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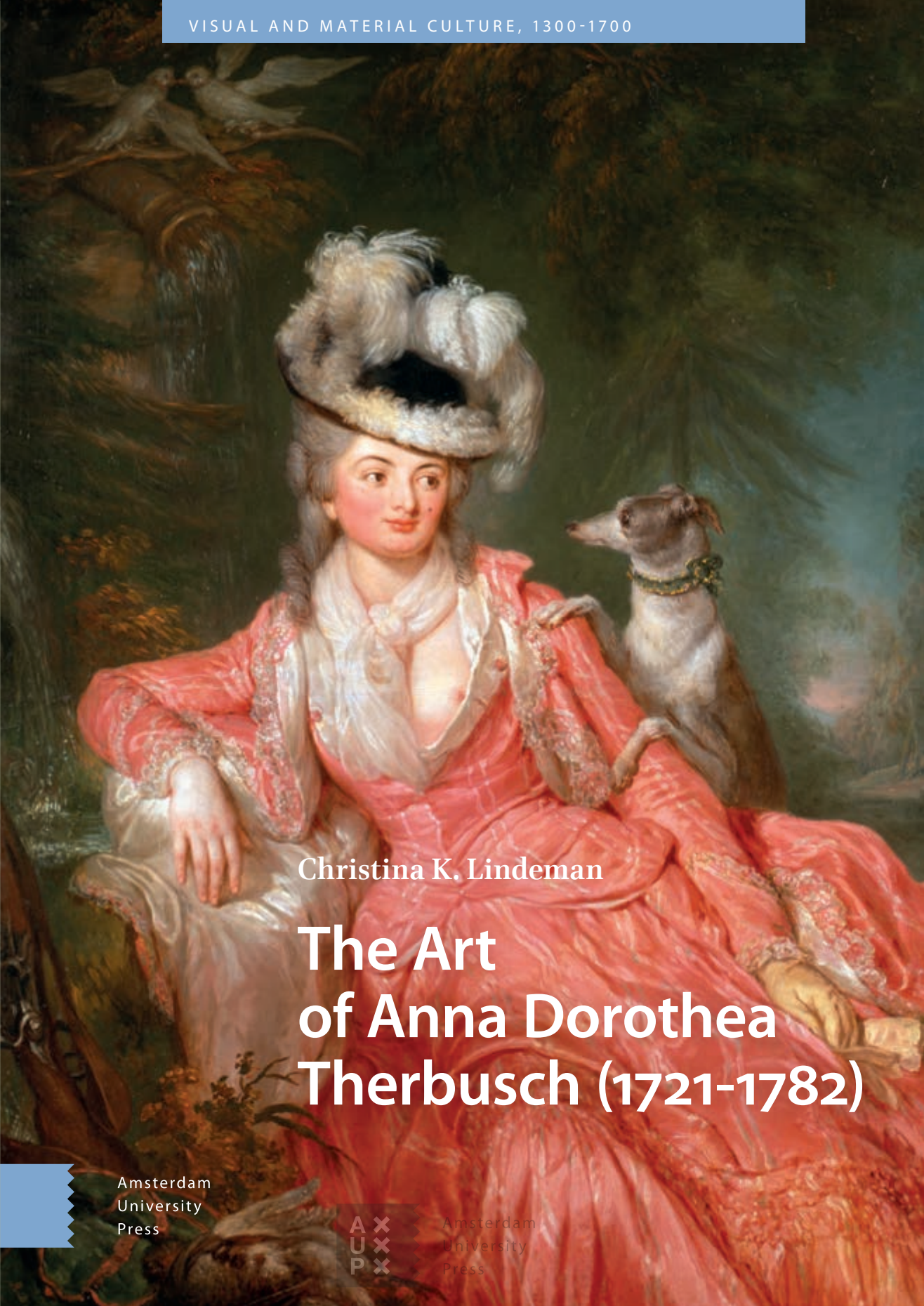

Christina K. Lindeman

The Art of Anna Dorothea Therbusch (1721-1782)

