A miracle mirrored

The Dutch Republic in European Perspective

Edited by

Karel Davids

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

and

Jan Lucassen

International Institute of Social History Amsterdam

1995

9

Art and commerce in the Dutch Republic

Michael North

> The faires are full of pictures, especially Landscips, and Drolleries, as they call those clownish representations. The reason for this store of pictures and their cheapness proceede from their want of Land, to employ their Stock; so 'tis an ordinary thing to find, a common Farmer lay out two, or 3000 pounds in this Commodity, their houses are full of them, and they vend them at their Kermas'es to very greate gaines.[1]

This entry in John Evelyn's diary about the pictures he saw in Rotterdam's fair in 1641 has been often quoted and misunderstood by art historians and sociologists of art. They took Evelyn literally and contended, that because of the scarcity of land, Dutch seventeenth-century peasants invested their surplus capital in paintings, hoping to resell them at a profit.[2] This claim is open to serious doubt. However, what holds and what impressed foreign travellers most, is the number of paintings in Dutch households. This is confirmed by the statement of another frequent traveller, Peter Mundy, who noticed also in the 1640s

> the affection off the people to Pictures: I thincke none other goe beyond them . . . All in generall striving to adorne their houses, esp. the outer or street roome, with costly peeces, Butchers and bakers not much inferior in their shoppes which are Fairely set Forth, yea many tymes blacksmithes, Coblers, etts., will have some picture or other by the Forge and in their stalle, Such is the generall Notion, enclination and delight that these Countrie Natives have to paintings.[3]

The Dutch Republic was unique in Europe in the number of paintings possessed by private households, and also in its production of millions of paintings.[4] John Michael Montias estimated that in the mid-seventeenth century, between 650 and 750 Dutch painters produced ninety-four works on average a year; this meant a total annual production of 63,000 to 70,000 paintings in the Dutch Republic. Ad van der Woude calculated that 50,000 paintings a year were produced in the province of Holland alone.[5]

This boom started in the late-sixteenth century with the influx of at least 250 experienced artists from the Southern Netherlands to the North. From less than one hundred active artists in the North before the 1590s, their number grew four-fold in the decades 1600–20 to reach at most between 700 and 800 active masters by the middle of the century, and as many additional apprentices, copyists and non-guild painters. The last quarter of the century saw a quick decrease however, to the level of the beginning of the century. Production only began to rise again slightly after 1775.[6]

This impressive production of paintings is reflected in the increasing numbers of paintings which appear in Dutch probate inventories. For example, the average number of paintings in Delft inventories rose from ten in the 1610s to twenty in the 1670s, and Amsterdam inventories show a rise from twenty-five to forty paintings during the same period.[7] So it was no wonder, that in 1643 a Leiden 'trowsers' weaver possessed sixty-four paintings, and two other weavers in the 1670s possessed ninety-six and 103 paintings each.[8]

In order to explain this remarkable aspect of seventeenth-century Dutch culture, I shall firstly examine the specific conditions of art and art production in the Dutch Republic. These were characterised by the emergence of an art market, the secularisation of the taste of consumers and collectors, and art production in a craft milieu organised by guilds. Secondly, I shall compare the Dutch situation with the position of the visual arts in the Southern Netherlands and Italy in earlier periods, and with England in the eighteenth century.

The Northern Netherlands imported not only many master painters from the South, but also marketing devices which had already developed there in the course of the sixteenth century. However, they did not simply imitate these southern forms, but rather developed them from the 1610s in a different manner, as I shall demonstrate.

One of the most striking features of the emergent art market, is the fact that the majority of painters did not paint for private patrons. Instead, they painted for an anonymous public market. The necessary preconditions for this were low production costs, a steady market demand, and prices high enough to cover material expenses and the artists' costs of living.[9] All these conditons appear to have been present in the seventeenth century.

