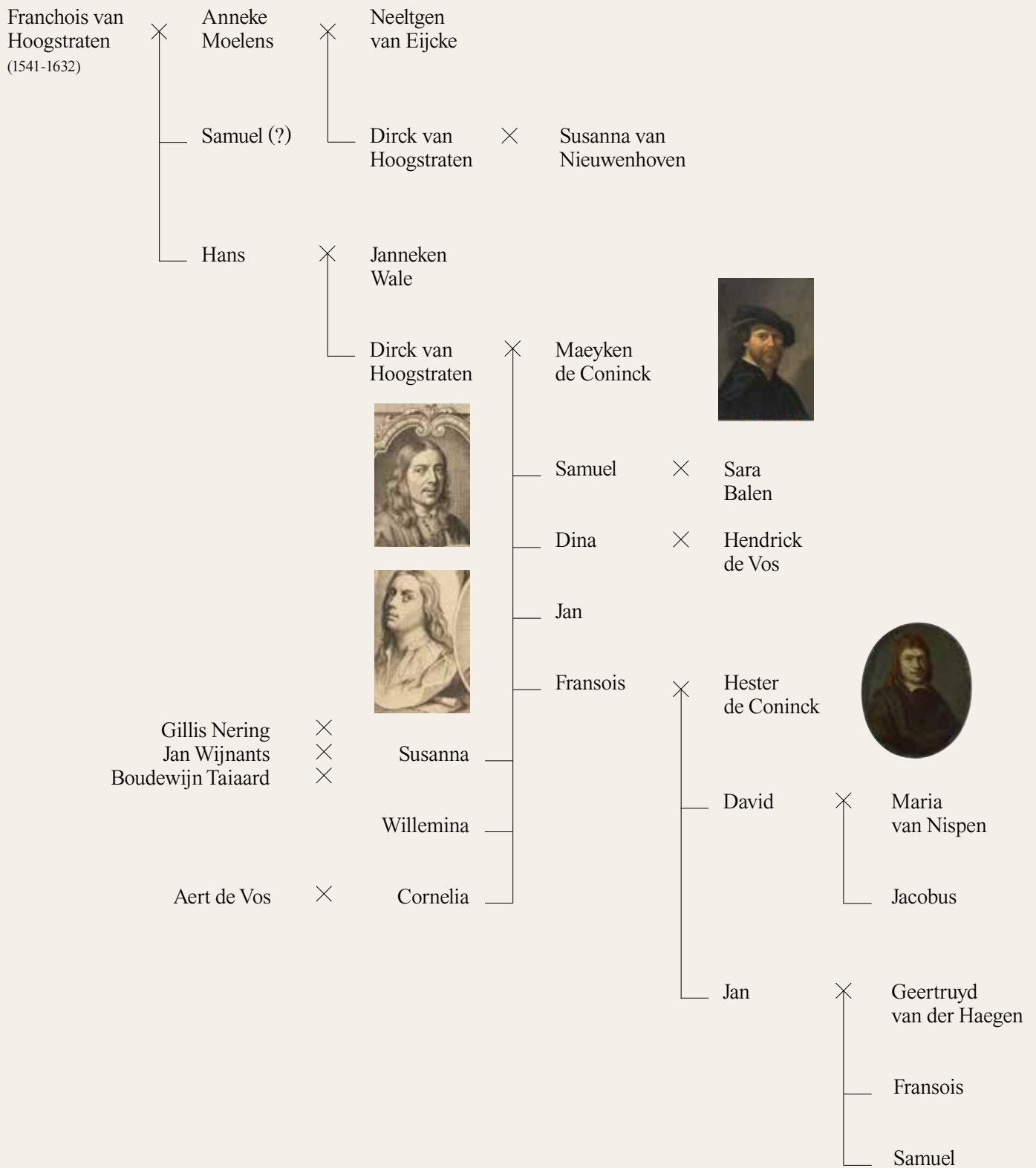


A portrait painting of Dirck van Hoogstraten, a Dutch painter and architect. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a dark blue cap with a gold band and a dark blue garment with a white lace collar. He has a full brown beard and is looking slightly to the right of the viewer.

