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Edited by Ingrid R. Vermeulen

Art and Its Geographies

Configuring Schools of Art in Europe (1550–1815)

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Configuring Schools of Art in Europe (1550–1815)

Ingrid R. Vermeulen (ed.)

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15. The Eighteenth-Century Art Market and the Northern and Southern Netherlandish Schools of Painting: Together or Apart?

Everhard Korthals Altes

Abstract

To what extent did the international art market contribute to the shaping of the concept of schools of painting, in particular the northern and southern Netherlandish schools? By studying the structure of auction catalogues, collection catalogues, art literature, and several other sources, this essay considers the important changes that took place around 1740–1760. During this period, both Dutch and French art dealers tried to expand the canon of Netherlandish art in France. The subdivision of the ‘École flamande’ into the ‘Écoles flamande et hollandaise’ was probably part of a strategy to sell paintings by northern Netherlandish masters who were still relatively unknown in France at the time.

Keywords: art market, school classification, auction catalogues, northern and southern Netherlandish painting, Gerard Hoet

The aim of this essay is to better understand what role the international art market played in shaping the concept of a northern and a southern Netherlandish school of painting. Comparative consideration of various eighteenth-century sources, such as auction catalogues, collection catalogues, and art literature, helps to clarify the commercial interest of art dealers in the concept of schools of art. In order to prevent anachronistic interpretations, nineteenth- and twentieth-century notions of national schools, which were rooted in nationalist art history, should be examined first.

In 1998, Hans Vlieghe published an article with the somewhat provocative title ‘Flemish Art, Does It Really Exist?’.¹ He convincingly pointed out that the use of the

Many thanks to Ingrid Vermeulen and Paul Knolle for their comments on an early draft of this essay.

¹ Vlieghe.

term 'Flemish' leads to an ahistorical approach to seventeenth-century art from the Low Countries. Flanders presently stands for the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, but, remarkably, the term 'Flemish' is still used as a classification for the art of the southern Netherlands in their entirety, i.e. more or less the area of Belgium as we know it today.

Belgium has been a sovereign state since 1830. After the fall of Napoleon, the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was established, a union of the Netherlands and Belgium as we know them today, but Belgium soon became an independent country. The first years of independence saw an increasing veneration of 'heroes' of Belgium's glorious past. For example, a statue of Peter Paul Rubens was erected in Antwerp in 1840. One would expect the artist to have been honoured as a Belgian citizen, but he was regarded as a Flemish hero instead, despite the fact that during the seventeenth century, the city of Antwerp was not even located in the province of Flanders, but in Brabant. Apparently, this distinction was insignificant in an age when the 'Flemish Movement', a group of intellectuals and cultural organisations promoting the Dutch language and Flemish culture, rapidly gained importance, and Rubens was used as a Flemish figurehead. On the other side of the border, in the Netherlands, people were equally eager to honour the heroes of their 'national' past. In 1852, a statue of Rembrandt was revealed to the public on the Botermarkt in Amsterdam. From then on, the differences between northern and southern Netherlandish art were emphasised strongly, while the artistic similarities, for instance those between Rubens and Rembrandt, received relatively little attention.

The following stereotypical contrast, initiated by authors such as Théophile Thoré-Bürger (1807–1869), became increasingly popular: in the south, monumental, Baroque art had been created for the Catholic church and for the court in Brussels, while the north had seen 'honest', 'bourgeois-realistic', intimate, small format paintings, which were bought by free but hard-working Protestant citizens.² This contrast has subsequently influenced distinct characterisations of Dutch and Belgian art deep into the twentieth century.

During the last two decades, a growing number of art historians—e.g. Hans Vlieghe, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, and Karoline de Clippel—have pointed out that this view is incorrect, and that the strong ties between northern and southern Netherlandish painting deserve far more attention.³ Christopher Brown, on the other hand, has presented a dissenting view in his lecture 'The Dutchness of Dutch Art'.⁴

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Low Countries had been a patchwork of various sovereignties, only bound by their ties to the Burgundian-Habsburg rulers.