Product innovations – characteristic for the Dutch economy as a whole[10] – generated new demand, while specialisation lowered the costs of producing paintings.[11] Since so many master painters were available, most of them could, to a large degree, specialise in different forms, from portraits to 'drolls' and still-lives. These were even subdivided into different categories, and some painters specialised in different types of still-life, like fruits, flowers, or fish. All these genres could be painted either originally or as copies.[12] Innovations in technique were connected with this specialisation. For example the introduction of the so-called tonal style cut down the time necessary to produce a painting, thus raising the painters' productivity. This innovation in tonal technique, pioneered by Esaias van de Velde and Jan Porcellis in land- and sea-scapes, and by Pieter Claesz in still-lives, consisted in moving from linear depiction and additive composition towards more painterly techniques and simplified compositions, integrated by the modulation of colour and tone.[13] The new techniques became widespread in the Northern Netherlands in the 1640s with the landscape paintings by Jan van Goyen and Pieter Molijn. The tonal style reduced the production time and the cost of a painting, since material costs for canvas and paint were low (Montias estimates not more than 5 per cent of the total price). The consumer thus gained by paying lower prices for landscapes, and this reduction contributed to the rising importance of landscapes in Dutch collections.[14]

The market demand for paintings rose throughout the first three quarters of the seventeenth century, and the supply of works more than kept pace with this rising demand. Unfortunately there is little evidence to illustrate the social stratification of this art market. However, we should distinquish between three groups: royal collectors, including foreign and Dutch princes like Christian IV of Denmark, Emperor Rudolph, Charles II of England and some princes of Orange; the so-called *liefhebbers*, the elites from the large cities, town governments and craft guilds; and the general public.[15] In the first two cases purchase on commission was the rule; in the third case purchases were made from an anonymous art market, either by direct sales from the master himself, or through common art dealers operating from shops or market places, or by auction.

The average price of paintings sold in auctions and assessed in inventories was less than 10 guilders. In Amsterdam inventories of the 1640s, the average price of 312 paintings was 6.8 guilders, and in an Amsterdam auction of 1647, 850 original paintings brought an average of 9.3 guilders, whereas the copies only sold for 4.13 guilders[16] each. Since copies and paintings by masters were available for as little as 5 to 10 guilders, many seventeenth-century Dutchmen would have been able to afford a painting, or at least a copy – perhaps several – during a lifetime. Moreover, the expanding art market generated a new profession, the profession of the art dealers. Although most painters bought and sold the pictures of their colleagues from time to time, professional art dealers became much more common in the 1630s and 1640s, when printers, engravers, framemakers and unsuccesful painters, like Gerrit Uylenburgh, Crijn Volmarijn and Abraham de Cooge, specialised in the art trade. This new trade in art also developed its own areas of specialisation. Whereas second-hand dealers (*uitdraegsters*) bought cheap paintings at estate sales and sold them on the street, other art dealers bought works of art directly from the artists' studios and exported them to other cities, selling paintings to collectors all over the country, and even abroad. Another group increased the supply of works available in the market by creating putting-out systems for art production.[17]

These art-dealers set artists to work so many hours per day, or bought from established artists for fixed prices, supplying them with the raw materials. For example in 1615 Jan Porcellis entered into a contract with the Antwerp cooper Adriaan Delen. According to this

contract Porcellis had to paint two seascapes a week for 15 guilders and participated in the profit from the sales (minus the costs of the materials, which were covered by Delen).[18] Other painters, like Pieter van den Bosch in 1645, had to paint for a fixed salary from dawn to dusk every painting which the art dealer and collector Marten Kretzer ordered. By this *schilderen op de galey* ('painting like a galley-slave') the art dealers acquired a stock of cheap paintings, and especially of copies, for an ever-growing market.[19] On the highest level of the art market ranked the international art dealers, who had masterpieces of the Renaissance and of the most famous contemporary artists at least as copies in their stock and offered them to Kings and Princes of Europe. A famous example is the selection of the paintings for the 'Dutch Gift' to Charles II in 1660.[20]

While most painters painted for the public market, others worked at least temporarily for patrons. There were different kinds of patronage in the Dutch Republic. Whereas the Calvinist church offered only a few organs to decorate, the stadholders of the House of Orange engaged Flemish painters and painters of the Utrecht school for the embellishment of their palaces, and they also commissioned a passion series by Rembrandt.[21] The cities commissioned the decoration of the city halls with allegoric paintings, remembering the time of the Batavians and Claudius Civilis or symbolising the omnipotent and just city government. Moreover, different social groups as the *schutters* (the town militia),[22] the eldermen of the guilds and the directors of charitable foundations commissioned group portraits (*regentenportretten*).

