

## A world of deception and deceit? Jacob Campo Weyerman and the eighteenth-century art market\*

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INTRODUCTION The last decade has seen an intensified interest in the nature of and changes in the eighteenth-century art market, with a focus on the increasing occurrence of specialized art auctions.<sup>1</sup> Much attention has been devoted to the growing importance of art dealers in an emerging and booming secondhand market for paintings and other goods of fancy such as books, furniture or antiques. An unpublished manuscript by Jacob Campo Weyerman (1677–1747) preserved in the Brussels Royal Library provides a fascinating account of the inner workings of this rapidly developing market. It is entitled *Vertoogh over de apocrieffe schilders* (Remonstrance about apocryphal painters) and is dated 1730.<sup>2</sup> The title is misleading, since Weyerman's manuscript is primarily an anthology of anecdotes combined with a series of character sketches of a selection of art dealers active in the Low Countries at the time. In this sense it differs greatly from the more typical early modern compilations of painters' biographies. In fact, the unique

character of this essay is underscored by the fact that the *Vertoogh* explicitly scrutinizes the role of intermediaries in the art market of the Low Countries. Not counting the remarks Johan van Gool made on the topic in his *Nieuwe schouburg der Nederlantsche kunstschilders en schilderessen* in 1750 and his quarrel with the younger Gerard Hoet, the Brussels manuscript may be the only true literary account of that market in the Age of Enlightenment.<sup>3</sup> For that reason alone, it deserves more attention than it has so far received. In addition, Weyerman's preoccupation with dealers makes it a completely different type of historical source from the ones used for art market studies up until now (mainly probate inventories and sales catalogues).

Weyerman certainly writes at a most interesting time and place. The market for the visual arts in the Low Countries of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was at a turning point. The Dutch Golden Age had come to a close and old master paintings were

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, K. Jonckheere, *The auction of King William's paintings (1713): elite international art trade at the end of the Dutch Golden Age*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia 2008; E. Korthals Altes, *De verovering van de internationale kunstmarkt door de zeventiende-eeuwse schilderkunst*, Leiden 2003; D. Lyna and F. Vermeylen (eds.), *Art auctions and dealers: the dissemination of Netherlandish art during the Ancien Régime*, Turnhout 2009; D. Lyna, *The cultural construction of value: art auctions in Antwerp and Brussels (1700–1794)*, diss., University of Antwerp 2010; N. de Marchi and H. van Miegroet (eds.), *Mapping markets for paintings in Europe. 1450–1750*, Turnhout 2006; M.J. Bok, "New perspectives on eighteenth-century Dutch art production and collecting," in M. North (ed.), *Kunstsammeln und Geschmack im 18. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2002, pp. 47–53.; M.J. Bok, "'Schilderijen te koop': nieuwe marketingtechnieken op de Nederlandse kunstmarkt van de Gouden Eeuw," in M.J. Bok and M. Gosselink,

exhib. cat. *Thuis in de Gouden Eeuw: kleine meesterwerken uit de Sor Rusche collectie*, Rotterdam (Kunsthal) 2008, pp. 9–29.

<sup>2</sup> J.C. Weyerman, *Vertoogh over de apocrieffe schilders enz., Anno 1730* can be consulted in Brussels, Royal Library, Department of Manuscripts, inv. nr. II-1608. On this manuscript see P. Altena, "'Doldrifter monster verscheen ons noit aan de Maze': Jacob Campo Weyerman en Rotterdam," *Mededelingen van de Stichting Jacob Campo Weyerman* 10 (1987), nr. 3, pp. 74–89; T. Broos, *Tussen zwart en ultramarijn: de levens van schilders beschreven door Jacob Campo Weyerman (1677–1747)*, Amsterdam 1990, pp. 187–206; K. Jonckheere, "'Een zedig uijterlijk, en een fijn mans ijthangbord, is het merk van een modern vroom konstkoper': Jacob Campo Weyerman over de kunsthandel," in H. Pauwels et al. (eds.), *Liber memorialis Eric Duverger*, Wetteren 2006, pp. 75–90.

<sup>3</sup> L. de Vries, "De kunsthandel is zoo edel als eenigen, vermits 'er geen bedrog in is': de pamflettenstrijd tussen Gerard Hoet en Johan van Gool," *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 4 (1985), pp. 1–16; Korthals Altes, op. cit. (note 1), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 58–59.

increasingly recycled through the retail system. New marketing techniques were applied to stimulate the demand for art, and efforts were made to increase exports. The printed auction catalogue and advertisements in newspapers announcing upcoming art sales in many ways revolutionized the market.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it is assumed that foreign dealers frequently traveled to Dutch and Flemish cities to buy up local art, hoping to resell these prized goods for a profit in Paris, London or at the German courts. Seen from this perspective, it can be argued that this time period witnessed the beginnings of a more integrated European art market. The Low Countries were at the heart of these developments, and their art centers played a pioneering role in introducing innovations in the marketing of art, such as specialized art auctions.<sup>5</sup> We therefore intend to explore Weyerman's writings in search of meaningful and previously unrecognized observations concerning the state of the art market. For this purpose, we will use the Brussels manuscript and a few related sources to elucidate and contextualize the expanding role of intermediaries and the impact they may have had on the dissemination and validation of Dutch and Flemish art, and on the growing importance of connoisseurship.

JACOB CAMPO WEYERMAN AND THE BRUSSELS MANUSCRIPT Jacob Campo Weyerman was born in 1677 and died after a long and eventful life as a convict in The Hague in 1747.<sup>6</sup> Primarily a painter in the early stages of his career, he traveled through northern Europe in search of fame and fortune by painting flower pieces for wealthy collectors. Not much of his art has survived, but a flower still life in the Fitzwilliam Museum appears to be a signature piece (fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> However, he was unable to make a living from painting, and attempted to supplement his income by occasionally dealing in works of



1 Jacob Campo Weyerman, *Vase of flowers*. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum

art.<sup>8</sup> Among art historians today, he is renowned not for his painting or his commerce but for his authorship of the four-volume *De levens-beschryvingen der Nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen* of 1729. While it draws heavily on Houbraken's *Groote schouburgh*, it remains a significant contribution to the rich tradition of artists' biographies in the Low Countries.<sup>9</sup> Literary historians are mostly appreciative of his well-written and idiosyncratic novels and plays, and he is further remembered as a penny-a-line author of countless pamphlets.

A recently discovered miniature portrait dating from 1724 shows a jolly Weyerman, seemingly full of life (fig. 2).<sup>10</sup> The miniature painted by Cornelis Troost (1696-1750) projects the public image of the *bon vivant*,

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> For a biography of Weyerman see Broos, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 1-42. See also E. Groenenboom-Draai, *De Rotterdamse woelreus: De Rotterdamse Hermes (1720-1721) van Jacob Campo Weyerman*, Amsterdam 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Campo Weyerman, *A vase of flowers*, canvas, 56.8 × 48.9 cm. Cambridge, The Fitzwilliam Museum, inv. nr. PD.95-1973.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Weyerman owned and dealt in works by David Teniers (1610-90), Gonzales Coques (c. 1615-84) and Cornelis van Poelenburch (1594-1664) among others; see Broos, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 191-92.

<sup>9</sup> On Houbraken see H.J. Horn, *The Golden Age revisited: Arnold Houbraken's great theatre of Netherlandish painters and painters*, 2 vols., Doornspijk 2000; B. Cornelis, "Arnold Houbraken's *Groote schouburgh* and the canon of seventeenth-century Dutch painting," *Simiolus* 26 (1998), pp. 144-61. On Weyerman and the tradition of artists' biographies see especially Broos, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 75-120.

