



A Group of Related Buyers at Orphan Chamber Auctions¹

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Introduction

The auction records of the Orphan Chamber of Amsterdam preserved in the Gemeentearchief Amsterdam have been studied and used by art historians and archivists for over a century. The 29 notebooks recording the proceeds of estates sold ('erfhuizen') and voluntary sales ('willige vercooping') span the years 1597 to 1638, with the exception of a five-year gap from March 1630 to February 1635 and of other smaller gaps². Most of the auctions recorded were of miscellaneous household goods. A few, of special importance to art historians, were held to sell paintings or prints and drawings exclusively; still fewer were devoted to the sale of books. The goods, for the most part, belonged to deceased citizens of Amsterdam and were sold for the benefit of their heirs, usually at the request of the guardians of their children of minor age. Some auctions were held at the request of painters and engravers who wished, for one reason or another, to dispose of part of their stock. I analyzed the contents of 423 sales in my article 'Auction Sales of Works of Art in Amsterdam (1597-1638)' in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 50* (2000), concentrating on the occupation, geographic origin, age and wealth of buyers.

The present fragmentary study concerns a group of buyers at auction, active chiefly from 1607 to 1613, who were all related by blood or marriage to a rich jeweler named *Jan* (or *Hans*) *van Maerlen* (or *van Merlen*)³. After the death of *Jan van Merlen* in 1637, his extensive collection of paintings was put up at auction. Three of his five daughters and two of his three sons-in-law bought paintings, drawings and prints at the *Van Merlen* auction. Sales transactions within the extended *Van Merlen* family and probate inventories taken after the death of two of their members (in 1659 and 1681), give us an idea of their collecting interests in later years. This group of collectors is especially interesting because they are related by blood or marriage to several artists.

Jan van Merlen's father, named *Dirck van Merlen*, was born in Grave around 1540. He migrated to Antwerp in his youth and became a citizen of the city in 1567. He practiced the liberal profession of attorney ('procureur') in the city. The next year he married *Christina van*

*Mansdale*⁴. Many years later, one of *Jan van Merlen's* daughters, *Constantia*, would marry *David van Mansdaelen* who almost certainly belonged to the same prominent Antwerp family as her grandmother. *Jan van Merlen*, born in Breda around 1570, became a jeweler in Antwerp. It is not known in what year he migrated to Amsterdam; the move, in any case, must have taken place before December 1598, when he was betrothed in the Town Hall to *Maria Sijbrechts van Ghils*. He was not the only member of the family to migrate to Amsterdam. On July 4, 1603, *Jan's* brother, *Jonas van Merlen*, painter, was betrothed to *Catelijne Gillis van Coninxloo*, the daughter of the landscape painter *Gillis van Coninxloo*. He was 25 years of age; she was 24. Both were said to be from (i.e. born in) Antwerp. He was assisted with his brother *Jan*, she by her father *Gillis van Coninxloo*, who had himself migrated from Antwerp to Middelburg, then to Frankenthal, finally to settle in Amsterdam in 1595. It is not known in what year *Jonas* began to work as an apprentice for *Gillis van Coninxloo*, as he was said to be at the auction sale of his father-in-law's paintings. There is evidence, however, that at some point he became a master in Amsterdam's Guild of St. Luke, perhaps after his master's death⁵. In 1604, *Jonas's* first child, named *Dierick*, was baptized in the 'Oude kerk' (Old Church)⁶.

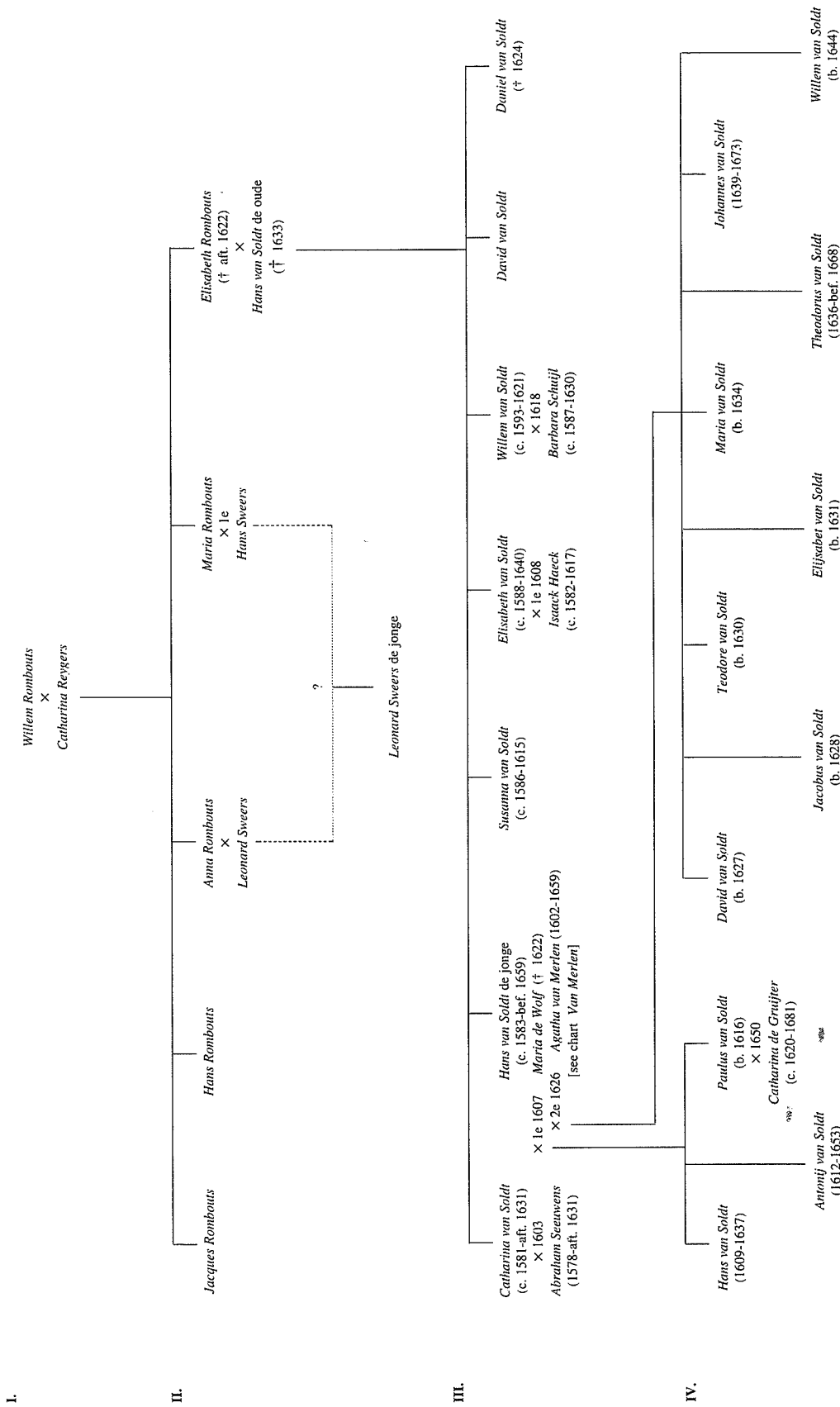
The acquisitions of the Van Merlen family

