The Library of Cornelis Dusart: Between Artist and Gentleman*

The library of Cornelis Dusart (Haarlem 1660 - Haarlem 1704), over 200 volumes strong, reveals a man as equally interested in books relating to art as those included in the humanist worldview. Artists’ libraries remain a little-known and understudied aspect of artistic life during Holland’s Golden Age: when such inventories do survive, their typically meager contents suggest minimal literary interest. Rembrandt’s (Leiden 1606 - Amsterdam 1669) documented books form a limited but representative ensemble in their small numbers and heavily illustrated contents; in contrast, Pieter Saenredam’s (Assendelft 1597 - Haarlem 1665) library, published with commentary in 1988, has remained unusual with regard to its large size and broad scope.1 By adding Dusart’s inventory of books to the published record of artists’ libraries, our conception of artistic identity as known through literary habits may be expanded and refined to include gentleman and scholar. Although the following paragraphs provide only a cursory overview of the library’s contents, the publication of its archival transcription, partial sale, and annotated list of identified volumes, together with concordance tables (Appendices A-D), will allow future scholarship in this arena another significant resource.

The last student of Adriaen van Ostade (Haarlem 1610 - Haarlem 1685), Dusart is already known more for his possessions than his artistic contributions to the peasant genre tradition. As Abraham Bredius published in his Künstler-inventare, Dusart owned a studio filled to the brim with tools of the trade alongside a wide-ranging collection of paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, and porcelain, as known from his probate inventory of 3 December 1704 and estate sale of 21 August 1708 (see Appendices A and B, below).2 Bredius deemed Dusart’s library worthy only of a truncated selection, primarily Dusart’s art books and others with extensive illustrations appearing in the probate inventory and again in the estate sale, leaving the reader to guess the contents of the ‘hundreds more’ volumes present. Dusart’s inventory and sale have already been lauded since Bredius’s time as a remarkable look into artists’ studio activities and collecting practices, and now it may be included in assessments of artists’ reading habits during the Dutch Golden Age. When considered alongside his art collection, Dusart’s books further cast his identity as a member of Haarlem’s literary circles in sharp relief against his traditional reputation as purveyor of light-hearted and often bawdy representations of the peasantry.

Most books in Dusart’s library are identifiable, despite the abbreviated descriptions recorded in his probate inventory, and are listed alphabetically by author in Appendix C. In comparison with the average artist’s collection of twenty to forty volumes owned mostly for their illustrations, Dusart’s library contained a broader spectrum of subjects in greater number.3 But, in keeping with most other artists who owned books, Dusart read almost exclusively in his native language, either original works by

Susan Anderson

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his fellow countrymen or texts in translation. Given that Dutch translations of famous or popular works were published in ever increasing number beginning around the middle of the seventeenth century, many acquisitions can be placed during his lifetime, even if the original work itself was known in the United Provinces for decades before. Beyond this, as specific publication dates are only given for a few volumes in the 1708 sale catalogue, it is often not clear to what degree Dusart owned early or late editions, or to what extent he inherited books from his family or from his teacher, Adriaen van Ostade. As with his art collection, Dusart may have inherited a large portion, in turn sparking the taste to acquire more – in some cases to follow personal tastes and interests and in others for the sake of collecting with an encyclopedic mindset.

Even though Dusart’s library was large for an artist, in comparison with the humanistic libraries of the cultural and intellectual elite, however, it ranked among their lowest tiers. Many bibliophiles collected volumes in the thousands in a variety of languages, including Latin, French, and Spanish. In terms of content, Dusart’s volumes demonstrate a wide range of humanistic interests, with a particular focus on theology and contemporary literature, plays, and poetry, but otherwise popular topics such as law, natural history, and numismatics are absent, with the exception of Abraham Bogaert’s *De roomsche monarchy* of 1697 (qu. 11), a description of Roman portraits drawn from coins. Although Dusart followed the humanistic libraries’ trend of shelving according to format — folio, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo — their haphazard order beyond that strays from the humanistic practice of organizing further by subject.

### Contents of the library in context

Jan Białostocki, in a short article surveying artists’ libraries, rightly noted the wide-ranging nature of Dusart’s book collection, while following in Bredius’s footsteps by emphasizing the comprehensive representation of art theory and history volumes. Indeed, Dusart’s selections in this genre constitute a powerful list of long-standing favorites and newer titles. A significant number appear in his broad-ranging formal library, which he housed in a room with his desk and business papers. Appearing here are Karel van Mander’s *Schilderboek*, 1604 (qu. 13), Franciscus Junius’s *De schilder-konst der oude*, 1641 (qu. 42), Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*, 1644 (qu. 21), Cornelis de Bie’s *Gulden Cabinet*, 1662 (qu. 19), Abraham Bosse’s *Tractaet in wat manieren men op root koper snijden ofte etzen zal*, 1662 (oct. 63), Willem Goeree’s *Inleydingh tot de practijck der al-gemeene schilder-konst*, 1670 (oct. 43), the anonymous *Tweedereley name-lyst der italiënsche constenaers*, 1671 (qu. 32), Samuel van Hoogstraten’s *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, 1678 (qu. 29), and Gerard de Lairesse’s *Grondlegginge ter Teeken-konst*, 1701 (qu. 23); as well as perspective books by Hendrik Hondius (fol. 13), Dirk Bosboom (qu. 24), and François Desargus (oct. 58); Albrecht Dürer’s *Van de menschelijcke proportion*, 1622 (fol. 8) and Willem Goeree’s *Menschkunde*, 1682 (oct. 5); and several architectural treatises by or after Vincenzo Scamozzi (fol. 6, fol. 12, qu. 30) and Goeree’s *Dalgemeene bouwkunde*, 1681 (oct. 2).

An additional selection of heavily illustrated volumes was found in the anteroom of Dusart’s studio alongside his prints and drawings, and as such these titles were inventoried apart from the formal library without format noted. Almost all of these were sold and described by lot in the estate sale of 1708, whereas those in the formal library were not. These titles include several sixteenth-century volumes, consisting of Jost Amman’s *Künstliche Wolgerssene New Figuren von allerlai Jag und Weidwerck*, 1582 (n.f. 14), *Ritterliche Reutter Kunst*, 1584 (n.f. 11), and *Trachten der Weiber*, 1586 (n.f. 8), and Phillip Lonier’s *Insignia Sacrae Caesreae Majestatis*, 1579, also with illustrations by Amman (n.f. 12); a version of Aesop’s *Fables* with illustrations by