



MICHAEL ZELL

Rembrandt,  
Vermeer,  
and the Gift in  
Seventeenth-Century  
Dutch Art

Amsterdam  
University  
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AMSTERDAM STUDIES IN THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

Rembrandt, Vermeer, and the Gift  
in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art

# Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age

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# Rembrandt, Vermeer, and the Gift in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art

*Michael Zell*

Amsterdam University Press



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Cover illustration: Johannes Vermeer, *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal*, ca. 1670-1672. Oil on canvas, 51.5 × 45.5 cm. National Gallery, London. Photo: National Gallery, London / Bridgeman Images.

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 642 9

e-ISBN 978 90 4855 064 7

DOI 10.5117/9789463726429

NUR 694

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*In loving memory of my mother,  
Carole Zell*



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# Acknowledgments

While all books begin by acknowledging the generosity and assistance of others, it is especially fitting for the author of a book about gifts to acknowledge his debts of gratitude. I benefited immensely from the help, support, and forbearance of a great many people over the course of this book's long gestation. Without this generosity from colleagues, students, friends, and family this book would not have been possible, and words alone can never repay the many debts I have incurred.

I am especially grateful to H. Perry Chapman for her abundant, incisive, and invaluable suggestions, which I have tried to incorporate as far as possible, and to an anonymous reader for comments that improved the book's readability. Natasha Seaman graciously and expertly edited the entire manuscript, and Carrie Anderson provided feedback at a critical moment. The support of Alan Chong and the positive reception of the audience of the Rethinking Rembrandt symposium he organized at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston in 2000, at which I first presented my ideas on Rembrandt and gift giving, helped launch the project. I am particularly appreciative of the encouragement of members of the audience who are no longer with us – Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, John Michael Montias, and Seymour Slive – whose scholarship has profoundly shaped the study of seventeenth-century Dutch art.

For bibliographic references, critical feedback, engaging discussions, assistance in various forms, and advice, I am indebted to George Abrams, Clifford Ackley, Susan Anderson, Christopher Atkins, Ronni Baer, Marten Jan Bok, Celeste Brusati, Margaret Carroll, Paul Crenshaw, Stephanie Dickey, Charles Ford, Wayne Franits, Ivan Gaskell, Amy Golahny, Erik Hinterding, Julie Hochstrasser, Elizabeth Honig, Alison Kettering, Erna Kok, Susan Kuretsky, Friso Lammertse, John Loughman, Walter Melion, Rodney Nevitt Jr., Harm Nijboer, Judith Noorman, Nadine Orenstein, Shelley Perlove, Tom Rassieur, Bruce Redford, Joshua Rifkin, William (Bill) Robinson, Lisa Rosenthal, Suzanne Ryan, Catherine Scallen, Gary Schwartz, Larry Silver, Eric Jan Sluijter, Nicolette Sluijter-Seijffert, Mariët Westermann, Thijs Weststeijn, Arthur Wheelock Jr., Marjorie (Betsy) Wieseman, David de Witt, Lloyd de Witt, Christopher Wood, Joanna Woodall, and Anne Woollett, and the Director and Fellows of the Boston University Center for the Humanities.

I am deeply grateful for the support and kindness of colleagues in the Department of History of Art & Architecture at Boston University. Thank you especially Danny

Abramson, Jodi Cranston, Emine Fetvacı, Deborah Kahn, Becky Martin, Ana María Reyes, Jonathan Ribner, Kim Sichel, and Greg Williams. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Fred Kleiner, and to Bruce Redford and Alice Tseng, who shouldered heavy administrative duties in part to allow me to focus on my research. I am also thankful for the insights and help of graduate students, in particular Christina An, Stephanie Glickman, Kate Harper, Rachel Hofer, Rachel Kase, Alexandra Libby, and Joseph (Joe) Saravo. For invaluable assistance with sourcing images, I thank Christopher Spedaliere, Visual Resource Manager, and Annemiek Overbeek for skillfully editing the images. I am also grateful to my editors at Amsterdam University Press, Chantal Nicolaes, for her support and guidance, and especially Erika Gaffney, for believing in the book, and for her unfailing patience, assistance, and graciousness.

The National Endowment for the Humanities and the Boston University Center for the Humanities, with a Jeffery Henderson Senior Research Fellowship, generously supported research leave. Subventions from the Boston University Center for the Humanities and the College of Arts and Sciences at Boston University Humanities Research Fund also helped substantially to cover the book's production costs. I thank especially Associate Dean Karl Kirchwey.

