



Dynamic Partnership

The work of married women in Dutch seventeenth-century artists' households

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The growing attention paid to female artists has significantly broadened our understanding of the professional art market in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.¹ This period, once believed to be predominantly occupied by men, is now recognized as home to a growing number of women artists, ranging from the talented daughters of painters like Alida Withoos (c. 1661-1730) to independent professionals such as the unmarried Maria van Oosterwijck (1630-1693). Despite this progress, one significant group remains notably absent from the narrative: married women. As elaborated below, there is a prevailing belief that women artists abandoned their artistic pursuits upon marriage, with their time and attention fully consumed by housekeeping and childcare.² Illustratively, the recent exhibition *In full bloom* (Mauritshuis, 10 February-6 June 2022) opened with a text explaining the exceptional status of women artists by stating that 'women in those days did not study art, did not study anatomy, but took care of the family'. Meanwhile, socio-economic research into women's work by historians such as Ariadne Schmidt, Danielle van den Heuvel, and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, challenges this assumption.³ Their research reveals that while the ideal of the male breadwinner and female housewife emerged in the seventeenth century, it was not yet widely practiced. Lower and middle-class married women generally contributed to the family's income, either by independent work or by assisting in the family business, all while balancing household responsibilities. This article extends these insights into the realm of married women within artists' households, exploring their role in both the actual art production and related tasks.

Detail fig. 3

Art historians have acknowledged the crucial role of family workshops in providing opportunities for female relatives to engage in professional artistic pursuits. However, this recognition has predominantly centered on the experiences of daughters rather than married women.⁴ For instance, Elisabeth Honig rightly emphasizes that painters' daughters might have received education at home but also noted that 'even these women often followed the expected social pattern and gave up painting upon marrying a dependable breadwinner'.⁵ Honig, as well as Els Kloek, references the case of Adriana Spilberg (1656-after 1697), whose father, as detailed in Arnold Houbraken's biography, harbored concerns that marriage might curtail his daughter's artistic talents, fearing that domestic responsibilities would consume her time.⁶ Certainly, domestic duties could have a restrictive influence on women's art production, as lamented by Anna Maria van

Schurman (1607-1678) in her *Dissertatio* (1641) on the adaptability of Christian women to the study of arts and sciences.⁷ What is noteworthy is that Spilberg's father did permit his daughter to marry a fellow artist, suggesting that artists' workshops offered a potential avenue for women to continue their artistic practices after marriage. While both Honig and Kloek mention this anecdote, they do not delve into whether such opportunities for married women materialized in practice, thereby leaving largely unchallenged the assumption that women artists generally abandoned their artistic pursuits upon marriage, which is, as we will see below, not true for everyone.⁸ Only Katlijne van der Stighelen has explicitly challenged the prevailing narrative.⁹ In her article on the Flemish artist Anna Francisca de Bruyns (1604/1605-1656), she lists one other seventeenth-century Southern Netherlands artist who continued her artistic endeavors post-marriage, as well as four examples from the Northern region. Although Van der Stighelen rightly acknowledges that in many cases it remains unclear whether married women continued their artistic practices after marriage, she observes that there is no archival evidence to suggest they did not. Which archival documents inform us about individual married women working in Dutch workshops? And is an adjustment of the collective image of women artists as predominantly withdrawing from art following marriage necessary?

Beyond the involvement of married women in art production, their participation in other aspects of the art business has remained largely unexplored. While it is commonly assumed that wives assisted their husbands in the shop or managed administrative tasks, such generalizing statements are often presented without substantial evidence and relies primarily on examples from sixteenth-century Southern Netherlands.¹⁰ In contrast, when examining the seventeenth-century Northern region, instances mentioned in art historical literature are frequently confined to the situation of the painter Judith Leyster (1609-1660).¹¹ Following her marriage to fellow artist Jan Miense Molenaer (c. 1610-1668), she occasionally set aside her paintbrush to oversee the business administration of their art business. Additional support for the hypothesis that artists' spouses were involved in marketing their works is provided by the research of Els Kloek and Astrid Waltmans, which highlights cases of widows who continued to sell artworks after their husbands' passings.¹² While it is conceivable that these women were engaged in the trade even before widowhood, such an assertion must be approached cautiously. The activities of widows do not necessarily shed light on the specific tasks undertaken by women during their marriages. Moreover, this does not conclusively prove women's involvement during their marriage, as not all women who took over their deceased husbands' enterprises had previously assisted their spouses in these endeavors.¹³ A comprehensive study of non-artistic work undertaken by married women in artists' households would provide a better picture of women working in artists' workshops.

This article brings together and analyzes the range of work performed by married women in artists' households to identify workshops as places where married women had the opportunity to work and to directly or indirectly contribute to art production, challenging the still prevailing assumption that women usually stopped producing art when they married. Before

proceeding, however, it is essential to clarify two fundamental concepts: 'work' and 'household'. First, 'work' encompasses all purposive actions that produce useful objects or services, whether they be paid or unpaid.¹⁴ With regard to artists' workshops, this includes a wide range of activities, between painting and grinding pigments, and between marketing artworks and collecting outstanding debts. Second, a 'household' is understood as an economic unit composing of individuals who share income and other resources, commonly characterized by marital or familial bonds and co-residence.¹⁵ In the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, households sometimes included grandparents or in-house staff like servants or apprentices, but more often typically resembled what we would now recognize as so-called nuclear families.¹⁶ Especially in the densely populated, urbanized areas of the west, such seventeenth-century households on average were composed of three to five persons in total: a (step)father and/or (step)mother and a few children. The notions of household and work are intrinsically linked, as it required work to fulfill the household's needs and desires. This work could be done by household members or be outsourced, could be collaborative or individual, could be performed within or outside the home, and could be, as mentioned, paid or unpaid. Adopting a broad definition of 'work' allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the activities within artists' households and facilitates a study of them in conjunction. It encompasses not only direct art production but also supportive tasks such as bookkeeping and sales. As we will see, art business was oftentimes combined with other sources of income, as well as domestic work like cleaning and cooking, child-rearing, and managing household finances. Art production was intimately connected to all other work within the household, which undeniably contributed to the household's survival and success. Therefore, acknowledging the significance and economic value of these diverse forms of work is vital for a thorough understanding of the art market and the role women played within it, be it directly or indirectly in relation to art production.

Furthermore, in discussing the organization of work within the household and more specifically between husbands and wives, I classify spousal collaboration as 'dynamic partnership'. Traditionally, collaborations within artists' households, as in other artisanal households, are described as a family business in the sense that family members worked jointly but with clear task divisions in the production of goods or services for sale.¹⁷ However, this implies that the family business revolves around a single source of income and has a fixed division of tasks. As we will see, collaborations between spouses were fluid and adaptable: when necessary, family members adjusted their work according to the situation. Therefore, a more flexible definition of collaboration is more appropriate when discussing task divisions and combinations of different kinds of work, such as art production and the sale of other products.

Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this essay studies the work of married women in artists' households by drawing on archival, literary, art theoretical, and other contemporary sources. The first section of this article positions artists' households within the broader historical landscape by exploring the division of work within early modern households as voiced

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Print maker unknown, after design by Adriaen van der Venne, *Men and women carry a chest of belongings*, 1625-1635, engraving, 213 x 167 mm (page), 139 x 138 mm (print), Jacob Cats, *Hovwelyck. Dat is De gansche gelegentheyt des echten staets*, (Middelburg, widow of Jan Pietersz van de Venne 1625-1626 & The Hague, Adriaen van de Venne 1625-1635), Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (photo: Rijksmuseum)

in moralistic and satirical literature by Jacob Cats, Petrus Wittewrongel, and Hieronymus Sweerts. Their contemporary viewpoints are situated against the abovementioned socio-economic historical research into women's labor in other professional groups. The second section delves into the work of married women in artists' households, based on a comprehensive analysis of artist biographies by Karel van Mander and Arnold Houbraken, combined with archival sources from both well-known painter couples, such as Judith Leyster and Jan Miense Molenaer, and lesser-known ones, like Pieter Mathijsz and his wife, Wijbe Barents. The third section examines the role of married women in professional art production, drawing on an updated overview of female artists active in the seventeenth-century Republic, supplemented with more in-depth case studies of artists such as Antonina Houbraken (1686-1736). Along the way, the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic is compared with similar case studies from abroad to address some of the questions raised above. Based on such comparisons and both new and previously known data and documents, the Dutch workshops of the Republic are presented here not as places where married women stopped working, but as places of professional opportunity, especially for married women.

1. Partners in marriage and business

In studying the work of married women in the early modern Dutch Republic, (art) historians frequently turn to contemporary conduct literature, household guides, moral treatises, and satiric literature.¹⁸ These sources typically emphasize the strict delineation of gender roles, where wives were confined to domestic duties, managing the kitchen, and caring for the children, while men assumed the role of leaders and providers for the family. Historical studies on working women, however, reveal a disconnection between prescribed gender ideologies in literature and the practical realities of daily life.¹⁹ Contrary to the prescribed norms, women in reality found opportunities to actively engage in professional pursuits. Read from a different perspective, a close examination of contemporary sources uncovers a more complex narrative – one where spouses were expected to assist each other, even beyond their gender-specific domains. In practice, this could translate into collaborations within both the marriage and the (family) business.

Moralistic and satiric literature. Mutual assistance in marriage

It is essential to recognize that the gender-specific responsibilities promoted in early modern moralistic literature were not solely about conforming to societal norms; instead, they served to achieve a common objective: the establishment of a peaceful marriage and a harmonious household.²⁰ The household was regarded as the cornerstone of society, underscoring the profound importance of fostering marital harmony as a pivotal societal endeavor. What is often overlooked is that, in the pursuit of marital comfort and peace, spouses were expected not only to complement each other by fulfilling gender-specific tasks associated with separate spheres of the household (economic and domestic) but also to extend assistance to one

VROUWE.

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Al draegh ick, wat ick mach, noch deuchtet niet met allen,
Mits een, die mede draeght, het pack wil laeten vallen :



Mijn hulp is mijn belet ; mijn troost is mijn verdriet ;
Mijn vlijt is sonder vrucht ; mijn sweet en gelter niet.
„ Of wel die vooren gaet sich quijt ten alderbesten,
„ Tis al maer hoy gedorft alst hapert aenden lesten ;

E e 2

„ Al

another, even if such help transcended the traditional gender-specific boundaries.

This slightly shifted perspective can be observed in Jacob Cats's *Houwelick* (1625), the most renowned and widely disseminated conduct book of its time, and in Petrus Wittewrongel's more Christian-dogmatic *Oeconomia christiana ofte Christelicke huyshoudinge* (1655). Both authors depict marriage as a collaborative effort, highlighting the essential role of mutual assistance.²¹ Cats vividly illustrates the interdependence of husband and wife, as exemplified in figure 1, where the spouses are seen jointly lifting a chest. This chest, brimming with items typically considered feminine such as a lace pillow and a small jewelry box, appears on the verge of falling as the wife loosens her hold with her left hand. The accompanying text explains that the chest symbolizes the family's finances.²² While the man, in his traditional role as the primary breadwinner, may accumulate and save substantially, his success is contingent on his wife's cooperation. Her predisposition towards extravagant spending could disrupt the household's financial equilibrium. Instead, she is expected to manage their shared finances judiciously and frugally.