Individual and family portraits formed another substantial part of commissioned art. They made up a significant share (10–20 per cent) of the paintings listed in inventories.[23] However, we should not forget the large-scale production of portraits of the Princes of Orange and well-known clergymen in the big studios, which contributed to the great number of portraits in Dutch households. It was not only the portrait-painters who worked for individual commissioners, but also the 'fine painters' Gerard Dou, Frans van Mieris and Johannes Vermeer. They sold most of their works to single patrons, who often paid in advance, thereby limiting the risk for the painters, whose highly finished paintings were time-consuming and expensive and therefore did not meet the conditions required in the anonymous art market.[24] Despite the considerable proportion of patronage in

seventeenth-century Dutch art, the majority of master painters seems to have produced paintings for commercial speculation, assisted by art dealers who channelled their works on the market. Recently Marten Jan Bok and Gary Schwartz have contended that more than half of Dutch paintings could have been commissioned, mainly to the assistants, journeymen and painters of copies, whose works were sold at the lower end of the market through art dealers.[25]

Secularisation of the taste of consumers and collectors

A second characteristic feature of seventeenth-century Dutch culture was the secularisation of the consumers' taste. John Michael Montias has examined the paintings collected in Amsterdam and Delft inventories, breaking down the subjects into *histories* including religious paintings, *landscapes*, *portraits*, *still-lifes* and *genre*. He noticed significant changes in the importance of the different subjects over time, and his findings are *grosso modo* confirmed by a comparable analysis by C. Willemijn Fock, who examined the paintings collected in the inventories of the Rapenburg gracht in Leiden.

Tables 9.1 and 9.2 show two major trends: the decline of histories and the rise of landscapes in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings. Whereas in the first third of the seventeenth-century histories constituted 45 per cent of paintings, they only accounted for 10 per cent by the end of the century. The proportion of histories and especially of religious paintings declined faster than the proportion of landscapes increased, which constituted 40 per cent by the 1670s in Delft and Leiden.[26] Other subjects, such as portraits and still-lifes, rose and then declined, while genre pieces (*boertjes, geselschapjes, bordeeltjes, corte-gaerdjes*) gained growing popularity throughout the century. Although research in other cities confirms this trend in Amsterdam, Leiden and Delft, local variations do occur. In Dordrecht, for example, the taste for landscape painting did not grow as quickly as in the other cities mentioned.[27]

The trend from history painting to the landscape in the seventeenth-century collections reveals changing attitudes towards

Table 9.1 *Paintings in Delft inventories, 1610–79*

Class	1610–19		1620–29		1630–39		1640–49		1650–59		1660–69		1670–79	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
History	218	46.1	547	44.5	550	41.1	754	34.3	470	26.1	441	26.3	170	16.6
Landscape	121	25.6	290	23.7	369	27.6	573	26.1	610	33.9	606	38.6	419	40.9
Stilllife	20	4.2	137	11.2	133	9.9	256	11.7	247	13.7	242	15.4	171	16.7
Genre	18	3.8	56	4.6	61	4.6	82	3.7	88	4.9	76	4.8	76	7.4
Portrait	80	16.9	166	13.6	185	13.8	479	21.8	329	18.3	192	12.2	154	15
Other	16	3.4	29	2.4	40	3	49	2.2	58	3.2	39	2.5	35	3.4
Totals	473		1225		1338		2193		1802		1566		1025	

Source: Montias, *Artists*, table 8.3

Table 9.2 *Paintings in Amsterdam inventories (containing attributions), 1620–89*

Class	1620–2		1630–39		1640–49		1650–59		1660–69		1670–79		1680–89	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
History	227	46.9	404	32.4	412	23.8	268	16.1	282	14.2	278	15.5	112	11.6
Landscape	98	20.2	315	25.3	467	27.1	474	28.5	660	33.2	568	32.2	353	36.5
Stilllife	30	6.2	100	8	157	9.1	144	8.7	202	10.2	159	9	72	7.4
Genre	19	3.9	86	6.9	141	8.2	123	7.4	157	7.9	182	10.3	116	12
Portrait	73	15.7	193	15.4	292	16.9	326	19.7	336	17	268	15.8	98	10.1
Other	36	7.1	150	12	257	14.9	326	19.6	350	17.5	309	17.8	215	21.4
Totals	483		1248		1726		1661		1987		1764		966	

Source: Montias, ‘Works’, table 3

paintings in the Dutch society. Montias explains this phenomenon with reference to the lowering of production costs and prices of landscape paintings, like those of Van Goyen, through the innovative processes outlined above, which increased the market-share of the landscapes and therefore also their proportion in the private households. However, this seems to be a secondary effect. More fundamental was the change in the function of paintings in the Dutch Republic. Up to the sixteenth century the devotional function was dominant – when people preferred paintings with religious subjects to be used as private tabernacles. In the seventeenth century – as a late result of Calvinistic iconoclasm – the esthetic function became most important. A large proportion of the population no longer adored paintings of the Virgin Mary or the saints, and bought paintings chiefly to decorate their houses and enjoy as objects of art.

