

# In search of Netherlandish art

## *Cultural transmission and artistic exchanges in the Low Countries, an introduction*

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### Abstract

This article forms the introduction to this special issue of *De Zeventiende Eeuw*. It puts the case studies presented in this issue into a broader theoretical perspective, highlights connections and differences, and puts forward new research questions.

*Keywords:* cultural transmission, artistic exchange, art market, local schools

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When the famous historian Pieter Geyl visited two separate exhibitions on early modern Flemish and Dutch art respectively in the Summer of 1946, he felt compelled to comment:

if only we could see a joint Dutch-Belgian exhibition that could demonstrate the unity of our great painting to the world and to ourselves! [...] We must learn to see each other's art as an organic unity. As should have been avoided in the past, so too in the present and in the future our culture ought not be bound by either the Dutch or the Flemish particularistic tradition. We should believe that each other's cultural treasures also are our own, for they both stem from the same shared soil.<sup>1</sup>

Almost seven decades hence we are still awaiting a major exhibition which would combine the artistic achievements of both the Dutch and the Flemish schools of painting in an integrated and inter-related manner. And this is all the more telling since we are confronted with some sort of a historical anomaly. After all, the leading art theorists and biographers of the age made no distinction whatsoever between the artists coming from Flanders or the Dutch Republic, and instead referred to the 'the lives of Netherlandish painters' in the case of Karel Van Mander and to 'the great theatre of Netherlandish painters' in the case of Arnold Houbraken.<sup>2</sup>

The creation of our separate art histories dates from the nineteenth century, when the birth of nation states fuelled the need for national heroes who would become the artistic embodiments of our national identities. It is in this context that Rubens (1577-1640) and his followers became the torch bearers of Flemish art, and the likes of Rembrandt (1606-1669) were showcased as quintessentially Dutch artists, each painting in a style and depicting subject matter that was deemed representative of their national schools of art. This has been the view long espoused by generations of art historians and used as an organizing principle of our national art collections in museums.

<sup>1</sup> For the original Dutch, see P. Geyl, 'De historische achtergrond van de Nederlandse schilderkunst', in: *Nieuw Vlaams Tijdschrift* 1 (1946), esp. p. 552, 556.

<sup>2</sup> Karel van Mander. *The lives of the illustrious Netherlandish and German painters*, ed. H. Miedema, 6 vols., Doornspijk 1994-1999; A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols., The Hague 1718-21.

However, as we argue in this volume, the traditionally nationalistic take has been eroded and challenged in recent years, and a slow but steady reappraisal of what might constitute as Netherlandish art of the seventeenth century is well under way.

It was Belgium's secession from Holland in 1830 which initiated a cultural nationalism, triggered by the need to legitimize the new state. In this process, artists were consecrated as national heroes acting as the ideal personifications of Belgium's illustrious past.<sup>3</sup> With a delay of a few decades, a similar movement took place in the North. Publications based on archival research dealing with the life and work of artists from the golden ages of both Belgium and the Netherlands formed the impetus for a nationalistically inspired history of art that definitively laid down the Flemish and Dutch 'schools of painting' as two separate and different realms. This polarization resulted in the retention of a generally strict division between Flemish and Dutch art in the twentieth century as well, both in historiography and in the institutional world of museums and universities.

None of this meant, however, that this established form of art-historiography, in which the art of the Low Countries was divided and studied along the lines of two separate national schools, did not meet with opposition. Historians – and especially Pieter Geyl – were the most vocal in this respect,<sup>4</sup> and from the field of art history, it was Horst Gerson who from the late 1960s onwards emphasized the cultural similarities between the Northern and Southern Netherlands.<sup>5</sup> Yet it was Jan Briels' 1987 publication on Flemish painters in the Northern Netherlands that dealt a first serious

3 J. Van Gerven, 'Antwerps verleden in veelvoud. "Invented traditions" en hun maatschappelijke rol in Antwerpen in de negentiende eeuw', in: *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis* 77 (1994), p. 171–194; J. Tollebeek, *De ijkmeesters. Opstellen over de geschiedschrijving in Nederland en België*, Amsterdam 1994, p. 58–61; S. Goddard, 'Investigating and celebrating the "Golden Age" in Nineteenth-Century Antwerp, 1854–1894', in: L.S. Dixon (ed.), *In detail. New studies of Northern Renaissance Art in honor of Walter S. Gibson*, Turnhout 1998, 151–164; J. Tollebeek and T. Verschaffel, 'Natie, geschiedenis en legitimatie', in: R. Hoozee, J. Tollebeek and T. Verschaffel (eds.), *Mise-en-scène. Keizer Karel en de verbeelding van de negentiende eeuw*, Antwerpen 1999, p. 18–19; B. Croon, 'Toe-eigeningsstrategieën bij stedelijke en nationale identiteitsvorming in de kunst- en handelsmetropool Antwerpen. De negentiende-eeuwse Rubenscultus', in: *Volkskunde. Driemaandelijks Tijdschrift voor de Studie van de Volkscultuur* 104 (2003), p. 19–83.

