GERRIT DOU’S VIOLIN PLAYER: MUSIC AND PAINTING IN THE ARTIST’S STUDIO IN
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH GENRE PAINTING

By
Jana Finkel

A thesis submitted to the Department of Art
In conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
September, 2008

Copyright © Jana Finkel, 2008
Abstract

This study is an examination of Gerrit Dou’s Violin Player (1653, Liechtenstein, Vaduz Castle, Princely Collection). The painting is a visual testimony to Dou’s manual skills and trompe l’oeil manner of painting in his own innovative fijnschilder painting style. The composition incorporates and reinvents devices from a variety of sources from portraiture, genre painting, and emblem literature, such as the arched niche window framing the violinist. The work demonstrates the connection between music and painting in the relationship between the violinist and the background setting of an artist’s workshop. Through an iconographic analysis of works depicting the artist in the studio by Dou and his contemporaries the correlation between music playing and painting becomes evident. In this context, this relationship acts as an important device in fashioning the painter’s image as an elevated and scholarly artist and brings to light the power of music as a mode of inspiration for the painter in the studio. Additionally, tobacco smoking, which appears in many seventeenth-century Dutch self-portraits, in the context of the studio, was also perceived as an inspirational tool for the artist, thus contrasting with smoking in genre scenes of the lower classes as a symbol of waste and idleness. The work, similarly to other Dutch seventeenth-century paintings, is not a realistic representation but a cleverly constructed image that acts as an allegorical master deception for the amusement and entertainment of an educated, upper-class clientele.
Acknowledgements

The present research is indebted to my advisor, Professor Stephanie S. Dickey, who offered her thoughtful guidance, expertise, sensitive advice, and encouraging mentoring throughout the research and writing of this thesis paper. I am indebted greatly to her for shaping and deepening my appreciation and love for Dutch art. I would like to thank the Art History Department at Queen’s University for granting me this opportunity, and I am very grateful for its knowledgeable faculty and financial assistance. Lastly, to my family and my other half I am extremely grateful for all the endless love, immeasurable help, and support. To them this thesis is dedicated.
# Table of Contents

Abstract.................................................................................................................ii

Acknowledgments.............................................................................................iii

Table of Contents..............................................................................................iv

List of Illustrations...........................................................................................v-xiii

Chapter 1
   Introduction........................................................................................................1-6

Chapter 2
   Literature Review..............................................................................................7-18

Chapter 3
   The Technical Virtuoso and His Critical Fortunes..............................................19
      I. Artistic Training and Working Methods.......................................................19-26
      II. Artistic Reputation and Critical Acclaim....................................................26-37

Chapter 4
   Music and Musical Instruments in the Artist’s Studio.........................................38
      I. Fashioning the Self.......................................................................................40-57
      II. Musical Instruments and the Atelier as a Place of Creativity and Practice.................................................................................................57-66

Chapter 5
   The Painter as Musician in the Artist’s Studio....................................................67
      I. Sources of the Violin Player.........................................................................67-73
      II. The Artist as Musician................................................................................73-89

Chapter 6
   Smoking, Painting Deception, and Studio Practices..........................................90
      I. Tobacco Imagery in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Paintings.........................91-96
      II. Revealing the Man behind the Curtain.......................................................96-117
      III. Studio Practices.......................................................................................118-128

Chapter 7
   Conclusion.........................................................................................................129-132

Bibliography....................................................................................................133-142
List of Illustrations

1. Gerrit Dou, *Violin Player*, 1653, oil on panel, 31.7 x 20.3 cm, Liechtenstein
   Princely Collection, Vaduz Castle………………………………………………..6
2. Adriaen van Ostade, *A Painter’s Studio*, c.1640, oil on panel, 37 x 36 cm,
   Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum…………………………………………………………37
3. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, 1647, oil on panel, 43 x 34.5 cm, Dresden,
   Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister…………………………………………………………37
4. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, c.1645, oil on panel, 12.4 x 8.3 cm, Spain, Private
   Collection………………………………………………………………………………37
5. Gerrit Dou, *Dropsical Woman*, 1663, oil on panel, 86 x 67.8 cm, Paris, Musée du
   Louvre……………………………………………………………………………………37
6. Rembrandt van Rijn, *A Young Girl Leaning on a Window-Sill*, 1645, oil on canvas,
   81.6 x 66 cm, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery…………………………………..37
7. Gerrit Dou, *An Artist in His Studio*, 1635, oil on panel, 92.5 x 74 cm, Chatsworth,
   Devonshire Collection……………………………………………………………………...37
8. Isaac Claesz. van Swanenburgh, *Self-Portrait*, 1568, oil on panel, 94 x 71.5 cm,
   Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal…………………………………………63
9. Catharina van Hemessen, *Self-Portrait*, 1548, oil on panel, 31 x 25 cm, Basel,
   Öffentliche Kunst-sammlung…………………………………………………………63
10. Herman van Vollenhoven, *Self-Portrait with Elderly Couple*, 1612, oil on canvas,
    89 x 112 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum………………………………………………63
11. Anthonis Mor, *Self-Portrait*, 1558, oil on wood, 113 x 84 cm, Florence, Uffizi …63
12. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, c.1635-38, oil on panel, 18.3 x 14 cm, Cheltenham
    Gallery and Museums……………………………………………………………………63
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions (W x H)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>59 x 43.5 cm</td>
<td>Boston, Private Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Jan Miense Molenaer</td>
<td>Self-Portrait in the Studio with Rich Old Woman</td>
<td>17th c.</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>40 x 46.5 cm</td>
<td>London, Collection Hans Raber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Frans van Mieris the Elder</td>
<td>Artist’s Studio</td>
<td>c. 1655-1657</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>59.5 x 47 cm</td>
<td>Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, formerly Dresden, destroyed in World War II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Michiel van Musscher</td>
<td>Self-Portrait in the Artist’s Studio</td>
<td>1679</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>57 x 47 cm</td>
<td>Rotterdam, Historical Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Job Adriaensz Berckheyde</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>36 x 30.7 cm</td>
<td>Florence, Uffizi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Rembrandt van Rijn</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1652</td>
<td>oil on canvas</td>
<td>112 x 61.5 cm</td>
<td>Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rembrandt van Rijn</td>
<td>Self-Portrait with Two Circles</td>
<td>c.1665-1669</td>
<td>oil on canvas</td>
<td>114 x 94 cm</td>
<td>London, Kenwood House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
<td>Self-Portrait</td>
<td>1663</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>54.7 x 39.4 cm</td>
<td>Kansas City, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Thomas de Keyser</td>
<td>Portrait of David Bailly</td>
<td>c.1627</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>73.5 x 53.5 cm</td>
<td>Private Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Thomas de Keyser</td>
<td>Constantijn Huygens and His Clerk</td>
<td>1627</td>
<td>oil on oak</td>
<td>92.4 x 69.3 cm</td>
<td>London, National Gallery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
<td>Man Interrupted at His Writing</td>
<td>c.1635</td>
<td>oil on panel</td>
<td>24 x 22.5 cm</td>
<td>Winchcombe, Sudeley Castle Trustees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
24. Gerrit Dou, *Old Painter at Work*, 1649, oil on panel, 68.5 x 54 cm, Germany, Private Collection………………………………………………………………………..65

25. Gerrit Dou, *Artist in his Studio*, c. 1630-32, oil on panel, 59 x 43.5 cm, London, Colnaghi…………………………………………………………………………… 65

26. Rembrandt van Rijn, *A Young Painter in his Studio*, c.1629, oil on panel, 24.8 x 31.7 cm, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts………………………………………………………………………………………………………66

27. Hendrick Gerritsz. Pot, *Painter in his Studio*, oil on panel, 42 x 48 cm, c.1636, The Hague, Bredius Museum……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………66


31. Gerrit Dou, *Man Writing by an Easel*, c.1631-32, oil on panel, 31.5 x 25 cm, Montreal, Private Collection………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………66

32. Gerrit Dou (and Rembrandt), *Artist in his Studio*, ca.1630-35, oil on panel, 66.5 x 50.7 cm, Duisburg, Collection G. Henle………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………66

33. Gerrit Dou, *Painter in his Studio*, c.1628-30, oil on panel, 53 x 64.5 cm, London, Robert Noortman Ltd………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………66

34. Rogier van der Weyden, *Miraflores Altarpiece*, 1437-38, oil on panel, 71 x 43 cm each panel, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie………………………………………………………………………………………………………86
35. Jacques de Gheyn II, *Vanitas*, 1603, oil on wood, 82.6 x 54 cm, Charles B. Curtis, Marquand, Victor Wilbour Memorial, and The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment Funds, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art……………………………………….86


37. Jost Amman, *The Brush Maker*, woodcut from Hans Sachs Ständebuch,
1568…………………………………………………………………………………………86

38. Jost Amman, *The Lantern Maker*, woodcut from Hans Sachs Ständebuch,
1568…………………………………………………………………………………………86

39. Gerrit Dou, *The Doctor*, c.1660-65, oil on panel, 38 x 30 cm, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………86

40. Willem van Mieris, *Grocer’s Shop*, 1717, oil on panel, 49.5 x 41 cm, The Hague, Mauritshuis………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………87

41. Adriaen van der Werff, *Self-Portrait of the Artist Holding a Small Painting*, 1678, oil on panel, 17 x 12.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………87

42. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Agatha Bas*, 1641, oil on canvas, 104 x 82 cm, London, Buckingham Palace………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………87

43. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Maria Trip*, c.1639, oil on panel, 107 x 82 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………87

44. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait at Age of 34*, 1640, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 80 cm, London, National Gallery………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………87

45. Raphael Sanzio, *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*, 1514-16, oil on canvas, 82 x 67 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………87

46. Titian Vecelli, *Portrait of Ludovico Ariosto*, ca.1512, oil on canvas, 81.2 x 66 cm, London, National Gallery………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………87
47. Gerrit van Honthorst, *Merry Violinist*, 1623, oil on canvas, 108 x 89 cm,
    Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

48. Gaudenzio Ferrari, *Angel Musicians*, fresco, 1534–6, Saronno, dome of the
    sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie

49. Pieter Codde (circle of), *An Artist in His Studio, Tuning a Lute*, c.1630, oil on panel,
    41 x 54 cm, present whereabouts unknown

50. Gonzales Coques, *The Painter’s Studio*, c.1650, oil on canvas, 65 x 82 cm,
    Schwerin, Staatliches Museum

51. Johannes van Swieten, *Lute-Playing Painter*, c.1660, oil on panel, 65.2 x 53.1 cm,
    Leiden, Stedelijk Museum

52. Gabriël Metsu, *A Young Woman Composing Music*, c.1662-1663, oil on panel, 57.8
    x 43.5 cm, The Hague, Mauritshuis

53. Jan Molenaer, *A Young Man playing a Theorbo and a Young Woman playing a
    Cittern*, c.1630-32, oil on canvas, 68 x 84 cm, London, National Gallery

54. Joris van Swieten, *A Painter Playing the Violin*, c.1645-50, oil on panel, 47.5 x 63
    cm, present location unknown

55. Attributed to Dou, *Young Man Playing the Lute in an Artist’s Studio*, oil on panel,
    unknown date, present whereabouts unknown

