

# Connection between Rough Brushstrokes and Vulgar Subjects in Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Paintings

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## 1. Introduction

Karel van Mander stated in his *Schilder-boeck* that painters at the time were accustomed to applying their paint more thickly than before; hence, their paintings were made seemingly of stone relief.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, he used the terms “uneven and rough (*oneffen en rouw*)” and “beautifully, neat and clear (*schoon, net en blijde*)” as two contrasting manners in the application of paint.<sup>2</sup> His comment is followed by a well-known passage referring to Titian’s earlier style, executed “with incredible neatness (*met onghelooflijke netticheyt*)” and his later one, “with stains and rough strokes (*met vlecken en rouw’ streken*)”. In 1604, when van Mander was writing the above passage, it was uncommon among Netherlandish painters to paint so thickly that their paintings might be compared to a relief. Nevertheless, in *Lives of the Northern Painters*, van Mander mentioned two painters who applied their paint so thick that the canvas could not be rolled or had to be scraped off,<sup>3</sup> although such rough manner was more tightly connected to the Italian style. In any event, the dichotomy of the neatness and the roughness of application of the paint was introduced into Netherlandish art theory at the time.

Within more or less a decade, the rough style began as a practice in the Netherlands. In this context, Peter Paul Rubens in the south and Frans Hals in the north have always been mentioned as practitioners of fluent and free brushstrokes. Among other examples of these artists include Rembrandt, Lievens, Adriaen Brouwer, and Adriaen van de Venne. The list could be extended to landscape painters, such as Jan van Goyen.

In fact, painters in the Netherlands increasingly took on rough, loose, and spontaneous style during the 1620s and the 1630s. In 1641, Philips Angel stated that “a nimble, bold but yet sweet-flowing brush” is among the virtues that an excellent painter must obtain,<sup>4</sup> and warned his colleagues against stiff neatness. Considering his taste for extreme naturalism, it is difficult to estimate to what degree of “rough” or “loose” touches would be acceptable to him. As he used the words “curious looseness (*curieuse lossicheyd*)” even for Dou’s hand, he must have referred to a subtle difference. Nevertheless, his opinion could reflect the development of painting style in the earlier decades in the seventeenth century when many painters began to apply bolder brushes.

Most of these painters who employed rough brushstrokes were engaged in low-genre scenes that featured peasants, beggars, or street people. Although various factors contributed to an artist’s choice of painting style, it seems worthwhile to consider the subject matter as a possible determinant for the brushstroke. The landscape painters will not be treated in this short work for want of space. In the following, the general idea of low-life genre scenes in the 1620s and 1630s will be first discussed while making a few remarks on their brushstrokes. Then, it will be followed by a section discussing a few painters who altered their brushstrokes apparently based on subject matter. In conclusion, the rhetorical or theoretical background to evaluate the style of paintings will also be

considered. The general tendency to connect painting style to its creator's personality appears to be related to the shift in combining painting style and subject matter, which would become less common as the integrity of the personal, signature style is considered as a kind of norm in modern times.

## 2. Low-Life Genre Scenes in the 1620s and 1630s

The pictorial representation of peasants and street people had its roots in the art of Hieronymus Bosch (fig. 1), Pieter Aertsen and Pieter Bruegel. Graphic arts, especially prints by Dürer and Matsys,<sup>5</sup> also contributed much to the development of the genre. Although their depictions showed the deformation on the proportion of human figures (a bit too plump or meager, and usually gnarled in both cases) and made people more comical and laughable by way of caricature, the brushstrokes themselves are neither sketchy nor rough.<sup>6</sup> David Vinkboons, who was born in Mechelen in 1576, succeeded the tradition and painted various scenes in which the Bruegelian theatre of farmers is enacted.

During the 1620s and 1630s, the interest in depicting peasants, beggars, and other social outcasts increased rapidly. Hals executed his *Rommel Pot Player* (fig. 2) from 1618 to 1622 in which he applies highly visible and bold brushstrokes. His even earlier *Shrovetide Revellers*, which betrayed the influence of Jacob Jordaens,<sup>7</sup> can be seen as in the similar vein.

Brouwer has often been connected to Hals, for he had come from Antwerp to the north by March 1625 and had been active in Haarlem until his return to the south in 1631.<sup>8</sup> Although he must have known Hals's art and acquired certain inspirations from it,



Fig. 1 Hieronymus Bosch, *Triptych of Haywain* (outer wings), 1500–1502, oil on panel, 135 x 90 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Fig. 2 Frans Hals, *Rommel Pot Player*, 1618–1622, 106 x 80.3 cm, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth.



