should or should not combine. With two concrete examples Van Hoogstraten ventilates criticism with regard to the lack of variety and to the lack of plausibility. The first deals with 'a certain painter' who had painted a dish full of peaches. Yet how beautifully it was made he cannot help but state that:

"I became sick of the simple-minded choice of subjects and the overabundance of so much food of the same sort: for with the same effort he could have piled up almost every kind of fruit on this place, and pleased the eye with a choice of delicacies."¹²¹

The other example speaks of the odd combinations within still-life painting:

"Recently a certain painter in Amsterdam painted a merry wine glass on a table in a strangely appealing manner. What else? He had also painted a lovely velvet cloth underneath. This may still go by, but on the clean cloth he painted a slimy haddock. An act from which one must conclude that this painter had to be a careless housekeeper: for who had such a rubbish maid in his kitchen that would place the messy fish on velour or velvet? And this was even appreciated by ignorant art lovers."¹²²

The message is quite clear. It is a fiction to place slimy fish on a precious cloth, so therefore do not depict it. At the same time Van Hoogstraten reveals his disappointment in the unrefined taste of contemporary collectors. A notion that certainly goes for the many unlikely arrangements that found ready buyers on the art market.

2.2.3 The art market

Compared to 1620, the art market had involved in a number of ways. To start, the number of active artists had grown even further. Parallel to the general course of the economy, a high point was reached around 1640 that would last for about twenty years.¹²³ In line with Montias' concept of a critical mass, the high number of artists generated artistic competition which eventually led to an ongoing specialization within Dutch painting. New topics were certainly not chosen at random and existing conventions could be accordingly adjusted. In order to establish their own market, artists had to keep their audiences in mind. In this case, a new generation of townsmen that began to form

¹²⁰ Weststeijn 2008, p. 69; Van Hoogstraten used military ranks to label painters.

¹²¹ Van Hoogstraten 1678, p. 181. English quotation taken from Taylor 1995, pp. 85-86.

¹²² Van Hoogstraten 1678, p. 183.

¹²³ Bok 1994, p. 101.

a new aristocracy on the basis of wealth.¹²⁴ The fact that they took up residence in large canal houses and bought country estates supports the thought that Dutch society became increasingly hierarchical and aristocratic after the Peace of Münster.¹²⁵ Artists seemingly went along in this trend. To give a few examples: portraitists gave their sitters the desired aristocratic allure by adopting the manner of Anthony van Dyck. Genre painters such as Gerard ter Borch and Pieter de Hooch banned low-life figures in favor of elegant companies and still lifes became increasingly lavish in content; a sign that buyers became more materialistic and were not afraid to show it.

A clear indication that the elite became more interested in the art forms at court, is the fact that some artists began to sign their work with their Italianated names. Two artists who are known for this practice are Jan Baptist Weenix and Willem van Aelst. Weenix started signing his work with 'Gio. Batta: Weenix' (Giovanni Battista Weenix) from 1647 onwards, after his return from Rome. Van Aelst began signing his work with 'Guillelmo van Aelst' or 'Guill.^{mo} van Aelst' in 1659, after he had been back in Amsterdam for a few years.¹²⁶ Undoubtedly, both artists wanted to emphasize their foreign experiences for self-promotion. This implies that their former activities by order of cardinals and members of the Medici court, was appealing to Dutch collectors. On the other hand, it seems that some artists did saw it fit to adjust their output to the Dutch market. Willem Kalf opted for Dutch items when he returned from France and even Willem van Aelst realized that incorporating elements from De Heem's pictorial style was a must. A draped curtain is for instance included in fruit pieces he made in Amsterdam.¹²⁷ One thing that is for sure is that the Dutch art market around 1650 was washed over by more refined and more diverse forms of art than was previously known in the Republic. In order to find out how the new art forms relate to the contemporary interiors, we shall take another look at the way people lived.

2.2.4 Interior fashions

The growing prosperity enabled townsmen to buy larger houses and to decorate their homes according to the latest trends. The basic shape of the ground floor changed and the new-built houses were characterized by an ongoing room specialization. The *voorhuis* developed into a separate entrance hall and was no longer the main room for paintings. Instead, paintings were more often hung in separate side rooms connected to the *voorhuis*. These side rooms would generally function as reception rooms since it became more common to invite people over.¹²⁸ Home owners could use

¹²⁴ Delft/Cambridge/Forth Worth 1988, p. 30.

¹²⁵ Adams 2007, p. 174.

¹²⁶ Auckland 1982, p. 141 (cat. nr. 24).

¹²⁷ Wheelock jr. 2012, pp. 42-43.

¹²⁸ Loughman & Montias 2000 p. 27.

this new representative setting to show off their wealth. The kitchen would no longer be used as bedroom or living space, which meant that the room no longer required paintings for decoration. According to inventories, the highest valued paintings were now hung in rooms indicated as 'great room' or 'zaal' as well as the side rooms.¹²⁹ Since these were commonly public rooms, a greater differentiation between the public and private domain begins to stand out. This is further emphasized by a courtyard that is more frequently placed between the public *voorhuis* and the private *achterhuis*.¹³⁰ Still, the furnishing of the rooms around 1650 appeared to be quite simple. Most houses still had wooden floors and whitewashed walls with in some cases some wooden paneling at the bottom. Only after 1670 would features such as gold leather and textile wallpaper replace the initial plain outlook of the Dutch interior.¹³¹

2.3 Conclusion

We have seen that around 1650, the Republic was more prosperous than thirty years earlier. As such, the burgher-elite was able to invest in more luxury products and to buy larger houses. Inventories studies show that people hung more diverse forms of art in their homes. In still-life painting alone four new types had appeared on the market since 1620: *pronkstillevens*, fish-, game- and *trompe l'oeil*-pieces. This is a clear sign that the art market had expanded even further. In order to establish their own market, artists were likely driven to compete with each other and as a result came up with new specializations. Another option appeared to be an intelligent adjustment of existing models, just as Balthasar van der Ast, Pieter Claesz and Willem Heda did at the beginning of their careers. By 1650, it appears that this honor must be awarded to a succeeding generation of young artists who again seemed inclined to handle things differently. Within fruit- and flower painting, Willem van Aelst and Jan Davidsz de Heem emerged as true innovators around mid-century. Their loosely assembled bouquets were evidently more natural looking than those made by the Bosschaert dynasty. Likewise, De Heem, Kalf and Van Beijeren gave expression to an entire new form of the monochrome breakfast piece. Especially the first two specialists had many followers, which indicates that their new approach went down particularly well with clients. It is certainly striking that the innovative Pieter Claesz and Willem Heda, who once inspired their older colleague Nicolaes Gillisz, now themselves got visibly inspired by the younger generation. Their efforts can be seen as an attempt 'to keep up' with changes in taste, for apparently the new generation of buyers was not afraid to see their high living standard objectified on their walls. A reconstruction of the contemporary interior reflects that the

¹²⁹ Loughman & Montias 2000, p. 69.

¹³⁰ Fock 2006, p. 64 & Loughman & Montias 2000, p. 69.

¹³¹ Fock 2006, pp. 65-69.

same generation wished for more representative rooms, even special room where one could entertain guests. If the home owner wanted to use this opportunity to impress visitors, it makes sense that you do not opt for paintings of cheese and herring, but those that depict rare porcelain and exotic fruits. At the same time an ongoing room specialization would make it easier to generate public and private rooms. The kitchen would no longer be used as a main living area, which might explain why artists of game pieces changed the initially culinary context into a more appropriate hunting context. The elite namely showed an increasing interest in what happened in court circles, including the noble sport of hunting. Another way artists seemingly responded to the demand for representative forms of art is an increase in 'a pleasingly decorative richness' as Angel would call it. We certainly see that the boundaries between the separate types were diminishing, and that there was an increasing interest in pictorial qualities. By combing all sorts of items, artists could even better demonstrate their ability to render nearly every sort of material; a development that can also be seen as ongoing search for naturalness. However many artists went so far in their search for visually attractive contrasts that Van Hoogstraten felt the need to address the odd and highly fictional combinations when he wrote his *Inleyding*. In the following chapter we shall see that by the end of the century his criticism seemingly found a proper response.

Chapter 3: Still-life painting around 1680

Interesting about the final chapter is the fact that it serves as a prelude of the genre's course the eighteenth century. All handbooks agree that after 1700 just two types maintained to flourish: the flower- and fruit pieces and the game pieces. By 1680, these types were already practiced in a highly decorative manner as we shall see in the following sections. The five remaining still-life types became increasingly less popular during the third quarter of the century; a development that is linked to multiple reasons. One must certainly keep in mind that most of the great still-life masters around mid-century were producing their last works between circa 1675 and 1680. In the following section, their final works along with that of their followers will be discussed. This will help find similarities between the types that were slowly losing ground and hopefully help answer why so? Hereafter, the two flourishing types will be discussed to see the contrast.

3.1 THE STATUS QUO

Since so many still-life types were not continued in the eighteenth century, it will be useful to determine the status quo around 1680. It will become clear that a lack of focus had set in, in the sense that all sorts of items were randomly combined. Around mid-century, the *pronkstillebens* and vanitas pieces already demonstrated the diminishing boundaries between the separate categories. A practice that likely opened up the possibility to experiment even further. A shining example may be *Game, fish and a nest on a forest floor* (fig. 3.1) by Abraham Mignon (1640-1679). The title already sums up the most prominent elements that have miraculously met in a forest. It is a mix of existing categories and conventions. The forest floor setting had for instance already been popularized by Otto Marseus van Schrieck (1619/20-1678), while the vivid colors and the use of plants as a unifying factor resemble the work of his former teacher Jan Davidsz de Heem.¹³²

De Heem himself was producing his last works at the end of the third quarter of the century. An exceptionally late piece is *A festoon of fruit and flowers in a marble niche* signed and dated 1675 (fig. 3.2).¹³³ This highly decorative piece that depicts a garland attached to two blue ribbons comes remarkably close to the type of flower pieces Gérard de Lairesse would describe in his *Groot Schilderboek* (Amsterdam 1707). At this point in his career, De Heem no longer painted the sumptuous tables of the 1640s and 1650s. Neither did Van Beijeren, whose last work appears to be a game piece signed and dated 1675. The inscribed words 'Vanitas Vanitatum' indicate that the artist

¹³² Amsterdam/Cleveland 1999, p. 256, cat. nr. 66 & Vorenkamp 1933, p. 132.

