



ANGELA JAGER

# The Mass Market for History Paintings in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam

Production, Distribution,  
and Consumption

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AMSTERDAM STUDIES IN THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

The Mass Market for History Paintings  
in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam

# Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age

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*Angela Jager*

Amsterdam University Press



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The publication of this book is made possible by grants from M.A.O.C. Gravin van Bylandt Stichting, De Gijsselaar-Hintzenfonds, and Hendrik Mullerfonds.



Cover illustration: Workshop of Jacob de Wet, *The triumph of Mordechai*, panel, 75.8 × 109.5 cm. Sale Amsterdam (Sotheby), 18-5-2004, lot no. 80. Whereabouts unknown. Photo at RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History.

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6298 773 9

e-ISBN 978 90 4855 398 3

DOI 10.5117/9789462987739

NUR 646

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# Acknowledgements

This book is based on doctoral research conducted at the University of Amsterdam. My research initiated in 2011, the final year of the project *Artistic and economic competition in the Amsterdam art market, c. 1630–1690: history painting in Amsterdam in Rembrandt's time*, funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). This groundbreaking project, led by Eric Jan Sluijter, explored the complex fabric of artistic and economic competition in the field of history painting in Amsterdam. In a way, this book can be seen as its spin-off: instead of concentrating on the very best history painters and successful middle-ranking artists, it focuses on the 'common' painters who supplied a relatively wide audience with history paintings, often through the mediation of art dealers specialized in this cheaper segment. I could not have done this research without the support and guidance of my three supervisors, who, each with his own expertise, has contributed so substantially to its development. First and foremost, I am extremely grateful to Eric Jan Sluijter, my primary supervisor, and my mentor, who has provided me with his unparalleled knowledge and unwavering support throughout this research (and my career). I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to Marten Jan Bok, who was instrumental in shaping my enthusiasm for art markets and archival research, and Harm Nijboer, who extended a great amount of assistance with the quantitative analysis of archival data. Their daily support throughout the research process was invaluable, and it was a blessing to know that I could always knock on the door of their shared office at the Kunsthistorisch Instituut at the Amsterdam Herengracht. On the whole, it was a great pleasure to be a part of the vibrant History of Art of the Early Modern Period department at the University of Amsterdam; my research has benefitted tremendously from the vast amount of expertise that was present through my direct and indirect colleagues.

I had the opportunity to study some of these mass-produced paintings in private collections during my doctoral research with a one-month fellowship in Copenhagen at the Centre of Art Technological Studies and Conservation (CATS), at the Statens Museum for Kunst (SMK); thanks to the generous support of the Historians of Netherlandish Art, Kircheiner-Galatius Fonds and the University of Amsterdam. After completing my doctoral research in 2016, I returned to SMK-CATS with a two-year Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship to study one undocumented private collection of hundreds of early modern Dutch and Flemish paintings. I cannot begin to express my thanks to my postdoctoral supervisor Jørgen Wadum, for sharing his extensive knowledge on the materiality of paintings and his invaluable support throughout the fellowship. His role in the technical study of several 'lower-quality' history paintings in this collection cannot be overestimated,



and I have fond memories of us making infrared images of these mass-produced paintings in an ice-cold castle in Denmark.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone else who contributed to the process of publishing this book. First of all, a special thanks to a number of my colleagues for their expert advice, feedback on parts of the manuscript, and general encouragement, particularly Anne Haack Christensen, Jasper Hillegers, Elmer Kolfin and Marije Osnabrugge. One of the challenges of this book regarded its illustrations: many of these types of paintings have not been seen for a long time, and not all photographs are sufficient. This research would not have been possible without the documentation at the RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History in The Hague and the assistance of their photo service, in particular Vicky Foster. In this regard, I also wish to thank Valerio Pilo for his effort in processing these images to make them presentable, and Imke Horvers, for her great suggestions for the cover design. I am indebted to Vivien Collingwood for the English translation of the Dutch manuscript. I also wish to thank Amsterdam University Press, and especially Danielle Carter, Erika Gaffney and Chantal Nicolaes for their suggestions, patience and professional guidance.

I feel privileged to have received publishing grants from the M.A.O.C. Gravin van Bylandt Stichting, Hendrik Mullerfonds, and De Gijsselaar-Hintzenfonds.

Finally, Valerio, thank you for your unconditional moral support.