At the sale of *Gillis van Coninxloo's* paintings on March 1, 1607, *Jonas* bought paintings and materials for a total of 74 'gulden' 7 'stuivers'⁷. Of the paintings with titles, five were landscapes and one represented dogs. He also bought various ground colors and prepared papers. In 1608, he sold his house on the Breestraat to *Barber Jacobs*, the mother of the painter *Pieter Lastman*⁸. Soon after he took advantage of the Twelve-Year Truce in the war with Spain to return to Antwerp. In 1609, his daughter *Constantia* was baptized in Antwerp⁹. He did not prosper there. After his death, which took place some time between 1609 and 1614¹⁰, his widow *Catelijne*, accompanied by her children *Dierick* and *Constantia*, came back to Amsterdam, where she died impoverished (apparently of the plague) on December 19, 1617¹¹. Besides her cousins *Hans II* and *Isaack* (sons of *Gillis's* brother *Hans van Coninxloo I*), who were themselves painters and / or dealers, several artists or members of their families lent *Catelijne* money in the time of her need, including the wife of *Abraham Vinck*, the children of the painter *Willem van den Bundel*, and a 'niece' of the painter *Jacques Savery*. Most of her possessions were sold at auction on January 8,

4. A. van der Marel, 'Van Merlen te Antwerpen', *De Ned. Leeuw* 84 (1967), p. 194-200, 218-231, there p. 194. Wout Spies kindly supplied me with a copy of this important article on the *Van Merlen* family.
5. This emerged, after the death of *Catelijne*, from the payment of 1 gulden 10 stuivers to "the servant of the guild" to summon members to her burial and to pay for the pall ("Reckening" of 1 November 1618, cited below).
6. Van der Marel, 'Van Merlen', p. 196.
7. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/942. Note: 'guldens' and 'stuivers' were the common currency of the Netherlands before the 19th century; 1 'gulden' contains 20 'stuivers'.
8. Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt, His Life, His Paintings* (Middlesex 1985), p. 30.
9. Van der Marel, 'Van Merlen', p. 196.
10. N. de Roever, in his article titled 'De Coninxloo's', *Oud Holland* 3 (1885), claimed on p. 39 that *Jonas van Merlen* had been dead "at least eight years" in 1622, but he offered no evidence for that assertion. "*Catarijna van Koningsloo*", who is surely identical with *Catelijne van Coninxloo*, was a witness at the baptism of *Joannes van Merlen* on 21 February 1610. It may be that her husband *Jonas* had already died by that date and that she had decided to return to live in Amsterdam.
11. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/1191, "Reckening" drawn up by *Hans van Coninxloo*, dated 1 November 1618.

1. I am grateful to Wout Spies for his careful research in the Amsterdam Gemeentearchief's Doop-, Trouw-, and Begraafboeken on the individuals cited in the present article. The results of this research appear in the genealogical charts. To save space, I will not provide references to genealogical evidence documented in the charts.
2. There are, in addition, two notebooks containing auction records of the period 1536-1537 which I have not consulted. The notebooks are preserved in the GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/935 to 5073/962 ('Erfhuizen') and 5073/966 ("Willighe vercoopinghe van imboel beghonnen 22 july 1608"). Even though only this last notebook is entirely devoted to voluntary sales, it should be noted that many of the notebooks of "Erfhuizen" (sales of estates) contain the records of voluntary sales made at the request of artists and other individuals wishing to dispose of goods.
3. From now on, I spell the name "*Van Merlen*", even though a number of variant spellings occur in betrothal and other records (*Van Merle*, *Van Meerle*, *Van Maerle*, *Van Maerlen*).

Chart 1: Genealogy Rombouts – Van Soldt.



1618¹². The proceeds came to just over 289 gulden, of which 11 paintings brought the meager sum of 32 gulden. (All the paintings were untitled, with the exception of one small kitchen scene.) A note after the accounting of the auction sale stated that *Jan van Merlen* had given *Hans van Coninxloo* (II) a profit ("op te winst") of 6 gulden on the paintings he (*Coninxloo*) had bought, with the proviso that 3 gulden out of that profit should go to *Catelijne's* orphan children. As it was, after loans and expenses were repaid, the children received in total only 73 gulden. *Dierick* and *Constantia* went back to Antwerp some time later where they became, respectively, engraver and illuminator ("af-settersse"). *Constantia* died in Antwerp in 1655; *Dierick*, saddled with seven children, apparently died in very poor circumstances, also in Antwerp, in 1659¹³.

Jan van Merlen, who practiced his jewelry trade in Amsterdam, prospered over the years. In 1631, six years before his death, he paid a tax of 135 gulden on his wealth, which must have amounted to at least 27000 gulden (The tax levied amounted to 0.5 percent of estimated wealth, which was frequently understated)¹⁴. The six children of *Jan van Merlen* and *Maria van Ghils* whose existence we are aware of were: *Christina* (born c. 1601); *Aechtgen* or *Agatha*, baptized on 26 December 1602; *Maria*, on 30 September 1604; *Constantia*, on 8 April 1607; *Joannes*, on 21 February 1610; and *Lucretia*, on 13 March 1616.