The Life and Work
of the Painter

Dirck van
Hoogstraten
(1596-1640)

Family tree Van Hoogstraten



× Marriage
 — Children

The Life and Work of the Painter

Dirck van Hoogstraten

(1596-1640)

Summary

The painter Dirck van Hoogstraten, who trained as a silversmith, has always stood in the shadow of his more famous son Samuel (1627-1678), a pupil of Rembrandt and author of an important treatise on the art of painting. We know something of Dirck's life thanks to Arnold Houbraken's biography of him, written in the eighteenth century. But it was only in the nineteenth century that one of his paintings caught the attention of art historians. His confirmed oeuvre now consists of nine paintings, nine prints and three drawings — twenty-one works in total — and there are also some possible attributions. Nothing has survived of his work as a silversmith, although two drawings may have been intended as designs. Dirck drew inspiration from various history painters and his work after he settled in The Hague clearly shows the influence of Rembrandt in particular.

This book gives an account of Dirck's life based on all the available sources (including transcriptions of these sources). It also contains a thoroughly argued catalogue of his oeuvre. Dirck's relationship with his son Samuel, who described his father as pious and respectable, is also discussed in detail. It turns out not all the information in Houbraken's biography is reliable. Some months before his death, Dirck moved from The Hague to Dordrecht to live in the house of his recently deceased Mennonite father-in-law, a silversmith. Dirck died leaving behind seven small children. This book uncovers the role that members of the Mennonite congregation in Dordrecht played in looking after the children.

It is fascinating to note that two of Dirck's works have remained within the Van Hoogstraten family for nearly four centuries. The present book is being published to mark the occasion of the exhibition *The Illusionist. Samuel van Hoogstraten* in the Rembrandt House Museum (1 February — 4 May 2025).

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Introduction

Thanks to the painter and author Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719), we have an account of the life of Dirck van Hoogstraten (Appendix VI.46).¹ That biography was published in 1718 in the first volume of Houbraken's *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters) and is illustrated with a portrait. Houbraken therefore ensured Dirck van Hoogstraten's memory would live on, but not because he was a renowned Dutch artist. It is more likely Dirck was included because Houbraken had something to say about him. After all, Houbraken knew the Van Hoogstraten family well. From 1674 to 1678, he was a pupil of Dirck's son Samuel in Dordrecht. Samuel, a painter who had studied with Rembrandt and was the author of a book on the art of painting, would become much more famous than his father.² It was from Samuel that Houbraken heard the information he would later write down in his book from memory. Thus Houbraken wrote the following about one of the anecdotes in his biography of Dirck:

The place where this happened has slipped from my memory (as many years have passed since my master Samuel van Hoogstraten, his son, told me this).

These studio stories were undoubtedly the source for Houbraken's information when he relates that Dirck first underwent training as a silversmith and goldsmith, went to Germany to specialise further, while there learned about Dutch painters and spent several years developing his painting skills, returning to announce that he had "exchanged the hammer for the paintbrush".

After Samuel's death in Dordrecht in 1678, Houbraken was in contact with other members of the family, including the poet David van Hoogstraten (1658-1724), who was the oldest son of Samuel's brother Francois (1632-1696). This grandson of Dirck would have been in a good position to help Houbraken with information for the biography. It was at David's house that Houbraken saw a deathbed portrait of Dirck drawn by Samuel:

The year of his death became apparent to me from a margin notation on a drawing that my master Samuel van Hoogstraten had sketched after the features of his deceased father. This drawing is still kept as a remembrance of his grandfather by Mister David van Hoogstraten, known well enough for his poetry, in his art book among portraits of old and new ingenious men.

David also had a sheet of paper with notes his father Francois had made on the family in about 1660 (Appendix VI.35).³ The notes were probably copied from a bible in which important events such as births, marriages and deaths were recorded. Houbraken used this document for the biography, without mentioning his source (fig. 0.1), as is clear from a comparison between the document and Houbraken's text (Appendix VI.46).

In this same year DIRK van HOOGSTRATEN was born in Antwerp. [...] He died in Dordrecht on the 20th of December of the year 1640.

The document says: *Dirck van Hoogstraten was born in the year 1596 and died in Dordrecht in the year 1640 on 20 December in the morning at about 11 o'clock.*

His father, Hans van Hoogstraten, born in the year 1568 on St. Matthew's evening, and died on the 14th of March 1605 [...]