4 P. Geyl, 'De historische achtergrond', p. 555: 'bedrieglijke vereenvoudiging'; 'methode om bepaalde [...] artistieke tendenties uit dat bestemde begrip volksaard te willen verklaren.' In later years, Geyl voiced his views on numerous occasions in connection with art historical exhibitions that unjustly made a distinction between the Northern and Southern Netherlands. See, for example P. Geyl, 'Heeft het zin van een Noord-Nederlandse school van primitieven te spreken', in: *Eenheid en Tweeheid in de Nederlanden*, Lochem 1946, p. 193–198 (originally published in *De Telegraaf* 1936); P. Geyl, 'De hardleersheid der (of van sommige) kunsthistorici', in: *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 14 (1960), p. 217–226. As of the late 1980s, Hugo de Schepper has also commented extensively on the historical fallacies in (art) history of 'the Netherlands'. For an introduction to his ideas, see H. De Schepper, 'Anachronismen, omissies en andere mythevorming in de geschiedenis van de Nederlanden', in: *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies* 26.1 (2005), p. 11–32.

5 Gerson's revised vision emerges in H. Gerson, 'Rembrandt and the Flemish baroque. His dialogue with Rubens', in: *Delta* (1969), p. 7–23; H. Gerson, 'Rembrandt en Rubens', in: *Handelingen van het Nederlands Filologencongres* 31 (1970), p. 24–32. See also B.W. Meijer, 'Vorwort zur zweiten Auflage', in: H. Gerson, *Ausbreitung und Nachwirkung der Holländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Haarlem 1942, reprint Amsterdam 1983, p. vii.

blow to the nationalistic vision.<sup>6</sup> Briels convincingly documented and argued that Northern Netherlandish painting in the early seventeenth century was less independent than presumed, but, on the contrary, strongly indebted to Flemish traditions.<sup>7</sup> His vision was taken up by the art historian Albert Blankert. In his review of the illustrious *Dawn of the Golden Age* exhibition of 1993 in the Rijksmuseum, he criticized the organizers for having limited themselves to Northern Netherlandish art from 1580 to 1620,<sup>8</sup> claiming that ‘the idea of any *exclusively Northern Netherlandish tradition* before the existence of a Northern Netherlandish state’ was obsolete. He drew attention to the anachronistic character of this point of view which is completely incongruent with the stance of contemporaries such as Karel van Mander, who considered the Low Countries and its art production undivided and ‘Netherlandish’, even after the country was split in two in 1648.<sup>9</sup>

Albert Blankert’s wake-up call marks the beginning of a new phase in the historiography characterized by a general willingness among scholars of seventeenth-century Netherlandish art to open up the traditional frontiers between the Northern and the Southern Netherlands to gain a better and historically correct understanding of the shared cultural heritage. This opinion was championed by Hans Vlieghe in his 1998 landmark article in *Simiolus* pleading for an integrated approach of the art of the Dutch Golden Age, and that of its ‘Flemish alter ego’.<sup>10</sup>

It is probably no coincidence that the world of exhibitions was the first to evidence a change in mentality. After all, in the past, criticism of the anachronistic approach to the Dutch history of art was always directed at large-scale exhibitions in the Netherlands and Belgium. Starting in 1998, a more nuanced trend can be discerned in exhibitions in which Dutch and Flemish art is presented side by side.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, several studies started to highlight aspects from the cultural transmission that took place between the

6 J.G.C.A. Briels, *Vlaamse schilders in de Noordelijke Nederlanden in het begin van de Gouden Eeuw, 1585–1630*, Antwerp 1987. There is a revised version of this book provided with biographies in the appendices: J.G.C.A. Briels, *Vlaamse schilders en de dageraad van Hollands Gouden Eeuw, 1585–1630*, Antwerp 1997.

7 Briels, *Vlaamse schilders in de Noordelijke Nederlanden*, p. 12.

8 He advanced his views for the first time in *NRC Handelsblad* of 1 March 1994 and 24 March 1994, and elaborated his ideas further in A. Blankert, ‘Review of Wouter Th. Kloek et al., *The dawn of the Golden Age. Northern Netherlandish art, 1580–1620*’, in: *The Art Bulletin* 77 (1995), p. 145–148.

9 Blankert, ‘Review of *Dawn of the Golden Age*’, p. 148. Herein he also pointed out that art historians were seriously lagging behind their historian colleagues who in the meantime had generally adopted Geyl’s theses.

10 H. Vlieghe, ‘Flemish art, does it really exist?’, in: *Simiolus* 26.3 (1998), p. 187–200.

11 Illustrative are D.P. Weller et al., *Sinners and saints, darkness and light. Caravaggio and his Dutch and Flemish followers*, (exh.cat. North Carolina Museum of Art), Raleigh 1998; A. Chong et al., *Still-life paintings from the Netherlands, 1550–1720*, (exh.cat. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam), Zwolle 1999; K. van der Stighelen and M. Westen, *Elck zijn waerom. Vrouwelijke kunstenaars uit België en Nederland, 1500–1950*, (exh. cat. Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten), Antwerp 1999–2000; P. Huys Janssen et al., *Meesters van het Zuiden. Barokschilders rondom Rubens*, (exh.cat. Noordbrabants Museum), ’s-Hertogenbosch 2000; P. Schoon and S. Paarlberg, *Greek gods and heroes in the age of Rubens and Rembrandt*, (exh.cat. Dordrechts Museum), Dordrecht 2001.