The first time we encounter *Jan van Merlen* at the Orphan Chamber sales is on 28 August 1612, at the prestigious sale of *Claes Rauwert* (consisting principally, if not exclusively, of works of art collected by *Jacob Rauwert*, the friend of *Carel van Mander*¹⁵). There he purchased two untitled lots (one of "two wings" (perhaps of a triptych) for 40 gulden, another wing for 28 gulden 10 stuivers, and "the 12 months of the year" for 102 gulden¹⁶. A little more than a year later, at the sale of *Anthonie Boonhoff* of 8 November 1613, he bought five lots: two landscapes for 32 gulden each, two untitled paintings for 10 gulden 10 stuivers and 12 gulden each, and a drawing by (*Jan Hermansz.*) *Muller* for 1 gulden 10 stuivers¹⁷. Judging from the prices, these were all originals by master painters and draughtsmen.

Of *Jan van Merlen's* five daughters, two married buyers at Orphan Chamber auctions. *Christina* was 20 years old when she was betrothed to *Geraert* (or *Gerrit*) *van Rijssen* from Utrecht on May 4, 1621. He was said to be 30 years old at the time. He was a prominent jeweler, as was his father-in-law¹⁸. Several children of this marriage have been identified, but the best named *Johanna*, died on 25 March 1623, is the only one we shall be concerned with here. He was betrothed to *Sara Lestevenon*, born in 1642, on 22 November 1663, at which time

he was accompanied by his uncle (by marriage) *David van Mansdaelen*, the husband of *Johannes's* aunt *Constantia*, to whom reference is made below.

Agatha was 23 years old when she was betrothed to *Hans van Soldt* de jonge, from Antwerp, widower of *Marija de Wolff*, on January 30, 1626.

Constantia married *David van Mansdaelen*, 27 years old, on 20 April 1638, at which time she was assisted by her sister *Agatha* and by her brother-in-law *Geraert van Rijssen*. *Van Mansdaelen* was almost certainly also a jeweler. *Constantia*, as we shall see, was herself a buyer at the auction of her father's paintings, but we have no record of *Van Mansdaelen's* ever buying works of art at auction. Of the last two daughters, *Maria* married *Otto van Langen*, and *Lucretia* died unmarried in 1638. The son *Joannes*, the only one of *Jan van Merlen's* children who did not buy any works of art at the auction sale of his possessions, never married. He died in The Hague in 1679¹⁹.

The acquisitions of the Van Soldt family

A good deal is known about the *Van Soldt* family²⁰. *Hans van Soldt* de oude was an early investor in the V.O.C. (the Dutch East India Company, the 'Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie'). A sum of 3,000 gulden was invested on his behalf by his nephew *Lenard Sweerts* de jonge²¹. In 1631, he was living on the Ooster Achterburgwal when he paid a wealth tax of 800 gulden, corresponding to assets estimated at 160,000 gulden²². He was married to *Elisabeth Rombouts*, who died some time after 1608. He was buried on 20 December 1633. Archival records reveal the names of seven of his children: *Catharina* (born c. 1581), *Hans van Soldt* de jonge (born c. 1583), *Susanna* (born c. 1586), *Elisabeth* (born c. 1588), *Willem* (born c. 1593), *David* (year of birth unknown), and *Daniel* (year of birth unknown).

Hans van Soldt de jonge, was a silk cloth merchant, who supplied raw silk to 'finishers' ('zijdebereiders')²³. He was an important client of the Wisselbank²⁴. He was living on or near the Groene Burgwal in 1631 when he paid a tax of 90 gulden (on an assessed wealth of 18,000 gulden)²⁵. His brother *Willem van Soldt*, born in London, jointly owned with his father *Hans van Soldt* de oude a 'compagnie' with a capital of 11,000 Flemish pounds (66,000 gulden) After he died, in 1621 or 1622, his brother *Hans van Soldt* de jonge had to pay 3,800 Flemish pounds (22,800 gulden) to his daughter *Elisabeth* plus some jewellery as part of the settlement of *Willem's* estate, of which he had been curator²⁶.

Hans van Soldt de jonge was first married to *Maria de Wolf* (the betrothal took place on 15 September 1607), with whom he had the following children: *Joannes*, born in 1609; *Antonij*, born in 1612; and

12. The record of the auction sale of *Catelijne van Coninxloo's* possessions is included in the same "Reckening" cited above. It does not contain the names of buyers. Unfortunately, the notebook of "Erhuizen" for the sales of 1618 is lost, so that we can not ascertain who the buyers were directly. However, as I discuss in the text below, a note in the "Reckening" reveals that the paintings were bought by *Hans van Coninxloo* II and resold to *Jan van Merlen*.

13. Van der Marel, 'Van Merlen', p. 196.

14. J.G. Frederiks and P.J. Frederiks, *Kohier van den tweehonderdsten penning voor Amsterdam en onderhoorige plaatsen voor 1631* (Amsterdam 1890), p. 50, fol. 220.

15. On *Jacob Rauwert*, see M.J. Bok, 'Art-Lovers and their Paintings, Van Mander's Schilder-boeck as a Source for the History of the Art Market in the Northern Netherlands', in: *Dawn of the Golden Age* (exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum 1993-1994), p. 147-148 and p. 159.

16. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/944.

17. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/946

18. According to Marten Jan Bok, *Geraert van Rijssen* was born in Utrecht ca. 1591 and died in Amsterdam in 1659. He became a member of the silversmiths' guild in Utrecht in 1616. As early as 1610, he published six engravings of decorative patterns for jewelry. He was one of the signatories of the 1628 petition of prominent Amsterdam citizens ("aenzienlijke luiden") who sought to obtain freedom of worship for the Remonstrants (*Jan Wagenaar*, Amsterdam, etc., 4 vols. (Amsterdam 1761), vol. 1, p. 497-498).

19. A. Bredius, *Künstler-inventare*, 7 vols. ('s-Gravenhage 1915-1922), vol. 4, p. 1398.

20. As this article was going to press, the editors found *Hans van Soldt's* family chronicle, which was published in *De Navorscher* 84 (1935), p. 35-42. Due to the publication schedule, the data from this source unfortunately could not be incorporated fully into this article [note by the editors].

21. J.G. van Dillen, *Het oudste aandeelhoudersregister van de Kamer Amsterdam der Oost-Indische Compagnie ('s-Gravenhage 1938)*, p. 224. *Lenard* also invested 5,400 gulden on behalf of *Hans Rombouts* "mijn oom". *Hans Rombouts* was the brother of *Hans van Soldt's* wife *Elisabeth Rombouts* (D.W. van Dam, 'Familie-aanteekeningen Rombouts, Arminius, Reael, e.a.', *De Ned. Leeuw* 42 (1924), kol. 211-217, ald. kol. 211-212).