# Introduction

In a passage on the ‘three degrees of Painting’, the painter and art theorist Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627-1678) wrote: ‘We reject everything that is without artistry, and disapprove of what cannot hold its place among good things; otherwise the third and highest degree of art would be the most contemptible, for we see everywhere illustrious Histories that are a dime a dozen.’<sup>1</sup> By ‘illustrious Histories’, Van Hoogstraten meant history paintings: text-based figure paintings with subjects from the Bible, mythology, literature, and classical and post-classical history. In Van Hoogstraten’s ranking, these subjects formed the top rung of the painting ladder. He grouped paintings by subject into three categories according to the forms of life depicted in them: the lowest category consisted of depictions of lifeless things, such as landscapes and still lifes; the second of creatures that follow their nature, such as cattle, peasants, or merry drinkers; the highest category of painting, history painting, depicted rational, thinking man as its subject.<sup>2</sup> Van Hoogstraten made it abundantly clear that this was a one-way ladder: a brilliantly painted flower painting could never belong to a higher category, whereas a poorly executed daubing of a ‘high’ subject was considered to be of little value. In order to achieve the ‘highest level of art’, history painters had to do more than ‘assemble heads and bodies’; they had to ‘depict the noble movement and will of the Reasoning creature that is man’, and those who could do this skilfully were ‘most thin on the ground’.<sup>3</sup> History painting was the ultimate subject in which a painter could excel in all skills. In fact, a number of the most highly valued painters from Van Hoogstraten’s time, such as his teacher Rembrandt, and his idols Rubens and Jordaens, were primarily history painters, and contemporary collectors paid eye-watering sums for works by these masters.

The reference to ‘illustrious Histories’ at ‘a dime a dozen’, however, points to the existence of a very different type of history painting, one that was emphatically

1 English translation from original Dutch: ‘wij verwerpen al wat onkonstig is, en keuren af, al wat geen rang onder goede dingen kan houden; Anders zoude den derden en hoogsten graed der konst wel den alderverachtsten zijn; want men ziet overal dozijn werk van doorluchtige Historyen’: Van Hoogstraten 1678, p. 87.

2 Brusati 1995, pp. 237-240.

3 Van Hoogstraten 1678, p. 87.



rejected by Van Hoogstraten. Van Hoogstraten and his contemporaries used the term *dozijnwerk*, ‘dime-a-dozen’ work, to describe cheap paintings of inferior quality.<sup>4</sup> Such paintings were evidently widely available. In a passage by Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719), we encounter a phrase with similar undertones: ‘I surmise that if one were to work out how many portrait painters there had been in the world from time to time, compared to History painters (aside from the bunglers and duds who are driven by profit alone) [...]’.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the seventeenth century, in addition to the famous history painters, there were also artists at work who produced history paintings of a much lower quality, driven by motives other than aesthetic and artistic status. This aspect of painting production has hardly been covered in art history, as art historians have traditionally focused on the artistic canon. It is important to realize that the seventeenth-century painters with whom we are familiar today were at the top of their profession, and that the paintings they produced were in fact mainly accessible to the financial and intellectual elite. As a result, these works do not offer a historically accurate reflection of the paintings with which the majority of the population would have been familiar. Although this ‘dime-a-dozen’ work may not have been of great artistic importance, it did have considerable cultural-historical significance. This book is the result of research on these inexpensive history paintings and their producers, suppliers, and consumers.

## The mass market for paintings in the Dutch Republic

The market for paintings in the Dutch Republic can be characterized as a mass market. In a mass market, a certain good is produced on a large scale, there are many suppliers, and there is demand from a large group. The volume of seventeenth-century painting production could certainly be described as massive. Estimates of the number of paintings produced over the course of the century vary from one to five to ten million.<sup>6</sup> During the seventeenth century, there were 925 painters working in Amsterdam alone; a further 823 persons were described in one or more contemporary sources as ‘painter’, but it has not yet been possible to prove their artistic status.<sup>7</sup> In 1650, just before the art market peaked, Amsterdam counted 180 artist-painters in a population of between 160,000 and 175,000; in other words,

4 De Pauw-de Veen 1969, p. 41.

5 English translation from original Dutch: ‘Ik gis, als men uytcyffering maakt hoe veel pourtretschilders de Waereld van tyt tot tyt in vergelyking van Histori-schilders gehad heeft (buiten de broddelaars en brekebeenen die door geen andere sporen als winzucht genoopt worden) [...]’: Houbraken 1718-1721, III, p. 168.