2 Bürger, I, pp. X–XI, 320–322. See Carasso, pp. 381–407; Jongh, pp. 197–206; Hecht, esp. p. 166.

3 DaCosta Kaufmann, esp. pp. 133–135; Clippel, pp. 390–405.

4 Brown.

The County of Flanders, the Duchy of Brabant, and the County of Holland were among the most important ones. The Burgundian-Habsburg rulers succeeded in setting up a process of legal integration, which resulted in a strong central government. Paradoxically, the various Netherlandish provinces only became more united in their opposition against the unpopular measures of the central government. This led to a certain awareness of a supra-regional entity, which initially had various names, but was often referred to as the Low Countries ('the Netherlands' or 'les Pays-Bas') from the end of the fifteenth century onwards.⁵

People from other parts of Europe must have struggled to understand the political situation with the continuously changing borders. They often called the entire Netherlands 'Flandria', which was based on the international reputation of that county in the late Middle Ages, when it had become particularly prosperous. Artists from the Netherlands were known as 'fiamminghi' in Italy. Giorgio Vasari, for example, used this term, sometimes even as a synonym for 'oltramontani'—to indicate artists from the entire area north of the Alps. He called Albrecht Dürer a 'fiammingho'.⁶ Netherlandish artists also referred to themselves as 'fiamminghi' when they stayed in Italy.

Remarkably, even after the political separation of the seven northern from the ten southern provinces and the birth of the Republic of the United Netherlands during the Eighty Years War with Spain (1568–1648), hardly anyone—either in the Netherlands or abroad—made a clear distinction between northern and southern Netherlandish art. The artistic and cultural ties between north and south remained close, despite the political and economic separation.

Artists' biographers working in the tradition of Vasari, such as Karel van Mander in *Het leven der Doorluchtighe Nederlandtsche, en Hoogh-duytsche Schilders* (1604) and Arnold Houbraken in *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (1718–1721), used the word 'Nederlands' in order to refer to both northern and southern Netherlandish artists.⁷ They did not make a clear distinction between the artistic developments on either side of the border, and even included German artists. Samuel van Hoogstraten, however, in his *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (1678), subdivided painters from 'ons Nederland' ('our Netherlands') into artists from Brabant on the one hand and Holland on the other.⁸ Outside the Netherlands, in France, Italy, or Spain, artists from both the

5 Billen, pp. 48–52; Suykerbuyk, pp. 215–224.

6 Vasari, VII, p. 433: 'Alberto Duro fiammingo', VII, pp. 579–592: 'di diversi artefici fiamminghi'. See also DaCosta Kaufmann, p. 28.

7 Mander; Houbraken. For the geographical terms used by Van Mander, such as *Nederlandtsch*, *Nederduytsch* and *Hoog-duytsch*, see Miedema 2011. See also the essay by Osnabrugge in this edited collection.

8 Hoogstraten, pp. 256–257. See Carasso, p. 384.

northern and the southern Netherlands were generally still referred to as 'flamands', 'fiamminghi', or 'flamencos'.⁹

School Classification

The *Abrégé de la vie des peintres* by Roger de Piles of 1699 has been of decisive importance because of the way in which he divided painting into six parts according to schools, which he associated with the principle of the 'goût de Nation' ('taste of the nation'): 'Et le goût de Nation, est une idée que les ouvrages qui se font ou qui se voient en un pais, forment dans l'esprit de ceux qui les habitent. Les differens goûts de nations se peuvent réduire à six, le goût Romain, le goût Venitien, le goût Lombard, le goût Allemand, le goût Flamand & le goût François (And the taste of the nation is an idea that the works which are made or are seen in a country develop in the spirit of those who live there. The different national tastes can be reduced to six: the Roman taste, the Venetian taste, the Lombard taste, the German taste, the Flemish taste, and the French taste).'¹⁰

This highly influential principle resulted in a classification of painters into national or regional schools. Such a classification was then adopted by later artists' biographers, including Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville, and must have had an impact on the presentation of art collections as well as on the structure of auction catalogues.¹¹

Among painting collections, it is likely that this new type of organisation originated in France or the Holy Roman Empire, where rich, aristocratic collectors had often acquired large numbers of paintings from both northern and southern Europe. However, several collections of prints and drawings had already been systematically arranged according to schools or in a chronological order from a very early period; these collections may also have influenced the new emphasis on national taste.¹²