22. Frederiks and Frederiks, *Kohier*, p. 57, fol. 247.

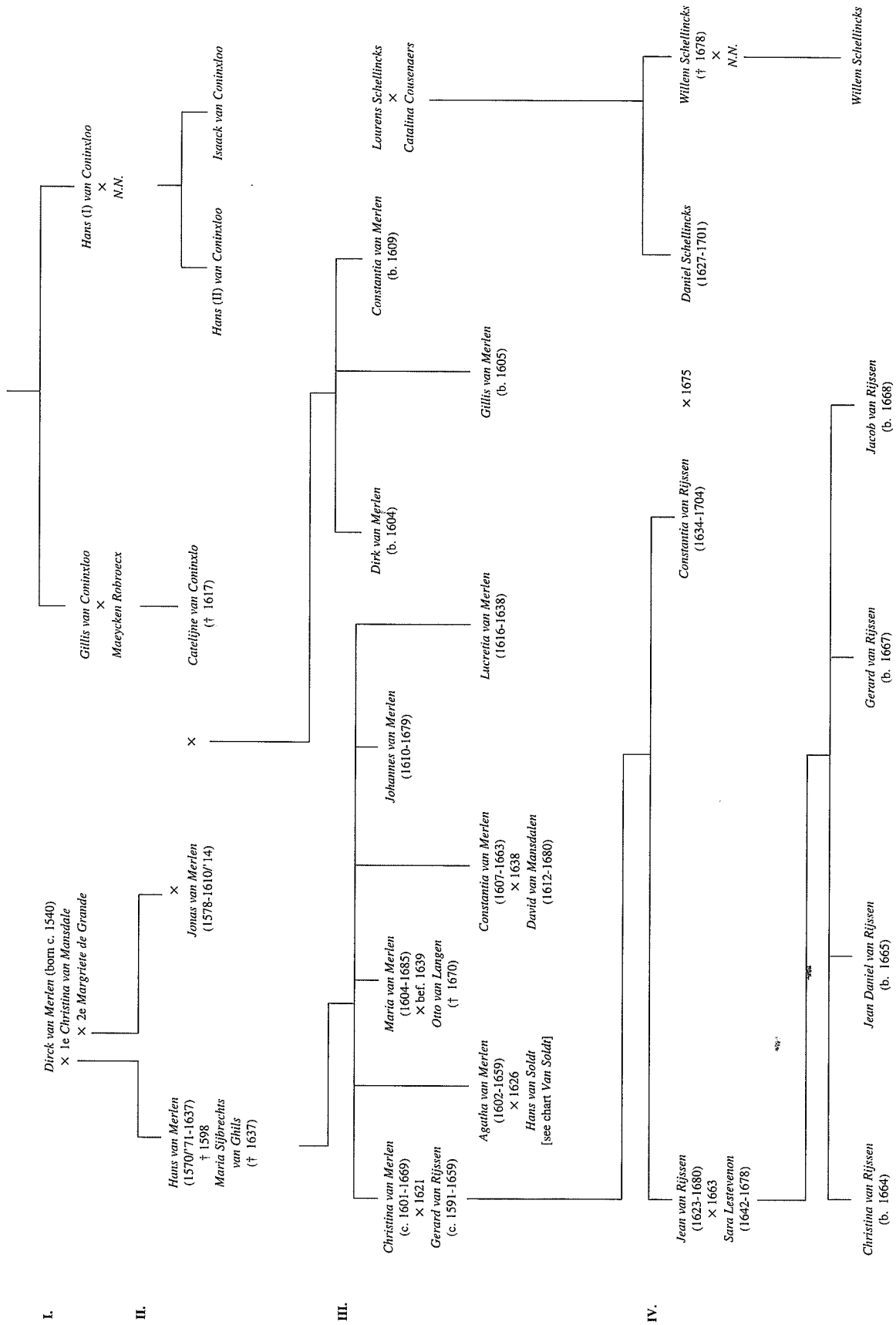
23. This emerges from a deposition, dated 31 December 1610 (J.G. van Dillen, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van het bedrijfsleven en het gildewezen in Amsterdam*, part I, 1512-1611 (Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën, vol. 69, 's-Gravenhage 1929), p. 702).

24. Van Dillen, *Het oudste aandeelhoudersregister*, p. 224.

25. Frederiks and Frederiks, *Kohier*, p. 51, fol. 224.

26. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/889, document dated 18 July 1622, fol. 129vo.-131.

Chart 2: Genealogy Van Merlen – Van Rijssen.



Note: Only information directly relevant to the text of the article is incorporated in this chart.

Paulus, born in 1616. On 30 January 1626, as we have already seen, *Hans* was again betrothed, this time to *Agatha van Merlen*, the daughter of *Jan van Merlen*. One of the eight children from this second marriage, who are listed in the genealogical charts, was a son named *Jacobus*, born in 1628. It is likely that *Jacobus* was the future painter, some of whose paintings turned up in the collection of *Agatha van Merlen* in 1659, as will be related in greater detail below.

Both *Hans van Soldt de oude* and his son *Hans de jonge* were frequent buyers at auction. It was almost certainly the father who bought four paintings for a total of 65 gulden 10 stuivers, plus prints for 13 stuivers at a sale organized at the request of *Pieter Loduwycxs* on 24 and 25 February 1609²⁷. At the estate sale of *Jacques Rombouts*, exactly a month later, the father purchased one of the most expensive lots in the sale, a landscape for 102 gulden. In this case, we can be sure that it was he, and not his son, who did so because the clerk drew a line across the words “de jonge” that he had initially written following his name. At the *Rombouts* sale, *Hans van Soldt de jonge* bought an East Indian shield for 7 gulden 10 stuivers and a painting of an undescribed subject for 31 gulden²⁸. At the sale organized at the request of the art dealer *Lucas Luce*, the young *Van Soldt* bought a painting for 21 gulden. At the *Rauwert* sale of 1612 already cited, he bought two paintings of unspecified subjects by *Karel van Mander* for 11 gulden and 7 gulden 10 stuivers respectively, a ‘tronie’ (probably a portrait) for 20 gulden, a lion for 11 gulden and a ‘stuck’ for 3 gulden 10 stuivers. At some time in the 1620s, he subscribed to a lottery in Amsterdam, on which occasion he appeared in the company of the well-known painters / dealers *Barend van Someren* (also of Flemish origin) and *Michiel le Blon*²⁹.