These changes in the function of paintings is documented *in nucleo* by the differences in Catholic and Calvinist collections. In Montias' study of the Amsterdam and in the research on Dordrecht by Loughman, Catholic households contained relatively more religious paintings and a greater frequency of New Testament subjects, like the Crucifixion and the Virgin Mary, as well as allegorical representations, than inventories from Calvinist households.[28] Orthodox Calvinists preferred instead the Old Testament religious histories, while Dordrecht Mennonites seem to have preferred paintings depicting scenes from both the Old and the New Testament. Portraits and still-lifes were more popular among Dordrecht orthodox Calvinists and Mennonites than among Catholics, and landscapes were the predilection of orthodox Calvinists. Genre paintings combined esthetic with instructive and moralising functions in their more or less overt messages (*vanitas*).[29]

The 'more secular orientation', as Montias describes it,[30] of Dutch collections has often been explained with the 'Dutch bourgeoisie's' inclination for 'realistic' or landscape painting.[31] However, the bourgeoisie did not favour realistic painting or landscape painting *per se*. Changes in devotion and religion, especially during the Reformation, were necessary preconditions, and the expansion of increasingly prosperous groups of consumers and collectors who sought to embellish their private dwellings with paintings according to the fashion of the century was also important. As a result, cheap tonal landscapes met the demand of a growing number of consumers and

won an increasingly important place in seventeenth-century Dutch collections. Lower prices, combined with a general rise in wealth, meant that a larger proportion of the population could afford works of art. Not only the elite, but also a much broader social strata beneath it, entered the art market.

A final factor, which should not be overlooked, but which cannot be dwelled upon more fully here, was the growing significance of pictorial messages, first in the form of woodcuts, but in the Republic mainly as engraved prints. No political or religious pressure group could afford to do without them.

Art production in a craft milieu, organised by guilds

Art was generally produced in the towns and not in the countryside. Painters in the towns were organised in craft guilds patronised by St Luke. Thirty-eight such guilds are known to have existed in the Northern Netherlands, mostly in the larger cities. Only in Utrecht, Middelburg, Leiden, Haarlem and Delft, did local schools maintain a strong local character, and only Amsterdam at the time of Rembrandt had a marked external influence.[32] In this respect, Montias introduced the concept of the 'critical mass', which he defines as 'a number of individuals large enough to preserve the intensity of interaction necessary to keep a community of artists from drifting apart'.[33]

Art historians and social historians of art have long contended that Dutch artists and their customers came from the lower sections of society. They have therefore overlooked the fact that most artists came from an artistic milieu or from the middle classes (members of the liberal professions), and in some cases even from the upper classes (rich merchants and brewers).[34] Their parents would not otherwise have been able to afford the considerable learning costs of 50 guilders a year, or between 75 and 110 guilders in the case of one well-known master, for the six years often served during a painter's apprenticeship.[35]

The apprenticeship of painters, like most other details of art production, followed the rules of the Guilds of St Luke. Dating back

to the Middle Ages, the Guilds of St Luke enjoyed a revival in the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth centuries, when local guilds were (re)established or re-invigorated in Amsterdam (1579), Rotterdam (1609), Delft (1611), Leiden (1615 and 1648), Alkmaar (1631) and Hoorn (1651).[36] The guilds included 'all those earning their living here by the art of painting, be it with fine brushes or otherwise, in oil or watercolors; glassmakers; glassellers; faienciers; tapestry-makers; embroiderers; engravers; sculptors working in wood, stone or other substance; scabbard-makers, art-printers; booksellers; sellers of prints and paintings, of whatever kind they may be'.[37] Thus ran the Delft guild letter of 1611.