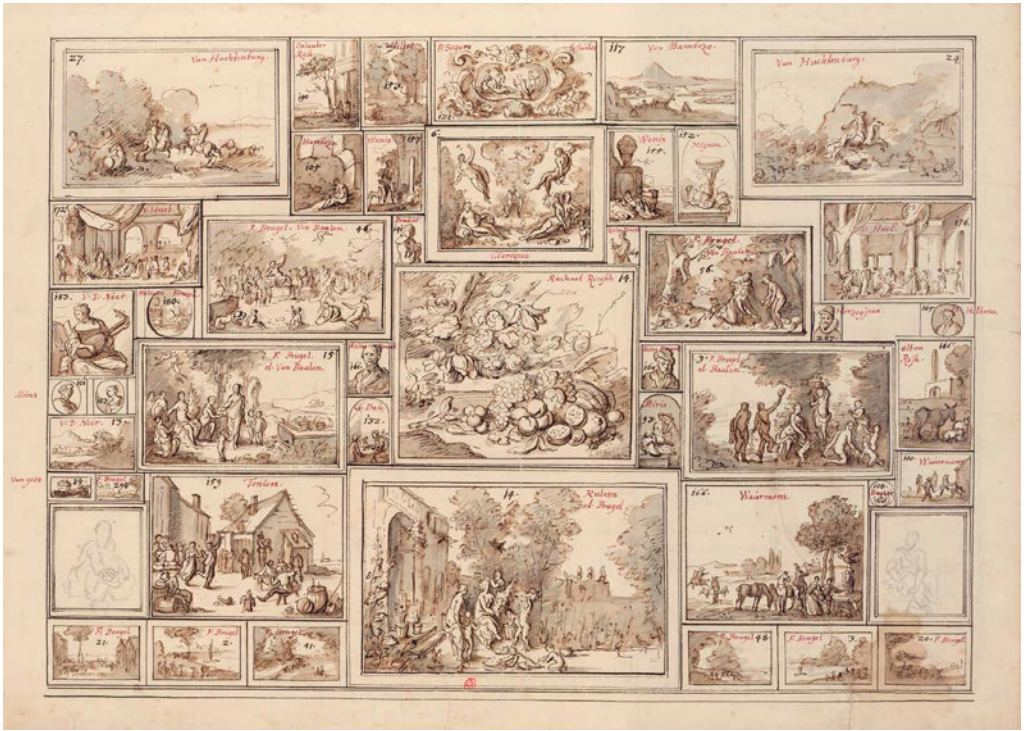
During the early eighteenth century, collections of paintings were not systematically arranged. Although famous picture galleries (for instance, in Vienna, Dresden, and Düsseldorf) presented as representative a survey of the art of painting as possible, initially they were not strictly divided into national or regional schools of painting or organised chronologically. Instead, there was a certain decorative system in which symmetry and the formats of the paintings played key roles.

9 DaCosta Kaufmann, p. 117; Newman.

10 Piles, pp. 538–545, esp. p. 541. See the essay by Vermeulen in this edited collection.

11 Dezallier 1745–1752, I, pp. XXIV–XXV. See also Maës, pp. 226–238; Vermeulen 2010a, pp. 108–109, 130–138. See the essay by Maës in this edited collection. For the origin and development of the idea of artistic schools, see DaCosta Kaufmann, pp. 17–42, esp. p. 30.

12 Plomp, pp. 72–81; Brakensiek; Vermeulen 2009–2010; Vermeulen 2010b.



60. Jan Philips van der Schlichten, *Picture Cabinet of Elector Karl III, Philipp von der Pfalz-Neuburg (1661–1742)*, 1731, pen on paper, 520 x 370 mm, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, inv./cat. nr. MS 409. © Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris.