My deepest thanks go to my wife Heidi and our children Myles and Arielle, who have spent their entire lives with this seemingly endless project. Their love, support, and patience sustained me throughout the research and writing. I am also grateful for the love and support of my sisters Janice and Allison and their families, and my mother, Carole Zell, who sadly passed away in 2013. Her enthusiasm for my work and for art left an indelible mark, and I regret that she did not live to see the publication of this book. I dedicate it to her in memory of her loving kindness.



# Introduction

In 1639 Rembrandt wrote to Constantijn Huygens, Secretary to the Dutch Stadholder Frederik Hendrik, that he was sending a monumental painting, likely *The Blinding of Samson* of 1636 (Fig. 93), as a token of appreciation for Huygens's role in securing payment from the Prince for an important commission.<sup>1</sup> Rembrandt was motivated by what he describes as Huygens's "kind inclination and affection," and sought to nurture a bond of mutuality with the statesman as his "obliging and affectionate servant." With gracious and affective language Rembrandt thus recorded for posterity his participation in the culture of gift giving, one of the most important institutions of interpersonal exchange and social interaction of early modernity. Far from anomalous, Rembrandt's gift exemplifies an important feature of the Dutch art world, which is so often presented in commercial terms. In the merchant republic's vibrant and diversified market for art, networks of gift relations and the anti-economic rhetoric of the gift mingled with the growing dimension of commerce. Exploring the interaction between the gift's symbolic economy of reciprocity and obligation and the artistic culture of early modern Holland, this book offers a new perspective that reveals a unique and richly creative chapter in the interconnected history of gift giving and artistic creativity.

The gift economy was indispensable to Dutch burghers for building and sustaining professional and personal bonds, and a vital means of demonstrating social values of goodwill, trustworthiness, virtue, and honor. As a consequence, a broad array of objects and services circulated in the form of gifts, including artworks. The Dutch state, too, regularly offered works of art as diplomatic gifts, the prime currency of international relations in seventeenth-century Europe – most ostentatiously with the "Dutch Gift" of paintings, antiquities, and other luxuries to King Charles II of England in 1660. Despite the significance and even fame of these Dutch bestowals of art, the role that gift giving played within the Dutch art system as an alternate economy of reciprocity and honor remains largely unexplored. By contrast, the gift economies of other early modern artistic cultures, particularly Italy, have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. The Dutch Republic's merchant society and

1 For the letter, see Strauss and Van der Meulen, *Rembrandt Documents*, doc. 1639/2.

buoyant art market have directed art historical study away from considerations of the gift and toward a relatively limited economic perspective.

Given the unprecedented expansion and dynamism of the seventeenth-century Dutch art market, scholars have understandably highlighted features of Dutch artistic culture that suggest the market's "invisible hand," especially artists' entrepreneurialism in adapting their practices to an intensely competitive marketplace. In the process, however, the gift's social economy of mutuality and honor has been sidelined or depreciated as a vestige of socio-cultural norms presumed to be alien to Dutch mercantile values and Holland's nascent capitalism. But gifts of art were traded among Dutch social and cultural elites as tokens of regard and materializations of shared cultural values. Like their counterparts in other European art centers, Dutch artists also embraced gift giving to cultivate relations with patrons, clients, and *liefhebbers* (art lovers), as well as familiars. The symbolic economy of the gift was an intrinsic part of the complex, overlapping modes of exchange that constituted the competitive Dutch art system, and from which emerged a vibrant and distinctive interaction between gift culture and art making.

This book thus seeks to enrich the economic perspective on seventeenth-century Dutch art by considering the gift paradigm as an alternate yet complementary framework of investigation. Gifts of art were not separate from but woven into the functioning of the Dutch art system, just as gift giving was integrated into Dutch business relationships and burgher society in general. Donated artworks functioned in the Republic as agents of the mutual interests and interdependencies that underlay professional and personal webs of social relations, fostering bonds between artists, patrons, collectors, personal contacts, and intimates. Looking through the lens of the gift illuminates Dutch artists' innovative adaptations of gift culture, particularly Rembrandt and Vermeer, who simultaneously define and defy our concept of the Golden Age. Rembrandt enlisted the gift economy to negotiate relations with patrons and collectors, and was inspired by this aestheticized form of exchange to create distinctive works of art designed to function as gifts (Figs. 104, 123). Both Rembrandt and Vermeer also activated the ethics and aesthetics of the gift to promote a privileged status for themselves and their work. Moreover, when used as a historical and critical framing, the gift paradigm helps us address apparently anomalous features of the Dutch art world, such as the exceptional number of amateur artists and the high profiles they enjoyed in cultural circles, as well as the unusually affective ties between Dutch artists and patrons that challenge expectations of typical artist–patron relationships.