two Netherlands. Particularly relevant in this respect is Xander van Eck's *Clandestine splendor* from 2008 and several monographs devoted to artists who appeared to be pivotal figures in the artistic exchange between the two Netherlands, such as Jan Lievens (1607–1674), Pieter Soutman (1593/1601–1657), Pieter Lastman (1583–1653) and Frans Hals (1582/83–1666).<sup>12</sup>

An historical evolution has also taken place at an institutional level. The Rubenianum and the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD), the two leading research institutes for seventeenth-century Flemish and Dutch art respectively, entered into a partnership in 2012 'to significantly improve the accessibility of their joint national heritage.'<sup>13</sup> And since its festive reopening on 13 April 2013, the Rijksmuseum is making a commendable attempt to present a more balanced image of the seventeenth-century art of the Low Countries to a broader public by integrating Dutch and Flemish works of art to some extent in its permanent installation. Finally, it would appear that similar changes gained traction in Dutch academia. Utrecht University, where Geyl's ideas had never faded entirely, took the lead largely thanks to the impetus of architectural historian Koen Ottenheym. Since 1996 he had propagated the joint and comparative study of the art in both parts of the Low Countries and by the early 2000s, he had become the driving force behind the creation of the research master's program *Art History of the Low Countries in its European context* transmitting the integrated vision to the youngest generation of art historians. Karolien De Clippel's own appointment in 2008 at this university must also be seen in the light of reinforcing the Flemish expertise in a Netherlandish context.<sup>14</sup>

It is against the backdrop of this fundamental discussion on the identity of Dutch and Flemish art that in 2009 an NWO-funded research program entitled 'Cultural transmission and artistic exchanges in the Low Countries, 1572–1672: mobility of artists, works of art and artistic knowledge' was started up, which forms the point

**12** X. van Eck, *Clandestine splendor. Paintings for the catholic church in the Dutch Republic*, Zwolle 2008; L. DeWitt, 'Evolution and ambition in the career of Jan Lievens, 1607–1674', dissertation University of Maryland, 2006; A.K. Wheelock Jr. et al., *Jan Lievens. A Dutch master rediscovered*, (exh.cat. National Gallery of Art), Washington 2008–2009; J. Coutré, 'Jan Lievens. Painting, politics, and decoration in Dutch art, 1652–1669', dissertation New York University 2011; K. Barrett, *Pieter Soutman. Life and oeuvre*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia 2012; C.T. Seifert, *Pieter Lastman. Studien zu Leben und Werk, Mit einem kritischen Verzeichnis der Werke mit Themen aus der antiken Mythologie und Historie*, Petersberg 2011; C.D.M. Atkins, *The signature style of Frans Hals. Painting, subjectivity and the market in early modernity*, Amsterdam 2012, spec. p. 127–147.

**13** M.F. Borg, 'Unique collaboration between RKD and Rubenianum, Antwerp', [http://english.rkd.nl/archive/news/2012/unique-collaboration-between-rkd-and-rubenianum-antwerp?set\\_language=en](http://english.rkd.nl/archive/news/2012/unique-collaboration-between-rkd-and-rubenianum-antwerp?set_language=en); see also V. van de Kerckhof, 'A remarkable new collaboration. Rubenianum and RKD joining forces', in: *The Rubenianum Quarterly* 3 (2013), p. 2.

**14** By that time, Karolien De Clippel had published some contributions defending and documenting an integrated perspective in the field of Netherlandish genre painting. See K. De Clippel, 'Adriaen Brouwer, portrait painter. New identifications and an iconographic novelty', in: *Simiolus* 30 (2003), p. 196–216; K. De Clippel, 'Two sides of the same coin? Genre painting in North and South during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in: *Simiolus* 32.1 (2006), p. 17–34.

of departure of this volume.<sup>15</sup> The essays in this special issue of *De Zeventiende Eeuw* are the written account of the international conference organized by the project members and entitled ‘Art on the move: artistic exchange and innovation in the Low Countries, 1572–1700’, held at the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam on 10 and 11 April 2014.

### *Notions of cultural exchange*

Some clarification on our use of the terms cultural exchange and cultural transmission is needed. From the outset, we preferred these terms – exchange, transmission, but also transfer – over ‘influence’ a concept traditionally used and often misused by art historians. Eric Jan Sluijter drove this point home early on by insisting that artists choose to cite or emulate other colleagues, or try something novel, and are driven by artistic as well as economic considerations. This perspective, by definition, implies a conscious and active intention to be receptive to elements from a foreign culture, rather than being a passive recipient of an external influence.<sup>16</sup>

Cultural exchange has the potential to affect cultural transformation, and ultimately change the path of the cultural development of a people or a nation. We hereby hold to the premise that one culture is not superior to the other, but that some sort of interaction takes place, which can lead to new concepts and ideas, and innovation. According to the literature historian Gesa Stedman

the immaterial aspect of cultural exchange is crucial: it influences what people think, how their expectations are raised, and how conventions grow which train and channel the responses of audiences. These conventions in turn may then lead someone to break away from them, to forge something new, to move away from existing stereotypes and genre limitations.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, ideas are not conceived in a vacuum, and neither is their dissemination random, and this is where material aspects play an important role. What got transferred in the seventeenth-century art market of the Low Countries and beyond depended on the ingenuity of middlemen, the impediments caused by borders and barriers, obstacles such as transaction and opportunity costs including tariffs, guild regulations, the creativity of artists themselves, the medium – visual, text or verbal – and geo-political factors such as war. Moreover, Lisa Jardine has argued in her well-known book *Worldly goods* that new

<sup>15</sup> The project was chaired by Filip Vermeulen, Karolien De Clippel and Eric Jan Sluijter, and ran between 2009 and 2014. It centered on the following research question: how, why and through which channels did cultural transmission and artistic exchanges in the visual arts take place in the Low Countries between 1572 and 1672, and what was the impact on the (shared) cultural heritage of the two regions?