This decorative system can be demonstrated by looking at a few designs for the arrangement of the walls of painting cabinets in the palace of the Elector Palatinate in Mannheim from 1731 (Fig. 60). In these rooms, northern and southern Netherlandish paintings dominated. Many of these works were of a rather small format and therefore perfectly suited to intimate rooms with a private or semi-private character. Italian paintings, on the other hand, often were larger and usually hung in larger, more ceremonial public spaces. However, there was definitely not a consistent division according to nation or school.¹³

It is still a matter of debate as to when and where the first attempts at an arrangement according to schools took place in picture galleries. Some scholars have pointed to the early reorganisations of the princely collections in Dresden, Salzdahlum, Potsdam, and Kassel.¹⁴ Thomas Gaehtgens and Louis Marchesano have claimed that it was in Düsseldorf in 1763, when Karl Theodor, Elector Palatine (1724–1799), commissioned the artist Lambert Krahe (1712–1790) to rearrange the hanging of his collection.¹⁵ Recently, it has been suggested that Philippe II, Duc d'Orléans (1674–1723), had already grouped the works in his collection in the Palais Royal in Paris by schools as early as the 1720s.¹⁶

Debora Meijers, on the other hand, has emphasised that contemporaries hardly considered rearrangements, such as the one in the Bildergalerie in Potsdam, to be innovative or important.¹⁷ What they did recognise as new was the presentation of art collections in the Upper Belvedere Palace in Vienna in 1781, when the Kaiserliche königliche Bildergalerie was thoroughly reorganised by Christian von Mechel.

The catalogue of the the Kaiserliche königliche Bildergalerie explains how the collection was divided into three schools of painting: the Netherlandish, the German, and the Italian.¹⁸ Rather than the place of birth of a painter, his style decided to which school he belonged. The Italian artists were divided into Venetians, Romans, Florentines, Bolognesi, and Lombards. Northern and southern Netherlandish painters were presented as a single school—the 'Niederländische Schule', or 'École flamande' according to the French version of the catalogue. Among the large number of rooms devoted to Netherlandish art, one room was exclusively hung

13 Korthals Altes 2003b; Baumstark. See also Wulff, esp. p. 237. Wulff claims that Johann Wilhelm II, Elector Palatine (1658–1716), already intended to arrange his collection according to artistic schools. However, this cannot be concluded on the basis of contemporaneous sources, such as Karsch.

14 Spenlé; Walz, esp. p. 129; Savoy 2015, p. 363; Lange.

15 Gaehtgens, pp. 4–5.

16 Schmid, p. 19. Cf. McClellan, pp. 30–42. According to McClellan, neither the collections of the Duc d'Orléans and Pierre Crozat nor the royal collection in the Luxembourg Gallery were arranged according to schools; instead, they presented a mixed display in which comparative viewing of paintings was encouraged.

17 Meijers 2015, pp. 135–152. See also Meijers 1991; Meijers 1992; Meijers 1993; Bergvelt 2005, pp. 273–282.

18 Mechel 1783; Mechel 1784.

with 'des tableaux du plus précieux fini de quelques Maîtres Hollandois, tels que les Mieris, Gérard Dou, Poelmbourg, Wouwermans, Berghem, Peter de Laer dit le Bamboche, Bonaventure Peeters, etc. (paintings of the most precious execution by some masters from Holland, such as Frans and Willem van Mieris, Gerard Dou, Cornelis van Poelenburch, Philips Wouwerman, Nicolaes Berchem, Pieter van Laer (called il Bamboccio), Bonaventure Peeters, etc)'.¹⁹

Mechel created a more or less chronological order in the Netherlandish and German schools on the second floor, as can be deduced from the terminology in the descriptions and floor plan of the catalogue: 'old' versus 'modern' or 'new' masters. Thus, the vast collection in Vienna offered an almost complete survey of the development of the history of European painting through a highly influential way of presenting art that had its roots in the ideas developed by De Piles and Dezallier.²⁰

School Classification and the Art Market

Having traced developments in art literature and collections of paintings, we now come to the following question: to what extent did the international art market contribute to the shaping of the concept of schools of painting? Could art dealers have had a commercial interest in such a classification system? Below, I will analyse and explain the introduction of the organisation according to schools into French and Dutch auction catalogues during the period 1740–1760.

Auction catalogues before 1740 do not follow any order whatsoever, be it alphabetical, geographical, or chronological. One of the first French catalogues to arrange paintings according to schools was compiled in 1756, for the sale of the prestigious collection of Marie-Joseph d'Hostun, Duc de Tallard (1683–1755).²¹ The Italian school was subdivided into the Florentine, Sienese, Roman, and Venetian schools. Apart from the Italian school, there was the Netherlandish school (*école des Pais-Bas*), which included both northern and southern Netherlandish masters, but also Dürer; at the end of the catalogue, the French and Spanish schools were presented. A second innovative aspect of the catalogue was the fact that there was a more or less chronological order within the schools.