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Introduction

Today, two early paintings by Anna Dorothea Therbusch (born Lisiewska, 1721–1782) in the style of a fête galante hang in the Rheinsberg Palace on the shores of the Grienericksee north of Berlin. They originally hung in the Schwedt Palace, the ancestral home to the second line of the Hohenzollern family that was badly damaged during the Second World War and torn down in the 1960s. *Die Schaukel* (The Swing) (fig. 0.1) and *Das Federballspiel* (The Badminton Game) (fig. 0.2) were completed in 1741, as denoted by the artist's signature "paint par Anna Dorothea Lisiewska 1741" on the latter. These large paintings are wonderful surviving early examples of the then twenty-year-old artist's foray into light-hearted and visually pleasing scenes of the French Rococo. They also demonstrate how the reinterpretation of the French style in the German-speaking realm was not always a faithful adaptation. The intimate spaces and delicate renderings of elegant companies in the small Rococo paintings of Nicolas Lancret, Jean-Antione Watteau, or Jean-Baptiste Pater are lost in the translation.

In *The Badminton Game*, Therbusch paints the *Gesellschaft* or company, playing games in a large pleasure garden with manicured box hedges on the left-hand side of the painting. In the foreground, two children are occupied playing with a monkey, while in the middle ground, a woman and two men are playing badminton. The men are standing still, whereas the woman is extending her arms and launching her body towards the floating shuttlecock. Neither her tight corset nor her heeled slipper prevent her from actively engaging in the game. In the right-hand corner of the scene, a couple is engaged in amorous flirtation. Behind them, another woman looks out of the painting, imploring us to look at the actual game happening in the garden. The sexual innuendo in the image is similar to that found in French Rococo art. However, the placement of the figures in the composition and the topographical layout of the landscape offer a realistic vision of a garden that makes Therbusch's painting distinctively German, and unlike the dreamscapes of Watteau.

Therbusch's early paintings demonstrate a clear composition with a distinct foreground, middle ground, and background guiding the viewer's gaze. The light and shade, colour and grading hues, and linear and atmospheric perspective all showcase her fundamental knowledge of painting. The clothing and movement of the body underneath, as well as the gesturing, indicates her assiduous study of the

Lindeman, C.K., *The Art of Anna Dorothea Therbusch (1721–1782)*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024
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Figure 0.1. Anna Dorothea Therbusch, *Die Schaukel* (The Swing), 1741. Oil on canvas, 104 × 153 cm. GK I 7436. SPSG, Photo: Gerhard Murza.

Figure 0.2. Anna Dorothea Therbusch, *Das Federballspiel* (The Badminton Game), 1741. Oil on canvas, 104 × 184 cm. GK I 7437. SPSG, Photo: Roland Handrick.

human form. Therbusch, like many women painters in the first half of the eighteenth century, began learning her craft from her father, Georg Lisiewsky (1674–1751), who served as portrait painter to three generations of Prussian kings: King Frederick I (r. 1701–13), Frederick William I (r. 1713–40), and Frederick II (called "the Great" r. 1740–86). In her father's studio, she and her siblings had access to paintings, prints, and plaster casts. They also learned the practical chemistry for creating pigments. Through her father's social station in Berlin society, she had a network of painters and artisans from whom to draw inspiration. Therbusch became acquainted with the French painter Antoine Pesne (1683–1757), court painter to Frederick II, and copied his paintings as part of her training. Although Therbusch was not listed as one of his many students, the influence of Pesne is evident in her painterly brushwork and choice of painting mythological nudes in the Rococo style. Pesne encouraged Prussian artists to imitate the fête galantes of Jean-Antoine Watteau and the art of decorative history painters such as François Boucher and Charles-Joseph Natoire.[1]

In the painting *The Badminton Game*, there is an active female presence and I like to imagine that the woman playing badminton is Therbusch herself. She was an artist who gracefully and energetically walked a fine line between following prescribed social and artistic conventions and turning her back on them. Therbusch's fête galantes are examples of how the vogue for French culture prompted German artists not only to emulate the French Rococo style but also adapt it with canniness and inventiveness. As Michael Yonan noted in his work on Bavarian Rococo architecture, the German adaptation of the style took on a life of its own, away from the refined style it emulated, and that art historiography has too often deemed it the "ugly stepsister" of its French counterparts.[2] Perhaps the influence of aesthetics has relegated the art of German-speaking territories to the back shelf of scholarly and public interest, while its French and British counterparts dominate current eighteenth-century art historical scholarship. Similar misconceptions surrounding artwork produced by women were noted in the primary source publications and private correspondence I consulted for this project and I discussed them where appropriate.