According to Jacob Cats, the wife's expertise primarily lies within the realm of the house and family, yet he also recognizes women's capabilities beyond the traditional domestic sphere. Cats notes that some astute women could offer valuable insights in making important decisions – a domain generally reserved for men – and encourages men to accept their wives' assistance in both realms:²³

You, who God has granted one of the clever women,
Whose advice and witty mind are powerful to strengthen you,
Give thanks for that help, and take for your benefit
What by its own nature stands at your service;
Not only in the house (as we discussed before)
Or in the light concern of small kitchen matters,
But also in other work that goes rather higher,
Even if it often touches the ground of your own state.²⁴

Petrus Wittewrongel shared a similar perspective, affirming that through mutual helpfulness, spouses could greatly benefit their families, underscoring the necessity of collaboration for a successful marriage.²⁵ He states that, apart from household matters, a wife was expected to provide help 'in all situations that concern her husband personally, wherever he requires any assistance and support', even in 'the governance of the household' (*de regeeringe van de huys-houdinge*).²⁶

While moralistic literature tends to depict women's assistance outside the domestic realm primarily as witty advice, the pages of parody literature paint a different picture, wherein women also actively engage in business activities.²⁷ In the satirical work *De biecht der getrouwen* (1679) – a sequel to the more renowned work *De tien vermakelikheden van het huwelijk* (1678), both published by Hieronymus Sweerts – newlyweds embark on a business venture and open a shop where the wife is expected to actively contribute:

Also, you, oh woman, out of love and carefulness, can often extend a helpful hand to your husband, which cannot happen in trade, so that by doing so, you also learn to deal pleasantly with the shop and all people; this way, in his absence, you learn to accommodate buyers and provide proper information, so much so that you often gain as thorough knowledge of the business as your husband himself.²⁸

Sweerts suggests that running a home-based shop, as opposed to outdoor trade, provides an opportunity for the woman to assist by serving customers in case the man is not available. Admittedly, in the numerous amusing spousal quarrels depicted in the subsequent chapters, the woman interferes in all kinds of matters, but her role in the family enterprise is probably no mere invention. When reading Sweerts alongside Cats and Wittewrongel, who are more often cited to emphasize the gendered division of marital roles, harmony takes precedence, and morality must yield when necessary.

Socio-economic research. Partnership in artisan households

The significance of spousal collaboration, both in marriage *and* in business ventures, becomes palpable when examining evidence from the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.²⁹ Economic historians have suggested that while women in the highest strata of society may have refrained from engaging in economic activities, in most early modern Dutch households, family income was typically the result of the combined efforts of both spouses.³⁰ At times, women worked independently of their husbands, a scenario often observed in lower-class families, such as those of wage laborers. However, in the broader middle class, particularly among craftsmen and retailers, husbands and wives frequently engaged in partnerships.³¹ As Hessel Miedema contends, artists' workshops were not fundamentally different from other artisans' establishments, bolstering the hypothesis that they operated similarly, with spousal collaboration possibly being a common practice.³²

Spouses operating jointly in business were found in various trades, including merchants, bargemen, brewers, bakers, dyers, pipe makers, ribbon makers, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, and printers.³³ Although other relatives, or external workers were sometimes also employed, the most prevalent and typical form of collaboration in these families consisted of a man, who as the head of the household ran the business in his own name, with his wife performing assisting tasks. She was often responsible for bringing in new orders, managing business administration, taking on apprentices, and interacting with suppliers, subcontractors, and customers. This joint business endeavor of men and women is strikingly illustrated in two drawings by Salomon de Braij, both depicting a book and art store. In figure 2, a man is shown engaged in conversation with a customer, while a woman enters the store, attending to the waiting customers. Figure 3 portrays a similar scene, with a woman leaning forward at the counter, and nearby, two men, one of whom is meticulously sewing a book in a stitching frame. The depictions of both men and women working side by side in these images confirm the collaborative nature of such enterprises, involving both genders.



2 and 3

Salomon de Braij (attributed to), *People in a book- and artstore* and *People and two dogs in a book- and artstore*, c. 1620-1640, ink on paper, 76 x 76 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (photo: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam)

Although spousal collaboration aligns with the concepts of the 'family economy' or the 'family production unit', I propose an additional term to describe the organization of work in these households: 'dynamic partnership'.³⁴ The term 'family economy' is often understood as a static model, where all family members continuously work together on the same product. However, since its introduction in the 1970s, our understanding of early modern households has evolved significantly, revealing a diversity and flexibility in the type of labor within families and its distribution among members.³⁵ Commonly, the wife performed unregistered and unpaid work related to the actual production. Yet, there were instances of collaboration where both spouses were involved in identical roles, such as in the core production process or in sales.³⁶ Moreover, these families often operated dynamically, adapting their work and task distribution to specific circumstances.³⁷ Women's labor was adaptable, filling in gaps and providing assistance as needed, stepping in during illness or absence, and even taking over when the family head passed away. The ability of women to stand in for their husbands was also facilitated by the law: although their legal freedom was normally limited, they could be temporarily relieved from their incapacitated status through an act of *procuracion*, allowing them to perform legal actions, enter contracts, or handle payments and collections.³⁸ Additionally, if working together was not possible or sufficient, married women sought alternative ways to generate income. Their contribution could even extend beyond the confines of the family firm, as some might seek employment in wage labor or even start their own trade or business.³⁹ In short, the concept of dynamic partnerships in seventeenth-century Dutch households illustrates how marriage offered opportunities for married women to be economically active in a variety of ways.

2. Working wives in the artists' household

Investigating dynamic partnership between spouses in seventeenth-century artists' households in the Dutch Republic presents significant challenges, as the activities of married women are often difficult to trace. In historical source materials, married women frequently remain obscured by their husbands, with their additional work in the business and the household – contrasting with the documented, guild-regulated art production – often going unrecorded.⁴⁰ As outlined in the introduction, it is commonly presumed that artists' wives played a role in their husbands' art businesses by managing the books or marketing their works in stores and markets. However, confirming this is challenging, particularly for the Northern Netherlands, where, unlike the Southern Netherlands, there are hardly any preserved account books from artists' households.⁴¹ There are some rare indications of artists' wives participating in the sale of art created by their husbands. For example, the wife of painter Johan Pietersz Schoeff (1608/1609–after 1666) was required to pay 4 guilders to the painters' guild in Middelburg in 1655 for 'offering paintings for sale'.⁴² Similarly, the wife of the Delft painter Willem Jansz Decker (1586–1624), according to Decker's 1623 petition, had been selling paintings at The Hague's Binnenhof during fairs and market days for 14 years.⁴³ However, generally, the involvement of married women in the sale of paintings remained largely unrecorded. Nonetheless, insights into women's agency in artists' households can be obtained from artists' biographies, archives of painters' guilds, and other archival sources related to financial and legal matters. As the forthcoming case studies will illustrate, women undertook a variety of flexible roles, ranging from housekeeping tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare, to economic activities, both in and outside the art business.

Cleaning, cooking, and childcare

In artists' biographies, we encounter multiple stories of artists seeking new wives or sisters to oversee the housekeeping (*huisbestier*), and of artists whose practices were disrupted when their mothers or wives were unable to manage cleaning and childcare.⁴⁴ These narratives suggest that women were actively engaged in housekeeping and that this work was closely interrelated with art production within the household. The young Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617), for instance, had to dedicate 'a lot of time to serve his siblings, servants, and the house' due to his mother's illness, which significantly hindered his artistic pursuits.⁴⁵ Barent Graat (1628–1709) faced a similar situation during his apprenticeship under his uncle Hans. With the master's wife and daughter 'paying little attention to household affairs', Graat frequently found himself assuming the role of the 'kitchen maid', leading him to return to his mother's house to continue his artistic work undisturbed.⁴⁶ While these anecdotal accounts should be approached with caution, it is clear that in both cases, the artists' creative endeavors were impeded by household responsibilities. The delegation of childcare, cleaning, and cooking responsibilities to others emerged as a crucial prerequisite for fostering productive artistic output. Traditionally, such obligations were primarily assigned to women,

but their impact extended to servants, apprentices, sons, and other male members of the household in the absence of women.⁴⁷ This underscores the dynamic allocation of tasks based on societal norms and practical considerations.

That household duties intertwined with the art business also becomes clear from the following anecdote concerning Adriaen Brouwer (c. 1604–before 1638). Brouwer's apprenticeship was marked by dissatisfaction, according to Houbraken, due to strenuous work and limited provisions: 'for the wife of [his master] Frans would have liked to fill Brouwer's hollow trunk with wind'.⁴⁸ This suggests that it was the wife of Brouwer's teacher who was in charge of feeding her husband's apprentices. During the seventeenth century, it was common practice for artists to locate their workplaces and stores within residential homes, and occasionally apprentices resided with their masters.⁴⁹ With the same house serving both as a workshop and a residence, the art business was integrally linked with the private aspects of life, making the artist's wife's involvement a natural extension of this coexistence. After all, there was little distinction between preparing meals for family members or for apprentices.

Managing finances

Artists' biographies include tales of artists who cunningly circumvented their wives to make financial expenditures, hinting at the significant control their wives held over financial matters (*het geld meester zijn*).⁵⁰ In Houbraken's biography of Nicolaes van Berchem (1621/1622–1683), he recounts that Berchem's wife 'usually kept him so deprived of money that, at times, when he saw beautiful prints for sale, which he desired to buy, if his wife did not have the intention of providing it for him, he borrowed money from his disciples for that purpose; and when he sold a painting that she didn't know of, he deducted so much from the amount to pay off the debt without her knowledge, in order to prevent any conflicts'.⁵¹ Likewise, Houbraken noted that Justus van Pee (1630–1710) managed to make a trip to Antwerp to see artworks of young talents only because he, under false pretenses, gained access to the cash his wife safeguarded.⁵²

While the extent to which Houbraken's artists' biographies accurately reflect the actual organization within artists' workshops remains a subject of inquiry, the involvement of artists' wives in financial matters is supported by incidents from the archives of the Saint Luke's Guild.⁵³ For instance, Jaccemijntje Coppens, the wife of painter Adriaen Lievensz van der Poel (1628–1671/1672), was required to pay 3 guilders and 10 stuivers to the guild in Leiden on 11 August 1664. Unable to settle this debt in one payment, an arrangement was made for her to pay 6 stuivers weekly.⁵⁴ Another example is Sara Klarebouts, the wife of painter Pieter Cosijn (1630–after 1667). She assisted her husband in his battle to secure his inheritance, which was managed by the Orphan Chamber, by sending a letter to the orphan masters in 1653. In 1658 she further appeared on his behalf at the Hague painters' brotherhood *Pictura* to discuss unpaid registration fees.⁵⁵ These incidents suggest that the finances of artists were entwined with the overall household finances, with wives playing a significant role in their management.

Archival sources also point to the involvement of artists' wives in collecting outstanding debts. An incident recorded in the Amsterdam City Archives involving Wijbe Barents, the wife of the painter Pieter Mathijsz, reveals that in August 1663, Barents confronted a certain Pieter Jans Grijbe/Grijp to demand payment for a portrait by her husband.⁵⁶ Instead of paying, Grijbe insulted her by calling her a whore and similar derogatory terms. The incident escalated further when Grijbe physically attacked her, resulting in her ear and nose bleeding. This distressing account unveils the active involvement of Pieter Mathijsz's newlywed wife in the collection of outstanding fees for his portraiture work.⁵⁷

Similarly, in a letter dated 5 April 1675 to Grand Duke Cosimo de Medici, Cosimo's agent Guasconi discusses the payment for a painting by Frans van Mieris (1635-1682) and his conversation with the painter's wife. Guasconi notes that the Van Mieris' wife, Cunera van der Cock (c. 1629-1700), whose portrait by her husband survives (fig. 4), was keen to receive part of the fee in person for household expenses, to be done without her husband's knowledge. She likened any money in his hands to 'unstoppable acid from an etching plate' (translation by Naumann).⁵⁸ This need to take matters into her own hands was likely necessitated by Van Mieris's alcohol abuse and the financial strain it caused. This case



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Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Portrait of the artist's wife, Cunera van der Cock*, c. 1657-1658, oil on vellum, inlaid on oak at a later date, 16 x 13.3 cm, London, National Gallery (photo: The National Gallery)

demonstrates not only Van der Cock's active involvement in her husband's business affairs but also her direct contact with important patrons.