¹³³ Utrecht/Braunschweig 1991, p. 172. This piece was auctioned at Sotheby's London 10-7-1974, nr. 65.

intended a moralizing message.¹³⁴ The third prominent master of *pronkstillevens*, Willem Kalf, did hold on to this former ways right until the end. Around the age of sixty, Kalf would produce his two latest known pieces: one in Copenhagen from 1678 (fig. 3.3), the other in Weimar from 1680 (fig. 3.4).¹³⁵ Both pieces depict very rare and precious objects that could possibly be painted after life. Kalf might have had disposal of the 'Holbein bowl' that only features in these two works.¹³⁶ The nautilus cup and silver pitcher also resemble real objects, but could be made after earlier sketches. No doubt Kalf's contacts as an art dealer helped him obtain such objects. After 1680, he assumedly stopped painting in order to focus on his activities in the art trade.¹³⁷

An influential artist that had been inspired by Kalf's mature style was Willem van Aelst (1627-1683). Among his last works are pieces with the exact same dates as the previous two examples: *Still Life with fish, bread and a nautilus cup* dated 1678 (fig. 3.5) and *Still Life with herring, cherries and glassware* dated 1680 (fig. 3.6). Again the titles can indicate how random the iconography appears after mid-century. Unlike Kalf, Van Aelst also included simple food items such as bread and herring. As such, these pieces pay almost tribute to the early breakfast pieces yet in a completely different setting. The marble table and velvet cloth are typical features of Van Aelst. The unconventional and moreover implausible combination of objects certainly recalls Van Hoogstraten's complaint about 'a certain painter in Amsterdam [who] on the clean [velvet] cloth [...] painted a slimy haddock'.¹³⁸ Just as many of the *pronkstillevens*, such awkward combinations were probably meant to emphasize the artist's skills to portray every sort of material; from shiny fish entrails to soft velvet cloths.¹³⁹

A work by a future neighbor of Van Aelst, Maria van Oosterwijck (1630-1693), demonstrates how decorative the vanitas pieces had become after mid-century (fig. 3.7). It is true that within vanitas-painting the depicted objects are still connected to the main theme, but the arrangements were of course highly fictional. In this example, the arrangement forms a religious allegory that underscores the brevity of life as well as the promise of resurrection. Even so, the perfectly rendered flowers, butterfly and reflecting bottle with 'Aqua vitae' etc. are obviously a demonstration of Van Oosterwijck's artistry as well.¹⁴⁰ The entirety of a table top setting is still reminiscent of the group of Leiden vanitas-painters; a group that by 1650 had already dispersed over different cities and by 1680

¹³⁴ Sullivan 1984, pp. 76-77.

¹³⁵ Rotterdam/Aachen 2006, pp. 146-149 (cat. nr. 36 & 37).

¹³⁶ Gaba-van Dongen 2006, p. 30. This dish was made out of rock-crystal in the fourteenth century and decorated with a silver frame after a design of Hans Holbein de Jonge around 1540.

¹³⁷ Meijer 2006, p. 102.

¹³⁸ Van Hoogstraten 1678, p. 183 & Hochstrasser 2012, pp. 54-55.

¹³⁹ Houston/Washington 2012, pp. 166-169 (cat. nr. 28) & Auckland 1982, pp. 74-77 (cat. nr. 6).

¹⁴⁰ Amsterdam/Cleveland 1999, pp. 253-255 (cat. nr. 65).

knew no living members.¹⁴¹ A trace of their style can still be seen in a work by Jacques de Claeuw from 1677 (fig. 3.8). It is however much more sumptuous due to the blue velvet cloth, the red curtain and pink roses. Other variations to the theme emerged in the 1660s and 1670s, such as *Vanitas still Life in a landscape* (fig. 3.9) by Mathias Withoos and *A collector's cabinet* (fig. 3.10) by Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712).¹⁴² So in addition to the table tops in an undefined space, vanitas elements could also appear in indoor study rooms or outdoor landscapes (with classical elements). Both options appear to be final attempts to create something that is more refined and in line with the upcoming classicism in Dutch art.

Similar efforts were made by specialists of fish pieces. Two examples from around 1670 illustrate how artists tried to keep up with the changing taste by experimenting with pyramid-like compositions and by adding some extra color (figs. 3.11 & 3.12). The first is a piece by Isaac van Duynen (1628-1679/81), who presents his main subjects as jewels of the ocean. The fish is placed on a stone table with a hint of an Ionic column and a bright blue cloth that contrasts with the red of the salmon.¹⁴³ The second example is a piece by Jacob Gillig (c.1636-1701, who also exploited the attractiveness of shimmering surfaces and a high finish. Nonetheless, such efforts could not prevent that by 1680 the autonomous fish piece had run its course. We must take into account that the restless Abraham van Bijeren had already left The Hague in 1669 and his follower Van Duynen was near or at a dead end. With the exception of one fish piece from 1707, there are no known specimens made in The Hague from the 1680s onwards.¹⁴⁴ The Utrecht painter Jacob Gillig appeared to be the most persistent specialist. Gillig began to paint in the early 1660s and was likely acquainted with Willem Ormea. In his early work he painted sea fish just like Ormea, but from 1665 onwards he began to favor freshwater fish; a more rational option given his location. Houbraken further informs us that Gillig struggled to sell work after the so-called 'Disaster Year' of 1672 and for that reason turned to portrait painting.¹⁴⁵ Gillig would however paint fish pieces till the early 1690s, but more generally speaking the biographer does correctly comment that we are dealing with a turning point within Dutch still-life painting: a point where fish pieces ran out of fashion. Also note that fish pieces do not particularly lend themselves for endless variations which at some point might take away its artistic alluring. Neither was it helpful that there was no particular market for fish pieces in Amsterdam, except from the herring banquet in the manner of Van Aelst (figs. 3.5 & 3.6).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ David Bailly died in 1657, Pieter and Harmen van Steenwijck both around 1656 and Pieter Potter in 1652.

¹⁴² Bergström 1956, pp. 184-188.

¹⁴³ Utrecht 2004, p. 263 (cat.nr. 24).

¹⁴⁴ Meijer 2004, p. 44, p. 52.

¹⁴⁵ Houbraken 1718-1721, vol. 3, p. 61.

¹⁴⁶ Meijer 2004, p. 56.

3.2 THE MAIN TYPES OF STILL LIFE

3.2.1. The fruit- and flower pieces

Jan Davidsz de Heem and Willem van Aelst were unquestionably the most innovative fruit- and flower painters around mid-century. Thirty years later their influence is still seen in the work of their pupils and followers. The most prominent fruit- and flower-painters around 1680 can therefore be divided into (roughly) two groups: Cornelis de Heem (1631-1695), Maria van Oosterwijck (1630-1693), Abraham Mignon (16400-1679) and Jacob van Walscapelle (1644-1727) worked in the manner of De Heem, Elias van den Broeck (1649/50-1708), Simon Verelst (1644-1717) and Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750) in the manner of Van Aelst.¹⁴⁷ Some examples will help illustrate that many pieces around 1680 are deeply rooted in the seventeenth-century tradition, while they are also an important prelude for the eighteenth century. On most occasions the objects are still placed against a dark background or in stone niches, similar to the earliest pieces by the Bosschaert dynasty and Roelandt Savery. Their arrangement has however evolved from stiff to decorative disorderly.

The first example is one of the last fruit pieces of Willem van Aelst (fig. 3.13). A remarkable feature is the prominent decay of leaves in the top left corner (fig. 3.13a),¹⁴⁸ which goes against the desired idealization found in contemporary texts on classicism. Very traditional elements are the dark background and the fruit basket, while neither the marble tabletop or the velvet cloth are ground-breaking elements by 1680. The next example by Jacob van Walscapelle shows the contemporary alternative: fruit is loosely dispersed over the surface and the background is a stone niche (fig. 3.14). The piled-up display including a wheat stem is certainly reminiscent of De Heem. It would be interesting to see what Van Walscapelle created around 1700, but it appears that he gave up painting in favor of a social career before the century was over.¹⁴⁹ One of his flower pieces is namely a forerunner of the eighteenth-century piece for multiple reasons (fig. 3.15): the background has lightened up, the stone pedestal seems to be weather-beaten (thus possibly placed outdoors) and the bouquet is placed in a stone vase that depicts a mythological scene.¹⁵⁰ It is certainly a huge step away from an even later bouquet by Maria Oosterwijck signed and dated 1685 (fig. 3.16). Her piece lacks vibrant blues and yellows and is set against a dark background and placed in a glass vase. It would not seem out of place around 1650, while it was among her last known works. We only know of dated works between 1667 and 1689.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Amsterdam/Den Bosch 1982, p. 44.

¹⁴⁸ Houston/Washington 2012, pp. 163-165 (cat. nr. 27).

¹⁴⁹ Cologne/Dordrecht/Kassel 2006, pp. 292-293 (cat. nr. 88).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 294-295 (cat. nr. 89).

¹⁵¹ Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 154.

Another pupil of De Heem was Elias van den Broeck, who after a period in Antwerp (ca. 1669-1685) returned to Amsterdam in 1685. Many influences can be seen in his work including the asymmetrical lines of Van Aelst (fig. 3.17) and the same fascination for small animals as Marseus van Schrieck. His work may not be among the most innovative creations around 1680, but his working method was certainly noteworthy. Arnold Houbraken informs us that Van den Broeck kept a '*bloemhof*' (flower garden) at his house in Amsterdam.¹⁵² This would allow him to cultivate his own flowers and to paint them from life; a practice that at the beginning of the eighteenth century is literally advised by Gérard de Lairesse.¹⁵³ On top of that, Jacob Campo Weyerman writes that Van den Broeck went even further in his search for naturalness; in Antwerp he was allegedly accused of sticking real butterfly wings onto the canvas.¹⁵⁴ This latter practice was probably a bit too extreme for most painters, but the interest in painting details from life was certainly accepted. Likewise, Otto Marseus van Schrieck is recorded to have kept living snakes and lizards in a shed at the back of his house. This allowed him to instantly have models ready for his many forest floor scenes (fig. 3.18) that were popular throughout the 1660s, -70s and -80s.¹⁵⁵

Even Rachel Ruysch, the second best flower painter of the eighteenth century, painted forest floors early in her career (fig. 3.19). She was only nineteen years old when she painted this opium poppy in the manner of Marseus van Schrieck. At the time she was probably still a student of Willem van Aelst, where she was sent somewhere before 1680. The fact that Ruysch came from a distinguished family no doubt helped her enter the studio of one of the most successful Dutch flower painters in the second half of the century. Her mother was the daughter of architect Pieter Post (1608-1669) and her father was a renowned professor in botany and anatomy in Amsterdam.¹⁵⁶ Her exact working method is not recorded, but contemporary laudatory poems and her biographer Johan van Gool all praise her for her natural rendering of flowers. Her father's collection of botanical studies and cultivated flowers gave her ample opportunity to take on '*de Natuur tot haere leermeesteresse en voorbeeld*' (Mother Nature as her instructor and model).¹⁵⁷

Ruysch's success was based on her flower bouquets that would earn her an international reputation. One of her earliest flower pieces is a festoon in the National Gallery of Prague signed and dated 1682 (fig. 3.20). The dark background and compact composition would prove characteristic of her oeuvre. Now and then she would experiment with different settings. In 1689 she painted a

¹⁵² Houbraken 1718-1721, vol. 3, p. 379.