The document states: *My father's father Hans van Hoogstraten was born in the year 1568 on the eve of St Matthew, and died in the year 1605, on 14 March.*

Incidentally, David van Hoogstraten cooperated enthusiastically with Houbraken on his ambitious project. For the first volume, he wrote an ode “To the great theatre of painters, established by the artistically gifted gentleman Arnold Houbraken”. Houbraken died in October 1719. The third and final volume, which Houbraken's widow produced in 1721, contains a portrait of Houbraken on which David wrote four lines of poetry.

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has a design drawing for an engraving for *De groote schouburgh*. At the bottom right is a portrait of Dirck, copied from a drawing of Dirck's self-portrait that Houbraken must have made at the home of David van Hoogstraten (A19, figs. 6.2 and 7.23). But the design was only partially implemented. Another portrait of Dirck, probably the self-portrait that David's brother Jan had, was chosen instead for the engraving.⁴ Aside from one etching (A7, fig. 7.2), Houbraken had nothing to say about Dirck's work, not even the portrait in the illustration. Instead, the biography strings together various memories of Dirck's life.

Houbraken relates that Dirck's father “came to live in Holland with his family to escape persecution” and that Dirck was born in Antwerp in 1596. However, it is far from clear whether the Van Hoogstratens moved to Holland for religious reasons. There are other anecdotes too that seem doubtful when we turn to historical sources to verify them. For example, Houbraken writes that Dirck's “father had him taught silver- and goldsmithing skills in his youth, as well as the associated necessary drawing skills, and also engraving”. However, Dirck was only nine when his father died in 1605, so this person is more likely to have been Dirck's father-in-law Isaack de Coninck. Dirck continued his training as a silversmith in Germany. According to Houbraken, when he returned home his “father” asked him:

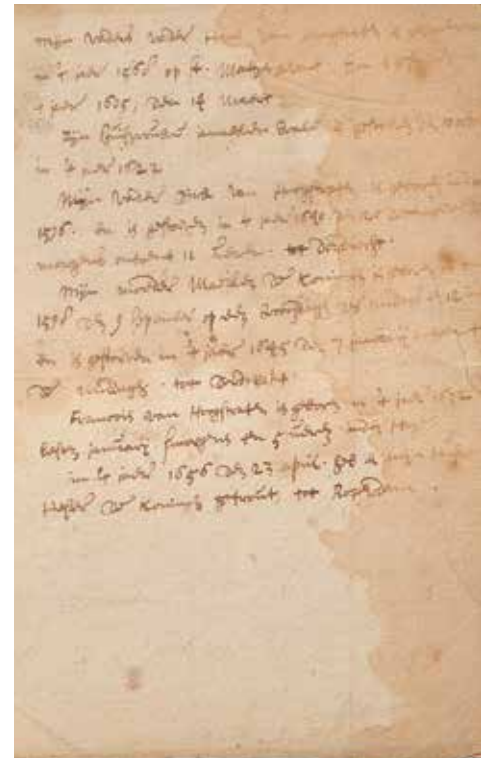
What he intended to do, whether he now wished to set up shop as master silversmith or in another way give proof of his progress in art which he had achieved on his journey.

Houbraken continues:

He replied to his father, who was most surprised: that he had exchanged the hammer for the brush and wished to turn to painting instead of to working silver.

Here too, it cannot have been Dirck's father; it must have been either his grandfather Franchois or his future father-in-law, the Mennonite goldsmith Isaack de Coninck, both from Dordrecht.

In this book, we attempt to reconstruct Dirck's life. We also describe his oeuvre, at least those works that have survived and been identified as his. It is time for Dirck to step out of the shadow of his more famous son Samuel.



0.1.
Fransois van Hoogstraten,
Notes on the family, c. 1660
(Appendix VI.35)

Next spread
Jacob Houbraken
Portraits of Samuel (left) and Dirck van Hoogstraten
(right), in Houbraken 1718-1721
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Research Library
317 E 29 (Dirck) and 317 E 30 (Samuel)