The acquisitions of Isaack Haeck

Hans van Soldt de jonge’s sister, named *Elisabeth*, was betrothed to *Isaack Haeck* – 26 years old, from Antwerp – on 13 November 1608. He owned a silk dyeing establishment on the Bloemgracht and worked either in partnership or at least in close cooperation with his father-in-law, *Hans van Soldt de oude*³⁰. *Haeck*, who died in 1617, at the age of 35, was a frequent buyer in the period 1609 to 1614. At the sale organized at the request of *Pieter Loduwycxs*, where, as we have seen, his father-in-law *Hans van Soldt de oude* had bought a number of lots, he purchased one painting for 11 gulden 5 stuivers. At the *Lucas Rombouts* sale, at which both *Hans van Soldt de oude* and *Hans van Soldt de jonge* had made purchases, he bought a painting for 35 gulden. At the sale organized at the request of *Lucas Luce* in March 1610, it was probably he (under the name of “*Haeck*”) who bought the most expensive lot, a painting for 232 gulden. At the 1611 sale of *Burchman Claesz. (Dob)* (another collector known to *Karel van Mander*), he bought a painting for 13 gulden as well as one lot of prints for 8 gulden³¹ (all the paintings referred to so far were of unspecified subjects). At the sale of the painter *Crispiaan Colijn* of 20 March 1612,

27. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/966.

28. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/943.

29. N. de Roever, ‘Rijfelarijen’, *Oud Holland* 4 (1886), p. 195-196. Both *Michiel le Blon* and *Barend van Someren* were very frequent buyers at Orphan Chamber auctions. The Orphan Chamber sale of *Barend van Someren*’s paintings, drawings and prints, which took place, starting on 22 February 1635, was one of the largest of its kind ever held (GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/961. In his discussion of the lottery, De Roever claimed, somewhat speculatively, that *Hans van Soldt de jonge*, “who apparently sought the company of artists”, lived in the house of *Barend van Someren* at the time (p. 195).

30. Some of the dye stuffs found in *Haeck*’s inventory were located in the warehouses of *Hans van Soldt de oude*.

31. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/944.

Haeck bought a painting of *Neptunus* for 3 gulden 15 stuivers³²; at the *Claes Rauwert* sale of 1612, he bought 15 lots – paintings, drawings and prints – for a total of 242 gulden 10 stuivers, including a painting on canvas by *Cornelis van Haarlem* (monogrammed ‘CC’ in the register of the sale), a water color by (*Hendrick*) *Steenwijck* (I or II) for 40 gulden, two unattributed pen drawings of “tronies” for 50 gulden, and prints by *Albrecht Dürer* for 7 gulden 5 stuivers. Finally, at the sale held at the request of the painter *Cornelis van der Voort* on 7 April 1614, he bought a landscape for the high price of 59 gulden, a portrait of *Jan van Leyden* by (*Maerten van*) *Heemskerck* for 42 gulden, a “naked personage” for 7 gulden 10 stuivers, a still life of cabbages by *Beuckelaer* for the modest sum of 7 gulden, and four round “tronies” for 5 gulden³³. These were his last known purchases at the Orphan Chamber auctions. After he died, apparently insolvent, three years later, the works of art in his death inventory, were assessed by the painter *Francois Luce*, at the request of *Haeck*’s widow, *Elisabeth van Soldt*, who had sought protection from his creditors from the court of Holland (“mandement van benefitie van inventaris”)³⁴. *Hans van Soldt*, father and son, declared themselves sureties for the widow. The total value of the works of art in the inventory came to 513 gulden 10 stuivers, which was quite a bit less than the estimated 666 gulden 10 stuivers corresponding to the total of his known purchases at auction. The discrepancy may be due to several causes, including sales effected before *Haeck*’s death, works of art kept out of the inventory by *Elisabeth van Soldt*, and differences between auction prices and evaluations³⁵. With the possible exception of a “naked woman”, valued at 12 gulden, which may be identical with the “naked personage” he had bought for 7 gulden 10 stuivers at the sale of *Cornelis van der Voort* three years earlier, none of the paintings in the inventory can be matched with paintings *Haeck* had purchased at auction³⁶.

The estate of Jan van Merlen

Jan van Merlen, both *Hans van Soldt de oude* and *de jonge*, and *Isaack Haeck* apparently bought works of art at auction only in the period 1608 to 1613. *Van Merlen* lived until 1637 and *Van Soldt de oude* until 1633. Both *Van Soldt*’s and *Van Merlen* may have depended on dealers later in life to build up their extensive collections. Less than a month before the post-mortem auction of *Van Merlen*’s jewelry and works of art took place on 3 September 1637, *Agatha van Merlen* appeared before a notary in The Hague and named as her beneficiaries *Johannes van Merlen*, *Christina van Merlen*, wife of *Geraert van Rijssen*, and *Maria*, *Constantia* and *Lucretia van Merlen*, all children of the late *Jan van Merlen*. She declared also that she did not wish to be considered an heir of her deceased parents *Jan van Merlen* and *Maria van Ghils*. It is not clear why *Agatha* desisted from her father’s inheritance. Had her husband *Hans van Soldt de jonge* become so wealthy that she did not need it? Yet the sequel of the story shows that *Hans van Soldt*

32. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/944.

33. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/946.

34. GAA, not. arch. Amsterdam, inv. no. 381 (not. N. Jacobs), film 6413, 27 December 1617. The inventory is cited by Bredius, without specification of its contents (*Künstler-inventare*, vol. 4, p. 1149).

35. The comparison of the sum total of works of art purchased at auction and of the assessed value of such works in *Haeck*’s death inventory is of course based on the assumption that the individual designated only by the last name *Haeck* who bought a painting for 232 gulden at the sale organized by *Lucas Luce* was actually *Isaack Haeck*.

36. The only attributed painting was a “groot stuck schilderije van Momper”, evaluated at 36 gulden, which hung in the house where the dye works were located. But there was another landscape in the inventory (“een weije”), valued at 72 gulden, which might be identical with the landscape *Haeck* had bought at the sale of *Cornelis van der Voort* for 56 gulden. The Momper painting may also be identical with one of four robberies (“roverij”, “afsettinge”), valued between 30 and 35 gulden.

sold to his sister *Maria* three years later a number of paintings, some of which belonged to his own children – hardly the behavior of an individual so rich that he did not need to cash in on an inheritance. I suspect the opposite: that he had borrowed heavily from one or more of his sisters-in-law with the expectation of recompensing them from his wife's share of the inheritance.