My book examines a selection of Therbusch's artworks, serving as case studies, in order to understand them within deeper social and cultural contexts of the

1 French painter Antoine Pesne (1683–1757), a student of French history painter Charles de La Fosse (1636–1716), arrived in Berlin in 1710 to become court painter to Frederick I (r. 1701–13) and then his son and successor, Frederick William I (r. 1713–40). In 1704, he travelled to Venice, where he copied the works of Veronese and Titian and studied the latter's usage of colour. In 1735, Pesne was placed in the court of then Crown Prince Frederick II (called the Great, r. 1740–86) at Rheinsberg. He painted portraits, ceiling paintings, and decorative history paintings for the palace spaces. It was also Pesne who introduced Frederick II to the French Rococo style and the work of Jean-Antoine Watteau.

2 Yonan, "The Wieskirche," 1.

eighteenth-century German-speaking court and intellectual and commercial life. She is a formidable example of the many women artists who travelled throughout Europe working on courtly commissions, yet Therbusch is also strikingly exceptional as one of very few women painters who became a member of several art academies: the Académie des Arts in Stuttgart, Accademia di Belle Arti Bologna, the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris, and the Kupferstecher-Akademie (later part of the Akademie der Bildenden Kunst) in Vienna. Therbusch's paintings act as springboards for an interdisciplinary interrogation of the milieu in which they were produced and received and are examined as social productions that simultaneously reflect and deflect her society. In particular, these paintings help to illuminate how art and culture were deployed in debates of nation, class, and gender in the eighteenth century.

The Art of Anna Dorothea Therbusch (1721–1782) is not intended as a complete biography nor a catalogue raisonné of the artist; this has been provided by Katharina Küster-Heise in her extensive dissertation "Anna Dorothea Therbusch, geb. Lisiewska 1721–1782: Eine Malerin der Aufklärung; Leben und Werk," (Heidelberg University, 2008),[3] as well as in a previous dissertation by Leopold Reidemeister, *Anna Dorothea Therbusch: Ihr Leben und Ihr Werk* (Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1924)[4] and articles by Ekhart Berckenhagen (1987)[5] and Gerd Bartoschek (2010).[6] Her life and work are briefly discussed in monographs on other artists, such as that of Therbusch's brother in the catalogue *Christoph Friedrich Reinhold Lisiewsky (1725–1794)* and in Bärbel Kovalevski's *Barbara Rosina Lisiewska (1713–1783): Hofmalerin in Berlin und Braunschweig* (2022), an in-depth art historical study of Therbusch's elder sister's life and work. Both monographs provide a wealth of information on the artist and, more importantly for my project, show how instrumental family ties, networking, and collaboration were for the Lisiewski family.

In Germany, as early as the 1970s, there was a renewed interest in women artists. Therbusch's life and art began to be included in anthologies of women painters, surveys of palace collections, and German museum exhibition catalogues.[7] In

3 Küster-Heise, "Therbusch, geb. Lisiewska."

4 Reidemeister, "Therbusch: Ihr Leben."

5 Berckenhagen, "Anna Dorothea Therbusch."

6 Bartoschek, "Gemeinsam stark?"

7 To list a few, Ekhart Berckenhagen, *Die Malerei in Berlin* (Berlin: Bruno Hessling, 1964); Helmut Börsch-Supan, *Höfische Bildnisse des Spätbarock* (Schloss Charlottenburg: Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten, 1966); Gerd Bartoschek, ed., *Anna Dorothea Therbusch: 1721 – 1782; Ausstellung zum 250. Geburtstag im Kulturhaus "Hans Marchwitza"; 27. Juni bis 25. Juli 1971* (Potsdam-Sanssouci: Die Generaldirektion der Staatlichen Schlösser und Gärten Potsdam-Sanssouci, 1971); Birgit Ulrike Münch et al., eds., *Künstlerinnen: Neue Perspektiven auf ein Forschungsfeld der Vormoderne* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2017); Kerstin Merkel and Heide Wunder, eds., *Deutsche Frauen der Frühen Neuzeit. Dichterinnen, Malerinnen, Mäzeninnen* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2000).

