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A NON-TRADITIONAL APPROACH: SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH WOMEN
ARTISTS AND THE NOCTURNAL GENRE SCENE MARKET

by

Jordan J. Harris

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of

Arts in

Art History and Visual Culture

at

Lindenwood University

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A NON-TRADITIONAL APPROACH: SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH WOMEN
ARTISTS AND THE NOCTURNAL GENRE SCENE MARKET

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Humanities
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master in Art History and Visual Culture
at
Lindenwood University

By

Jordan J. Harris

Saint Charles, Missouri

May 2022

Abstract

A Non-Traditional Approach: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Women Artists and the Nocturnal Genre Scene Market

Jordan J. Harris, Master of Art History and Visual Culture, 2022

Thesis Directed By: Dr. Sarah Cantor, PhD

Nocturnal genre scenes were on the rise in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. With new technologies and advances taking place during this time, people were staying out later and partaking in more nocturnal activities. Both men and women engaged in these new nightly endeavors, but there were still notable expectations in regards to gender roles for men and women. As seen in the scholarship included within this thesis, men were allotted more freedom than women. The Dutch artists who chose to specialize in nocturnal genre scenes depicted these well-known gender roles within their paintings. Seventeenth-century women artists Judith Leyster and Gesina ter Borch worked within the realm of nocturnal genre scenes. Based on the gender roles of the time, these two prominent artists challenged what was deemed acceptable for women in their scenes; whereas their male contemporaries tended to depict what was considered respectable. While previous scholarship has examined the nocturnal scenes of both Leyster and Gesina, as well as their peers, there has not been a discussion on how the specific paintings included would fare on the market. As seen by a variety of scholars, the seventeenth-century Dutch art market was growing rapidly. This development allowed artists to start specializing and tailoring their paintings to attract potential buyers, such as a group known as collectors. This group mostly consisted of middle-to-upper class citizens, but varied in their employment and age. Therefore, while this thesis analyzes nocturnal genre scenes and the seventeenth-century gender roles depicted in them, it also focuses on the market success of these artists and their scenes.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Sarah Cantor, for all her guidance and valuable feedback over the last two years. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. James Hutson and Dr. Melissa Elmes, whose insight helped push my argument further. In addition, I would like to thank the reference librarians and writing specialists I worked with during my time at Lindenwood University. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support throughout this program. I would especially like to thank my mom, whose consistent encouragement has always helped me through various parts of my life.

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Introduction

During the seventeenth century, art in the Netherlands was a popular business, especially among the growing middle and upper classes. Due to their newfound wealth, this population of citizens emerged as new customers for artists, mainly since the Netherlands did not have any royal courts and most of the Dutch nobility lacked the funds to be a dominant force within the art world.¹ The Church also stepped back from buying works after the Reformation in the Netherlands, which meant artists were given fewer commissions. With the number of customers increasing, especially within the middle and upper classes, the art market and artistic production grew. It is estimated the number of painters in the Dutch Republic increased fourfold between 1600 and 1619, and then doubled again from 1619 to 1639.² This growth meant artists faced competition and had to start specializing in certain genres. Paintings ranged in subject, but one of the most popular categories that came from this period was the depiction of genre scenes, or scenes of everyday life. These could be in domestic settings or even in places like taverns. To further differentiate themselves from other genre scene painters, several artists produced nocturnal genre scenes.³ This separation from others would attract different groups of buyers when artists were trying to sell paintings on the open market.

Throughout the Dutch Golden Age (1588-1672), night gained a philosophical and practical importance, mainly because various lighting technologies became affordable and urban

¹ J. Leslie Price, *Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 105.

² Maarten Prak, "Guilds and the Development of the Art Market during the Dutch Golden Age," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 30, no. 3/4 (2003), 238, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3780918>.

³ Throughout this thesis, nocturnal genre scenes are referred to as paintings either dimly lit or were dark except for a brightly lit candle that illuminated the scene.

growth contributed to habits of staying up later and doing more once it got dark.⁴ These new nocturnal opportunities attracted both genders. Men and women partook in various nighttime endeavors, both together and separately, and these ventures were depicted in paintings of the time, such as genre scenes. While nighttime activities were becoming more popular, gender roles still played a significant role on what endeavors were acceptable for women to do. Men were allotted more freedom, but women were still able to participate in nightly activities, just in a different capacity.⁵

In the seventeenth-century Netherlands, male artists far outnumbered women artists. Fortunately, the women artists who were active during the Dutch Golden Age, whether classified as professional or amateur artists, have been rediscovered and analyzed by modern-day scholars. Arguably, the most well-known woman artist of the Dutch Golden Age is Judith Leyster (1609-1660). Leyster was formally trained and considered a successful professional artist by modern scholars. She primarily painted genre scenes. She was one of only two women during the seventeenth century who were admitted to the Haarlem Guild of St Luke, and Leyster's acceptance allowed her to sell her art at the local market and open her own workshop.⁶ Irene Kukota argued she "successfully played by the rules of the masculine art institutions," and as a free player in the seventeenth-century Dutch art market, "she could artistically experiment and

⁴ Nicole Elizabeth Cook, "By Candlelight: Uncovering Early Modern Women's Creative Uses of Night," in *Women Artists and Patrons in the Netherlands, 1500-1700*, ed. by Elizabeth Sutton (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 55.

⁵ See Cook, "By Candlelight" and Benjamin B. Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll: Youth Culture and Masculinity during Holland's Golden Age*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), doi:10.2307/j.ctt46msrz.6.

⁶ Irene Kukota, "Judith Leyster: The Artist Vanishes," in *Thanks for Typing: Remembering Forgotten Women in History*, ed. Juliana Dresvina (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 129, the other woman admitted to the guild was painter Sara van Baalbergen (1607-1638).

enjoy her modest but real market success.”⁷ Even with her success during her lifetime, Leyster was mostly forgotten until her critical revival during the late twentieth century. Leyster’s near erasure from history was mainly due to the misattribution of her works; more specifically, her paintings were credited to her male colleagues.

Gesina ter Borch (1631-1690), who was twenty-two years Leyster’s junior, is the second artist discussed. Gesina was not formally trained and never sold any of her artwork during her lifetime.⁸ She was assumed to only show her work to her friends and family, but received high praise from those who saw her various drawings. She is best known for her poetry albums, which included both poetry and watercolor drawings. These drawings mostly show scenes of everyday life. While Gesina’s life and works are slowly being revived, there is not much scholarship on her work, in contrast to her brother, the artist Gerard ter Borch (1617-1681). She was overlooked, possibly because of her status as an amateur artist and her brother’s success. Nevertheless, her drawings and contributions to her family’s legacy are starting to receive attention from a handful of scholars.⁹

Even though Leyster and Gesina had different artistic careers, both produced works that focused on gender roles and nocturnal activities. They painted men and women interacting in various nightlife endeavors, including creative pursuits and courting activities. They also had male contemporaries that produced similar works to their nocturnal scenes. Leyster’s work is comparable to three of her contemporaries who produced genre scenes: Frans Hals (1582-1666),

⁷ Kukota, “Judith Leyster,” 133.

⁸ Based on previous scholarship on Gesina ter Borch, Gesina’s first name will be used instead of her last name when referencing her to avoid confusion with her brother, Gerard ter Borch.

⁹ See Alison M. Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*, (Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1988); Alison M. Kettering, “Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands: Between Mirror and Comb,” *Women’s Art Journal* 42, no 1 (Spring/Summer 2021); Cook, “By Candlelight.”

Dirck Hals (1591-1656), and Jan Miense Molenaer (1610-1668).¹⁰ Frans Hals' and Leyster's supposed working relationship, as well as the common elements of their style, made comparison easy between their paintings. Next, Dirck Hals, who was Frans Hals' brother, had similarities in works he produced, especially in style and subject, to Leyster and her paintings. Finally, Jan Miense Molenaer and Leyster had a common stylistic approach to paintings, and had a personal relationship. Gesina's drawings are compared to paintings by her brother, Gerard ter Borch, and Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667).¹¹ Her drawings are comparable to her brother's paintings because they demonstrate similar stylistic elements within their works; while Metsu's paintings are comparable with Gesina's drawings because Metsu was influenced by Gerard ter Borch and produced similar subjects.

The peers of these prominent women provide good comparisons for several reasons: they had similar styles, were influenced by the same movement, or worked directly with either Leyster or Gesina. Even with these factors, the depiction of men and women interacting in different nightlife settings often varies. The male contemporaries of these women tended to depict subjects differently than they would. Both Leyster and Gesina challenge what was considered acceptable and unacceptable nocturnal behavior, especially when they are depicting women in these scenes. Their male contemporaries, on the other hand, conform to more traditional gender roles in their depictions. They do not push the boundaries and gravitate towards depicting women and men in more comfortable roles, doing activities that are deemed

¹⁰ Leyster's paintings included are *The Last Drop (The Gay Cavalier)* (figure 2), *Man Offering Money to a Woman (The Proposition)* (figure 4), and *A Game of Tric-Trac* (figure 6). Frans Hals' painting is *Merrymakers at Shrovetide (Shrovetide Revellers)* (figure 3), Dirck Hals' painting is *A Woman Sewing by Candlelight* (figure 5), and finally, Jan Miense Molenaer's painting is *Card Player by Lamplight* (figure 7).

¹¹ Gesina's drawings included are *Man Courting a Lady* (figure 8) and *Night-piece: Couple Walking Behind a Woman with a Lantern* (figure 10). Gerard ter Borch's painting is *The Suitor's Visit* (figure 9) and Gabriel Metsu's painting included is *A Man Smoking a Pipe at a Fireplace* (figure 11).

more appropriate. Comparing these paintings also helps determine the market success of these artists. In other words, analyzing these paintings for how they appealed to potential buyers on the open market in seventeenth-century Netherlands shows the popularity of nocturnal genre scenes. The market itself, as well as the subjects chosen, help determine whether these paintings would attract possible customers. Therefore, this thesis analyzes nocturnal genre scenes produced during the seventeenth-century Netherlands, specifically investigating how gender roles are shown, and how non-traditional approaches indicated a thriving art market that was interested in innovation and novelty.