Crucially, the gift paradigm also provides insight into artists' mixed responses to the growing impact of market forces on Dutch artistic culture. Rembrandt and Vermeer, I argue, engaged the gift economy's alternate, aestheticized discourse to identify their creative labor as inspired by a devotion to art, not materialistic gain.



Despite Rembrandt's demands for high, even exorbitant, remuneration, he presented his art as gifts and designed works for distribution within gifting networks, which facilitated assemblies of art lovers of diverse social backgrounds. In 1667 the poet Jeremias de Decker, a recipient of Rembrandt's portrait painting of himself (Fig. 125), wrote admiringly that Rembrandt was motivated "not for the sake of monetary gain, but purely as a favor [...] and out of love for art."<sup>2</sup>

Vermeer figured this "love of art" in modern paintings of beautiful women and elegant courtship that symbolically transform the (male) art lover's desiring gaze by means of the gift's anti-economic rhetoric of virtue and honor. In *Young Woman Seated at a Virginal* (Fig. 193), Vermeer announces the gift-like, non-commercial status of his art by emphatically juxtaposing an elegant woman's invitation to the beholder to join a refined duet with an inset brothel painting of a procuress demanding payment for the services of a prostitute. Drawing on the antithesis between gifts and sales, Vermeer contrasts a crude monetary transaction with the woman's enactment of an aestheticized exchange with the *liefhebber*, symbolically distancing his art and himself from ordinary economic relationships and calculations.

For highly self-conscious artists and art theorists in early modernity, and especially the seventeenth century, the gift economy emerged as a critical tool for mitigating what they perceived as the market's threat to perceptions of the value of art. The Italian painter Guido Reni insisted on transacting his works in the form of gifts, earning his biographer's praise for refusing to compromise his aesthetic principles or undermine his social status by engaging in buying and selling paintings as if they were any other good. In today's terminology, gift giving provided early modern artists with the means to de-commodify their practices, to promote the value of their works above the status of commodities. Of course, neither de-commodification nor commodification existed in the seventeenth century as terms to describe economic processes. But the gift's alternate, social system of valuation offered early modern artists like Reni an established social mechanism for insulating their creative work from the taint of merchandizing and the leveling effect of the market. The allure of the gift economy as an alternate system of valuation in the arts remains to this day. Lewis Hyde has advocated passionately for the incommensurability between creative activity and the domain of the market, asserting that art is a gift not a commodity.<sup>3</sup> A 2001 exhibition in Italy also explored contemporary art as gift, highlighting its gift-like capacity to generate new social encounters and relationships.<sup>4</sup>

2 For De Decker's poem on the portrait, published in the anthology *Lof der geldsucht*, vol. 2, pp. 34-36, see Strauss and van der Meulen, *Rembrandt Documents*, doc. 1667/11.

3 Hyde, *The Gift*.

4 *Il Dono*.



Dutch artists' embrace of gift giving had distinctive characteristics that evolved from the Republic's merchant culture and vibrant art market. Artists in other European art centers such as Italy or the Spanish Netherlands typically enlisted the gift economy to align themselves with aristocratic behavioral norms and values and detach themselves from association with activities of the merchant class. Dutch artists, by contrast, affirmed their *burgerlijk* virtue by mobilizing the gift economy. When Rembrandt offered his works as gifts to patrons, when he designed prints to function within a context of gift exchange or creatively adapted the ethics of the gift to distribute highly individuated impressions of his prints, he promoted artistic ideals shared by multiple strata within Dutch merchant society. And however pointed Vermeer's assertion of his work's exemption from ordinary or commercial transactions, his career and modern genre paintings epitomize the values of the Dutch burgher elite.