answer to Linda Nochlin's celebrated essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Painters?," Therbusch's artworks were showcased in museum exhibitions such as *Anna Dorothea Therbusch, 1721–1782: Ausstellung zum 250 Geburtstag* (Staatlichen Schlosser und Garten Potsdam-Sanssouci, 1971), and again a few years later in the *Berlinerinnen: Bekannte und unbekannte Frauen in Berlin* (Berlin Museum, 1975). And more recently *Der freie Blick: Anna Dorothea Therbusch und Ludovike Simanowiz* (Städtischen Museums Ludwigsburg, 2002), and on the tercentenary of her birth *Anna Dorothea Therbusch: A Berlin Woman Artist of the Age of Enlightenment* in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin (3 December 2021–10 April 2022). Simultaneously, while I edit this manuscript, curators and conservators in Berlin— Nuria Jetter, Sarah Salomon, and Anja Wolf— are preparing an edited volume inspired by the exhibition.[8] Therbusch's admission to art academies is the topic in the exhibition and catalogue *Geniale Frauen Künstlerinnen und Ihre Weggefährten* (Hamburg and Basel, 2023–24) in which Bodo Brinkmann's "Künstlerinnen in den Institutionen" places Therbusch and her sister Barbara Rosina Lisiewska née Matthieu née De Gasc among other early modern women artists. They were exceptional because they were the few women admitted into the male dominated academies.

My book, however, is the first English-language monograph on this important German woman artist that critically examines Therbusch's artworks within the German and international milieu that commissioned them. I hope that it will also spark new interest in the art history of the eighteenth-century German-speaking regions, not just literature, and serve as a foundation for English-speaking scholars. The scholarship on individual women artists of the period is relativity rich, including works by Mary Sheriff, Melissa Hyde, Laura Auricchio, Eik Kahng, Wendy Wassyng Roworth, Angela Rosenthal, Bettina Baumgärtel, Angela Oberer, and Heidi Strobel, among others, who have successfully examined the works of eighteenth-century women artists in a variety of social and cultural contexts.[9] A common theme is the examination of the lives and oeuvres of professional women artists and how they deployed visual rhetoric in both self-portraits and in their overall bodies of work to remain respectable within the public eye. Women's artwork and personae often faced extreme scrutiny in the eighteenth century. The scholarship also often addresses how these women navigated their international fame and gained artistic commissions through networking within aristocratic circles and friendships with politically influential men. Adding to the excellent scholarship on French, British,

8 Nuria Jetter (ed.), *Anna Dorothea Therbusch in Berlin and Brandenburg: Works, Techniques, Contexts*, forthcoming 2024.

9 The list is certainly growing. While writing this manuscript, new publications on British and French women artists by Paris Spies-Gans (2022), and art exhibitions with catalogues such as *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe 1400–1800* (Banta et al.) (2023), have expanded audiences' knowledge on women's cultural production.

Italian, and Swiss eighteenth-century women painters, I help provide a clearer understanding of court cultures' social and cultural practices beyond France and how a woman painter navigated them.

Most English-language scholarship on Therbusch focuses on just one brief period in her life, her roughly three years in Paris, and leaves much of her life and work untouched. Essays, lectures, and sections of chapters in the works of Mary D. Sheriff (1997), Patricia Crown (2003), Bernadette Fort (2004), Angela Rosenthal (1997), Elena Russo (2010), and more recently Rosalind P. Blakesley (2023) examine Therbusch's time as a member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris and centres discussions around Denis Diderot's infamous published critique of her work in his *Salons* of 1767. Therbusch's work is also found in catalogues containing works of other women artists such as *Women Artists: 1550–1950* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1977) and *An Imperial Collection: Women Artists from the State Hermitage Museum* (National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2003).