Literature Review

Nachtstukjes, or night pieces, as nocturnal genre scenes were sometimes called, were becoming well-liked among the seventeenth-century Dutch population. This was because new technologies and mindsets allowed men and women to feel more comfortable participating in nightly activities. Therefore, the first scholarship included analyzes the transition into nightlife from previous centuries. This discussion helps with the understanding of why nocturnal endeavors were becoming so popular in the Netherlands. After an overview of the sources that examine the changes in nightly activities taking place, scholarship that is the most influential to this thesis is introduced. There is a discussion of gender roles in the early modern Netherlands; specifically, focusing on how women were expected to behave at night, and what were deemed acceptable and unacceptable activities for them to participate in. Finally, while modern scholarship has only recently begun seriously investigating these artists, the scholars included in this thesis have helped shape the narrative for both artists. These scholars have taken a closer look at the biographical details of Leyster and Gesina, and analyzed how certain aspects of their lives had affected their approach to their art and nocturnal scenes. This study aims to add to what has been said about these prominent women artists, especially by analyzing how their gender affected the depictions of women in their nocturnal genre scenes.

In regards to societal change allowing for more nocturnal activities all over Europe, Craig Koslofsky examines this phenomenon in his 2011 book.¹² Koslofsky analyzes how daily life translated to nighttime activities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of Europe. More specifically, Koslofsky focuses on what he coins as “nocturnalization,” which is defined as “the

¹² Craig Koslofsky, “An Early Modern Revolution,” in *Evenings Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

ongoing expansion of the legitimate social and symbolic uses of the night.”¹³ The change from staying in at night to going out to gather with others partially came from a better understanding of night; more specifically, people were starting to comprehend the science behind the change from light to dark. This new perception led to people attending certain social gatherings and frequenting places that were staying open later, which allowed people to enjoy their “free time” by playing cards or drinking.¹⁴ Certain individuals were also working later into the night in order to get tasks accomplished in a timely manner. While the night was becoming popular for various activities, Koslofsky notes there were still expectations for the different genders and classes of the time, and both men and women had to be careful not to cross the line that was deemed appropriate for them. For example, wealthy men had very different expectations and boundaries than poor women who lived in the same area. Koslofsky states, “one could move in the blink of an eye from the most legitimate and respectable location in this nocturnal matrix to a far more disorderly, vulnerable, or exciting position.”¹⁵ Men and women had to be careful what location they went to during the night, so they did not stray far from what was safe. Overall, Koslofsky’s scholarship provides a good overview of the transition from strictly daytime activities to people expanding to various gatherings and activities during the night.

Conventions of gender in the Dutch Golden Age played a significant role in how women were expected to conduct themselves, including what were appropriate endeavors. Discussing these gender roles is influential to this thesis. The framework of this study is based on recent research on gender in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. In her 2001 article, Elizabeth

¹³ Koslofsky, “An Early Modern Revolution,” 2.

¹⁴ Koslofsky, “An Early Modern Revolution,” 7.

¹⁵ Koslofsky, “An Early Modern Revolution,” 8.

Alice Honig examines popular creative activities among Dutch women.¹⁶ During this time, women of middle and upper classes were often given training or guidance in a creative field, such as painting or needlework. Even with this training, most women were not expected to make a living off these trades. Instead, these particular creative practices were meant to either support them for a short time or provide a full educational experience; in other words, these women produced works on an “amateur” scale, and could further their particular craft in their leisure time.¹⁷ They were free to use their creative practices however they saw fit and still be valued in their environment. In many instances, these artistic activities were reflected in paintings of domestic settings – something Irene Cieradd refers to as “homescapes” within her 2018 article.¹⁸ She states certain imagery produced by seventeenth-century artists idealized homescapes, such as the depiction of a well-dressed woman who was seated in a domestic interior and was enthralled with her reading or writing.¹⁹ These scenes were almost glamorized, showing women partaking in appropriate creative endeavors comfortably at home.

Nicole Elizabeth Cook discusses similar creative aspects to those discussed by Honig, but shows them in a nocturnal setting in her essay published in 2019.²⁰ In several writings of the time, including those by fifteenth-century Italian writer Laura Cereta, women discuss their freedom at night, and how they were able to partake in creative endeavors more so than during

¹⁶ Elizabeth Alice Honig, "The Art of Being 'Artistic': Dutch Women's Creative Practices in the 17th Century," *Woman's Art Journal* 22, no. 2 (2001), doi:10.2307/1358900.

¹⁷ Honig, "The Art of Being 'Artistic'," 31-32, Honig notes there are artists who did not follow this expectation, including Judith Leyster.

¹⁸ Irene Cieradd, “Rocking the Cradle of Dutch Domesticity: A Radical Reinterpretation of Seventeenth-Century ‘Homescapes’,” *Home Culture* 15, no. 1 (2018), doi:10.1080/17406315.2018.1555122.

¹⁹ Irene Cieradd, “Het interieur als decor van het huiselijk leven,” *Gen. Tijdschrift voor familiegeschiedenis*, 22, no. 4, (2016), quoted in Cieradd, “Rocking the Cradle of Dutch Domesticity,” 75.

²⁰ Cook, “By Candlelight.”

the daytime.²¹ In part, it seems many of these women were torn between their creative activities, such as writing, and the “demands of domestic responsibilities” during the day.²² These tasks could include various homemaking duties, such as taking care of children or household chores. Therefore, it is clear why many of these women choose to do their creative pursuits at night when there was not as much responsibility or noise, even though there were other obstacles to overcome, such as exhaustion or inadequate lighting.²³ These obstacles seemed not to bother many women, for Cook states they were able to see their works in different light and perhaps produce more impressive projects because of it.²⁴ Cook’s analysis of nighttime activities provides a better understanding of how some women used their newfound free time, whereas Honig’s provides an understanding of creative practices in general.

Middle-to-upper-class women had the freedom to partake in creative activities during the night, particularly because they were at home. If they participated in any nighttime activities outdoors, there were different standards. If they were unaccompanied at night, women were assumed to be participating in immoral activities, according to the 2017 essay by Helen Baker and Anthony McEnery.²⁵ This assumption is partially the reason prostitutes are known as nightwalkers; before the start of the seventeenth century, nightwalker was an “umbrella term to

²¹ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 56.

²² Cook, “By Candlelight,” 58-59.

²³ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 60.

²⁴ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 58, 60.

²⁵ Anthony McEnery and Helen Baker, "Life as a 17th-Century Prostitute," in *Corpus Linguistics and 17th-Century Prostitution: Computational Linguistics and History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781474295062>.

refer to suspicious people who were out of doors after dusk.”²⁶ The assumption was no respectable women would be seen out alone at night, walking the streets, unless they were working in what was considered an unsavory profession. This belief stems from actual nocturnal activities of the seventeenth century. In his 2012 book, Benjamin B. Roberts notes “after sunset, many early modern European cities turned into Sodom and Gomorrah. At night, they were overrun by prostitutes, thieves, and people engaging in criminal activity.”²⁷ According to Roberts, night was a popular time for people who partook in endeavors that were illegal.

While many European countries did have some type of educated or higher class of sex worker, the Netherlands did not. Lotte van der Pol, in her 2010 article, states Dutch prostitutes hailed from lower classes, and an educated class of courtesans did not exist within the Netherlands.²⁸ Ann Jensen Adams’ 1999 essay goes one step further and adds prostitutes were comparable to foreign mercenaries, both in terms of their social status and the fact they “sold their bodies for very low pay.”²⁹ Furthermore, both were regarded as the most unruly part of society and were considered close to men’s and women’s natural state, which would have supposedly subverted social stability.³⁰ These states refer to men’s and women’s natural desires and passions, such as a woman’s sexuality and temptations. Nevertheless, even though these

²⁶ McEnery and Baker, "Life as a 17th-Century Prostitute," 39, with this, it is easy to see the connection that was made to refer to women (also could refer to men) who were partaking in “disreputable activity.”

²⁷ Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*, 155.

²⁸ Lotte van der Pol, "The Whore, the Bawd, and the Artist: The Reality and Imagery of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Prostitution," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2, no. 1-2 (2010), 5, doi:10.5092/jhna.2010.2.1.3.

²⁹ Ann Jensen Adams, “Money and the Regulation of Desire: The Prostitute and the Marketplace in Seventeenth-Century Holland,” in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. by Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 237.

³⁰ Adams, “Money and the Regulation of Desire,” 237-238.

women hailed from the lower classes, van der Pol notes they were supplied with clothing made from fabrics similar to those worn by upper-class women. These articles of clothing were provided by these women's bawds, who were "the female organizers of prostitution" and provided housing and finances to the women they employed.³¹ Van der Pol states that bawds were predominately women, which might contradict prior beliefs of men running these prostitution spaces:

So why were the "whore-managers" nearly always women? The answer lies in the functioning of the preindustrial economy: bawds essentially operated as small traders, peddlers in vice. Petty trading throughout preindustrial Europe was women's work, with seventeenth-century Holland no exception. Add to this the traditional custom according to which women supervised the household, including female personnel. In sum, brothel-keeping and procuring functioned as illegal forms of typical women's work. A man who performed such work would taint his honor.³²

As mentioned, this profession was considered women's work, both on the business side of things as well as the act of prostitution. It was considered a disreputable activity for a woman to participate in, both during the day and at night.

Along with premarital sex, prostitutes engaged in other activities that were deemed unacceptable for a middle- or higher-class women, but acceptable for men. These ventures included drinking, smoking, and gambling. According to Roberts, women were not expected to drink in large amounts, for a drunken woman was considered taboo and represented an outcast.³³ Furthermore, some contemporary scholars state there was a belief of a "fine line between excessive drinking and engaging in premarital sex," and women were more "tempted by the

³¹ Van der Pol, "The Whore, the Bawd, and the Artist," 6.

³² Van der Pol, "The Whore, the Bawd, and the Artist," 7.

³³ Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*, 80.

flesh” when intoxicated and therefore would have a hard time remaining chaste.³⁴ This idea is further expanded upon by Lynn Martin:

Just as women were expected to preserve their chastity so also were they expected to maintain their sobriety. The two double standards were linked because of the widespread opinion that a sober woman was chaste while a drunken woman would be promiscuous. Not only did men have a great freedom than women in matters of sexuality, but they also had the right to consume vast amounts of alcoholic beverages, not just the right but also the duty if they were to uphold their honor and status.³⁵

Hence, it is clear why prostitutes were looked down upon in society; they were not only being promiscuous with their sexuality, but they were also consuming large amounts of alcohol.

Women were not expected to drink, whereas for men, excessive drinking and being able to hold one’s liquor was a rite of passage. In addition, smoking was also considered something only men could do, and was “an expression of manhood,” similar to drinking and gambling.³⁶ Young women smoking would not be commonplace until the late seventeenth century, so at the beginning of the century, a woman smoking was “unthinkable” to some.³⁷ With all these factors, it is blatantly apparent there was a large double standard between men and women. Roberts even notes “by the day’s end, young men would congregate to chat, drink, play cards, and flirt.”³⁸ Women, it seems, were not granted the same freedom in choosing which nocturnal activities to participate in.