¹⁵³ De Lairesse 1707, vol. 2, p. 357.

¹⁵⁴ Weyerman 1729-1769, vol. 3, p. 211 & Taylor 1995, p. 181.

¹⁵⁵ Houbraken 1718-1721, vol. 3, p. 358 & Taylor 1995, p. 173.

¹⁵⁶ Slive 1995, p. 319.

¹⁵⁷ Van Gool 1750-1751, vol. 1, p. 211.

bouquet surrounded by classical architecture (fig. 3.21). It also appears that she would opt for lighter backgrounds after her younger colleague Jan van Huysum (1682-1749) had drastically changed his output around 1720. Another feature she copied from Van Huysum is the inclusion of a bird's nest as seen in a piece she painted at the age of seventy-five (3.22). It is certainly noteworthy that a married woman who gave birth to ten children was so well able to keep up with changes in taste. Her husband Juriaen Pool (1666-1745) had been a credible portraitist, but his career pales into insignificance in comparison to his wife. Van Gool sets out how her works were to be found in prominent collections all over Europe and Ruysch's recognition was crowned by her appointment to court painter of Elector Palatine Johann Wilhelm in 1708.¹⁵⁸

A last painter of fruit and flowers around 1680 we need to address is Justus van Huysum (1659-1716). Justus had entered the studio of Nicolaes Berchem (1620-1683), the son of Pieter Claesz, in 1675. Here he learned to paint Italianate landscapes, which he could use for his later profession. After his studies he was active as a painter of interior decorations in Amsterdam. A large part of his oeuvre therefore consisted of wall- and ceiling pieces that got destroyed over time. With reference to his flower- and fruit still lifes, it appears that the Belgian born Jean Baptiste Monnoyer (1636-1699) was his main source of inspiration. Monnoyer had moved to Paris at a young age and stood in contact with Charles le Brun (1619-1690) and the French Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture. Throughout his life Monnoyer was active as a painter of interior decorations in court circles in both France and England. His bouquets are often placed on pedestals in stone or terracotta vases with classical columns and balustrades featuring in the background. Justus van Huysum probably got acquitted with his work through engravings.¹⁵⁹ A piece in the St. Petersburg Hermitage may demonstrate that his work is a prelude of that of his son (fig. 3.23). We see a stone vase with in relief some playing putti that is placed in an outdoor setting. Behind the vase there is a statue holding a bunch of grapes; possibly as a sign of fertility.

So by 1680, most artists were still embedded in the seventeenth-century tradition, while at the same time artists were experimenting with new ideas. Most experiments, especially in connection to their working method, reflect an ongoing search for naturalness. Compositions with marble, stone vases with reliefs and classical architecture reflect the search for a new (classical) form. It was however Justus' son, Jan van Huysum, who managed to strike all the right chords in the following century. His fruit- and flower pieces turned him into one of the best paid European artists of his time and were immensely popular in the Republic and far abroad.

¹⁵⁸ Slive 1995, p. 319.

¹⁵⁹ Delft/Houston 2006, p. 33, pp. 48-49.

3.2.2. The game pieces

In the previous chapter I briefly set out that father and son Weenix (successively) put their mark on this particular branch of painting. Whereas works by Jan Baptist can be dated between 1642 and 1658, dated works by his son rapidly follow up between 1660 and 1718.¹⁶⁰ Both men were initially active in multiple specialisms, but son Jan turned almost exclusively to still-life painting in the early 1680s; particularly to painting dead game. Together with his nephew Melchior d'Hondecoeter (1636-1695), who painted mostly living birds, Jan got trained by his father. Clear evidence of his familiarity with his father's work (or possibly drawing) is shown by *Still Life with swan and game before a Country Estate* (fig. 3.24), which includes a very similar swan to one painted by his father (fig. 3.25) or even one by Frans Snyders (fig. 3.26). The backgrounds are however completely different. These three paintings may in fact summarize the development of the genre from 1620 to 1680; game painting evolved from culinary/dining settings to undefined (hunting) settings to wide outdoor settings filled with classical elements.

It is also good to point out that from the 1680s onwards the variety in animals diminishes. Artists tend to use only the most 'prized specimens' such as peacocks, deer and swans as their main topic.¹⁶¹ In many cases these imposing animals are placed directly upon the ground while their bodies take on swirling positions. In a game piece by Hondecoeter (fig. 3.27) the deer is suspended by a rope to achieve this effect most naturally. Hunting gear is also present which makes these works still relatable to the sport. The mere decorative aspect, however, would become even stronger in the succeeding decades. How surprisingly decorative piles of death animals could be had already been proven by Willem van Aelst. His game pieces can roughly be dated between 1650 and 1680, but differed from the average Dutch game piece (fig. 3.28). Upon his return to the Republic in 1656 he kept painting game pieces in a highly sophisticated manner, using costly materials such as ultramarine while practicing a high finish technique. Van Aelst favored pyramid-like compositions, marble tables and blue velvet materials. In the 1660s he also included a stone relief with a mythological scene; the famous encounter between the Greek goddess Diana and the young hunter Actaeon. Van Aelst omitted well-known motifs such as sniffing dogs and playful youths, as well as large swans and peacocks.¹⁶² By doing so he created small and intimate pieces known for their unprecedented sophistication.

¹⁶⁰ Van der Willigen & Meijer 2003, p. 215.

¹⁶¹ Sullivan 1984, p. 62.

¹⁶² Hochstrasser 2012, p. 55.

3.3 SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.3.1. Historical introduction: politics and economics

By the year of 1680, the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands had experienced a number of important events. Most noteworthy was the double war threat in 1672. Both England and France initiated wars that are respectively known as the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674) and the Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678). It speaks volumes that the year of outbreak is now referred to as 'disaster year' or 'year of calamities'.¹⁶³ Right at this time of crisis, the House of Orange was summoned to take control of the situation. As rightful successor to the last stadholder, William III (1650-1702) became head of state that same year. He immediately had to deal with multiple war fronts due to a secret alliance between England, France and the German bishoprics of Cologne and Münster. Both bishoprics and England were defeated in 1674; the latter had to surrender to the Republic's naval army under command of admiral Michiel de Ruyter. The national land forces proved however less powerful, which led to a six-year-war against France. Just two years before our target date, the Peace of Nijmegen (1678) would bring off the withdrawal of Louis XIV's troops.¹⁶⁴ In the mean time, England had the chance to profit from the continuing warfare on the continent. Between 1674 and 1678 the country were able to enlarge its shipping industry and to gain more trade power.¹⁶⁵ The Republic could only start recovering after the last peace treaty was signed. It proved that especially the economy had suffered hard setbacks, which had long-lasting effects on the national art market.

It is certainly striking that the large *pronkstillevens* full of exotic commodities and fine craftwork came to a halt around 1670. Where buyers perhaps no longer interested in trade commodities or precious objects? They probably still were, but significant changes in the conception of art, the situation on the art market and changing interior fashions probably changed what people wished to hang in their homes and what artists wished to paint.

3.3.2. The contemporary conception of art

In order to determine how tastes have evolved since 1650, we must take a final look at the results of inventory studies and what is written on still-life painting in art theory. If we start with the familiar overview of subject preferences (table 1), we can see that the percentage of listed still-lives decreased after 1680. At the same time, landscape is still the best-represented genre within private collections. Portraiture proved to be the most stable genre throughout the seventeenth century, which indicates that the demand remained steady. Table 2 confirms that for the period of 1680-89 flower

¹⁶³ Slive 1995, p. 3, p. 295.

¹⁶⁴ Schöffer 1978, pp. 255-263.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 262.

painting became increasingly popular (1620-29: 12.1%, 1650-59: 16,7%, 1680-89: 23,8%), while laid table pieces became increasingly less popular (72,7%, 49,0%, 30,9%). Especially the Breakfast pieces slowly began to disappear from private collections (63,7%, 22,2%, 3,6%). Game pieces on the other hand went up from 1,1% for the period 1650-59 to 5,9% thirty years later. The percentage of fish pieces (4,8%) appears relative high, but is lower than a decade before (5,1%). In contrast, the percentage of vanitas pieces appears to be increasing (2,8%, 4,4%, 8,3%). But one must not forget that the vanitas type consists of numerous arrangements; either with or without skull. If we look closely we see that 1/4 listed vanitas pieces for the period 1650-59 is recorded as a 'skull' compared to 1/7 for the period 1680-89. Whether the inventory maker decided to name specific elements is of course a decisive factor, but the difference is certainly significant.

An important written source we can address is *Het Groot Schilderboek* (Amsterdam 1707) by Gérard de Lairese (1641-1711). It is a conscious choice to highlight an eighteenth-century publication since the author was well-able to speak of Dutch painting in the last quarter of the century. First of all, the Liège born artists arrived in Amsterdam as early as 1665 and could even have personally met prominent still-life masters like Van Aelst and Kalf. Shortly after his arrival he even got portrayed by Rembrandt, whose style he initially admired. Hereafter he would however favor the rules of classicism which is reflected by his large-scale history paintings and ceiling decorations.¹⁶⁶ When De Lairese turned blind around 1690 he would start lecturing on classical art theory and practice. Two publications that derived from his teachings were: *Grondlegginge der Teekenkunst* (Amsterdam 1701) and *Het Groot Schilderboek*. Especially the last publication is vital for Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting. De Lairese devoted two entire chapters to the genre, whereas Van Mander did not even know of the term and Van Hoogstraten's comments are scattered over several chapters.

Het Groot Schilderboek consists of thirteen chapters (called books) that deal with general issues as well as an unprecedented large section on the categories within Dutch painting. Half of the book is devoted to history painting, but over a hundred pages (circa ten percent) is devoted to still-life; quite a significant amount for a genre that was held in such low esteem among art theorists.¹⁶⁷ Hence it is necessary to take a closer look at the two chapters to unravel his main thoughts. This first chapter is book eleven that opens with some general yet interesting statements on still life painting. De Lairese literally starts by addressing still-life painters as '*zwakke geesten*' (weak minds).¹⁶⁸ A harsh statement that indicates that still lifes were still being seen as too much of a direct imitation of

¹⁶⁶ Slive 1995, p. 302.