Other sources of income

The painting business was not always the sole source of income for artists' families; as demonstrated by the examples below, couples often jointly engaged in various economic ventures. An instance of a couple combining multiple sources of income is seen in the Dordrecht painter Cornelis Bisschop (1630-1674) and his wife, Geertruyt van Botlandt (1634-1704). The French nobleman and art collector Balthasar de Monconys made this observation during his visit to the Bisschop family in 1663:

I went to visit a painter named Cornelius Buscat, who makes cabinets, wardrobes, comb cases, and other things of this kind. His wife was very pretty, but not as much as a seller of paintings and a white thread merchant, where I stopped specifically to observe them.⁵⁹

This account highlights Cornelis Bisschop's versatility, who, apart from his painting endeavors on canvas, also painted various wooden furniture items. It also reveals that Van Botlandt was involved not only in trading paintings but also in the yarn trade. She was not merely a salesperson for her husband's artworks but also a tradeswoman in her own right, for whom it apparently made no difference to trade in artworks or in other household goods.

For The Hague painter Isaac van Duijnen (1628-1679/1681) and his wife, Maria van Bladen, the proceeds from Van Duijnen's fish and fruit still lifes appeared to be insufficient. Starting from the mid-1660s, debts began to accumulate.⁶⁰ This financial strain might explain their reliance on additional income from renting out a property and their aggressive approach to handling delinquencies. In October 1672, several witnesses reported an incident where a woman who owed rent to the couple was harassed by Van Bladen. She insisted on receiving payment, stating: 'Give me my money, or I shall not leave this house, (...) you may be the devil, but I would strike you in the face.'⁶¹ Subsequently, her husband also confronted the debtor with equal coarseness: 'Were you a man, I would split your face open.'⁶² This attestation not only illustrates that the household combined various sources of income but also that both the painter and his wife played active roles in these endeavors.

The couple Jan Jansz Wijnants (c. 1632-1684) and Catharina (Katrijn) van der Veer (c. 1641-1709) also engaged in multiple activities. It might have been the family's financial difficulties that necessitated Wijnants to supplement his income as a landscape painter by setting up a tavern.⁶³ In turn, Van der Veer contributed to the family income by cleaning paintings. Witnesses' statements recorded on 3 July 1680, at the request of Joan van Driesch, indicate their dire need, with Van der Veer actively seeking additional work and – according to the witnesses – even willing to work below the market rate:

About 4 to 5 weeks ago, the witnesses were present when the wife of Jan Wijnants came to Van Driesch and asked him if he would like her to clean his paintings, with which she immediately could start. Upon which Van Driesch told her that he had previously paid a guilder and ten stuivers a day for cleaning, and that he was now being asked for two guilders a day, but she said she would do it for even less. He allowed her to clean the paintings under the condition that she would receive less than two guilders a day. She worked at his house for about four days and during that time ate there with two children.⁶⁴

It is possible that Van der Veer acquired the skill of cleaning paintings in her husband's workshop. There are indications that she participated in the painting business. As a widow, Van der Veer sold 'plaster figures' and 'prints and models of the most famous masters' at the Amsterdam Exchange, which might imply her involvement in art sales even during Wijnants's lifetime. Moreover, in 1667, she was authorized by her husband to manage all his affairs.⁶⁵ While the exact details of her responsibilities in the procurement are not specified, her stepping in for her husband during his absence underscores the flexible and dynamic nature of their partnership. Together, Wijnants and Van der Veer adapted their work and roles, responding to the evolving needs of their household.

The same dynamics of spousal cooperation can be observed between the Haarlem painters Judith Leyster and her husband, Jan Miense Molenaer. While it was previously assumed that Leyster ceased producing artworks after her marriage in 1636 to focus on family care, the consensus since James Welu's and Pieter Biesboer's 1993 exhibition and monograph is that she likely continued working in her husband's studio (see section 3). Moreover, she was involved in his art trade as well as in their property investments.⁶⁶ Ellen Broersen's meticulous archival research reveals that Leyster acted as Molenaer's fiduciary on several occasions.⁶⁷ For example, in 1655, she represented him in the purchase of a house in Amsterdam. In 1657, Molenaer authorized Leyster to collect, forfeit, and receive all outstanding and future debts 'over sold paintings, outstanding monies, as well as other related items'.⁶⁸ And during a financial conflict with Hendrick Segersz van der Camp in 1657, Leyster appeared in court with 'her register' ('haer register') in her hand, indicating her involvement in the administration.⁶⁹ Based on these accounts, James A. Welu suggests that Leyster had an important stake 'in her husband's affairs', and Elizabeth Honig argues that she became 'a sort of manager to her husband', which, according to Honig, was a savvy career move because his paintings fetched higher prices than hers.⁷⁰ However, Molenaer authorizing Leyster does not necessarily imply her involvement in *his* business. As evident from the works of moralists and historical research into early modern families, households formed the basis where both spouses were expected to contribute their work and income. Molenaer, as head of the household, indeed had the financial and legal authority in these matters. Nonetheless, it is evident that the responsibilities involved were shared by the couple, as they took advantage of the opportunities provided by Dutch law to act jointly. In this regard, the Leyster-Molenaer household was quite typical, combining multiple

sources of income and collaborating to pursue them successfully. Leyster was not an important figure in *her husband's* business but rather a partner within a *shared* household.

Partnership in the Southern Netherlands

While the representativeness of individual case studies such as these remains uncertain, the striking parallels with partnerships observed in other economic sectors provide corroborative evidence for spousal collaboration in the seventeenth-century Dutch art market. This is even further strengthened by the applicability of the concept of dynamic partnership to artists' households in other regions.⁷¹

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Southern Netherlands are especially of interest, as the art market in the seventeenth-century Northern Netherlands was heavily influenced by refugees from the South, indicating that Southern examples probably provide some insight into the functioning of artists' households in the seventeenth-century Northern Netherlands as well.⁷² Both Lynn F. Jacobs and Filip Vermeulen suggest that spousal collaboration might have been a common practice among artists in sixteenth-century Southern Netherlands, with the husband-painter producing the artworks in the workshop while the wife sold the finished paintings.⁷³ They base this on the early sixteenth-century 'panden' (marketplaces for selling paintings) in Antwerp and Bruges, where about 10-15 percent of the stall tenants were widows.⁷⁴ The fact that the wives of deceased artists and dealers took over the art trade after their husbands' passing is seen as an implication of their involvement in the art business also prior to that. That couples indeed collaborated in the art business is further reinforced by traces of wives receiving (parts of) payments and selling artworks at annual fairs. Notably, the examples provided by both authors actually reveal that the work of artists' wives was not limited to selling the art produced by their husbands. For instance, Elisabeth Borremans is known to have traveled to Middelburg in 1551 to sell eight paintings, which were not the works of her husband, the painter Jan Van Sevenhoven, but rather creations of Hubert Goltzius (1526-1583).⁷⁵ Similarly, Karel van Mander writes that Adriana de Hollander, the wife of the Antwerp landscape painter Jan de Hollander, made such profits by traveling to markets with paintings that it allowed her husband to work less, suggesting that she traded not (only) in works by her husband but also by other artists.⁷⁶ That women also sold work made by others than their husbands not only explains how widows were able to continue their trade after their husbands died, but also illustrates the dynamic functioning of these families in combining multiple strategies.

Similar collaborations between spouses can also be found in the seventeenth century. Of particular interest in this regard is the discovery by Leen Kelchtermans of the household book kept by Anna Schut (1593/1597-1675), wife of the Flemish painter Peter Snayers (1592-1667).⁷⁷ In this book, Schut meticulously recorded the financial aspects of art production, as well as other sources of income. Although their teamwork is described in terms of a clear task division with Snayers as producer and Schut as bookkeeper, their partnership demonstrates the same flexibility

as observed in other professional groups. While Schut's predominant handwriting throughout the preserved household book rightfully recognizes her as the administrator of the workshop and household, Peter Snayers also made four contributions to the book, presumably in Schut's absence, which she corrected upon her return.⁷⁸ This flexibility in their division of labor is further exemplified by their involvement in the collection of outstanding debts. For instance, in securing payment for 21 paintings commissioned by Prince Ottavio Piccolomini (1599-1656), both Peter Snayers and Anna Schut played active roles. Snayers corresponded with the Italian warlord, his agent, and secretary on multiple occasions. However, on 28 September 1657, Schut personally traveled from Brussels to Antwerp to negotiate an agreement with Piccolomini's agent.⁷⁹ This illustrates not only their skillful undertaking of complementary roles as painter and bookkeeper but also how they supported each other when necessary.

3. Married women in art production

The dynamic partnerships observed within artists' households have cast new light on the professional art production of married women. As mentioned above, art historians have assumed that women artists generally saw a decrease in their artistic output upon marriage, as they shifted their focus more to motherhood and other domestic duties. Yet, the collaborative nature of these artists' businesses, wherein wives could play an active role, indicates that the family workshop could provide not only opportunities for daughters but also potential avenues for married women to continue engaging in art production. This implies that, contrary to prevailing assumptions, women may have continued their artistic pursuits even after marriage.

Post-marriage art production

To explore whether women's art production generally decreased or indeed continued after marriage, I compiled a dataset, drawing data from various online sources such as RKDartists, ECARTICO, and the *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*.⁸⁰ Compared to the 1998 *Lexicon van Noord-Nederlandse kunstenaressen, circa 1550-1800*, which listed 178 women artists with 114 active during the long seventeenth century, my updated overview identifies 162 women painters, draftsmen, illuminators, engravers, paper cutters, calligraphers, and embroiderers active in the Northern Netherlands between 1580 and 1720 (August 2024).⁸¹ Of the 111 women artists whose marital status is known, a significant proportion (78 percent) were married. However, analyzing the impact of marriage and household duties on their artistic production is challenging due to the scarcity of surviving artworks and the lack of accurate dating. Half of these women artists (47 percent) have no extant works, while only a quarter of them (27 percent) have more than two preserved and recognized artworks. The difficulty in making definitive statements about the art production of married women is exemplified in the case of Margaretha Haverman (1693/1694-after 1722); her membership in the Parisian Académie royale in 1722 as a newly married woman attests to her undiminished artistic ambitions post-marriage, but it

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Andries Both, *The poor painter and his family*, c. 1634-1635, oil on oak panel, 31.8 x 24.8 cm, New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery (photo: Yale University Art Gallery)

is questionable whether she indeed continued painting, as no works from after this date are known, and she failed to deliver the new painting that was requested by the Académie.⁸² Nevertheless, despite these challenges, research dedicated to individual women artists has increasingly yielded valuable insights into their lives and artistic output. This body of research equips me to address, for a subset of these women, the question of whether their art production declined or continued after marriage.