The previous generation of feminist art historians, notably Ann Sutherland Harris, Linda Nochlin, Rozsika Parker, and Griselda Pollock, introduced Therbusch to an English-speaking audience in their landmark catalogues and inserted her into the art historical canon primarily as a portrait painter. In Parker and Pollock's *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, published in 1981, the caption next to Therbusch's *Self-Portrait* (1782) in the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin stated, "[h]er *oeuvre* contains few major subject pictures; she concentrated on portraiture, for she never had the opportunity to study anatomy sufficiently to fulfil her ambitions as a history painter."[10] They noted the challenges of becoming a history painter due to her lack of academic training. Yet during her lifetime, Therbusch had a formidable reputation as a history painter, albeit focusing on the recumbent mythological nude female figure rather than the heroic male subject. Indeed, in 1767, on admission into the Académie Royale in Paris, the *Mercure de France* announced that she was "a famous painter of history" and not a portraitist.[11] The majority of surviving works by the artist are indisputably portraits, but after a recovery of her work in chapter 1 of this book using photographs taken before the Second World War and prints of her work, we will see that she was actively and avidly engaged with mythological and historical subject matter.

The inspiration for the framework for *The Art of Anna Dorothea Therbusch (1721–1782)* comes from the groundbreaking exhibition monograph *Zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit: Künstlerinnen der Goethe-Zeit zwischen 1750 und 1850* (1999) edited by Bärbel Kovalevski which expanded readers' knowledge of German-speaking women artists, many of whom were unknown, and unveiled their poorly acknowledged

10 Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 94.

11 *Mercure de France*, 308.

impact on the cultural sphere. The thematic essays examine the works of women artists through a feminist lens—examining friendship circles, the culture of sociability, networking, collaboration, women as court painters, the development of women painters outside of academies and within family workshops, as well as women as honorary members of academies and as instructors.

The exhibition monograph illuminates how German-speaking women painters asserted themselves within the cultural politics in parallel with the women writers of the age. The more prevalent scholarship on German women writers reflects the prominence of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. As I have argued elsewhere, historians' and literary scholars' persistence in referring to this period in German history as the "Age of Goethe" overshadows the accomplishments of women during the second half of the eighteenth century.[12] It delineates women's involvement in the visual arts and cultural politics such that their work is viewed as less than or mere copies of their male contemporaries.

Carola Muysers's essay "Profession mit Tradition – Künstlerinnen der Dresdner, Berliner und Münchner Kunstakademie in der Aufklärungs- und Goethe-Zeit" demonstrates how, in Dresden, women became honorary members in the academies working as portraitists, miniaturists, still-life painters, and copyists. One woman highlighted in Muysers's essay is Anna Dorothea Therbusch's sister, Barbara Rosina de Gasc, who was awarded honorary membership of the Dresden Academy of Art in 1768. The academy accepted women based on its 6 February 1764 founding decree that members had to contribute and promote the academy's reputation.[13] Barbara Rosina held positions as court painter in Braunschweig and Berlin, thereby fostering a positive image for the academy. Muysers also discusses how most women admitted into the Dresden Academy were connected to families who were either academy members or had worked at court. For example, the miniaturist Sophie Friederike Dinglinger's grandfather was the celebrated court goldsmith Johann Melchior Dinglinger. As Muysers's essay demonstrates, family members often explored different art mediums. Throughout the chapters in this book, I consistently return to the importance of the family atelier (since most German art academies were in their infancy and some did not faithfully follow the model of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris) as a place of education, collaboration and experimentation, and networking. Of particular interest in my book is the fluency between mediums such as painting and the so-called minor arts of working in enamel and porcelain, discussed in chapter 4, when examining Therbusch's experiments in practical chemistry and the creation of synthetic pigments.

12 Lindeman, *Anna Amalia's Bildung*.

13 Muysers, "Profession mit Tradition," 62.

The Artist's Biography

While there are only small snapshots of Therbusch's life, most of which remain unknown or at least speculative, art historians can turn to Johann Georg Meusel's celebrated biographical account, written after her death, "Lebensumstände der im Jahr 1782 zu Berlin verstorbenen Madame Therbusch," published in 1783 in the early art periodical *Miscellaneen artistischen Inhalts*.[14] As Julia K. Dabbs noted in her examination of the journal issues published between 1779 and 1786, Therbusch was the only woman artist whose life was highlighted in a lengthy section of the journal.[15] This is compelling evidence that the artist was both well respected and celebrated during her lifetime.

