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RKDartists&

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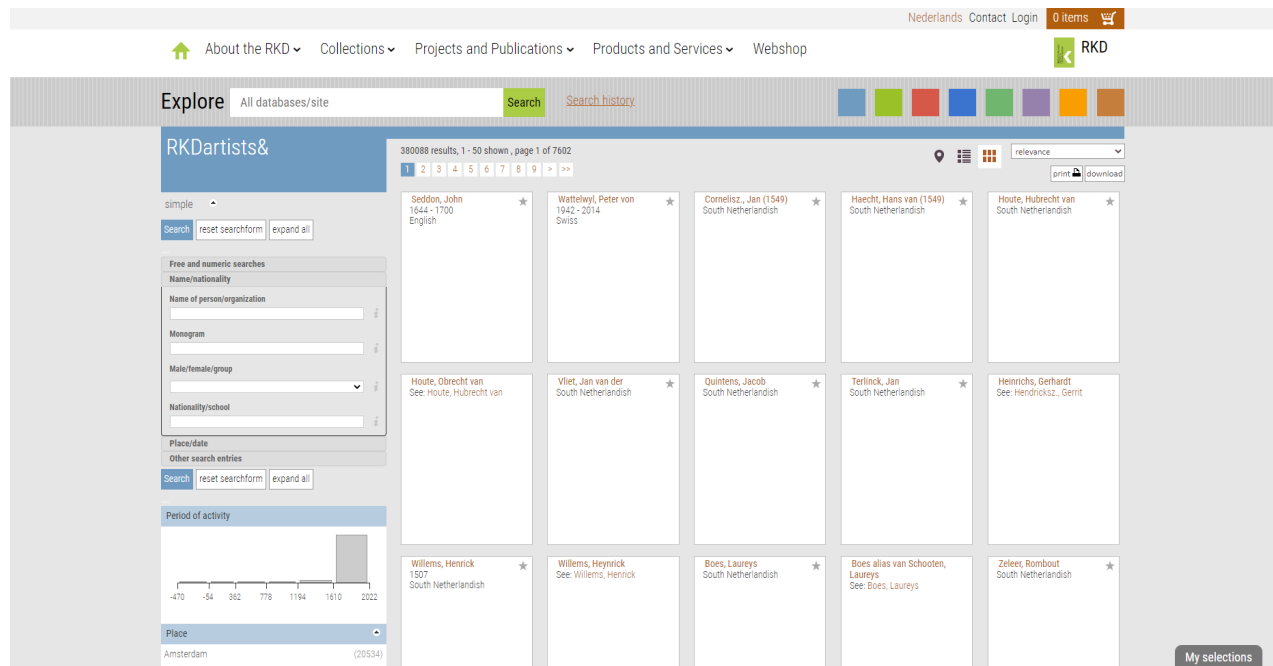
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Produced by the RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, [RKDartists&](#) makes up one part of the institute’s digital search platform, RKD Explore. Launched in 2014 and offering over 380,000 records at the time of review, the freely accessible database provides a comprehensive and authoritative resource for biographical information on Dutch and foreign artists from the Middle Ages to the present day.

While the ampersand in the database name may be confusing at first glance, it signifies that the scope goes beyond only artists, with biographical information for art dealers, art collectors, and art historians. The database features international artists, with a heavy emphasis on artists of the Low Countries. A faceted search by location reveals Amsterdam, The Hague, and Antwerp have the most hits. Likewise, “painter” is the most frequent qualification, while “oil paint” is far ahead of other medium/technique terms. Despite this slant towards Dutch artists and artistic styles, the sheer number of artists featured means those interested in art from outside the Netherlands can still find worthwhile information.



The default interface of RKDartists& with a partially expanded advanced search interface

RKDartists&'s extensive controlled vocabulary is a major strength, covering places, nationality, artist qualifications, medium/technique, artistic subject and movement, and institutional or association affiliations. The controlled vocabulary utilizes terms from major thesauri like the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus as well as regionally significant terms. The result is a robust and flexible thesaurus. Given the extent of the controlled vocabulary, a more user-friendly method of browsing the hierarchy would be helpful; clicking terms within a record opens a browsable pop-up window, but it is cumbersome and not easily navigated.

Most metadata is derived from the RKD's library and archives, and as such some records feature a greater amount of detail than others. For example, Vincent van Gogh's entry is as extensive as the accompanying documentation at the leading Dutch art history institute would suggest. Other artist entries are much less developed. Depending on the nationality of an artist, alternative resources may offer more information.

Though other name authority databases like the Getty Union List of Artist Names or the Virtual International Authority Files offer similar biographical data, the true strengths of RKDArists& come from its accessible and attractive interface, flexibility in search with facets like medium, location, or product, and the deep integration with the other RKD databases; as such, its full potential is realized when considering RKDArists& as part of the larger RKD Explore platform rather than as a siloed resource. Large amounts of biographical and historical information are still housed in physical format in the Netherlands, but RKDArists& allows discovery of otherwise difficult to uncover connections between entities without needing to consult primary resources as well as offering access to the growing catalog of digital resources made available through RKD Explore.