At the same time, some Dutch artists found it challenging to reconcile their artistic ideals with the Republic's nascent capitalist culture. In 1656 the Amsterdam artist Willem Schellinks, who moved within the circle of Rembrandt's contacts, expressed deep ambivalence about the impact of market forces on perceptions of the value of art. In his poem "On the Painting of the Indians," which is also interesting for situating the history of European painting in global perspective, Schellinks condemned what he perceived as the market's debasing effects on the value of the arts by invoking a utopian Other in Mughal India.<sup>5</sup> Schellinks imagines a stark contrast between the Mughals' appreciation of art's transcendent value and its diminished value in the commercialized society of Europe, where money and utilitarianism prevail over what he considers more significant forms of valuation. "[W]ere the West Indies to offer the Benjan [Mughal] for their art all the silver that Potosí (Peru's silver mines) still has in store," Schellinks writes, "he would say, 'I'll not trade art for treasure'"; in this way, he continues, India offers the Europeans the lesson that "art cannot be bought for any amount of money."<sup>6</sup>

Schellinks's opposition to the application of market valuation to his assertion of art's transcendent worth, even if extreme or exceptional, opens a window into

5 Schellinks, "Op de schilder-konst der Benjanen." Quoted in Schwartz (acknowledging Jan de Hond), "Terms of Reception," p. 55; DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North, "Introduction," p. 19; and Gommans, *Unseen World*, pp. 218-219. On Schellinks's unusual praise of Mughal painting, his four paintings of Mughal subjects, and Mughal artworks in seventeenth-century Europe, see Subrahmanyam, "A Roomful of Mirrors," pp. 60-68; Gommans, *Unseen World*, pp. 215-223; and Schrader, ed., *Rembrandt and the Inspiration of India*, p. 14.

6 Schellinks, "Op de schilder-konst der Benjanen," p. 353: "Al bood West-Indjen en den Benjaan / Voor deze konst, al 't zilver an, / Dat Potozi noch heeft in 't vat, / Hy zey, ik ruil geen konst voor schat, / Dees les leert ons al t'zaam Euroop, / de konst is met geen gelt te koop." Translation from DaCosta Kaufmann and North, "Introduction," p. 19.

Dutch artists' varied attitudes toward their changing circumstances in the burgher republic, and the role the gift economy served in negotiating this environment. Like Schellinks, Vermeer, whose rarified art and practice evade connotations of the market, likely harbored a similarly ambivalent view of the effects of this new economic situation on perceptions of his art's value. Yet it would be a mistake to consider Vermeer's or Schellincks's attitudes as detached from the Dutch art system rather than intrinsic to its richly complex and at times seemingly contradictory characteristics. The anti-economic rhetoric of the gift offered Dutch artists and the cultural elites who sponsored them a means of mediating tensions between aesthetic and economic values that was fully consistent with the norms of burgher civility.

As noted above, Rembrandt was praised by the poet De Decker, a recipient of one of his gifts, for his commitment to art as a noble pursuit based on aesthetic value alone; in De Decker's words, Rembrandt was motivated "not for the sake of monetary gain, but purely as a favor [...] and out of love for art." De Decker here seamlessly intermingles the ethics of the gift with the phrase "the love art" to dispel money and economic calculation from the valuation of art. Based on the classical construct of the benefits of a happy life, the adage was pervasive in the discourse on art and commonly invoked by Dutch cultural and social elites, yet subtly adapted to suit the Republic's artistic and commercial culture. In his 1678 art treatise Samuel van Hoogstraten, who studied with Rembrandt, cited Seneca's triad of artistic motivations in which "the love of art," or the artist's satisfaction in his own labor, is privileged over the desire for profit and fame, remarking that the latter are "fruits of the first," and painting is its own reward.<sup>7</sup> But Van Hoogstraten inflected the ancient formula with a decidedly burgher gloss, based on arguments advanced earlier by Philips Angel and Jacob Cats, that stresses the ability of painters to earn a living from their profession. "Unlike her impoverished sister Poetry," Van Hoogstraten writes, practitioners of painting are rewarded with generous payments.<sup>8</sup>

The gift economy therefore functioned for artists and *liefhebbers* as a resource to navigate the frictions between their aesthetic ideals and the rapidly changing economic conditions of Dutch burgher society. Institutionalized as a means of

7 Van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding*, pp. 355, 348. See further Brusati, *Artifice and Illusion*, pp. 213, 253-256, and Gaskell, *Vermeer's Wager*, pp. 63-65. Van Hoogstraten also depicted the Seneca motivations of money, fame, and love on the outside of his *Perspective Box with Interior of a Dutch House* (Fig. 41) and in the drawing *Allegory of Painting and Its Benefits* (Musée Nissim de Camondo, Paris).