Fig. 3 Adriaen Brouwer, *Fight between Two Peasants*, 30.8 x 25.8cm, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.



Fig. 4 Adriaen van Ostade, *Rustic Concert*, 1635–1637, oil on panel, 27 x 30 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Brouwer developed his highly personal approach. His specialty is to grasp the coarse manner of drinking, smoking, and fighting men in their liveliest in relatively small picture format (fig. 3). Humorous gaiety prevailing in Hals's art is subdued, and the world he depicted is coarser and manlier in nature. Brouwer marked a new phase in peasant genre in both southern and northern Netherlands. As Renger presented, Joos van Craesbeeck, David Teniers the Younger, and David Ryckaert the Younger were indebted to Brouwer's art in the Southern Netherlands.<sup>9</sup> In the Northern provinces, Adriaen and Isaac van Ostade (fig. 4) and many other painters followed the path he paved, although there is another tradition of farmyard depiction in Rotterdam.<sup>10</sup> In Haarlem, in addition to van Ostade brothers, Jan Miense Molenaer took the peasants, drinking people, and street musicians as his subjects.<sup>11</sup>

Besides paintings, there is also a long tradition of graphic representation of peasant in Germany and the Netherlands from the sixteenth century. However, it is Jacques Callot from Lorraine who deserves a special attention in this work. He published the print series of beggars in the 1620s (fig. 5) and the *Misery of War* in the 1630s,<sup>12</sup> in which the expressionistic way of handling is developed skillfully. As print medium can easily be circulated, his prints seem to have had certain influence on art in the Netherlands, including Rembrandt's etchings. Adriaen van de Venne, a Dutch painter and illustrator, might have certain knowledge of Callot's print, as he was involved in his brother's



Fig. 5 Jacques Callot, *A Beggar with Crutches*, 1622–1623, etching.

business of printing and publishing.<sup>13</sup> Van de Venne was born in Delft in 1589, and moved to Middelburg in 1614 where he also provided the illustrations for books, including the writings of Jacob Cats. Mainly after he settled in The Hague in 1625, he painted particular low-life scenes in grisaille in which beggars, rascals, and extremely poor people are represented satirically.

All the artists cannot be mentioned here, but it should be emphasized that most of these early low-life genres involved rather rough brushstrokes and traces of artists' hands. For example, Callot's print shows strokes that are freely zigzagging around tattered shoes and disheveled clothes, whereas bold and clear lines are used to depict the shadowy area. Although the high degree of control was undoubtedly needed to achieve such a result, Callot's print gives an impression of spontaneity, which is also seen in Rembrandt's etchings. Indeed, the etching technique itself allows artists to develop more spontaneous, sketch-like style, and they employed the technique at its full advantage.

As for paintings, Brouwer's brushstrokes are remarkable in a number of his works. His paintings are mostly small with about 30 centimeters on one side and are not intended to be seen from afar. As such, the traces of his hand are, in a sense, even more apparent. He used both warm-toned and bright-gray *imprimatura*, and let it contribute to the effect of the surface, making it interact with the upper layer of paint. Then he applied a thin paint layer that left clear traces of movement of his hand. Analyzing the painting technique of Brouwer, Sonnenburg stated that the transparency and thinness of the paint layer make it possible to create the atmospheric effect of Brouwer's interior<sup>14</sup> (fig. 6.) Especially in the background, clothes, and floors, spectators feel as if they could follow his strokes and touches and see the speed and order of their application. His followers exhibited similar rough brushstrokes, but they were often more tempered.

Van de Venne also used rough brushstrokes. As in Brouwer's painting, van de Venne depicted disheveled clothing and tousled hair in a sketchy manner (figs. 7–8). Certain background area is done in a careless, random, and at times almost sloppy manner. The monochrome tone added certain air of roughness in the scene.

Compared with earlier examples from the sixteenth century, the style in Brouwer's and van de Venne's paintings during the 1620s and 1630s was different while the subject is almost the same. The same holds true when their works are compared with those featuring similar motifs in the latter half of the seventeenth century. In general, the low-life genre was represented in roughest way in the first half of the seventeenth century, and the neat and exquisite way of painting became popular also for the peasant scene in the latter half of the century. An example for this is Cornelis Bega's *The Prayer before the Meal* (fig. 9).<sup>15</sup> Although the farmhouse interior in Bega's painting indicates extreme poverty, everything is represented in a smooth way. The girl's skin and hair are not at all coarse, and even a cracked bowl is neatly attended. This tendency is observed even in one same artist's



Fig. 6 Adriaen Brouwer, *The Bitter Draught*, ca. 1635, 46 x 35cm, Städel Museum, Frankfurt.