It has become clear that women did not always cease their artistic endeavors after marriage.⁸³ As mentioned in the introduction, Katlijne van der Stighelen has already highlighted four Northern Netherlandish artists who created post-marriage artworks: Mechtelt van Lichtenberg toe Boecop (c. 1520-1598), Margaretha de Heer (c. 1600-before 1665), Maria de Grebber (c. 1602-1680), and Susanna van Steenwijck-Gaspoel (c. 1610-after 1653).⁸⁴ This list can now be expanded. Signed works that were dated post-marriage are known from Cornelia toe Boecop (after 1551-c. 1630), Maria Beck (Strick) (1577-1639), Maria Boortens (Van Nieulandt) (c. 1626-after 1678), Cornelia de Rijck (1653-1726), Antonina Houbraken, and Henriëtta van Pee (1692-1741).⁸⁵ It is also presumed that Anna van den Queborn (c. 1625-c. 1689) continued painting after her marriage to the still life painter Abraham van Beijeren (1620/1621-1690), with whom she moved to Delft in 1663, as a flower still life attributed to her is mentioned in a Delft inventory from 1666 and a painting by 'the wife of Van Beijeren' is noted in a Hague inventory from 1680.⁸⁶ The same is true for Anna Splinters (birth unknown-1659): she was active as a painter during her widowhood, evidenced by a signed flower still life from 1647, a lease contract from 1648 referring to 'a small painting painted by the lessee herself', and a 1651 estate inventory revealing she had a painting workshop in the back house, suggesting she also painted during her earlier and later marriages.⁸⁷ One of the most renowned examples of a Dutch female artist continuing her art during marriage is Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750), who achieved tremendous success as a painter of flower still lifes while bearing an astounding 10 children.⁸⁸

Across the border in Düsseldorf, we find the Amsterdam portrait and history painter Adriana Spilberg (1656-after 1697), who, like her father and second husband, worked as a court painter for the Elector Palatine.⁸⁹ While still living in Nuremberg and Frankfurt, Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) was also engaged in various artistic endeavors during her marriage to the painter and engraver Johann Andreas Graff (1637-1701).⁹⁰ She taught embroidery and painting to a group of ladies, dealt in painting supplies, and painted textiles such as tablecloths and even an army tent with designs of flowers and animals. During her marriage, she published her three-volume floral book (1675, 1677, and 1680), which served as embroidery patterns, as well as the first two volumes of her renowned caterpillar book (1679 and 1683), stemming from her own research into the metamorphosis of butterflies. Following her divorce, Merian continued to be active, collaborating with her daughters, Johanna Helena Herolt (née Graff) (1668-1730) and Dorothea Maria Henriette Graff (1678-1743), who can also be cited as examples of female artists continuing their craft during marriage.⁹¹



Lastly, attention must be drawn to Judith Leyster. It was long believed that Leyster either ceased or significantly reduced her art production after marrying Molenaer, but there are now increasing indications that she continued to paint. In 1993, Ellen Broersen questioned whether an artist of Leyster's ambition and reputation would have truly ceased painting. She argued that it was more plausible that Leyster, perhaps occasionally, continued to paint within her husband's workshop. Broersen's reasoning was partly based on the inclusion of several paintings listed under the names 'Judith Molenaer' and 'Juffr. Molenaer' in Molenaer's inventory, compiled in 1686.⁹² The hypothesis that Leyster continued painting is reinforced by the discovery of more artworks dated post-marriage; besides the well-known tulip watercolor (1643), a flower still life from 1654, signed 'Judith Molenaer 1654' was attributed to her oeuvre in 2010, and a second self-portrait surfaced in 2016, depicting Leyster as an older painter. According to Paul Crenshaw, these findings lead to the conclusion that Leyster 'did not abandon the brush entirely'.⁹³

Undeniably, there were instances where the artistic production of women artists appeared to decline after marriage, as observed in the cases of Magdalena de Passe (1600-1638), Catharina Backer (1689-1766), Alida Withoos (c. 1661-1730), Anna Ruysch (1666-1754), and Fopje Folkema (1690-1752).⁹⁴ In these instances, the reduction in artistic output could indeed have been influenced by the constraints of marriage and household obligations. For instance, Magdalena de Passe assumed the care of her father following the deaths of her husband and mother. Anna Maria van Schurman, who was renowned for her exceptional talents in science, poetry, and the arts, believed that domestic obligations were incompatible with pursuits of arts and sciences. In her 1641 treatise, Van Schurman argues that Christian women are apt for the study of letters, albeit with the limitation that only those capable of occasionally freeing themselves from their 'general and specific calling, namely the confession of faith and household duties' could engage in such studies.⁹⁵ She added that this was feasible for wealthier women who could employ a servant, or for unmarried women. Nonetheless, Van Schurman later experienced firsthand that even unmarried status did not always shield one from the demands of domestic responsibilities. After her mother's death, she took on the care of two elderly aunts and expressed that 'household cares and working with love for some relatives' deprived her of 'the progress of studies and the practice of the arts' for nearly 20 years.⁹⁶ However, it is essential to note that the decline in artistic activity after marriage cannot be solely attributed to an increase in domestic responsibilities. For example, the decline in Catharina Backer's art production after her marriage may have been more closely associated with the depressive and melancholic moods she experienced rather than domestic concerns.⁹⁷

While we must acknowledge that our insights into the post-marital artistic development of women are limited to a small fraction of female artists, the substantial number who continued to engage in professional artistry after marriage at least demonstrate that, contrary to previous assumptions, marriage and its associated obligations did not necessarily result in an unmanageable and permanent constraint on women's artistic

output. In line with what Johan van Beverwijck asserts in his *On the excellence of the female sex* (*Van de wtmentheyt des vrouwelicken geslachts*, 1639), it seems that 'many women, without neglecting their household duties, engage in trade and commerce, and others also dedicate themselves to the arts and sciences'.⁹⁸ Without questioning that their first task remained to marry and run the household, according to Van Beverwijck, this could be combined with other economic and artistic activities. This observation is akin to findings in other sectors, such as the textile industry and the food market, where women were seen to earn income through activities like spinning or selling eels, even while pregnant or caring for young children.⁹⁹ The art market appears to have allowed the same flexibility. Domestic responsibilities likely varied, adapting to the evolving needs of growing families. The assistance of older children or hired help, such as servants, could also have eased the load of household chores. Therefore, to accurately gauge the constraints household obligations placed on artistic endeavors in the lives of women artists, one must consider specific circumstances, including family dynamics like the ages of children and the health of parents, as well as socioeconomic conditions. For wealthier women, the luxury of hiring a servant could facilitate the balancing of domestic responsibilities with art production. In contrast, for women from less affluent backgrounds, combining household duties with economically driven art production may have been crucial for supporting the family income.

Collaborative art production

Of the 18 examples of women continuing their art post-marriage mentioned in the previous section, 13 were married to artists, which might be seen as an indicator that the family business fostered the continuation of artistic production. This mirrors a trend observed among daughters, where the family workshop served as a platform for artistic education, a fact now quantitatively corroborated by my dataset.¹⁰⁰ Among the 114 female artists with known parental occupations, 58 (51 percent) were identified as daughters of artists, while 7 had fathers engaged in other creative professions such as chief master builder, sculptor, or ivory worker. When not only parents but also brothers, uncles, and grandparents are considered, the number of women who had family ties with one or more artists increases to 72. As expected, the majority of women artists with identifiable instructors (49 out of 71) were trained by family members, predominantly their (step)fathers. A comprehensive examination of the cases of married women artists, as delineated above and corroborated by additional sources like biographies and artworks, suggests that the family workshop not only fostered the artistic development of daughters but could also create opportunities for married women to actively engage and contribute to art production. Their involvement in the family's art production could take various forms, aligning with the diverse and dynamic nature of spousal partnership, as observed by historians in other crafts and trades.

In artist biographies and paintings, we regularly find the artist's workshop functioning as a family business, with the wife also participating. For instance, Samuel van Hoogstraten mentions the involvement of women in the mass production of lower-end arts, noting that 'the making of works-

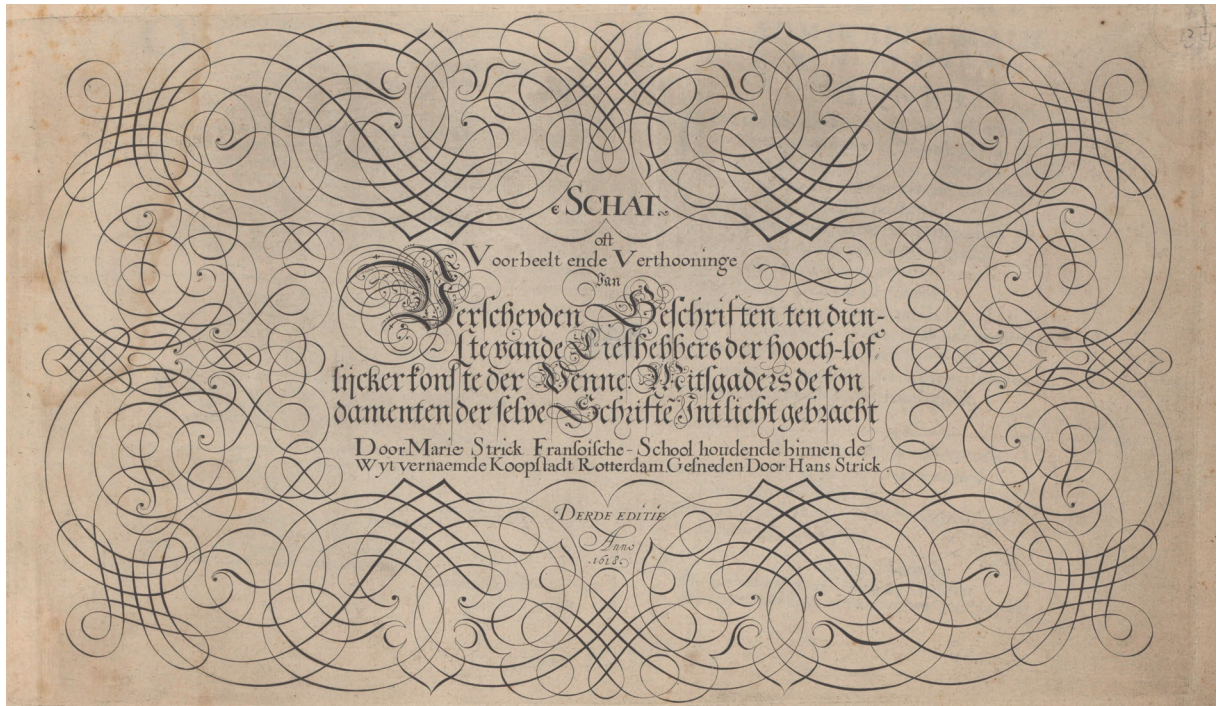
by-the-dozen [dozijnwerken], with the help of boys and women, has caused the masters of the same (...) to regress in art'.¹⁰¹ Similarly, according to Houbraken, the (satin) painter Isaak Dusart (1628-1699) received assistance from his wife, 'who also understood the art and helped him paint satin with flowers'.¹⁰² Unfortunately, Van Hoogstraten and Houbraken do not provide specific details about the work these women undertook, but the phrasing, 'with the help of', implies that their roles might have been of a supportive nature. Some studio scenes also portray art production as a collective family endeavor. Andries Both presents a frequently repeated archetype of the impoverished painter (fig. 5). This disheveled painter is surrounded by children, whose mouths he must feed, signifying a heavy burden. In the background, his wife toils alongside him, grinding pigment with a muller. A painting attributed to Egbert van Heemskerck I (fig. 6) displays a similar workshop setting, but seemingly of a slightly more affluent family. Here, we observe two women contributing, likely the painter's wife and an older daughter or maid, one of whom cares for the children while the other grinds pigments. These examples suggest that family businesses provided opportunities for women to contribute, but often they were seen in assisting or subordinate roles.