8 Van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding*, p. 351. See Brusati, *Artifice and Illusion*, p. 256. Angel, *Lof der schilder-konst*, pp. 27-30, emphasizes the financial rewards of the painter's profession, inverting the primacy traditionally accorded to painting over poetry because poets do not sell their work, which he borrowed from Cats's *Trou-ringh* (Wedding Ring). On Angel's adaptation of Cats in relation to the distinctive socio-economic conditions of Dutch culture, see Sluijter, "Didactic and Disguised Meanings?," pp. 79-83, and idem, *Seductress of Sight*, pp. 213-217.

signaling opposition to the growing pressure of the market on social and professional relationships, gift giving was also privileged in early modern art theoretical writings as a method of contesting the market's perceived erosion of the value of art and the status of artists. By drawing upon the ethics of the gift, Dutch artists bridged their mercantile sensibilities with ideals of artistic honor and notions of art's transcendent value. Entrepreneurial artists like Rembrandt could enlist gift giving to reconcile their embrace of the unprecedented economic opportunities offered by the booming Dutch art trade with claims to artistic and social prestige. But the discourse of the gift also accommodated more ambivalent, nuanced positions within the Republic's competitive marketplace for art. Vermeer, whose paintings defy categorization as market productions, mobilized the gift economy to engage his rarefied audience of *liefhebbers* in a dialogue that symbolically transcended economic relationships and transactions. Exploring Dutch art from the vantage point of the gift captures these mixed responses to the evolving circumstances of the Dutch art market, while casting new light on behaviors and artworks that resist the dominant explanatory models of the field. The gift's inclusiveness as an interpretive model not only brings into focus transfers of art as gifts in seventeenth-century Holland but reveals Dutch artists' creative reactions to the changing economic and social conditions of nascent capitalism.

## Chapter Descriptions

The book comprises five chapters, beginning with a discussion of various theories of the gift, the gift model's application to the study of early modern European society, and the status of art as a privileged form of gift in the seventeenth century. Having laid this foundation for investigating the interplay between art and gift giving in seventeenth-century Holland, I then focus on the distinctive character of gift culture and the gifting of art in the burgher republic. The three subsequent chapters explore Dutch artists' involvement with gift exchange and the potential of the gift paradigm for reinterpreting the works and careers of Rembrandt and Vermeer, and the Republic's many talented amateur artists.

Chapter 1, "The Gift and Art in Early Modernity," examines the centrality of gift giving to the developing commercial cultures of early modern Europe and the rise to prominence of works of art, especially paintings, in circuits of gift exchange. The chapter first addresses the evolution of the gift as a research paradigm in anthropology, tracing its emergence as a mythical alternative to Western capitalism to its modification into a dynamic model in which gifts and the market are viewed as interdependent rather than inherently antithetical exchange systems. Contrary to common assumption, gift giving in the early modern period acquired

renewed importance as a mode of negotiating professional, social, and personal ties in a rapidly changing, increasingly commercialized environment. Art also emerged as an essential currency for negotiating relationships of patronage and clientage, and highly self-conscious artists increasingly turned to the gift's symbolic economy to negotiate with patrons and set their transactions apart from ordinary forms of exchange. I probe the interconnections between gifts and art in various overlapping contexts of early modernity: Within the protocols of international diplomacy; structures of political patronage and clientage of court society; and artists' professional and personal networks of affiliation, addressing as well the special circumstances and implications of artists' embrace of gift giving to distribute their works.

Chapter 2, "Art as Gift in the Dutch Republic," explores the distinctive gift culture and the gifting of art in seventeenth-century Holland. Although they thrived in aristocratic societies, gift exchanges of various kinds, including art, were also widespread in Dutch mercantile culture. I first address gift giving's marginalization in studies of seventeenth-century Dutch art, and then turn to the emphasis on gift exchange in recent historical research as being imbricated in Holland's social, cultural, political, and commercial arrangements. For Dutch burghers giving gifts was obligatory in creating and nurturing professional, business, and personal relationships. Gifts of art also played a key role in the Republic's diplomatic engagements, culminating with the "Dutch Gift" to England of 1660, arguably the most famous use of art in this way of all time. Like their colleagues elsewhere, Dutch artists mixed gifts with sales transactions by offering their works to potential and established patrons, contacts, and familiars. Discussion of the special cases of Rembrandt and Vermeer is reserved for later chapters, but here examples of various gifts by Hendrick Goltzius, Jan Lievens, Govert Flinck, and others are addressed.