³⁴ Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*, 80.

³⁵ A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 134, quoted in Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*, 76.

³⁶ Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*, 182.

³⁷ Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*, 182.

³⁸ Roberts, *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*, 155.

While nightlife was believed to lead into unruly behavior, seemingly by the older generations, not everything that happened at night was bad. In fact, according to Cook, there was a “new vogue” happening across Europe of going out for social visits and walks at night, and was specifically popular among the younger generations.³⁹ It was common for younger people to be with each other at night, staying up later, and participating in social visits, courting, or even singing.⁴⁰ One example that stands out is the process of courting, which was slightly different than in other European countries and had its own unique rituals. In their 2004 article, Roberts and Leendert F. Groenendijk convey that Dutch courting rituals actually allowed people of the opposite gender to be together without a chaperone and have physical contact, mainly because it was stated “teasing bodily contact between the sexes was an important part of [the] courting ritual.”⁴¹ While young people (especially women) were encouraged to wait until marriage to have sexual intercourse, these courting rituals allowed for other forms of intimacy and could happen both during the day and at night.

Nightlife was not the only thing on the rise during the Dutch Golden Age. Compared to previous centuries, the seventeenth-century Dutch art market was expanding rapidly. In fact, in his article published in 1988, John Michael Montias reports “the market for art in the first half of the century expanded even faster than the rest of the economy, as consumers with rising incomes devoted an increasing portion of their budgets to paintings and other works of art.”⁴² This, of

³⁹ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 73-74.

⁴⁰ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 74.

⁴¹ Benjamin B. Roberts and Leendert F. Groenendijk, “‘Wearing out a Pair of Fool’s Shoes’: Sexual Advice for Youth in Holland’s Golden Age,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13, no. 2 (2004), 145, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3704853>.

⁴² John Michael Montias, “Art Dealers in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 18, no. 4 (1988), 245, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3780702>.

course, refers to the new upper and middle classes who were buying paintings to decorate their homes. As previously mentioned, after the Reformation happened within the Netherlands, the Catholic Church was not involved in the arts in the same capacity as before. In Michael North's 1997 book, he notes the Church was not a patron in areas dominated by Calvinists, and all art displayed in the church was very minimal, leaving little room for commissions of any kind.⁴³ In regards to aristocratic families, the House of Orange, which has been the ruling family of the Netherlands since the sixteenth century, did little with the arts compared to their contemporaries in other European countries.⁴⁴ In fact, North states city and provincial governments gave more support to Dutch painters than the House of Orange, which does not say much since these types of commissions were not numerous.⁴⁵ Without the Church or any aristocratic families commissioning art regularly, this opened the market for other interested buyers.

These new customers altered the art market, which in turn changed how painters produced artwork. North notes a majority of painters in the seventeenth-century Netherlands were not granted "regular commissions from public or private individuals," but this does not mean commissions were completely obsolete.⁴⁶ Thera Wijzenbeek-Olthuis and Leo Noordegraaf's essay, published in 1993, affirms there was still a market for commissions, and these paintings usually scored the highest prices in terms of salary.⁴⁷ The best chance for

⁴³ Michael North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 82, many paintings and statues were destroyed during the iconoclasm, but those that survived were removed. Walls were painted over and North states the only decorative element left in churches were decorative organs.

⁴⁴ North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, 82.

⁴⁵ North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, 84-85.

⁴⁶ North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, 87.

⁴⁷ Thera Wijzenbeek-Olthuis and Leo Noordegraaf, "Painting for a Living: The Economic Context of Judith Leyster's Career," in *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and Her World*, ed. James A. Welu and Pieter Biesboer (New York: Yale University Press, 1993), 46.

commissions was in the portrait market, but one needed a high reputation with the city's elite in order to paint their portraits.⁴⁸ In addition, Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf mention history paintings were a respectable category, and were valued highly, but only a few artists ventured into this category because of the small market.⁴⁹ Therefore, if one were to sell on the new market, they would have to produce paintings in other subjects, such as landscapes and genre scenes. According to North, there were a variety of ways artists could sell their paintings on the market to potential buyers. For example, artists could sell directly to clients who visited the artist's studio, or through events, such as exhibitions and sales, organized by the Guild of St Luke.⁵⁰ Additionally, artists were able to put their artwork in lotteries or auction them off to attract interested parties.⁵¹ Occasionally, artists would even use their paintings to pay off their debts with the local tavern or merchant; since many painters considered their work to be "a valuable asset or a means of exchange" that could be used to pay off loans.⁵² This new way to sell paintings completely changed the art market in the Netherlands.

As previously mentioned, serious scholarship on both Leyster and Gesina has only been published within the last forty years. Nevertheless, the research on these two artists is the most influential to this thesis, and provides a better understanding of Leyster's and Gesina's personal

⁴⁸ Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, "Painting for a Living," 47, it is said the city's elite were "bound to be sensitive to status," and being painted by a highly regarded artist would only help enhance their standing in society.

⁴⁹ Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, "Painting for a Living," 48, Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf expand further to say history paintings were expensive because of their size (which would increase the cost of materials). In addition, one would need knowledge in mythological, biblical, and allegorical subjects to be successful and gain commissions.

⁵⁰ North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, 87.

⁵¹ North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, 87.

⁵² North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, 87, 92.

lives, artistic careers, and styles. Leyster had a short, but successful, professional career as an artist. After her marriage to fellow painter Jan Miense Molenaer in 1636, she took on more of a management role for Molenaer's career, as well as handling all domestic responsibilities.⁵³ As a result, she painted very little. While she was still an active artist, Leyster developed a unique style, which was nurtured through several different influences, including Frans Hals. Hals was a well-known painter of the Dutch Golden Age and is assumed to have trained Leyster, which might explain their comparable stylistic features. These similarities led to many of Leyster's works being attributed to him throughout history until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when her now famous monogram was rediscovered under forged signatures.⁵⁴ Leyster's monogram consisted of her initials, J and L, which "conjoined into a mysterious monogram, struck through with a five-pointed shooting star."⁵⁵ One of the most famous examples of Leyster's hidden signature was with her painting titled *The Carousing Couple* (figure 1). Once the painting's origins were called into question in 1892, art historian Cornelis Hofstede de Groot was consulted. After analyzing the painting, he dismissed the work as a Frans Hals painting and instead reattributed the work to Leyster based on her unique monogram.⁵⁶ The following year after the discovery, Hofstede de Groot published "groundbreaking research" that once again brought Leyster to light after nearly two and a half centuries.⁵⁷

⁵³ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 134.

⁵⁴ Frieda van Emden, "Judith Leyster, a Female Frans Hals," *The Art World* 3, no. 6 (1918), 501, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25588385>.

⁵⁵ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 130, Kukota notes that Leyster's signature monogram showed her "determination and assertiveness," and was showing she could be a leading artist in the world.

⁵⁶ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 136.

⁵⁷ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 136.

After her revival, scholarship published on Leyster was mostly comparative between her and Frans Hals. One of the earliest examples is the 1918 article written by Frieda van Emden, who states that Leyster's "style of work resembles [Hals] to the point of confusion."⁵⁸ Van Emden notes the similarities in posing, as well as the technical aspects like colors choices and brushstrokes. Additionally, the essay discusses the similarities in subjects, and how sometimes Leyster was "so intense" with her subjects that she was "more Frans Hals than Frans Hals."⁵⁹ In other words, for early art historians such as van Emden, Leyster's works were more reminiscent of Hals' paintings than Hals himself. While this article, and others later, demonstrated Leyster's achievements, she still was not highly regarded as an artist, and her ability compared to Hals was questioned.⁶⁰ As van Emden's article illustrates, Leyster was seen as the female Frans Hals: an imposter or copyist of his work. Leyster had yet to be seen as her own artist, with talent comparable to and perhaps even surpassing that of her mentor.

During the second half of the twentieth century, scholarship about Leyster was changing. This shift is especially true during the second wave of feminism, where many women artists were analyzed and researched as individuals. Leyster began to be seen as her own artist rather than a painter who imitated her male contemporaries. Prominent Judith Leyster scholar Frima Fox Hofrichter is one art historian who has brought Leyster's career back to light. She has written several trailblazing articles and books on Leyster since the 1970s. She has also reattributed several Leyster paintings and brought forward new ways to analyze Leyster and her

⁵⁸ Van Emden, "Judith Leyster, A Female Frans Hals," 501.

⁵⁹ Van Emden, "Judith Leyster, A Female Frans Hals," 503.

⁶⁰ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 136, Kukota cites articles published by Robert Dangers in 1928 and James Laver in 1964.

paintings. Concerning Leyster's nocturnal scenes, one movement Hofrichter notes as an influence on her paintings is the short-lived Utrecht Caravaggisti movement (1620-1630), which Hofrichter assumes Leyster came in contact with when her family moved to Vreeland, a town near Utrecht, in 1628.⁶¹ The movement itself was started by a Dutch group of painters who traveled to Italy and were influenced by the work of Caravaggio. One of their focuses was genre scenes, and their compositional impacts were also "heightened by contrasting areas of light and dark" while also striving for realism.⁶² The movement itself only lasted about a decade, but the strong lighting and shadows prevalent in the movement are seen throughout Leyster's nocturnal paintings.

The most recent scholarship on Leyster's interest in nocturnal imagery is Cook's essay mentioned earlier. Cook notes Leyster's nocturnal imagery shows "her engagement with the new interests in artificial light" that was making its way through a variety of artistic communities in Europe.⁶³ Leyster was interested in understanding how artificial light, such as candles, could be used within her paintings and what effects they would have on the subject. Cook also believes Leyster studied the visual effects of the night, specifically for its narrative power and aesthetic effect.⁶⁴ By analyzing these results, Leyster was able to create "hushed moments of suspended time and narrative ambiguity" within her pieces.⁶⁵ This includes the figures Leyster painted. The

⁶¹ Frima Fox Hofrichter, *Judith Leyster: A Woman Painter in Hollands Golden Age* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1989), 14.

⁶² Paul Huys Janssen, "Utrecht Caravaggisti," *Grove Art Online*, 2003, 1, doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T087469

⁶³ Cook, "By Candlelight," 61.

⁶⁴ Cook, "By Candlelight," 61-62.

⁶⁵ Cook, "By Candlelight," 61.

men in these scenes are usually the “nocturnal revelers,” whereas women would occasionally join in on the entertainment, but often would be depicted working.⁶⁶ A majority of the time, the viewer is unsure whether the figures within these scenes are participating in acceptable or unacceptable behavior. This ambiguous nature of these depictions is because Leyster often portrays women in scenes with men where the intentions of both are unclear.