The structure of the Tallard auction catalogue does not reflect the way in which the paintings had actually been displayed in the collector's house. From a contemporaneous description by Antoine-Nicolas Dezallier d'Argenville (1723–1796), we can deduce that paintings from various schools were intermingled, possibly in order to facilitate

¹⁹ Mechel 1784, p. XX. See Swoboda, I, pp. 254–259.

²⁰ Ultimately, this way of presenting art had its roots in Vasari's *Vite*. See Wellington Gahtan, p. 10.

²¹ Pomian, pp. 139–168. For Tallard's collection, see Michel 2017.

comparison of the quality of paintings from various regions.²² The walls were probably densely hung with paintings—as a kind of decorative and symmetrical mosaic.²³

The introduction to the Tallard catalogue declared:

Les Tableaux des grands Maîtres d'Italie ont toujours été regardés comme les Chefs-d'oeuvres de l'art de la Peinture: ils sont les seuls qui puissent acquérir à un Cabinet l'estime des vrais Connoisseurs. C'est donc avec justice que la collection de feu Monsieur le Duc de Tallard tenoit le premier rang en France, après celles du Roi & de Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans (The paintings of the great masters of Italy have always been considered as masterpieces of the art of painting; they are the only ones that can earn a *cabinet* the esteem of true connoisseurs. The collection of the late Duc de Tallard therefore rightly holds the first place in France, after those of the king and the Duc d'Orléans).²⁴

The author of the catalogue, the art dealer Pierre Rémy, made it clear that he fully agreed with Tallard's preference for Italian paintings.²⁵ The duke had only bought the art of other countries if the artists had worked 'dans le genre noble & sublime (in the noble and sublime genre)'. These artists included Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, and 'autres Maîtres Flamands, qui par la noblesse de leurs compositions, & l'accord admirable de leur brillant coloris, méritent de figurer à côté des Ouvrages des premiers Maîtres de l'Art (other Flemish masters, who by the nobility of their compositions and the admirable harmony of their brilliant colors deserve to be placed beside the works of the best masters of art)'. According to Rémy, most northern and southern Netherlandish paintings were 'admirables à la vérité par la finesse de l'exécution, & le gracieux du coloris, mais dans la composition desquels l'esprit ne trouve point à s'occuper solidement, ils ne lui présentent que des beautés superficielles & momentanées (admirable in truth for the skill of their execution and the grace of their colors, but in their composition, there seems to be no spirit; they present only superficial and transitory beauties)'.²⁶

Although a negative opinion of the subject matter of Netherlandish paintings was part of the traditional French criticism of the art of the Low Countries,²⁶ collectors still bought the paintings. As Rémy had to acknowledge, albeit reluctantly: 'Presque tous nos Cabinets ne sont présentement remplis que de ces petits Tableaux Flamands & Hollandois. [...] Mais ne craignons pas que ce goût de mode jette de plus fortes racines; il passera & fera place à un goût plus sur & plus épuré (Almost all of our

22 Dezaillier 1752, pp. 208–214.

23 For a similar display of the Jullienne collection (based on an album from c. 1756), see Vogtherr, p. 60.

24 Rémy.

25 For Rémy, see Marandet 2003.

26 Grijzenhout.

cabinets are currently filled only with these small Flemish and Dutch paintings. [...] But we should not fear that this fashionable taste will put down strong roots; it will pass and make room for a more durable and more refined taste.)'

From the early 1730s onwards, an increasing number of paintings by Netherlandish artists who had previously been nearly unknown in France were gradually being introduced into collections. This broadening of the canon was probably initiated and facilitated by art dealers who bought large quantities of paintings for the Parisian art market during their travels to the Low Countries.²⁷ Dealers must have realised that a market could be created for these unknown masters in France. They played a vital role in the dissemination of Netherlandish art. The classification of paintings according to schools in auction catalogues may have been part of a commercial strategy to emphasise and advertise the distinct characteristics of paintings by Netherlandish masters who were still relatively unknown in France.