¹⁶⁷ Schöffer 1978, pp. 257-368.

¹⁶⁸ De Lairese 1707, vol. 2, p. 259.

nature without a clear intellectual contribution. Hereafter a common definition of the genre follows, as well as a clear advice on what to prefer and how to hang these paintings:

“We shall therefore choose out of many objects those we judge the most beautiful, elegant, and pleasing. First, flowers. Second, fruit. Third, gold, silver, and other precious treasures. Fourth, musical instruments. These four types, appropriate at art and well executed, can without problem be placed in salons and cabinets, just like the best paintings, provided they receive proper light and remain together.”¹⁶⁹

The author stresses multiple times that only the most exquisite objects should be chosen, preferably from these four categories. De Lairese also doubts whether wealthy patrons, who possess so much, would derive any pleasure from old-fashioned objects such as silver and gold jugs or other costly things. Why would they show off such objects while they can obtain more beautiful and elegant things? To make his point come across, De Lairese also advises what artists should definitely not depict:

“With regard to cabbages, carrots and turnips, as well as cod, salmon, herring, smelt and animal objects, which are awful and vulgar decorations, unworthy to hang in any of the indoor rooms, we shall pass them over: whoever desires these objects may pay a visit to the market.”¹⁷⁰

A clear message indeed, while at the same time the suitability of objects in relation to their surroundings begins to attract notice. The taste of the intended audience is also a key reference point. Whereas there is no good excuse why artists should opt for fish and vegetables, dead game pieces may count as an exception since monarchs and noble men seem to like them.¹⁷¹ Other key notions for De Lairese are ‘beauty’ and ‘virtue’; both are essential if one wants to create good art.¹⁷² In the context of this chapter, beauty may derive from choosing the rarest, most exquisite specimens of well-chosen subjects. Virtue, on the other hand is described as the only thing that can make beauty appealing. The author states:

“What is an attractive flower, apple, golden goblet and well-tuned violin, if there is no good smell, pleasant flavor, playing skill and pleasant sound in it? No, I say, the virtue must filter through: the pencil cannot paint smell, taste, hearing or sound. But by means of hidden meanings one can convey this to their audience.”¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 259

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 260.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 260.

¹⁷² De Lairese 1707, vol. 1, p. 200.

¹⁷³ De Lairese 1707, vol. 2, p. 261.

So virtue is achieved through meaningfulness. What is depicted should leave an impression on its viewers; one that is exquisite as well. This inclines that artists should pick things that can even please our sensory perception. The insertion of certain symbols would then complement the scene, which is perhaps easier said than done. It surely touches upon one of the biggest problems De Lairese sees within still-life painting: the lack of content. De Lairese would further on even accuse the best still-life painters of intellectual poverty due to the absence of a meaningful aspect:

“Although we have said before that the famous Kalf excelled in still life above others, yet, like his predecessors and successors, he could give little reason for his depictions, why he showed this or that; but he only depicted what came to mind [...] without ever having thought of producing something of importance that might contain meaning, or could be applied to something.”¹⁷⁴

In order to produce something of importance De Lairese provides two solutions. Artists could either insert a bas-relief with an allegorical content (something that might contain meaning) or they could adjust the overall theme to a particular person such as a patron (something that could be applied to something). By selecting the right objects, the overall scenes will thus be beautiful and virtuous. For more inspiration, the chapter is concluded by an exhausting analysis of Roman attributes. Nowadays this section remains quite isolated since we do not know of any still lifes that were ever made in such an explicit classical form.

The next chapter deals exclusively with flower painting. Flower painting had been a separate specialism since the third quarter of the sixteenth century, which may explain this split. Moreover, De Lairese made no secret of the fact that flowers are ‘the most beautiful, elegant and pleasing’ out of all still-life objects. If only for the simple fact that spring is the most enjoyable season.¹⁷⁵ Soon hereafter, the author specifically states the three things that go into the making of a good flower piece:

“Firstly, beautiful and select flowers; secondly, a good arrangement and harmony; and thirdly, an exact soft brush. What I mean by the first, is that the flowers should excel in size and beauty [...]. What I understand by the second, is that flowers [...] always should keep their own quality and shape [...] and finally the third, that each flower be well expressed according to its nature and quality; the one thin, the other thick-skinned [...].”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ De Lairese 1707, vol. 2, p. 268. English quotation taken from Amsterdam/Cleveland 1999, p. 17.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 355.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 356. English quotation taken from Taylor 1995, p. 104.

It may come as no surprise that De Lairese aims for the most exquisite flowers and ‘none that are poor or common’. The second quality prescribes that the most beautiful flowers should have the most prominent position and that the bouquet as a whole forms ‘an agreeable mix of color’. The third quality refers to the rendering of natural details and quite possibly the smooth finish that matches the classist ideals.¹⁷⁷ What hereafter follows is an explicit advice for serious flower specialists: cultivate your own flower garden. This way, artists should be able to supply themselves with fresh flowers to paint from life. At the same time, a nearby garden would also allow artists to make drawings or aquarelles for the winter months.¹⁷⁸ Another explicit recommendation is the use of background colors. The main idea is that flowers should set off against the backdrop without disturbing the unity as a whole. Advised backgrounds are therefore: the color of blue tombstone, dark live, light gray freestone and white marble of a soft tint.¹⁷⁹ How to achieve the right color harmony is set out with numerous examples. Further on, each color is also given an emblematic meaning; white refers to purity for which one can use a lily, purple refers to nobility for which one can use a tulip etc. The flower species themselves were already linked to mythological gods in the previous chapter; a rose is associated with Venus, a white lily with Juno, a sun flower with Apollo etc.¹⁸⁰ The chapter is then concluded by a range of examples, particularly focused on the color combinations within bouquets and festoons. All in all, it becomes clear that flower specialist were similarly encouraged to take on an intellectual challenge in the hope that they would create something of more importance.

3.3.3. The art market

Whereas the art market had expanded between 1620 and 1650, it significantly scaled down between 1650 and 1680. The cause of this turnaround was probably twofold: the demand for paintings had dropped and the market had become oversaturated with second-hand paintings. The first cause can be directly connected to the ‘disaster year’ of 1672. The acute war threat evoked by France and England probably prevented art collectors from expanding their collections with either new or existing work. Since the art market did grow between the end of the Twelve Year’s Truce and the Peace of Münster, there is reason to believe that an acute war threat was far more devastating for the economy than the state of war itself.¹⁸¹ Either as precaution or as a result of economic setbacks, the demand for paintings dropped to such an extent that after 1672 the mass market for paintings

¹⁷⁷ De Lairese 1707, vol. 2, p. 356.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 357.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 361.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 362, p. 262.

¹⁸¹ Bok 1994, p. 121, p. 123.

went lost. It appears that hereafter only the top section of the art market would sustain, referring to high quality works of Art for the wealthiest section of burger-elite that was still able to collect.¹⁸² The fact that the relative importance of contemporary masters declines in collection records made up in the 1670s and 1680s helps support that fewer new collections were formed.¹⁸³

Over-production is another issue that may explain why the art market slowly began to scale down after mid-century. As the century progressed, it is logical that an increasing number of second-hand paintings began to emerge on the market. No doubt this put a huge pressure on living artists who now had to compete with old masters' paintings. The fact that the number of artists began to drop after 1660 can be an indication that the 'old' ones began to substitute the demand for new ones. In line with Montias' concept of critical mass, it appears that the decline of active artists led to the loss of certain traditions, or in this case the loss of certain types of still life. It sounds plausible that the types that did sustain matched the contemporary conception of art and the demands of the shrunken art-buying-community. The work of (still-life) artists who supplied the market with new paintings around 1680, surely shows signs that they kept their minimized public in mind. This meant that they had to meet the demands of an elite group of collectors who reflected an ongoing orientation after French example. For although the French turned out to be a powerful enemy in 1672, the aristocratic lifestyle of Louis XIV's court circle proved very appealing to the highest social ranks. From the third decade of century, several aspects of their daily life, such as clothing and interiors designs, reflect the desire for a similar representational and classicizing style.¹⁸⁴

Similar to the situation in 1648, artists seemingly met the changing demands of their audiences. A combination of a smooth painting technique and an elegant subject-matter appeared most fruitful.¹⁸⁵ Developments in other genres help validate that the elite was looking for a more idealized and significant form of art. The genre painters began experimenting with scenes from the bible or mythology, while maintaining the absolute quality of rendering materials and their smooth finish.¹⁸⁶ Other topics refer to the aristocratic lifestyle of the burgher-elite such as elegant companies in gardens of country estates or groups of hunters. Portraitists such as Nicolaes Maes (1634-1693) would around 1680 depict their clients as Roman generals situated in a park landscape with columns and fountains.¹⁸⁷ In other words, most subjects seem to show more and more affinity with classicism. With reference to still-life painting, this may help explain why flowers and highly decorative game

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 126.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 120.

¹⁸⁴ Weber 2006, pp. 53-54.

¹⁸⁵ Loughman & Montias 2000, p. 87.

¹⁸⁶ Hecht 2006, pp. 17-19.

¹⁸⁷ Cologne/Dordrecht/Kassel 2006, p. 196 (cat. nr. 45).

pieces were still practiced by the end of the century. Piles of fishes or endless variants of tables with lobsters and lemons were without a doubt not very significant subjects. Flower- and game pieces had at least in common that they had been popular among European aristocrats and noble men for decades. At the same time, the iconography of death fish and human skulls was not exactly what people might hang in their newly decorated houses.