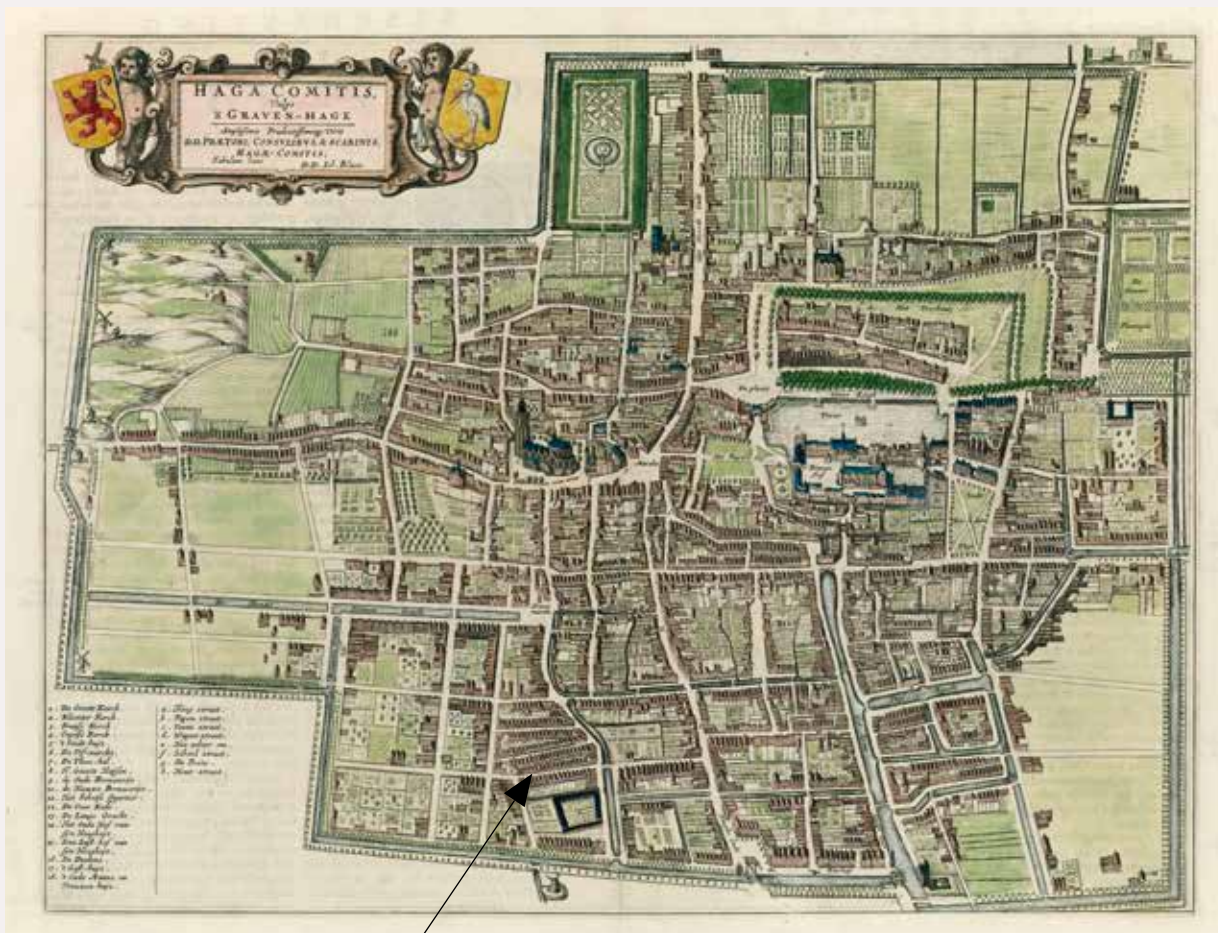


2.

Painter
in
The Hague

Dirck can rightly be called a Hague painter.

In 1630, he bought a house, probably with a workshop, on the street Corte Molstraat, which he later sold to the painter Willem van Diest. Dirck had at least two pupils in addition to his sons Samuel and Jan. He was first and foremost a history painter, and was undoubtedly influenced by Rembrandt.



2.1.

J. Blaeu, Map of The Hague, 1649
HGA, Collection of maps gr.0252
Photograph: Jan Jansen
The arrow points to plot 16
where Dirck had his house

House, yard and garden on Corte Molstraat

In around 1628, Dirck moved from Dordrecht to The Hague.¹⁰³ He had had connections with this town from an early age. In May 1624, Dirck signed a deed before a Hague notary stating that he had paid his half-sister Neeltgen 100 guilders from their mother's estate (fig. 2.5). The deed also suggests Dirck's parents were married with a prenuptial agreement and the family were living in The Hague in 1602.¹⁰⁴ Dirck himself may have spent some time in The Hague in 1620, after returning from his travels in Germany and Italy, when he was commissioned by the Hague printmaker and publisher Hendrik Hondius I to make an engraving (A9).