Leyster’s specialty in genre scenes was largely due to the competition seen in the seventeenth-century Dutch art market. Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf note these types of paintings would attract a group they term as “collectors,” which was a group modest in size, came from “diverse ranks of society,” and were “real enthusiasts” for art.⁶⁷ The first collectors in Haarlem were Flemish refugees, who introduced the “fashion for collecting paintings.”⁶⁸ According to Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, in order to attract these collectors, painters had to focus on a particular genre and concentrate on their compositions and techniques.⁶⁹ For example, Cook notes there was a group called *liefhebbers van de schilderkunst*, or the “lovers of the Art of Painting.”⁷⁰ This association of “learned amateurs” studied paintings, as well as additional works of art, in order to have a conversation and discuss various meanings with others who had a similar interest.⁷¹ Therefore, this particular group was most interested in paintings that had an unclear meaning. Even though artists were specializing in certain subjects to attract these

⁶⁶ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 61.

⁶⁷ Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, “Painting for a Living,” 48, these collectors are said to have ranged from merchants and burgomasters to potters and ship’s carpenters.

⁶⁸ Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, “Painting for a Living,” 48.

⁶⁹ Wijssenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, “Painting for a Living,” 48.

⁷⁰ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 66.

⁷¹ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 66.

collectors, or other specialized groups, there were no guarantees the chosen category would gain the attention of this set of art enthusiasts. Wijsenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf report artists would have had a greater reliance on the open market, which means they would have less of a chance for a regular salary.⁷²

Despite Leyster's "innovative features and trademark of her figure pieces," and the fact these paintings were tailored to collectors, genre scenes, or 'modern figures' as they were called during the time, sold for much less than other paintings and were valued lower because of their size.⁷³ One example of these lower prices is shown in an inventory taken of the estate of Leyster's brother-in-law, Gerard ten Berch. According to Peter Biesboer, ten Berch owned two of Leyster's paintings that were "small and inexpensive;" one was worth 3 guilders and 3 stuivers while the other was worth 12 stuivers.⁷⁴ Yet, her artwork still stood out among her peers. She produced quality paintings with a wider appeal, and collectors ranked her work just under the top-ranking artists of the time.⁷⁵ She was successful during her active years as an artist and was able to compete in a tough market.

⁷² Wijsenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, "Painting for a Living," 48, this can specifically reference gaining commissions.

⁷³ Wijsenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, "Painting for a Living," 48.

⁷⁴ Pieter Biesboer, "Judith Leyster: Painter of 'Modern Figures,'" in *Judith Leyster: A Dutch Master and Her World*, ed. James A. Welu and Pieter Biesboer (New York: Yale University Press, 1993), 86; in 2002, the guilder was replaced by the euro, and De Nederlandsche Bank states the exchange rate is 2.20371 guilders to one euro. One euro is equivalent to 1.08 USD. Stuivers have not been in circulation since the early half of the nineteenth century, but twenty stuivers are said to have equaled one guilder.

⁷⁵ Wijsenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, "Painting for a Living," 48-49, 52, Wijsenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf do not note any specific collectors praising her work. Leyster's name only appears five times out of 702 inventories from 1620-1670, but it can be assumed she did have unnamed paintings within these collections since many paintings listed in inventories from seventeenth-century Haarlem did not name artists.

In contrast to Leyster, there is not much modern-day scholarship available for Gesina ter Borch as an individual artist, especially in English.⁷⁶ One of the earliest examples is the 1988 catalogue by Alison M. Kettering; and in it, Kettering examines Gesina's upbringing and artistic ability.⁷⁷ Kettering notes when Gesina was younger, she worked with embroidery and calligraphy, and it was not until she was seventeen that she started working on drawings.⁷⁸ This age is relatively late compared to her brothers, who began drawing as early as seven years old. Kettering affirms she "was not her father's student" in the same sense her brothers were, and instead, learned to draw with her younger brothers, Harmen and Moses.⁷⁹ Her drawings mostly consisted of miniature watercolors, which Kettering notes directly related to "contemporary cultural restrictions on her gender, for the art of miniature painting had been pursued by women since medieval times and would have been considered an acceptable outlet for her feminine talents."⁸⁰ These watercolors would either appear by themselves or accompanying a poem.

Unlike Leyster, Gesina never married, but instead dedicated herself to managing and preserving her family's artistic estate, including many of her own drawings.⁸¹ Kettering states this freedom also allowed her to continue pursuing various forms of art and develop her skills

⁷⁶ Although scholarship is limited, there is more scholarship on Gesina in other languages, such as Dutch.

⁷⁷ Alison M. Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*.

⁷⁸ Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*, 362.

⁷⁹ Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*, 362.

⁸⁰ Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*, 362.

⁸¹ Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*, 363; Kettering, "Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands: Between Mirror and Comb," 32, Kettering notes that Gesina's guardianship of her family's art, as well as her own, is one of the reasons modern scholars know more about her than other Dutch amateur woman artists.

even further.⁸² According to Martha Moffitt Peacock’s 2020 book, Gesina’s commitment to the arts helped her acquire some renown in her city of Zwolle, but her reputation was not as widespread as other women of the time.⁸³ Nevertheless, many of her friends wrote about her accomplishments, one even claiming her talent superseded that of many male artists of the time.⁸⁴ She was highly regarded in the small circle that was allowed to view her work. To date, there have been no records found stating Gesina ever sold her work. She created her drawings for personal enjoyment instead of trying to sell her drawings.

Gesina was best known for her poetry albums that showcased her skills in both calligraphy and watercolor. Her lack of formal training allowed her to develop her own style within her watercolors.⁸⁵ Gesina’s absence of proper schooling is explored more in Kettering’s article published in 2021.⁸⁶ Kettering notes the more Gesina practiced with her watercolors, the more she moved away from transparency with her colors, and instead focused on thickening paint, intensifying color, and including fuller settings.⁸⁷ In addition, by 1658, she was producing scenes and handing “the paint with a miniaturist’s sense of delineation.”⁸⁸ In other words, Gesina was so precise with all aspects of her drawings that the viewer could easily see any detail

⁸² Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*, 363, Kettering cites a poem by Gesina’s contemporary Schoolmaster Roldanus. Within the poem, Roldanus discusses Gesina’s personality and her commitment to the arts.

⁸³ Martha Moffitt Peacock, *Heroines, Harpies and Housewives: Imaging Women of Consequence in the Dutch Golden Age* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 165.

⁸⁴ Peacock, *Heroines, Harpies and Housewives*, 167, this specific praise came from Robert Altius, but Peacock cites several friends writing highly about Gesina including Henrik Jordis and Anna Adriana Geerdinx.

⁸⁵ Kettering, “Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands,” 32.

⁸⁶ Kettering, “Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands.”

⁸⁷ Kettering, “Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands,” 32.

⁸⁸ Kettering, “Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands,” 32.

included. These drawings mostly focused on genre scenes and portraits, and Kettering observes her collection never included flowers, insects, fruits, or other creatures.⁸⁹ As stated above, even with her status as an amateur, her talents were well admired among her close peers, such as friends and family.

While Gesina has been reconsidered as an artist in her own right by a few modern scholars, sources concerning her nocturnal scenes are especially lacking. Within the same essay analyzing Leyster's nocturnal scenes, Cook discusses Gesina's nocturnal watercolors and how she was interested in showing the "expanding social possibilities" of the night, especially for women.⁹⁰ The nocturnal scenes she created mostly depict romance activities between men and women, such as walking together at night or courting. She used a monochromatic palette, which echoes the limited perception one would have of colors after dark.⁹¹ Sometimes she would include pops of color. Like Leyster, Cook argues Gesina was also interested in the visual effects that artificial light had within her watercolors. Her cast shadows, silhouetted buildings, and sharp points of bright light indicate she focused on and tried to understand the visual experience of night.⁹² These elements allowed Gesina to have a better understanding of nocturnal effects and how they could affect her genre scenes.

One of the most influential works to this thesis is Cook's essay discussing Leyster's and Gesina's nocturnal genre scenes. While Cook provides a good overview of both artists' nocturnal styles, as well as analyzing several of their nocturnal works, this thesis builds on her ideas and

⁸⁹ Kettering, "Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands," 32.

⁹⁰ Cook, "By Candlelight," 69.

⁹¹ Cook, "By Candlelight," 72.

⁹² Cook, "By Candlelight," 73.

adds a new dimension through the discussion on the seventeenth-century Dutch art market. This dialogue brings a deeper understanding of nocturnal scenes by seeing how these artists were tailoring their paintings for market trends. In other words, examining Leyster, Gesina, and their contemporaries' nocturnal genre scenes with this angle shows how they appealed to a buyer on the Dutch market. The market, as well as the analysis of these paintings, is explored more in the next section.

Chapter One: Judith Leyster

Examining the framework of Judith Leyster's artistic career allows for a deeper understanding of Leyster and her work while also providing context not addressed in the previous section. Leyster started her artistic career without much financial support, for her parents had to declare bankruptcy on their brewery in 1625.⁹³ Contemporary scholars speculate where Leyster first got her training. Some suggest Leyster could have studied with Frans Pietersz de Grebber (1573-1649), who was best known for his portraits and history paintings. Seventeenth-century city chronicler Samuel Ampzing connects nineteen-year-old Leyster and Frans Pietersz de Grebber's daughter, Maria de Grebber (1602-1680), as co-pupils in his 1628 *Description and Praise of the City of Haarlem in Holland*.⁹⁴ While Leyster's name is linked to the de Grebber family in Ampzing's account, there is "no trace of any influence of a training period in the De Grebber studio" in Leyster's paintings.⁹⁵ The lack of evidence leads into Leyster's connection with one of Haarlem's leading artists: Frans Hals. While there is no "documentary proof" Leyster studied or worked in his studio, many scholars continue to believe Leyster had some type of working relationship with Hals.⁹⁶ This association is especially true with her style, which was discussed in the previous section and is brought in again to analyze her paintings.

⁹³ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 129.

⁹⁴ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 129.

⁹⁵ Biesboer, "Judith Leyster," 77, Biesboer does note the painting *David with the Head of Goliath* would be the only evidence linking Leyster to the de Grebber studio. This, of course, was if it was authenticated, but even in present day, the whereabouts of the paintings are unknown.

⁹⁶ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 129, Kukota notes that Leyster knew him on a personal level as well, as she was present for the baptism of Hals' daughter in 1631.