<sup>16</sup> E.J. Sluijter, *Rembrandt's rivals, history painting in Amsterdam 1630–1650*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia 2015, p. 3. Also, see M. Baxandall, *Patterns of intention. On the historical explanation of pictures*, New Haven, London 1985, p. 58–62.

<sup>17</sup> G. Stedman, *Cultural exchange in seventeenth-century France and England*, Surrey, Burlington 2013, p. 8.

developments and innovation in the arts cannot be separated from material factors such as migration and travel, information channels, modes of production and other economic realities.<sup>18</sup> These recommendations were certainly adhered to by economist John Michael Montias in his many seminal publications on the material culture of the Dutch Republic of the Golden Age, and other social and economic historians in his wake.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, we are left to wonder how these transfers took place in reality, and what this volume wants to offer is some concrete leads that shed light on the mobility of artists, artworks and ideas in these brilliant chapters of the art histories of both Belgium and the Netherlands. It is important to keep in mind that cultural exchange and transfer denotes exchange between cultures, and this requires individuals acting as mediators and frequently instigators of exchange, objects and ultimately ideas. This was certainly the case in the Low Countries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>20</sup> These processes of creative appropriation took place through various types of mediation. And Stedman adds that no matter what type of mediation, all of these gatekeepers act within a particular social context or system, and are guided by certain interests.<sup>21</sup> To gain insight into these phenomena, we therefore need to draw on a myriad of sources ranging from toll books, egodocuments, probate inventories, guild documents, correspondence, art historical treatises, the works of art themselves, and so forth. We are convinced that only a multi-disciplinary perspective can help solve this puzzle whereby an art historical reading of the images of the period is combined with an economic and sociological understanding of the actors and objects that facilitated these exchanges. This is precisely the goal of this collection of essays, and the thematic clusters that structured the aforementioned conference – circulation of artists, circulation of art and circulation of ideas – are maintained in this volume.

### *Circulation of artists*

It is often assumed that individuals are much more mobile now compared to past times, but the exodus of tens of thousands Flemings to the northern provinces after

**18** L. Jardine, *Worldly goods. A new history of the Renaissance*, London 1996.

**19** See among others, J.M. Montias, *Artists and artisans in Delft. A socio-economic study of the seventeenth-century*, Princeton 1982; J.M. Montias, 'The impact of economic factors on style', in: *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6.1 (1990), p. 49–57; C. Lesger, 'Migrantenstromen en economische ontwikkeling in vroegmoderne steden. Nieuwe burgers in Antwerpen en Amsterdam, 1541–1655', in: *Stadsgeschiedenis* 1 (2006), p. 97–121; M.J. Bok, 'The rise of Amsterdam as a cultural centre. The market for paintings, 1580–1680', in: P. O'Brien et al. (eds.), *Urban achievement in early modern Europe. Golden ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London*, Cambridge 2001, p. 186–209.

**20** Stedman, *Cultural exchange*, p. 4–5.

**21** Stedman also makes explicit reference to Peter Burke's critical article 'Kultureller Austausch' in which he outlines a number of elements that facilitate cultural transfers, such as the degree of closeness between two cultures which is particularly relevant in the case of the Low Countries; Stedman, *Cultural exchange*, p. 3.

the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt was of biblical proportions, with enormous ramifications for both regions – also for the arts. Among the estimated 100,000 to 150,000 Flemings who left their homes in search of a better future elsewhere were scores of painters, draughtsmen, printmakers, tapestry weavers, musicians, poets and other creative workers who relocated to France, England, the Rhineland and especially to the northern provinces.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the earlier mentioned Jan Briels was the first to systematically map the displacement of these individuals and examine the push and pull factors that made them move to different towns, but artist migrations have scarcely received any serious attention since then.<sup>22</sup> A significant and welcome break in this dearth has been the publication in 2014 of the *Netherlandish Yearbook of the Arts* which was devoted entirely to the migration of Netherlandish artists in early modern times. In a contribution to this volume, we underscored the need to transcend the existing models focusing on the traditional push and pull factors, and take into account network effects and the impact of family ties in particular that mitigated the costs of migration such as job insecurity and distance, to better understand these movements.<sup>23</sup> New insights derived from contemporary migration theory are yet to be applied to the historical mobility of artists, but numerous essays in this volume present important forays into the potential of these new approaches.

What makes the Dutch case particularly interesting is that it became the favored destination of many refugees from across Europe, and especially from Flanders. The streams of refugees included individuals from all walks of life, and a myriad of professions and religious beliefs. It has long been understood that these huddled masses contributed significantly to the so-called Dutch economic miracle during the seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup> This historical narrative is well known, and many scholars have pointed to exogenous supply shocks whereby Flemings jump-started entire industries or trade ventures. To take an example from the cultural industries, it can be argued that Flemish painters were instrumental in launching the Haarlem school of painting.