<sup>10</sup> E. Mai, S. Paarlberg and G.J.M. Weber (eds.), exhib. cat. *Vom Adel der Malerei: Holland um 1700*, Cologne (Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and Fondation Corboud), Dordrecht (Dordrechts Museum) & Kassel (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister) 2006, pp. 474-75, nr. 80.



2 Cornelis Troost, *Jacob Campo Weyerman*, 1724.  
Private collection

and the perception may have matched reality, since Weyerman was indeed a public figure who professed to enjoy life. He traveled widely within and outside the Low Countries, but if there was any town he could have called home it was Breda. He grew up in this frontier town, and his mother continued to live there after Jacob embarked on his peregrinations.<sup>11</sup> At set times, he would return to his adopted home town. Breda is interesting because it is situated precisely at the crossroads of the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Netherlands, the countries where Weyerman spent most of his time. It is no surprise, then, that his perspective and outlook were not confined to the Dutch Republic; he discusses artists and dealers from both sides of the frontier. The overwhelming majority of the art dealers mentioned in his manuscript lived in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, Rotterdam, Amsterdam or The Hague. His Greater Netherlands perspective also emanates from the list of painters whose works are mentioned in the *Vertoogh* (see the Appendix).

The Brussels manuscript is preserved in the manuscripts department of the Royal Library in Brussels. It numbers 56 folios and is in relatively good condition. None of the pages have faded, which allows for clear and easy reading. Weyerman made economical use of every space, and his swift handwriting reveals the ease of a prolific author. The handwriting is confident and steady, and shows no hesitation in confiding the author's thoughts to the pages (fig. 3). The greater part of the text is exclusively about art dealers but, between fols.

15r and 23r, Weyerman embarks on a lengthy excursion on some minor Dutch painters.<sup>12</sup> This section of the manuscript is of no importance for our examination of intermediaries in the art market.

It is not clear why this text was never published. We do know that Weyerman had run into financial difficulties in the late 1720s, and that his fortunes and credibility had started to wane to the extent that he had to leave Amsterdam and take refuge in Vianen.<sup>13</sup> Publishers were in all likelihood shying away from an author who was increasingly being labeled as subversive. The fact that the manuscript explicitly mentions the names of crooked dealers and incompetent collectors (as perceived by Weyerman) probably added insult to injury, leaving any publisher open to charges of libel. Weyerman's reputation as a publicist had come under serious scrutiny, and clearly no publisher wanted to take a chance with such a loose cannon.

Nevertheless, the existence of this important document did not go entirely unnoticed. Ton Broos was the first and so far the only author to quote extensively from it.<sup>14</sup> He used the *Vertoogh over de apocrieffe schilders* primarily to complement his study on *De levensbeschrijvingen der Nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen*, but he also devoted a chapter to Weyerman's views on the marketing of art, primarily by relating telling anecdotes. He did not, however, draw conclusions as to the nature and functioning of the art market in general, which is our goal.

CONTEXT: ART AUCTIONS AND AN EXPANDING SECOND-HAND MARKET It is a commonplace to point out that Weyerman's literary style is satirical—even cynical—and that the factual evidence he provides needs to be treated with caution.<sup>15</sup> His wry sense of humor notwithstanding, he was in many respects ideally positioned to describe the nature and functioning of the art market in the early eighteenth century. When he discusses the names of the artists whose works are in demand on the contemporary market, it is striking that with the exception of the elder Gerard Hoet, who died in 1733,

<sup>11</sup> Broos, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 2–26.

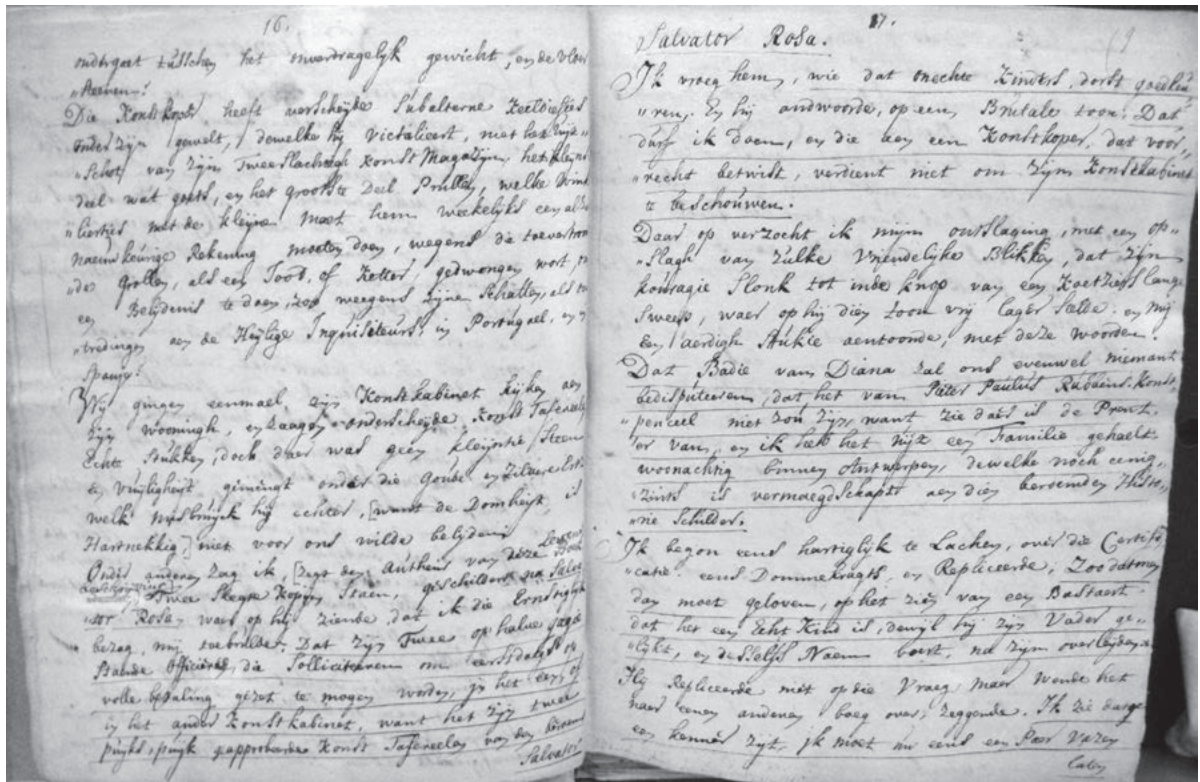
<sup>12</sup> Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fols. 15v–16r. The minor painters mentioned in this section are Tens, Baardstro, Baldi, Micharius, van der Loch, and Kuningham.

<sup>13</sup> This is probably why the final volume of his *Levens-be-*

*schrijvingen* was not printed during his lifetime. It was eventually published posthumously in 1769; see Broos, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 43–62.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 187–206.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., *passim*.



3 Sample page from Weyerman's *Vertoogh*. Brussels, Royal Library

it involves dead painters from the Flemish and Dutch golden ages. For instance, when Weyerman refers to the “most famous artists” (“alderberugstte konstenaers”) he lists no living artists at all. This, of course, underscores the assumption that the market for paintings in Weyerman’s day was primarily a secondhand one. This marked a departure from the seventeenth century, when living painters were in high demand. Weyerman’s manuscript thus anticipates Johan van Gool’s views on the contemporary art market in the 1750s and his frustrations about the high prices paid for old masters at a time when living artists could barely make ends meet.<sup>16</sup> While van Gool may have exaggerated the lamentable state of the artists’ labor market in the mid-eighteenth century, he correctly

<sup>16</sup> De Vries, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 1–16.