Fig. 7 Adriaen van de Venne, "*Jammerlijk*", 1621, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 8 Adriaen van de Venne, "*Fraay en Lelijck*", 1630s, Erik Noah, New York.



Fig. 9 Cornelis Bega, *The Prayer before the Meal*, 1663, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 10 Adriaen van Ostade, *Resting Travelers*, 1671, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

oeuvre. Adriaen van Ostade, for example, first employed the relatively free manner similar to that of Brouwer, but his style would change later into a more smooth and neat one (fig. 10).

As such, the taste of the period in which the works were produced seems to be among the key factors in the choice of painting style. Interestingly, the popularity of rough touches in low-life genre scenes corresponded to the vogue of monochrome still-life and landscape paintings in Haarlem. Although the most influential factors for this trend could not be pinpointed decisively, there are at least three aspects which might have contributed to the popularity.

The first is the introduction of the idea of *sprezzatura* from the Italian art theory into artistic practice in the North. Although *De volmaeckte hovelinck*, the Dutch translation of Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, appeared only in 1662, van Mander must have been familiar with the idea as he introduced the typical episodes of late Titian in his book. In addition, in reexamining the meaning of the word *sprezzatura* in Dutch art theory, Pousão-Smith showed that the word was translated as *lossigheid*, which the translator interpreted as "a looseness as painters call it (*een lossigheydt gelijk het de Schilders noemen*)".<sup>16</sup> Here, the translator seemingly searched for a suitable word from the earlier customary use of Dutch language and found it in painters' idiom. Although written testimonies seemed to have appeared later than the actual practices, it is highly probable that there were expectations for more spontaneous, sketchy manner in the Netherlands in the first half of the seventeenth century.

The first aspect is in conjunction with the second one, which is cost sparing in executing the paintings. The paint layer of monochrome landscapes and low-life genre scenes were mostly too thinly applied and thus betrayed the traces of an artist's hand. It is a kind of opposite to the daubing type of rough and bold strokes, which involved an affluent application of paint. After there were drastic social changes at the turn of the century, Dutch painters strived for survival in a competitive situation. A number of painters developed a quick way of reducing the cost, by either letting the middle-toned under layer contribute to the effect of the surface or applying the paint layers so thinly to save not only paint but also time in drying the painting.<sup>17</sup> The lowly subjects might match with the modest prices.

The third aspect, which will be further discussed later, concerns the connection of the style to the self-image or self-representation of its creator. Van Mander lamented on the reputation of his fellow painters, referring to a common saying that had become a prevailing idea: "the more one is a painter, the wilder he is (*hoe Schilder hoe wilder*)."<sup>18</sup> The saying was mainly concerned with the behavior and attitude of artists rather than with the artistic style. Nevertheless, there were usually anecdotal associations of style and the mind that executed it. For example, van Mander often mentioned Frans Floris as a rapid and proficient painter as well as an excessive drinker. He enjoyed executing works even in his inebriety. Van Mander stated: "it seemed as if he had even more spirit then [when he is drunk], or that he thereby entertained his own spirit."<sup>19</sup> The free spirit and free manner of execution are seemingly linked together by association. Similar examples can be found abundantly from artists' lives. Thus, the connection of style to the state of mind or personality of its maker is among the factors to be considered.<sup>20</sup> In addition, this third factor seems to be supported by the first one, that is, the appreciation of *sprezzatura* or a kind of nonchalance and looseness in execution. If there were no such appreciation, the combination of the cost sparing effort and the rough execution by wild painter would only be regarded as a coarse scribble, or second-rate works at best. The aforementioned three factors seemed

intertwined with each other, and the appreciation of the dexterity behind the rough appearance would be the precondition for the popularity of lowly, rather somber, but proficiently created paintings.

In any event, the dusty low-life scene with rugged and disheveled clothes and wretched people is especially suitable motives for the speedy rough touches. Intuitively, it is easy to assume that painters, such as Brouwer or Hals, might have had similar reasons. In the following section of this work, a number of proofs to the above reasons will be provided by examining the artists who appeared to have selected consciously their style of execution and whose criterion to do so might have been related to subject matter.

### 3. Connection between Brushstrokes and Subject Matter

Later in the seventeenth century, Samuel van Hoogstraten advised his painter colleagues to change the handling according to what one is painting. He stated:

For there should be other kind of looseness of handling for the airy hair, trembling foliage, or something like that. Other types of brushstrokes apply for beautiful nude and shiny marble. But you should reach the right way in everything, only if you just conform your hand to the eye and judgment.<sup>21</sup>

Van Hoogstraten's statement might not appear particularly informative, but it is still a rare written testimony showing that painters in the seventeenth century were aware of the connection between the type of brushstroke and the object depicted with it. However, the unity of style as a whole must be maintained in one same work, even though the touches and strokes were changed according to the things depicted. Still, a number of painters seemed to have applied the multiple styles in their career, and the change was not because of typical life chronology, namely, the shift in personal style in the course of time, but because of the subject matter they chose.