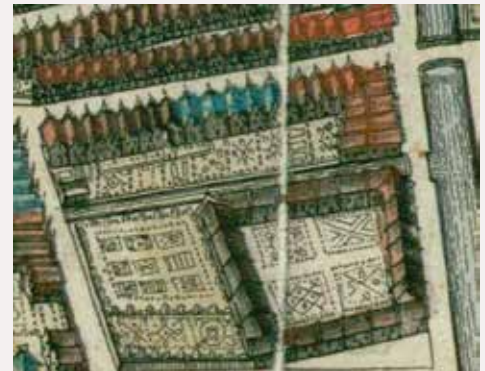
After a spell in Dordrecht, where both his oldest son Samuel and his oldest daughter Dina were born, Dirck stayed in The Hague, where he had the son of a certain Mr Ossewaert as a pupil.¹⁰⁵ In 1630, Dirck bought a house in the street called Corte Molstraat (now Nieuwe Molstraat). He would live and work there for the next ten years.¹⁰⁶

The history of the street needs to be discussed in order to pinpoint the precise location of this house. The city was extended in about 1615. Then, in 1616, the Heiligegeest almshouses (which still exist) were built in a field south of The Hague on the canal Paviljoensgracht. The map of The Hague from 1649-1652 made by the cartographer Joan Blaeu (1598-1673) indicates the almshouses with the number 8 (fig. 2.1). On the north side had long been a watercourse — also shown on the map — leading to a mill. Housing was also built on the field to the north of that. The land surveyor Floris Jacobsz (active 1582-1634) drew a map showing eighteen plots between the watercourse (now the street Rozemarijnstraat) and Heerstraat, which became Corte Molstraat. This street joined the avenue of the widow Bouckhorst in the west (now called Looijerstraat). The field the houses were to be built on was owned by the Van Naesthoven brothers, who are both called gardeners in the records.¹⁰⁷ Blaeu's map also shows eighteen houses (fig. 2.2). That this is the same as the number of plots in the map (now lost) drawn by Floris Jacobsz is surely no coincidence. Over the course of time, houses were built on those plots, all with grounds reaching as far as the mill watercourse to the south.

In May 1630, Dirck purchased two plots on the south side of Corte Molstraat from the town councillor Huibrecht Adriaenssen van Suydervliet (1608-1641). Van Suydervliet himself had acquired the plots separately. In July 1623, he bought a house and grounds for 900 guilders from the wine merchant Engelbrecht Sloten. This house was encumbered with a debt of 600 guilders in the name of Doctor Voorburch "having as an asset and property from Cornelis Maertens van Naesthoven", the original owner, who would undoubtedly have worked the land in his capacity as a gardener. The neighbour to the west was the widow of Cornelis Meessen van Leyden.¹⁰⁸ The addition "now of the said Suydervliet" implies Van Suydervliet had obtained that plot from the widow before July 1623. When Dirck purchased both plots in 1630, his neighbour to the west was a certain Jan Jansz van Arckelens. Van Arckelens' plot was number 18 in the map of Floris Jacobsz, the land surveyor.¹⁰⁹ This shows that in 1630 Dirck must have purchased the plots numbered 17 (just a garden) and 16 (house and grounds), which were on the west side of Corte Molstraat (the site of what is now Nieuwe Molstraat 298-314).

Dirck moved into the Van Suydervliet house (plot 16). According to the property tax register of 1628, Van Suydervliet was taxed at 6 pounds and 6 *stuivers*, which means his assets were assessed at 6,000 pounds. In 1632, a note was added above his name in this property tax register stating "now Mr Dirck van Hoochstraten, Painter".¹¹⁰ The addition is confirmation Dirck was living in the house by then.

Dirck paid Van Suydervliet 1,300 guilders in 1630: 100 guilders in cash and the rest in the form of two bonds valued at 600 guilders each with his



2.2.
Corte Molstraat and the almshouses of Heiligegeesthofje, detail in the map by Joan Blaeu (fig. 2.1)

The work that most clearly shows a possible link with Italy is the engraving dated 1620 (fig. 7.1). It is a copy of the *Supper at Emmaus* by Raphael Sadeler, who in turn had copied Bassano (A9; fig. A9.1). The Bassano family mainly worked in and around Venice, but prints by them or after their work could of course be purchased in many places in the Dutch Republic, Germany and Italy. Moreover, Dirck was commissioned for this engraving by the Hague publisher Hendrik Hondius I and he therefore probably had no say in the subject matter. The date makes it likely that Dirck was back in the Netherlands in that year and available for assignments.