The three final chapters comprise case studies that explore how the gift paradigm allows new insights into the careers and works of Rembrandt and Vermeer, the most acclaimed artists of the Dutch Golden Age, and the many amateur artists active in seventeenth-century Holland.

Chapter 3, "Rembrandt's Art as Gift," examines Rembrandt's embrace of gift exchange over the arc of his career and analyzes the works he created to function as gifts among favored patrons, collectors, and intimates. Documents show that Rembrandt could be obstinate with patrons and that he insisted on extremely high remuneration, behaviors that may at first seem incompatible with the gift's social economy of mutuality, service, and honor. But Rembrandt's increasing engagement of the gift economy in later years, like his growing intransigence with patrons and conviction that his work was of transcendent value, reinforced the exceptional artistic persona and status he fashioned for himself. When Rembrandt began to present his art as gifts in the 1630s to important patrons and other figures, he

largely followed the conventions and courtesies expected of such transactions. From the late 1640s through the 1660s, as Rembrandt's primary supporters shifted to *liefhebbers*, gentlemen-dealers, and cultured members of the burgher class, however, he intensified his engagement and became more experimental with gift giving. In this period, which marks a highpoint in Rembrandt's printmaking career, he focused on individuated impressions of etchings and drypoints and highly distinctive prints designed to circulate as gifts within networks of *liefhebbers*. With these works Rembrandt enlisted the gift economy to nurture ties with his inner sanctum, harnessing the ethics of gift giving to cultivate a unique position for himself and his work in the Dutch art world's complex ecosystem.

Chapter 4, "Art and Leisure: Amateur Artists, Rembrandt, and Landscape Representation," identifies a correspondence between the practice of Dutch amateur artists and the place of landscape in Rembrandt's artistic production, and in doing so illuminates the link between gift culture and the withholding of certain types of artworks from the domain of the marketplace. Dutch amateurs favored landscapes drawn directly from nature as a pleasurable pastime, thus enacting interrelated ideals of art and leisure that also governed the status of landscape representation in contemporary art theory. This aestheticized social construct of sketching nature as a leisure activity also shaped the landscape art of prominent history painters, including Rembrandt, whose landscape drawings share close affinities with amateur landscapes. The vast majority of Rembrandt's drawings of Amsterdam's suburban countryside, which he drew exclusively while living in a fashionable neighborhood of the city, were not preparatory to more formal works, indicating that his sketching excursions, like those of Dutch amateurs, were not purely a commercial undertaking. Moreover, one of Rembrandt's contemporaries reflexively linked landscape sketches by famous painters to gift exchange and its symbolic operations. In 1618 Edward Norgate wrote that artists' "first and sleight drawings," mentioning specifically landscapes, are "things never sold but given to friends [*sic*] that are Leefhebbers [art lovers]."<sup>9</sup> Here the period's construct of landscape drawing as a private recreation intersects with the anti-market ethos of the gift to describe the exceptional desirability of artworks that were unobtainable on the market.

Chapter 5, "For the Love of Art: Vermeer and the Poetics of the Gift," explores Vermeer's art in relation to the ethics and aesthetics of the gift. Unlike Rembrandt and many of his peers, Vermeer did not fully embrace the economic opportunities offered by seventeenth-century Holland's thriving market economy. Vermeer's output of paintings was extraordinarily limited, due in part to the support he apparently enjoyed from a benefactor or patron who protected him from the vicissitudes

9 Quoted in Muller and Murrell, *Edward Norgate*, p. 5. Parts of the passage are also cited in Howarth, *Arundel and His Circle*, p. 231, n. 3.

of the market. While no records survive of Vermeer's practice of gift giving, or of any other form of transacting his work, the gift culture of Dutch burgher society together with the conceptual framework of the gift paradigm cast a revealing light on his exceptionalism. Vermeer's depictions of beautiful women and refined courtship encourage the art lover to experience his paintings as if in love with their seductive beauty, figuring the ideal relationship between beholder and artwork, and painter and painting, promoted in contemporary Dutch art theory, which was structured on the Petrarchan poetic trope of the male lover's frustrated desire for an elusive female beloved. As objects of desire of the viewer and Vermeer himself, his paintings thematize art's inspiration in love, not the desire for fame or profit. In this way, Vermeer laid claim to his work's gift-like status, carving out a symbolic space for himself and his art in conformity with ideals of *burgerlijk* civility and yet incommensurate with the logic of economic measures of value.