The sale of *Jan van Merlen's* jewelry and precious stones on September 7 brought 25,130 gulden³⁷, the sale of his works of art on September 30 and the following days (paintings, drawings and prints) brought 8,210 gulden, among the highest proceeds of any Orphan Chamber auction³⁸. Of the entire of paintings, drawings, and prints (plus a few carved agathe stones sale that were included in the jewelry part of the sale), the direct heirs of *Hans van Merlen* (the two unmarried daughters, *Maria* and *Lucretia*; *Constantia*, married to *David van Mansdaelen*; *Hans van Soldt* and *Geraert van Rijssen*, the husbands of *Agatha* and *Christina*) bought for 1,047 gulden 9 stuivers. The purchases were as follows.

Maria: total 759 gulden 5 stuivers, consisting of 13 landscapes in 11 lots for 207 gulden 5 stuivers (including a “winter” by *Stomme – Hendrick Avercamp* – for 75 gulden), a siege for 38 gulden, a storm (at sea) for 2 gulden 15 stuivers, a banquet of the gods for 25 gulden 5 stuivers, a painting of *Maria* for 25 gulden, a tooth-puller for 10 gulden, 12 Emperors (of Rome) for 40 gulden 4 stuivers, Hercules for 15 gulden, Susanna (by *Adriaen?*) *van Nieulandt* for 30 gulden, two portraits for 160 gulden, an image of Christ for 31 gulden, 2 tondos of unspecified subjects for 12 gulden 10 stuivers, a ‘Massacre of the Innocents’ for 11 gulden, a pen drawing for 41 gulden, some prints by *Albert Dürer* for 10 gulden, and two framed drawings of unspecified subject for 16 gulden.

Lucretia: “A wet nurse with a child” for 5 gulden and a landscape for 6 gulden 5 stuivers, a total of only 11 gulden 5 stuivers.

Constantia: total 126 gulden 11 stuivers, consisting of eight landscapes (six small ones for 27 gulden and two others for 20 gulden and 2 gulden 1 stuivers); 5 still lifes (three vases of flowers for 10 gulden 10 stuivers, 5 gulden 51 stuivers, and 5 gulden 5 stuivers; a wreath of flowers for 20 gulden 11 stuivers; a fish banquet for 25 stuivers); three religious paintings (“Christus calling on those who are heavily laden to come to him” for 18 gulden 5 stuivers; a gilded image of *Maria* for 21 stuivers; and a “Peteres-nacht” for 5 gulden 5 stuivers); 2 carved stones with three plates for 8 gulden 5 stuivers .

Hans van Soldt: a total of 130 gulden 5 stuivers, consisting of a painting of ‘Juno and Pallas’ for 100 gulden, a vase of flowers for 4 gulden 5 stuivers, an oyster still life for 10 gulden, and two drawings for 16 stuivers.

Geraert van Rijssen: a total of 47 gulden, consisting of an agathe stone carved with a “tronie” for 11 gulden (probably for his jewelry trade), drawings by *Albert Dürer* for 25 gulden 10 stuivers, and ‘Venus and Idone [Adonis ?]’ for 10 gulden 10 stuivers.

The expensive purchases made by *Maria*, who was the older of the

two unmarried daughters, are particularly worthy of note for any one wishing to study the independent taste of a relatively wealthy 17th-century woman (inventories of married women do not provide this sort of information because the works of art they contain may have been purchased by their late husbands; even those of unmarried women may have been ‘contaminated’ by inheritance.) The lots *Maria* bought, as we have seen, included many landscapes (such as the expensive winter scene by *Avercamp*); surprisingly few religious paintings (a ‘Susanna’ and a ‘Massacre of the Innocents’, together with an image of Christ and one of *Mary*, these last two hardly the religious paintings we should expect in a Reformed – Calvinist – family³⁹). It would have been appropriate for the older unmarried daughter to buy the family portraits. This may explain why the only portraits bought by any of *Jan van Merlen's* heirs, were the pair that *Maria* obtained for the high sum of 160 gulden. They may well have been portraits of her parents, *Jan van Merlen* and *Maria van Ghils*, done by some unknown but presumably reputed master. The sophistication of *Maria's* taste is reflected in the *Dürer* prints and the pen drawing for 41 gulden, a very high auction price for such a work (very few pen drawings beside those of *Goltzius* attained such prices). The taste of *Constantia* was clearly oriented toward still lifes (vases of flowers). The gilded image of the Virgin *Mary* that she bought for 21 gulden is also suggestive of a Roman Catholic or Lutheran rather than a Calvinist religious inclination.

Given the fact that *Hans van Soldt de jonge* had been a frequent purchaser at auction in his youth, it is curious how little he bought at his father-in-law's sale. After all, he was representing the interests of his wife *Agatha*, who did not buy any lots on her own. Yet, as we shall see presently, she is said to have made purchases of works of art out her own savings. The meagerness of his purchases may perhaps be explained by a difficult financial situation, as I have suggested earlier. The ‘Pallas and Juno’ bought by *Hans van Soldt*, however, was an expensive painting, which showed that he had not lost his earlier interest in art. The even more meager purchases by *Geraert van Rijssen* raise the same questions. That he bought drawings by *Dürer* for 25 gulden 10 stuivers, however, shows that he, too, had sophisticated tastes.