It is known that artists often chose from multiple styles according to occasions and functions of the work. The best examples will be given from drawings. As it is generally observed, drawings for sale as completed works of art tended to be executed rather meticulously, and daily studies for artists themselves were rough and sketchy. Discussing the style of Rembrandt, Nicola Courtright showed that certain drawings intended for *album amicorum* tended to be made rougher and more sketchily, thereby, giving the appearance of freshness, ease, and being unfinished, which lead to an impression that an artist's innermost imaginings are being revealed.<sup>22</sup> As such, the function and occasion of the work were undoubtedly a decisive and influential factor.

In addition to the function of the work, the subject matter appears to have been a factor according to which artists altered their style. Most apparent of these artists among the Dutch is Adriaen van de Venne. As already discussed, he made many grisailles with lowly people's folly and deceitfulness as subject matter.<sup>23</sup> The banderole with a witty epigram gives the basic tone of the scene. Van de Venne was also active as a poet, and similar messages can be found in his writings, such as *Tafereel van de belacchende werelt* (Picture of the ridiculous world). As scholars have argued, these grisailles are not associated with sympathy toward the poor.<sup>24</sup> The depicted people are a target of criticism and laughter. As Annelies Plokker pointed out, the represented people, namely the poor, beggars, and peasants, were at times called grey (*grauw* or *grauwtje*), which was the Dutch homonym



Fig.11 Adriaen van de Venne, *Fishing for the Souls*, 1614, 98.5 x 187.8 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

for grisaille (*grauw*).<sup>25</sup> As she explained, van de Venne tried to depict the grey people in grey, and thus the subject matter was connected to color choice.

Van de Venne's earlier paintings have colorful palette and touches that are totally different from his low-life grisailles. He had absorbed the art of Jan Brueghel in Middelburg, and executed works featuring noblemen, enjoyable social gatherings, or political themes. His *Fishing for the souls* (fig. 11) in 1614, for example, exhibits a precisely neat and meticulous manner instead of a carefree one. One might assume that life chronology could explain the change in style. Indeed, it is normal for an artist to change style in his or her lifetime. However, even among his grisailles executed in the same period, van de Venne altered the degree of meticulousness or *fini* of his work.

Let us examine van de Venne's grisaille dated around 1626 to 1628. The grisaille represents Frederick V and his spouse Elisabeth Stuart on horseback (fig. 12). The size of the painting is much greater than his usual grisaille.<sup>26</sup> As such, it is more apparent that the dress and its decorations, the skin of the dapple-gray horse, and the airy hair of the page boy were treated with extra care. The choice of grisaille as the medium must be explained by the fact that van de Venne was already recognized in using such technique. It shows the artist's originality and adds value to the painting. The brushstrokes, however, are entirely different from those in his usual grisailles. This must have been a conscious decision according to the subject matter, the royal couple.

Jacques de Gheyn II, who was also active in The Hague, adopted various styles in drawings. In his famous drawing featuring witches and a hermit crab, two different techniques exist within the same sheet (fig. 13).<sup>27</sup> While a hermit crab is depicted with precise control of his executing hand even in minute details, the fanciful witches and monsters are treated sketchily though extremely deftly. As already noted, the drawings were made in different styles according to their intended use or function. However, de Gheyn II seems to have changed his drawing style also for the sake of subject matter. He showed his freest, liveliest, and most spontaneous hand in treating the witches, devils, furious woman, and street people (figs. 14–15).<sup>28</sup> Traces of his hand match the subject matter, although these traces might not always display his signature style by which de Gheyn II is clearly identified. Still, the works themselves are accomplished in its utmost harmony between what he draws and how he draws it. Incidentally, de Gheyn II's sister is



Fig. 12 Adriaen van de Venne, *Frederick V and Elisabeth Stuart, 1626–1628*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Fig. 13 Jacques de Gheyn II, *Study of Hermit Crab and Witchcraft, ca.1602*, pen, ink and watercolor, 18.5 x 24.5 cm, Graphische Sammlung, Städel Museum, Frankfurt.