6 Biemans 2007; Van der Woude 1991; Montias 1990a.

7 *ECARTICO database*, consulted on 16-11-2019.

there was more than one painter per 1000 residents.<sup>8</sup> Based on a random sample of Amsterdam estate inventories, Montias found that the number of paintings per household at least doubled between 1600 and 1660.<sup>9</sup>

In seventeenth-century towns and cities, it became quite common for a broad cross-section of society to own one or more paintings, and this is not only evident from research in contemporary estate inventories but also in letters and travel journals.<sup>10</sup> In these written documents, foreigners visiting the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century expressed their astonishment at the number of paintings owned by 'common folk' such as simple cobblers, bakers, and farmers. These paintings were available for sale at the market, just like any other product.<sup>11</sup> Although not every claim by these seventeenth-century writers can be taken as gospel, what these statements *do* show is that foreigners were struck by painting ownership in the Dutch Republic, especially in relation to the status of the owner. It would be an exaggeration to conclude that every common farmer and cobbler in the Dutch Republic owned a painting; paintings were a luxury item and remained beyond the reach of the very poorest. Outside the towns and cities, we rarely come across paintings in estate inventories, and then only in limited number and of modest value.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, it was not uncommon, certainly in urban settings, for one

8 *ECARTICO database*, consulted on 16-11-2019. On the size of Amsterdam's population in 1650, see: Lesger 2005, p. 21.

9 Montias 1996, p. 78.

10 For publications on the ownership of paintings in urban settings, see: Bakker 2008a, pp. 136-159 (Leeuwarden); Biesboer 2001 (Haarlem); Boers-Goosens 2001, pp. 345-347 (Haarlem); Faber 1980 (Amsterdam); Fock 1990 (Leiden); Frijhoff 2007, pp. 175-179 (Woerden); De Laet 2006 (Den Bosch); Loughman 1992 (Dordrecht); Montias 1982, pp. 220-271 (Delft); Montias 1991 & 1996 (Amsterdam); Nijboer 2007, pp. 49-50 (Leeuwarden). For an exploratory impression of the paintings owned by different population groups, see: Sluijter 2015a.

11 Here are listed several examples of contemporary anecdotes about painting ownership in the Republic: 'All-in generall striving to adorne their houses, especially the outer or street roome, with costly peeces, Butchers and bakers not much inferior in their shoppes, which are Fairely sett Forth, yea many tymes blacksmithes, Cobblers, etts., will have some picture or other by their Forge and in their stalle. Such is the generall Notion, enclination and delight that these Countrie Natives have to Paintings.' Peter Mundy, 1640: Mundy 1907-1936, IV, p. 70. 'Their annual marte or faire [was] so furnished with pictures (especially Landskips and Drolleries, as they call those clounish representations) that I was amaz'd. Some I bought and sent into England. The reson of this store of pictures and their cheapness proceedes from their want of land to employ their Stock, so that it is an ordinary thing to find a common Farmer lay out two or 3,000 in this com'odity. Their houses are full of them, and they vend them at their faires to very great gaines.' John Evelyn, 1641, during a visit to Rotterdam's annual fair: Evelyn 1640-1706. 'The Lining of their Houses is more rich than the Outside, not in Hangings, but Pictures, which even the poorest of the Boors are there furnished with: Not a Cobler but has his Toys for Ornament'. Anonymous 1691, p. 575. For more examples, see: Sluijter 2003, p. 12.

12 Berger Hochstrasser 2000, pp. 205-211 (Doesburg); Dibbits 2001, pp. 285-302 (Doesburg and Maassluis); Kamermans 1999, pp. 129-134 (Krimpenerwaard); Van Koolbergen 1983 (Weesp and Weesperkarspel); De

or more small paintings to be included in the estate inventories of labourers and simple craftsmen.<sup>13</sup>