In the tradition of earlier biographers of male artists such as Giorgio Vasari, Meusel captures Therbusch's life in a hyperbolic narrative that creates the image of her as a heroic Prussian woman who, against familial suppression, particularly from her mother-in-law, continued to practise her art in secret. Meusel's work also presents Therbusch as an exceptional woman and an anomaly, particularly in her pursuit of knowledge of subjects associated more exclusively with men of learning. At the same time, the writer also favourably compares her work to the most well-regarded painter in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Peter Paul Rubens, when he describes her use of colour. It is significant here that Meusel provides this comparative analysis with artworks by male artists, thereby suggesting that her work was not viewed as "work by a woman" who could not do more than emulate the works of men.

Meusel's biographical account has undertones of national pride when it praises the Prussian artist Anna Dorothea, who was born on 19 July 1721 in Berlin. The author indicates that she was trained in the art of painting by her father so that she could earn a living, but this did not come to fruition; she married innkeeper Ernst Friedrich Therbusch in February 1742. Anna Dorothea's focus transitioned from creating art to managing the day-to-day affairs of the family.

Meusel noted that she had many children and was frequently ill during this period of her life. It was difficult for her to paint because she was confined to the

14 Therbusch's life story allows for many literary interpretations. In 2014, Therbusch's life was once again fictionalised when Cornelia Naumann's historical novel *Die Portraitmalerin: Die Geschichte der Anna Dorothea Therbusch*, loosely based on Küster-Heise's dissertation, created a compelling, if speculative, image of the artist's life.

15 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 430–31. Dabbs argues that although it is unknown for certain if Meusel knew Therbusch or her family personally, it is clear that he did his research on the artist. It is, indeed, very likely that if not the artist herself at least a member of her eminent family would have been connected to Meusel because Therbusch and her siblings were well acquainted with most literary intellectuals in Prussia and beyond, including the Berlin writer and publisher Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811), who also engaged with the art and culture of his time by establishing the art periodical *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften* in 1757 and whose family portrait Anna Dorothea Therbusch painted in 1775–80.

home and the bed for childbirth, having borne seven children between 1742 and 1750.[16] The author gives the impression that the artist's mother-in-law disapproved of painting; calling them "leisure activities," and that it was not until after her death that the artist continued to paint.[17] He highlights the moment she stepped out of the dark confines of the home to shine in the spotlight by catching the attention of Duke Carl Eugen of Württemberg and travelling to the court at Stuttgart in 1761. On March 8, 1762, she became an *Ehrenmitglied* (Honorary Member) of the newly established academy. That same year she became a member of the Accademia di Belle Arti in Bologna.

Meusel exclaimed that "the fortunate success of this first escape" from her life in Berlin led to her introduction to her second major patron, Carl Theodor, Prince Elector of the Palatine.[18] She travelled to his court in Mannheim in 1763. The author highlights her large mythological works painted for these men, discussed further in chapter 1 of this book, and how she completed them with great speed and skill. In 1764 she had returned to Berlin to finish the paintings, and she returned to Stuttgart in 1765 to deliver them. In 1766 she arrived in the city of Paris. Meusel labelled this moment "her third major epoch," citing her admission to the Académie Royale with her reception piece *A Man, Glass in Hand, Lighting a Candle: Night Painting* (1766–67). Although the author was not present, he described many members treating her justly, but others questioned her skill, "In the opinion of some of the doubters, such vivid brush strokes, such beautiful color tones, and such a magnificent mixture of colors were all things that revealed the help of a man."[19] Meusel most likely saw other works by the artist and was commenting on her celebrated skill in colour mixture, a subject of much debate during and after her life (see chapter 4). He exclaimed that the artist was under pressure to prove herself and created the reception painting under eyewitnesses who, after seeing it for themselves, voted for her membership to the Académie Royale on 28 February 1767.

In the biographical account, Meusel noted Therbusch's misfortune in Paris. He stated that the city "gave her so little satisfaction" that she left on 13 November 1768, travelling to Brussels and the Netherlands. Here, he presents a similar story: she was unhappy, under much financial strain, and yearned to see her family, so she returned to Berlin sometime between 1769 and 1770. When Therbusch returned home, she presented a small historical painting, *Anakreon* (1771), to Frederick II,

16 The "Genealogie" in *Christoph Friedrich Reinhold Lisiewsky (1725–1794)*, lists 7 children: Anna Loysa, Dorothea Wilhelmina, Ernestina Friederica, Georg Friedrich, Christina Loysa, Carl Heinrich, and Carl August.