Contrary to the typical rendering of married women as assistants of inferiors, several case studies demonstrate matrimonial collaborations featuring a more equitable division of roles. This is evident in the case of the calligrapher and schoolmistress Maria Beck, who was married to Jan or Hans Strick (1566-1645). Strick, originally a shoemaker at the time of their marriage, later became a schoolmaster and acquired skills in engraving.¹⁰³ Together, they produced four sample books for teaching writing, with Beck responsible for the calligraphy and Strick for the engraving (fig. 7), exemplifying how they complemented each other with their respective tasks.¹⁰⁴ An even more remarkable case with spouses in identical roles is



6

Egbert van Heemskerck I (attributed to),
A painter with his family in his studio,
 c. 1675-1699, oil on canvas, 23.8 x 30.8 cm,
 whereabouts unknown (photo: RKD)

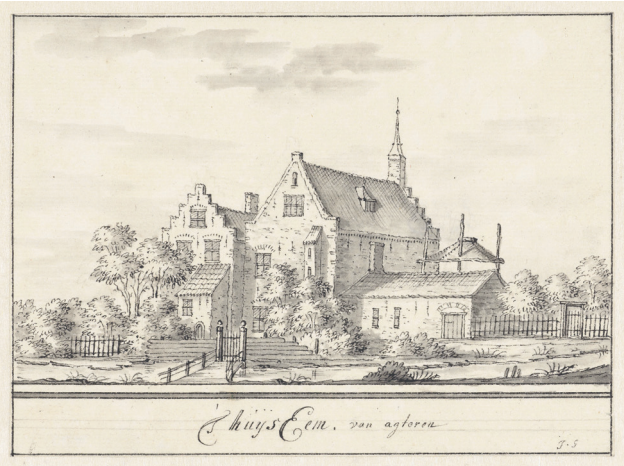


the case of Antonina Houbraken, daughter of renowned artist biographer Arnold Houbraken. Initially, there were misunderstandings regarding Antonina's artistic production because she signed her works under her husband's name. Consequently, only a limited number of her works were recognized, and she was labeled as a dilettante or amateur.¹⁰⁵ It was commonly believed that after the death of her husband, Jacobus Stellingwerf (1650–1715), Houbraken became active as a professional draftsman, continuing her husband's commissions for topographic drawings. However, recent research conducted by Bert Kolkman offers a different perspective on this matter.¹⁰⁶ Through comparative and stylistic analysis, Kolkman suggests that following her marriage to Stellingwerf, Houbraken likely signed her works using the initials J.S. or the full name J. Stellingwerf.f. It appears that approximately 1,000 drawings of buildings, cityscapes, and landscapes found in the manuscripts of the Amsterdam cloth merchant Andries Schoemaker are actually attributable to Antonina Houbraken, rather than Stellingwerf (figs. 8, 9).¹⁰⁷ Stellingwerf's professional engagements were limited to the service of the lawyer and collector Mattheus Brouërius van Nidek, whereas Houbraken worked for the aforementioned Schoemaker.¹⁰⁸ While many questions remain about their collaborative process and the extent to which this working method applies to other artist couples, it seems highly probable that Houbraken and Stellingwerf operated under the same (brand) name as a joint company, while potentially handling separate projects for different clients. This highlights how their partnership enhanced their artistic output, allowing them to serve multiple patrons by working together.

The fact that women worked as part of a family business, often registered in their husband's name, did not necessarily preclude them from making

7

Maria Strick-Beck (design) and Hans Strick (engraving), title page of *Schat oft voorbeelt ende verthooninge van verscheiden geschriften ten dienste vande liefhebbers der hooch-loflijcker konste der penne*, 1618, engraving, 194 x 335 mm, Amsterdam, Rijkmuseum Amsterdam (photo: Rijksmuseum)



8

Jacobus Stellingwerf, *'s Huijs te Linschoten*, c. 1720-1727, ink on paper, 16 x 20 cm, Rotterdam, de Bibliotheek Rotterdam (photo: author).

9

Antonina Houbraken (signed J.S., attributed to), *'t huijs Eem, van agteren*, c. 1670-1736, ink on paper, 130 x 178 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (photo: Rijksmuseum)

a name for themselves. For instance, Susanna van Gaspoel was married to the painter Hendrick van Steenwijck (1580-c. 1649). As Jeremy Howarth has detailed, the paintings attributed to her exhibit a close alignment with Van Steenwijck's work, suggesting she likely acquired her skills in architectural painting from her husband.¹⁰⁹ Howarth proposes that she was probably an integral part of the family painting business, presumably contributing significantly to the body of similar works produced by this studio. Moreover, she also created her own signed and dated paintings. One of the earliest works attributed to her, a church interior from 1629, for example, bears the signature SvS.¹¹⁰ This aligns with the diverse organization of artists' households, where various strategies could coexist, both collectively and individually.

The division of labor could sometimes be reversed; if the wife excelled in art, it was feasible for the husband to undertake supportive roles.¹¹¹ This is exemplified in the case of Henriëtta van Pee, renowned for her miniature portraits for brooches and bracelets, such as the portrait of Magdalena de la Court (fig. 10). She was reportedly assisted by her husband, Hermanus Wolters (1682-1755).¹¹² While Wolters was primarily engaged in his father-in-law's art trade, an anonymous biographical sketch of Van Pee indicates that he also assisted with less crucial aspects of her miniature portraits (*bijwerk*), while Van Pee oversaw the primary painting tasks. This example demonstrates that the division of labor within family businesses was not always dictated by traditional gender norms, but rather skill and talent were the decisive factors in practice.

To conclude

This exploration into the roles of married women in Dutch seventeenth-century artists' households has led to three main insights. Firstly, it demonstrates that married women were not inevitably constrained by domestic duties; instead, these household responsibilities could be integrated with other forms of work. This leads to the second insight: in artists' households, married women could undertake a diverse array of tasks, such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, financial management,

collecting outstanding debts, trading in paintings and other goods, and producing art. Consequently, this research challenges the common assumption that women stopped creating art after marriage, showing that this was not necessarily the case. Moreover, the wide range of work performed by married women demonstrates that female achievement in the arts should not be narrowly defined by the success of women as artists alone. Instead, it should be broadened to recognize the more extensive spectrum of women's involvement in Dutch artists' households. In the absence of archival evidence, we should not hastily presume that women ceased their professional activities upon marriage, as the sources indicate a wider array of possibilities.

Thirdly, the concept of 'dynamic partnership' provides a more nuanced understanding of the potential diversity and flexibility in labor division, demonstrating that while art historians often depict spousal collaboration as involving clear-cut task divisions with the wife in subordinate roles, the reality could be more varied, encompassing fluid and cooperative arrangements. In most case studies discussed in this article, although women primarily assumed administrative, intermediary, and selling roles, their husbands sometimes engaged in these tasks too. Conversely, women occasionally stepped in for their husbands and, with an act of procuration, managed financial and legal matters typically overseen by their spouses. Furthermore, when the art business was not sufficiently profitable, both men and women sought alternative income sources, at times collaborating or working independently. Within the category of married women painters,



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Henriëtta van Pee, *Portrait of Magdalena de la Court*, c. 1699-1731 (part of a series), paper, glass, and tempera, 80 x 68 mm, Amsterdam, Amsterdam Museum (photo: Amsterdam Museum)

a remarkable range of variations is evident. There are instances of women adapting to their husbands' specialisms and working under their husbands' brand names, but instances of a more equal or even reversed distribution of tasks also existed.

Furthermore, this essay sheds new light on the functioning of artists' households. Art production was not isolated, but it was integrated with other aspects of the household, including domestic affairs and alternative income sources. Women were part of this larger complex where various interests, revenues, and expenditures, as well as services and labor, intertwined. Regardless of the skills a woman possessed, there was work for her in an artist's household and business. In line with Martha Howell's argument about working women in early modern Europe, women artists and other working women were not just exceptional outliers who defied societal norms; rather, they were individuals who skillfully and structurally seized the opportunities presented within the existing cultural system.¹³

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 To illustrate, here is a brief selection from the many publications on Dutch 17th-century female artists: cat. Haarlem 1993; Kloek 1998, cat. Haarlem & Frankfurt 1998, Honig 1999, cat. Antwerp & Arnhem 1999, cat. Leeuwarden 2002, Sutton 2019, Noorman 2020, Kettering 2021.
- 2 Kloek 1998, 11-13; De Visser 1998, 40; Honig 1999, 44-45 (in Dutch) and Honig 2001-2002, 31 (in English); Howell 2018, 108; Van Suchtelen 2022, 35. The exhibition catalogue *Genius Women (Geniale Frauen)* even includes a separate contribution by Rahel Müller entitled 'Karriere vor der Ehe', which discusses five female artists whose marriage seems to have marked the end of their (independent) artistic practices (Müller 2023).
- 3 Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2007, 188-189, 215-218; Van den Heuvel 2007, 126-131; Van den Heuvel & Van Nederveen Meerkerk

- 2008, 213; Van den Heuvel 2008, 228-229; Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008, 259-260; Schmidt 2011, 48-49, 51-53, 59-67; Schmidt & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2012, 71-79, 90.
- 4 See the publications on women artists listed in note 2.
- 5 Honig 2001-2002, 31-32.
- 6 Honig 2001-2002, 32; Kloek 1998, 13; Houbraken (1718-1721) 1976, vol. 3, 45-46: 'Zy aan 't Hof zynde had veel aanzek tot trouwen: dog haar Vader bedugt dat al de voortgang in de Konst, die zy door haar vlyt gemaakt had, door huisselyke bezigheid, wanneer zy kwam te trouwen, zou verydelt werden, nam vast voor, haar aan niemant dan een schilder te geven'.
- 7 Van Eck 1992, 51; Van der Stighelen 1992, 64; Van Schurman (1641) 2021, 66. Anna Maria van Schurman will be discussed in more detail in the third section of this article.
- 8 In the recent exhibition catalogue *Genius women (Geniale Frauen)*, this perception is reinforced by presenting women who continued making art after marriage as exceptions to the rule (cat. Basel & Hamburg 2023, 11). Bodo Brinkmann highlights three of these exceptions: Lavinia Fontana (1552-1614), Mary Beale (1633-1699), and Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) (Brinkmann 2023).
- 9 Van der Stighelen 2019, 193-194, n. 4 and 6.
- 10 See, for example, Jacobs 1997; Kloek 1998, 18; Honig 2001-2002, 32; Kelchtermans 2013, 180; Howell 2018, 110.
- 11 The Leyster-Molenaer case will be discussed in more detail in the second and third sections of this article. Another example is Hendrickje Stoffels, maid and partner of Rembrandt van Rijn. In 1660, she and Rembrandt's son, Titus, entered

into a contract in which they agreed to continue a trade in paintings and prints they had begun in 1658, with Rembrandt as a resident employee. While this may indicate Stoffels's involvement in the painting trade, this construction was probably devised for the painter to escape his creditors (Floerke 1905, 115; Thurn 1994, 52, 252-253; Waltmans 1998, 98-99).

- 12 Kloek 1998, 17; Waltmans 1998, 100-103. In various craft guilds, widows had the right to continue the business after the death of their spouse under certain conditions, a tradition that was not unknown to artists either, as evidenced by a 1546 ordinance of the St. Luke's Guild in Den Bosch: 'Item sall die weduwe van een gestroven meester hetselve ambachte mogen blijven doen soo long zij haer aen egheenen andere nijet vrij wesende behiweelijcten' (Bezemer 1894, 126; also cited in Jager 2016, 278). However, it remains uncertain how many widows actually availed themselves of their guild rights, and whether those who did were actively engaged as artists or whether they employed a foreman into service, which was often a requirement (Kloek 1997, 30-31; Kloek 1998, 11).
- 13 Van den Heuvel & Meerkerk 2008, 210; Schmidt 2014, 306.
- 14 This definition is inspired by Marcel van der Linden, who defines work as 'the purposive production of useful objects or services' (Van der Linden 2012, 65). However, it is slightly modified to underscore the active nature of the involved actions and the diverse array of forms these actions can take. For more on the definition of work and the importance of taking into account 'unpaid' work,