<sup>17</sup> Broos, op. cit. (note 2), p. 189. Van der Werff’s paintings fetched particularly high prices. His ‘Lot’s bloedschande’ (Lot’s incest) sold for 4,200 guilders, and was bought by Griffier Fagel of The Hague. Another major sale that Weyerman attended in Rotterdam was that of the collection of Jacques Meyers. Weyer-

pointed out that the art market held Golden Age artists in much higher esteem.

In his essay, Weyerman pointed to the rise of art auctions and the further internationalization of the market. In fact, he himself attended several public sales and reported on them. For instance, he was present at the auction of the splendid collection of Adriaan Paets in 1713 in Rotterdam, which included valuable Italian works and six cabinet pieces by Adriaen van der Werff (1659–1722).<sup>17</sup> As a very perceptive witness, Weyerman clearly understood the significance of printed inventories of art collections, auction catalogues and advertisements for upcoming sales in newspapers, and how these innovations revolutionized the marketing of art in early

man scholars have plausibly identified the anonymous dealer and collector mentioned in *De Waarheit* as Jacques Meyers, another Rotterdam merchant who was quite familiar to Weyerman. On the Paets auction, Jacques Meyers and art dealing and collecting in Rotterdam see J.G. van Gelder, “Het kabinet van de Heer Jaques Meyers,” *Rotterdams Jaarboekje* 1974, pp. 167–83.

modern times.<sup>18</sup> Even though catalogues and the accompanying advertisements had only been introduced in Weyerman's lifetime, both were used to excess by the art dealers discussed in the *Vertoogh*. "The newspaper advertisement is his daily bread, and thus he can enjoy a good midday meal with the reading of a catalogue of a sale of paintings, just like a poor student who dines on the philosophy of Aristotle."<sup>19</sup>

The dissemination of printed catalogues stimulated further internationalization of the art market, a point which has been emphasized in the recent literature. What we learn from Weyerman is how catalogues featuring upcoming sales were distributed in inns to travelers coming from various cities in the British Isles, and to passenger ships arriving in the port of Rotterdam.<sup>20</sup> Printed catalogues were thus efficiently used for localized advertising in order to boost event awareness and broaden the market. Not surprisingly, Weyerman stresses the negative aspects of these newly developed marketing tools, but through his disgust we can catch a glimpse of the impact these printed sources had on collecting and dealing in the early eighteenth century. Individuals not accustomed to art were told what auctions might have in store for them, enticing them to take up collecting.

Weyerman did not oppose this new phenomenon as such. What he lamented was that instead of looking at the paintings themselves, art dealers and collectors trusted the names and attributions mentioned in these sales catalogues. For dealers this was certainly shameful, according to Weyerman. They regarded the catalogues as if they were distinguished treatises by themselves instead of looking at the works of art. Indeed, although catalogues in early eighteenth-century Holland seem to

be mere lists with little information on painters or paintings, they do give interesting indications about quality and authenticity.<sup>21</sup>

Research on extant auction catalogues and commercial documents indicates that the branding of artists had been a common practice since the late seventeenth century, with sellers hoping to capitalize on the name of an artist. The frequent occurrence of brand names such as "Brouwerkens," "Tenierskens" and so forth in commercial documents indicates that branding was employed as a marketing strategy, well before Weyerman commented on it.<sup>22</sup> He was not alone in his views on abuses that went hand in hand with branding practices and false attributions. For instance, the columnist Justus van Effen (1684-1735) wrote the following barely four years after the *Vertoogh*: "If one wishes to go by the names, a Grasbeek, a Spreeuw stand for Brouwer or Dou. Van Harp, although a creditable artist, is christened Teniers because people have rarely seen anything of his here. And so they toy with them like Jack Pudding with his hat, which he manages to turn into a crown one minute and a miter the next."<sup>23</sup>

This brings us to Weyerman's second criticism of printed catalogues, namely that people implicitly started to consider them as carrying a 'quality label.' For instance, in his account of a trick played by the English art dealer Wats, Weyerman relates that this man's printed catalogues were distributed in harbors and inns, especially in places where tourists arrived or stayed.<sup>24</sup> Prompted by the lure of a seemingly fabulous collection, these ignorant *curiosi* would then visit Wats's collection. When they were subsequently told about all the other noblemen who had come and visited the merchant's collection, the naive youngsters trustfully bought some of the "rubbish"

<sup>18</sup> On the importance of the introduction of printed auction catalogues see Jonckheere, *op. cit.* (note 1), esp. pp. 61-74; D. Lyna and F. Vermeulen, "Rubens for sale: art auctions in Antwerp during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," in Lyna *et al.* *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 139-54.

<sup>19</sup> Weyerman, *op. cit.* (note 2), fol. 3v: "De advertisement Courant is zijn Dagelijks Broodt, en hij kan alzoo wel een goed middagmael houden op de Leesing eener catalogus van een verkoop van Schilderijen, als een arm student die avondmaelt op de wijs-begeerte van Aristoteles;" Lyna, *op. cit.* (note 1), pp. 151-90.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 41r.

<sup>21</sup> K. Jonckheere, "Supply and demand: some notes on the economy of seventeenth-century connoisseurship," in K. Jonck-

heere and A. Tummers (eds.), *Art market and connoisseurship: a closer look at paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and their contemporaries*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 69-95.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> As quoted in A.W. Stellwagen, *J. van Effen en de Hollandse spectator: eene bloemlezing van een en tachtig vertoogen*, Groningen 1889, pp. 405-06: "Wil men zig naar de namen richten, een Graasbeek, een Spreeuw staan voor Brouwer of Douw geboekt. Van Harp, schoon een verdienstig kunstenaar, wordt, omdat men hier Zelden iets van hem gezien heeft, Teniers gedoopt. En dus spelen ze'er mee als jan potage met zyn muts, daar hy nu een kroon en dan een myter weet toe te stellen." See also Lyna, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 112.

<sup>24</sup> Weyerman, *op. cit.* (note 2), fols. 41r-42r.

he had to offer. Young and inexperienced noblemen, in particular, were among Wats's victims. Weyerman blames him for creating a sort of aura around his stock by presenting it as a collection with a printed inventory, and augmenting the value of his art by boasting of all the honorable art lovers he had received over the years. He derived social capital from a printed catalogue and an (imaginary) list of viewers, and subsequently used it as a means to increase the artistic and financial standing of his collection of art and curiosities; truly a vicious scheme in Weyerman's eyes. The interest of wealthy connoisseurs could enhance the value of a collection, as has been argued elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> At a time when printed sales and collection catalogues were still relatively rare, it seems that such publications were themselves enhancing the alleged value of a collection. No wonder that in the eighteenth-century Netherlands and France, printed catalogues became a crucial instrument in the marketing of art, and that, up until the present day, art dealers and auction houses invest a great deal in them.