This mass market for paintings arose for a number of reasons. Demand for paintings in the Northern Netherlands grew explosively and almost continuously between 1580 and 1660. The population of Holland's towns rose quickly, especially Amsterdam, Leiden, and Haarlem. The growth in Amsterdam's population was particularly exceptional: the number of residents increased from 25,000-30,000 in 1578 to 210,000-220,000 in 1680.<sup>14</sup> The large wave of immigration from the Southern to the Northern Netherlands contributed significantly to the rising population numbers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These immigrants had been used to decorating their houses with inexpensive paintings in their original culture, and continued this practice in their new homes.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to strong economic growth in the Dutch Republic, purchasing power rose.<sup>16</sup> This rise in purchasing power mainly affected the budget of the middle classes, who then had the resources to purchase luxury goods – something that had previously been the preserve of the wealthy. Initially stimulated by the habits of their new Flemish compatriots,<sup>17</sup> consumers increasingly opted to spend part of their extra budget on paintings (and, to a lesser extent, on prints) and other luxury goods.<sup>18</sup>

The production side also saw great changes during this period. Due to the Reformation, the majority of ecclesiastical commissions for painters disappeared. At the end of the sixteenth century, most painters were still producing expensive, time-consuming history paintings and portraits commissioned by small groups of wealthy collectors. As a result, the demand from Flemish immigrants for cheap works that could be hung at home was not fully satisfied. This was followed, after the conclusion of the Twelve Years' Truce in 1609 and the reopening of the borders, by the massive importation of 'Brabant Rubbish' (cheap paintings from the Southern Netherlands). Complaining of market spoilage and of their livelihoods being snatched from them, local painters appealed to the government to ensure that import-restricting measures be taken.<sup>19</sup> In order to meet the new demand and, furthermore, to be able to compete with the low prices of imported paintings, local

Vries 1974, pp. 218-220 and De Vries 1975, pp. 221-222 (Frisian countryside); *Meertens Instituut: Boedelbank* (Doesburg, Geldermalsen, Lichtenvoorde, and Groenlo, Maasland, Maassluis, Medemblik, and Twisk, Oirschot, Rosmalen, Weesp, and Weesperkarspel). See also: Montias 1990c, pp. 361-362.

13 Sluijter 2015a, pp. 107-109; see also Chapter Four of this book.

14 Lesger 2004, p. 104; Lesger 2005, p. 21; Sluijter 2015a, p. 10.

15 Sluijter 2009.

16 For literature that investigates the rise in purchasing power as the main reason for the increasing demand for paintings, see, among others: De Vries 1991, esp. p. 256; Bok 1994, pp. 98, 109-115.

17 Sluijter 2009.

18 Nijboer 2010, pp. 201-202.

19 Sluijter 1999 & 2009.

painters were forced to innovate. By adopting new techniques, production costs were driven down and productivity increased (process innovation). At the same time, painters developed new genres – such as various kinds of still lifes, Dutch and Italianate landscapes, and so forth – and adopted idiosyncratic styles in order to capture a niche and thereby compete in the extremely competitive art market (product innovation).<sup>20</sup> Some of these innovations are likely to have been copied from the many Flemish painters who had settled in the Dutch Republic at that time; such innovations had already been introduced in the South in the sixteenth century, when demand for luxury goods rose and a commercial art market emerged.<sup>21</sup> Innovations employed by painters from the Northern Netherlands included the wet-on-wet technique (whereby the painter applied additional paint on wet paint layers, drastically lowering production time) and monochrome painting (use of a limited colour palette).<sup>22</sup>

Finally, new distribution channels were introduced that advanced the dissemination of paintings. In the Northern Netherlands, customers had previously ordered paintings from a painter, but eventually, influenced by the ever-evolving market, most painters worked on spec on a stock of paintings. These were then sold at the painter's workshop or at markets and annual fairs. Unlike Antwerp, with its 'Schilderpand' (from 1540), Amsterdam had no permanent market for selling paintings.<sup>23</sup> During the seventeenth century ever-increasing numbers of paintings were sold with the mediation of professional art dealers. As we shall see, this was especially true of the production of inexpensive paintings. The occupation of the art dealer, which had hardly existed in the sixteenth century, came to the fore in the 1630s and 1640s in response to the greater variety of art on offer.<sup>24</sup> By means of alternative selling techniques such as auctions, lotteries, games, and competitions, a market was created for the surplus supply of paintings.<sup>25</sup>