It is useful to briefly survey the main motivations that have been associated with mobility in the context of the Dutch Revolt. First, religion has been a seminal cause for many migrations of people across times and continents, and this especially applies to the Dutch Revolt. After all, the outbreak of the Iconoclasm in 1566 was to a large extent a religious uprising. Secondly, economic incentives and necessity are frequently a driver of migration, and the situation in the Southern Netherlands during the latter third of the sixteenth century is a case in point. Unless they are willing to quit their profession,

**22** Briels, *Vlaamse schilders in de Noordelijke Nederlanden* (n. 6); Briels, *Vlaamse schilders en de dageraad van Hollands Gouden Eeuw* (n. 6).

**23** F. Vermeylen, 'Greener pastures? Capturing artists' migrations during the Dutch Revolt', in: *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 63 (2013), p. 40–57. The following paragraphs re-iterate some of the main points of this essay.

**24** J. de Vries and A. van der Woude, *The first modern economy. Success, failure, and perseverance of the Dutch economy 1500–1815*, Cambridge 1997.



a reduction in the local and international demand for art due to the military campaigns and economic isolation forced artists to quit their art, take up another profession or move elsewhere where chances for commissions and sales seemed more likely. Thirdly, distance plays both a role in the decision to migrate and in the choice of destination. It is understood that the farther away the prospective new homeland is located, the higher the costs (including the psychological cost of leaving the familiar environment behind). Both the real and psychological distance increases as the migration takes place across borders into foreign lands. Furthermore, Clé Lesger has drawn attention to the importance of information in people's determination whether to move to a certain location or not. A combination of both objective and subjective information allows the potential migrant to weigh the pros and the cons of his or her existing situation, and the possible benefits of moving to a new location.<sup>25</sup> Fourthly, Flemish immigrants were met by a striking openness in their adopted hometowns. Many Dutch cities welcomed the vast numbers of southern compatriots into their walls. This toleration towards newcomers was to some extent motivated by a sense of compassion for the displaced and the economic stimuli that the newcomers could bestow on the local economy, and the knowledge that there was an abundance of free space to spare to house the new arrivals (often in the form of confiscated Catholic monasteries and cloisters). Lastly, recent scholarship points to the importance of migrant networks as a cause of migration. Familial and professional ties play a seminal role in patterns of migration that sustain themselves in the towns of destination, decreasing the cost of relocation for new migrants and thereby perpetuating future migration.<sup>26</sup>

Various articles in this volume reflect in one way or another on the underlying reasons for artists' movements during the Dutch Revolt. Hans van Miegroet examined migration patterns of artists from Mechelen from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards. Mechelen was known as a center of watercolor painting (*watervverfdoeken*) featuring no less than 150 workshops in its heyday, but the town also suffered from the excrescencies of the Dutch Revolt. By distinguishing between first stop migration and the eventual new home of artists, he adds a useful nuance to the debate. Artists often did not engage in linear movement from one set town to the next, but changing circumstances and career choices could result in a staged migration pattern. Moreover, Van Miegroet's database and the visualizations derived from it reveal a noteworthy flow of Mechelen artists to the town of Delft. These artists would find employ in the local textile industry as cartoon painters, and proved essential in setting up Delft's tapestry industry.

Rather than focus on departing artists, David Van der Linden makes a case to examine the strategies of those artists that remained in Antwerp in its darkest of times, during the 1570s and 1580s, suggesting that the majority of painters decided not to

25 C. Lesger, 'Migrantenstromen en economische ontwikkeling in vroegmoderne steden. Nieuwe burgers in Antwerpen en Amsterdam, 1541-1655', in: *Stadsgeschiedenis* 1 (2006), p. 97-121.

26 D.S. Massey et al., 'Theories of international migration. A review and appraisal', in: *Population and development review* 19:3 (1993), p. 431-466.

emigrate. He offers a refreshing, counter-intuitive and perhaps welcome correction of the long standing view of Antwerp as a city depleted of artists after it was conquered by Farnese's army in 1585. Van der Linden maintains that there were ample opportunities – both in terms of commissions and exports of existing stock – for artists after the Fall of the Antwerp, thereby putting into question the supposed implosion of the art market. Nevertheless, dozens of artists did leave and would end up impacting the visual culture in Dutch Republic. We are reminded of nearby Middelburg as an intervening opportunity for artists fleeing Antwerp, an interlude for some before moving to towns further north, and a safe haven for others awaiting the eventual return to their hometown on the River Scheldt.

In a thoughtfully developed case study of two artist brothers, Eric Jan Sluijter elaborates in his essay on the artistic cross fertilization that took place between Amsterdam and Antwerp, the leading cultural hubs of the Low Countries in the seventeenth century. Guiliam and Adriaen Van Nieuland spanned a network across Amsterdam, Antwerp and Rome during the first decades of the seventeenth century. They both subscribed to a Netherlandish tradition reminiscent of the sixteenth century, to the point of pursuing a conservative interpretation of art. Both brothers were featured in the influential *vitae* published by Cornelis de Bie and Arnold Houbraken, without any mention of an allegiance to either north or south – they were simply regarded as Netherlandish painters. Sluijter and several other authors raise the problem of determining to what extent migration within the Low Countries, such as between Mechelen and Delft, was considered a move to a foreign country, or rather as a relocation to a city with the same cultural, political and legal environment, and where the same language was spoken. Also, it has been observed that flows of migrants are more likely between regions that are culturally similar, which would explain the tendency of many Flemings to relocate to the northern provinces.