56. Jan Steen, *Self-Portrait as a Lutenist*, c.1663-65, oil on wood, 55.5 x 44 cm,
    Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza

57. Gerrit Dou, *Violin Player*, 1665, oil on panel, 40 x 29 cm, Dresden,
    Gemäldegalerie

58. Gerrit Dou, *Astronomer by Candlelight*, c.1665, oil on panel, 32 x 21.2 cm, Los
    Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
<td><em>The Night School</em></td>
<td>c.1665</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>53 x 40.3 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Gerrit Dou</td>
<td><em>Painter with Pipe and Book</em></td>
<td>c.1645</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>48 x 37 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>Adriaen Brouwer</td>
<td><em>The Smoker</em></td>
<td>1630-38</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>30.5 x 21.5 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>Adriaen van Ostade</td>
<td><em>Piping and Drinking in a Tavern</em></td>
<td>c.1650s</td>
<td>Oil on wood</td>
<td>48 x 37 cm</td>
<td>Salzburg, Residenzgalerie</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>Gerard ter Borch</td>
<td><em>Violinist</em></td>
<td>c.1648-50</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>29 x 24 cm</td>
<td>St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Frans van Mieris</td>
<td><em>The Old Violinist</em></td>
<td>1660</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>28.1 x 21 cm</td>
<td>Boston, Private Collection</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>Willem van Mieris</td>
<td><em>The Merry Toper</em></td>
<td>c.1699</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>25 x 20.1 cm</td>
<td>Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>Willem van Mieris</td>
<td><em>The Trumpeter</em></td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>30.3 x 25 cm</td>
<td>Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>Joos van Craesbeeck</td>
<td><em>Scene in a Studio</em></td>
<td>c.1640</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>86 x 127 cm</td>
<td>Paris, Institut Néerlandais</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>Isack Elyas</td>
<td><em>Merry Company</em></td>
<td>1620</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>47 x 63 cm</td>
<td>Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>Jan Miense Molenaer</td>
<td><em>Painter in his Studio</em></td>
<td>1631</td>
<td>Oil on canvas</td>
<td>86 x 127 cm</td>
<td>Berlin, Staatliche Museum</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>Gerrit Dou, Detail of Violin Player</td>
<td></td>
<td>1653</td>
<td>Oil on panel</td>
<td>31.7 x 20.3 cm</td>
<td>Liechtenstein Princely Collection, Vaduz Castle</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
71. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Holy Family*, 1646, oil on panel, 46.5 x 68.5 cm, Kassel, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.................................125

72. Gerrit Dou, *Girl at a Window*, 1657, oil on panel, 37.5 x 29.1 cm, Waddesdon Manor, The National Trust.................................................................125

73. Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Self-Portrait of the Painter in his Studio*, c.1655-57, oil on panel, 60 x 47 cm, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister.........................................................125

74. Job Adriaensz Berckheyde, *The Artist’s Workshop*, c.1659, oil on panel, 49 x 36.5 cm, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum...........................................125

75. Pieter Codde, *An Artist and Connoisseurs in the Studio*, c.1630, 38.3 x 49.3 cm, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie...........................................................................125

76. Pieter Codde, *Conversation about Art*, c.1630, 41.5 x 55 cm, Paris, F. Lugt Collection, Foundation Custodia, Institut Néerlandais.............................................126

77. Gerrit Dou, *Old Man Lighting a Pipe*, c.1635, oil on panel, 49 x 61.5 cm, England, Private Collection.................................................................126

78. Gerrit Dou, *Man with a Pipe*, c.1645, oil on panel, 19 x 14.7 cm, London, National Gallery.........................................................................................126

79. Gerrit Dou, *Violin Player*, c.1650s, oil on panel, Basel, De Buleratt Collection.................................................................126

80. Pieter Codde, *Self-Portrait*, oil on panel, 30.5 x 25 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen.........................................................126

81. Jan van Mieris, *Painter Smoking a Pipe in His Studio (Self-Portrait?)*, 1688, oil on panel, 17.7 x 14.3 cm, Hamburg, Kunsthalle.............................................126
82. Cornelis Saftleven, *Portrait of A Man*, 1629, oil on panel, 31 x 23 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre………………………………………………………………………………126

83. After Cornelis Saftleven, *Portrait of Cornelis Saftleven* after a lost self-portrait, c.1630, oil on panel, 33 x 26 cm, present whereabouts unknown……………………126

84. Raphael Sanzio, *School of Athens*, 1509, fresco, 19 x 27’, Rome, The Vatican……………………………………………………………………………………………127

85. Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, c.1475, tempera on wood, 111 x 134 cm, Florence, Uffizi………………………………………………………………………127

86. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1482-85, tempera and (?) oil on panel, 167 x 167 cm, Florence, Santa Trinità……………………………………127

87. Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak, 82.2 x 60 cm, London, National Gallery………………………………………………………………………………127

88. Rembrandt van Rijn *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*, 1625, oil on canvas, 89.5 x 123.6 cm, Lyon, Musee des Beaux-Arts……………………………………………………127

89. Rembrandt van Rijn, *History Piece*, 1626, oil on canvas, 90 x 121 cm, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal…………………………………………………………127

90. Gerrit Dou, *The Quack*, 1652, oil on panel, 112 x 83 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen…………………………………………………………………..127

91. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, 1658, oil on panel, 52 x 40 cm, Florence, Uffizi……127


93. Gerrit Dou, *The Grocery*, 1647, oil on panel, 38.5 x 29 cm, Paris, Musée de Louvre…………………………………………………………………………………128

xii
94. David Bailly, *Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait*, 1651, oil on wood, 89.5 x 122 cm, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal.................................128

95. François Duquesnoy, *Children with a Goat or Bacchanale of Children*, 1626, marble relief, Rome, Galleria Doria Pamphilj.................................128

96. Jan van der Straet, *Color Olivi*, c.1590, woodcut, 20.2 x 27 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.................................................................128

97. Adriaen van Ostade, *The Landscape Painter*, c.1663, 38 x 35.5 cm, oil on panel, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen........................................128
Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the most revered Dutch painters of the seventeenth century is Gerrit Dou (1613-1675), Rembrandt’s first pupil, renowned for his illusionistic images and fine painting technique. Dou was born on April 7, 1613, in Leiden to Douwe Jansz. and Marijtgen Jansdr. His subject matter and pictorial devices influenced an array of followers and students. Themes like the hermit, the doctor, the grocery shop, musicians, and the artist in the studio were conventional themes that he reinterpreted in new ways. Within these categories he often incorporated references to music. In paintings of the studio, especially, incorporating music-related imagery helped elevate the artist’s status to that of a scholarly and educated painter. Dou was the originator and father of the fijnschilder painting style, and he has gained increasing attention in recent research on seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting. Dou’s meticulous manner of working was by and large influenced by his training as a glass painter and his apprenticeship in Rembrandt’s workshop; ultimately, however, it is a visual expression of his artistic personality.

Dou became a renowned artist, achieving fame and fortune in his own day. He specialized and dedicated his entire artistic career to genre-themed allegorical paintings, often depicting the feminine world; subjects like elderly women reading, mothers busied with their parental obligations, women occupied with household chores, servants performing tasks, and female figures often shown at a window. But he also depicted masculine themes such as the artist in the studio, the scholar in his study, and the musician in a painter’s or scholar’s atelier. He was an artistic innovator enriching the pictorial language of art and expanding the range of traditional painted subject matter.
In the seventeenth century, artists made a rich contribution to the theme of the artist in the studio, and the relationship between music and painting is well-represented in paintings of the Dutch Golden Age. A number of these painted interpretations show fashionably dressed artists as musicians playing instruments in studio settings. Dou’s *Violin Player* (1653, Liechtenstein, Vaduz Castle, Princely Collection) belongs to this category of paintings and it will form the focus of this thesis (fig.1).

Dou’s *Violin Player*, dated 1653, embodies the artist’s signature fine style of painting as perfected over two decades. The painting shows a man leaning out of an arched stone window playing his violin. He is gazing outwards into the distance or towards the hanging birdcage to his right. There is an opened book of music and a beautifully decorated tapestry suspended from the ledge on which he is resting his left arm. In the dimmed background there are two more figures and there is a painting set up on an easel. These elements and ambiguities manifest in the work will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters. The panel has an arched opening and its size is 31.7 by 20.3 centimeters. There are various versions and copies of this composition, and the Vaduz painting arrived at the collection of Prince of Liechtenstein in 1999.¹

Dou connected painting and music in his genre paintings and self-portraits as a means of elevating the status of the artist and his profession. Like many other painters at that time he wanted to assert his professional status by identifying himself as an ennobled gentleman-artist practicing a venerable profession. By pictorially dissociating themselves from the craft aspects of their practice, and showing themselves dressed in expensive garments, writing, or playing a musical instrument, artists associated themselves with scholarly gentleman-like conduct. In Dou’s painting, the artist-musician is playing the violin in a studio setting. As I will demonstrate, playing musical instruments or listening to music being played in artists’ studios was believed to be inspiring for the painter.

The Vaduz panel demonstrates the way Dou skillfully incorporated and reinterpreted motifs from portraiture, still-life, and genre painting. The illusionistic effect of depicting a half-length figure behind a stone ledge carries influences from a variety of sources. The setting evokes a shop window from which a craftsman would display his products, which has origins in the representation of the trades in emblem literature. The imaginary arched window as a pictorial convention could have been derived from Jost Ammans’ illustrations in Hans Sachs’ *Das Ständebuch*. The use of a window niche and strong contrasts of shadow and light are motifs found in still-life and portrait paintings by past artists as well as Dou’s contemporaries. Portraying an artist playing a musical instrument in a studio was also a popular theme in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings and self-portraits. In the Vaduz painting, the musical instrument and book of music identify him as a musician. The identification of the violinist as also an artist is confirmed by his costume and the background setting of a painter’s studio.

---

The dim setting behind the violinist reveals a studio in which a younger man is grinding pigments and another man is seated, smoking in front of an easel. In a number of seventeenth-century self-portraits, painters portrayed themselves seated at their easels, elegantly dressed, smoking tobacco pipes. This practice is emulated by the unidentified man in the background of Dou’s Violin Player. Although both music-playing and smoking were regarded as vain and wasteful activities, in the context of the artist’s studio they were generally thought of as modes of inspiration for the painter’s senses. Primarily, it was perceived that by smoking the painter was unwinding and participating in moments of quiet contemplation, all to stimulate creativity.

The fact that this painting belongs to the trompe l’oeil tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch art makes it possible to assume that although it appears to depict an everyday subject, in fact, it could be a sophisticated deception. The man smoking the pipe in front of an easel with his elbow leaning on a chair is the only figure directly gazing at the viewer. It is my proposition that the physiognomy of this figure resembles Dou’s self-portraits of the same time period, and that the smoking man is in fact a self-portrait of the artist. Generally speaking, the two aspects of the artist’s occupation, manual work and inspirational pursuits, are both important parts of the painter’s creative process. This might imply that in order to create an illusionistic and finely-painted work of art the artist applies both his physical and mental powers, with the purpose of deceiving and tricking the viewer in an amusing and entertaining manner.