20 Montias 1987 & 1990b.

21 Vermeylen 2001 & 2003.

22 Montias 1987.

23 There was a market on the upper floor of the Amsterdam Beurs (stock exchange) where paintings and various other artisanal products were sold. Like the exchange in Antwerp, the exchange building in Amsterdam had upper galleries with four 'rounds' of sales booths, and was known as the 'building above the exchange': 'here, around a row, are a great many wooden booths and shops, where all kinds of merchandise, such as knives, silk, gold and silver ribbons, hats, and skilfully turned and cut ivory-work, are sold throughout the year.' Thus, unlike in Antwerp, paintings were not the main wares sold there. The wares could be hung on display. Such stalls were only available for burghers of Amsterdam and cost 6 stivers a year. English translation from original Dutch: Dapper 1663, pp. 451-454; Lesger 2013, pp. 89; 97-98. In 1634, the inventory of Bastiaen Starenberg made mention of 'a few paintings at the exchange, 40 guilders': Bredius 1915-1922, VI, p. 1980.

24 Montias 2004, p. 76; Montias 1988, p. 245.

25 Bok 2008, p. 9. For a recent study on the lotteries, see: Raux 2018.

## Amsterdam and history painting

In the seventeenth century, Amsterdam's art market developed into the liveliest and most competitive in Europe. Montias and Bok have even claimed that Amsterdam was home to an exceptionally free art market.<sup>26</sup> They argue that, as in Amsterdam, other Dutch cities too experienced an influx of inexpensive Flemish paintings; in those cities, however, the guilds of St. Luke were far more successful in restricting imports.<sup>27</sup> As a result, local masters had too great a hold on the art market for it to be described as a completely demand-oriented economy.<sup>28</sup> In the international trading centre Amsterdam, similar measures taken by the guild were not, or were hardly, successful.<sup>29</sup> As a result, Amsterdam's painters, possibly more than those elsewhere, were forced to innovate in order to compete with the influx of cheap imported paintings. Far from forming a threat to the local art market, these imports actually acted as a massive incentive.<sup>30</sup>

A prominent role within Amsterdam's competitive art market was played by history painting, which developed into a true Amsterdam specialization in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup> Stimulated by innovations from the workshops of Pieter Lastman and Rembrandt, among others, Amsterdam became *the* destination for ambitious history painters from the Netherlands and abroad. In *Rembrandt's Rivals: History Painting in Amsterdam 1630-1650* (2015), Sluijter demonstrates how a group of artists active in this market competed with one another through the artistic and economic choices they made, and how the ongoing rivalry within this constant flow of new painters resulted in enormously differentiated painting production, not only in painting types, styles, and subjects, but also in quality. There was an enormous difference in sales prices and valuations between high-quality works of masters with a good reputation and paintings of those without any reputation. Paintings by Rembrandt, Flinck, or Lievens, for example, could reach hundreds of guilders, and even, in a few exceptional cases, more than a thousand guilders, whereas 'dime-a-dozen' works were usually valued between several stivers and a few guilders at most. This suggests that these artworks concerned entirely different categories.

26 Montias 1988, pp. 248-249; Bok 1994, p. 92.

27 Montias 1982, pp. 70-73; Miedema 1987, pp. 4-5.

28 Bok 1994, pp. 92-93.

29 The protective measures included a ban on public auctions held by non-burghers (1609) and a ban on the trade in works produced outside the Dutch Republic (1617). These bans were unsuccessful. With a little creativity, it was possible to evade the rules, as shown by the repeated complaints; after all, complaints are an indication of ever-increasing violations. Sluijter 2009.

30 This was concluded by Sluijter 1999 & 2009; Sluijter 2015b, p. 11.

31 For how and why, see: Sluijter 2015b, pp. 14-16.

## Approach and outline of the book

This book explores the extensive market for cheap history paintings in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, by examining the producers, suppliers, and consumers who were active in it. What type of history paintings were for sale in this segment of the market? Who produced these works, and under what conditions? Which production methods did these painters use to produce history paintings economically? Which art dealers sold these cheap history paintings, and what marketing strategies did they use when doing so? Who bought these paintings, and based on what need? This book will investigate these questions, while paying attention to how this low-cost segment relates to the high-quality end of the thriving Amsterdam art market – in this period the most thriving and competitive in Europe. Were the products, production methods, consumers, and distribution strategies of the art dealers at the bottom of the market different from those at the top, or was there in fact an overlap between the two? What implications does the ‘discovery’ of a market for cheap history paintings have for our understanding of seventeenth-century art production and consumption?