Fig. 14 Jacques de Gheyn II, *Scene of Sorcery*, pen and brown ink, 38.2 x 28.5 cm, Kupferstichkabinett, Dresden.

thought to have married van de Venne's brother Jan; de Gheyn II and van de Venne were active in the same high social circle in The Hague.<sup>29</sup> It seems highly plausible that these two were conscious of the rhetorical theory when conforming their style to subject matter.

It has often been suggested that low-life subject matter allowed Hals to challenge his bold and frank style even more freely.<sup>30</sup> No written document exists to express this point of view, but his early repertoire, except for the portrait paintings, largely comprises such kind of themes. The comparison between his portrait and genre painting from almost the same date reveals the tendency in which he applied bolder brushes in genre paintings.<sup>31</sup>

Rubens would have been conscious of the *decorum* that was extended to the type of brushstrokes. Karolien de Clippel takes *Bacchus* in the Ermitage (fig. 16) as an example and introduced a letter dated 1676 from an art dealer, Matthijs Masson.



Fig. 15 De Gheyn II, *Various Subjects*, pen and dark-brown ink, grey wash, 20.6 x 17.3 cm.

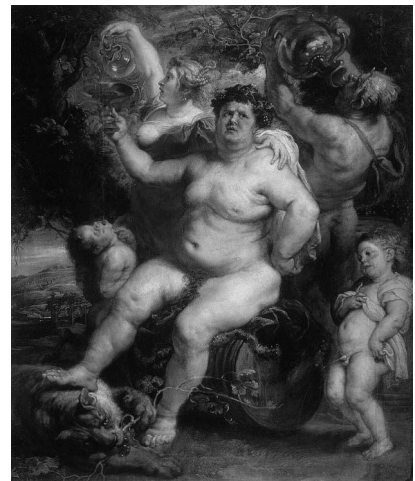


Fig. 16 Peter Paul Rubens, *Bacchus*, 1638-1640, 191 x 161.3 cm, Ermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

*The Andromeda*, so beautiful, is painted as neatly as *the Judgement of Paris*, and so is *the Bacchus*. But the latter is a bit rougher as the subject requires.<sup>32</sup>

De Clippel noted that Bacchus's popular byname was *Bacchus Layaeus*, which means "one that loosens limbs," and concluded that the painter, gifted with *furor poeticus*, expressed this releasing effect in not only the pose and expression but also his loose painting style. For this work's purposes, it is highlighted that not only painters but also the seventeenth-century viewer regarded the subject matter's requirement as the cause of rougher brushstrokes.

#### 4. *Genera dicendi*, Decorum or the Link to the Artist's Self?

When the hierarchy or the type of subject matter and its connection to style becomes the topic, the rhetoric concept *genera dicendi* often comes to the fore. The concept is derived from Cicero and Quintilian, who distinguished the three different styles of speech, namely, the grand, mediocre, and humble one.<sup>33</sup> The style must be closely tied to the theme and expected function of the speech. As Thijs Weststeijn pointed out, Vossius, a renowned Latinist, introduced the idea in the Netherlands in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>34</sup> Vossius's book was a study material in the Latin school in the Netherlands; his *Elementa Rhetorica* was also translated into Dutch. According to Vossius, the grand high-flown style is suited for heroic and tragic things and capable of stirring passion. The humble style is suitable for simple matters and aims for witness, whereas the middle style has an intermediate function.<sup>35</sup>

The similar three-way classification is also found in the art literature in the seventeenth century.<sup>36</sup> Here, the text from van Hoogstraten's treatise is referred to as an example. However, the matter of style in the sense of *pictorial execution*, instead of *genre* or *mode*, is



Fig. 17 Jan Davidsz. de Heem, *Bouquet of Flowers in a Glass Vase*, signed, ca. 1650, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

not explained concretely in neither this text nor later ones. Van Hoogstraten began with still-life painters, such as Jan Davidsz. de Heem (fig. 17) and Daniel Seghers as the lowest rank. In the second rank, he named all kinds of “comical stuff, bamboccios [ugly dolls], Brouwer’s drollers’ modern games, Molenaer’s inns, Ludius’s landscapes, and Peiraikos’s asses.”<sup>37</sup> The third and highest rank involved history paintings, with the aim of moving people, but no proper names were given as examples. These three categories were defined according to subject matter as a criterion. However, van Hoogstraten introduced a double standard and insisted that the paintings of lesser quality do not merit the highest rank, even if these paintings were intended for the church or displayed certain beautiful women.<sup>38</sup> The high quality of the work is tacitly regarded as a prerequisite criterion, but not the style. It can be assumed that the still-life in the lowest rank was made in a neat style, and the examples of the second rank were supposed to be made in a free and rough manner, judging from the artists’ names he mentioned. However, what can be induced and concluded concerning the style of the highest rank?