- see Pott-Buter 1993, 5-6; Schmidt & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2012, 72-73; Schmidt 2014, 302; and Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2018, 7, 10, 18; Sarti *et al.* 2018, notably 3; Whittle 2019; Wyffels 2021, 14-18.
- 15 My definition of households is drawn from the perspective of socioeconomic historians; see De Vries 2008, 10 (n. 28), 261-262; Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008, 238-239; Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2018, 9.
 - 16 Haks 1985, 141-147; Kloek 2009, 94.
 - 17 Schmidt 2014, 302, 306-311.
 - 18 See, for example, Kloek 1993, 56; Frijhoff & Spies 1999, 190-191; Schama 1988, 400-404, 423-431; Kloek 2009, 73-74; and Howell 2018, 115-116. While these publications acknowledge that moralistic authors saw the well-being of the family as a joint responsibility of both spouses who were to treat each other as comrades, they primarily emphasize that the responsibilities of the husband and wife lay in separate domains, with the duties of the wife unmistakably lying in the home and family.
 - 19 Schmidt 2003, 32-34; Schmidt & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2012.
 - 20 Cats 1657, 49; Van Beverwijck 1639, 302-304; Wittewrongel 1662, 6-27, 234-240; Schama 1988, 388-390.
 - 21 Wittewrongel 1662, 94-107; Cats 1657, 77-80, 88, 138-139.
 - 22 Cats 1657, 88: 'Ghy, reyst dan, neerstigh man, en pas op u gewin./ Ghy, set u, jonge vrou, en let op u gesin./ Ghy, let op u bedrijf, en alle kleyne baten,/ En wilt u op de winst niet al te seer verlaten;/ De man is wel het hooft, die groote dingen doet,/ Maer die het evenwel niet al begraeyen moet./ Ick wou dat over al de jonge vrouwen wisten,/ Hoe veel, oock in het kleyn, een vrouwe kan verquisten:/ 't Is wint, dat eenigh man sijn hooft geduerig breeckt./ Indien, ô jonge vrou, u hant geduerigh leeckt./ Al wat de man vergaert, dat kan het wijf verstroyen;/ Al wat de man verspaert, dat kan het wijf vermoyen:/ Al wat de man bejaeght door lastigh hant-bedrijf,/ Al wat de man bekooft, dat spilt een quistigh wijf./ Ghy, die voor desen tijt niet recht en hebt geweten/ Hoe dat het vrouwen ampt hier dient te sijn gequeten,/ Koom, hoort den goeden man, dien gy hier onder siet/ U spellen dijne les, en klagen sijn verdriet./ Al draeg ick, wat ick mag, noch deugt 'et niet met allen,/ Mits een die mede draeght, het pack wil laten vallen'.
 - 23 Cats 1657, 80, 137. The same message is conveyed by Johan van Beverwijck in his *Van de wtneemtheyt des vrouwelicken geslachts* (1639). Significantly, Cats and Van Beverwijck even made reference to the same excerpt: 'Daer sijn verwaende mans, die alle vrouwen laken,/ En sluyten haer de deur, oock in geringe saecken,/ Ja houden voor geral en enkel kinder-praet/ Oock dat een deftigh wijf op vaste gronden raet./ Daer sijn verwaende mans, die buyten alle reden/ En met een nortse kop in alle dingen treden,/ Die uyt een eygen sin en aengenomen waen,/ Al wat de vrouwe seyt geen acht en willen slaen. /Hier sijn (na mijn begriip) geen kleyne reden tegen;/ Ick meyne dat de vrou ons meer behoort te wegen,/ Ick meyne dat de vrou ten dienste van de man/ Oock groote dingen selfs ten goede leyden kan' (Cats 1657, 137; Van Beverwijck 1639, 312-313).
 - 24 Cats 1657, 138: Ghy, die God heeft gejoint een van de kloecke wijven,/ Wiens raet en geestigh breyn u machtigh is te stijven,/ Geeft danck voor dat behulp, en neemt tot uwer baet/ Dat uyt sijn eyghen aert tot uwen dienste staet;/ Niet in het huys alleen (gelijck wy voren spraecken)/ Of in het licht beslag van kleyne keucken-saecken,/ Maer oock in ander werck dat vry wat hooger gaet,/ Al raect het menighmael den gront van uwen staet'.
 - 25 Wittewrongel 1662, 240-245.
 - 26 Wittewrongel 1662, 119-120: 'De Vrouwe, die haren Man oock recht sal onderdanigh sijn/ moet als sijne mede-gesellinne hem tot een hulpe ende noodige assistentie sijn. (...) Niet alleen in opsichte van de huys-selicke saecken (daer van hier naer sal gehandelt worden) maer oock in alle voorvallende gelegentheden/ die haren Man in eygen persooone sijn betreffende/ en daer in hy eenige hulpe en bystandt noodigh heeft'; and 242-243: 'Soo doende konnen sij malkanderen seer behulpsaem sijn/ ende het huysgesin veel goets toebrengen; de Man sijne huys-vrouwe inlatende in de regeeringe van de huys-houdinge/ ende in alles sijne huys-vrouwe helpende/ bringht haer geen kleyne autoriteyt toe onder de huys-ge-nooten; ende maeckt dat sy by de selve niet in verachtinge ofte kleynachtige en komt'.
 - 27 Although Cats and Wittewrongel only explicitly mention women's participation in the keeping and management of the household and not in business affairs, it must be noted that their works do contain some examples of and references to women engaged in economic work. Wittewrongel, for instance, acknowledges that men and women would step beyond the boundaries of the home when their profession required it (Wittewrongel 1662, 74). As argued by Ariadne Schmidt, these examples show that economic activities were not necessarily considered problematic for women. Instead, they suggest that the household income or family business was a shared responsibility in which women contributed their fair share (Schmidt 2011, notably 55-58, 65-67).
 - 28 Thanks to Judith Noorman, who directed me to this source. Within the research project 'The female impact', Noorman and Piet Bakker are also working with moralistic sources, applying new perspectives on women's roles in household finances and home decorating. De Vrije 1679, 7: 'Ook kunt gy, ô Vrouwtje, uyt liefde en zorgvuldigheyt menigmaal aan uw man hier in de behulpzame handt bieden, 't geen in de Koopmanschap niet geschieden kan, zulks dat je ook dus doende leert met de Winckel en met alle lieden fraeitjes omgaan; waar door gy in syn absentie ook de koopers leert gerieven, en behoorlick bescheyt te geven, zulks dat je dickwils zo grondigen kennis van de neering, als uw man zelve, komt te krijgen'.
 - 29 Cultural historians have frequently observed that the relationship between men and women in the Northern Netherlands was characterized by partnership and a reciprocal sharing of duties and obligations, more so than elsewhere in Europe. Whereas this article mainly focuses on partnership in working relations, it can also be observed in other domains. The Dutch nuclear family was marked by elements such as the freedom to choose one's partner, the presence of affection, and a degree of equality between spouses, without a strong patriarchal authority. Despite married women being officially under the custody of their husbands, they had the option to seek support from the church or legal system if, for instance, their husbands squandered money or mistreated them. See, for example, Haks 1985, 150-157, 221; Van der Heijden 1998, 222-224, 229-231, 268-270; Frijhoff & Spies 1999, 192; Damsma 1999, 62-63, 65-66, 77-78; and Schmidt 2001, 245.
 - 30 Notably, studies related to the research project 'Women's work in the early modern Northern Netherlands' have uncovered high rates of women's work in all areas studied, including the textile industry, the drink industry, commerce, and in social services; see Schmidt 2005, 4-10; Van den Heuvel 2007, 132-134, 174-176,

- 220-222, 262-265; Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2007, 132-141, 204-223, 321; Van den Heuvel & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008, 209-210, 212-213; Van Dekken 2010, 100-101, 185-191, 246-248; Van der Heijden & Schmidt 2010, 378; Schmidt & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2012, 71-79; and Schmidt 2014, 303-306.
- 31 Businesses that relied on spousal cooperation could be found in craft production, agriculture, retail trade, wholesale, international trade, and even the service sector. Schmidt 2014, 303-306, 309; Van den Heuvel & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008, notably 211-213; Van den Heuvel 2008; Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008.
 - 32 Aikema *et al.* 1975; Miedema 1987, 9-12, 21-22; Montias 1987, 455.
 - 33 Schmidt 2014, 309, 311-313.
 - 34 The term *family economy* was introduced in the 1970s by Hans Meddick in the debate about labor organization in proto-industrial times and around the same time by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott in the debate about the history of women's work. Although their exact definitions do not align precisely, they both understood the *family economy* as a unity of production or labor, which was regarded as characteristic for the way in which labor was organized in pre-industrial times. Martha Howell introduced the *family production unit*, explicitly differentiating them from families that produced solely for the family, i.e., subsistence (instead of for sale at the marketplace), and families whose members worked for wages (instead of selling goods and services) (Howell 1986, 27-30). For a description of both concepts as well as the criticism it encountered, see Knotter 1994 (in Dutch) and Knotter 2001 (in English). Within 'The female impact' research project, intern and master student Femke Valkhoff analyzed the concept of the *family economy* in relation to 17th-century Haarlem brewers and their agency within the family and the brewery, and with regard to portraits commissioned for the household (Valkhoff 2023, 23-26).
 - 35 Van den Heuvel & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008; Van den Heuvel 2008; Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008.
 - 36 Schmidt 2014, 312; Van den Heuvel 2008, 225-229.
 - 37 Knotter 1994, 38-39, 65-71; Schmidt 2014, 311-315.
 - 38 Schmidt 2004, 38-39, 42-43.
 - 39 These varied and flexible labor relations can be observed in the brewing industry, for example, in which the contribution of a brewer's wife was often vital to the success of the business. However, if working together was not possible or sufficient, married women sought alternative ways to generate income, such as seeking employment in wage labor or starting their own trade or business (Van Dekken 2010, 101-102).
 - 40 Van den Heuvel & Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2008, 209; Schmidt 2014, 301-302.
 - 41 Only a few financial records of 17th-century painting workshops in the Netherlands have survived, and they are often incomplete (Jansen 1997, 42-43, n. 5; Bok 1998, 108). For instance, we have a sketchbook of the Haarlem painter Jacob de Wet (c. 1610-after 1671), which includes a collection of notes on pupils and their apprenticeship fees between 1638 and 1671, along with a list of works sold with selling prices (Bredius 1919, 215-222; Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (NHA), Kennemer Atlas te Haarlem, inv. 53-999002K) and two notebooks dated 1694-1697 and 1703-1705 from the Amsterdam painter Philip Tideman (1657-1705) with notes on his commissions, including short descriptions of the works and some sketches, descriptions of personal experiences, and art theoretical comments (Schoon 1990; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BI-1946-660; Leiden, University Print Room, inv. no. AW 907). Unfortunately, these cases thus do not involve a complete financial accounting of the workshop and household.
 - 42 Waltmans 1998, 100; Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 6, 202: 'schilderie te koop stelde'.
 - 43 Vermeeren 1998, 54.
 - 44 See, for example, the life stories of Rubens (Houbraken [1718-1721] 1976, vol. 1, 66), Jakob van der Does (Houbraken, vol. 2, 107), and Jan Steen (Houbraken, vol. 3, 21).
 - 45 Van Mander 1604, 282: 'De veel sieckten zijner Moeder veroorsaecten, dat hy veel tijt d'ander kinderen, knechten, en t'huys heeft moeten dienen, tot groot naedeel van zijn toegheneyghde voornemen'.
 - 46 Houbraken (1718-1721) 1976, vol. 2, 201-202: 'Maar alzo de Vrouw en Dochter van Meester Hans, zig weinig der huishoudinge bekreunden, en zig meer aan 't onderzoek en spreken over geschillen den Godsdienst betreffende lieten gelegen leggen, en zyn Oom niet anders dan op krukken konde gaan, moest Barent dikmaals voor keukenmeit spelen, 't welk met zoo veel verlet verzelt, hem weder (naar hy zes of zeven jaren by zyn Oom had gewoond) deed tot zyn moeder keeren, en zyne konstoefening onverhindert voortzetten'.
 - 47 Other examples of painters or pupils who had to take care of household duties include Pieter Vlerick (Van Mander 1604, 249v), pupils of Ian Mostart (Van Mander, 228), Pieter Jansze van Asch (Houbraken [1718-1721] 1976, vol. 1, 235), and Ludolf de Jong (Houbraken, vol. 2, 33).
 - 48 Houbraken (1718-1721) 1976, vol. 1, 319: 'Maar alzo Brouwer veel voor zyn meester werken moest, en weinig te eeten kreeg (want het wyf van Frans Brouwers hollen romp wel met wind zou hebben willen opvullen) werd hy verdrietig by zig zelve, en opgestoot door de andere Leerlingen, waar van Ostade een was, besloot hy van zyn meester weg te loopen, gelyk hy deed'.
 - 49 Li 2023, 61-77: A remarkable example of this practice is the house of Rembrandt van Rijn, which now functions as a museum where visitors can explore the kitchen downstairs and visit the master's studio on the second floor. Recently, even the workplaces of Rembrandt's pupils have been reconstructed on the top floor (Van Sloten 2020; Noorman 2021, 342-343). For an impression of the house, see <https://www.rembrandthuis.nl/en/>. It is important to consider that not all artists organized their households in this manner. For instance, assistants or 'galey-schilders' who worked in the service of established painters or art dealers operated outside the context of their own homes and families (Jager 2016, notably chap. 4 on the production of 'dozijnwerk'), which probably limited the opportunities for their wives and daughters to collaborate in the art business. How factors such as the type and organization of the business and the location of the workshop influenced familial collaboration remains an important area of research that will be further explored in my forthcoming dissertation. For more on apprentices, see De Jager 1990, 79. For more on the relationship of authority between artisans and their apprentices, see De Munck 2004.
 - 50 Houbraken (1718-1721) 1976, vol. 3, 214-215: 'Egter bleef hy [Johannes Offermans] konstminnende, dreef somwyl handel met schilderyen, en was graag by de Konstenaars in gezelschap; waarom (schoon zyn Vrouw het geld meester was) hy altyd maak- te dat hy een buidelkje byzonder had, om een vrolyken avond te houden'.
 - 51 Houbraken (1718-1721) 1976, vol. 2, 111-112: 'ja zy [his wife] hield hem doorgaans zoodanig ontbloot van geld, dat hy ziende somtyds fraaije printen te koop, waar toe hy geneigt was, als zyn Vrouw geen goeden wil had om 't hem te schieten, het geld