Most of this study was based on archival material, which was processed quantitatively. In this sense, there are many parallels between this research and the socio-economic approach to art history. The study of the social and economic aspects of art was given a powerful stimulus by the pioneering work of John Michael Montias.<sup>32</sup> Beginning in the 1980s, Montias published a number of socio-economic studies on painting in the Dutch Republic. Aided by the statistical analysis of archival material, he sketched an innovative impression of the demographic composition of a certain community of painters, painting ownership among citizens, trends in painting prices, and the activities of art dealers, among other things.<sup>33</sup> Since Montias conducted his research, the socio-economic approach has gained firm foundations in art history and has taken off in various directions, particularly in the form of important publications by Neil de Marchi, Hans van Miegroet, and Filip Vermeulen on the Southern Netherlands, and by Marten Jan Bok on the Dutch Republic.<sup>34</sup> Although the socio-economic approach initially focused on early-modern Dutch painting, this approach is increasingly being used for studies of other geographical regions and time periods, whereby the use of different types of sources also has a significant impact on the approach.<sup>35</sup>

32 For a historiographical overview of the socio-economic approach to art history until c. 1990, see: Bok 1992.

33 See, for example: Montias 1982, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1991, 1996, 2002, 2004, & 2004-2005.

34 See, for example: De Marchi 1995; De Marchi and Van Miegroet 1994, 1996, 1999, 2006a, 2006b, & 2009; De Marchi, Van Miegroet, and Raiff 1998; De Marchi and Raux 2014; Vermeulen 2001, 2003, & 2012; Vermeulen and Van der Stighelen 2006; Lyna, Vermeulen, and Vlieghe 2009; Bok 1994, 1998, 2001, & 2008.

35 See, for example: Cavazzini 2008; Spear and Sohm 2010.

Due to the lack of sources, researching the cheap segment of the art market in the Dutch Republic presents a considerable challenge. Only a fraction of these inexpensive paintings have survived. As mentioned above, the total number of paintings produced is estimated to have been in the millions, but only a small proportion of these paintings were kept for reasons of artistic, aesthetic, or historical importance. Owing to this lack of physical material, it was not possible to start from traditional art-historical approaches. Just as cheap paintings were often not considered worth keeping in the past, people did not consider it important to document them either. As a result, these paintings were not listed with the name of the artist in seventeenth-century estate inventories. Thus, we only know of their names from sources such as registers of births and marriages (now compiled in the *ECARTICO* database<sup>36</sup>). Many of these people must have been ‘dime-a-dozen’ painters, but their status as painting creators remains unproven in the absence of any surviving signed works (if indeed they were signed at all) or listings of such works in estate inventories.

In the first chapter, the inventories of the estates of three art dealers from Amsterdam – Jan Fransz. Dammeroen (1646), Cornelis Doeck (1666/1668), and Hendrick Meijeringh (1687) – provide a way into researching the market for cheap history paintings. With their massive assortment of history paintings, each worth an average of 3-5 guilders, these dealers focused on the inexpensive segment of the market. Their shop inventories are a unique source. In contrast to private inventories, these shop inventories contain detailed descriptions of the paintings, including the subject and the name of the ‘dime-a-dozen’ artist. They thereby offer us a unique view of this market segment. One should immediately add that focusing on these three dealers necessarily limits our view; Amsterdam’s market for cheap paintings must have been much larger than this, but we do not know of any detailed inventories from other dealers, who may have sold very different ‘dime-a-dozen’ paintings. A second limitation is the type of source used in this study: the estate inventories offer a glimpse of the status and contents of a shop at a specific moment in time. The results obtained from this research on popular subjects and paintings are therefore not exhaustive; above all, they offer a first impression of a market segment that has not been researched until now.

Unfortunately, the inventories lack useful information about suppliers, consumers, and selling prices. The available sources on the trade in paintings in the Northern Netherlands thus differ greatly from those on the art trade in Antwerp, where art dealers such as Matthijs Musson and Guilliaem Forchondt left extensive shop records (including cash books, correspondence, and bills).<sup>37</sup> Based on that

<sup>36</sup> *ECARTICO database*.