AGENTS: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ART DEALERS IN A WORLD OF DECEIT AND DECEPTION Jacob Campo Weyerman starts his exposé with a derogatory and intensely vicious description of the character of those who call themselves "konstkopers" (literally buyers of art, here used in the sense of art dealers).<sup>26</sup> His description of the "character of an art buyer" is a three-page tirade of which the following paragraphs are merely the highlights. "An art buyer is a fellow who is far too wise to undergo martyrdom for religion, but who on the other hand sacrifices his life and salvation in the defense of a deceptive artistic copy.... The face or countenance of an art buyer is as recognizable among the uninterested

lovers of art at a sale of paintings as a comet or tail-star is recognizable in the firmament of the heavens from among the other pentagonal sky-lamps, for his pale, furrowed and tormented brow usually looks like an interest-rate table calculated at fifty percent."<sup>27</sup> The tone is set and Weyerman never fails throughout the text to point to the incompetence of would-be art dealers. He blames them not just for their inability to distinguish between an original and a copy or for their name fetishism, but above all for their fraudulent nature. They were "Judas to betray all those painters with imitation copies" ("Judas, alle die schilders te verraeden, door nageboodste Kopijen").

Inundated by all this name calling and offensiveness, one almost misses the few paragraphs in which Weyerman mentions the rare instances where he has come across trustworthy and honorable art dealers. The Rotterdammer Jacob van Dam, for instance, who ran a fashionable inn in Hoogstraat, also sold works of art to the "many honorable merchants, distinguished gentlemen and decent citizens" who frequented his establishment.<sup>28</sup> He was a novice art lover but Weyerman praises the way he ventured to become a connoisseur and trustworthy dealer. He is the proverbial exception to the rule. "He listened so attentively to the discourses on painting and studied paintings so intently that he began to gain some understanding of them, and finally arrived at the point where he could see the good essences shine through the bad and went straight to them, and within a short while he had become quite a good connoisseur."<sup>29</sup>

Who, then, is qualified to deal in works of art, according to Weyerman? Is the author of the same mind as van Gool in that it must be left to the artists themselves?<sup>30</sup> This is often implied in Weyerman's words, but

<sup>25</sup> Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> See Broos, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 187–206; Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 2), pp. 75–90.

<sup>27</sup> Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fols. 1v–2r: "Een Konst koper is een karel die al te wijs is om ooit het Marteldom te ondergaen voor den godsdienst, doch die aen den andere kant zijn Leeven, en zaligheid opoffert aen de verdedegingh van een Bedriegelijke Konstkoepij.... Het gezicht of de Tronie van een Konst koper is zoo kenbaer op een verkoping van Schilderijen uijt de ongeinteresseerde Konstliefhebbers, als een komeet, of staartstar, aen het uijtspansel des Hemels kenbaer is uijt de andere vijfhoekige Luchtlampen, want zijn bleek gerimpelt en beplaegt voorhoofd, ziet er doorgaens uijt, als een Tafel van Inrest, opgerekent tegens vijftig per cent."

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 51r: "...veele brave Koopluyde deftige Heeren, en Fatzoenlijke Borgers."

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 51v: "...hij Luijsterde zoo vlijtiglyk na de Dis koersen over de schilder konst, en Bestudeerde schilderijen zoo naerstiglyk, dat hij 'er eenig begrip voor begon te krijgen, en eijndelyk zoo ver geraakte, dat hij het goede uijt het kwade effenties kon zien Doorstralen, en daar op ging hij Recht toe regt aen en hij wierdt binnen een korte Tijt een Tamelyk goed Konstkenner." Weyerman added that there was no one to be found who could accuse van Dam of even the slightest wrongdoing in his activities as a dealer.

<sup>30</sup> E. Duverger, "Réflexions sur le commerce d'art au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle," in G. Kauffman (ed.), *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des abendlandes*, 3 vols., Berlin 1967, vol. 3, p. 69. The discussion

not articulated explicitly. What does emanate from the Brussels manuscript is that he makes a clear distinction between the “verstandige konstkenners” (knowledgeable connoisseurs) and the crooks, the art dealers whom he characterized so viciously. To fully understand the role of intermediaries in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century art market it is therefore important to delve deeper into this division made by Weyerman, for here he explains how the bulk of the art dealers gained a reputation for being untrustworthy.

Weyerman counted many renowned art dealers of the early eighteenth century among the villains. Some telling examples will suffice to illustrate the wrath of his pen. The first to have his reputation shattered was Jacob Bart, a dealer in The Hague who dealt in paintings and engravings, in addition to delftware and flowers. “That crab from Zeeland had a threefold livelihood: art, porcelain buyer and florist, yet whereas he had once heard that an uneven number was pleasing to God and aimed for a lower position he added the punishable profession of falsifier of art or counterfeiter of paintings, doing nothing more than begetting bastard copies on genuine pictures which he fobbed off on the art-loving world as so many genuine works by the Chevalier van der Werff, Gerard Lairesse, Dou, Mieris, J. Steen, Hoet, Mignon, Albani and others, which he managed to dispose of in the following way. He sent an accomplice with those copies to this or the other art-loving gentleman who was just starting to put together a cabinet of paintings

about the most capable connoisseur had already been going on for a century in the Netherlands. See A. Tummers, *The fingerprint of an old master: on connoisseurship of seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish paintings*, diss. University of Amsterdam 2009.

31 Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 3: “Die Zeeuwsche Krab, had een Drievoudige Kostwinning, Konst, Porcelijn koper en Bloemist, doch dewijl hij eens had gehoord, dat het oneven getal gode aengenaem was, en hij op een lager plaets Doelde, voegde hij er het Strafbaer beroep bij van Konstvervalscher of valsche munter in Schilderijen, dewijl hij nergens anders op toeleij, als om de Echte KonstTafereelen te beswangeren door onegte Kopijen, dewelke hij dan de Konstlievende wereldt aensmeerde, als soo veele Echte Tafereelen van den Ridder vander werff, gerard lairis, Dou, Miris, J. Steen, Hoedt, Mignon, Albana, en meer andere, dewelke hij op de volgende wijze wist te debiteeren. Hij vaardigde een vertrouwen met die Kopijen af, na deze of geene Konstlievende Heeren, die eerst begonnen een Kabinet van Schilderijen op te regten of te hooij, en te gras een stukie te kopen. Die Heeren die noch geene ooggen hadden, waar op zij konde betrouwen, bediende zich dan van de Brillglazen van onsen Bart (die wij slegts zoo zullen noemen, tot dat zijn naem

by buying a piece from time to time. Those gentlemen, not yet having eyes they could trust, then made use of the spectacles of our Bart (whom we shall only call thus until his name comes to mind) and kindly requested him to come to their house or place of residence because they had to consult him about some pictures, and so forth.”<sup>31</sup>

This harsh opening paragraph is followed by several pages describing Bart’s pernicious activities.<sup>32</sup> Weyerman’s eloquence in lambasting him and other dealers at times defies all description. Another target is the “churlish, ruthless art buyer” (“lompe genaedeleze konstkoper”) Vervoort from Brussels, whom he had already discussed in his *magnum opus*, the *Levens-beschryvingen*. “A certain art buyer called Vervoort, who being a coachman had all the painters dancing on the long whip of poverty. Hanging in the house of this Vervoort we have seen very beautiful Floras, Pomonas and other nymphs and woodland priestesses of the wine god, furnished with flowers, fruit and herbs by N. van der Burgt, and with merry landscape scenes.... That strangler had succeeded in extorting those works of art from the needy painter for next to nothing.”<sup>33</sup>

Given his predilection for collecting and dealing in mythological scenes, this character can conceivably be identified with Gerard Vervoort, who bought a *Venus and Adonis* attributed to Rubens from Gillis van der Vennen in 1709.<sup>34</sup> Weyerman relates that he visited Vervoort’s collection in Brussels, which he describes as “the smallest part being some that are quite good and the

ons invalt) en lieten hem vriendelijk verzoeken, om eens aen hun huijs, of woonplaats te willen komen, dewijl zij noodzakelijk met hem over eenige KonstTafereelen moesten Raedplegen, en zoo voortz.”