Van Hoogstraten devoted chapter 10 of book 6, titled “*Der handelinge of maniere van schilderen* (On the style or manner of painting),” to painting style. His discussion of painting styles does not correspond to this tripartite classification of the subject. His argument began with the ideal that “one makes it a rule to have a brisk stroke, which boldly indicates the places differing from the others, by adding the appropriate effects to the form of drawing, and where it is allowed, by giving the coloring a playful movement of brush.”<sup>39</sup> He admonished the painters to avoid stiff neatness as it is contrary to this ideal. Although this argument is slightly changed and developed, it is similar to the dichotomy between rough and neat. It is difficult to apply the theory of *genera dicendi* or related trichotomy to the actual practice rigidly, as the painting style is always treated in dichotomy, at least, in theory. In addition, the standards with which a style is estimated largely depend on the taste of the judging person. It might be safe to assume, however, that the theory of *genera dicendi* itself prevailed enough at that time, and certain painters and art lovers must have had been conscious that the style could be related to the signified and purposes of the painting.

In this regard, van de Venne would produce an intriguing testimony. As already mentioned, his grisailles were in similar vein with his own writing, *Tafereel van de belacchende Werelt*, in which the stupidity and vices of the peasants or beggars are emphasized. In *Tafereel*, there is a scene in which a peasant girl, Fijtje, remarked on an eloquent peasant friend, Lubbert, saying “You speak too vigorously. Don’t speak too witty, man, nor too solemn (*Je praat te heftich, niet te deun, maat of te deftigh*).”<sup>40</sup> A commentary on the margin of the page also reads: “Dignified speech from simple folk doesn’t sound grave (*Deftige reden uyt slechte luyden klincken niet ruchtbaer*).”<sup>41</sup> Van de Venne was not only conscious of decorum but also staged the lack of it in his writing. In his *Tafereel*, he emphasized the need to conform the way of speech to the speaker’s nature and not to the subject matter of the speech. Interestingly, van de Venne himself deviated from this conformity as he changed his painting styles according to subject matter and not to his own nature. This connection or association between a product and its maker seemed to have an influence on the reception of paintings and in staging on the part of the artists.

If a farmer must speak like a farmer, as someone’s way of speech can be seen as a reflection of one’s personality, a wild speech means a wild person. In other words, a rough painting would mean a rough person. Brouwer used this precondition when he staged his self-portrait with his friends at an inn (fig. 18).<sup>42</sup> He painted himself as a man puffing smoke toward viewers, with his eyes wide open in a somewhat threatening way, and a tankard in one hand and a pipe in another. Behaving sinfully, he showed himself as a brutal,



Fig. 18 Adriaen Brouwer, *Self-Portrait in an Inn with Painter Friends*, ca. 1636, 46.4 x 36.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 19 Daniël van den Bremden, (after Adriaen van de Venne), *Adriaen van de Venne's Portrait*, 1634, engraving.



Fig. 20 Molenaer, *Painter in His Studio, Painting a Musical Company*, 1631, 86 x 127 cm, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

coarse, and rough rogue in the way he depicted his lowly dudes with the coarse brushstrokes. It makes a clear contrast with the self-representation in part of van de Venne. His portrait in print after his own drawing reveals that he identified himself with a gentleman in the Hague, and it is far away from the farmer's and beggar's world, which did consist of his repertoire (fig. 19).<sup>43</sup>

The atelier scene of Molenaer (fig. 20) can be regarded as similar to the example on Brouwer's self-representation. Although Molenaer's brushstrokes are not as free as Brouwer's, he tried to make the viewer believe that the world he painted was the world in which he lived. There are many testimonies reflecting this kind of view. Among others, Houbraken wrote in the beginning of Brouwer's life: "As his paintings were funny so was his life: the man and his work [were] just alike."<sup>44</sup> As de Clippel has shown, Roger de Piles opined that Rubens's rough brushstrokes suited well with the artist's active temperament and passionate genius.<sup>45</sup> The style was tightly connected with the artist's temperament, and it would become a prevalent view that the artist's style is tied with his self, personality, and intelligence.

Between van de Venne's choice of style according to subject matter (the practice rooted in the rhetorical tradition), and Brouwer's self-representation conforming to his own style, there would have been a historical crossroads of which one way became a narrow path labeled eclectic and the other turned out to be the main street of artists' biography. Seeing the examples above of van de Venne, de Gheyn II, and Rubens, and considering the general connection of style to subject matter in the early seventeenth-century low-life genre, it is tempting to assume that such subject matter allowed the painters to develop a more spontaneous style, at least at the dawn of "rough manner" in the Netherlands.