The present examination aims to make a contribution to the study of Dutch seventeenth-century painting by examining Dou’s artistry and depiction of music in an

---

artist’s studio. In the course of the analysis, questions will be posed in regard to the reasons for depicting art-making and music-playing in a shared context. Within this analysis, the significance of the background setting, which reveals a painter’s studio, shall be examined as it helps to elucidate the intended meaning of the composition. Also, was the violinist an artist making music for personal inspiration, or was he a musician inspiring the real painter – the man seated in front of the easel in the background? If in fact the violinist is an artist-musician, would playing a musical instrument be suggesting self-indulgent behavior or elevating the status of the artist? The discussion will examine the ways in which Dou, painstakingly working in his fijn manner of painting, reinvented conventional motifs from portraiture, still-lifes, and emblem literature in his Violin Player.
1. Gerrit Dou, *Violin Player*, 1653, oil on panel, 31.7 x 20.3 cm, Liechtenstein Princely Collection, Vaduz Castle
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In recent studies of seventeenth-century Netherlandish genre paintings, considerable attention has been given to the examination of meaning in representations of the painter in the studio. This topic belongs to the iconography of genre paintings in Northern art and reevaluation of Dutch seventeenth-century art-theoretical sources of that period. In contrast to Italian artists who painted primarily mythological, classical and religious works, many Netherlandish painters of the seventeenth-century made a specialty of genre paintings dealing with various themes from everyday life, painting in different styles and techniques. The term genre originated in the late eighteenth-century, becoming more common in the nineteenth-century, and was used to describe paintings that depicted scenes of daily life.4

As Peter C. Sutton describes in the exhibition catalogue Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting (1984, Philadelphia), the etymology of genre “leads to the French word meaning kind or type.”5 French art critics divided painting into two major categories, peinture d’histoire, which included subjects drawn from historical or religious texts, and peinture de genre, which was made up of landscape, still-life, and animal painting. In 1766, Diderot wrote, “One calls genre painters, without distinction, those who busy themselves with flowers, fruit, animals…as well as those who borrow their scenes from common and domestic life.”6 While Diderot links these subjects under one

---

4 In the seventeenth century, however, paintings of this kind were described by specific subject: for example, a drunken brawl, a peasant dance, a country inn, a banquet and so forth; see Jeroen Giltaij, “Painters of Daily Life: An Introduction to the Exhibition,” Senses and Sins: Dutch Painters of Daily Life in the Seventeenth-Century (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2005), 12-13.
6 Ibid.
heading, the term *genre* today is employed to refer to scenes focused on people engaged in the activities of everyday life, while landscape and still-life are understood as independent categories.

One of the most important reasons for the growth of genre painting in seventeenth-century Holland was the flourishing art market that allowed a variety of people from the rising middle-classes to purchase works of art. Genre painting was comprised of sub-genres depicting subjects such as tavern revelers, soldiers, family life and elegant gatherings in the home, and tradesmen at their work.\(^7\) Dou, similarly to his fellow artists, tackled a number of these subject matters in his own works depicting a variety of interior scenes. Scholars believe that for modern viewers genre paintings are hard to give precise interpretations primarily because the intended meanings are deeply embedded in the daily affairs and interests of the culture of that specific period.\(^8\)

Twentieth-century scholars argued that the realism in these paintings was selective, and that it was a type of artificial and staged record of daily life. Many researchers of Dutch interior scenes, portraiture and self-portraiture, and landscape recognized that these paintings had varying possible meanings. As will be demonstrated in this paper, the naturalism of Dutch art is persuasive but potentially misleading.

The growing interest in the depiction of the Dutch painter and his studio contributed to significant new approaches to the subject. Scholars began to employ refreshed readings of Dutch sources and theory, formulating innovative interpretations. In the 1960s, the Dutch art historian J.A. Emmens emphasized the importance of art theory

---


\(^8\) Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” XIII-XIV.
in investigating meaning in Dutch art. He noted that paintings portraying themes of the studio were representations less concerned with biography and more with the demonstration of the dignity of the painter’s profession. Emmens renewed an interest in Dou’s paintings, writing that these works were not merely ordinary depictions of daily life, but, instead, integrated complex ideas and conceptualizations. By showing that Dou used emblematic traditions in the conception of his work Emmens demonstrated that the artist thoughtfully and carefully depicted moralizing and concealed messages that were hidden below the polished surfaces of his panels. These reexaminations corresponded with the developing interest in the 1970s and 1980s in the complexity of visual references to emblematic sources and moralizing aspects of the so-called Dutch realism.

Consequently, when discussing and distinguishing various Dutch realist modes of describing the world through painting, scholars are forced to rethink the “seeming” or “apparent realism” (schijnrealisme), a term coined by Eddy de Jongh, of these works. De Jongh is acknowledged as having a major influence on research on seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting, with several groundbreaking publications, beginning with “Realisme en schijnrealisme in de Hollandse schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw” in the exhibition catalogue Rembrandt en zijn tijd (Brussels, 1971). De Jongh’s interpretation of portraiture and genre paintings, beginning in the early 1970s, has been crucial as he, like Emmens, has called attention to emblem books and proverbs on a quest

---


to find meaning in these seemingly realistic images of daily life of the Dutch. For example, he stated that woodcuts from the *Ständebuch* of Hans Sachs (Book of Trades, 1585), which were scenes that show a figure framed in a window niche practicing his or her trade, as well as other emblem sources provided prototypes for Dou’s paintings. Using this method, which rooted the iconography of Northern art in culturally-based meanings discernible in a variety of literary and visual media, helped contextualize and further interpret Dutch art.¹¹ In turn, this method meant that genre painting itself became more than a vehicle to transcribe or illustrate visual reality: it could also function as a metaphor or a message in visual form.

It was then established and recognized that there was a close connection between style and meaning in Dou’s paintings. In the exhibition catalogue *Tot Lering en Vermaak* (To Teach and Entertain) held in the Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam, 1976), De Jongh argued that various Dutch genre paintings visually alluded to emblems. He stated that these visual deceptions would delight and morally instruct viewers, noting that in the seventeenth century there was a “combination of two sorts of deceit: the ‘pleasant deceit’ from the apparent true-to-life imitation, and the deceit that arises through the veiling of the real intent of the representation.”¹²

De Jongh’s innovative ideas generated debate among scholars. Svetlana Alpers, in *The Art of Describing* (Chicago, 1983), suggested that the nature of Dutch art was descriptive rather than narrative or allegorical as de Jongh proposed. Arguing that the deeper meaning simply was not there, she emphasized the link between art and the

---

growth of research and interest in optics and mapmaking within the innovative, intellectual climate of Dutch society. She interpreted Dutch paintings as products of a culture for which pictorial depictions were the preferred manner of knowing and understanding the world.\textsuperscript{13} Mariët Westermann rightfully noted that Alpers’ arguments for Dutch art as a tradition of description rather than ideation were too categorical.\textsuperscript{14} Nonetheless, scholars recognize that Alpers’ hypotheses stimulated discussion and renewed awareness of the way paintings look and the way they produce varying types of experience.

Eric Jan Sluijter, in various essays on form and meaning in Dutch art published from the 1980s to the 1990s and recently reproduced in English in his \textit{Seductress of Sight: Studies in Dutch Art of the Golden Age} (Zwolle, 2000), has argued that whether the seventeenth-century viewer was a connoisseur, a Calvinist theologian, or a painter, he would be less concerned with the moralizing aspect of the work, as proposed by de Jongh, and more with the artist’s power to create deceptive and seductive imitations of the world.\textsuperscript{15}

Peter Hecht, a former student of De Jongh, takes an opposite stance to his teacher’s beliefs about the interpretation of Dutch art. In a number of essays published on this subject, he strongly sets out his point of view, especially perceptible in his papers “The Debate on Symbol and Meaning in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Art: An Appeal to Common Sense” (1986) and “Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting: A

\textsuperscript{14} Westermann, “After Iconography,” 353.
Hecht believes that seventeenth-century Dutch painters sought pictorial illusionism and continually searched for alternative sophisticated manners of painting due to the competitive nature that existed between pupils and their masters; specifically, he states that Vermeer’s and Schalcken’s concerns in their art making were driven by artistic rivalry with their teachers, de Hooch and Dou. Hecht, therefore, argues that the variety of thematic range and the seductive slick surface textures of paintings from this circle originated out of the continuous need of varying generations of art students to display and flaunt their talents in attempts to surpass their master teachers and compete in the marketplace.

His approach and prevailing argument carries a grain of truth, given that creative people frequently compete amongst themselves. However, Hecht’s dismissal of any further analysis of seventeenth-century painting has led to criticism of his method, and in an essay entitled “There’s No Problem Enjoying It, But the Meaning is Tricky” appearing in the 2005 exhibition catalogue Senses and Sins: Dutch Painters of Daily Life in the Seventeenth-Century (Rotterdam), he states that reconsideration of what is meant by “meaning,” the value of genre as a concept, and how the seventeenth-century viewer would experience these painted realities within the context of those times should be subjected to further examination in order to advance our understanding of Dutch genre art. Nevertheless, he does not really change his stand and perception, returning to his original argument about competitive technique by emphasizing, for instance, the

---


17 Hecht, “The Debate on Symbol,” 179.
importance of texture imitation in works by Dou and his pupil Schalcken. Hecht does suggest, however, that because genre paintings existed in a free and open market the meanings of these types of works must have varied.

The multitude of relationships between the pictorial system and the written word have been experiencing critical study in recent scholarship. Scholars such as Ronni Baer and Martha Hollander try to answer questions of meaning by implementing detailed analyses of specific works of art through a combination of the above mentioned methodologies originally proposed by De Jongh, Sluijter, and others. With respect to Dou, they follow the established belief that Dou’s trompe l’oeil technique and his subject matter were interconnected. Recent scholars, therefore, reiterate the importance of the emblem as a source for Dou’s works, placing more emphasis on its visual structure and less on its moralizing content as an influence for the artist. In the process of deciphering visual imagery in Dou’s works, both Baer and Hollander, following in Emmens’ and De Jongh’s footsteps, point out that Dou’s method was to associate various elements in the composition to form a concept, similar to the construction of the emblem.

These scholars believe that the importance of the moral message that was embedded into a painting might have been downplayed because artists wanted to amuse and deceive the sophisticated viewer, and not necessarily only to moralize. For example, certain formulaic juxtapositions, like the one between a prominent foreground figure and a background scene in a composition, as in the Violin Player, become central to

---

understanding Dou’s art and the meaning of a given painting. The importance of his technique and the smooth appearance of his works should not be underestimated. These interrelationships, therefore, become key to interpreting the meaning of his paintings. Using a similar approach, this study will demonstrate the relationship between contemporaneous written sources and visual depictions embraced and reinvented by Dou, with specific focus on the *Violin Player*.

The artist in his, or rarely her, studio was a theme popularized by Dutch late sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries artists. Dou and his circle depicted the humanist ideal of the *pictor doctus*, a learned artist who is involved with intellectual, literary, and often musical activity, in order to elevate the painter’s profession to that of a liberal art. H. Perry Chapman and Celeste Brusati have discussed the objective of Dutch painters to be perceived as distinguished creative individuals through self-portraiture. Artists in the Dutch school of painting, in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, began to show themselves at their easels dressed in costly garments and surrounded by tools of their trade and scholarly attributes such as books. As scholars discovered, these images were not necessarily realistic representations of the daily lives of these artists but were cleverly staged images of self-fashioning through art.