The Delft guild ruled the following areas of production, like many other craft guilds: it defined the craft occupations, requiring status of master in the guild, and enforced guild membership; it regulated the conditions of apprenticeship and decided the qualifications necessary for becoming a master; it governed relations between masters, servants (*knechts*) and apprentices; and it tried to regulate the local art market.

Whether the guilds were successful as cartel on the art market depended on local conditions. Whereas membership and guild rules were enforced in communities as Delft, Dordrecht, Haarlem and most other cities throughout the seventeenth century, they were far less rigorously enforced in the open city of Amsterdam.[38] Although the Amsterdam Guild of St Luke in the first half of the seventeenth century tried to prevent particular auctions of cheap paintings from outside, it was hardly successful.[39]

The regulation of the art market was difficult at times in the smaller towns, but in towns like Delft and Dordrecht products by local artists were significantly overrepresented in probate inventories, compared with what might be expected in a fully free open market. Every guild letter forbade or limited the sale of paintings by out-of-town art dealers or by non-members of the guild. And yet there was no lack of imports of paintings by art dealers of the local guild; moreover, imported paintings were smuggled into estate auctions. That is why in Delft nearly half of the paintings in the inventories were made by out-of-town masters, who had never been members of the local Guild of St Luke.[40]

The majority of the artists – apart from very successful masters like Rembrandt – remained craftsmen, but they distinguished themselves from members of other crafts by their higher incomes and their larger houses. The average master painter earned three times as much money as a master carpenter.[41] Some may even have seen themselves as part of the liberal professions. There was little place in the corporate Dutch art industry for academies of the Italian model or the ideal of the 'free artist', as postulated by Karel van Mander. Academies which organised drawing classes from live models were only established in Haarlem and Utrecht, and these academies were small and short-lived. Van Mander deplored the fact that in the Low Countries 'art was squeezed into a guild', but he was unable to induce any changes with his own academy.[42] The corporate forces were too strong and hampered the development of academies and an artists' cult in the Dutch Republic, although tendencies towards emancipation from the guild are discernible.[43]

The singularity of Dutch art?

We have shown that characteristic features of Dutch art in the seventeenth century included the emergence of an art market, the secularisation of consumer taste, and the corporate forms of art production. In the following section we shall test this singularity in comparison with other regions and times for which we have comparative evidence, in particular the Southern Netherlands and also northern Italy and eighteenth-century England. However, comparisons have often to be speculative or impressionistic because of a paucity of evidence.

The marketing of art was not new; neither was it confined to the Dutch Republic. The art trade began in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy, where desire for paintings of the Virgin Mary, the Crucifixion and St John the Baptist encouraged Florentine artists to standardise their production of paintings on these and other devotional themes. In the 1370s and 1380s, Francesco Datini regularly exported these paintings to Avignon.[44] Moreover, in fifteenth-century northern Italy, works of art were often bought as finished products. Paintings, especially of those of a low quality, and copies, were exhibited and sold at fairs. Merchants specialising in the art trade found customers chiefly among the Courts of the Renaissance

princes. This trade expanded during the sixteenth century, but there is no evidence from Florence, Venice or Mantua, that an anonymous public market displaced the commissions ordered by public and ecclesiastical patrons as the dominant impetus for art production.[45]

By the sixteenth century, the commercialisation of artistic production was well under way in the Southern Netherlands. It started with the sculptors, and was imitated in the next century by the painters, followed by the engravers and the precious metals craftsmen in succession.[46] The proportion of commissioned pictures declined and standardised production, involving the repetition of parts and patterns, increased.[47] Some famous artists overcame guild restrictions to become full-time art dealers. Before the Antwerp Exchange became the first permanent exhibition for works of art in 1540 (something even Amsterdam did not achieve), artists and dealers exhibited works for display and sale at fairs held in churchyards. Only Utrecht had a permanent guild-gallery in the mid-seventeenth century. Despite the expansion of the Antwerp art market, however, patronage remained the dominant form of art production in the Antwerp guild up to the seventeenth century.[48]

Remarkably, the artistic crafts recovered quickly following the fall of Antwerp in 1585, and the brief but impressive exodus of many of its most industrious and talented inhabitants to the north. Up to the 1640s, gold- and silver-smiths, engravers, and especially painters, worked for an international market focused on the Iberian peninsula and the Americas. The workshops of Jordaens, Van Dyck, and most significantly Rubens, all made famous contributions to this recovery.[49]

Most German city guilds in the fifteenth century forbade the sale of works of art at church fairs and weekly markets, and also forbade works commissioned by out-of-town dealers. Nearly all of the paintings produced by the flourishing artistic community at Nuremberg were commissioned.[50] When Dürer exhibited a triptych at the Frankfurt fair, he hoped to attract new commissions, not potential buyers.