## Notes

1 Karel van Mander, *Den Grondt der Edel Vry Schilder-const*, Haarlem, 1604, fol. 48r, 20; Karel van Mander and Hessel Miedema (ed. and annotated), *Den Grondt der Edel Vry Schilder-const*, Utrecht, 1973, pp. 258–259.

2 *Ibid.*, fol. 48r, 22–23.

3 The mentioned artists are Rijckaert Aertsz and Pieter Pourbus (fol. 247v and 257v). Karel van Mander and Hessel Miedema (ed.), *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, 6 vols., Doornspijk, 1994–1999, vol. 1., pp. 248–249, 288–289.

4 Philips Angel, *Lof der Schilder-konst*, Leiden, 1642; Hessel Miedema and Michael Hoyle, "Philips Angel, Praise of Painting, Translated by Michael Hoyle, with an Introduction and Commentary by Hessel Miedema," *Simiolus*, 24 (1996): pp. 227–258, esp. p. 248.

5 Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market*, Philadelphia, 2006, esp. pp. 130–132.

6 Aertsen's works show the spontaneous loose strokes at times. His and Frans Floris's contribution to the shift in style and execution of painting was not insignificant. Owing to limited space, however, the author could not discuss this topic further in this work.

7 As for influence from Jordaens on Hals, see; Karolien de Clippel and Filip Vermeylen, "Frans Hals and Flemish Artists: Dialogue or One-Way Street?," Anna Tummers (ed.), exh. cat. *Frans Hals*:

*Eye to Eye with Rembrandt, Rubens and Titian*, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, 2013, pp. 43–46.

8 Konrad Renger, *Adriaen Brouwer und das niederländische Bauerngenre 1600–1660*, Munich, 1986, p. 9 and note 2, p. 113.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 53–62.

10 In Rotterdam, Pieter de Bloot and Hendrick Maertensz Sorgh were active in this genre. Even though it is difficult to establish the influence of Brouwer on them, Brouwer was undoubtedly among the painters who founded the popularity of the genre in the north.

11 Dennis P Weller, C. Bogendorf Rupprath and Mariët Westermann (ed.), *Jan Miense Molenaer: Painter of the Dutch Golden Age*, Raleigh, 2002.

12 Jules Lieure, *Jacques Callot: Catalogue Raisonné de L'Œuvre Gravé*, 2 vols., San Francisco, 1989 (First ed. Paris, 1924–27). *Les Gueux*, tome.2. (in Text volume), pp. 40–45; *Les Petites Misères de la Guerre* (1636); tome 3. (in Text volume), pp. 69–71; *Les Grandes Misères de la Guerre* (1633); tome 3. (in Text volume), pp. 71–78.

13 The same assumption is made in Laurens J. Bol, *Adriaen Pietersz. van de Venne: Painter and Draughtsman*, Doornspijk, 1989, p. 94. Bol also pointed out that there are copy drawings after Callot that bear the signature of van de Venne, but he denied the authenticity of the drawings (p. 92).

14 Hubertus von Sonnenburg, “Bemerkungen zu Brouwers Maltechnik,” Renger *op.cit.* (note 8), pp. 103–112 and 127.

15 Peter van den Brink und Bern Wolfgang Lindemann (ed.), exh. cat. *Eleganz und raue Sitten*, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum, Aachen, and Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, 2012, p. 15. Interestingly, his graphic works, representing peasants, are executed far more sketchily and there remain the atmospheric effect of the earlier decades.

16 Maria-Isabel Pousão-Smith, “Sprezzatura, Nettigheid and the Fallacy of ‘Invisible Brushwork’ in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 54 (2003), pp. 258–279. However, the author does not agree completely with her opinion that *sprezzatura*, or *lossigheid*, is rather combined with the deft neatness of the execution and not with the roughness of the strokes.

17 For the use of the middle-toned under layer, see Pieter Biesboer, exh. cat. *Frans Hals und Haarlems Meister der goldenen Zeit*, Haarlem and Munich, 2008, pp. 20, 93–94.

Rubens left an interesting testimony concerning the time needed for the drying process in his letter to Sir Dudley Carleton on May 26, 1618: “I cannot, however, affirm as precisely as I might wish, the exact day on which all these pictures will be dry. To tell the truth, it would seem to me better to have them all go together, considering that the first ones are freshly retouched. Still, with the aid of the sun, if it shines bright and without wind (which raises dust and is injurious to freshly painted pictures), they will be ready to be rolled after five or six days of fine weather.” (Ruth Saunders Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, Cambridge, 1955, p. 64). Prof. dr. Büttner kindly provided the author with the information.