In her dissertation (New York, 1990) and exhibition catalogue (Washington, 2000) on Dou, Ronni Baer discusses Dou’s achievement and contribution to Dutch painting of the seventeenth-century and to the subject matter of the artist in the atelier. She maintains that Dou, similarly to preceding and contemporary artists, represented the

---

ideal of the painter as a virtuous, educated, and elevated man. In the dissertation monograph, the first on Dou since Wilhelm Martin’s monograph of 1908, Baer examines writings on Dou by his contemporaries, the context of Leiden, the city he worked in, and his artistic education, a key phase of which took place in Rembrandt’s workshop. In her examination, Baer suggests that Dou’s choice of subject matter, including the painter in the studio, was influenced by his teacher.

The artist’s perfected fine technique, however, was his own invention. Baer reasserts one of Hecht’s and Sluijter’s arguments by stating that Dou’s art comes close to imitating life, and therefore asks the spectator to think about appearance and reality. As we will see, trompe l’oeil and illusionism are significant factors in the painter’s art, and combined with his meticulous method of painting, allowed him to create artificial realities and intricate associations. The seductive surface texture of his small paintings and the true-to-life interior scenes lure the viewers and delight their senses, possibly with a type of a moral lesson and master deception integrated within the works. Dou’s oeuvre demonstrates an interest in self-portraiture as well an innovative approach to the theme of the artist in the studio.

In his self-portraits Dou presents himself as a gentleman usually surrounded with attributes alluding to his intellectual erudition and artistic abilities. Dou and his followers in the Leiden fijnschilder (fine-painter) school of painting, such as Frans van Mieris the Elder and Johannes van Swieten, often referred to music and to the act of playing musical instruments in paintings depicting the artist in the studio. As will be seen, this was a

---

23 Baer, Gerrit Dou, 26.
device used by painters to promote their image as elevated and inspired artists who make art of courtly quality.

The exhibition catalogue Music and Painting in the Golden Age (Zwolle, 1994) demonstrates the importance of music in Dutch culture and its representation in paintings by various artists. Magda Kyrova and Louis Peter Grijp both discuss in their essays the prevalence of music in artists’ studios and inventories. While Kyrova states that portraying music-playing painters at their easels was a way to elevate the status of painting to that of a liberal art, Grijp affirms that some painters would make music primarily to inspire their senses.24 The idea of a painter playing music in the studio as a means of inspiration has been discussed by Baer in relation to Dou’s painting of a fiddler (1653, Liechtenstein, Vaduz Castle, Princely Collection).25

This thesis investigates the theme of music in the artist’s studio with a specific focus on one of Dou’s most important formulations of the subject, his Vaduz Violin Player of 1653. The association between art and music in paintings by Dou and his followers will be examined as a reflection of the prevailing concept of music as inspiration for painting. This examination, furthermore, will demonstrate that musical instruments and other related motifs were placed in depictions of artists’ studios to convey particular meanings to the viewer about the artist and the practice of art.

As indicated by various scholars, the background scenes of Dutch seventeenth-century paintings often elucidate particular meanings of the work. Hollander interprets the

---

Vaduz *Violin Player* as a triple self-portrait, in which she explains that the background scene represents the thought and labor required to create a work of art, and combined with the violinist’s meditative state, depicts the pursuits necessary to create a painting. These three figures, according to her reading of this work, are allegorical embodiments of Dou.\(^{26}\) While the self-portrait of the artist constitutes an important part in the overall meaning and deceptive qualities of the painted illusion, the discussion in the final chapter of this paper will argue that the smoking gentleman is the only figure that can be identified to represent Dou.

The *Violin Player* shows a man leaning comfortably out of the window niche while playing a violin and gazing into the distance or towards a birdcage to his right. The significance of specific motifs such as the musician’s pose, his costume, and the context of the scene will be addressed in the chapters that follow. The analysis will examine the role of the violinist in the painting as well as his relationship to the man in the background, the concept of music as means of inspiration for the painter or its indulgent qualities, and Dou’s attempt in elevating the status of the artist and his profession through a representation of the artist as a scholarly and musically capable man. The research for this paper aims to contribute and further the understanding of Dutch seventeenth-century genre painting through an investigation of Dou’s innovative uses of motifs from self-portraiture, popular prints, still-lifes, and genre paintings, as well as his technical challenges.

superiority and iconographic originality. The study of the theme of the artist as musician will also help clarify how Dutch painters perceived and promoted their art.
Chapter 3: The Technical Virtuoso and His Critical Fortunes

Dou’s technical superiority and the craftsmanship of his fine style of painting is impossible to disregard in discussing this artist’s oeuvre, and will serve as a worthy introduction to Dou as master painter. He was the founding father of the *fijnschilder* (fine) manner of painting that produced generations of followers and admirers of his works, during his own lifetime especially in his hometown of Leiden. He earned recognition for his meticulously painted illusionistic panels from his fellow artists and critics alike. Through an examination of Dou’s early artistic training, manner of painting, and critical reception the reader will come to a better understanding of Dou as an artist and innovator in Dutch seventeenth-century genre painting.

Dou was highly respected in Leiden, where he lived his entire life. By the end of the sixteenth century Leiden had emerged as a major cultural centre. Holland’s first university was established there in 1575.27 Artists and scholars were proud of their town and Dou was highly regarded partially thanks to his development of the new painting style. Various important texts on the city’s most prominent residents were published prompted by the concern to promote Leiden as a major centre for artistic production and Dou figures prominently in these descriptions.28

I. Artistic Training and Working Methods

It is generally believed that Dou began his artistic career by studying drawing with the engraver Bartholomeus Dolendo about 1622-23. Dou’s father, Douwe Jansz., intended

---

27 *Baer, Gerrit Dou*, 27.
28 Ibid, examples such as Jan Orlers’ *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (Description of the City of Leiden), published in 1641 and Simon van Leeuwen’s, *Korte Besgryving van het Lugdunum Batavorum Nu Leyden* (Short Description of Leiden), published in 1672.
for his son to follow the craft of a glasschrijver in his glass workshop, which was the second most important workshop for the production of church glass in Leiden. Jan Orlers, Dou’s first biographer, in his Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden (1641), wrote that Dou was sent to study with Dolendo “the basic principles of draftsmanship,” and he also praised the artist’s “passion and yearning for painting.”29 In this text Orlers’ primary concern was to laud the accomplishments of the city’s most influential residents, and evidently Dou was one of them.

Subsequently, the young artist’s father enrolled him with the glass-worker Pieter Couwenhorn, with whom Dou studied the craft of glass engraving, copper engraving, and glass painting for more than two years, supposedly between the years 1623-1625.30 From 1625 to 1627, he was enrolled in the glaziers’ guild of Leiden.31 According to Orlers, Dou was quite reckless when he had to climb up to set or repair glass, and fearing an accident, his father decided to make him a painter.32

As a result, Dou entered the workshop of Rembrandt van Rijn in 1628. At that time Rembrandt (1606-1669) was only seven years his senior. Rembrandt was an aspiring history painter and around 1627 his subject, compositional, and palette choices were influenced by his teacher Pieter Lastman’s theatrical painting style.33 During his three-year apprenticeship under Rembrandt, with whom he stayed probably until the artist moved to Amsterdam in 1631, it appears that Dou was influenced by his master’s early

29 Franits, Dutch Seventeenth-Century, 116 and Baer, Gerrit Dou, 29-30. Further on Dou’s early training, see Martin, Gerard Dou, 27-42.
30 Baer, Gerrit Dou, 28.
32 Baer, Gerrit Dou, 29.
mode of painting. Around the time that he was apprenticed, his teacher’s work was filled with strong contrasts and use of artificial Caravaggesque light, possibly inspired by the Utrecht Caravaggist style of artists such as Gerrit van Honthorst.  

Moreover, the period prior to 1632 was a time when Rembrandt was painting in a manner more detailed and fine than the rougher and more spontaneous style so characteristic of his later works. Dou embraced and revolutionized Rembrandt’s style of painting in his own way by making his works more precise and polished, both in technique and visual appearance. Joachim von Sandrart, a German artist and writer who lived in the Dutch Republic in the years 1637-1645, wrote that even though Dou was Rembrandt’s student, he had become a “totally different flower” who “adopted an entirely different manner of painting never before seen.”  

Though there are noticeable influences from his teacher, like early subject matter and dramatic light and dark contrasts, the student formed his own signature style by specializing in small-scale, meticulously painted, and highly illusionistic genre paintings.

It has been suggested that the meticulous nature of glass painting and his first training as a glasschrijver might have influenced Dou’s inclination for smaller scale finely painted panels rarely exceeding sixty by forty-eight centimeters. His technique of applying enamel-like colors in a series of glazes as well as his choice of bright, saturated colors, as Baer suggests, could be reflective of his training in glass painting. She writes, “The polish resulting from the firing of painted glass might have provided a model for the

34 Ibid, 28-29.  
characteristic smooth finish of Dou’s paintings.” Baer implies that the meticulous and careful manner in which one had to work to transfer designs from paper to glass may “explain Dou’s predilection for small works.”\textsuperscript{38}

In her hypothesis, however, Baer fails to mention that many Dutch panel painters, like David Bailly, Cornelis Cornelisz van Haarlem and Joachim Wtewael, also made small, detailed paintings.\textsuperscript{39} As a result, it seems that the artist’s two-year education in a glass shop is not a sufficient explanation for his remarkable style. Dou’s consistent oeuvre demonstrates that it was not an artistic phase that the painter went through. Counter to his teacher Rembrandt’s experimental nature, he chose to paint in a smooth manner on small-scale panels his entire career. The size and fine technique of the small panels used by Dou not only reflects his influence from the glass-painting period, but are a testament to his inner artistic personality and merits.

In the seventeenth century, \textit{Fijnschilderen} was a term for the controlled and elegant technique that Dou and his followers practiced.\textsuperscript{40} Further, \textit{fijnschilder} was a word used to distinguish a “fine-art-painter” from a \textit{klandschilder}, a rough painter. This fine painting manner can be described as a smooth technique of meticulous handling of oil paint that makes the individual strokes nearly impossible to distinguish, and emphasizes the reflections of surface textures under various illuminations; it created the widely known ‘photographic’ quality of many Dutch paintings.\textsuperscript{41}

In Dou’s tiny and carefully blended brushstrokes, there is barely, if any, visual evidence of the painter’s handiwork. Contemporary critics described this technique as \textit{net}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 30 and Hollander, \textit{An Entrance for the Eyes}, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Walter Liedtke, \textit{Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art} (New York: Yale University Press, 2007), 153.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 43, note 1.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Westermann, \textit{The Art of the Dutch}, 77-79.
\end{itemize}
(neat), a technical antithesis of ruw (rough) painting in which brushstrokes are deliberately visible.\textsuperscript{42} Orlers wrote about his admiration of Dou’s art by saying that “everyone seeing these same [paintings] must be amazed at their highly finished neatness (netheyt) and curiousness.”\textsuperscript{43} Dou and his student Frans van Mieris developed a remarkable ability of differentiating textures, and became famous in their own lifetime for this manner of painting. Dou’s strokes remain just visible, while van Mieris’ are painted in an even smoother manner, which some see perhaps as an effort on the student’s part to outdo his master.\textsuperscript{44} Even so, Dou was the originator and first practitioner of this overtly time-consuming technique.