As briefly mentioned before, Leyster joined the Haarlem Guild of St Luke in 1633. While she did not have to join the guild in order to make a living as an artist, joining reinforced her status as a professional painter and helped her gain extra income.⁹⁷ This extra income came from being able to open her own studio and take on students, which helped with her earnings. Leyster is the only known Dutch woman artist who ran her own workshop, which was located just one street away from the central square of the town.⁹⁸ In 1636, after a successful seven-year career, Leyster married Jan Miense Molenaer. This union stopped Leyster's career, and she rarely painted after their marriage.⁹⁹

While looking at Leyster's contemporaries, it is hard to ignore the connection between her and Frans Hals. He was best known for his portrait paintings. Leyster is said to have adopted his subjects, sketchy style, and coloring while creating her paintings.¹⁰⁰ She is also stated to have come the "closest to mastering Hals's virtuosity."¹⁰¹ In other words, she was one artist who was adjacent to Frans Hals' technical skill in painting. Leyster's 1629 nocturnal scene titled *The Last Drop (The Gay Cavalier)* (figure 2) is analyzed next to Hals' 1616-1617 *Merrymakers at Shrovetide (Shrovetide Revellers)* (figure 3). Both scenes depict *Vastenavond*, which is the Eve of Lent when people would binge on pleasures they were not allowed during the Lent season.

⁹⁷ Wijsenbeek-Olthuis and Noordegraaf, "Painting for a Living," 44. They notes there were several women artist who did not join the guild and still made a living selling paintings.

⁹⁸ Kukota, "Judith Leyster," 133. Kukota states the location of her workshop provided her "reputable standing as a professional artist."

⁹⁹ There have been several works that have been attributed to Leyster after her marriage to Molenaer. This includes a self-portrait and tulip watercolor.

¹⁰⁰ Biesboer, "Judith Leyster," 78.

¹⁰¹ Dennis P. Weller, *Jan Miense Molenaer: Painter of the Dutch Golden Age* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Museum of Art, 2002), 11.

These paintings show men participating in a variety of vices, including overindulging in alcohol and food, as well as acting foolishly. These were all common occurrences for the night.

Leyster's *The Last Drop (The Gay Cavalier)* depicts three figures in total: two men and a skeleton. Both men have clearly overindulged; one is still drinking, and the other holds his drinking vessel upside down in his left hand, smoking paraphernalia in his other hand. Both men are wearing festive costumes, which appear to be pulled over their regular clothes.¹⁰² Neither is paying attention to the skeleton which holds an hourglass above its head with one hand. In the skeleton's other hand, a skull and candle are present. The candle itself is lit and provides sharp lighting within the space. Leyster appears to have set the scene in an empty interior. Cook states Leyster's use of artificial lighting within the painting is "ambitious," and a major portion of the canvas is devoted to the abstracted shadow patterns seen on the floor and walls.¹⁰³ In addition, the highlights that outline the figures' faces are reminiscent of the advice from Karel van Mander, a sixteenth-century painter and art writer from the Netherlands. According to his book, candlelight is a "rare thing" and "difficult to fashion," therefore, he recommends the painter place the entire figure in the shadow, and allow the "candlelight to rake only the exposed edge of hair or clothing."¹⁰⁴ Leyster accomplishes van Mander's advice in her scene.

One of Frans Hals' earliest works is his genre scene *Merrymakers at Shrovetide (Shrovetide Revellers)*. Even though Hals was best known for his portraits, in his earlier career, he created genre scenes. The divergence could combat any economic difficulties for him and

¹⁰² Cook, "By Candlelight," 63.

¹⁰³ Cook, "By Candlelight," 63.

¹⁰⁴ Walter Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel Van Mander's Schilder-Boeck*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 71-72, quoted in Cook, "By Candlelight," 63.

“open new markets...[where he] could sell his wares, generate revenue, and...create a name for himself.”¹⁰⁵ In this particular painting, Hals includes more figures than Leyster’s (the painting has nine characters in total). These are not random figures either; several included within the painting are popular theatre characters. Hans Worst (John Sausage) and Pekelharing (Pickled Herring) are two of the figures who are illuminated within the foreground. These roles are identifiable based on certain characteristics, such as the food seen on their person. Scholars suggest the other figure, who is also illuminated in the middle of the painting, is a young boy in drag, rather than a young girl.¹⁰⁶ Pekelharing is the only main character who looks out directly at the viewer, but two background figures also engage the viewer as well. The background characters are painted in the shadows to perhaps help the three main characters stand out. The plays these roles were a part of were performed by a chamber of rhetoricians, usually in private rooms, and the organizations themselves were exclusively male.¹⁰⁷ Hals himself was involved with the Haarlem chamber of rhetoric. The figures and humor in this setting were often crude, and the painting itself featured subjects and symbols that “were too lewd for the average Haarlem household.”¹⁰⁸ In addition, there are also references to overindulgences with both food

¹⁰⁵ Christopher D.M. Atkins, *The Signature Style of Frans Hals: Painting, Subjectivity, and the Market in Early Modernity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 122, Atkins notes it is possible Hals faced some financial difficulties early in his career, which could explain his start in genre scenes and selling on the open market.

¹⁰⁶ Walter Leidtke, “Frans Hals,” in *Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press), 2007, 254, the suggestion has been made based on the hairstyle elaborate dressed, and the fact women were not permitted to participate in these events.

¹⁰⁷ Leidtke, “Frans Hals,” 254.

¹⁰⁸ Leidtke, “Frans Hals,” 254, Leidtke notes a variety of objects and food that relate to either men or women’s genital. This includes, but is not limited to, sausages, eggs, and mussels.

and drink.¹⁰⁹ Hals captures the festivities that take place during this event, but includes different elements than those found in Leyster's scene.

As shown, both artists depict the same event, and even share some similarities while portraying gender roles. The two paintings clearly show *Vastenavond* as a night where overindulgences were accepted. As mentioned previously, men on a normal basis were expected to be able to hold their liquor, even when they consumed way too much. Binging on alcohol was a rite of passage, and *Vastenavond* is when men were able to test their limits even further. Smoking was also something men partook in, so Leyster's inclusion of the pipe as an indulgence for the night is understandable. Hals also includes smoking paraphernalia, but it is not as prevalent as in the scene by Leyster. Hals and Leyster both show acceptable nocturnal activities for men, but each convey a different tone and the paintings appeal to different audiences.

Leyster's *The Last Drop (The Gay Cavalier)* appears to be reminding the viewer of the dangers of certain earthly pleasures. These were themes popular in *vanitas* paintings. In the seventeenth century, *vanitas* paintings were favored among the Dutch population; they included symbols that showcased different themes, such as human morality or vanity of earthly pleasures. Skeletons were a popular choice to depict mortality. Leyster's inclusion of *vanitas* symbols would attract potential buyers on the open market. These possible new customers included the group mentioned above, called the *liefhebbers van de schilder Konst*, also known as the "lovers of the Art of Painting." On the other hand, Hals is only appealing to a male audience. While his painting is much cheerier than Leyster's, only a male audience with access to the theatre would recognize the characters or crude symbolism. Hals' painting on the open market would only

¹⁰⁹ Leidtke, "Frans Hals," 254, Leidtke states that the over-sized spoon, the Pekelharing's pipe, and jug could all be references to overindulging in food and drink.

attract limited clientele. Therefore, even though these two artworks depict the same event, and both artists are showing the normalcy of men overindulging in drink and other vices, these paintings would interest different audiences on the open market. Leyster would be able to reach a wider audience with the inclusion of the popular *vanitas* symbols, whereas Hals' subject would only be understood among the theatre population, which was exclusively male.

Frans Hals' younger brother, Dirck Hals, is another of Leyster's contemporaries working in a similar style. Dirck Hals joined the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke relatively late in his life, but was still moderately successful as an artist.¹¹⁰ He was best known for genre scenes, specifically those referred to as 'merry company' scenes, but also more intimate genre scenes. Pieter Biesboer believes that Dirck Hals had an "equally important influence" on Leyster and her paintings as his brother did.¹¹¹ For their nocturnal genre scenes, Leyster's 1631 *Man Offering Money to a Woman (The Proposition)* (figure 4) is analyzed next to Hals' 1633 *A Woman Sewing by Candlelight* (figure 5).

Leyster's painting *Man Offering Money to a Woman (The Proposition)* depicts a woman deeply concentrated on her needlework by candlelight. A man hovers above her, showing her a hand full of coins. The two figures are in what appears to be an interior setting. The somewhat tense scene has been a topic of debate for years. Cook believes the scene itself is meant to be ambiguous and open for interpretation. The unknown relationship of the figures within the scene is enhanced by the woman's "complete self-contained state," and neither the man or the viewer is

¹¹⁰ Atkins, *The Signature Style of Frans Hals*, 163, Atkins notes Hals did not join the guild until he was thirty-six years old.

¹¹¹ Biesboer, "Judith Leyster," 80.

able to understand what she is thinking.¹¹² Cook further states the woman's concentration possibly illustrates the work ethic of Dutch women of the time, specifically at night, compared to their male counterparts. Hofrichter, on the other hand, argues Leyster's painting could be a "critical response" to brothel scenes of the time.¹¹³ In Dutch slang, "to sew" is a reference to sex, but Leyster's inclusion of the woman sewing is "deliberately ambiguous."¹¹⁴ Hofrichter states the woman appears uninterested and instead could be a dedicated housewife, demonstrating her domestic virtue to her craft.¹¹⁵ If the woman was "sewing," Hofrichter notes she would be more of a "willing and active participant" by entertaining the man, and possibly drinking, smoking, and wearing more provocative clothing.¹¹⁶ Both Cook and Hofrichter believe Leyster's painting was meant to be open for interpretation.

Leyster's piece can be closely compared to Dirck Hals' *A Women Sewing by Candlelight*. These intimate, domestic scenes was themes Hals would often paint. Similar to Leyster's painting, the woman is working on needlework by candlelight. The woman's two children are with her in the scene and are sitting by a fire. One child looks out directly at the viewer with a surprised expression. Even with both light sources (the fire and the candle), the candle on the wall gives off the most light in the scene. The woman herself is almost fully illuminated while her children are almost in complete darkness. The scene appears to be set in an interior, and Hals' cropping adds to the more intimate feeling of the space.

¹¹² Cook, "By Candlelight," 66.

¹¹³ Hofrichter, *Judith Leyster*, 47.

¹¹⁴ Hofrichter, *Judith Leyster*, 47.

¹¹⁵ Hofrichter, *Judith Leyster*, 47.

¹¹⁶ Hofrichter, *Judith Leyster*, 47.

