Pieter Cornelisz. van Rijck and Venice

According to Karel van Mander, it was around 1588 that Pieter Cornelisz. van Rijck (Delft 1567/68 – Italy? after 17 February 1635) left his native city for Italy in the company of his second master, Huybrecht Jacobsz. Immediately prior to his departure he had enjoyed a two-month apprenticeship with Jacob I Willemsz. Delft. He remained in Italy for fifteen years, working in both oil and fresco, “with many Masters, also for many princes, great signori, prelates, mons and nuns and others in nearly every place in Italy”.1 In 1603/4, at the age of 36, Van Rijck was back in Holland and living in Haarlem. On the basis of large and smaller kitchen pieces with subjects such as *The Rich Man and the Poor Lazarus* which Van Rijck painted shortly after his return, Van Mander concluded that the master “… had done many things after Bassano”.2 This, as we shall see, is confirmed by several works, among them a *Kitchen piece* in Braunschweig, signed and dated 1604 (fig. 6). Sometime after September 1, 1605, Van Rijck left Haarlem and returned to Italy. Before leaving, he requested his cousin, the painter Floris Claesz. van Dijck, to take care of his offspring, and in case of his death, to act as their guardian.3 There is no information about Van Rijck’s whereabouts for the next 27 years, but in 1632 Van Dijck represented the absent Van Rijck in the matter of an inheritance.4 On February 17, 1635, Van Dijck acted again on behalf of Van Rijck, who, according to the document, “was at that moment in Naples”, but the name of the city has been crossed out and replaced with “Italy”.5 Although undocumented, a stay in Venice before 1604 is highly likely, as other data and works to be discussed here will indicate. However, before going to Venice, Van Rijck must have been in Rome and Prague. In the Eternal City he may have assisted the Jesuit painter-monk Giambattista Fiammeri (possibly one of the monks to whom Van Mander refers) in the Trinity chapel – the third on the left – in the Gesù. In 1588 Fiammeri had designed the ceiling decoration, and painted God the Father and angels in the scene of the *Creation* on the vault (fig. 1). In this scene, the landscape and the animals below Adam and Eve seem to be distantly related to prints in two series of the *Creation* engraved by Johannes Sadeler I: one after Crispijn van den Broeck in 1575, the other after Maarten de Vos.6 According to the documents, the landscape in the Trinity chapel – but probably this is also true of the animals in the landscape – was painted by a certain Pietro Fiammingo.7 As I have recently suggested, this Pietro may have been Pieter Cornelisz. van Rijck.8 In some of the works discussed below which can be attributed to the artist, a comparable treatment of animal forms can be observed.9 More research needs to be done in this area, but if the identification is correct, then his involvement with the Trinity chapel of the Gesù would be Van Rijck’s earliest known documented activity in Italy.

At some point in his career Van Rijck visited Prague, as is indicated by the inscrip-
tion on a signed sheet in Budapest representing an allegorical figure of Peace (fig. 2). This drawing – the most Rudolphine of his known works – is executed with a rather mannerist elegance, the solid, compact forms of the figure notwithstanding, which seems to stand halfway between the works of the followers of Hans Speckhert in Rome in the 1580s, and Bartholomeus Spranger's style in Prague. In view of this circumstance and of the fact that the sheet exhibits no traces of Venetian influence, it may well have been drawn before Van Rijck went to the Serenissima.

Less clear is where Van Rijck painted another Italianate work in a vein similar to Leonardo da Vinci and his followers: the Salome now in the Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, which is signed, but not dated (fig. 3). Although it was believed to be a copy after Leonardo himself, it is more likely to be an interpretation of a Bernardino Luini composition. This and the other aforementioned signed works – and also those to be discussed below – display a variety of styles which are not easily reconcilable but may well indicate the artist's elaboration of diverse influences to which he was exposed in his various places of residence in Italy and elsewhere.

As we shall see, Van Rijck's activity in Venice is linked at least to some extent with that of his master, Huybrecht Jacobsz. According to Houbraken, Huybrecht or Hubertus Jacobsz. was in Venice "nine or ten years at the service of the Doge's court as a portrait painter and took the name Grimani of his patron there." It is usually supposed that the latter was Doge Marino Grimani, who reigned from 1595