32 Van Gool was critical about Bart as well. See Korthals Altes, op. cit. (note 1), p. 39.

33 J.C. Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen der Nederlandse konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen*, 4 vols., The Hague & Dordrecht 1729-69, vol. 4, p. 89: “... een zeker konstkoper genaamt Vervoort, die een koetsiersjongen zynde, alle de schilders op het muziek van de lange zweep der armoede deed danssen. Wy hebben ten huize van dien Vervoort, zeer schone Floras, Pomonas en andere Nimphen en Bospapinnen des Wyngods zien hangen, gestoffeert met bloemen, vruchten en kruiden by N. Vander Burgt, en met vroyke Landschaps-gezigten.... Die konststukken had dien keelbeul den behoeftegen konstschilder weten af te knypen voor een appel of ey.”

34 E. Duverger, *Documents concernant le commerce d'art de Francisco-Jacomo Van Den Berghe et Gillis Van Der Vennen de Gand avec la Hollande et la France pendant les premières décades du XVIIIe siècle*, Wetteren 2004, pp. 48, 71-72, 81.

greatest part rubbish.”<sup>35</sup> He was appalled by the large number of poor copies, and allegedly burst out laughing when Vervoort presented him with a *Diana bathing* which he said was by Rubens. The dealer showed him an engraving of the composition to support the authenticity of the painting, which left Weyerman even more exasperated and infuriated.<sup>36</sup>

Weyerman goes on to discuss another Brussels art dealer called Karel Verbeij who, according to him, was the biggest scoundrel ever.<sup>37</sup> Although nothing is known about him, he seems to have been an interesting figure, for he used a network of “art mongers” (“kleijne onderkonstkopers”) or agents who scoured the market on his behalf. Weyerman is suggesting here that Verbeij engaged in some form of outsourcing, a phenomenon in the eighteenth-century art market of which scarcely anything is known. Sadly, Weyerman does not continue his description of Verbeij’s working methods either.

After a short intermezzo on mediocre painters, more untruthful dealers are made to run the gauntlet. Among them a certain Lambert, whom he nicknamed Pain et Vin, and a fellow called Maes. Lambert “Pain et Vin” was probably Lambert van der Truyn, the former assistant of the wine merchants and agents Jacob and Walter Senserf, and indeed an art dealer in his own right. The well-known Gillis van der Vennen, Quirijn van Biesum and Philips van Dyck and the princely agents Balthasar Pahmann, van Haeften, du Buesson, and Jacob Carpi are mentioned as well.<sup>38</sup> Several of these individuals attract our attention since we can rely on other archival evidence to learn more about their activities. Many of them were highly regarded and trustworthy art dealers, in sharp contrast to Weyerman’s nasty comments. With the exception of Carpi, they were all active on the

high-end market, where paintings went for at least 100 guilders.<sup>39</sup> Only du Buesson remains a kind of mystery, since he could not be identified.<sup>40</sup>

If they were indeed important art dealers, what had they done to earn Weyerman’s scorn, and is there any basis to his allegations? Why did he—without exception—include them in the almost endless list of despicable art dealers? Jacob Bart, Balthasar Pahmann and van Haeften, among others, all appear to have been renowned dealers or agents. Bart was trusted by Adriaen Bout, one of The Hague’s foremost gentleman-dealers in the early eighteenth century. Pahmann and van Haeften were successful agents for the dukes of Mecklenburg.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, van der Vennen and van den Berghe were probably two of the most important international dealers in the eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup> None of the evidence suggests that they had paintings copied to be sold as originals, nor did they trick ignorant art lovers into buying junk. So what triggered Weyerman’s strong aversion to these dealers in particular?

His reasoning is quite complex and varies with the malicious anecdotes he tells, but the recurring complaint seems to be that these intermediaries were fundamentally untrustworthy. Either they deceived the untrained buyer’s eyes, or they swindled them by providing false provenances. Jacob Bart, for instance, was dishonest for misleading gentlemen collectors whose judgment was not yet good enough to discern true from false (“gentlemen not yet having eyes they could trust”).<sup>43</sup> Of a similar nature was the trick played by Lambert “Pain et Vin” van der Truyn.<sup>44</sup> He made sure that the paintings he wanted to sell were packed. He never opened the crates and told the eager art lovers that they were about to be sent to wealthy collectors in Paris or elsewhere.<sup>45</sup>

35 Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 8: “...het kleinste deel wat goeds, en het grootste deel prullen.”

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., fol. 10v; A man called Verbeijst bought several paintings at the Quirijn van Biesum sale in Rotterdam in 1719. See Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), p. 241.

38 Information about these individuals can be found in Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 154, 288, 290, 300–30, 309; Korthals Altes, op. cit. (note 1), *passim*; Duverger, op. cit. (note 34), *passim*.

39 For the average prices they paid see Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 241–42.

40 He might be the itinerant artist Jean Baptiste Gayot Dubuisson (Paris 1660–Warsaw 1730/35).

41 Pahmann’s as yet unpublished correspondence with the dukes of Mecklenburg is preserved in Schwerin, Staatsarchiv, Hofstaatsachen, Kunstsammlungen, Angebote und Erwerbungen 110, correspondence Balthasar Pahmann, 1733–1748; Schwerin, Staatsarchiv, Hofstaatsachen, Kunstsammlungen, Angebote und Erwerbungen 65, correspondence Van Haeften — Philips van Dijk, 1738–39.

42 Duverger, op. cit. (note 34), *passim*; Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 144–48.

43 Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 3v.

44 Van der Truyn was also important for the dispersal of paintings by Adriaen van der Werff to England and France. See B. Gaechtgens, *Adriaen van der Werff. 1659–1722*, Munich 1987.

45 Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), *passim*.



However, if they were willing to seize the moment, he would leave some of the “precious” pictures with them.

Verbeij, the other Brussels dealer was even more audacious. He solicited several “common folk” whom he persuaded to hang his bad paintings in the darkest parts of their houses. When foreigners visited him at home and asked for work by the best masters, he took them to these houses and told them that the owners were old nobility who had fallen on hard times, adding that they still owned a few good but slightly dirty paintings by some of the best old masters: Rubens, Bruegel, van Dyck, and Rembrandt. Naive as they were, in Weyerman’s view, most art lovers trusted Verbeij and believed that they were being given a unique opportunity to pick up a masterpiece. Here again, information relative to provenance was misused and manipulated by the deceitful dealer.<sup>46</sup> One is reminded of the above-mentioned Brussels dealer Vervoort, who produced an engraving in a fraudulent attempt to demonstrate the authenticity of a Rubens painting.