On 30 June 1639, *Hans van Soldt* appeared before the same notary in The Hague who had recorded his wife's desistence two years earlier but this time in Amsterdam⁴⁰. The document was drawn up in *Hans van Soldt's* house situated on the Prinsengracht. *Van Soldt* declared that he had sold to his wife's sister *Maria van Merlen* certain paintings, together with porcelain, a spread and six upholstered chairs. In addition to the paintings listed in the inventory, he still had in his house a painting by (*Willem II van?*) *Nieulandt* entitled ‘Antiqua’ and two paintings out of Ovid with black gilded frames – a porridge eater (“papeeter”) and a Pomona –, which he promised to hand over to *Maria van Merlen* at her request. He further specified that these items belonged to his children, procreated by his wife *Agatha van Merlen*, which had been in part inherited from her father *Jan van Merlen* and in part had been bought from her own pin money (“met hare eigene potpenningen”), with his approval, for the sake of the children. *Maria van Merlen* also appeared before the notary, accompanied by [her husband; EDS.] Sr. *Otto van Langen*, and declared that she had received the paintings and other subjects specified in the inventory as security for 442 gulden 18 stuivers that her brother-in-law owed her. In fact, the prices of the works of art that she received were considerably in excess of the sum of 442 gulden 18 stuivers cited in the document. Not counting the three paintings that *Hans van Soldt* still had in his house, which were not valued, the total

37. One of the buyers of *Van Merlen's* jewelry was named *Jan le Thor* (or *Le Toor*) II. He was the son of the jeweler *Jan le Thor* I, who was also an art dealer. The son was said to be “bij” (at the house of) *Jan Jansz. Uijl* (the still life painter). His surety was *Gerard van Rijssen*, the husband of *Christina van Merlen*. *Jan le Thor* (1601-bef. 1654) was married to *Susanna Tielens*, the daughter of *Jan Tiellens* (or *Tiels*) and *Sara Lestevenon* (an aunt in the second or third degree of the individual of the same name who married *Gerard's* son *Joannes*). *Jan Tiellens* was a frequent buyer at Orphan Chamber auctions. It is interesting to note that *Hans van Soldt de jonge* stood surety (along with *Diego Fernandez Paes*) for the purchase of a ruby ring bought by *Abraham Mesurado* “portugees”, who was probably a Portuguese Jew.

38. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/962.

39. *Christina*, *Agatha*, and *Constantia van Merlen* were all betrothed “in de kerck”, as was usual for Reformed (Calvinist) couples. Only the betrothal of *Hans van Soldt de jonge* with his first wife *Marija de Wolff* took place in the town hall (“de pui”).

40. GAA, not. arch. Amsterdam, inv. no. 992 (not. Jan Bosch), film no. 4941.



Olieverf op koper. 16 × 24,2 cm.

Warnard van Rijssen (gemonogrammeerd 'W.R.')

Italiaans landschap met badende vrouwen bij een brug

Afb. 1.

Coll. en foto Kunsthandel Hoogsteder en Hoogsteder, 's-Gravenhage

came to 830 gulden 5 stuivers. It consisted of two original ("principael") vases of flowers for 150 gulden and 100 gulden respectively, two pairs of small "tronies" painted by "the son of Mr. *Ritzerdt*" for 20 gulden each, a peasant "kermesse" for 50 gulden, four landscapes by *Willem Nieulandt* (II ?) for 100 gulden, a pen drawing by *Matham* for 20 gulden, a painting of Joseph for 75 gulden, one of Rebecca for 25 gulden, a landscape by *Savery* for 10 gulden 5 stuivers, John the Baptist for 170 gulden, and 2 "tronies" done by *Geldorp* and (*Adriaen?*) *van Nieulandt* for 90 gulden. It is not known who *Ritzerdt* or his painter-son were (they were presumably relatives). The reference to objects that *Agatha* had inherited from her father suggests that not all the jewelry and works of art owned by the wealthy jeweler had been auctioned off in 1637. Some of them had gone directly to *Agatha* and her husband. This may also explain why *Hans van Soldt de jonge* had bought so few lots at the sale.

On 10 November 1640, *Hans van Soldt de jonge* transferred a number of paintings to his brother-in-law *Geraert van Rijssen*, including a landscape by *Van den Hecke* (4 gulden), two of unspecified subjects by the same *Van den Hecke* (10 gulden and 20 gulden respectively), and a painting of Acteon by (*Adriaen?*) *van Nieulandt*⁴¹. None of these paintings can clearly be identified with lots that *Van Soldt* had bought at auction, either in his youth or at his father-in-law's sale in 1637. Who was "*Van den Hecke*"? Several painters by that name, or by variants thereof, are known, including *Abraham van der Hecke* of Alkmaar.

The estate of *Hans van Soldt de jonge* and *Agatha van Merlen*

I do not know the year of *Hans van Soldt de jonge*'s death, except that it must have taken place between 1650, when he is last referred to, and *Agatha*'s own death in 1659, at which time she was said to be his widow. The inventory of her possessions was taken in The Hague on 13-15 September 1659⁴². Whatever may have been her husband's money troubles in the late 1630s, she seemed to have died far from destitute. Her pictures included a number of portraits of her extended family, such as "Sr. and Joffr. *Haeck* together with *Sara van Soldt*"⁴³, "Sr. and Joffr. *van Soldt de oude*", "Sr. and Joffr. *van Soldt* standing, in one frame", three of "*Heer ende Joffr. van Maerlen*" and the latter's mother, seven of the children of Sr. and Joffr. *van Soldt*, and three of *Willem, Daniel* and *David van Soldt*. They were the youngest sons of *Hans van Soldt de oude* and *Elisabeth Rombouts*. There was also a small portrait of greatgrandfather *Van Meerlen* (presumably *Dirck van Merlen* of Antwerp) and a piece of calligraphy consisting of a poem by the old *Van Soldt*. (It is not known whether *Hans van Soldt de oude* published any of his poems). Finally, there were portraits of *Theodore van Soldt* and *Paulus van Soldt de oude*. *Theodore* (or *Theodorus*) was the son of *Hans van Soldt de jonge* and *Agatha van Merlen*, baptized on 22 June 1636; *Paulus* is probably the son of the same *Van Soldt* from his first wife *Maria de Wolf*, baptized in 1616, who was living in the Warnoesstraat in 1650 when he was betrothed to *Catharijna de Gruyter*. Among

41. Bredius, *Künstler-inventare*, vol. 4, p. 1399. The inventory, drawn up in Amsterdam by notary G. Borsseleer, has not been located.

42. Bredius, *Künstler-inventare*, vol. 4, p. 1396-1398.

43. Wout Spies could not find any child baptized under the name of *Sara van Soldt*.

the attributed paintings were two by *Jacobus van Soldt*, one of them an Italian landscape. Little or nothing was known about the life of the painter until Wout Spies discovered his baptismal record, as one of the children of *Hans van Soldt de jonge* and *Agatha van Merlen*. There were also two seascapes by Willem van Diest, a landscape by Momper and Francken, and a print by Goltzius. The inventory was signed by *Hans (Johannes)*, *David*, *Elisabeth* and *Maria van Soldt*, all children of *Agatha van Merlen* and *Hans van Soldt*. Two paintings seem to be identical with objects that *Hans van Soldt* had earlier sold to his sister-in-law *Maria van Merlen*: A 'Pomona' and a "papeeter with a satyr" (the story out of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* of the peasants who blew hot and cold on their porridge). From this I deduce that the sale had been fictitious (as I have suggested earlier) and that the paintings had remained in *Hans van Soldt's* collection.