The fijnschilders, fine painters, specialized in still-lifes and images of daily life, some of which include Frans van Mieris the Elder’s domestic scenes and Willem van Mieris’ musicians. The fijnschilders used their painting abilities to reflect the widest spectrum of their society such as the exemplary mother, the dirtiness of a lowly tavern, stylish partying and so forth. As discussed earlier, genre painting often depicted scenes of daily life encoded with moral lessons. The works of the fine painters, hence, may contain discreetly concealed moral messages for their viewers that are apt to be easily recognizable today only to emblem book and proverb fanciers, or to scholars.

Several seventeenth-century writers and art theorists dedicated texts to Dou and his meticulous treatment and painstaking method of painting. Von Sandrart wrote that Dou “painted everything with the utmost perseverance and patience from nature, through

\textsuperscript{43} Sluijter, Seducress of Sight, 204.
a frame across which wires were stretched.”

Martin, in his monograph on Dou, translated another of von Sandrart’s accounts of Dou’s methodologies:

Finally, he rubs down his colors on glass, and makes his brushes himself; he keeps his palette, brushes and paints carefully put away out of the dust which might soil them, and when he prepares to paint he will wait quite a long time till all dust has completely settled. Only then does he quietly take his palette out of its box near at hand, the prepared colors and brushes, and begin to work; and when he has done he puts everything carefully away again.

Although such descriptions might have been exaggerated, there must be some truth to them. It seems believable that an artist like Dou would take such care and worked in such a manner in the privacy of his studio.

Dutch paintings of the artist’s studio show that painters would preserve their work from dust. For instance, Adriaen van Ostade’s A Painter’s Studio (c.1640, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) shows an artist at work in his workshop (fig.2). There is a piece of linen suspended from the roof, which could have served as a blind that was lowered to reduce the glare, and also to keep the dust away from the freshly painted works. Such draperies hung in Dou’s studio over his easel to protect the minutely finished panels from dust. In addition, Dou’s painted self-portraits, such as the Dresden (1647, Gemäldegalerie Alte

---


Meister) and Spain (c.1645, Private Collection) panels, show a Japanese parasol that he used to attach to the easel so that dust would not settle on the wet surfaces of his panels (fig.3-4).49

Dou dedicated his whole life to perfecting his style of painting in this detail-driven technique.50 Dou’s works demonstrate a conscious and obsessive quest to describe surfaces with illusionistic fidelity. He would use the finest and smoothest brushstrokes to depict the surfaces and textures of various objects, apparently at times using a brush with a single hair.51 Von Sandrart observed that Dou’s paintbrush was “scarce larger than a fingernail.”52 One connoisseur, the Danish scholar, Ole Borch, after a visit to Dou’s studio, wrote that by the light of a candelabrum one could count the folds in the curtain of the bed in the Dropsical Woman (1663, Paris, Musée du Louvre), a painting that the artist was working on at the time (fig.5).53 It appears that Dou used a magnifying glass to assist him in such delicate craftsmanship, given that the surfaces and textures he painted are more precise than what appears to the naked eye.54 Borch wrote in his journal in 1661, that “Whenever Dou is painting, he is wont to place three magnifying glasses before his eyes at the same time, to see more sharply.”55 Whether it can be explained because of his worsening eyesight or not, this rendering of surface details was what constituted the

49 The parasol was a well-established attribute of the quack doctor, and it had become a symbol of the quack doctor’s and the painter’s dependence on deception, as noted by Ivan Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, his Patrons and the Art of Painting,” Oxford Art Journal 5, no.1 (1982), 20.
50 Laabs, The Leiden Fijnschilders, 10.
52 Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 68.
53 Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, his Patrons,” 19.
54 Von Sandrart wrote that Dou began to wear glasses during his thirties, and Houbraken noted that these were in fact magnifying glasses, as mentioned by Baer, Gerrit Dou, 51, note 137.
biggest and most noticeable difference between his, Rembrandt’s and other contemporaries’ manner of painting.

It has been observed that most *fijnschilders* enjoyed stable patronage that often came from a single source and was limited to a small elite, hence giving them the possibility of creating time-consuming, highly finished panels.56 Prospective art buyers would often deal with the artists themselves.57 Cost was primarily based on the finish of the work and the time it took to execute it rather than the idea and invention of the composition.58 Baer notes the fact that Dou’s paintings were in high demand, which gave him a freedom few Dutch artists had in his choice of subject matter and the possibility of refining his painting style.59

II. Artistic Reputation and Critical Acclaim

During his own lifetime Dou was revered as the model of an ideal painter. As we have seen, Dou’s detailed and smooth technique was admired by contemporaries. The Danish connoisseur Borch pronounced the opinion that “The best painter in Leiden, whose equal is not to be found in the Low Countries or any country in the world, was Gerrit Dou.”60 Additionally, a Leiden painter and connoisseur, Philips Angel, presented a eulogy entitled *Lof der Schilderkonst* (In Praise of Painting), on St. Luke’s Day on October 18, 1641 at a ceremony of the Saint Luke’s Guild in Leiden, to further promote the creation of a separate guild for painters. The speech, which was published at Leiden, might have been an attempt by the St. Luke’s guild to persuade the municipal authorities

57 Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, his Patrons,” 15.
to give the painters full guild privileges. Especially, painters wanted protection from outside competition and foreign dealers.\textsuperscript{61} In this lecture Angel outlined central tenets that he considered fundamental for contemporary painting, crowning Dou as the perfect master. Dou’s high artistic reputation allowed him to become one of the founders of the Leiden painters’ guild in 1648, the year of the guild’s establishment.\textsuperscript{62}

Angel believed that painting’s primary function was to be pleasing for the art lover’s eye. Painting nature as close to life as possible and the ability of distinguishing varying textures defines a painter worthy of praise since he can “gratify the eyes of those who fancy the arts” as well as “kindle a rousing affection in the art lovers’ minds” by showcasing skill and workmanship in depicting details.\textsuperscript{63} He stressed that the painter should depict things as precisely as he can to appear “almost real.”\textsuperscript{64} Angel wrote that “if he [the artist] manages to imitate life in such a way that people judge that it approaches real life without being able to detect in it the manner [of] who made it, such a spirit deserves praise and honor and shall be ranked above all others.”\textsuperscript{65} Like other Dutch seventeenth-century authors, he emphasized that a painting should be an accurate record of the visual world and artists should focus on appealing to the viewer’s eye through skillful and neat rendering. Consequently, the art theorist praised the superiority of Dou’s

\textsuperscript{61} Further see Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, his Patrons,” 15.

\textsuperscript{62} Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 30-31.


\textsuperscript{64} Angel, \textit{Praise of Painting}, 244. For a discussion on Angel’s \textit{Praise of Painting} see Sluijter, “Didactic and Disguised Meanings? Several Seventeenth-Century Texts on Painting and the Iconological Approach to Dutch Paintings of This Period,” in \textit{Looking at Seventeenth Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered}, ed. Wayne Franits (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 82.

\textsuperscript{65} Sluijter, \textit{Seductress of Sight}, 245.
technique, underlining the painter’s superb ability to give lifelike appearance to objects and thus honouring Dou with the title of the ideal artist.\textsuperscript{66}

Later in the seventeenth century, Rembrandt’s painterly manner fell out of fashion, while the taste for the smooth and polished surfaces of paintings like those of Dou grew stronger as the century progressed.\textsuperscript{67} He was the model of the smooth and his teacher of the rough technique, and people who liked things classical believed that the “loose” technique was a sign of sloppy technique as well as “loose” and immoral human character.\textsuperscript{68} Artists like Rembrandt, therefore, were looked upon as disobeyers of rules of life and art.\textsuperscript{69} Whereas Rembrandt sketchily ‘sculpted’ with impasto, Dou meticulously glazed and blended the paint.\textsuperscript{70} Even though not all praised Dou’s manner, his works were among the most popular and highly valued in Holland in his own lifetime.

The ultimate goal of painting, as believed by Angel and others, was to deceive the beholder’s eye.\textsuperscript{71} In discussing the dignity of the artist’s profession, Angel encouraged artists to emulate ancient masters. He described how the legendary ancient Greek painter Zeuxis could imitate nature in such a perfect and believable way that even birds were deceived by the grapes that he painted on his panel. The tale of the competition between two great artists, Zeuxis and Parrhassius, tells how each artist attempted to paint the most illusionistic image.\textsuperscript{72} According to this ancient legend, although Zeuxis painted the

\textsuperscript{66} Angel, \textit{Praise of Painting}, 248; Sluijter, “Didactic and Disguised,” 82; Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” XIX.
\textsuperscript{67} Chapman, \textit{Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits}, 98.
\textsuperscript{68} Emmens, “A Seventeenth-Century Theory of Art,” 15.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid, 16.
\textsuperscript{71} Angel, \textit{Praise of Painting}, 235-239.
believable grapes, Parrhasius surpassed him because he managed to fool his competitor by depicting a curtain hanging over his painting which Zeuxis, upon entering Parrhasius’ studio, tried to draw aside. Parrhasius, therefore, became the winner of the competition and was awarded the laurel, “for Zeuxis had deceived only the birds of heaven, but Parrhasius had deceived Zeuxis.”

The story of the competition between Zeuxis and Parrhasius was widely known in seventeenth-century Holland. This ancient anecdote demonstrates that perfect illusionism and trompe l’oeil painting can fool knowledgeable viewers, including even skilled artists. In seventeenth-century Leiden it was a common tendency to compare contemporary artists to legendary painters from antiquity. Dirk Traudenius named Dou the Dutch Parrhasius, writing in his poem, “Den Hollandschen Parrhasius” (1662): “If Zeuxis saw this banquet, he would be deceived again:/Here lies no paint, but life and spirit on the panel./Dou does not paint, oh no, he performs magic with the brush.”

There are various accounts of such cleverly painted deceptions mentioned throughout the history of Western art. One of these widely known stories concerns Rembrandt’s painting of his servant girl, *A Young Girl Leaning on a Window-Sill* (1645, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery) (fig.6). According to Roger de Piles, Rembrandt placed the work at his window to deceive the pedestrians passing by the house. He achieved his purpose since only days later did they notice that the girl did not move from

---

76 Sluijter, *Seductress of Sight*, 209.
In the sixteenth century, Giorgio Vasari had written an anecdote about how Cimabue attempted to push a painted fly away from a painted portrait by Giotto. The fictive fly, which had a long history of being used as an illusionistic device, was used by Dou in his *An Artist in His Studio* (1635, Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection) to the same end (fig.7). It can be seen high up on the wall of the studio and it throws a shadow into the picture space. Most likely it is not, as some interpreters have proposed, a reference to the plague that struck Leiden in 1635 or a part of the *vanitas* imagery in the work symbolizing transience. Rather, following Gaskell’s proposition that Dou intended it as a device to showcase his skill at illusionism, the fly is another tool by which Dou wanted to deceive, impress, and please the viewer.