The odd thing about Weyerman’s anecdotes is that he never seems to blame the buyers—mostly wealthy merchants, noblemen and princes—who were misled by the dealers he so vividly describes. Here he touched upon one of the most crucial aspects of art dealing in the early modern era: the sharing of information between dealers and buyers, especially on provenance. As has been argued elsewhere, the art market and connoisseurship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with their significant information asymmetries, were hugely dependent on the trustworthiness of the dealers and agents involved.<sup>47</sup> In the eighteenth century, there were no museums where people could go and study art, nor were there full-color prints or books. If art lovers wanted to acquire the skills to distinguish among eminent, deceased masters, they were obliged to visit cabinets of fellow art lovers or they had to make use of black-and-white prints or drawings. Under such circumstances, it was hardly possible to learn how to discern the hand of different old masters, certainly if his or her paintings were rare in the Low Countries at the time. As a result,

people were often completely dependent on the little information they had about the provenance or the current attribution of the painting. A painting with a solid provenance and an unchallenged attribution was often the foundation on which to build other attributions. Withholding information or lying about art was the ultimate sin, because it made the foundations of connoisseurship unreliable. The Duke of Chandos described this phenomenon in the catchy and often quoted phrase: “The picture ought to be as tenderly handled as a lady and the least question upon it casts a stain upon its reputation, which is hardly ever washed off.”<sup>48</sup> Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there are examples of people who lost their credibility in the art market, and subsequently their clientele by cheating, the case of Gerrit van Uylenburgh being one of the most famous.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout his manuscript, Weyerman for all intents and purposes blames dishonest art dealers for spreading misleading information about the paintings they sold. In search of easy profits, they damaged the one thing that was crucial in dealing in art in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: trust and accurate information. If one could not rely on accurate information, one simply could not become a good judge of art. Having at one’s disposal original paintings with credible provenances painted by genuine artists was essential for the training of a connoisseur. That is why Weyerman never blames collectors for being naive. “Knowledgeable connoisseurs” were always dependent on information provided by the selling party. In other words, false attributions, bogus information, and especially copies (when sold as originals) undermined the very foundations of the art market. For attributions based on fallacies will in turn cause new problematic attributions. Hence, “good faith” or trust is crucial, as Weyerman posits in the opening sentences of his manuscript. It was not without reason, then, that he likened malevolent art dealers to Judas and other hypocrites.

When reading through the Brussels manuscript one gets a sense that Weyerman mainly mistrusted the social ambitions of art dealers. Art dealing, in his mind, had

<sup>46</sup> Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fols. 10v-11v.

<sup>47</sup> F. Vermeylen, “The art of the dealer: marketing paintings in early modern Antwerp,” in M. Keblusek (ed.), *Your humble servant: agents in early modern Europe, 1500-1800*, Leiden 2006, pp. 109-20; Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 21), pp. 69-95.

<sup>48</sup> San Marino, Huntington Library, Brydges Papers, inv.

nr. ST 57, vol. 13, letter from James Brydges to Henry Davenport, 22 September 1716, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> F. Lammertse and J. van der Veen, exhib. cat. *Uylenburgh & zoon: kunst en commercie van Rembrandt tot De Lairese 1625-1675*, Amsterdam (Museum het Rembrandthuis) 2006, pp. 79-102.

become a profession for parvenus or worse, would-be nouveaux riches. They abused the noble profession of art to make a quick profit, climb the social ladder and join the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Weyerman mocks their emulation of eighteenth-century elitist behavior, which he associates (among other things) with the pastime of visiting coffee-houses. “If he lives in a mercantile city the art scoundrel runs off daily to the bourse and on Fridays to the auction house or the coffee-house at a pacing gallop, although he has as much to do there as with his counterparts, apart from satisfying his curiosity about such matters, of which he understands as little as a Great Dane understands Arabic.”<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, Weyerman goes out of his way to stress the humble background of the various dealers: Bart was a florist, van Biesum a baker, van Grondesteijn a turf-carrier and later on gatekeeper, Verbeij a soldier, Vervoort a coachman, and so on.<sup>51</sup> Despite his misgivings, Weyerman was very perceptive in commenting on a new trend in the art market. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century art dealers had mainly been painters or successful merchants, while at the time of Weyerman’s writing individuals from a more diverse and modest milieu entered the market.<sup>52</sup> Although they seemed to have no artistic background whatsoever, either as artists or as collectors, they obviously felt that they could partake in a booming market. The social barriers were being breached and the neophytes were thriving. Weyerman was one of the first to observe this, but certainly not the last. Some 20 years later, in his *Antwoordt op den zoo genaemden Brief aen een Vrient*, Johan van Gool expressed the same grievances.<sup>53</sup> Even more outspoken than Weyerman, he complained about the many unreliable and ignorant people from ‘lower’ professions who had entered the art market and spoiled it for all decent dealers.

Weyerman’s criticism reveals how the new players

differed from traditional art dealers. They speculated at auctions and sold works of art as if they were plain commodities. They discussed prices rather than artistic qualities, and used painters’ names as if they were mere brands. They were not art lovers but speculators who would never be part of the “elect of St Luke’s commonwealth” (“verkoren volk van St Lukas gemeene best”). Dealing in the art of such “favorites at St Luke’s court” as Rubens, van Dyck, Rembrandt or Dou had become a common profession instead of a noble pastime.<sup>54</sup> Weyerman resented it, but he was fighting a losing battle. Holland’s wealthiest collectors and most foreign princes did not refrain from making use of the services of these challengers of the traditional supply chain.

THE MARKET: COPYING AND PRICING One of Weyerman’s chief observations is that the contemporary market for paintings had been flooded with copies which, he contends, had a pernicious effect on the value of works of art in general. He mainly blames the fraudulent dealers for stimulating copying practices, but makes some very relevant and insightful comments on the dynamics of the eighteenth-century art market and the attitudes towards copying practices as well. Certain dealers apparently went from door to door in search of prized originals, only to have them copied. “Other art-buying rogues do nothing but nose about with a lantern within the confines of Antwerp, Brussels etc.... in search of altarpieces painted by Rubens or A. van Dyck, as well as cabinet pieces by Velvet Brueghel, Dou, Mieris, Rembrandt and other such pictures by the most famous artists, having some of them copied and sending the copies to the art lovers instead of the bought originals.”<sup>55</sup>

Seemingly an innocent anecdote, this telling paragraph reveals more than anything that eighteenth-century dealers were well aware of the economic practice

<sup>50</sup> Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 2: “Zoo hij in een koopstadt woond, stapt den Konstplu[gger] Dagelijks na de Beurs, vrijdags Boelhuijs of Coffijhuijs op een Telgang-galop, alhoewel hij daer zoo véél te doen heeft als bij de tegenvoeters uijtgesondert in het voldoen zijner Nieuwsgierigheijt in soodanige saken, die hij zoo min begrijpt, als een Deensche Hond, de Arabische Tael verstaet.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., fols. 3r, 52v, 39, 10v and 8r. The information on these dealers’ backgrounds appears to be correct. See Jonckheere, op. cit. (note 1), *passim*, and Duverger, op. cit. (note 34), *passim*.

<sup>52</sup> J.M. Montias, “Art dealers in the seventeenth-century

Netherlands,” *Simiolus* 18 (1989), pp. 244–66.

<sup>53</sup> De Vries, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 1–16, esp. pp. 8–9.