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As will become apparent, my analysis is not limited to empirical evidence for recovering transactions of art in the form of gifts. While documentary and other textual sources are invaluable and provide crucial insight into the interplay between art and the culture of the gift in a range of social and institutional contexts of early modern Europe and the Dutch Republic specifically, they are not the only, or necessarily the most illuminating, form of evidence. The artworks themselves are essential sources of understanding as well as embodiments of the phenomenon. Art objects play active roles in the pages that follow, through their distribution as gifts and in the social identities they generated as they mediated affinities between Dutch artists and their audiences. My approach contrasts in some respects with theoretical formulations of the gift as involving relations between people, not objects.<sup>10</sup> But objects were not necessarily inconsequential to the gift's symbolic operations – its capacity to set in motion the personal and communal values that transcend depersonalized social relations and market valuations. When the gift is a work of art, especially when offered by the artist him- or herself, it tends to play a much more active role in the exchange as a performance both of its maker's virtuosity and honor and the discernment and virtue of its cultured recipient. As the gifted artwork is viewed and appreciated by others, the aesthetic and social distinction it embodies is confirmed and renegotiated.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Honig follows this formulation in an important study of gifts of art, writing that the generosity an artist anticipates as a reward for presenting his work as gifts “will be entirely detached from the value of anything [...]. The gift-reward is not about objects, but about persons.” See Honig, “Art, Honor, and Excellence,” p. 95.

My effort to highlight the agency of art in the discrete social circumstances of gift exchange is informed in part by the material turn in recent social theory and the humanities, and applications of this materialist framework to the study of seventeenth-century Dutch art.<sup>11</sup> Sociologists have increasingly focused their attention on material things not as inert entities but as active participants or quasi-actors in creating, sustaining, and extending human ties. In reimagining the social realm as an integration of humans and things, this approach releases things from the passive roles to which they are typically assigned and transforms them into constitutive elements of social processes and relations. Art historians have always recognized the agency that artworks exercise in shaping, not merely reflecting or reinforcing social values or hierarchies.<sup>12</sup> But underscoring the physical properties of and practical role artworks play in the establishment and performance of social relationships helps us capture how art and humans effectively co-construct each other.

Exchanges of art as gifts and the circulation of artworks in the form of gifts epitomize the entanglement between humans and things that this recasting of the social realm considers the cornerstone of social activity. Focusing on gifts of art reveals the means by which certain personal ties between artists and members of their circles of admirers were created, sustained, and extended. The gifted artwork acquires an inalienable aura or agency through the circumstances of its trade, placing an especially intense spotlight on the active role that material things play as co-constructive agents rather than subordinate objects within the social networks that formed around them. The convergence between the Dutch Republic's distinctive gift culture and vibrant art market, as we shall see, stimulated highly creative artistic engagements with gift giving that accorded works of art exceptional agency in nurturing affinities and webs of social interaction among Dutch artists, their patrons, collectors, and beyond.

11 On the material turn in social theory, see in particular Latour, *Reassembling the Social*. For an excellent summary of the material turn and its implications for art history, see Roberts, "Things." On the "return to material" in the social sciences and humanities, and its application in archaeology, see Hodder, *Entangled*. For an application of this materialist framework to Rembrandt's gift giving, see Zell, "Rembrandt's Gifts." For other investigations of the social agency of Netherlandish artworks in fostering new forms of association, see Vanhaelen and Wilson, "The Erotics of Looking," esp. pp. 14-15. Ho, "Gerrit Dou's Enchanting *Trompe-l'Oeil*," applies anthropologist Alfred Gell's theories to illuminate the social agency of Dou's paintings.

12 In fact, art historical studies such as Michael Baxandall's now-classic *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* have indirectly contributed to one of the most important materialist approaches to social theory, Actor-Network-Theory, through sociological studies of taste and music. Hennion, "Pragmatics of Taste," pp. 133-134, calls the history of art "a choice ally," and Bruno Latour, leading spokesperson of Actor-Network-Theory, repeatedly cites Hennion's work. See Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, pp. 11, n. 33, pp. 217, 237.



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