17 For this manuscript I am using Lilli Thene's translation of Johann Georg Meusel ed., *Miscellaneen artistischen Inhalts* in Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 434–39.

18 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 435.

19 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 436.

King of Prussia. As Meusel denotes, the king highly praised her talent and asked her to create another historical painting, the *Toilet of Venus* (1772). After receiving accolades from the king, she painted *Diana with Her Nymphs* (1772). At the end of a year of professional success, on 31 December 1772, Therbusch's husband, Ernst Friedrich Therbusch, died, about which Meusel states, "the loss of her beloved husband was made even more painful by the fact that her only daughter was already married, so the burden of the household fell solely on her."[20]

Sometime in 1772, Therbusch's brother, Christoph Friedrich Reinhold Lisiewsky, returned to Berlin to work with his sister. Meusel highlights that they collaborated on the largest commission of Anna Dorothea's life: mentioning six life-size portraits of the Prussian royal family for the Russian Empress Catherine II called Catherine the Great (see chapter 2). Meusel marks this by writing, "in order to comfort her in her time as a widow, her talent was blessed anew by significant orders from the Russian court" and that the portraits were generally admired.[21]

As quickly as Therbusch's fame rose in Berlin, it slowly dwindled due to competition from other portrait painters, such as the Swiss painter Anton Graff, whom Meusel described as "a foreign upstart artist."[22] The author's choice of words indicates that even among German-speaking intellectuals, a sense of pride was connected to a person's city of birth and territory. He also noted her failing health as a factor: "Her best years were gone. Her delicate body was weakened by grief and sorrow, and her nerves were strained too much by the accumulation of a lot of work."[23] Here, the author falls back on a gendered assumption that it was women's nervous systems that restrained them from being productive. Yet Meusel also singles her out from her sex, stating "she was in all aspects a rare and commendable woman. She not only possessed great talent, but in light of her coloring and the magic of her art, she no doubt came closest to Rubens."[24] Meusel's anecdotal biography shifts back and forth between statements about her sentimental and physiognomic characteristics found in the voices of male critics. The crescendo to his written account is his lamentation that many were too late in commissioning their portraits from the artist who died on 9 November 1782 from consumption.

Therbusch's place within the Berlin art world was also acknowledged in the first exhibition of the newly reformed Royal Prussian Academy of Arts and Mechanical Sciences in 1786. The exhibition paid tribute to not only artists who were members of

20 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 438. Meusel is referring to her only surviving daughter Dorothea Wilhelmina who married a student of Therbusch and her sister Barbara Rosina de Gasc, Johann Christian Samuel Gohl. The author incorrectly cited Ernst Friedrich Therbusch's death at the end of 1773.

21 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 438.

22 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 438.

23 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 439.

24 Dabbs, *Life Stories*, 439.

the academy but also non-members who lived and were employed in Berlin. Among the "deceased" artists hung three paintings by Therbusch: her 1782 self-portrait with monocle; a mythological painting of Venus, Cupid, and Satyr (a subject she returned to throughout her life); and an allegorical bust of Devotion.[25] At the academy's second art exhibition a year later, a family portrait by Therbusch was on display. The paintings presented in both exhibitions highlight the various subjects Therbusch engaged with and are analysed throughout this book.

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The first chapter examines how Therbusch navigated the challenges that a woman artist faced when painting female mythological nudes for male patrons and courtly audiences. The exploration of mythological and classical literary themes in Therbusch's paintings is quite limited. Although the artist created many historical artworks, many of them have been destroyed or lost. The scholarly literature dedicated to a critical examination of these works is relatively sparse. Chapter 1 is partly a recovery of the artist's work as partially documented in photographs taken before the Second World War. Surviving reproductions in print or black-and-white photos fill in some of the gaps in our appreciation of her role as a painter of decorative history paintings.