The Gerard Hoet Auction Catalogue

The first Dutch auction catalogue in which paintings were arranged according to schools was produced for the sale of the collection, or trading stock, of the Hague artist-art dealer Gerard Hoet; this collection was auctioned after his death in 1760.²⁸ Hoet had been an art dealer with an international clientele and had traded in a broad variety of schools. In order to obtain the highest quality, he had purchased paintings on various art markets: most of his northern Netherlandish paintings were bought in Amsterdam and The Hague, the majority of his southern Netherlandish paintings came from Antwerp, and his Italian art was from Paris.

Both the Dutch and French versions of Hoet's catalogue mention three categories: 'École italienne' / 'Italiaanse school' ('Italian school'), 'Maîtres allemans' / 'Hoogduitse meesters' ('German masters'), and 'Écoles flamande et hollandoise' / 'Nederlandse school' ('Flemish and Dutch schools' / 'Netherlandish school').²⁹ The structure of the Tallard catalogue had probably served as a model. It seems significant that Hoet had been well acquainted with the Tallard collection and its sale catalogue, structured by Rémy according to a system of schools. He had even attended the Tallard sale in Paris in 1756 and purchased a couple of paintings.

Another possible influence may have been the fact that quite a few earlier catalogues of prints and drawings had had a similar structure, such as the Pierre

27 Art dealers, such as Edme-François Gersaint, Ferdinand-Joseph Godefroid (before 1700–1741), and François-Louis Colins (1699–1760), frequently travelled to the Low Countries. See Duverger; Glorieux, pp. 281–288; Marandet 2008.

28 Hoet 1760; Hoet 1752–1770, III, pp. 222–236. For the art dealer Gerard Hoet, see Korthals Altes 2003a.

29 Hoet 1760.

Crozat catalogue of drawings, written by the Parisian connoisseur, collector, and dealer Pierre-Jean Mariette in 1741.³⁰ Apart from paintings, Hoet had also collected large numbers of drawings and prints, which he kept in albums and portfolios and classified according to schools (the Italian, French, and Netherlandish schools). He had even purchased drawings formerly in the possession of either Crozat or Tallard, and he had owned French auction catalogues and books, such as the Dutch translation of De Piles' *Abrégé de la vie des peintres*.³¹

The Northern and Southern Netherlandish Schools: Together or Apart?

What is particularly interesting about the French version of Hoet's catalogue is the fact that Netherlandish art works were classified as the 'Écoles flamande et hollandoise', i.e. two separate but related schools, instead of one school.³² In both the Dutch and the French versions, an attempt was made to group the paintings of the most important southern Netherlandish artists together, followed by the works of the most important northern Netherlandish masters—albeit in a somewhat tentative and not entirely systematic way.³³

Many decades earlier, at the end of the seventeenth century, French authors of art literature, such as André Félibien and De Piles, had already mentioned regularly whether an artist was a 'peintre hollandais' ('Dutch painter') or a 'peintre flamand' ('Flemish painter'), but it seems they were not attentive to the possible artistic differences between northern and southern Netherlandish painting.³⁴ The geographical terminology used thus differs from our current notion of national schools. This can be demonstrated by analysing a document that mentions the most famous painters from 'Holland' and 'Brabant', the provinces constituting the political, economic, and cultural heart of the Dutch Republic and the Spanish-Austrian Netherlands respectively (Fig. 61).³⁵

30 Mariette 1741. See also Mariette 1751: Mariette arranged the Crozat paintings according to schools. For the collection of Pierre Crozat and his nephew Joseph-Antoine Crozat, Marquis de Tugny (1696–1751), see Stuffmann; Michel 2007; Michel 2010; Ziskin.

31 The Crozat and Tallard provenances are specifically mentioned in Hoet 1760: see p. 172, cat. no. 40 for De Piles and p. 173, cat. no. 66 for a lot with French auction catalogues. For Gerard Hoet as a collector of drawings, see Plomp.

32 Mariette had used a tripartite classification in his catalogue of the Crozat drawings (Mariette 1741), p. 86: 'Écoles flamande, hollandoise et allemande'.

33 Hoet 1760, cat. nos. 1–21 (Italian school), cat. nos. 22–28 (German masters), cat. nos. 29–43, 66–80 (Southern Netherlandish), and cat. nos. 44–65 (Northern Netherlandish).