<sup>54</sup> Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 2v: “...gunstelingen van St Lukas hofhouding.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., fol. 40r: “Andere Konstkopende guijten doen niet als binnen den omtrek van Antwerpen, Brussel enz. met Landtaren te lopen snuffelen,... om altaar Stukke door Rubbens, of A. van Dijck geschildert op te zoeken, benevens Cabinet stukies van den Fluweelen Breugel, Dou, Miris, Rembrandt en meer andere Konst Tafereelen der alderberugteste Konsteners Enige daar van te laten Copieeren En den KonstLiefhebbers in plaets van de gekogte origineele de copien ’er van toe te zenden!”

of discounting, whereby the future earnings of a valuable work of art were taken into account. An easy profit could be made if they held on to the original—the *principael*—and supplied the collectors with copies instead.<sup>56</sup> It goes without saying that this provided strong incentives toward copying. Neil de Marchi and Hans van Miegroet have demonstrated that this practice was not new. A similar strategy was already common practice in Antwerp in the seventeenth century to fuel the overwhelming demand for Flemish paintings in Catholic Europe and the New World.<sup>57</sup> Weyerman, like van Gool, singles out the Friday market in Antwerp, where many a studio was geared toward the serial reproduction of known compositions by old masters. He does not mince his words when he describes the painters at work there. “A tribe that knows precisely how to multiply paintings like a brood of piglets, which counterfeit bastard scenes are fobbed off on Polish and German gentlemen as so many original pieces by Peter Paul Rubens.”<sup>58</sup>

There is another occasion when Weyerman displays an extraordinary understanding of the economic pricing mechanism on the art market, and how copies can have an adverse impact on the going rate for an established artist like Jacob Jordaens. “To which multiplication we had to attribute the fall in value a few years ago, for rarity raises the price of all the pieces and abundance makes the market decline.”<sup>59</sup>

Weyerman precociously understood and articulated the notion of scarcity in the market. The higher the quantity of a product offered, the more the price will decline in a *ceteris paribus* situation. Especially in a

<sup>56</sup> It is worth pointing out that this practice may have triggered the ever-growing interest in authenticity in the seventeenth century. See J. van der Veen, “By his own hand: the valuation of autograph paintings in the seventeenth century,” in E. van de Wetering (ed.), *A corpus of Rembrandt paintings*, in progress, 1982–, vol. 4, Dordrecht 2005, pp. 3–44, and Tummers, op. cit. (note 30), pp. 81–121.

<sup>57</sup> N. de Marchi and H.J. van Miegroet, “Pricing invention: ‘originals,’ ‘copies’ and their relative value in seventeenth-century Netherlandish art markets,” in V. Ginsburgh and P.M. Menger (eds.), *Economics of the arts: selected essays*, Amsterdam 1996, pp. 27–70.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Broos, op. cit. (note 2), p. 204: “...een Geslacht dat het een konstje fix heeft om de Schilderyen te vermenigvuldigen, gelijk als een gebroed van jonge Biggen, welke onechte Bastaartafereelen dan aan de Heeren Polen en Germaanen worden aangesmeert, als zo veele oorspronkelycke stukken van Peter Paul Rubens.”

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192: “Aan welke meenigvuldigheyt wy het ver-

market that values authenticity, an abundance of copies can have a negative effect on price. Buyers become increasingly uneasy about the quality or the originality of the work of art, which causes a reluctance to pay high prices. In standard economics, this phenomenon is known as Akerlof’s model whereby the “bad drives out the good.”<sup>60</sup> The (suspected) presence of inferior copies lowers the expectations for all paintings, as well as the price.

CONNOISSEURSHIP: THE ART OF VIEWING Reading between the lines of his tirade against fraud and deceit, one comes across some interesting insights on early eighteenth-century connoisseurship and conservation practices. This is particularly relevant, since connoisseurship became ever more prevalent in the seventeenth century, and few sources provide us with clues as to how paintings were actually examined by art lovers. “And then an extremely fine wine was produced, as well as a pair of well-rinsed rummers or goblets, and after drinking to welcome Bart and to the health of the master of the house that piece, or those pieces, were brought into the room and placed upon chairs in order to be adopted or rejected by our Japanese hypocrite. After Bart had thrice dusted off his British spectacles with the end of his long cravat, and after he had thrice tried them on his nose and then placed them there so that they would not fall off in the first storm of exclamation, he bent his stiff marrowbones and fell to his knees before those dung-gods, whoresons (formed by his deception), in order to examine them closely.”<sup>61</sup>

val van derzelve waarde, eenige jaaren geleden, moeten toeschryven, want de Zeldzaamheyt verhoogt den prys aller zaaken, en de meenigvuldigheyt doet de markt daalen.”

<sup>60</sup> In a seminal article, George Akerlof used the market for used cars to illustrate the problems involved with quality uncertainty and asymmetric information; see G. Akerlof, “The market for ‘lemons’: quality uncertainty and the market mechanism,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 84 (1970) pp. 488–500.

<sup>61</sup> Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 4v: “Daer op kwam er een Fles Superfijne wijn voor den Dag, benevens een Paer welgespoelde Roomers, of kelken, en na het Drinken van de welkomst van Barts, en van mijn-Heers gezondheid, wiert dat Stukie, of wierden die Stukken, in de Kamer gebracht, en op stoelen geplaetst, om geadopteert, of verworpen te worden, bij stoelen Japanschen Schijnheijligh. Nadat Bart driewerff de Britsche Briglazen met het Eijnde van zijn Lange Das had afgeveegt, en na dat hij die ook driewerff op zijn Neus had beproeft, en toen vastgezet, om niet af te vallen in den eersten storm van Exclamatie, Boog hij zijn stramme mergpijpen, en



4 Adriaan de Lelie, *The art gallery of Jan Gildemeester Jansz*, 1794-95. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Such descriptions, which are extremely rare in other printed or archival sources, shed some light on how people behaved in front of paintings. They demonstrate that cabinet paintings on the subject seem to have been taken from life (fig. 4). Paintings were placed on chairs or easels and discussed intensely. Art lovers did indeed try to determine the authorship on the basis of mere visual evidence. How paintings were viewed was recently examined by Anna Tummers, but how they actually handled these objects remains something of a mystery.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, Weyerman was aware of the importance of light while examining panels and canvases. In his description of Karel Verbeij's scams, Weyerman repeatedly stresses the importance of good lighting when examining paintings.<sup>63</sup> He argues that without daylight it is hard to see if a painting was artificially aged.<sup>64</sup> Sophisticated fraud apparently already existed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries!

viel voor die Drekgoden, onegtelingen (gevormt door zijn Bedrog) neer op zijn Knien, om dezelve naeuwkeuriglijk te examinieren." "Japanese" is probably a reference to the fact that Bart lived in a house called The Three Japanese.

<sup>62</sup> Tummers, op. cit. (note 30).

<sup>63</sup> Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 10v.

However, this is not Weyerman's main focus. Every anecdote he tells in one way or another reflects his concerns with authenticity and the ways to determine it, and reveals a growing sensitivity to connoisseurship in general in the eighteenth-century art scene. He believes that the touch of the master is vital, and learning to discern ingenious brushstrokes from "coarse paintings" is what connoisseurship is all about. In doing so, he merely seems to be following in the footsteps of famous predecessors like Samuel van Hoogstraten, who called ignorant collectors "name buyers" ("naamkopers"), and who taught his readers the basics of connoisseurship. But unlike van Hoogstraten and other art theoreticians, Weyerman did not distinguish between different criteria of quality.<sup>65</sup> In his eyes, there were good paintings and bad paintings, knowledgeable connoisseurs and ignorant art dealers. There is no room for nuance in his reasoning. His outspoken opinions reveal much about his

<sup>64</sup> Here Weyerman pinpoints something that might be crucial in contemporary examinations of seventeenth-century paintings. If paintings were already being forged and artificially aged back then, one can only conclude that this kind of fraud was as sophisticated in the eighteenth century as it is now.