Therbusch and her siblings, Barbara Rosina (married names Matthieu and De Gasc) and Christoph Friedrich Reinhold Lisiewsky, trained with their father Georg Lisiewsky, who provided access to prints, plaster casts, and scientific methods of creating pigments. Through his extensive network, Therbusch became acquainted with the work of Frenchman Antoine Pesne (1683–1757), court painter to Frederick II, who trained German-speaking artists in the fashionable French Rococo style. As crown prince, Frederick II cultivated his love of the style, and as king, he saw that German painters studied the French Rococo style under the tutelage of painter Pesne. This first chapter also examines Pesne's influence on Therbusch's painterly style and choice of mythological subject matter, as well as her paintings and prints prevalent in German-speaking courts in the eighteenth century. The chapter ends with an examination of how Therbusch's paintings of mythological nudes caught the attention of Wilhelmine Enke, later Countess Lichtenau, mistress to Crown Prince Frederick William II of Prussia, whose seductive portrait she painted.

The second chapter examines the artist's collaborations with her brother from 1772 until 1779 when they shared a studio on Unter den Linden in Berlin. At the core of this chapter is an examination of their largest collaboration together: six large-scale, full-length portraits of members of the Prussian royal family for Empress Catherine the Great. An analysis of these works unfolds the complexity of family

25 Kovalevski, "Berliner Künstlerinnen," 23.

units and, ultimately, how each sibling developed their own identities, stressed individual achievements, and even renegotiated gendered roles. I also consider how Therbusch consciously chose to recast herself within the structure of her birth family for social acceptability and to adapt to her new identity as a widow. The impact of family on the enrichment and fluidity of artists in the eighteenth century is underscored in contrast to a prevalent focus on the rise of the art academy in past scholarship. Collaboration between artists in the early modern period was a common studio practice, the most famous of which examined by scholars are the seventeenth-century artworks created by Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder. The chapter sheds light on the working processes of collaborative family ateliers.

The third chapter considers Therbusch's use of the windowsill as a framing device in her self-portraits, an element she appropriated from seventeenth-century Dutch art. With such images, the chapter argues, the artist consciously blends the more "high-brow" academic conventions of eighteenth-century French painting with motifs derived from humbler seventeenth-century Dutch models. This unusual, creative approach reflects the interconnectedness of the artist's growing profession within the rising urban culture of Berlin, as well as the increasing demand for Dutch art throughout the German-speaking realm. German-speaking artists did not always look to France for artistic inspiration. They often instead emulated the secular, emblematic traditions of Flanders and Holland.

The fourth chapter analyses Therbusch's engagement with practical chemistry and her experiments with inventing a new red pigment called Arcanum, as revealed in the primary sources. The name, borrowed from Arabic, was used when discussing the secret formulas used in making true porcelain. I explore how Therbusch's and Christoph Friedrich Reinhold Lisiewsky's colour experiments participated in the accelerated development of the luxury goods industries in Berlin, a period of intellectual curiosity in natural philosophy among the growing scientific communities in Berlin. This chapter also connects her use of the colour red to gendered discussions of colour that were prevalent in eighteenth-century discourses and, indeed, earlier, during the Rubenist-Poussinist controversy. Therbusch was scrutinised in contemporary accounts for her use of red in her paintings, a pigment needed when painting flesh, and an ulterior motive for critics who preferred to focus on her provocative choice of subject matter, namely recumbent semi-nude and nude female mythological and classical literary subjects.

The study of Anna Dorothea Therbusch's works is limited not only by the ravages of time and wars but also by the absence of the artist's own words, thoughts, and testimony about the places she visited, the paintings she saw, and the artists, artisans, aristocrats, and intellectuals with whom she engaged. Unlike English painter Joshua Reynolds, the Prussian printmaker Daniel Chodowiecki, and her

brother Christoph Friedrich Reinhold Lisiewsky, Therbusch did not publish nor has any of her correspondence survived, with the notable exception of a letter to Emperor Joseph II that begins chapter one. This book draws on the extensive contemporary periodicals and published works, travel writings, and personal correspondences written by those who formed part of her network of European Enlightenment artists, craft artisans, and patrons to offer a deeper, contextualised examination of her work, revealing how she confounded, inverted, and toyed with pre-existing genres, stylistic conventions, historical traditions, and practices in painting.

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