The second work in a style reminiscent of Italian Baroque art is his *Ecce Homo* (A7; fig. 7.2). The composition is his own invention. Arnold Houbraken mentions this etching as an example of Dirck's work as an engraver.²⁰ The picture depicts the moment when Pontius Pilate shows Jesus to the people. While Jesus has been accused of proclaiming himself King of the Jews, Pilate announces pragmatically "Behold the man". The composition's lack of depth plus the figure of Jesus are both reminiscent of Italian examples. However, the other figures are types to be found in Northern Netherlandish art. Van Hoogstraten may have copied the man with the tall hat from prints by Lucas van Leyden or Hendrick Goltzius.



7.2.
Ecce Homo (A7)

Early work: nudes

The drawing of the *Triumph of Bacchus* (A14; fig. 7.3) and that of the *Battle between Gods and Giants* (A13; fig. 7.4) show how interested Van Hoogstraten was in depicting nudes in motion. It is easier to find examples he may have used in Italian art than in works from the Northern Netherlands or Flanders. Michelangelo's ceiling paintings with scenes from Genesis, from 1508-1512 and his *Last Judgement* from around 1540, both in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, were an important inspiration for nudes for many artists. Incidentally, Dirck did not have to have visited Rome to be familiar with these works.

The themes in which Van Hoogstraten reveals his interest in nudes in motion are relatively rare in Northern Netherlandish art, particularly the *Battle between Gods and Giants*. The *Triumph of Bacchus* shows Mercury in the top left with his staff and wings on his cap (fig. 7.3). Bacchus holds the hand of a nude woman. Between them stands a soldier, looking towards the viewer. There is little sense of depth in the picture. That links this drawing to Dirck's work as a silversmith, where figurative work is generally either two-dimensional or with very little relief.

The drawing of the *Battle between Gods and Giants* seems primarily an exercise in depicting nude figures in dynamic poses, with the representation of a mythological theme being of secondary importance (fig. 7.4). The subject, which is taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, concerns the gods' battle with horrendous monsters and is a story of rebellion and arrogance. Here too, we can point to examples in Italy and by contemporary painters in the Dutch Republic.²¹ As in the previous drawing, there is little depth in the picture, which could suggest a design for a silver or gold object. The two drawings were probably executed some time between 1620 and 1625. Both signatures are very similar to Dirck's signature in the notarial deed dated 1624 (Appendix VI.3; fig. 2.5).

Early work: Pre-Rembrandtists

Dirck's paintings in landscape format refer to compositions by Pre-Rembrandtists. For the first time, he places figures convincingly *in* a landscape rather than in front of it, which improves the sense of depth. *The Adoration of the Kings* from about 1625-1630 is a good example



7.3.
Triumph of Bacchus (A14)



7.4.
Battle between Gods and Giants (A13)



A11.2.
Dirck van Hoogstraten
detail with Tmolus, King Midas full-face
and the man with the turban in profile

A11.3.
Samuel van Hoogstraten
Perspective Box (detail), c. 1656
London, National Gallery,
inv.no. NG3832



PROVENANCE

Auctioned in London (Christie's), 27 May 1960, no. 114: as Jan Moeyaert, "signed", but without further details; The Hague, St. Lucas art dealership, 1961; Auctioned in Los Angeles (Bonhams), 26 March 2019, no. 547: as Claes Moeyaert, *The Competition between Apollo and Marsyas*.

LITERARY SOURCE

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XI, 146-189.

LITERATURE

Tümpel 1974, p. 10, note 87, p. 129, fig. 177 as Jan Moeyaert (?), *Der Wettstreit von Apoll und Marsyas*; Sumowski 1983-1994, vol. 6 (1994), p. 3522 and p. 3531, note 38 (as *Wettstreit zwischen Apoll und Marsyas* and attributed to Dirck van Hoogstraten); Sluijter 2000, p. 43, fig. 117 as Jan Moeyaert?, *Het oordeel van Midas*.

This painting was previously attributed to Jan and Claes Moeyaert, but it does not fit with their oeuvre. However, as Sumowski was the first to note, it is a very good fit with the Pre-Rembrandtist paintings of Dirck van Hoogstraten. That would imply a date of around 1627.