Irrespective of the national context or the drivers of this extraordinary mobility of the artistic community, the effects of these migrations were far reaching. The receiving towns in the North benefited greatly from the arrival of trained creative workers. Besides the obvious benefits for the development of the cultural industries such as the production of tapestries in Delft, immigration resulted in the importation of resources and much needed skills and knowledge. As a result, the newly arrived painters did not crowd out the indigenous artists, but provided training for local apprentices through their workshops, and exposed the already established colleagues to novel subject matter and painterly styles in the market arena, and through artistic exchanges.

### *Circulation of works of art*

The art trade greatly exposed societies on both sides of the border with each other's visual culture. The seventeenth century witnessed the disintegration of the Low Countries into two separate states, but throughout this period they were not isolated from each other and trade continued, even when military conflict made travel and trade

perilous. Various archival sources allow us to get a sense of this kind of cross border traffic, ranging from import and export duties (the so-called *convooien* and *licenten*), to probate inventories which – insofar that the attributions are accurate and sufficiently detailed – list goods of foreign origin in estates, to the rich correspondence and account books of art dealing firms. Up until now, they had not been used in any exhaustive manner to analyze the trade patterns and the business models that underlie the strategies and success of art dealers. The contributions in this volume by Claartje Rasterhoff and Filip Vermeulen, and Sandra van Ginhoven draw on these rich sources, and provide a much more accurate view of the international trade in luxury goods and the business models that made the impressive export figures possible.

Rasterhoff and Vermeulen examine how specialized art dealing firms overcame uncertainty in terms of demand and quality of the luxury goods that were exported from Antwerp to the Dutch Republic. They compiled a dataset based on the Zeeland toll registers which was used to map the trade in luxury goods passing through Zeeland, which is assumed to be the bulk of the interregional trade. The authors found that there was a significant trade in mostly Antwerp-made paintings, musical instruments (mostly harpsichords), tapestries, decorative arts such as cabinets and gilded leather, and books. A sizable portion of this was intended for re-export, among others to Southern Europe, but the volume of imports for local consumption is significant nonetheless. Moreover, a close reading of commercial correspondence shows that vertically integrated firms operating out of Antwerp such as Musson and Forchondt were very effective in marketing an array of luxury products abroad. They could rely on an extensive network of associates and agents (often relatives), who kept the home base Antwerp abreast of the reigning fashion in foreign lands. This matters because cultural appetites vary from place to place. In doing so, they proved to be essential mediators in the ongoing and intense process of cultural transmission within the Low Countries, well after the Republic and the Spanish Netherlands went their separate ways.

In the subsequent article, Sandra van Ginhoven studies processes of cultural transition that went well beyond the borders of the Low Countries. Based on extensive archival research, she demonstrates how the vertically integrated Forchondt firm was in a position to engage in mass exportation of works of art to Central Europe and the Iberian Peninsula, and henceforth to the Americas. An astounding 12,852 transactions are recorded in a 35-year period (1643–1678). Only a small percentage of these went to the Dutch Republic but Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Middelburg were of seminal importance in terms of financial and shipping infrastructure they provided to Forchondt. For instance, agents stationed in these cities facilitated the transportation of paintings made in Antwerp and Mechelen to Spain and Portugal. Van Ginhoven convincingly argues that the Dutch Republic was an integral part of Forchondt's trading network, extending to Spain and Latin America. Her insights not only underscore the findings of Rasterhoff and Vermeulen, but convincingly demonstrate that the success of the Antwerp export machine can be attributed to the ingenuity and efficacy of the dealers who engaged in the art trade. Especially the vertically-integrated firms such as Musson and Forchondt were extremely successful in probing foreign markets across

Europe and the Americas, and engendering demand for Flemish paintings and other luxury goods.

### *Circulation of ideas*

The new integrated approach of looking at cultural transmission facilitates a better understanding of the cultural heritage of the Low Countries. Unlike the time-honored, nationalistic and insular view which strived above all to highlight the Dutchness of Dutch art and the Flemishness of Flemish art, our perspective offers a refreshing interpretation of artistic exchange between both parts of the Netherlands and a plausible explanation for artistic innovation. The goal of various articles in these proceedings is to ascertain how and why ideas were transferred, through which channels and under which circumstances. The results demonstrate that Hilaire-Pérez's, Verna's and Cipolla's ideas on the diffusion of technical innovations also hold true for artistic innovations.<sup>27</sup> The main conduits for the transfer of knowledge, including artistic know-how, appear to be human migration and, concomitantly, personal contacts.