3.3.4. Interior fashions

In the previous chapter, it was set out how in the second half of the seventeenth-century houses became larger and home-owners more sensitive to trends. New changes reflect that the burgher-elite desired an even more representative interior around 1680. The first step was the ongoing room specialization that generated a hierarchy of rooms. The relative importance of each room is then reflected by the standard of finishing. It goes without saying that the public rooms were furnished to the highest standard. In practice this meant that home-owners would opt for precious wall coverings such as textile wallpaper or gold leather. Especially from the 1670s onwards, the white plastered walls in the most prominent rooms were covered with a luxurious alternative. Most of them were quite bold in terms of texture and coloring.¹⁸⁸

Since walls were now decorative elements themselves, paintings were less often needed for decoration. If a wealthy house-owner still desired paintings, it became fashionable to include them as fixed part of the interior; especially above doorways and above chimney mantels. A practice that up until the 1680s was only common in court circles. By the end of the century, the use of free-hanging paintings was even so much restricted by the fashionable wall panelling that private collectors began to decorate separate rooms for paintings.¹⁸⁹

3.4. Conclusion

We have seen that around 1680 The Republic had recently suffered from wars against France and England, but managed to sustain. The immediate threat of war proved more devastating than expected. The economy experienced harsh setbacks that resulted in a drastic decline of the art market. The mass market for paintings went lost: the number of active artists shrunk dramatically as well as the number of collectors able to invest in contemporary art. In sharp contrast to the situation around 1650, we can conclude that the number of still-life types first stagnated and later began to decline. It appears that the types that did maintain to flourish better suited the contemporary conception of art. The types that began to disappear have at least a few things in common: they are

¹⁸⁸ Fock 2006, pp. 65-69.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 82.

characterized by a lack of focus and they do not seem to be the result of a direct observation of nature. Think of the fish pieces that due to their highly perishable content had to be made with sketches, or the vanitas pieces that depict skulls and roses lying around in gardens. Likewise the *pronkstillevens* with parrots, lobsters and rare collector's items or the tabletops with herrings on velvet cloths would soon no longer be painted. A contributing factor was certainly the loss of critical mass. Many of the prominent masters around mid-century had either died or stopped painting. Note how by 1680 no one of the original group of Leiden vanitas-painters was still alive and how Van Aelst and Kalf were producing their last tabletop pieces. Apparently many traditional types became short of artists eager to produce them, which inclines they had lost their fashionable quality. Also note how the loss of certain types corresponds with the words expressed by art theorists such as Van Hoogstraten and later on De Lairese. The new conception of art apparently included that random and fictional arrangements were no longer the way to go and one does best by selecting 'the most beautiful, elegant, and pleasing' subjects. De Lairese also stressed that artists should keep in mind the suitability of subjects in connection to prospective buyers including their surroundings. Even for the situation around 1680, we can sense that dead fish, skulls and lemon peels were not what people wished to hang above the chimney mantles in their representative interiors.

The types that did sustain have at least one thing in common: they were associated with court circles for decades. It cannot be mere coincidence that patrons who started to adopt courtly manners and interior fashions were particularly interested in flower- and game painting. Moreover, the flower specialists in particular showed an ongoing interest in painting details from life; a practice that apparently suited the contemporary conception of art very well. It was also important that a critical mass of flower- and game painters sustained after the year of calamities; for again we can see that a new generation of artists was able to handle things differently. Within fruit- and flower painting, the most creative pupils of Van Aelst and De Heem set out a new course while their work was still embedded in the seventeenth-century tradition. The way Rachel Ruysch and Jacob van Walscapelle experimented with classical motifs and lighter backgrounds can be seen as a contemporary form of artistic emulation. Ruysch's dark backgrounds can be traced back to the Bosschaert or Brueghel, while her working method and natural looking arrangements show the genre's progress in terms of naturalness. Likewise, Jan Weenix's swan before a country estate is another example of accordingly adjusting existing models that go back a century. Apparently both game- and flower painting offered enough room for new maneuvering, while we have seen that inventing new variations of piles of fish proved difficult for even the best artists. The next new innovator within Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting would be Jan van Huysum, who by 1680 had not even been born yet. In the epilogue his achievements and long-lasting fame will be further discussed.

- Conclusion -

This thesis set out to discover how Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting can be linked to its socio-historical context. By highlighting three reference points in time, it became clear that both the still-life genre and its contemporary context changed significantly over the course of the century. Why certain types were more favorable at a certain time, is best understood if we summarize the main characteristics of still lifes around each target date and embed them in changes in context.

With reference to 1620 we can determine that one of the main objectives appeared to be the orderly display of whatever was put in vases or placed on tabletops. This was what we may call an analytical approach. The content appeared to be modest; either because still lifes depict quite simple food items or the subjects are not handled in an overly decorative way. Artists were not inclined to randomly combine cheeses with flowers or skulls. Within the limited choice in autonomous still-life subjects each type had its own specific iconography.

With reference to 1650 we can determine that one of the main objectives appeared to be a more natural display and the inclusion of more various items. This is what we may call a disorderly approach. The content appeared to be more lavish and refined. Lavish in the sense that expensive collector's items and more exotic food items appeared in still-life painting and refined in the sense that pictorial qualities became more important. Types such as the *pronkstillevens* and *vanitas* pieces demonstrate how the several categories began to crossover. This practice paved the way for arrangements with a complete lack of focus in the following decades, especially since there were now so many subjects to choose from.

With reference to 1680 we can determine that one of the main objectives appeared to be the search for sophistication and the search for a classical form. This is what we may call a decorative approach. The content appeared to be more beautiful and elegant in the sense that subjects were more carefully selected; types that were not the result of a direct observation from nature or could not be accordingly adjusted were soon filtered out. The choice in autonomous still-life subjects began to shrink to a minimum; only flower- and game painting maintained to flourish. The developments around 1680 can be seen as a prelude to the genre's course in the eighteenth century.

This analysis can subsequently be linked to changes in the course of history, the functioning of the art market, the conception of art and interior styles. Yet before doing so, I would like to place some footnotes. First of all, inventory studies proved not specific enough to make a waterproof connection between artistic developments within the still-life genre and the way still lifes functioned in the domestic environment. All seven types are discussed as one category. My conclusions are based on general changes in interior fashions that seemingly match the course of the genre. Still-life subjects

as well as interiors became more sophisticated over time. Game pieces were for instance taken from their culinary context right around the time kitchens became solely rooms people prepared meals. Original inventories might confirm that the first game pieces were to be found in kitchens, whereas the ones with hunting implements were hung in the most representative rooms. Secondly, I wish to point out that the notion of artistic emulation is also something you can describe or illustrate but never fully prove. I have repeatedly emphasized how young generations of (innovative) artists seemed to be inclined to handle things 'differently'. Different in the sense that their work is indebted to existing models, but they somehow gave a new and successful spin to it. Think of differences in tonality (color to monochrome), differences in arrangement (stiff to loosely) and even differences in iconography or setting. This way a genre could 'keep up' with time. The history of trade products confirms that there was certainly a connection between what we see depicted on tables and what was produced nationally or imported from overseas.

I must however stress that a historical event or the contemporary political situation must not be directly linked to artistic changes. Their effect on the level of prosperity and on lifestyles seemed to have played a more significant role. We have seen how Dutch society became increasingly wealthier over time. By 1650, a new generation of townsmen even began to form a new aristocracy on the basis of wealth, while after the year of calamities the elite adopted a French aristocratic lifestyle including the way they dressed and lived. In connection to still lifes, we have seen how the modest content of the earliest tabletop pieces reflect that the first prosperous generations could still take pride in having reached a certain comfort level. A generation later, the demand for luxury products had reached an unseen height which we see objectified in the *pronkstillevens*. Due to the matured art market, artists could cater nearly every demand by far-reaching specialization. Private collections reflect 'the secularization of Dutch art', which may support why the focus on symbolic significance began to diminish within vanitas painting as the century progressed. Around mid-century, texts such as Angel's *The Praise of Painting* reflect the contemporary appreciation for pure pictorial values. Piles of dead fish and game animals would certainly not have become popular if it were not for the artists who turned these subjects into appealing works of Art. Especially a combination of as many different textures allowed artists to demonstrate their artistry, but this practice would likely bring about its own end. Around 1680 the eclectic and off-looking pieces failed to find eager practitioners. One of the causes must have been the loss of a mass market for paintings after the economic setbacks of the 1670s. Only the top-section of society was still able to continue their collecting practices, whose needs were catered by a significantly smaller amount of artists. We can say that due to a lack of critical mass, many specializations began to disappear. The two types of still lifes that did maintain to

flourish were associated with the aristocracy, just as domestic interiors began to incorporate features that were already known at court. In line with international classicism, artists began to implement classical features. Writer-artists such as Van Hoogstraten and De Lairese moreover advised artists to be more selective; to choose only 'the most beautiful, elegant, and pleasing' subjects. In practice, this meant selecting the finest flowers and the most prized game animals. A new spin to naturalness was simultaneously given by floral painters who began to paint details from life. Game pieces were decidedly more fictional, so we can conclude that still-life painting around 1680 was in the first place decorative (attractive) and beautiful (selective). In the following century Jan van Huysum would prove that essentially one type of practice would continue to prosper; he was able to combine an objective observation of the natural world with a careful selection of what nature has to offer. His flower pieces therefore mark a final stage within an age long search for more naturalness and exquisiteness. Metaphorically speaking, the evolution of Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting can thus be summarized as the flourishing of truth and beauty.

Epilogue

While most types of Dutch still-life painting came to a complete halt around 1700, Dutch flower painting would reach an absolute height in the following century. Rachel Ruysch and Jan van Huysum created such satisfying pieces which enabled them to enjoy great fame and fortune during their lifetime. Both artists provided foreign kings and noble men, as well as the Amsterdam elite, with beautiful and ever-lasting bouquets. Especially Van Huysum struck all the right chords with his bright use of colors and incredible eye for detail. Up until ca. 1850 his reputation would thrive; just as long as the ruling taste inclined towards classicism. This is supported by the fact that out of all the Dutch still-life painters, the English art dealer John Smith (1781-1855) devoted the first oeuvre catalogues to Ruysch (1835) and Van Huysum (1842).¹⁹⁰

Why Jan van Huysum ultimately became the '*Fenix der Bloemschilders*' (Phoenix of Flower painters) is best understood by briefly summarizing what made his work stand out.¹⁹¹ It is, however, important to realize that he started out painting 'traditional' flower pieces in the first decade of the eighteenth century. At this stage he was probably still a student of his father Justus, who worked as a painter of interior decorations in Amsterdam. An early piece from circa 1710 (fig. E1) shows how much Van Huysum was originally indebted to the seventeenth-century manner. Just like De Heem, he used dark backgrounds and strong contrasts between light and dark. Shortly hereafter, he went through a transitional phase that lasted between 1715 and 1720. At the beginning of the 1720s the previous experiments would result in a drastic new approach: dark backgrounds were replaced by light backgrounds or garden views and chiaroscuro effects were replaced by an overall bright light that shines from behind the bouquets. But the list of innovations goes on. Just like Jacob van Walscapelle and his father Justus, Van Huysum would also use stone vases that depict a figure scene in relief. Yet in contrast to his predecessors, he would clarify this practice on at least one occasion. In many cases it namely seems as if artists intended to stress a symbolic meaning by means of a stone relief, just as Gérard de Lairesse would advise in his *Groot Schilderboek*. Van Huysum would actually confirm his intellectual efforts with a text. A concrete example is recorded on a piece in the Amsterdam Museum that is nicknamed 'Lilies of the Field' (fig. E2). On the terracotta vase a text reads: "Consider the lilies of the field. Salomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these".