The scene has repeatedly been interpreted as the competition between Apollo and Marsyas. But that musical contest was judged by the Muses, and they are absent from this representation. This must therefore be the contest between Apollo and the forest god Pan. The mountain god Tmolus judges the musical skills of Apollo and Pan while King Midas gives his unsolicited opinion. Tmolus sits in the middle, with his distinguishing attribute of the oak leaf wreath and his judge's staff between his knees. Apollo plays a violin. Pan is seated in front of Apollo with his back to the viewer, holding his flute in his hands. The viewer's attention is drawn to Apollo and Tmolus by their colourful clothes. Pan stands out because of the light falling on his back from the left. King Midas stands on the right, but his distinguishing ass's ears can barely be seen.

Pan, the god of wild nature and the animal instinct, does battle with the god Apollo, who symbolises rationality and order. This contest is about the opposition between culture (Apollo) and nature (Pan) and between string instruments and wind instruments. Tmolus proclaims Apollo the winner, but King Midas criticises his judgement. Tmolus then points to his ear.⁴⁹ This may be intended to indicate his ruling is based on what he can hear, or a reference to the donkey's ears Midas would be given by Apollo as a punishment. For Apollo decided that ears capable of such ridiculous opinions did not deserve to take a human shape. Midas' unwanted – and harshly punished – intervention in this musical duel served as a warning to the viewer against hubris and giving uninformed opinions.

Pieter Lastman's *Judgment of Midas* from around 1616 has so many similarities that it must surely have been used as an example by Van Hoogstraten (fig. A11.1).⁵⁰ In Lastman's painting, Midas is the man on the right with the turban.⁵¹ His ass's ears can clearly be seen and he points towards Pan. King Midas cannot be identified so easily in Van Hoogstraten's work (fig. A11.2). Given the reliance on Lastman for the composition, you would expect the man with the turban to be Midas, but it is precisely in this respect that Van Hoogstraten deviates from his source. In his representation, the man with the high tapered hat and crown is the unfortunate King Midas. The crown and full beard are in line with the iconographic tradition but the donkey's ears are largely hidden from view. Midas is talking to the beardless man in the turban. This may be his manservant, who would later reveal the fact that Midas has the ears of an ass, something Midas had managed to keep secret until then.⁵² Midas

eventually died of shame after his secret was exposed. Ovid says nothing about the fate of the challenger Pan.

Van Hoogstraten has arranged the figures in a closed circle without making sufficiently clear how they relate to one another. Lastman's approach is different: his arrangement is more open and there is no ambiguity about the identity of the main protagonists.⁵³

Dirck's son Samuel shows the *Contest between Apollo and Pan* in his perspective box painting (fig. A11.3). Samuel shows the right side of a large painting with a gilt frame in which Apollo can be seen with a lyre, Pan with a flute and King Midas with his ass's ears. The *Perspective Box* contains various features typical of a modern home of the time, possibly that of Samuel and his wife Sara Balen. The painting of Apollo and Pan could have been placed in the imaginary domestic domain of Sara, to be interpreted along with the other paintings in the perspective box as a warning against various sins.⁵⁴ It should be noted that the painting of the *Contest between Apollo and Pan* included by Samuel in his *Perspective Box* bears no resemblance in terms of the composition to the work by his father.

Three paintings of this theme are known by the Hague painter Moyses van Wtenbrouck (c. 1590/1600–c. 1647), whom Dirck would have known personally during his time in The Hague. The earliest, from 1615, is a composition with small figures in which Apollo plays a lyre. The painting from 1622 shows Pan playing, not Apollo.⁵⁵ In 1625, Van Wtenbrouck painted a third version, this time with large figures reclining. In all these works the main protagonists can be clearly identified.