Comparing Leyster's *Man Offering Money to a Woman (The Proposition)* to Hals' *A Woman Sewing by Candlelight*, the viewer can see a difference in how the same nocturnal activity is portrayed. As stated, creative endeavors, such as needlework, were popular nocturnal activities that appealed to middle-and-upper class women. This was supposedly a time when women were able to be left on their own and not have any distractions. In both Leyster's and Hals' paintings, the woman is not left by herself. The woman in Leyster's scene is being bothered by the man, and the woman in Hals' scene is still handling her domestic responsibilities as a mother. Therefore, while both artists depict this popular activity for women, they focus on different things. With Leyster's scene, she is leaving this painting open for interpretation for viewers to make their own assumptions. The inclusion of the man raises questions the viewer is not able to answer. The suggestion that the man is propositioning the woman for sex is interesting, especially because many prostitutes listed sewing and being a seamstress as their profession.¹¹⁷ However, Leyster could also be showing the work ethic and diligence of the Dutch woman. Hals' painting is more straightforward. Hals appears to be showing that a mother can never rest, even when partaking in something for herself. Her children will be present and might need her for something. The two paintings are showing gender roles, but in different ways.

The ambiguous nature of Leyster's painting would attract a specific market of buyers. Linda Stone Ferrier states "proper, improper, and sometimes morally ambiguous endeavors on display in [the] paintings would have spawned lively conversation among viewers. Because artists mostly sold their genre scenes on the open market, picture with varied readings broadened

¹¹⁷ Van der Pol, "The Whore, the Bawd, and the Artist," 5.

their appeal for an array of possible buyers.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, by choosing this subject, Leyster appealed to two different audiences: those who liked scenes depicting creative endeavors and those who enjoyed debating the meaning behind paintings. Dirck Hals also chose to focus on the woman’s creative pursuits, but instead of an ambiguous meaning, he focused on her domestic responsibilities as a mother. Since the glamorization of these endeavors was popular during the seventeenth century (‘homescapes’ as Cieradd refers to them), Hals would appeal to potential buyers on the open market.¹¹⁹ Even though both artists depicted the same nocturnal activity, their execution of the subject was different. It is possible Leyster is showing “the contrast between male desire and female industry,” or more specifically, commenting on “a perceived reality of shiftless Dutch men and industrious Dutch women.”¹²⁰ The woman, who is hard at work with her respectable activity, ignores the man who is making assumptions that something, or someone, is for sale. The depiction of the woman in Leyster’s scene is opposite of Hals. Hals just focuses on the woman and her participation in moral activities. While the scene is similar, the differences of how the woman is portrayed separated the two artists’ paintings from each other.

The final comparison is made between Leyster and her husband, Jan Miense Molenaer. Molenaer was best known for his genre scenes, but also painted large scale portraits. Like Leyster, it is believed Molenaer was influenced by both Frans and Dirck Hals. More specifically, it is possible the Hals brothers had a part in Molenaer’s artistic training, but Molenaer’s early

¹¹⁸ Linda Stone-Ferrier, “Glimpses, Glances, and Gossip: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Paintings of Domestic Interiors on Their Neighbourhood’s Doorstep,” *RACAR: Revue d’art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 45, no. 2 (2020), 25, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26965793>.

¹¹⁹ Cieradd, “Rocking the Cradle of Dutch Domesticity.”

¹²⁰ Cook, “By Candlelight,” 66-67.

career is not easily traced so this is not a proven fact.¹²¹ As for Leyster's and Molenaer's working relationship, research has been inconclusive. There is no evidence (documents or paintings with both signatures) that show collaboration, but "attribution questions" do suggest Leyster and Molenaer had a close working relationship.¹²² Leyster's *A Game of Tric-Trac* (figure 6) from 1630 is compared next to Molenaer's *Card Players by Lamplight* (figure 7) from 1627-1628.

In *A Game of Tric-Trac*, Leyster depicts two men and a woman involved in a game. One of the men looks directly at the viewer. The game itself is tric-trac, which is similar to backgammon. Leyster continues her theme of ambiguity, especially with the relationship of the woman and two men. Cook argues even though the woman is out enjoying herself at night, something middle and upper class women were not often depicted doing, "nothing specifically marks her as a sex worker."¹²³ In fact, Cook argues the woman is reasonably dressed; she is wearing a dress with full length sleeves and a short white cape, which was usually seen in domestic settings and not the usual attire prostitutes of the time would wear.¹²⁴ Instead, Cook states Leyster "depicts a woman who could potentially be virtuous enjoying the new freedoms of nighttime culture," and is savoring various indulgences.¹²⁵ Even with this idea, Cook does note the woman is deeply blushing while handing a pipe to the man who sits across from her, which is supposedly "rife with sexual connotations."¹²⁶ While her face does appear flushed, the woman

¹²¹ Weller, *Jan Miense Molenaer*, 9-10.

¹²² Weller, *Jan Miense Molenaer*, 16.

¹²³ Cook, "By Candlelight," 63-64.

¹²⁴ Cook, "By Candlelight," 64, the attire differs greatly from other candlelight tavern scenes that Gerrit van Honthorst and Hendrick ter Brugghen in the 1620s. The woman they depict wear extremely low-cut bodices, which usually revealed their position.

¹²⁵ Cook, "By Candlelight," 63.

¹²⁶ Cook, "By Candlelight," 64.

could easily be overheated from a crowded room or the closeness of the candle. Others have argued the woman depicted in *A Game of Tric-Trac* is a prostitute.¹²⁷ The main reasoning presented is the woman is not only out at night, which risked her reputation, but she appears to be actively participating in the group's smoking and drinking in what seems to be the front room of a tavern.¹²⁸ The woman is partaking in activities deemed unfit for proper women in society. In this particular painting, Leyster challenges the idea of what women were allowed to do at night.

Molenaer's *Card Players by Lamplight* depicts five figures in total: three men and two women. The setting is an interior room, possibly in a tavern. One man looks directly out at the viewer and shows his card, while the other figures are focused on the card game. There are two candles that illuminate the scene. The older, bearded man is from the peasant class and is described as a fool, whose "misguided eagerness" had him place all his trust into his cards.¹²⁹ In other words, he does not have a great chance of winning, especially against the other players. The two younger men are cheats, while the two women do not actively participate in the game. In regards to the composition of the painting, Molenaer shows an "interest in capturing the play of artificial light on the faces of the figures."¹³⁰ He also shows the influence Dirck Hals had on his work by the "horizontal compositional arrangement" of the figures within the scene, as well as the grouping of people shown around the table.¹³¹ The scene is somewhat intimate in its

¹²⁷ Another possibility that supports this idea would be that the woman applied rouge to her cheeks. The application of make-up was common among prostitutes.

¹²⁸ Cook, "By Candlelight," 64.

¹²⁹ Weller, "By Candlelight," 124.

¹³⁰ Biesboer, "Judith Leyster," 82.

¹³¹ Biesboer, "Judith Leyster," 82.

setting, but the characters and table are not pushed as much into the foreground as Leyster's painting.¹³²

Both Leyster's *A Game of Tric-Trac* and Molenaer's *Card Players by Lamplight* depict the popular subject of card games. According to Lloyd DeWitt and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr, gambling is considered a night sport, and is "where passions and foolish behavior are allowed their full range, their limits decided only by the size of the gamblers' purses."¹³³ Both Leyster and Molenaer take this belief into consideration while creating their scenes. Like Leyster's *Man Offering Money to a Woman (The Proposition)*, *A Game of Tric-Trac* is an ambiguous scene. While it is possible the woman could be a prostitute, based on her participation in the gambling and smoking aspects of the night, other interpretations should be considered as well. The fact that social visits were becoming more popular at night led to both men and women being together more and participating in nocturnal activities. These gatherings could even lead to women partaking in certain activities (smoking and gambling) that were deemed inappropriate for a woman of a higher class. Leyster allows the viewer to decide whether or not the woman can be considered moral in her actions. Recognizing the vagueness of the painting helps the viewer understand Leyster's choices within her scene. In addition, Leyster's ambiguous scene would once again draw potential buyers on the market. The subject of cards was also a popular choice for artists during this time, so Leyster would appeal to a group of buyers interested in these types of scenes.

¹³² Biesboer, "Judith Leyster," 83, Biesboer notes there are several more similarities in the scene that makes it appear Leyster knew of Molenaer's painting. He makes this connection based on compositional elements, such as the artificial light and characters included, but also notes Leyster took her work further in making the table diagonal and by bringing the scene closer to the viewer.

¹³³ Lloyd DeWitt and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr, "Card Players," in *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 3rd ed, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Lara Yeager-Crasselt, (New York, 2020), <https://theleidencollection.com/artwork/the-card-players/>.

Molenaer's painting is clear in what he is trying to depict. Scenes of card games that depicted "trials and tribulations of card players" were popular in Haarlem and other parts of the Netherlands.¹³⁴ Showing young men cheating at cards was not an uncommon scene. The women are dressed similar to the attire Leyster's woman wears in her scene; in other words, the two women are wearing something that would be seen in a domestic setting. While they are also out at night, the biggest difference between Leyster's and Molenaer's scenes is the women are not actively participating in the game. Instead, they appear to be watching the events unfold. It could be assumed these women are just enjoying their new nightly freedom and not participating in any activities deemed inappropriate. In other paintings by Molenaer and his colleagues of the time, women are seen helping these men cheat. This includes holding up mirrors or distracting the men's opponent. These women, though, are not the main focus of the scene or even shown to be helping the two younger men cheat. Like Leyster, Molenaer would appeal to a group of buyers who were interested in the depiction of these gambling activities, specifically those who enjoyed all aspects of the game; including the downfalls and successes of players.

Comparing Leyster's genre scenes to those of her male contemporaries shows a difference in how she depicts events compared to her colleagues. While portraying men in these scenes, Leyster seems to stick to typical gender roles. Men are usually participating in activities such as gambling or drinking. This type of depiction can also be seen in the nocturnal scenes by Frans Hals and Molenaer. Leyster differs when it comes to portraying women in her nocturnal scenes. She tends to leave the roles of the women open for interpretation, even if she shows endeavors that were acceptable for women of the time. Dirck Hals and Molenaer, on the other hand, show these women in straightforward roles and do not add any mystery to what they

¹³⁴ Weller, *Jan Miense Molenaer*, 124.

contribute to the scene. When bringing in a discussion of the market, Leyster's choices in these scenes seem intentional. The ambiguity of two of her paintings would attract a group of buyers interested in determining the meaning of her painting, while the overall subjects of all three of her paintings had an appeal to certain specialized groups. Her colleagues, on the other hand, just appealed to one group of buyers, which was whoever enjoyed the subjects they were painting.