¹⁹⁰ Utrecht/Braunschweig 1991, p. 15
Smith 1829-1842: volume VI London 1835, volume IX London 1842.
Delft/Houston 2006, p. 77.

¹⁹¹ Van Gool 1750-1751, vol. 2, p. 13.

This sentence is quoted from Matthew 6: 28-29 and refers to a sermon held by Christ. Christ told his audience that there is no use in collecting earthly belongings and all men should be like lilies in the field: full of simplicity and faith.¹⁹² Not only does this text explain why a female figure is holding a lily in her hand, it helps to reveal the symbolic content of the entire bouquet. The white lilies obviously refer to being modest and faithful, and possibly even to the Annunciation, whereas Van Huysum depicted white instead of red roses to express purity. All in all, it seems that this bouquet possesses everything De Lairese once dreamed of: the artist chose flowers (the number one subject-matter) and created something meaningful (by means of a symbolic use of flowers species, a symbolic use of color and the insertion of a clarifying relief!). On top of that, Van Huysum even seemed to have followed the theorist's advice to paint directly from nature. The artist once personally informed one of his patrons that he needed a few more months to finish a piece, since he was waiting for the right flowers to blossom. This also explains the double dating on some of his paintings. In order to obtain fresh flowers Van Huysum could either take specimens from his own flower garden or contact florists in Haarlem.¹⁹³

It is however an illusion to think that his bouquets are an exact copy of a real-life arrangement. Van Huysum's bouquets still consisted of flowers that blossomed in different seasons and were arranged in a highly decorative manner with many naturally curving leaves. In order to keep up with the high demand, the painter probably had a solid working plan to make sure he could combine the individually painted flowers within one bouquet. He possibly even worked on multiple paintings at once while one species was in bloom.¹⁹⁴ But no matter what his exact working method was, his impeccable painting technique and sophisticated subject-matter were completely in line with the current French taste. Both foreign and national patrons were willing to pay huge sums for his floral paintings, which turned him into one of the best paid European artists of the eighteenth century. He would not only influence many successive generation of floral painters, but also decorators of tableware and porcelain.¹⁹⁵ It appears that by combining naturalness and exquisiteness, he achieved what art theorists had been stressing, what generations of flower painters had been aiming at and what audiences seemed to have favored instantly. Due to the fact that nearly all other still-life types had diminished by the 1720s, his work would not only represent a final step in the development of Dutch flower painting, but in the development of Dutch (seventeenth-century) still-life painting as well.

¹⁹² Amsterdam Museum <<http://am.adlibhosting.com/detail.aspx?parentpreref=>> & Slive 1995, p. 321.

¹⁹³ Bergström 1956, p. 228 & Delft/Houston 2006, p. 20, p. 16.

¹⁹⁴ Delft/Houston 2006, p. 47.

¹⁹⁵ Slive 1995, p. 321 & Delft/Houston 2006, p. 17.

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APPENDIX Images to chapter 1



Fig. 1.1. Jan Brueghel the Elder,
Flowers in a blue vase, ca.1608-10, 66 x 51 cm,
Kunsthistorischen Museum, Vienna.



Fig. 1.2. Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder,
Flowers in a Wan Li Vase, signed 1619, 31 x 23 cm,
The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 1.3. Balthasar van der Ast,
Still life with fruit and flowers, signed 1620 (left) and 1621 (right), 39 x 68 cm,
The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 1.4. Roelant Savery,
Bouquet of Flowers in a Stone Niche, 1620,
Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



Fig. 1.5. Balthasar van der Ast,
Fruit still life with shells and a tulip, signed 1620, 46 x 64 cm,
Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis, The Hague.



Fig. 1.6. Balthasar van der Ast,
Basket of fruits, ca. 1622, 18 x 23 cm
The National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Fig. 1.7. Balthasar van der Ast,
Basket of flowers, ca. 1622, 18 x 23 cm
The National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Fig. 1.8. Anonymous,
A laid table, ca. 1615, 56 x 67 cm,
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.



Fig. 1.9. Joachim Beuckelaer,
A kitchen scene, 1566, 171 x 250 cm,
The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 1.10. Floris Gerritsz van Schooten,
A kitchen scene, ca. 1620/25, 91 x 155 cm,
The Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem.



Fig. 1.11. Clara Peeters,
Still Life with Cheeses, Almonds and Pretzels, c.1615,
35 x 50 cm, Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis,
The Hague.



Fig. 1.12. Floris van Dijck,
Still life with cheeses, 1615, 82 x 111 cm,
The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 1.13. Nicolaes Gillisz,
Still life with cheeses, 1611, private collection.



Fig. 1.14. Pieter Claesz,
Breakfast Still Life With Strawberries And Cherries, 1621,
64 x 46 cm, private collection.



Fig. 1.15. Floris van Dijck,
Still life with cheeses and fruit, 1622,
private collection.



Fig. 1.16. Willem Claesz. Heda,
Still life with a roemer and a watch, 1629, 46 x 69 cm,
Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis, The Hague.



Fig. 1.17. Willem Claesz. Heda,
Vanitas, 1628, 46 x 70 cm,
Museum Bredius, The Hague.



(right) Fig. 1.18. Jacques de Gheyn the Elder,
Vanitas, 1603, 83 x 54 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York.



Fig. 1.19. Jan Davidsz. de Heem,
Still life with books and a violin, 1628, 36 x 49 cm
Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis, The Hague.



Fig. 1.20. David Bailly, Pen drawing on paper, 16 July 1624,
Album Amicorum Cornelis de Montigny de Clarges,
Royal Library, The Hague.



Fig. 1.21. Pieter Potter,
Vanitas, 1636, 27 x 35 cm,
Bode Museum (Staatliche Museen), Berlin.

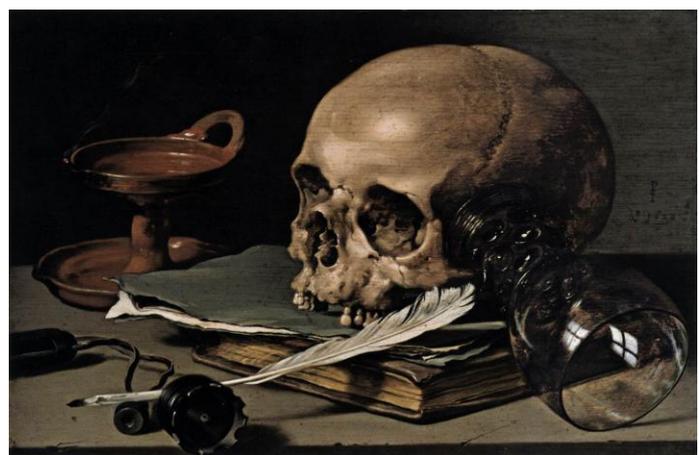


Fig. 1.22. Pieter Claesz,
Still-Life with a skull and writing quill, 1628, 24 x 36 cm,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Images to chapter 2



Fig. 2.1. Balthasar van der Ast,
Fruit still life with shells and a tulip, signed 1620,
46 x 64 cm, Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis,
The Hague.



Fig. 2.2. Jan Davidsz. de Heem,
Fruit still life with a jewel box, ca. 1650-55,
95 x 121 cm, Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis,
The Hague.



Fig. 2.3. Willem van Aelst,
Fruit still life with a snail, 1649, 54 x 65 cm,
Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof, Delft



Fig. 2.4. Willem van Aelst,
Vase with flowers, 1651, 33 x 45 cm,
Musée des Augustins, Toulouse.



Fig. 2.5. Jan Davidsz. de Heem
Vase of Flowers, ca. 1660,
Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck.



Fig. 2.6. Simon Verelst,
Flowers in a metal vase, undated, 61 x 45 cm,
Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.



Fig. 2.7. Pieter Claesz, *Pronkstilleven*, ca. 1648, private collection.



**Fig. 2.8. Jan Davidsz. de Heem,
Still life with a nautilus cup, 1632, 78 x 65 cm,
The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham.**



**Fig. 2.9. Jan Davidsz. de Heem
Still life with a lobster and nautilus cup, 1634, 62 x 55 cm,
Staatsgemäldegalerie, Stuttgart.**



**Fig. 2.10. Jan Davidsz. de Heem
A table of desserts, 1640, 149 x 203 cm
Musée du Louvre, Paris.**



**Fig. 2.11. Pieter de Ring,
Pronkstilleven, 1651, 120,2 x 173 cm,
Museum de Beaux arts, Antwerpen.**



Fig. 2.12. Abraham van Beyeren ,
Pronkstilleven, ca. 1650, 102,5cm x 121cm,
Instituut Collectie Nederland, Rijswijk.



Fig. 2.13. Abraham van Beijeren,
Pronkstilleven, ca. 1654-80, 126 x 106 cm,
The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 2.14. Adriaen van Utrecht, *Pronkstilleven*, 1644, 185 x 243 cm, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

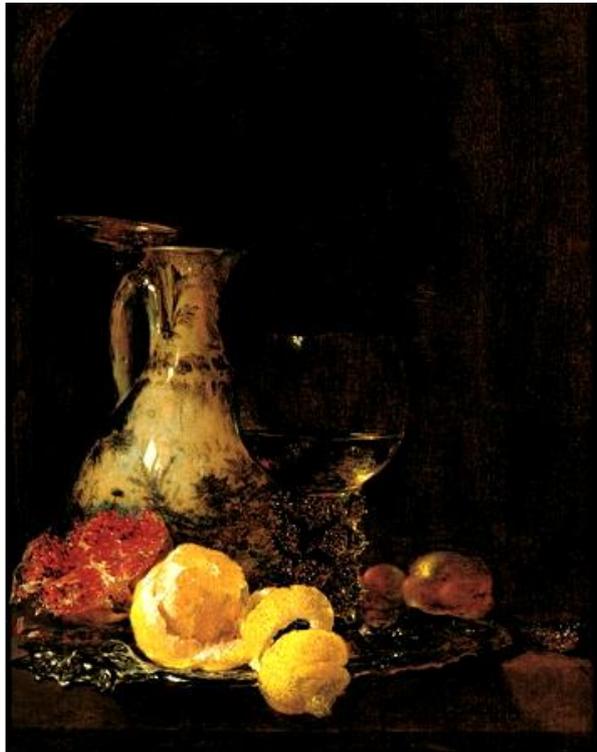


Fig. 2.15. Willem Kalf,
Still life with a porcelain jar, 1653, 45 x 36 cm,
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen
(Alte Pinakothek), München.