<sup>37</sup> De Marchi and Van Miegroet 1999; Denucé 1949.



rich source material and additional research on shipping documents, Sandra van Ginhoven was able to establish that Forchondt had focused his trade largely on exports to Latin America. How he developed his business policies offered insights into how art dealers responded to changes in the market.<sup>38</sup> When using the three Amsterdam shop inventories as a source, it is not possible to sketch the development of business strategies in such detail. However, the inventories do give an impression of the types of paintings that were circulating in the market at a particular time, and, to a certain extent, give insight into the painters who produced them. In addition, these inventories provide a snapshot of the trade in inexpensive paintings: by analysing all the information in the inventories and auction proceeds, and by conducting additional research in the archives, it was possible to discover some of the marketing strategies used by these dealers.

In the second chapter, the names of the artists listed in the inventories form the starting point for further research into the career prospects of painters in the Dutch Republic. In this part of the research, I looked at whether social background played a determining role in achieving success as a painter. To this end, biographical research was carried out on the painters mentioned in Doeck's and Meijeringh's shop inventories.<sup>39</sup> This research profited immensely from the multitude of biographical materials that Bredius and his contemporaries published on painters and art dealers. Particular mention should be made of the Bredius archive in the collection of the RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History,<sup>40</sup> which consists of published and unpublished archival material. When selecting the archival material, Bredius made no distinction between the names of important or unknown painters; he was aiming for comprehensiveness, and wanted to deliver 'building blocks [...] for assessing the social status, the daily lives of our painters'.<sup>41</sup> For many years, this wonderful source material was rarely used by art historians; after Bredius's day, scholars were more interested in the great masters and in stylistic and iconographic questions.

The third chapter provides an analysis of cheap paintings and the ways in which they were produced. The three inventories provide various indications that Dammeroen, Doeck, and Meijeringh sold paintings that were produced in series; for instance, up to seven different depictions of the same subject were available in a limited number of standard sizes. In this regard, the present research followed a very different approach to that taken by Montias. Here, the questions raised by the archival research are related back to the works themselves, for

38 Van Ginhoven 2017.

39 The full biographies are published in my dissertation: Jager 2016, pp. 269-374.

40 RKD, Archive A. Bredius [NL-HaRKD.0380].

41 Bredius 1915-1922, II, p. VII; Bok 1992, p. 332.

how could an iconographically challenging genre such as history painting be produced on the cheap? The relationship between economic motivations and artistic opportunities also forms the key theme of Sluijters's *Rembrandt's Rivals*.<sup>42</sup> This part of my research starts from a similar place, but in contrast to Sluijter, I look at how these cheap paintings were produced and the significance of economic efficiency in that process. I focus on a number of history painters whose works were sold by Dammeroen, Doeck, and Meijeringh, and whose paintings I was able to trace; although in the case of the obscure painter Barend Jansz. Slordt, it was only possible to trace one. In order to scrutinize the process of producing these paintings, in addition to art-historical analyses, technical analyses of a number of paintings in a Danish private collection were carried out as part of my postdoctoral research at the Statens Museum for Kunst (National Gallery of Denmark).<sup>43</sup>

In the fourth chapter, the research on the production and distribution of these cheap history paintings makes the natural progression to the consumer. Many studies on paintings in estate inventories undertaken in recent decades have found that, during the seventeenth century, the percentage of history paintings fell sharply, whilst the percentage of landscapes increased rapidly. Montias's findings in 'Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: An Analysis of Subject and Attributions' (1991) suggest, however, that unlike rich estates, estates that merely listed anonymous paintings actually contained a higher percentage of history paintings.<sup>44</sup> If modest households owned more history paintings, this would imply that the use of large, wealthy inventories significantly influenced the results of other research studies. The representativeness of the consumer preferences indicated by these inventories is thus highly questionable. By studying the ownership of history paintings in Amsterdam, the present research thus enters into a debate with a quarter of a century of research into consumer preferences in the early-modern art market. In a study published in 1991, Montias made a distinction between affluent and less affluent estates, based on the presence of attributed works. In the present research, I categorize the estates using a different method, and the different social groups are classified much more precisely. I also set a number of additional objectives. I pay attention to differences between modest and wealthy households with regard to ownership of specific scenes in history paintings, for example, and attempt to explain this. This part of the research draws on the estate inventories in the Montias/Frick Database and the Getty Provenance Index: Archival Inventories. Although the

42 Sluijter 2009 & 2015b.

43 Jager 2018 & 2019.

44 Montias 1991.

countless anonymous works in inventories are often described summarily, the final chapter shows that important conclusions can nevertheless be drawn about painting ownership from the descriptions of the enormous quantities of anonymous works.

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