The skill of imitating and deceiving, besides being emphasized by Angel, formed a significant part in the art theory and criticism in that period. Fooling the audience was perceived as evidence of the painter’s abilities and looked upon favorably by Dutch seventeenth-century connoisseurs. For instance, Samuel van Hoogstraeten (1627-1678), a painter, art theorist, and also a pupil of Rembrandt, had achieved success in 1651 at the Habsburg court in Vienna when he deceived and delighted Emperor Ferdinand III with

---

77 Wheelock, “Illusionism in Dutch and Flemish Art.” 77. The tale is recounted by Rogier de Piles, in Piles 1708, 10-11, which is cited by Wheelock from Slive’s 1953, 129 translation of the text. It reads: “Rembrandt diverted himself one day by making a portrait of his servant in order to exhibit it at his window and deceive the eyes of the pedestrians. He succeeded, because the deception was only noticed a few days later. It was not beautiful drawing, nor a noble expression which produced this effect. One does not look for these qualities in his work. While in Holland I was curious to see the portrait. I found it painted well and with great strength. I bought it and still exhibit it in an important position in my cabinet;” for further on stories of deceptions in art, see Wheelock, “Illusionism in Dutch and Flemish Art,” 77-78.

78 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, ed. and introduction by William Gaunt, vol. 1 (New York: Dutton, 1963), 85-86 and also ibid, 79. Even though the tale might be mythical, it remains the first recorded attempt by a western artist to create an illusionistic element in the painting as if present in the viewer’s space, as noted by d’Otrange-Mastai, *Illusion in Art*, 56.


his *trompe-l’oeil* still-life. He received a gold medallion and chain as a consequence of the convincing and witty deceit.\(^8^1\) In his treatise of 1678, Hoogstraten expressed high regard for illusionism. He defined the aim of the art of painting as “a science for representing all the ideas or notions which the whole of visible nature is able to produce and for deceiving the eye with drawing and color.”\(^8^2\) Furthermore, illusionism and *trompe l’oeil* were recognized as important devices in Dou’s art as well. In his *History of Leiden* of 1672, Simon van Leeuwen wrote about the artist: “The famous Gerrit Douw…[was] the excellent small-scale painter who knew how to depict his living subjects…with such perfection that his work seemed so real [that it] could scarcely be distinguished from life.”\(^8^3\) In terms of framing solutions, Dou would place the illusionistic painting within a case that the potential viewer would have to open and see the painted illusion of a scene. Thus, contemporaries clearly admired Dou for painting highly lifelike images that convincingly deceived the audience.\(^8^4\)

The art-lovers of the seventeenth-century were most interested in the magic created with the painter’s hand. A quote, “painting on a flat surface, one of the most noble arts of the world…and the unerring judgment with which the details are worked out,” from a French art-lovers manual known as the *Brussels Manuscript* of 1635 comments on the art-lovers’ concern with the magic created on a flat surface.\(^8^5\) Van de Wetering states that, reading works written by artists for art lovers and some works by the art enthusiasts themselves, it seems that the knowledge gained from studio visits, which will be

---

\(^8^2\) Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, 77.
\(^8^3\) Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, 27.
discussed in the final chapter of this paper, primarily related to the marvel of the illusion of reality on a flat surface, as well as the technical abilities of the artist to create that illusion.  

During his lifetime Dou already had considerable success commanding high prices for his paintings. He had several regular clients including Johan de Bye, François de le Boe Sylvius, and Willem de Langue. As early as 1641, Orlers wrote that Dou’s paintings were “highly valued by art lovers and dearly sold.” As a successful Leiden painter Dou received from six hundred to one thousand *gulden* annually, which was a sum of money sufficient to buy a house in the Dutch Republic at that time, from his patron Pieter Spiering, the son of a successful tapestry merchant. Spiering paid a yearly fee for the right of first refusal and was a great admirer of highly finished and smooth paintings. Few Dutch painters enjoyed such monetary gains, and in his own lifetime, it was quite possible that Dou fetched higher prices for his paintings than his master Rembrandt. In examining fifty-two inventories in the Delft archives between 1617 and 1672, J.M. Montias calculated that the average painting attributed to a particular artist would be valued at 16.6 guilders while an un-attributed work was only 7.2 guilders. Ultimately, financial accomplishments, according to Angel, were what measured the artist’s status and achievements.

Dou’s artistic reputation and place among the most admired Dutch seventeenth-century artists remained unabated until the eighteenth to mid nineteenth century, a period

---

87 Sluiter, *Seductress of Sight*, 204.  
90 Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” XVI.  
91 Angel, *Praise of Painting*, 238.
in which the artist was receiving mixed reviews. Some eighteenth-century critics felt that he was painting lesser subject-matter than other major artists of the seventeenth century. Arnold Houbraken (1718-21) wrote that it was unfortunate that Dou did not use his talents and abilities as a painter to the fullest.  

His theoretical views stressed the importance of history painting, and considering that Dou painted splendid still-life details and specialized in interiors with relatively inactive figures, Houbraken commented by stating:

> It is to be regretted that the man’s intellect was not applied to important considerations, and his brush set to the depiction of more worthy and valuable subjects…There are two considerations that people suppose may have been the reason why he always stuck to the depiction of lesser matters; the first that he had developed so strict a routine in life that he could not and would not do otherwise […] or that his spirit was not able to push through to those heights [of philosophy] and therefore (with respect of the choice of his subjects) kept himself down.  

Nonetheless, the biographer recognized the intelligence behind Dou’s compositions. He summarized near the end of his Life of Dou:

> It is almost inconceivable, when we consider the detail of his brushworks that a man could work out so much in his lifetime, which assures us that he must have made very good use of his time. And as far as his art is concerned, it does itself celebrate the intellect of its maker.

In the nineteenth century, Dou’s patience was a quality noted by some critics. In 1842, Johannes Immerzeel, Dutch writer and poet, wrote of Dou that no other artist before or after could match his manner of painting. He stated that the artist’s works bore the “stamp of rare genius.” Immerzeel believed that Dou had “unspeakable talent for depicting all animate and inanimate subjects without scrimping on the purity and the freshness of colors or betraying through other means that the wonders of his brush were

---

94 Ibid, 457.
wrought with difficulty and untiring patience.” Along the same lines, in 1854 a critic for the *Illustrated Magazine of Art* wrote of the painter:

He would bestow hours in studying new effects, in viewing the contrasts and combinations of light and shade, and in perfecting the most trivial accessories of his subject. He cared not how he labored or how protracted his labour was, so that he was enabled to attain to that degree of excellence to which he felt his genius was capable of leading him.

In addition, John Smith, an English dealer and writer, in his influential *Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters* (1829-42) stated that Dou was “a perfect master of all the principles of art; which, united with consummate skill and labor, enabled him to produce the most perfect specimens that ever came from the easel of a painter.” Changing times and tastes, nevertheless, brought about various opinions concerning Dou’s smooth manner.

Not all was favorable praise, and in the late nineteenth century the *fijnschilder* works were rejected by some critics based on the very qualities that had previously gained them respectability and admiration. These detractors regarded Dou as an untalented and amateurish painter. The French art critic Étienne-Joseph-Théophile Thoré believed that Dou’s paintings lacked fantasy and mystery and did not compare to Rembrandt’s genius and his way of creating “mysterious, profound, inapprehensible” paintings. In 1859, he expressed a very critical opinion about Dou by writing, “The genius of Rembrandt is [found] in the intimate expressions, the character of movements, and the originality of effects. Gerard Dou has none of these. His manner of painting, as well as his inspiration,

---

96 Ibid.
is precisely contrary to that of Rembrandt.”¹⁰⁰ It seems that critics like Houbraken and Thoré could not simply acknowledge the fact that Dou and Rembrandt were two different individuals and therefore artists who painted in distinct styles. Each had his own unique artistic personality, and unfortunately for Dou, his style of painting did not gain him longevity and respect among art critics.

Dou’s paintings were previously revered because of their meticulous technique, but eventually were considered overworked and lifeless. In the latter part of the nineteenth century interest in Dou and his art declined.¹⁰¹ Early in the twentieth century Martin mentioned, “Now the times are changed, and we naturally think the modern taste the best which regards Dou as only fit to stand in Rembrandt’s shadow.”¹⁰² He described Dou’s paintings as “painstaking study” made with “excessive carefulness,” continuing by describing him as “the smaller mind and inferior taste” that “led him into widely diverging paths from his great master.” Martin wrote that Dou’s later works “subsequently grew worse and worse, and soon degenerated into [finicky] painting, the outcome of the brain and devoid of feeling.”¹⁰³ Clearly, an artist who was once regarded as the most ideal representative of painting came to be seen by some as emotionless and unworthy. With this discourse in mind it is apparent that the refined technique and meticulous manner of painting were highly admired during the seventeenth century, while the appeal of extreme surface illusionism was disregarded and overlooked by some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics and art theorists. These writers on art,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 16.
¹⁰¹ Kitson, “Ten Paintings,” 848.
¹⁰² Ibid.
consumed by romantic ideologies, believed that art should be able to express spiritual qualities.\textsuperscript{104}

Although contemporaries did not, to my knowledge, comment on it specifically, Dou’s Vaduz \textit{Violin Player} is one of his mature paintings that embodies the very essence of why the artist was so esteemed and highly regarded in his own time. It is meticulously painted in the \textit{fijn} manner with which Dou created a lifelike scene of a musician protruding out of a window niche into the viewer’s space. Such technical superiority and compositional mastery, both demonstrated in this work, were precisely the tenets lauded by Angel and many others previously mentioned. All the more, the pictorially persuasive carpet on the parapet, the opened book of music, and peculiar background scene are some of the visually deceptive elements in the painting produced by Dou to cleverly deceive and entertain the viewer.

Consequently, the subsequent chapters of this paper will focus on this painting as a demonstration of Dou’s unique artistic personality and his contribution to seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting. Readers are encouraged to make their own judgment of the artist’s illusionistic works and technical capabilities, innovative compositional choices, and level of ability to express life and feeling through oil paint. In Dou’s self-portraits and representations of the scholar in his atelier, as will be discussed shortly, he employed themes and motifs with associations to the general theme of artistic creation, inspiration, and the relationship of painting to other arts of sculpture and music. These aspects are present in this painting as well, and the connection between the art of painting and that of music-playing in the context of the artist’s studio shall now be considered.

\textsuperscript{104} Wheelock, “Dou’s Reputation,” 21.
2. Adriaen van Ostade, *A Painter's Studio*, c.1640, oil on panel, 37 x 36 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

3. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, 1647, oil on panel, 43 x 34.5 cm, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

4. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, c.1645, oil on panel, 12.4 x 8.3 cm, Spain, Private Collection

5. Gerrit Dou, *Dropsical Woman*, 1663, oil on panel, 86 x 67.8 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre

6. Rembrandt van Rijn, *A Young Girl Leaning on a Window-Sill*, 1645, oil on canvas, 81.6 x 66 cm, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery

7. Gerrit Dou, *An Artist in His Studio*, 1635, oil on panel, 92.5 x 74 cm, Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection
Chapter 4: Music and Musical Instruments in the Artist’s Studio

The connection between music and painting is an essential theme in Dou’s Violin Player. With the purpose of deciphering the intended meaning in the work, the ambiguous relationship between the foreground and background will be analyzed in the context of the visual tradition in Dutch late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings of the artist in the studio. Through an iconographic analysis of paintings by Dou and his contemporaries I propose the correlation between music and painting in the artist’s workshop as an important device used by painters in fashioning their identity as elevated, scholarly, and inspired artists. As will be examined, musical instruments are a recurring pictorial motif in depictions of self-portraits and generic portrayals of the artist’s studio by Dou, his fijnschilder followers, and his contemporaries. Playing music and the presence of musical instruments in these painted depictions of the artist’s atelier reflect the use of music to inspire, unwind, and motivate the creative juices of the learned painter.