34 Félibien 1725, III, esp. pp. 291, 456–466; Piles, esp. pp. 409–456. See Teyssèdre, pp. 142, 151.

35 Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Geheimes Kabinett, loc. 379/11, 'Diverse Verzeichnisse', f. 239. See Korthals Altes 2003a, pp. 238–239.

163. 443

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Liste de plus fameuses peintres
D'hollande et brabant 239

Flingerlands
 miris le vieu
 grad sou
 Nesker
 Breuges de velour
 Poulembourgh
 Scalek
 Themiens
 Rottenhamer
 helshamer Eyheimet
 Rubbens
 van dyck
 morillo, D'Espaigne de ceville
 Vanderwerue peintre de Duc Palatin
 Paulo Brit
 Vandermeren peintre de Duc palatin is est mort
 brauer

61. Liste de plus fameux peintre D'hollande et brabant (List of the Most Famous Painters of Holland and Brabant), 1708, Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden, Geheimes Kabinett, loc. 379/11, 'Diverse Verzeichnisse', fol. 239. © Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Dresden.

In October 1708, Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland (1670–1733), acquired eleven paintings from Mrs. Foulon in Brussels through an art dealer from Antwerp, François Lemmers. The documents concerning this purchase include a list drawn up by Lemmers. Remarkably, the list is not limited to northern and southern Netherlandish artists, but also mentions German painters, such as Adam Elsheimer (1578–1610) and Hans Rottenhammer (1564/65–1625), and even the Spanish Bartolomé Esteban Murillo ('from Seville'). The categories of 'Holland' and 'Brabant' clearly do not cover the diverse origins of painters on the list.

It is interesting to speculate about the reasons why these particular artists are mentioned here. Nearly all of them had painted expensive and highly fashionable small cabinet pieces, often in a precise and refined technique, with the exception of Rubens, Van Dyck, and Murillo, who usually worked on a larger format. Why Murillo is mentioned is an intriguing question. A possible explanation is the fact that the list was based on the presence of paintings by these masters in the Antwerp art market during those years.

One of the first French authors of art literature to make a stylistic distinction within the larger entity of the 'École flamande' between southern Netherlandish, northern Netherlandish, and German artists was Antoine Coypel. In his *Discours prononcez dans les conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* of 1721, Coypel tried to articulate the essence of each of the three groups in the following passage:

Imitez les grands Maîtres: [...] Dans les Flamans, Rubens, dont il faut cependant démêler ce que le goût & la nature de son pays luy ont pû donner de défectueux. Parmi les ouvrages des Hollandois, on trouvera dans les sujets les plus communs & même les plus bas, une vérité simple & naïve tres-estimable, comme dans Rimbrand, Girardou & plusieurs autres. Parmi les Allemands, vous trouverez encore dans Albert Dure le même naïf & le même vray dans les gestes: l'estime du Grand Raphael fait mieux son éloge que tout ce que j'en pourrois dire (Imitate the great masters: [...] Among the Flemish, Rubens, from whom however it is necessary to disentangle what the taste and nature of his country have been able to give him that is undesirable. Among the works of the Dutch, one will find in the subjects that are the most common and that are even the lowest a very praiseworthy simple and naïve truth, as in Rembrandt, Gerard Dou, and several others. Among the Germans, you will find again in Albrecht Dürer the same naivete and the same truth in the gestures: the respect for the Great Raphael gives him more praise than anything that I could say).³⁶

36 Coypel, pp. 161–162. Cf. Dubos, pp. 64–67.

A few decades later, in the *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres* of 1745–1752, Dezallier subdivided his biographies of artists in the *École de Flandre* into four distinct but related groups: ‘Allemands et suisses (Germans and Swiss)’, ‘Hollandais (Dutch)’, ‘Flamands (Flemish)’, and even a small group of English artists—as the table of contents of his book shows.³⁷ Dezallier started his section on northern Netherlandish artists with Lucas van Leyden (c. 1494–1533) and ended it with contemporary masters, such as Jan van Huysum (1682–1749). In the next section of his book, he described the lives and works of southern Netherlandish artists in chronological order.