Thus the Dutch Republic witnessed the emergence of an unprecedented anonymous art market in the seventeenth century which nourished a large proportion of its artists. This resulted from a tremendous growth in the demand for paintings, stimulated by the availability of cheap works which a large majority of prosperous Dutchmen could afford.

From the last quarter of the seventeenth century onwards, however, the Dutch art market contracted, and the active participation of Dutch artists declined, as amateurs bought paintings chiefly by old masters rather than new works by contemporary artists. This contrasts with the continued expansion and commercialisation of the art market in England.[51] An indigenous painting tradition hardly existed in seventeenth-century England. However, a number of Dutch portrait and genre painters and engravers emigrated to England, and Dutch paintings were also imported. English artists gradually began to copy the Dutch works. In addition, a change in public opinion took place under the influence of continental theorists. A distinction was made between the high genre of Italian paintings and the low genre of the Dutch 'Drolls'. Seventeenth-century English paintings were hardly original, and relatively few were produced. The art market grew rapidly at the end of the century, however, during a speculation boom in which tens of thousands of paintings changed hands. Mount studied 129 extant catalogues from 1689–92 in which 35,797 pictures were mentioned, including Dutch genre. After this explosion of interest in selling and buying paintings, the number of art sales per annum dropped substantially, but the art market remained healthy for much of the eighteenth century.[52]

The secularisation of the consumers taste was not confined to the Dutch Republic. Everywhere in Western and Central Europe, the Reformation inspired a fundamental change in the function of paintings.[53] Peter Burke argues that this trend began in fifteenth-century Italy. According to Erreras *Répertoire des peintures datées* the proportion of subjects rose significantly, as is shown in table 9.3.

Table 9.3 *Proportion of secular subjects in dated paintings in Western and Central Europe, 1480–1539*

1480–89	5 per cent
1490–99	9 per cent
1500–09	10 per cent
1510–19	11 per cent
1520–29	13 per cent
1530–39	22 per cent

Source: Burke, *Die Renaissance*, p. 285

This development reached its climax, however, in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, where the proportion of paintings rose from 65 per cent at the beginning of the century to 90 per cent at the end.

Another point, which may serve as key for understanding seventeenth-century Dutch culture, is the predominance of guild structures and the absence of an academy. Academies of art were founded in sixteenth-century Italy. The Accademia del Disegno was founded in Florence by Cosimo de' Medici in 1563, at the suggestion of Giorgio Vassari, and Cosimo became the first President and appointed the members of the Accademia. Vassari wanted to emancipate the artist from the guild, and thereby stimulate their upward social mobility. He also wanted to make the training of the artists more scholarly.[54] The second Italian academy was the Accademia di San Luca in Rome, opened in 1593 on the initiative of Cardinal Federico Borromeo and the painter Federico Zuccari. Supported by the pope, they intended to stop the decline of painting and sculpture by establishing a new training programme at the Accademia.[55] Both academies, and the ideal of the free artist developed there, were closely connected with the Medici-court of the Grand-dukes of Tuscany in Florence, and with the papal court in Rome. It was thus above all the prince who contributed to the artists' fame – and vice versa. This relationship reached its peak with Louis XIV of France, when the Académie Francaise (founded in 1634–35), and the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (founded in 1648, reorganised in 1663) together with other academies, fulfilled the sole task of glorifying the king. For example the reception piece for the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture dealt with the history of the king, and there was a prize for the best painting or statue celebrating Louis.[56]

In the Dutch Republic, there was no place for an academy of this type, nor for the free artist glorified by Vassari and Van Mander and indentured by Louis XIV. This was also the case in the Venetian Republic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Here painters were registered together with other artisans in a guild, the Scuola dei Depentori, and were regarded as craftsmen in the social class of the *popolano*. Venetian painters were not members of the Accademia della Fama, an academy of sciences, which had an ambitious scientific and juridical publication programme. 'Venice, always the most conservative and stable of Italian cities, remained the most *retardataire* with respect to the social and intellectual emancipation of painters and the

establishment of academies of art'.[57] It therefore seems very likely that corporate forms of political organisation supported corporate forms of art production in the fabrication of culture.