Chapter Two: Gesina ter Borch

Gesina ter Borch's family belonged to the regent class in the city of Zwolle, which meant her position in society and gender eliminated her chance to pursue a professional career as an artist.¹³⁵ Since Gesina was a woman, and unlike her brothers, it was presumed she would not continue or contribute to the family legacy, her father Gerard ter Borch the Elder left Gesina to "her own devices."¹³⁶ Gesina learned to draw alongside her younger brothers. Her father is said to have taken "great care with the artistic training of his sons...by the score of annotations and corrections that he made to their drawings," whereas only two of Gesina's drawings contained her father's notes.¹³⁷ She was not given the same training as any of her brothers, and this would also help solidify her status as an amateur artist.

One of the more obvious choices to use for comparison against Gesina is her half-brother, Gerard ter Borch. Gerard ter Borch was first trained by their father, and eventually joined the Haarlem Guild of St Luke in 1635. He not only worked within the Netherlands, but also gained success throughout other European countries such as Spain and England. He was best-known for his portrait and genre scenes, and several of his paintings feature Gesina as the model. Cook notes Gesina and her older brother seemed "to have shared a close and creatively stimulating relationship," meaning they had worked together in some capacity during their lifetime, despite their fourteen-year age difference.¹³⁸ For nocturnal scenes, Gesina's 1658-1659 *Man Courting a Lady* (figure 8) is compared to Gerard ter Borch's 1658 painting *The Suitor's Visit* (figure 9).

¹³⁵ Kettering, "Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands," 32.

¹³⁶ Kettering, "Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands," 32, Gerard ter Borch the Elder gave up his artistic career to pursue a career in civil service, but still trained his sons artistically.

¹³⁷ Cook, "By Candlelight," 69.

¹³⁸ Cook, "By Candlelight," 80.

Gesina's *Man Courting a Lady* depicts a preexisting poem, specifically a courting attempt from a Spanish Brabander, or a man from the southern Spanish-controlled Netherlands, for a northerner woman named Elisabeth.¹³⁹ According to Cook, the Brabander greets Elisabeth, combining Dutch and French, and states "Good evening, Betty, love, I say, I, I, I am your slave...ready *tout jour* to do your pleasure."¹⁴⁰ The remainder of the poem involves the "young lovers verbally sparring [which is] full of lively yet light provocation."¹⁴¹ They are alone in the encounter; there are no chaperones to supervise the meeting. Eventually, Elisabeth sends her suitor away after he begs for a kiss. Gesina's depiction of the scene shows the man bowing to the woman, who has just stepped out of her home. Cook notes the positioning of the couple at the doorway could be considered provocative to some contemporary writers of the time, specifically, because men were warned "against the potentially corrupting effects of women who might be allowed to linger at street-facing windows and doorways."¹⁴² In the background, the viewer is able to see other groups walking in the moonlight and guided by lanterns. The silhouette of a Dutch town is also clearly seen. There is a large, starry sky above the town, and a cartoonish-moon is shown in the top left corner of the drawing. While Cook states Gesina's work is "stylized and composed," the drawing also "evokes the sensation of standing outside on a moonlit night," which is said to be difficult to understand with today's lighting.¹⁴³ Gesina clearly shows that courting can be a nocturnal activity.

¹³⁹ Cook, "By Candlelight," 71, The poems that Gesina included in her albums were already well-known, and something her friends and family would be able to recognize.

¹⁴⁰ Cook, "By Candlelight," 71.

¹⁴¹ Cook, "By Candlelight," 71.

¹⁴² Cook, "By Candlelight," 73.

¹⁴³ Cook, "By Candlelight," 72-73.

Gerard ter Borch's *The Suitor's Visit* also shows a courting attempt, and it can be noted the two main figures in ter Borch's paintings are almost identical in positioning to the suitor and young woman in Gesina's drawing. In addition to the two main figures, ter Borch shows an additional man and woman in the background, as well as a dog between the main couple. The scene is in an interior setting, and the figures are pushed forward towards the viewer for a more intimate feeling. Wayne E. Franits believes the woman depicted is showing restraint toward the man who just entered the room. He says the interaction in the painting "exhibits decorous restraint which parallels contemporary ideals of the courting process that allowed young ladies only a limited degree of initiative."¹⁴⁴ Kettering takes this further by stating many Dutch conduct books written during the seventeenth century, such as works produced by Jacob Cats, encouraged "female passivity," which meant women were expected to show restraint and not act too interested towards a possible suitor.¹⁴⁵ One example included in a seventeenth-century conduct book encourages women not to entice any of her suitors with a laugh, and instead, she should act "bitter as gall" and keep her admirer waiting.¹⁴⁶ While women were encouraged to be passive in these encounters, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr also cites a popular book of the time warning men that women were not always to be trusted in these courtships. More specifically, this warning references Jan Hermanszoon Krul's 1634 *Erlycke Tytkorting* (Honorable Pastimes), which include popular images and texts that relate to "the delights and travails of love."¹⁴⁷ One

¹⁴⁴ Wayne E. Franits, "Gerard Ter Borch and Casper Netscher," in *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting: Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution* (United Kingdom: Yale University Press, 2004), 102.

¹⁴⁵ Alison M. Kettering, "Ter Borch's Ladies in Satin," *Art History* 16, no. 1 (1993), 104-105, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8365.1993.tb00514.x.

¹⁴⁶ Kettering, "Ter Borch's Ladies in Satin," 105.

¹⁴⁷ Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Gerard ter Borch the Younger/The Suitor's Visit/c. 1658," *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century*, NGA Online Editions, 2, <http://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/65>

of the illustrations in Krul's book has "remarkable parallels" to ter Borch's painting; it is a warning for men that a woman's encouragement is not always to be trusted, for his potential lover could reject then belittle him.¹⁴⁸ Even with this, Wheelock believes the scene is "alive with sexual innuendo."¹⁴⁹ Supposedly, the man's and woman's hand gestures suggest an invitation for sexual intercourse, and Wheelock states the woman is clearly initiating the meeting.¹⁵⁰ This is especially interesting if ter Borch is trying to show the woman misleading the man. In ter Borch's painting, courtship is shown in a different light than in Gesina's drawing.

Both Gesina and Gerard ter Borch show the newly popular nocturnal courting phenomenon. While these paintings have their similarities, especially in the posing of the figures, there are differences that are shown in each scene. Gesina portrays an event that is truer to life, based on the accounts of young people of the seventeenth century. Courting without a chaperone was becoming more and more popular, and the two figures are from different social classes as well. While there are seventeenth-century accounts that warn against this type of behavior, or this type of courting for that matter, Gesina relies on what was popular among the younger generations. She did not portray what was deemed acceptable, but rather, what was actually happening with seventeenth-century Dutch courting practices. The woman also teases her suitor, which does not show restraint as suggested by contemporary conduct books. Since these watercolors were inserted into albums, specifically drawn directly on the page with the

¹⁴⁸ Wheelock, "Gerard ter Borch the Younger/The Suitor's Visit/c. 1658," 2-3, Wheelock notes the first scholar to make this connection was Sturla J Gudlaugsson in 1950s/1960s.

¹⁴⁹ Wheelock, "Gerard ter Borch the Younger/The Suitor's Visit/c. 1658," 2.

¹⁵⁰ Wheelock, "Gerard ter Borch the Younger/The Suitor's Visit/c. 1658," 2, Wheelock notes the woman's hands are clasped in a way that suggests intercourse, for her right thumb protrudes between her left index and second finger. The man, on the other hand, forms a circle using his left thumb and index finger. The dog's glance up at the woman show that she is the initiator.

accompanying poem, and Gesina was considered an amateur artist, her works were never sold on the open market.¹⁵¹ They were never removed, and were only for Gesina's friends and family to interact with. Nevertheless, analyzing the potential market success of Gesina's drawings provides a better understanding of the artistic choices she made, and whether or not these decisions coincided with market trends. With this, based on the research included within this thesis about art market, Gesina's drawings would have attracted potential buyers, if she had chosen to sell her works.

Gerard ter Borch's painting, on the other hand, focuses on traditional courtship expectations encouraged by the older generations and contemporary writers. These beliefs included meeting with a chaperone, or two in this case, in an interior setting. In addition, the man and woman seem to be from the same social class and similar in age, which was recommended. The woman does show some restraint to her potential suitor, but also is supposedly leading him on with her gestures. She is meant to be passive, yet it is possible she is going to reject her match after he puts his trust in her. As for ter Borch's market success with this particular painting, the subject itself, as well as his previous accomplishments, did draw in potential buyers. The relationship between the man and woman would also fascinate another group; more specifically, the uncertainty of the outcome of the encounter would appeal to buyers who were intrigued in discussing hidden meanings within these paintings.

The second artist that Gesina's work is comparable to is Gabriel Metsu. Although Gesina and Metsu did not have a working relationship, Metsu was influenced by Gerard ter Borch.¹⁵² In

¹⁵¹ Kettering, "Watercolor and Women in the Early Modern Netherlands," 32.

¹⁵² Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Gabriel Metsu," Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century, NGA Online Editions, 1, <https://purl.org/nga/collection/constituent/1717>, Wheelock notes this is especially true when Metsu was

addition, since Gesina's drawings were mostly for personal enjoyment and certain audiences, many of her scenes are unique. Therefore, there are not many paintings that have similar scenes to make comparisons easy. This is where Metsu's paintings come in. Metsu was a member of the Leiden Guild of St Luke and painted a variety of subjects, including genre scenes, portraits, and still lifes. Metsu was best known for his genre scenes though, and Wheelock notes his "stylistic and thematic adaptability suggests that he understood the changing character of the art market."¹⁵³ Gesina's *Night-piece: Couple Walking Behind a Woman with a Lantern* (figure 10) from 1655 is analyzed next to Metsu's *A Man Smoking a Pipe at a Fireplace* (figure 11) from 1656-1658.

Gesina's Night-piece: Couple Walking Behind a Woman with a Lantern depicts a man and woman holding hands. They are behind a woman who is holding a lantern, while a dog walks alongside the couple. Many times, the upper classes would hire lantern-bearers, also known as moon-cursors or linkboys, but these were almost always men.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, Cook states the figure could be a friend or chaperone for the couple, who stepped away to give the man and woman a moment to themselves. Within the drawing, Cook notes Gesina uses "a limited palette and subtle tonal modulations of light and dark" that is striking.¹⁵⁵ Kettering takes this idea one step further to suggest Gesina's use of tenebrism within the drawing was inspired by popular book illustrations of the seventeenth century, specifically, when sharp contrasts of light and dark

in Amsterdam, for he responded to the "thematic and stylistic innovations" of Gerard ter Borch, as well as other artists.