Conclusion

Inspired by the writings of De Piles and Dezallier, and possibly also by the way in which collections of prints and drawings were organised, authors of auction catalogues such as Mariette and Rémy started to classify paintings according to national or regional schools. The Tallard catalogue from 1756 is a good example of the new trend. This approach was soon taken up in other countries, as the Dutch auction catalogue of the collection, or trading stock, of Gerard Hoet from 1760 shows.

The technique of subdivision into national or regional schools was also applied to eighteenth-century collections of paintings, especially in the Holy Roman Empire. This became the customary way of presenting art all over the world in the nineteenth century. Initially, Netherlandish painting was exhibited as a single school, despite the rise of patriotic sentiments in art literature in both the northern and southern Netherlands from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards.³⁸ It was only after the political separation of Belgium and the Netherlands in 1830 that this practice changed.

What is often overlooked, however, is the fact that long before 1830, French authors such as Coypel and Dezallier had already made a stylistic distinction within the larger entity of the Netherlandish school of painting, the ‘*École flamande*’: artists were separated into distinct but related groups (‘sub-schools’). Dezallier may have been inspired by the way in which the Italian school had been frequently structured into several regional schools. It may also be significant that he was a connoisseur and keen promoter of Netherlandish art. Perhaps he subdivided the Netherlandish

37 Dezallier 1745–1752, II, pp. III–V. See also Dezallier 1762. For Dezallier and Netherlandish art, see Carasso, p. 389; Cornelis 1995; Pommier, esp. p. 121; Cornelis 1998, esp. p. 155; Maës.

38 For the rise of patriotic sentiments in the art literature of the northern Netherlands during the second half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, see Knolle; Koolhaas-Grosfeld; Koolhaas, esp. p. 127; Bergvelt 1998. For the situation in the southern Netherlands, particularly the role of Mensaert 1763, see Loir; Suykerbuyk.

school in order to raise the status of the northern Netherlandish masters, many of whom were still little known in France at the time.

Dezallier's separation of northern and southern Netherlandish artists may have had an impact on the way in which auction catalogues were compiled, both in France and in the Netherlands. In the catalogue of the collection, or trading stock, of the art dealer Hoet, for example, Netherlandish art was classified as 'Écoles flamande et hollandoise', and an attempt was made to group the paintings of the most important southern Netherlandish artists together, followed by the works by the most important northern Netherlandish masters.³⁹

Both Dutch and French art dealers had a commercial interest in expanding the canon of Netherlandish art in France. The subdivision of the 'École flamande' into the 'Écoles flamande et hollandoise' was probably part of a strategy to sell paintings by northern Netherlandish masters who were still relatively unknown in France at the time.

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39 Future research into a more substantial number of auction catalogues will hopefully corroborate these findings. See, for example, the auction catalogues for the collection of Johan van Schuylenburg (1675–1735), The Hague, 20 September 1735 (Lugt 453) and for the collection of Freiherr Ferdinand Wilhelm Adolf Franz von Plettenberg (1690–1737), Amsterdam, 2 April 1738 (Lugt 480). Both of these catalogues show a subdivision somewhat similar to that of Hoet's catalogue. Schuylenburg, cat. nos. 1–20 (Italian/French); 21–39 (southern Netherlandish); 40–62. Plettenberg, cat. nos. 1–35 (Italian); 36–52 (southern Netherlandish); 53–72 (northern Netherlandish), while cat. nos. 73–140 are a mix of paintings from various schools. See Hoet 1752–1770, I, pp. 403–458, 495–506. Cf. Jonckheere, p. 102, for his views on a hierarchy in the position of lots in auction catalogues: the most valuable lots were displayed in the first part of sale catalogues, while cheaper or lower-quality works were put at the end.

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Schools of art represent one of the building blocks of art history. The notion of a school of art emerged in artistic discourse and was disseminated across various countries in Europe during the early modern period. Whilst a school of art essentially denotes a group of artists or artworks, it came to be configured in multiple ways, encompassing associations with learning, origin, style, and nation, and mediated in various forms via academies, literature, collections, markets, and galleries. Moreover, it contributed to competitive debate around the hierarchy of art and artists in Europe. The ensuing, fundamental instability of the notion of a school of art helped to create a pluriform panorama of both distinct and interconnected artistic traditions within the European art world. This edited collection brings together 20 articles devoted to selected case studies from the Italian peninsula, the Low Countries, France, Spain, England, the German Empire, and Russia.

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