Many renowned seventeenth-century painters, sculptors and engravers traveled seemingly effortlessly across enemy lines to render their services to foreign patrons and to study cross-border artistic practices and products as an integral part of the learning process. In some cases, these shorter or longer travels and contacts with foreign colleagues resulted in significant innovations. Such an interaction with major consequences took place between Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625) and Ambrosius I Bosschaert (1573-1621), whose north-south travels and mutual contacts in 1604-06 were of crucial importance for the emancipation of the Netherlandish flower still-life into an independent genre.<sup>28</sup> An equally fruitful meeting was the one in the Spring of 1612 on Haarlem soil between the most famous of seventeenth-century Flemish painters, Peter Paul Rubens, and his great example Hendrick Goltzius (1558-1617). Through his engravings, the Haarlem master had been somewhat of a mentor for the ambitious Flemish painter in his early years, long before Rubens' voyage of 1612, but his visit also allowed the ambitious Antwerp master to witness firsthand how Goltzius had efficiently organized his print business. A few years later and back in Antwerp, Rubens would adopt this business model by setting up his own, very successful printmaking venture. However, the interaction between Rubens and Goltzius went well beyond a mentor-mentee relationship. Telling examples exist whereby Goltzius, after their encounter, was inspired by compositions of the great Antwerp master. For instance, Rubens' *Jupiter and*

<sup>27</sup> L. Hilaire-Pérez and C. Verna, 'Dissemination of technical knowledge in the Middle Ages and the early modern era. New approaches and methodological issues', in: *Technology and Culture* 47 (2006), p. 565; C.M. Cipolla, 'The diffusion of innovations in early modern Europe', in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14 (1972), p. 48.

<sup>28</sup> K. De Clippel and D. van der Linden, 'About the genesis of the Netherlandish flower piece. Jan Brueghel, Ambrosius Bosschaert and Middelburg', in: *Simiolus* 38 (2015), in print.

*Calisto* from 1613 (Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen) clearly acted as a model for the *Fall of man* (National Gallery, Washington) which Goltzius painted in 1616.<sup>29</sup>

How Rubens was received in the protestant North remains a fascinating topic, on which Marloes Hemmer sheds light in her contribution to this volume. One of Goltzius' pupils was Pieter De Grebber (ca. 1600–1652/53). His early work of the 1620s was remarkably and closely related to that of Rubens through its monumentality and that of its figures, its focus on the expression of vehement emotions, its involvement of the spectator and its *ordonnantie*. This is surprising since at that time Rubens' work was not yet widely spread in the Northern Netherlands. Hemmer demonstrates that De Grebber's creative imitation of Rubens at such an early date can be largely explained by his connections with the Leiden humanist network which, according to her, was responsible for the spread of knowledge about Rubens in the Northern Netherlands.

Whereas the interest in Dutch history painting and its connection with the artistic tradition of the Habsburg Netherlands is quite new, the development of the 'lower genres' such as landscape, sea scape, still life, architectural pieces and genre painting in the early seventeenth-century Dutch Republic has since the early twentieth century been considered in close relationship with and dependence on the Southern Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> Less studied until recently is another profane genre enjoying an enormous popularity in the early seventeenth-century Northern Netherlands: the kitchen scene.<sup>31</sup> Zoran Kwak, who finished his dissertation on this topic in 2014, contends in his contribution to this volume that the development of new types of images after 1600 received a powerful impetus from the influx of immigrants from the Southern Netherlands. This included many painters of food as well as a considerable part of a new audience. The Southern Netherlandish custom of surrounding oneself with paintings of different price categories, including kitchen scenes and other images of food, was imitated by the local Dutch population. This also generated a demand for paintings of a higher quality which were technically more skillfully executed, more life-like and attractive in terms of their inventiveness.

In his aforementioned article on the Van Nieulandt brothers, Eric Jan Sluijter makes the important point that transmission and exchange between the Southern Netherlands and the Republic did not always give rise to excitingly new developments, but that conservatism could be another reaction to what is 'foreign'. In the case of the brothers Guilliam II (1584–1635) and Adriaen II van Nieulandt (ca. 1586–1658), who were both very successful in their respective fields, interactions between Antwerp and Amsterdam yielded conservative styles and subjects based on a shared Netherlandish heritage with a strong international flavor.

<sup>29</sup> K. De Clippel and F. Vermeylen, 'Rubens and Goltzius in dialogue. Artistic exchanges between Antwerp and Haarlem during the Revolt', in: *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 28 (2012), p. 138–160.

<sup>30</sup> See among others W. Martin, *De Hollandsche schilderkunst in de zeventiende eeuw*, Amsterdam 1935, p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> This changed with the dissertation of Zoran Kwak; Z. Kwak, '*Proeft de kost en kauwtse met uw oogen.*' *Beeldtraditie, betekenis en functie van het Noord-Nederlandse keukentafereel (ca. 1590–1650)*, unpublished dissertation University of Amsterdam 2014.

The reliance on a shared Netherlandish tradition appeared even stronger among Dutch and Flemish artists outside the Low Countries. Examining North and South Netherlandish immigrant artists' careers in seventeenth-century Madrid, Abigail Newman illustrates how *Flamencos* from the Northern and the Southern Netherlands identified themselves as belonging to the same culture and reinforced this image towards their Spanish audience. Crucial in this story was the existence of a culturally-based royal organization, the *Noble Guardia de Arqueros de Corps*, the Spanish king's Burgundian bodyguard. Approximately half of the immigrant painters in Madrid from both the Northern and the Southern Netherlands joined or sought to join the guard and, through their mutual contacts in this network, reinforced their shared Netherlandish identity. This article argues not only for the strength of these associations, but for the self-conscious decision by certain Northern and Southern Netherlandish painters associated with the *Noble Guardia* to capitalize on these associations by marketing their still lifes and flower paintings as 'Flemish'.