Fig. 2.16. Willem Kalf,
Still life with a porcelain bowl, 1662, 64 x 53 cm,
Staatliche Museen (Gemäldegalerie), Berlin.



Fig. 2.17. Willem Claesz. Heda, *Still Life with a nautilus cup and silver salt cellar*, ca. 1660-63, private collection.



Fig. 2.18. Harmen van Steenwijck, *Vanitas*, ca. 1645-50, 39 x 51 cm, The National Gallery, London.



Fig. 2.19. Petrus Schotanus, *Vanitas*, ca. 1650, whereabouts unknown.



Fig. 2.20. David Bailly, *Vanitas with a donor portrait*, ca. 1650, 95 x 116 cm, Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell.



Fig. 2.21. David Bailly, *Vanitas with a Self-portrait*, 1651, 90 x 122 cm, Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden.



Fig. 2.22. Jacques de Clauew, *Vanitas*, 1650, 54 x 71 cm, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



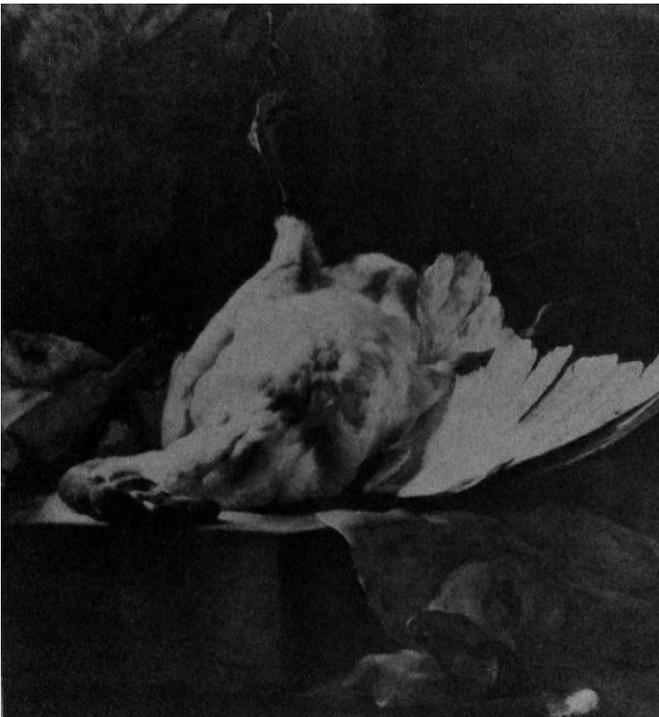
Fig. 2.23. Pieter van Steenwijck, *Allegory of the death of Admiral Tromp*, ca. 1655, 79 x 101 cm, Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden.



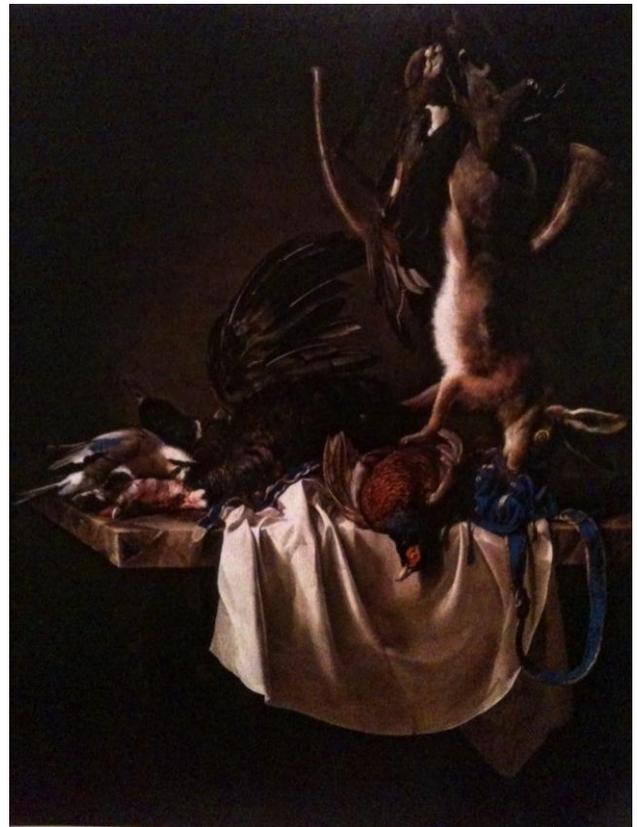
**Fig. 2.24. Elias Vonck,
Still-life of vegetables and game, 1640,
71 x 55 cm, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.**



**Fig. 2.25. Philips Angel,
Still life with game and a youth, 1646,
110 x 154 cm, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.**



**Fig. 2.26. Jan Baptist Weenix,
Dead Swan, 1650, 156 x 143 cm,
Museum De Fundatie, Zwolle.**



**Fig. 2.27. Willem van Aelst,
Still life with game, 1652, 125 x 100 cm,
Galleria Palatina, Florence.**



Fig. 2.28. Jan Baptist Weenix,
Dead partridge, ca. 1650-52, 51 x 44 cm,
Royal Picture Gallery The Mauritshuis, The Hague.



Fig. 2.29. Cornelis Lelienberg,
Still life with a black rooster and two rabbits, 1659,
94 x 84 cm, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 2.30. Wallérant Vaillant,
Letter-rack trompe l'oeil, 1658, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
(Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister), Dresden.



Fig. 2.31. Samuel van Hoogstraten,
Letter-rack trompe l'oeil, 1664, 46 x 58 cm,
Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht.



Fig. 2.32. Pieter de Putter, *Fish and a jar on a table*, 1640s, 42 x 63 cm, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Fig. 2.33. Abraham van Beijeren, *Still life with fish*, ca. 1650-1670, 74 x 87 cm, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 2.34. Abraham van Beijeren, *Still life with fish*, undated, 66 x 88 cm, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.



Fig. 2.35. Abraham van Beijeren,
Fish on the shore of Egmond aan Zee, 86 x 102
cm, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest.



Fig. 2.36. Willem Ormea,
Fish on a table in the open air, 1638, 55 x 92 cm,
The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 2.37. Willem Ormea,
*Still life with fish and a
seascape*, 1649, 29 x 43 cm,
Wakefield Art Gallery,
Wakefield.



Fig. 2.38. Jan de Bont,
Sea fish on a table, 1650,
56 x 74 cm, collection N.J.
Oppenheimer, Sweden.



Fig. 3.1. Abraham Mignon, *Game, fish and a nest on a forest floor*, 1670s, 82 x 100 cm, Musées du Louvre, Paris.



Fig. 3.2. Jan Davidsz. de Heem, *A festoon of fruit and flowers in a marble niche*, 1675, 64 x 80 cm, whereabouts unknown, auctioned at Sotheby's London 10-07-1974.



Fig. 3.3. Willem Kalf, *Still Life with Holbein bowl, nautilus cup, glass goblet and fruit dish*. 1678, 68 x 56 cm, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



Fig. 3.4. Willem Kalf, *Still life with Holbein bowl and silver jar*, 1680, 83 x 72 cm, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen (Schloßmuseum), Weimar.



Fig. 3.5. Willem van Aelst, *Still Life with fish, bread and a nautilus cup*, 1678, 68 x 55 cm, Private collection.



Fig. 3.6. Willem van Aelst (signed Guill. van Aelst), *Still Life with herring, cherries and glassware*, 1680, 51 x 43 cm, Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow.



Fig. 3.7. Maria van Oosterwijck, *Religious still life*, 1668, 73 x 88 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Fig. 3.8. Jacques de Claeuw, *Vanitas*, 1677, 114 x 145 cm, The Cumer Museum of Art & Gardens, Jacksonville (Florida).



Fig. 3.9. Mathias Withoos, *Vanitas in a Landscape*, 1660s 105 x 84 cm, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.

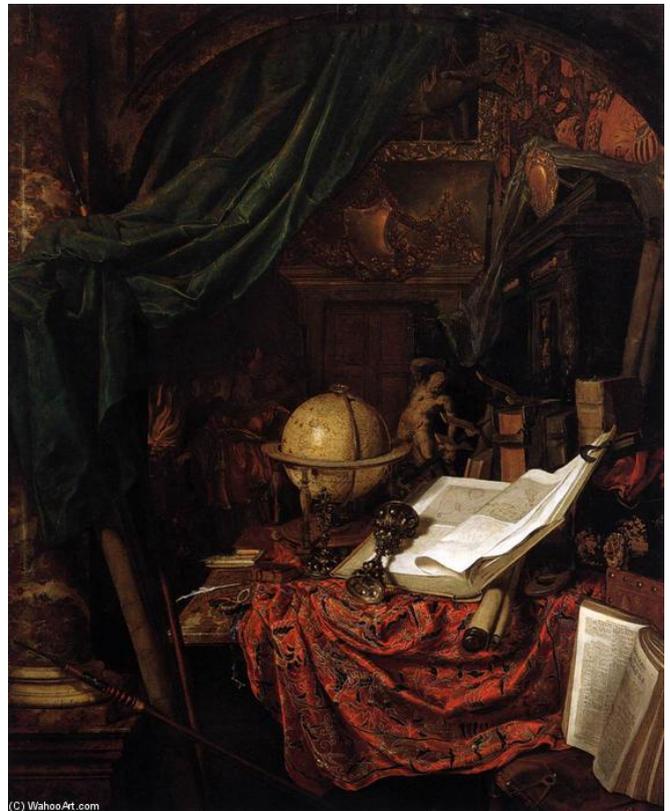


Fig. 3.10. Jan van der Heyden, *A collector's cabinet*, ca. 1670, 63 x 50 cm, Gemäldegalerie der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna.



Fig. 3.11. Isaac van Duijnen,
Still life with sea fish on a table,
ca. 1670, 84 x 115 cm,
private collection.



Fig. 3.12. Jacob Gillig,
River fish and nets in a niche,
1669, collection N.J.
Oppenheimer, Sweden.



Fig. 3.13. Willem van Aelst, *Still life with fruit, nuts, butterflies and other insects on a ledge*, ca. 1677, 74 x 57 cm, private collection.