Various painted depictions of music and musical pursuits demonstrate that amateur music-making was significant in Dutch culture. The exhibition entitled Music & Painting in the Golden Age demonstrates that between ten and twelve percent of all seventeenth-century paintings are representations of music. In genre works, which make up the majority of Dou’s oeuvre, the numbers of paintings that portray music are even higher. Furthermore, about twenty per cent of Frans van Mieris’ oeuvre deals with music in some way or another. He was named by Houbraken the “prince among

---

[Dou’s] pupils,” and his works were most likely as influential as those of his teacher in their technique and overall execution.

Based on contemporary evidence of inventories and texts as well as visual sources of the period it can be suggested that in seventeenth-century Holland music-making was a popular pastime in the everyday life of the Dutch. Kyrova, for instance, cites a sign that would be placed in muziekherbergen (music-inns) and danscamers (dancing rooms) stating, “Anyone who can play the violin or bass or some other instrument yet does not perform a tune, must suffer a punishment from which his only release is a jug of bottle-beer or wine.” In these establishments people would enjoy music, and at times instruments were available for visitors who were then encouraged to play them. There was music in churches, taverns, danscamers, and it was present on special occasions like weddings and festivals. Music had the power to influence a person’s mood and was believed to possess therapeutic qualities.

Music was part of the lifestyle of the Dutch bourgeoisie. In the upper classes musical activities would have generally taken place in the homes. There, it was an important part of family life, and in portraiture, music became the standard symbol of familial harmony. In elite circles, furthermore, it was considered a pleasant way of


Buijsen, “Music in the Age of Vermeer,” 110. Furthermore, as an example, for the wedding of king’s Christian IV’s daughter Leonora Christina in 1636 there were 41 drums and Tenor Fioller bought. She would herself play the viola da gamba, flute, guitar, and keyboard, as discussed by Eva Legène, “A ‘Foolish Passion for Sweet Harmony,’” in Music and Painting in the Golden Age, exh. cat., Hoogsteder & Hoogsteder, The Hague, and Hessenhuis Museum, Antwerp, eds. Edwin Buijsen and Louis Peter Grijp (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1994), 92.


passing time, and played an important part in maintaining contacts and networking.\textsuperscript{111} Connoisseurs often collected both art and musical instruments. Vermeer’s chief patron Pieter Claesz van Ruyven, for example, owned at his death a viola da gamba, a violin, two flutes as well as several music books.\textsuperscript{112}

Furthermore, in the homes of wealthy Dutch burghers, who were urban middle-class citizens and could be artisans or affluent regents, music became increasingly fashionable. This segment of the population bought a lot of the pictures being produced, and this perhaps reflects the concept of supply and demand by which painters would make paintings that depicted musical activities as an appeal to the interests and tastes of their clients.\textsuperscript{113} Apparently, music and painting were intertwined in Dutch seventeenth-century society, and as we will see, this led music to become an important motif in painted self-portraits by Dou and his contemporaries.

I. Fashioning the Self

The background in the \textit{Violin Player} is a dimly lit setting that reveals two figures, one seated in front of an easel and the other grinding pigments, identifying the space as an artist’s studio. This, therefore, places the violinist in an arched window of a painter’s workshop. In order to demonstrate that music and musical instruments in the context of the studio were a way of raising the standing of the painter’s profession and social status, it is important to examine how artists’ painted self-portraits served as a means of elevating the craft of painting and the status of the artist. This context underlies the

\textsuperscript{112} Buijsen, “Music in the Age of Vermeer,” 114.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, 115.
\textsuperscript{113} Westermann, \textit{The Art of the Dutch}, 33.
representation of the artist as musician in the painter’s studio, to be discussed in the following section of the paper.

(i) Elevating the Artist

To begin with, the portrayal of the artist in the studio was a recurring theme in the Dutch school of painting in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Paintings, drawings and prints by Rembrandt and his followers, made an important contribution to this trend. For the most part, artists were depicting the humanist ideal of the artist as the virtuoso painter, and thus making a claim for painting as a liberal art. Painters tried to protect their intellectual status and to elevate the art of painting above its traditional status as a manual craft. In seventeenth-century Holland, the studio picture flourished as never before in part because of the professionalization of painters in an increasingly competitive atmosphere. As a result, works that show artists in their studios became their means of constructing an image of the artist as the elevated professional.

Through self-portraiture artists fashioned their social identity. There is a substantial number of self-portraits in which Dou and other painters depicted themselves dressed in costly garments, seated at their easels and at times holding the artist’s attributes. Portraying oneself at the easel was a pictorial practice that had been popular in the Netherlands from the second half of the sixteenth century. Many portrayed themselves with their tools at their easels, as exemplified in self-portraits by Isaac Claesz van Swanenburgh, Catharina van Hemessen, Herman van Vollenhoven, and Anthonis Mor (fig. 8-11). Yet, even while posed as if at work, they are dressed in elegant, expensive

114 Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 84.
garments, seated or standing gracefully, and conveying an overall image of grand sophistication. By bringing themselves closer to the image of the upper class gentleman or gentlewoman, painters wanted to assert their professional status. These works are personal statements of artists’ perceptions of the painter’s occupation and his or her artistic practice as a genteel accomplishment, not a menial physical activity. Although they presented themselves to the viewers as painters with the attributes of their craft, the message was of the elevated artist and not the artist as craftsman.

In his *Self-Portrait* (1558, Florence, Uffizi) Anthonis Mor conveys the most popular type at the time. He shows himself dressed in upper-class clothing, seated in a stylized pose in front of a panel set up on the easel, and in his left hand he is holding the palette, brushes and maulstick. The illusionistic rendering of the slip of paper attached to his blank panel is inscribed in Greek identifying Mor as the most famous of painters. By stating in this inscription that he is superior to Apelles, he places himself at the top of a classical tradition. It seems that it was not meant to be a realistic depiction, but a cleverly staged portrayal of the artist at work.

Dou produced about a dozen or more self-portraits in the course of forty years, as well as six variants of scenes of the artist’s studio. Like his teacher, Rembrandt, Dou’s works demonstrate an innovative approach to the subject matter of self-portraiture. In

---


120 In his note, Liedtke mentions that in Moes 1897-1905, vol. 1, there are twenty-eight self-portraits by Dou or records of the same, with some entries that repeat the same object, and others refer to works that are not self-portraits or works that are no longer considered to be by Dou’s hand; Liedtke, *Dutch Paintings*, 158; 165.

the works depicting the artist in his atelier as well as in his self-depictions, Dou does not portray the painter or himself at the easel. In most of these works he depicts himself as *pictor doctus*, a scholarly artist who is involved with intellectual, artistic, and most likely musical activity.\textsuperscript{122} Dou, similar to many preceding and contemporary artists, pictorially dissociated himself from the artisanal aspects of his craft.\textsuperscript{123} In the Cheltenham *Self-Portrait* (c.1635-38) Dou presents himself dressed in fashionable clothes and a style of long hair with bangs, which were in fashion in the 1630s.\textsuperscript{124} He is seated, holding the tools of his trade, in a three-quarter format, portraying himself as a self-assured artist (fig.12).\textsuperscript{125} The easel has been placed in the background so that the artist is associated with but physically separated from the act of painting, stressing the dignity of the profession rather than the practice of the craft.\textsuperscript{126} The plaster cast on which he rests his arm refers to the training of the artist, specifically the practice of drawing after sculpture. It could also allude to the *paragone* debate between the relative merits of painting and sculpture.\textsuperscript{127} It could thus symbolize the foundation of Dou’s art and reflect his familiarity with ancient and contemporary art theory.\textsuperscript{128}

Dou’s self-portraits demonstrate a relationship between the art of painting and the art of making music, both creative arts requiring diligence, practice, talent, and stamina.

\textsuperscript{122} This, in turn, contrasts with the concept of *pictor vulgaris*, a “vulgar painter.” The *pictor doctus* and *pictor vulgaris* derive from Horace’s *Ars Poetica* of 18 B.C. as positive and negative ideals within the creative life—the Learned Poet and Vulgar Poet. Cartwright, *Hoe Schilder Hoe Wilder*, 18. Terms first used by Emmens in *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*.
\textsuperscript{124} Hunnewell, *Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits*, 25.
\textsuperscript{125} Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, 76.
\textsuperscript{126} Hunnewell, *Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits*, 25-26.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, 47-48.
\textsuperscript{128} Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, 76.
Dou manipulated conventions of representation in self-portraiture to depict an image of a cultivated and musically refined artist. In his Boston Self-Portrait (1665, Private Collection) Dou depicts himself in a three-quarter view, gracefully standing in a niche window where two tapestries are opened up as if to unveil the artist and his atelier (fig.13). His right hand is seen resting on the large, opened book placed on top of a closed, smaller book on the ledge. The plaster cast and a jar, probably of linseed oil, are also placed there. Dou is holding a palette covered in paints and brushes in his other hand. Generally speaking, artists would hold as many brushes in their hand as there were paints on their palette.\textsuperscript{129} He is wearing a fur-lined scholar’s tabbaard; this costume and the sash seen lying on the windowsill allude to his erudition and advanced age.\textsuperscript{130} The tabbaard was a type of clothing that was fashionable in the sixteenth century into the seventeenth century for elderly gentlemen and members of the clergy, who often had themselves depicted wearing this clothing item. The tabbaard is usually black or dark brown, which seems to be the color of Dou’s cloak, and could have been the actual wear by painters in their studios.\textsuperscript{131}

The dimly lit background consists of an easel with a canvas, an écorché figure, a globe, and a violin, which were common still-life objects seen in artists’ studios. The violin could be part of the vanitas still-life that the painter was painting on the panel set on the easel in the background. However, viewed in the context of the artist’s studio, the musical instrument also functions to indicate to the viewer the painter’s musical

\textsuperscript{130} Baer, Gerrit Dou, 122.
inclinations, characteristic of a man of high social standing and education. Paintings of vanitas still-lifes, which typically included objects like pipes, drinking vessels, and musical instruments, were a specialty in Leiden throughout the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{132} Usually they were intended to reflect life’s transience and alluded to the idea that life is brief, reminding the viewer that pleasurable illusions, like painting, are man-made.\textsuperscript{133} Nonetheless, within the construct of this painting, the violin and its presence may plausibly imply that Dou might have known how to play and maybe even would play the violin in his studio.