Conclusion: the relationship between economy and the arts

Ever since Charles Burney stated in 1776 that the 'polite arts are the children of affluence',[58] cultural and economic historians have debated the economic conditions of art and culture. Most historians accept the view that the fine arts flourish best under conditions of economic expansion and prosperity. This view was challenged, however, by Robert Lopez in the 1950s, who contended that in Italy the period of economic boom and greatest prosperity did not coincide with the Renaissance, but occurred in the thirteenth century – a century which is not famous for its artistic achievements. Thus Lopez formulated his thesis that 'hard times', with general insecurity and business pessimism, stimulated the unproductive investment in culture which produced important artistic developments such as the Italian Renaissance.[59] This concept, in turn, has recently been challenged by Peter Burke and Arnold Esch, who have demonstrated that the fifteenth century was a period of recovery for the Italian economy, although this economic growth influenced the arts only indirectly.[60] In addition, Wilfried Brulez has recently stressed the small proportion of investments in art compared with investment in the economy as a whole.[61]

That is why I did not focus on the investment aspect of buying and commissioning art, because it has been shown to be only of marginal importance. I also realise that other reasons for the decline of the market of paintings have to be taken into account. Changes in the fashion of interior decoration are one of the most important. For reasons that are not yet very clear – Jan de Vries points to a decline in wealth[62] – the taste for decorative textiles and wallpaper grew after the seventeenth century, leaving less wall-space for paintings, and other objects became popular for interior decoration, in particular chinaware.[63]

I have tried to find similarities in market behaviour in different countries. Indeed, Dutch painting in the Golden Age was characterised by essentially the same factors which distinguished Dutch trade and industry: a commercial attitude (like the commercialisation of agriculture), and a tendency towards the introduction of technical innovations (like the herring fisheries, and the textile and shipbuilding industries).[64] Competition and innovation kept the growth of the economy and the rise of seventeenth-century Dutch painting alive, and the growing economy supplied most of the population with the means to play active roles as consumers in the art market. When competition between the different small artistic communities like in Alkmaar, Haarlem, and Delft came to an end and the art market – like other markets – became saturated at the end of the seventeenth century, artistic production stagnated, because the export of paintings offered no real alternative.

Notes

I would like to thank Marten Jan Bok for his most helpful suggestions

1. De Boer, *The Diary*, p. 39.
2. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte*, pp. 502ff.
3. Temple, *The Travels*, p. 70.
4. De Vries, 'Art history'; Bok, 'De organisatie'.
5. Montais, 'Estimates', p. 70; Van der Woude, 'De schilderijenproduktie', pp. 286–97.
6. De Vries, 'Art history', p. 264; Bok, *Vraag en aanbod*.
7. Montias, *Artists*, table 8.3; Montias, 'Works', table 3.
8. Fock, 'Kunstbezit', p. 6.
9. Montias, 'Cost', p. 462.
10. See North, *Kunst*, ch. 2, and the chapter by Karel Davids in this volume.
11. Montias, 'Costs', pp. 456–8.
12. De Vries, 'Art history', p. 265.
13. Montias, 'Cost', pp. 459ff.
14. See below, pp. 289–92.
15. Bok, 'Art lovers'; Loughman, 'Een stad'; De Marchi and Van Miegroet, 'Art'.
16. Montias, 'Estimates', p. 69; Bredius, *Künstler-Inventare*, II, pp. 457–520.
17. For this section see Montias, 'Art dealers', pp. 244–56.
18. Floerke, *Studien*, p. 19.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
20. Logan, *The 'Cabinett'*, pp. 77–85.
21. An overview on patronage supply Haak, *Hollandse schilders*, pp. 36–60, and Bok and Schwartz, 'Schilderen', pp. 183–95. For the House of Orange see Fock, 'The Princes', pp. 466–75.