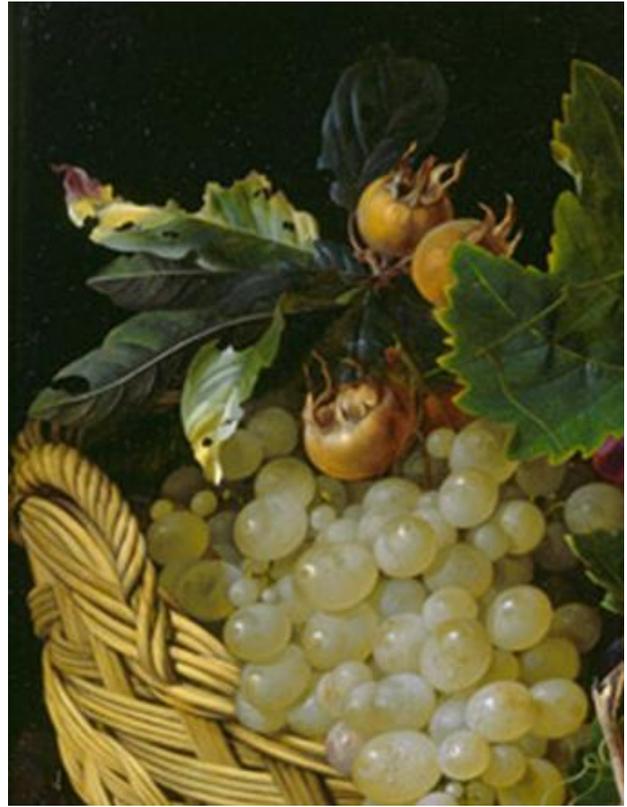


Fig. 3.13a. Detail of fig. 3.13.



Fig. 3.14. Jacob van Walscapelle, *A pear, grapes and a medlar on a stone table*, ca. 1675, 44 x 35 cm, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum & Foundation Corboud, Cologne.



Fig. 3.15. Jacob van Walscapelle, *Flowers in a stone vase with plums*, 1677, 72 x 58 cm, Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt.



Fig. 3.16. Maria van Oosterwijk,
Bouquet of flowers in a glass vase, 1685, 101 x 78 cm,
Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.



Fig. 3.17. Elias van den Broeck,
A vase of flowers, ca. 1670, 62 x 53 cm,
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.



Fig. 3.18. Otto Marseus van Schrieck,
Flowers, insects and reptiles, 1673, 70 x 53 cm,
The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig. 3.19. Rachel Ruysch,
Forest floor, 1683, 64 x 52 cm, whereabouts unknown,
formerly at art dealer Rafael Valls Limited, London.



Fig. 3.20. Rachel Ruysch,
Festoon with flowers and fruit, 1682,
39 x 33 cm, Národní Galerie, Prague.



Fig. 3.21. Rachel Ruysch,
Vase of Flowers, 1689, 68 x 57 cm,
The San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA



Fig. 3.22. Rachel Ruysch,
Flowers in a glass vase with a bird's nest, 1739,
52 x 41 cm, private collection.



Fig. 3.23. Justus van Huysum,
A vase of flowers in a garden, ca. 1685, 84 x 70 cm,
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Fig. 3.24. Jan Weenix, *Still life with a swan and game before a country estate*, ca. 1685, 173 x 202 cm, The National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Fig. 3.25. Jan Baptist Weenix, *Still life with a dead swan*, ca. 1651, 154 x 152 cm, The Detroit Institute for Arts, Detroit.



Fig. 3.26. Frans Snyders, *A kitchen scene*, 1640s, 163 x 235 cm, The Pushin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.



Fig. 3.27. Melchior d'Hondecoeter,
Dead game, 1681, 167 x 150 cm,
The Hermitage State Museum, St. Petersburg.



Fig. 3.28. Willem van Aelst,
Dead game 'The Bag', 1679,
61 x 74 cm, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.



Fig. E1. Jan van Huysum,
Flowers in a vase, ca. 1710, 62 x 52 cm, The National
Gallery, London.



Fig. E2. Jan van Huysum,
*Flowers in a terracotta vase with
inscription*, ca. 1710-1740, 81 x 62 cm,
Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam.

Table 1: Subject preferences in Amsterdam, Delft, Dordrecht, Leiden inventories, 1600-99

| | Invs. | History | Landscape | Still Life | Genre | Portraits | Other | Total |
|------------------|-------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------|
| AMSTERDAM | | | | | | | | |
| 1620-49 | 149 | 37.0 (1380) | 26.5 (988) | 9.2 (340) | 7.8 (289) | 18.6 (693) | 0.9 (34) | 3724 |
| 1650-79 | 213 | 20.0 (1089) | 36.6 (1991) | 11.0 (601) | 10.3 (560) | 20.3 (1106) | 1.8 (97) | 5444 |
| DELFT | | | | | | | | |
| 1600-19 | 49 | 46.1 (218) | 25.6 (121) | 4.2 (20) | 3.8 (18) | 16.9 (80) | 3.4 (16) | 473 |
| 1620-49 | 729 | 38.9 (1851) | 25.9 (1232) | 11.1 (526) | 4.2 (199) | 17.4 (830) | 2.5 (118) | 4756 |
| 1650-79 | 446 | 23.9 (1051) | 37.2 (1635) | 15.0 (660) | 5.5 (240) | 15.4 (675) | 3.0 (132) | 4393 |
| DORDRECHT | | | | | | | | |
| 1620-49 | 43 | 37.2 (226) | 13.2 (80) | 8.9 (54) | 4.8 (29) | 28.3 (172) | 7.6 (46) | 607 |
| 1650-79 | 126 | 19.6 (750) | 28.6 (1094) | 13.3 (510) | 9.3 (355) | 22.5 (860) | 6.5 (250) | 3819 |
| 1680-99 | 65 | 17.5 (383) | 27.5 (600) | 12.0 (263) | 9.0 (197) | 23.1 (504) | 10.8 (237) | 2184 |
| LEIDEN | | | | | | | | |
| 1600-19 | 24 | 48.9 (200) | 7.6 (31) | 2.2 (9) | 2.4 (10) | 36.2 (148) | 2.7 (11) | 409 |
| 1620-49 | 36 | 25.8 (426) | 30.1 (496) | 8.0 (132) | 8.5 (140) | 23.9 (394) | 3.7 (62) | 1650 |
| 1650-79 | 36 | 16.2 (446) | 35.1 (965) | 11.3 (312) | 16.4 (451) | 16.9 (464) | 4.1 (112) | 2750 |
| 1680-99 | 24 | 10.2 (135) | 39.9 (529) | 9.6 (127) | 17.1 (227) | 18.5 (246) | 4.7 (62) | 1326 |

Sources: Montias 1982, p. 242, table 8.3; Montias 1991, pp. 350-51, table 2; Loughman 1993, pp. 262-65, table 2; Fock 1990, p. 19.

Note: The first figure is the percentage of all paintings described by subject; the number in parentheses refers to the quantity of paintings surveyed. Percentages have been rounded off to the nearest decimal point. 'No. Invs.' is the number of inventories sampled.

Table 1 & 2 are taken from the exhibition catalogue *Still-life Painting from the Netherlands 1550-1720*, pp. 101-102 (Amsterdam/Cleveland 1999).

Montias 1982

J.M. Montias, *Artists and Artisans in Delft: a socio-economic study of the seventeenth century*, Princeton 1982.

Montias 1991

J.M. Montias, 'Works of art in seventeenth-century Amsterdam: an analysis of subjects and attributions', in: D. Freedberg & J. de Vries (ed.), *Art in History, History in Art: studies in seventeenth-century Dutch culture*, Santa Monica 1991, pp. 331-372.

Loughman 1993

J. Loughman, *Paintings in the public and private domain: collecting and patronage at Dordrecht 1620-1749*, London 1933.

Fock 1990

C.W. Fock, 'Kunstbezit in Leiden in de 17de eeuw', in: T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer e.a., *Het Rapenburg: geschiedenis van een Leidse gracht*, Leiden 1986, pp. 3-36.

Table 2: Still lives in Haarlem inventories 1620-1689

| SUBJECT | 1620-29 | 1630-39 | 1640-49 | 1650-59 | 1660-69 | 1670-79 | 1680-89 |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 'Still life' | - | - | - | 2.2 (2) | - | - | 4.8 (4) |
| Flowers | 12.1 (4) | 22.2 (8) | 13.8 (9) | 16.7 (15) | 13.1 (23) | 24.4 (43) | 23.8 (20) |
| Fruit | 12.1 (4) | 8.3 (3) | 35.4 (23) | 20.0 (18) | 25.6 (45) | 28.4 (50) | 20.2 (17) |
| Laid tables | 72.7 (24) | 55.5 (20) | 40.0 (26) | 49.0 (44) | 43.7 (77) | 26.7 (47) | 30.9 (26) |
| Breakfast pieces | 63.7 (21) | 33.3 (12) | 23.1 (15) | 22.2 (20) | 20.4 (36) | 8.5 (15) | 3.6 (3) |
| Banquet pieces | 9.1 (3) | 19.4 (7) | 12.3 (8) | 14.4 (13) | 17.0 (30) | 14.2 (25) | 15.5 (13) |
| Itemized foodstuffs | - | - | 4.6 (3) | 2.2 (2) | 1.7 (3) | 1.1 (2) | 5.9 (5) |
| Everyday objects | - | 2.8 (1) | - | 10.0 (9) | 3.4 (6) | 1.1 (2) | 4.8 (4) |
| Precious objects | - | - | - | - | 1.1 (2) | 1.7 (3) | 1.2 (1) |
| Kitchen pieces | 3.0 (1) | 11.1 (4) | 7.7 (5) | 5.5 (5) | 7.4 (13) | 2.2 (3) | 1.2 (1) |
| Fish | - | - | 1.5 (1) | 1.1 (1) | 1.1 (2) | 5.1 (9) | 4.8 (4) |
| Shells | - | - | - | - | - | 1.7 (3) | 1.1 (2) |
| Vanitas | - | 2.8 (1) | - | 4.4 (4) | 5.7 (10) | 7.9 (14) | 8.3 (7) |
| 'Vanitas' | - | - | - | 3.3 (3) | 5.1 (9) | 6.8 (12) | 7.1 (6) |
| Skulls | - | 2.8 (1) | - | 1.1 (1) | 0.6 (1) | 1.1 (2) | 1.2 (1) |
| Dead animals | - | - | - | 1.1 (1) | 1.7 (3) | 3.4 (6) | 5.9 (5) |
| Garlands of flowers | - | - | - | - | 1.1 (2) | - | 5.9 (5) |
| With religious image | - | - | - | - | 0.6 (1) | - | - |
| Markets | - | - | 1.5 (1) | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL | 33 | 36 | 65 | 90 | 176 | 176 | 84 |
| Inventories with Still Lifes | 22 | 21 | 48 | 56 | 120 | 77 | 46 |
| Total Inventories | 95 | 120 | 192 | 265 | 412 | 357 | 243 |

Source: Getty 1996.

Note: See Table 2.

Getty 2006

The Getty Provenance Index: cumulative edition on CD-rom, Santa Monica 1996.