A11.1.
Pieter Lastman
Judgment of Midas, c. 1616
Canvas, 83.8 x 99.6 cm
Turin, private collection

Colophon

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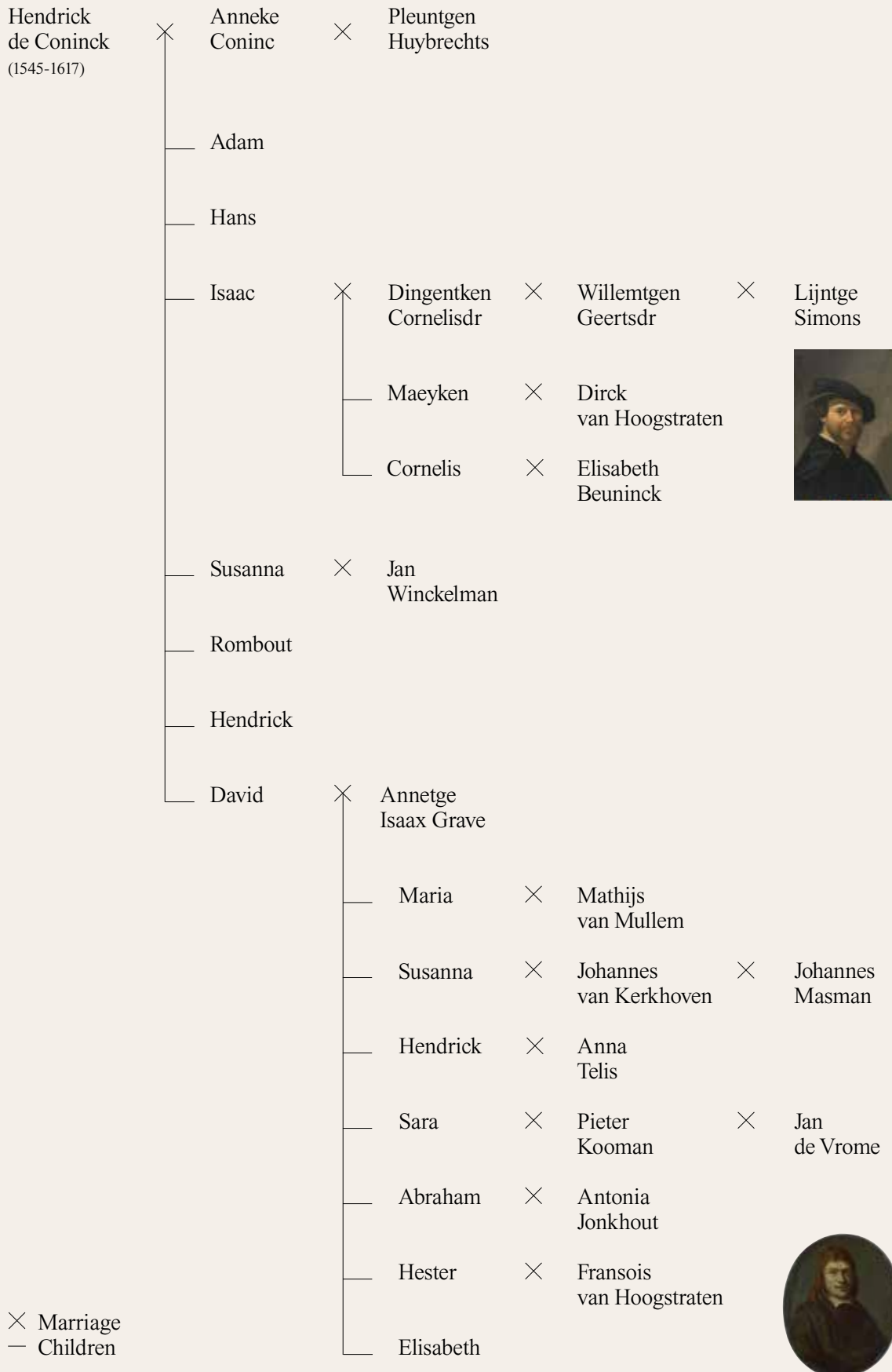
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Family tree De Coninck



The painter Dirck van Hoogstraten (1596-1640), who trained as a silversmith, has always stood in the shadow of his famous son Samuel (1627-1678), a pupil of Rembrandt and author of an important treatise on the art of painting. This monograph puts Dirck van Hoogstraten in the spotlight for the first time.

There was already some information about Dirck's life thanks to the biography Arnold Houbraken wrote in the eighteenth century. However, it was only in the nineteenth century that one of his paintings caught the attention of art historians. The *catalogue raisonné* presented here consists of nine paintings, nine prints and three drawings, plus several works where the attribution to Dirck cannot be confirmed. Nothing of his work as a silversmith has survived. Dirck van Hoogstraten drew inspiration from history painters, Rembrandt in particular from 1632 onwards. Dirck was Samuel's first teacher, and the relationship between the father and son is also discussed in detail.