- van zyne Discipelen daar toe leende; en wanneer hy een stuk schilderye verkogt, daar zy de neus niet over had, dan zoo veel van de som af kneep, om die schult buiten haar weten te betalen, om dus alle onlusten voor te komen'.
- 52 Houbraken (1718-1721) 1976, vol. 3, 85-89: 'Wanneer onze van Pee getrouwt was en kinderen had, werd hy belust om Antwerpen, de kweekschool van zoo vele brave Konstenaren, en hunne Konstwerken te zien. (...) Dog hier toe werd geld vereischt en verschooning van linnen, waar toe hem de gelegenheid niet gunstig was, als op zekeren tyd, wanneer hy geneigt was tot het eeten van Both, en zyn Vrouw hem den sleutel van de kas gaf, om geld daar toe te krygen. Toen stak hy tien ducatonen, twee hemden, en eenige dassen by zig, en daar mede ten huis uitgaande, zeide hy dat hy naar de Vismarkt zoude gaan, en zyn Vrouw vast het water in den ketel over 't vuur zou hangen, en maken dat het kookte, tegens dat hy met den Visch t'huis zoude komen'.
- 53 Hessel Miedema already noted that the wives of painters who appear in Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* often functioned as an illustration of the painter's nature, featuring as disruptive or inspiring influences (Miedema 2012, 12).
- 54 Jager 2016, 333; RKD, Archief A. Bredius (NI-HaRKD.0308), 'Van der Poel', p. 8 Leiden, Vred., 11-8-1664.
- 55 Jager 2016, 292-293.
- 56 Thanks to Suzanne Laemers of the RKD who works on the digitization of the Bredius Notes and points 'The female impact' team towards interesting examples of women active in the art market. Amsterdam City Archive, NA (5075), not. J. de Winter, inv. no. 2291, katern 65, p. 43-44, scans 75-76, 13 August 1663.
- 57 Frans Grijzenhout brought some related archival documents to my attention. At the time of the incident, Mathijsz and Barents had only been married for a few weeks (Amsterdam City Archive, DTB [5001], inv. no. 484, p. 354, 24 July 1663). The chance that they received their money for Grijbe's portraits is small. In June 1665, Grijbe left his belongings behind on the Zeedijk without paying the rent. The estate does contain 'een konthefysel van een kint' (Amsterdam City Archive, NA [5075], not. J. de Winter, inv. no. 2409, p. 16-18, 16 December 1665).
- 58 Cat. The Hague & Washington 2005, 23; Naumann 1981, vol. 1, 31, 183-184.
- 59 De Monconys 1666, vol. 2, 128: 'Je fus chez un Peintre nommé Cornelius Buscat qui fait des cabinets, armoires, estuis de peignes, & autre choses de cette sorte: sa femme estoit fort jolie, mais non pas tant qu'une revendeuse de tableaux, & une Marchande de fil blanc, chez qui je m'arrestay exprés pour les considerer'.
- 60 Meijer 1998, 124-125.
- 61 The Hague Municipal Archives, NA Den Haag (0372-01), inv. no. 523, no. 180, p. 363-364, 26 October 1672: 'heeft sij schilders vrou tegens de voorn. craamvrouw gesegt, 't sa comt geeft gij mijn gelt of ik en gae hier niet uijtten huis, seijde de voorn. craamvrouw, comt als mijn man thuys is, hij sal u wel betalen, heeft sij schilders vrouwe daar op verscheijde malen geantwoort ende onerwaerlik gesproken, ghij sijt maar Canaelge (hijt gij een craamvrouw, gij meugt de duivel wesen, ik soude u wel voor u backus slaen)'.
- 62 Ibid.: 'korts daar aan de man vande voorn. schilders vrouw met namen van Duijnen aldaer ten huise van reqrte. gekomen, die oock seer impertinent ende onbeleef sprack, groot gewelt stelde, als mede tegens de voorn. dogter vande Reqrte. verscheijde malen seijde ghij hoer waert gij een mans persoon ik soude u het backus opsnijden ende veel andere scheltwoorden meer'.
- 63 De Vries 1886, 302; Bredius 1911, 181-182; Van Thiel-Stroman 2006, 350.
- 64 Bredius 1911, 182-183; Van Thiel-Stroman 2006, 350; Amsterdam City Archive, NA (5075), inv. no. 4534, p. 26-28, 3 July 1680: 'dat nu omtrent 4 a 5 weecken geleden zij getuygen bij en present geweest zijn, dat de huysvrouw van Jan Wijnants bij de producent gecoomen is en versoght off de producent geliefde, dat zy sijn schilderijen soude schoonmaacken, waerom zy instantelyck aenstont, daarop de producent tegen haer zeyde, dat hy voor desen voor het schoonmaacken gegeven hadt 1 gulden tien stuivers daaghs en dat hem nu 2 gulden daaghs geëyst was, dogh zeyde zy, dat zij het noch minder soude doen, ende heeft de producent onder die conditie dat zij minder soude hebben als twee gulden daaghs toegestaen dat zij de schilderijen schoonmaacken soude, gelijk zij ten huise van de producent ooc omtrent vier dagen geaerbeijt heeft ende geduyrende die tijt met twee kinderen ten huise van de producent gegeten (...)'.
65 De Vries 1886, 302; Van Thiel-Stroman 2006, 350; Amsterdam City Archive, NA (5075), J. Hellerus, inv. no. 2493CB, p. 1017 (scan 277), 10 November 1667.
- 66 Broersen 1993, 29-30; Welu 1993, 14; Honig 1995-1996, 45; Huet & Grieten 1998, 144-145; Honig 2001-2002, 32; cat. Haarlem 2009, 23; Blokhuis 2020, 71-72.
- 67 Broersen 1993, 29-30.
- 68 Noord-Hollands Archief, NA Haarlem (1617), not. W. von Kittensteyn, inv. no. 281, fol. 365, 24 December 1657: 'over vercofte schilderijen, uijstaende gelden, als anders vande selve'.
- 69 Noord-Hollands Archief, ORA (184), Heemstede Schepenrol, inv. no. 546, fol. 144v, 17 October 1657.
- 70 Welu 1993, 14; Honig 1995-1996, 45; Honig 2001-2002, 32, 37, n. 10.
- 71 Apart from the Southern Netherlands, Jacobs's article does include a few interesting examples that extend the region, such as the wife of Albrecht Dürer who attended fairs to sell her husband's work, and the wife of Rogier van der Weyden who received payment for an altarpiece that her husband created for Cambrai (Jacobs 1997, 29-30). Additionally, although this article focuses on the art market, it is worth nothing that dynamic partnerships can also be found in both the tapestry and book markets. The research project *MapTap: Mapping the Antwerp-Brussels-Oudenarde Tapestry Complex via Network Analysis (1620-1720)* found that married women frequently and fundamentally participated in the management of workshops and the entrepreneurial process of tapestry businesses. They took the lead in administration, received payments, made business trips, and, with powers of attorney provided by their husbands, ran the businesses independently in their husbands' absence (Brosens *et al.* 2016, 321-322). In her study of 16th- and 17th-century printing houses in Antwerp, Leuven, and Douai, Heleen Wyffels found a similar division of labor; these printing firms operated as family businesses in which women played integral roles by, for example, bookkeeping, managing the printing houses, providing the catering, running errands, and shaping editorial strategies. Not only did women perform diverse tasks, but also their roles varied significantly throughout their life cycles. Moreover, their acquired skills were transferable, enabling them to pursue work outside the family environment in other sectors. This not only contributed to the family's financial stability but also facilitated taking larger risks within the printing house and making longer-term investments in new editions (Wyffels 2021, notably 22-26, 45-95, 99-145, 282-283).
- 72 Sluiter 2000; Bok 2008, 10-12; Boers 2012, 17-21.
- 73 Jacobs 1997, 29-30; Vermeylen 2003, 62.
- 74 In the early 16th century, about 14-18