¹⁵³ Wheelock, "Gabriel Metsu," 1.

¹⁵⁴ A. Roger Ekirch, *At Day's Close: Night in Time Past*, (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2005), 125, cited in Cook, "By Candlelight," 78.

¹⁵⁵ Cook, "By Candlelight," 79.

were used to amplify religious and mythological narratives.¹⁵⁶ This use of light within Gesina's drawing adds a layer of mystery to the scene. Cook states while the portrayal of the couple is romantic, the depiction is an "anonymous scene that purposefully avoids a clear narrative...[and] instead offers an example of [Gesina's] artistic experimentation, facilitated by night's known connections with romance, mystery, and emotional longing."¹⁵⁷ It is a scene that leaves the viewer not understanding the subject completely, especially since it is unclear where the couple is headed in the night and what will happen between them. Gesina seems to let the viewer decide if the activities shown within her work are acceptable or not for men and women to be doing together at night.

Metsu's *A Man Smoking a Pipe at a Fireplace* depicts a man and a woman in a dark interior setting, possibly a tavern or other social spot. The man sits close to a fireplace while he smokes a pipe. The pipe's length hints at the man's status within society, for members of the middle class were able to use pipes with longer stems that softened the bitter taste of burnt tobacco, as well as cooled off the smoke.¹⁵⁸ The man glances off to the side, perhaps hearing the woman coming up behind him. He does not look directly at the woman, but he does have a faint smile on his lips as she approaches. The woman stares directly at him while setting down a jug, and smiles broadly at him. She is wearing something similar to what women in domestic settings

¹⁵⁶ Kettering, *Drawings from the Ter Borch Studio Estate Vol 2*, 378, cited in Cook, "By Candlelight," 79.

¹⁵⁷ Cook, "By Candlelight," 79-80.

¹⁵⁸ Adriaan Waiboer, "Young Man Smoking and A Woman Pouring Beer," in *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 3rd ed, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Lara Yeager-Crasselt, (New York, 2020), 3, <https://theleidencollection.com/artwork/a-young-man-smoking-and-woman-pouring-beer/>.

would wear.¹⁵⁹ Waiboer notes the interaction between the man and woman, specifically the smiling and postures shown, suggests “an amorous tension exists between them.”¹⁶⁰ In other words, there seems to be sexual attraction between the two, causing underlying excitement, and perhaps nervousness, for both. While the fireplace provides light to the scene, the illumination is mostly coming from the single candle on the table. The entire body of the man can be seen, while the woman’s upper body is clearly shown. The woman’s lower body is cast in shadow. Half a table, the chair the man is sitting on, and the outline of the fireplace can also be seen; otherwise, the scene is in complete darkness.

As mentioned previously, while Gesina’s and Metsu’s scenes are not exactly the same, they are connected in the sense that both show men and women interacting in a nocturnal setting. More specifically, both scenes have hints of romance between the two figures depicted, whether obvious or not. Gesina’s watercolor shows the new trend among the younger generations to go out and enjoy social visits with one another at night. The couple in her drawing is clearly enjoying each other’s company, and they are emotionally invested in one another. Nevertheless, there is a hint of mystery behind the scene. The couple’s intentions from that moment on are unclear, and the use of the colors within the drawing add to the intrigue. They are heading to an unknown destination, and perhaps future. Again, Gesina’s drawing was not meant to be seen outside a certain group of people, but based on the analysis of Leyster’s paintings with similar themes, the strong lighting and the subject choice would have attracted interested buyers. Metsu’s scene is also depicting the new trend of staying out later and interacting with one

¹⁵⁹ As seen in the previous section, women in a domestic setting would often wear dresses with longer sleeves and short white capes. On the other hand, sex workers would be depicted with more revealing clothing, showing their position.

¹⁶⁰ Waiboer, “Young Man Smoking and A Woman Pouring Beer,” 4.

another, but there is less mystery between the man and woman's interaction. While the woman is serving the man, based on their body language and other factors, they are clearly attracted to one another, and are either considering moving forward with their feelings or have already made the next step. In Metsu's painting, the woman also seems to be the one initiating the interaction, rather than the man. For his genre scene, Metsu would attract potential buyers on the market based on the subject he chose as well as the unknown relationship between the main couple.

Looking at Gesina's drawings next to those of her male contemporaries, one can see differences and similarities in how similar scenes are depicted. Gesina's drawings focus on the viewpoint from a younger generation. In other words, she depicts these activities through a lens of the younger population. She focuses on courting rituals and social visits that would have been considered unconventional to the older generations. In turn, several of these activities allowed women more freedom, which Gesina showcases within her watercolors. Both Gerard ter Borch and Metsu, on the other hand, focus on more traditional activities and roles of women within their paintings. They stick with older viewpoints on certain endeavors, such as courting. As for the market success of these artworks, it would be hard to tell if Gesina's drawings would sell. They were created for personal enjoyment rather than the market. These drawings also allowed Gesina to create works that explored the new possibilities women had at night, specifically those that involved the courtship process with men. Nevertheless, Gesina's scenes, although probably not valuable, could have sold on the market. The nocturnal aspects, as well as the subjects, would have attracted potential buyers. Gerard ter Borch and Gabriel Metsu found market success with their paintings, both in subject and setting.

Conclusion

As shown throughout this thesis, the seventeenth-century Netherlands was a prosperous environment for artists. While the expanded art market was competitive for those looking to sell their paintings, artists distinguished themselves from their peers by choosing the right subject. These categories included nocturnal genre scenes. Within this thesis, nocturnal genre scenes were analyzed by two women artists and five of their male contemporaries. The gender roles shown in these paintings or drawings were investigated, and it was determined there were differences in depictions of gender based on if the artist was a man or woman. A discussion of the art market in the Netherlands was also brought in to establish if these particular artworks would have market success in the seventeenth century. A large majority of these paintings were found to be successful in the open market environment.

In the seventeenth century, there were new technologies that changed interactions after dark, and provided new opportunities for both genders. Women were still restricted in their endeavors, and because of these expectations, most stayed home participating in activities such as sewing. On the occasions when they would go out and interact with each other, or even interact with men, women were held to certain standards. They were not expected to drink or smoke, and participation in these things would lead to the assumptions these women were sex workers. Men, on the other hand, were given more freedom in their nocturnal endeavors. Drinking and smoking were expected, almost encouraged, and they were able to go out and enjoy themselves without too many consequences. There was a double standard when it came to these new nocturnal opportunities.

These nocturnal activities were becoming popular among a majority of the Dutch population, and were reflected in paintings and drawings of the time. Judith Leyster and Gesina

ter Borch were two women artists of the Dutch Golden Age who worked within this genre. Leyster's nocturnal scenes pushed the boundaries on depicting acceptable endeavors for women of the time. In other words, her paintings had ambiguity when it came to depicting women participating in any nocturnal activities. Her status as a professional artist, as well as her choice of subject, proved to be beneficial; for these paintings did have market success. Through comparing her works to her male contemporaries, Frans Hals, Dirck Hals, and Jan Miense Molenaer, it is clear Leyster's artistic peers did not take the same risks she did when portraying gender roles. They tended to keep the women in these scenes participating in clear-cut activities. Nevertheless, their paintings had elements that made them successful on the market.

Like Leyster, Gesina's drawings also pushed boundaries when depicting nocturnal events of the seventeenth century. Women in these scenes were shown in roles popular among the younger generations, which meant they were allowed more freedom than what the older generation would have liked. While Gesina was considered an amateur artist, and therefore did not sell her works, the research gathered in this thesis suggests her nocturnal watercolors would have attracted buyers on the market. Gesina's peers, Gerard ter Borch and Gabriel Metsu, on the other hand, have the women in their scenes stick to more traditional roles. Nevertheless, Gerard ter Borch and Metsu also found market success based on the subjects and elements included within their paintings.

As shown, both Leyster's paintings and Gesina's drawings of nocturnal genre scenes were dissimilar to their male contemporaries. More specifically, the gender roles shown in Leyster's and Gesina's scenes questioned what was considered acceptable for women, unlike their male peers, who stuck to traditional roles. In addition, while this thesis included scholarship influential to the analysis and overview of Leyster's and Gesina's art, it differentiated itself with

the discussion of the seventeenth-century Dutch art market and how each artwork would fit into the market. More specifically, by analyzing these nocturnal genre scenes that showcased gender roles, this thesis shows how these non-traditional subjects would have attracted potential buyers on the open market because of an interest in innovation and novelty. As scholarship on women artists of the Dutch Golden Age expands, especially for women like Gesina, there could be a larger discussion of her nocturnal genre scenes and how these scenes compared to male artists of the time. In addition, since there were several other artists who worked in nocturnal genre scenes, a deeper analysis on the seventeenth-century Dutch art market and the role these particular scenes played could be expanded upon.

Illustrations



FIGURE 1

Judith Leyster, *The Carousing Couple*, 1630
Oil on Canvas, 68 x 54 cm
Louvre, Paris, France



FIGURE 2

Judith Leyster, *The Last Drop (The Gay Cavalier)*, 1629
Oil on Canvas, 89.1 x 73.5 cm
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



FIGURE 3

Frans Hals, *Merrymakers at Shrovetide (Shrovetide Revellers)*, 1616-1617
Oil on Canvas, 131.4 x 99.7 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York



FIGURE 4

Judith Leyster, *Man Offering Money to a Woman (The Proposition)*, 1631
Oil on Canvas, 30.9 x 24.2 cm
Mauristhuis, The Hague, Netherlands



FIGURE 5

Dirck Hals, *A Woman Sewing by Candlelight*, 1633
Oil on Panel, 28 cm
National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, Ireland



FIGURE 6

Judith Leyster, *A Game of Tric-Trac*, 1630
Oil on Canvas, 40.6 x 31.1 cm
Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts



FIGURE 7

Jan Miense Molenaer, *Card Players by Lamplight*, 1627-1628
Oil on Panel, 44 x 51 cm
Private Collection



FIGURE 8

Gesina ter Borch, *Man Courting a Lady*, 1658-1659
 Paper and Ink, 313 x 204 mm
 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



FIGURE 9

Gerard ter Borch, *The Suitor's Visit*, 1658
Oil on Canvas, 80 x 75 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington DC



FIGURE 10

Gesina ter Borch, *Night-piece: Couple Walking Behind a Woman with a Lantern*, 1655

Paper and Ink, 71 x 98 mm

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands



FIGURE 11

Gabriel Metsu, *A Man Smoking a Pipe at a Fireplace*, 1656-1658

Oil on Panel, 27.5 x 23 cm

Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Germany

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