22. For the commissioned group portraits see Carasso-Kok and Levy-van Halm, *Schutters in Holland*.
23. See this chapter, tables 9.1 and 9.2.
24. Gaskell, 'Dou', pp. 15–61; Montias, *Vermeer*, pp. 246–55.
25. Bok and Schwartz, 'Schilderen', pp. 194ff.; see also De Marchi and Van Miegroet, 'Art', p. 15.
26. Fock, 'Kunstbezit', pp. 21ff.
27. Loughman, 'Een stad', p. 49.
28. Montias, 'Works', table 5; Loughman, 'Een stad', pp. 56–8.
29. I am not going to enter the discussion on *realisme* versus *schijnrealisme*. For an overview see Sluijter, 'Hoe realistisch is de Noordnederlandse schilderkunst?'.
30. Montias, 'Works', p. 347.
31. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte*, p. 496; Larsen, *Calvinist Economy*, pp. 59ff.
32. Bok, 'De organisatie', p. 38.
33. Montias, *Artists*, p. 181.
34. Price *Culture and Society*, pp. 119–69.
35. Montias, *Artists*, pp. 149–53; Bengtsson, *Studies*, pp. 34–6, 51; Bok, '"Nulla dies"', pp. 64ff.; Roethlisberger and Bok, *Abraham Bloemaert*, pp. 572–3; De Jager, 'Meesters'.
36. Hoogewerff, *De geschiedenis*.
37. Montias, *Artists*, p. 75.
38. Loughman, 'Een stad', p. 51; Bok, 'Art lovers'; Montias 'Works', pp. 344, 347.
39. De Marchi and Van Miegroet, 'Art'.
40. Montias, *Artists*, p. 100.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 119–33.
42. Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*. For Karel van Mander see Miedema, *Karel van Mander*. For his academy see Pevsner, *Die Geschichte*, pp. 90 ff.; Roethlisberger and Bok, *Abraham Bloemaert*, p. 571.
43. Miedema, 'Kunstschilders'.
44. Origo, *'Im Namen Gottes'*, pp. 85 ff.
45. Burke, *Die Renaissance*, pp. 110–14; Hochmann, *Peintres*, pp. 87–91; see also Goldthwaite, *Wealth*.
46. Thys, 'De Antwerpse luxenijverheid'; Montias, 'Le marché'.
47. Campbell, 'The art market'; Jacob, 'The marketing'.
48. Floerke, *Studien*, pp. 6ff.; Wilson, 'The participation'; Filipczak, *Picturing Art*.
49. Thys, 'De Antwerpse luxenijverheid'; Bok, 'De organisatie'; see also Burke, *Antwerp*, pp. 19–20.
50. Schmid, 'Kunst', p. 324; Irsigler and Schmid, 'Kunsthandwerker'.
51. Montias 'Cost', p. 463.

52. The explosion of auction sales was noticed by Dr Harry T. Mount (Oxford) in his unpublished dissertation, *The Reception*. I am indebted to Dr Mount for xeroxes of his dissertation
53. Christensen, 'Reformation'.
54. Pevsner, *Die Geschichte*, pp. 57–77.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–75.
56. Burke, *The Fabrication*, pp. 50ff.
57. Rosand, 'The crisis', p. 26; See also Hochmann, *Peintres*, pp. 58ff.
58. Burney, *A General History*, II, p. 584.
59. Lopez, 'Hard times'.
60. Burke, *Die Renaissance*, pp. 265–70; Esch, 'Über den Zusammenhang', pp. 219–21.
61. Brulez, *Cultuur*, p. 83.
62. De Vries, 'Art history', pp. 268ff.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
64. North, *Kunst*, pp. 157ff.

10

Access to credit and capital in the commercial centres of Europe

Peter Spufford

In this chapter I look first at some aspects of credit and capital in the United Provinces. I next try to see how many of these aspects were new to the Northern Netherlands of the seventeenth century, at the time that theirs was the dominant commercial economy of Europe, and how far these were transmitted to eighteenth-century England, and I then examine some of the features of the general social and political climate that most favoured capital accumulation.

Credit and capital in the Republic

In the seventeenth century there were already a wide range of ways of raising the speculative capital needed to start a commercial or industrial undertaking. These ranged from the smallest enterprises in which the capital was provided by single individuals, through simple partnerships set up for a single voyage, companies with shareholders bound together for twenty-year periods, through inter-locking groups of companies like those headed by Elias or later Louis Trip, up to the complex organisation of the vast United East India Company (the VOC). Furthermore since it was possible to sell all or part of a shareholding in a company without breaking it up, shareholders could realise their investment at any time, without needing to wait to do so at the end of a fixed time-span. The ability to dispose of