- percent of the stall renters in the Bruges 'panden' were widows, with 2 widows and 14 painters renting stalls from 1512-1519, and 2 widows and 12 painters from 1520-1526. Similarly, in Antwerp between 1543 and 1560, 5 widows and 1 daughter rented stalls alongside 48 male artists, accounting for 9 percent of the total (Jacobs 1997, 29-30; Vermeylen 2003, 69-70, 75-76).
- 75 Likewise, Barbara de Vos, wife of the painter Marten Alleyns, is known to have purchased some paintings in 1581 from the estate of the late Jan van Kessel. Vermeylen 2003, 69, 72.
- 76 Van Mander 1604, 215r: 'zijn Huysvrouw reysde op de Marcten, in Brabant en Vlaender, alles vervullende met schilderije, en won daer wel mede. Soo dat Ian, al en reysde hy niet, seer weynigh wrocht'. The same was noted in 1901 by H. Floerke (Floerke 1901, 20; Floerke 1905, 15). That Adriana de Hollander was indeed involved in selling art is confirmed by the fact that she is recorded as renting a stall at the Antwerp Saint Bavo's fair in 1545 and paying for a stall at Our Lady's 'pand' between 1545 and 1550 (Vermeylen 2003, 69).
- 77 Kelchtermans 2013, notably 180-186.
- 78 Kelchtermans 2013, 183.
- 79 To validate her authority, Schut obtained explicit approval from Snayers, as documented by the notary: 'Jouff[rouw]e Anna Schut, wettige huysvrouwe van Sr Peeter Snayers, constschilder woonende tot Bruessel, ende als van denselven heuren man tot tgene nabeschreven wordt speciaelen last ende commissie hebbende'. Kelchtermans 2013, 182-183.
- 80 The RKD database contains biographical data of Dutch and foreign artists (RKDartists&) and descriptions and photographs of artworks made by them (RKDimages); the ECARTICO database allows for visualization of social and genealogical networks in addition to biographical data of persons involved in the cultural industries of the Low Countries in the 16th and 17th centuries; and the *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland* (DVN) led by Els Kloek has more extensive lemmas on the most remarkable women in the history of the Netherlands. These online collections do not claim to be complete but proved extremely useful for collecting new data. The advanced search filters in these databases allow for selection by location, period, occupation, and gender.
- 81 The dataset will be published along with my forthcoming dissertation. Limited by the sources used (see preceding footnote), I collected data on painters, draftsmen, illuminators, engravers, paper cutters, calligraphers, and embroiderers, but not on lace makers and gold/silversmiths. Although women were certainly active in these latter sectors, and while there is an increasing scholarly attention to these art forms in contemporary research (see, for example, cat. Baltimore & Toronto 2023), it is unfortunate that there remains relatively little research specifically focused on their contribution in the 17th-century Netherlands. In addition, due to my focus on pictorial arts, women active as writers, poets, and dramatists also fell outside the scope of this study, except if they also created works such as watercolors or glass engravings, in which case these versatile women were included in the dataset. The geographical demarcation to the Northern Netherlands limited the study to artists active (regardless of their place of birth) in the area that roughly corresponds to the present-day Netherlands, focusing exclusively on artists active between 1580 and 1720 (died after 1580 or born before 1700). It is essential to address two significant disclaimers. Firstly, it is crucial to acknowledge that this database is an ongoing document rather than a final product. New names continue to be added, and much remains unknown about the lives and artistic output of the listed women. Secondly, the representativeness of the database warrants consideration. While the three online sources used for data collection are regularly updated with new information, they do not claim to be exhaustive. Due to the traditional focus of art historians on professional painting, the inclusion of amateurs and practitioners of other art forms may be underrepresented.
- 82 As Haverman had not fulfilled the request of the Académie for a new painting a year after it was made, speculation arose that the painting with which she had earlier presented herself to the Académie was not her own work. However, a more plausible explanation might be that she was unable to complete this task due to external circumstances. It is possible that her ability was hindered by the responsibilities of her husband, who, as a merchant, traveled extensively, or by domestic obligations, particularly since during this period the couple had their first child (Alen 2010, 31-40; Huiskamp 2014b).
- 83 The same observation is made in the literary field; see Geerdink 2017.
- 84 Van der Stighelen also refers to the Southern Netherlandish artist Clara Peeters (c. 1580-1657), and emphasizes that this tradition of married women pursuing their art was already visible in the 16th century, with artists such as Agnes van den Bossche (c. 1440-after 1502), Susanna Horenbout (active c. 1520-1540), Levina Teerlinck (c. 1520-1576), and Catharina van Hemessen (1528-after 1581). Van der Stighelen 2019, 192-194.
- 85 See their lemmas in the *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*: Kloek 2014a; Volbeda 2021; Huiskamp 2014a; Huiskamp 2014c; Van der Hut 2014b; De Beer 2014b. Following the death of Cornelia de Rijck's husband, his apprentice, Gerard Rademaker, is said to have continued working under De Rijck's guidance. In Rademaker's biography, Van Gool notes: 'But with his deceased master's widow, Cornelia de Ryck, also being a painter, he decided that after spending time with her deceased husband he would stay with her, to continue practicing art under her guidance and the good examples present there' (Van Gool 1750-1751, 379-380).
- 86 Cat. The Hague 1998, 339; Janssen 2014.
- 87 Cat. The Hague 1998, 348; Huiskamp 2014d.
- 88 Kooijmans 2014b.
- 89 Kloek 2014c.
- 90 Cat. Haarlem & Frankfurt 1998, 18-31; De Beer 2015; Brinkmann 2023, 160.
- 91 For more on the cooperation between mother and her daughters, see Reitsma 2008. Her eldest daughter, Johanna Helena Herolt (Graff) (1668-1730), married to Jacob Hendrik Herolt (1660-1715) in 1692 with whom she moved to Suriname, painted botanical watercolors, studied insects and plants, and collected and traded reptiles, fish, and insects. The younger daughter, Dorothea Maria Henriette Graff (1678-1743), remained with her mother during her first marriage, but moved with her second husband, the painter Georg Gsell (1673-1740), to Saint Petersburg. There, she taught at the Art School of the Peter Academy of Sciences, painted birds for the curiosity cabinet of Tsar Peter the Great, and was commissioned to design and decorate new buildings for Peter's extensive collections, including painting cabinets and showcases (Reitsma 2008, 235-237; De Beer 2014a; De Beer 2022).
- 92 Broersen 1993, 23.
- 93 The attribution of the self-portrait is being debated, but in the recent exhibition *Geniale Frauen* (2023), it was presented as a Leyster (cat. Basel & Hamburg 2023, 123). Although Leyster did not entirely abandon her brush, the question remains

- how frequently she continued to paint, what exactly she produced, and whether, as suggested by Frima Fox Hofrichter, she specialized in still lifes and botanical studies. These questions will be further explored in my forthcoming dissertation. Huet & Grieten 1998, 144-145; cat. Haarlem 2009, 23-28; Kloek 2014c; Blokhuis 2020, 71-72; Crenshaw 2021, 63-71; Müller 2023, 124.
- 94 For more information, see the lemmas of these women artists in the *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*: Van der Hut 2014a; Veldman 2014; Missel 2016; Kooijmans 2014a; De Haas 2021. According to Van Gool, Maria Bosman (1672-1700) also painted less upon marriage: 'met haar huwelijk verflauwde de lust en ging op 't laatst met haar Kunstvermogen geheel te niet' (Kloek *et al.* 1998, 133), and Anna van Royen (1707-1749) is known to have stopped giving drawing lessons after she became pregnant (Van der Hut 2014c). Similar observations are drawn in the literary field, where distinguished figures such as Anna Roemers Visscher (1607-1689) and Catharina Questiers (1631-1669), renowned for their poetry and fine artistry, seemed to have written less after marriage; see Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen 1997, 39-43.
- 95 Van Eck 1992, 51; Van der Stighelen 1992, 64; Van Schurman (1641) 2021, 66: 'In de derde plaats moet onze vrouw, wat omstandigheden en positie betreft, aan de eis voldoen dat ze zich af en toe kan vrijmaken van haar algemene en haar bijzondere roeping, te weten het belijden van het geloof en de huishouding. En een vrouw kan tijdens haar jeugd, wanneer ze de vrijheid heeft en niet belast is met verantwoordelijkheden, zonder problemen aan deze voorwaarde voldoen, en ook op gevorderde leeftijd, wanneer ze ongetrouwd is of over dienstbodes beschikt; want die nemen meestal ook de rijkere getrouwde vrouwen hun huishoudelijke taken voor een groot deel uit handen'.
- 96 Van Schurman 1684, 150: 'in welke door het overlijden van mijn zeer getrouwe Moeder, een zekere groote veranderinge aangaande den stant van mijn leven en Studien is voorgevallen, die my door huiszorgen en door werken der liefde ontrent eenige bloetvriendinnen in ons huis, van de voortgank der studien, en van het oefenen der konsten, bykans twintig jaren heeft afgehouden'.
- 97 Sluijter 1998, 52-54.
- 98 Van Gemert 1994, 45-47; Moore 1994, 641-642; Van Beverwijk 1639, 304: 'Ende soo yemant mochte seggen, dat de Vrouwen pas tot de Huys-houdinge bequaem zijn, ende niet verder; daer op antwoorde ick, datter by ons vele Vrouwen sonder haer huys te vergeten, nering, ende koopmanschap doen, ende andere oock haer in konsten ende wetenschappen oeffenen'.
- 99 Van Nederveen Meerkerk 2007, 215-218; Van den Heuvel 2007, 127-129.
- 100 Kloek 1998, 11-13; Honig 1999, 44-45 (in Dutch) and Honig 2001-2002, 31 (in English); Missel 2000. It was different for women from wealthier, cultured families. They regularly received broad artistic training as part of a humanistic education and drew, made watercolors, cut paper, and engraved glass, often for their own pleasure or – if they possessed talent – on commission for friends and family. However, they are beyond the scope of this article, which focuses primarily on art production as a source of income. For more on the (arbitrary) distinction between amateurs and professionals, see Van der Stighelen 1997; Kloek 1998, 15; and Honig 2001-2002.
- 101 Van Hoogstraten 1678, 241: 'Zelfs het maeken van dozijnwerken, met hulpe van jongens en vrouwen, heeft de meesters van de zelve niet alleen in de konst doen te rug gaen, maer, door den afslach, die de Schilderyen daer door in prijs verkreegen, zoo is hun beoogt voordeel ook in wind verdweenen'.
- 102 Houbraeken (1718-1721) 1976, vol. 3, 83: 'Hy had lang in Engeland verkeert, van waar hy de Konst meê Bragt in Holland, nevens een Vrouw die hy daar getrouwt had, die ook de Konst verstond, en hem hielp het Satyn met Bloemen beschilderen'.
- 103 Interestingly, there are more examples of women who married men who seemed to have mastered the visual arts only after marriage. Antonina Houbraeken married the goldsmith Jacobus Stellingwerf (1650-1715), who after marrying devoted himself to drawing topographical views (Kolkman 2013). Similarly, the painter Abraham van Beijeren only turned his focus to still lifes after marrying the painter Anna van den Queborn. As suggested by Noud Janssen, Van den Queborn might have been his inspiration in this regard, as she is known to have painted exclusively still lifes (Janssen 2014).
- 104 Cat. Amsterdam 2005, 33; Croiset van Uchelen 2009, notably 90-92; Volbeda 2021. Niels Weijenberg, postgraduate researcher in Art History at University of Manchester, is currently working on PhD research into early modern Netherlandish calligraphy.
- 105 Houbraeken was previously listed as an amateur artist in the RKD's database, and her portrait of Cornelis Witsen based on an existing portrait of the man was placed by Van der Stighelen in the dilettante sphere because many a dilettante liked to copy other artists' work. Cat. Antwerp & Arnhem 1999, 209.
- 106 Kolkman 2013.
- 107 While Antonina Houbraeken often signed her works under her husband's name, there are discernible differences between their working methods and artistic styles. Her husband, Jacobus Stellingwerf, signed his works as J;St, distinct from Antonina's JS signature. According to Kolkman, Houbraeken's artworks exhibit a level of craftsmanship that surpasses that of Stellingwerf. Her drawings are characterized by elaborate detail, lively compositions often featuring figures, and an overall heightened artistic quality.
- 108 Incidentally, according to Kolkman, there are some indications of some form of cooperation. For instance, Antonina seems to have had access to the collection of examples from which Jacobus drew, and on the title page Jacobus made for the second Utrecht volume in the Brouërius van Nidek atlas his name is written in small type in Antonina's handwriting. The exact functioning of the joint family business requires further research. Kolkman 2013, figs. 5a-b, 6a-b.
- 109 Howarth 2009, 97-99; Huiskamp 2018.
- 110 Her education in the family business allowed her to become an independently skilled artist, enabling her, after her husband's death in 1649, to continue supporting herself with her paintings. Howarth 2012; Von Sandrart 1675-1680, 299.
- 111 Another interesting case in this respect is the British portrait painter Maria Beale (1633-1699). She was assisted by her husband, Charles Beale (1632-1705), who dealt with extracting pigments from plants and insects, making paints, preparing canvases, and with records in which he made precise notes about Mary's progress per portrait commission, payments still outstanding, painting materials he provided for her, and what knowledge they picked up from other painters (Karst 2021, 185-187).
- 112 Beer 1998, 90-91; De Beer 2014b; RKD, Archief Adriaan van der Willigen (NL-HaRKD-0392): 'Dese Konstenares al getrouwd zijnde den 15 jan[uari] 1719 met haar man een mede mede hulp gekregen bekomen, om het bijwerk van de portretten te schilderen; (...) [Van Pee] had egter dagelijks soo veel te doen, haar man

- (hoe wel met tegen sin) genootsaakt was aan het bijwerk te helpen.
- 113 This is consistent with the recent argument – advocated by Martha Howell and confirmed by, among others, Nina Geerdink and Feike Dietz – that female agency usually came from opportunities arising from special features of a cultural system, while only a few women wanted to overturn the system as a whole (Howell 2018, notably 101-102, 117; Howell 2019, 22-30; Geerdink & Dietz 2022, 164). That artistic production is currently regarded primarily as an individual achievement is underlined by the still swelling stream of exhibitions and monographs on exceptional women. See, for example, cat. Haarlem 1993; cat. Haarlem & Frankfurt 1998; cat. Leeuwarden 2002; cat. Antwerp 2018.

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