### *Netherlandish art?*

The case studies featured in this volume point to some of the origins and illustrations of the shared artistic heritage of both the Northern and Southern Netherlands, and perhaps more importantly, provide insight into the complicated but fascinating process of cultural transmission in European history. A correction of our views of the past golden ages had been taking place for some time. Art market scholars in particular have been on the forefront of pursuing a more integrated history of our national art schools, starting already in the 1990s with Neil de Marchi and Hans van Miegroet, but also Michael Montias and Marten Jan Bok who remarked on the strong interlinkages between the art market systems of both regions. Art historians such as Hans Vlieghe, Eric Jan Sluijter and Karolien De Clippel soon followed suit by advocating a contextual approach to Netherlandish art whereby a lively artistic dialogue within the Low Countries lay at the basis of seminal innovations in the visual arts. By stressing this process of cross-fertilization, they have and are guarding us against the privileging of one culture over another. The young Dutch Republic was not just a fashion taker, merely absorbing a tsunami of migrant artists from Flanders and imported artworks from Antwerp. Especially after the treaty of Munster in 1648, there is mounting evidence that Dutch art infiltrated Antwerp collections.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, it is necessary to look for signs of where cultural transmission did not take place, or were there was resistance against the assimilation of foreign elements in the visual vocabulary of one culture. Guilds in Dutch cities are known to have attempted to put up a dam against the swelling imports of pictures from Antwerp and Mechelen, often claimed to be of questionable quality.

<sup>32</sup> A. Jager, "“Everywhere illustrious histories that are a dime a dozen.” The mass market for history painting in seventeenth-century Amsterdam", in: *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 7.1 (2015), p. 1-26, spec. 8, DOI: 10.5092/jhna.2015.7.1.1.

Nevertheless, in the end, some pictures are inextricably linked with the stereotypical image we associate with the golden ages of Antwerp and Amsterdam. It is hard to imagine that a painting depicting the Miracles of St. Ignatius of Loyola by Rubens, laden with the typical Baroque drama and pompa, could have seen the light in the protestant North. By the same token, the incredible variety of group portraits such as the portrayals of harquebusiers guilds or so-called anatomy lessons appear to be a Dutch specialty. In fact, we know of no Flemish depiction of an anatomy lesson. But even so, it is hard to gaze at the quintessential (winter) landscapes by the likes of Hendrick Avercamp (1585–1634) which are believed to emanate the very Dutchness of Dutch art, without being reminded of the Flemish prototypes by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525–1569) and others.

Furthermore, we need to consider transnational cultural exchanges other than those which occurred within the Low Countries. Dutch and Flemish artists alike engaged in an artistic dialogue with colleagues and pictorial traditions elsewhere in Europe. The contributions in this volume by Abigail Newman and Barbara Uppenkamp aptly demonstrate the necessity to expand the geographical scope. Indeed, much more research on the cultural exchanges with the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, England, the German art centers and Central Europe is essential to ascertain and comprehend the transnational nature of our art schools. Moreover, Sandra van Ginhoven reminds us in her essay that these relations extended to overseas regions such as Latin America, and others have shown that Asia should be included as well.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly, it is not a given to speak of Netherlandish art in the context of the seventeenth century Low Countries, and the regional level may not even be the most appropriate perspective. A focus on cities, and the urban networks that connect them, may present a more useful lens through which we can map and interpret processes of cultural transmission. Cities are more easily discernible as nuclei of cultural production with their own specific identity compared to regions or nation states. Already in 1969, Jane Jacobs has argued that innovation and exchanges of information take place in cities. Endowed with a skilled labor force, they are hubs of creativity where growth and resilience seem to come from experimentation and whereby a variety of small, new firms that, in breaking away from a parent, generate fresh and varied clusters of activities.<sup>34</sup> When the displaced Flemish painters trained new generations in the knowledge and practical skills of their craft, they also generated novelty, because amongst each new crop of masters there were always some who wished to strike out on a slightly different path. This, in the spirit of Jane Jacobs, is the origin and character of innovation and sustained growth: not necessarily radical newness, but multiple slight modifications and incremental changes occurring at a steady and *quasi* never ending pace.

<sup>33</sup> M. North (ed.), *Artistic and cultural exchanges between Europe and Asia, 1400–1900*, Surrey, Burlington 2010.

<sup>34</sup> J. Jacobs, *The economy of cities*, New York, 1969; N. De Marchi, *Antwerp as incubator of innovation*, working paper, Duke University 2009.

With the blurring of borders in this digital and global age and in the wake of European integration, we should indeed be careful not to replace one anachronism with another. Whether looking at the increasingly international art market of the seventeenth century or the globalized art world today, a strong local embeddedness still defines the artistic production and how it is perceived by the public. But this presents us with a bit of the quandary, as the tension remains between what we consider as inherent to our culture, and that what is foreign. It is our view that global art does not exist, yet images are certainly not created in a vacuum either. We therefore need to explore both the shared origins of our culture, and what remains as meaningful differences, and identify how processes of artistic exchange ultimately lead to innovation in the arts, thereby adding to the canon of our art histories and forever shaping the cultural identity of the peoples on both sides of the border.