<sup>65</sup> Tummers, op. cit. (note 30), pp. 185-86.

own character, but in all likelihood they again point to the growing uncertainty about quality and authenticity discussed in the previous section. The mere fact that Weyerman felt the need to pick up his pen and write an essay on unworthy art dealers indicates that trustworthy connoisseurship in the market for old master paintings had become problematic in the early eighteenth century. Moreover, van Gool and Hoet fought a similar battle on connoisseurship only a few decades later.<sup>66</sup> As an issue which had remained academic throughout the seventeenth century, connoisseurship became paramount in the rapidly developing market of the eighteenth century and enticed commentators to express their views. Whereas painters, their pupils or their relatives could often be consulted in the seventeenth century to determine authenticity in the case of a dispute, the early eighteenth century needed trustworthy connoisseurs and intermediaries to make the final call.<sup>67</sup> The paintings themselves were the only remainders of the Golden Age of Dutch painting, and they ought to be handled with care by competent experts. This forms the crux of Weyerman's manuscript.

#### THE LOW COUNTRIES' ART MARKET IN TRANSITION

Jacob Campo Weyerman lived through a turbulent period in the history of the Low Countries. The Nine Years' War (1688–97) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13) created political and socioeconomic unrest, but also afforded great opportunities for art dealers. Many foreign princes and noblemen frequented the Low Countries to lead their troops into battle or to engage in diplomatic missions. The Hague was at the center of international diplomacy. While they were in the Netherlands settling alliances, many aristocrats made use of the occasion to buy old master paintings in one of the many Dutch art collections or at public auctions. Inspired by elite Dutch and other European collectors and brokers, many smaller entrepreneurs rose to the occasion and started to deal in art as well. It is precisely these dealers who are discussed and ridiculed in Weyerman's manuscript. His ambitions are clear: "to display the bare metal of truth undisguised by the chemistry of fakery."<sup>68</sup> In other words, he wants to impress upon the

reader that this new class of art dealer consisted mostly of crooks.

Indeed, in the Brussels manuscript, rife with its personal anecdotes and endless tirades, Weyerman presents himself as a soul with a fabulous talent to insult people. In this respect, the *Vertoogh* is in line with many of his other publications which are rampant with personal attacks on Dutch regents and fellow painters. Nearly all the people he mentions are dragged through the mud. The knowledgeable connoisseurs to whom he refers in the opening paragraphs of his manuscript are conspicuously absent in the remainder of his text. That said, Weyerman was a keen observer who certainly did not fail to notice that the art market was changing in a structural way. The fast-growing market for secondhand paintings fueled the rise of art auctions and further stimulated the need for intermediaries at a time when the value of old master paintings had become uncertain. New dealers, many with unusual social backgrounds, arrived on the scene to fill the gap. Experts were in demand to ascertain both the monetary and artistic value of the countless paintings and drawings that started circulating. In this new convoluted art market featuring increasing numbers of recycled items from times past, information issues became a predominant concern for collectors and dealers alike. Judging quality in art proved as difficult then as it had in the past. The name and reputation of an artist went a long way in the market, as it became a measure of quality and recognition in addition to the provenance of the artworks themselves. The ranting and raving against "bad copies" reveals a growing sensitivity towards authenticity in the art market and the impact it has on the perceived value of a work of art. Weyerman argues that knowing the provenance can be a most effective way to establish the originality and authorship of the work in question.

The expansion and increasing complexity of the art market highlighted the need for intermediaries, an evolution of which Weyerman was acutely aware and found particularly unsettling. His views were tainted by a profound mistrust of those intermediaries who did not share his artistic background or his ethics, and in that respect his views are blurred by his own prejudic-

66 De Vries, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 1–16.

67 Cf. van der Veen, op. cit. (note 56), pp. 3–44.

68 Weyerman, op. cit. (note 2), fol. 1v: "...bloot metael der

Waerheijt aentoonen, niet vermomt door de stofscheijdingh der geveijnstheijt."

es. However, many of his observations on the working methods and strategies of dealers appear accurate and to the point. The emphasis on trust is as much an integral part of the art market today as it was in the eighteenth century. Moreover, Weyerman's views on authenticity, rogue dealers and pricing mechanisms are surprisingly modern. In particular, his remarks about copying practices reveal an understanding of the economics of the art market. The observation that the prices for Jordaens's paintings would suffer from more and more copies circulating on the market demonstrates an almost innate understanding of microeconomic price theory.

In the end, Jacob Campo Weyerman left us with a unique literary account of an art market in transition. As a knowledgeable participant and keen observer, he provides a unique insight into the functioning and nature of the market for paintings in the Low Countries during the eighteenth century. His background as an unsuccessful artist and bankrupt art dealer may have clouded his judgment in some respects, but his observations remain timely and topical nonetheless. Reading his 1730 essay allows us to get a sense of an art market in flux, one on the brink of modernity while underscoring the time-honored value of trust and at the same time revealing the struggle with quality in the arts and the complex role of experts—not coincidentally the most disquieting issues the art world faces today as well.

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and

ERASMUS SCHOOL OF HISTORY, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION  
ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM

## Appendix

### Artists mentioned in Weyerman's *Vertoogh*

| Name                      | Dates          | Mainly active in    |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Achtschellink, Lucas      | (1626–99)      | Spanish Netherlands |
| Arthois, Jacques d'       | (1613–86)      | Spanish Netherlands |
| Bosch, Hieronymus         | (c. 1450–1516) | Spanish Netherlands |
| Breughel, Abraham         | (1631–97)      | Spanish Netherlands |
| Brueghel, Jan I           | (1568–1625)    | Spanish Netherlands |
| Caree, Hendrick I         | (1656–1721)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Colyns, Ferdinand         | (17th century) | Spanish Netherlands |
| Dou, Gerard               | (1613–75)      | Dutch Republic      |
| Dujardin, Karel           | (1626–78)      | Dutch Republic      |
| Dyck, Anthony van         | (1599–1641)    | Spanish Netherlands |
| Heem, Cornelis de         | (1631–95)      | Dutch Republic      |
| Heem, Jan Davidsz de      | (1606–83/84)   | Dutch Republic      |
| Hoet, Gerard I            | (1648–1733)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Jordaens, Jacob           | (1593–1678)    | Spanish Netherlands |
| Kneller, Godfried         | (1646–1723)    | England             |
| Lairesse, Gerard de       | (1641–1711)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Leur, Nicolaes van de     | (1657–1726)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Locht, van der            | (?–?)          | Italy               |
| Mieris, Frans I van       | (1635–81)      | Dutch Republic      |
| Mignon, Abraham           | (1640–79)      | Dutch Republic      |
| Netscher, Caspar          | (1635/36–84)   | Dutch Republic      |
| Poelenburch, Cornelis van | (1594/5–1667)  | Dutch Republic      |
| Poussin, Nicolas          | (1594–1665)    | Italy and France    |
| Rijn, Rembrandt van       | (1606–69)      | Dutch Republic      |
| Rubens, Peter Paul        | (1577–1640)    | Spanish Netherlands |
| Schoor, Nicolaes van      | (1666–1726)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Steen, Jan                | (1626–79)      | Dutch Republic      |
| Tens, Willem              | (?–1623)       | Italy               |
| Terwesten, Augustinus     | (1649–1711)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Werff, Adriaen van der    | (1659–1722)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Werff, Pieter van der     | (1665–1722)    | Dutch Republic      |
| Wouwerman, Philips        | (1619–68)      | Dutch Republic      |