The collection of Jean van Rijssen

On 28 April 1681, the probate inventory of the jeweler *Jean (Johannes) van Rijssen*, the son of *Geraert van Rijssen*, widower of *Sara Lestevenon*, was drawn up in Amsterdam, at the request of *Jan Lestevenon*, the painter *Daniel Schellincks*, and *Esayas Fournoy*, all three guardians of *Jean van Rijssen's* children appointed in his testament⁴⁴. *Van Rijssen* was living at the time of his death on the Nieuwe Hoogstraat, which may have been the house that his grandfather *Jan van Merlen* had once lived in. The inventory contained a number of family portraits, including a pair representing "grandfather *van Meerloo* and his wife" (presumably *Jan van Merlen* and his wife *Maria van Ghils*), portraits of *Geraerd van Rijssen* and his wife, a portrait of *Jean Daniel van Rijssen* (baptized on 28 October 1665) as a child, and two small portraits of "Warnar and the late *Jean van Rijssen*".

Warnar was almost certainly the painter *Wernard* (or *Warnaer*) *van Rijssen*, who, according to Houbraken, was born in Zaltbommel around 1625, was a pupil of *Cornelis van Poelenburg* in 1646, and became a merchant in Spain in 1665 (ill. 1). It is not clear how he was related to *Johannes van Rijssen*. Wout Spies found the baptismal record of a daughter of "Wannerus *van Rijssen*" and *Catharina van Elst*, dated 16 March 1689, which may refer to the painter.

Jean van Rijssen's inventory included, in addition to these family portraits, thirty-three paintings by *Wernard van Rijssen*. Most were landscapes, but there was also a painting of 'Joseph and Mary' and one of 'Diana in her bath', both unfinished ("onvolmaect"). Worth mentioning, among the paintings by other masters, were a large picture by *Lange Pier (Pieter Aertsen)*, a Winter by *Willem Schellincks*, a landscape by (*Jacobus*) *van Soldt*, a large drawing with the pen by *Matham*⁴⁵, a landscape by *Jacob Esselens*, and an Italian harbor by "Gomar" (*Thomas?*) *Wijk*.

Paintings in the possession of Daniel Schellincks

The painter *Daniel Schellincks* (1627-1701), one of the three guardians of *Jean van Rijssen's* children, was married to *Jean's* sister, *Constantia*, born in 1634. He was the brother of the better-known landscape painter *Willem Schellincks* († 1678), one of whose paintings was recorded in *Jean van Rijssen's* collection. On 17 May 1698, *Constantia* and *Daniel* passed their testament⁴⁶. Among other bequests, they be-

queathed to *Willem Schellincks* (apparently the son of the painter of that name) a landscape with hunters made by his late father, to their daughter *Constantia* (the fourth of that name in the extended family) two landscapes hanging in the "best room" made by the testator (*Daniel Schellincks*) and to Mr. *Jacob van Rijssen*, attorney, two portraits of the testatrix, two portraits of her father and mother (*Gerard van Rijssen* and *Christina van Merlen*), and two portraits of grandfather and grandmother "Van Meerle" (*Jan van Merlen* and his wife *Maria Sijbrechts van Ghils*). If we assume that the family portraits passed on to *Jacob van Rijssen* after *Daniel Schellincks's* death in 1702, it follows in all likelihood that the portraits of *Jan van Merlen* and his spouse, painted in the early 17th century, decorated an Amsterdam house well into the next century.

Several observations emerge from this chronicle. (1) All the collectors named in this account were either born in the Southern Netherlands or had parents or grandparents who were born there. (2) In the first generation, from 1607 to 1637, the life of relatively wealthy buyers at auction (*Jan van Merlen*, *Hans van Soldt de oude* and *de jonge*, *Isaack Haeck*) intersected with that of artists (*Gillis van Coninxloo* and *Jonas van Merlen*). In the second or third generation, the relatives of these same collectors or their progeny became artists themselves (*Jacobus van Soldt*, possibly the "son of Rytzerd", and *Wernard van Rijssen*) or married into an artists' family (*Daniel* and *Willem Schellincks*). (3) Women of the affluent bourgeoisie, such as *Maria* and *Agatha van Merlen*, collected art on their own, more or less independently of the male members of their families. (4) The taste of all three generations, from *Jonas van Merlen* to *Jean van Rijssen*, was more inclined toward landscapes and still lifes (the latter, in particular, seem to have appealed to the women in the group) than toward the religious works which made up a large share of the paintings owned by other collectors, especially in the earlier part of the century. In this regard, these collectors may be considered taste leaders of the period. (5) Landscape painting was the dominant speciality of the painters in the family (*Jacob van Soldt*, *Wernard van Rijssen*, *Daniel Schellincks*), in accord, it would appear, with the tastes of the collectors in the family. (6) All the principal male members of the extended *Van Merlen* and *Van Soldt* families, with the exception of *David van Mansdaelen*, the husband of *Constantia van Merlen*, are known to have bought works of art at Orphan Chamber auctions. This can hardly be a coincidence, since only a minority of the Amsterdam élite ever bought at auction in the period for which we have a reasonably complete record of auction purchases. I suspect that buying at auction was a social activity, an opportunity for entertainment, and an occasion for emulation, enhanced by the presence of relatives and friends.

All the individuals I have written about in this chronicle had family connections with artists, a circumstance that must have stimulated their interest in art, increased their sense of the quality of the works they contemplated buying, and facilitated their access to art auctions.



44. GAA, not. arch. Amsterdam, inv. nr. 4514, film 5336, 28 April 1681. The inventory is summarized in: Bredius, *Künstler-inventare*, vol. 4, p. 1399.

45. This drawing could possibly be identical with the pen drawing transferred by *Hans van Soldt* to his sister-in-law *Agatha van Merlen*. It would have remained in his possession after the loan had been repaid and then been sold to *Geraert van Rijssen* along with the other items mentioned above.

46. Bredius, *Künstler-inventare*, vol. 6, p. 2263-2264.