18 Van Mander, *Den Grondt*, fol. 3r, 23; Van Mander and Miedema, *op.cit.* (note 1), pp. 78–79.

19 Van Mander and Miedema *op.cit.* (note 3), vol. 1, pp. 226–227.

20 It must be too far-fetched, but the identification of the Dutch people, who called themselves “beggars” (*geuzen*) appropriating a remark by certain Spaniards, might have some association

with the popularity deep down in the collective self-image, though it is totally out of the scope of this work.

21 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*, Rotterdam, 1678 (reprint ed., Soest, 1969), p. 234.

22 Nicola Courtright, "Origins and Meanings of Rembrandt's Late Drawing Style," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 78 (1996), pp. 485–510.

23 For his grisailles, see: Annelies Plokker, *Adriaen Pietersz. Van de Venne (1589–1662): De Grisailles met Spreukbanden*, Leuven and Amersfoort, 1984; Bol, *op.cit.* (note 13), pp. 77–111.

24 Cf. K. Porteman's foreword in Plokker, *op.cit.* (note 23), p. 8.

25 Plokker, *op.cit.* (note 23), p. 15.

26 *Frederick V and Elisabeth Stuart*, grisaille, oil on canvas, 154.5 cm x 190 cm. See Bol, *op.cit.* (note 13), pp. 71–72.

27 Cf. Claudia Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629)*, Cambridge et al., 2005, pp. 2–3.

28 I. Q. van Regteren Altena, *Jacques de Gheyn: Three Generations*, The Hague, Boston, London, 3 vols., 1983. Most prominent works in this regard are: *Five busts of women, one of them looking like a fury with wild swirling hair* (fig. 165, cat. 528); *The parable of the Devil sowing weeds*, (fig. 236, cat. 50); *The peasant and his bride* (fig. 257, cat. 544); *Scene of sorcery* (fig. 260, cat. 520); *Three devils conversing amongst themselves* (fig. 344, cat. 513); and *Various subjects* (fig. 484, cat. 500), among others.

29 Bol, *op.cit.* (note 13), p. 29. It may explain the reason for the dedication of a long poem in van de Venne's *Zeeuwsche Nachtegaal* to De Gheyn III. Van Regteren Altena, *op.cit.* (note 28), vol. 1, p. 133.

30 Cf. Anna Tummers, "Frans Hals: 'Rightly Admired by the Greatest Painters,'" Tummers (ed.), *op.cit.* (note 7), pp. 12–40, esp. p. 33.

31 Telling examples are, for example, *Catharina Hooft with her Nurse* (1619–1620, Staatliche Museen, Berlin) and a girl from *Rommel Pot Player* (1618–1622, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth).

32 Cited from Karolien de Clippel, "Rough Bacchus, Neat Andromeda," Carl van de Velde (ed.), *Classical Mythology in the Netherlands in the Age of Renaissance and Baroque*, Leuven and Paris, 2009, pp. 95–112, esp. pp. 98–99.

33 Cicero, *Or*, 20, 69; Quint. *Inst.* 12,10,58.

34 Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden Age*, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 193.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 193 and 405.

36 In addition to the Weststeijn, see; Courtright, *op.cit.* (note 22); Hans-Joachim Raupp, "Ansätze zu einer Theorie der Genremalerei in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 46 (1983), pp. 401–418.

37 Van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding*, p. 87.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 233–242.

40 Adriaen van de Venne, *Tafereel van de belacchende Werelt*, The Hague, 1635, p. 58.

41 *Ibid.*

42 On this work, see Karolien de Clippel, “Adriaen Brouwer, Portrait Painter: New Identifications and an Iconographic Novelty,” *Simiolus* 30 (2003), pp. 196–216.

43 Another self-portrait from younger age shows himself as a gentleman, dressed nicely with a pair of gloves in his hand. *Self-Portrait*, copper, 18.5 cm x 13.5 cm. Formerly Amsterdam, dealer D. A. Hoogendijk. Bol, *op.cit.* (note 13), pp. 63–65.

44 Arnold Houbraken, P. T. A. Swillens (ed.), W. Vogelsang (intro.), *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlandshe Konstschilders en Schilderessen*, (first ed. Amsterdam, 1718), reprint. ed. Maastricht, 1943, vol. 1, p. 251.

45 Cited from de Clippel: “*Cette manière de peindre les choses si nettement et avec tant de patience ne convient guère au temperament actif de Rubens, ni à son genie de tout feu.*” Roger de Piles, *Conversations sur la connoissance de la peinture et sur le jugement qu’on doit faire des tableaux*, Paris, 1677, p. 299.

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