Artists’ inventories demonstrate that musical instruments were part of their many possessions and part of their studio accoutrements. The inventory of Michiel van Musscher, a Dutch painter and printmaker, which was recorded after his death, includes two violins, a harp, two citterns, a guitar, a viola da gamba, a hurdy-gurdy and a bagpipe; Jan Miense Molenaer’s inventory includes three citterns and two transverse flutes among other instruments.\textsuperscript{134} It is possible that in some cases the use of these instruments was for pictorial props. However, visual and written records of artists playing musical instruments prove that such activities were common in studio settings, a topic that shall be addressed and examined in detail in the following chapter.

Self-portraits by Dou’s contemporaries further confirm the apparent relationship between music and art in artists’ studios. Paintings such as Jan Miense Molenaer’s \textit{Self-Portrait in the Studio with Rich Old Woman} (17th c., London, Collection Hans Raber), Frans van Mieris the Elder’s, \textit{Artist’s Studio} (c.1655-1657, formerly Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister), Michiel van Musscher’s \textit{Self-Portrait in the Artist’s Studio}

\textsuperscript{132} Baer, \textit{The Paintings of Gerrit Dou}, 25.3.
\textsuperscript{134} Legène, “Dutch Music of the Golden Age,” 98; 122.
(1679, Rotterdam, Historical Museum), and Job Adriaensz Berckheyde’s *Self-Portrait* (1675, Florence, Uffizi) are some of the many examples that show various musical instruments in artists’ ateliers (fig.14-17). In the Molenaer painting there are several instruments seen hanging on the far wall. In the van Mieris painting there is a viola da gamba in the foreground of the work. In Musscher’s studio, in addition to the couple of instruments in the foreground still-life, there is a lute hanging on the far back left wall. In his self-portrait Berckheyde depicts himself at his easel surrounded by various studio objects, similarly to Musscher and Molenaer, and a violin is seen hanging on the wall.

Together, books, the painter’s implements, and the musical instrument depict an image of an intellectually, artistically, and musically refined artist. Contrary to Rembrandt’s later painted depictions of himself as draftsman and painter, it is clear that Dou, in sync with the established tradition since the sixteenth century of elevating the status of the artist and his profession, wanted to depict himself and be commemorated as a learned, scholarly, gentleman-painter who possibly was a capable violinist.\footnote{135 On Rembrandt as craftsman see Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 79.} It is quite plausible that Dou followed the fashion of fellow artists and men of nobility by studying and playing music in the studio or as a pastime. Based on the formal elements in the Boston painting, the sitter seems to have wanted to depict an image that will transcend death. The representation of an erudite artist, which contrasts with the manual aspects of painting, illustrates that his artistic abilities will grant him fame and therefore grant him immortality, a common belief at that time.\footnote{136 Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, 122. The concept of *ars longa vita brevis* and the function of a portrait as a *memento mori* was popular in the seventeenth century and during the early eighteenth century, see Hunnewell, *Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits*, 242-252.}
Representations of the artist as craftsman during this period were not part of the accepted norm. Rembrandt’s Vienna *Self-Portrait* (1652, Kunsthistorisches Museum) and *Self-Portrait with Two Circles*, (c.1665-1669, London, Kenwood House), therefore, are peculiar and are contrary to the pictorial convention of the time of portraying oneself as a dignified and learned gentleman-artist (fig.18-19). In the Vienna painting, he shows himself wearing a brown painter’s smock and a belted sash over a black jerkin, which made up his studio attire. The black beret on his head by then had become his trademark. The painter stands in a frontal pose with hands on his hips facing the viewer. This projects a commanding and dignified stance. The entire painting is made out of dark brownish tonalities, which contrast and draw our attention to the artist’s face and his authoritative gaze. The clothing that he is wearing, which was painted in a free style, seems to be designed to be practical and comfortable. This type of representation was perceived as informal and shocking for the time period when formal attire in portraiture was expected. In this painted self-portrait Chapman writes that he placed himself in a “proud, confrontational worker’s stance [which] conveys a self-assurance.”

Moreover, in his Kenwood self-portrait the artist presents himself as a working artist, contrasting to the image of the artist as scholarly gentleman. He shows himself standing next to his canvas, and in his left hand he holds a rectangular palette, a maulstick and several brushes. Besides the thick impasto, visible brushwork, and lack of finish, he is in a frontal pose that creates an overwhelming sense of presence. Chapman believes the significant changes in representing himself at work with the artist’s tools can be explained because of his conception of his professional identity. It is as if he glorifies the craft-like aspect of the painter’s work. The artist, therefore, attempts to represent himself as

---

137 Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits*, 87.
dignified, while defying the concept of the vulgar painter. In these self-portraits especially, Rembrandt portrays himself as a painter proud of his profession, and he seems to have embodied and embraced the idea of the painter as craftsman. He does not include musical instruments among the attributes of the studio.

Opposite to the unconventional methodologies of his teacher, Dou exemplifies the strategy of eliminating the traces of the painter’s manual labor altogether. In the Kansas City Self-Portrait (1663, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art) (fig.20) the artist shows himself standing in a proud stance, leaning against a ledge next to some folios, and with the other hand he is holding a walking stick. He is wearing luxurious clothes like the fur-trimmed coat and hat. The setting is of an arched portico. The overall vision communicates to the viewer, through his dress, pose, and surroundings, an image of a successful and wealthy gentleman. The impression in Dou’s Cheltenham, Boston, and Kansas City self-portraits, therefore, is not of a dirty painter dressed in casual garments and busy working on his painting with his brushes and paints, but it is of an upper-class gentleman. These are carefully and cleverly constructed self-representations of how Dou wanted to be perceived by the public and his patrons. He does not depict himself as a craftsman-painter but as learned gentleman.

(ii) The Artist Proper

The association of art with intellectual and musical pursuits exemplifies the artist’s scholarly ideal. Intellectual study was one of the ways an artist in the seventeenth century...
century would differentiate himself from a craftsman.\textsuperscript{141} Paintings by Thomas de Keyser like \textit{Portrait of David Bailly} (c.1627, Private Collection) and \textit{Constantijn Huygens and His Clerk} (1627, London, National Gallery) show lavishly dressed figures in elegant interior settings, surrounded by objects that allude to their erudition and social status including musical instruments (fig.21-22). De Keyser’s portrait of Constantijn Huygens, the secretary to three successive stadholders as well as a prolific Dutch poet and composer, shows him seated at a table with a large lute, globes, compass and architectural plan, which reflect his interests and accomplishments. Gentlemen of the upper class would play musical instruments, and the historian Johan Huizinga described Huygens to be “A man of the world, an outstanding connoisseur of classical and modern art, a fine musician.”\textsuperscript{142} It is known that he played the viola da gamba from the age of six, and when he was a young man he was invited to perform the lute before the English king.\textsuperscript{143}

The portrait of Bailly, like Dou, a painter active in Leiden, shows the artist seated in a scholarly interior, dressed in expensive garments, surrounded by a \textit{vanitas} still-life, painted by Bailly himself. He is resting his arm on the table filled with various objects, among which is a skull.\textsuperscript{144} De Keyser’s representation of Huygens, a gentleman of high social status, and that of Bailly, an esteemed Leiden artist, demonstrate similarities in the layout and details of the composition. Both figures are seated, with their left hand resting on the tables. In both cases there is a lute in the atelier, and hence reference to music or musical activity. The above mentioned pictorial canons were used by Bailly, Dou and

\textsuperscript{141} Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 74.
\textsuperscript{142} Legène, “Dutch Music of the Golden Age,” 82.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid and Alpers, \textit{The Art of Describing}, 2.
\textsuperscript{144} The Leiden painter Bailly painted himself with a skull which most likely can be associated with the celebrated precursor who is considered the founder of the art of painting in Leiden, Lucas van Leyden’s sixteenth-century engraving of a young man (thought to be a self-portrait) holding a skull see, Sluijter, “The Painter’s Pride,” 184-185.
other artists in their self-portraits in order to amplify their status and the image of the artist as scholar, as well as place themselves among the respected Dutch elite, elevating the painter-craftsman to the status of humanist-gentleman.

Dou used the pictorial tradition of the scholar or upper-class gentleman in his study for depictions of himself in his imaginary studios. Dou’s Dresden Self-Portrait (1647, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister), his only self-portrait as a practicing artist (fig.3), provides an appropriate model for the examination of the self-portrait of the artist as draftsman, the artist as scholar, and possibly the artist as practicing musician in the setting of an extensively defined but most likely imaginary studio. The purpose here is not to discuss and elaborate on Dou’s iconographic sources for this work, but to examine the correlation between the painter, the musical objects, and the setting as essential means of elevating the craft of painting and the artist.

This self-portrait, a painting compositionally similar to his Man Interrupted at His Writing (c.1635, Winchcombe, Sudeley Castle Trustees) (fig.23), shows Dou seated at a table, gazing outwards, and wearing a fancy Japanese-style robe worn over ordinary clothing. He holds a quill pen in his right hand, an attribute linked with intellect and study because it is the tool of a poet or scholar as well as a draughtsman. He depicts himself mastering the essentials of his craft – drawing – the basis of painting. It seems to reflect Pliny’s advice, “No day should pass without drawing a line. Only practice makes great artists.” The popular epigram in Pliny’s Natural History, “nulla dies sine linea,” shows a sketching hand drawing the proportions of a face; the inscription above

---

145 Liedtke, Dutch Paintings, 162.
146 Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, his Patrons,” 16.
147 Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 53.
148 Laabs, The Leiden Fijnschilders, 27.
this illustration further emphasizes the meaning of the drawing hand as an emblem of regular practice.\footnote{149} Pliny’s \textit{Natural History} was a significant source of information on painters from classical antiquity, cited in various seventeenth-century emblems and contemporary writings such as Angel’s \textit{In Praise of Painting}.\footnote{150} Furthermore, Dou chose to depict himself based on Aristotle’s model of training of the artist, known since the sixteenth century. Aristotle believed that natural skill, teaching, and practice were essential for good education; additionally, Plutarch, in his \textit{Golden Book}, which was widely known in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, states that the act of learning and constant practice are needed to produce a man of all-round virtue.\footnote{151} Evidently, Dou shows that he is a follower of a long lived tradition of artists who acquire skill through mastering drawing.

Dou depicts himself as the lone occupant of his studio, making it a private space of study, artistic practice, and possibly musical creation. This context links the proper practices of the artist in his studio with the scholarly ideal, and not necessarily what actually took place in a painter’s atelier. Dou’s \textit{Old Painter at Work} (1649, Germany, Private Collection) and \textit{Artist in his Studio} (c. 1630-32, London, Colnaghi) are further examples of painters in their studios surrounded by attributes of the educated artist (fig.24-25). Though most likely not a self-portrait but a generalized representation of a painter, his \textit{Artist in his Studio} is another example in which Dou presents the artist as the learned painter.\footnote{152} The artist is seated at a table with the attributes of his craft, and

\footnote{149} Hunnewell, \textit{Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits}, 165.
\footnote{150} Angel on drawing see, \textit{Praise of Painting}, 242.
\footnote{151} Ibid and Emmens, “A Seventeenth-Century Theory of Art,” 17-20. Also, the mask lying on the edge of the table was the traditional attribute of illusion in painting.
\footnote{152} It is a portrait of someone Dou might have known and this work was speculated to be a self-portrait of Dou or possibly a portrait of Rembrandt. Scholars, for the most part, concluded that this is not a representation of Dou since the features of the sitter in this painting do not look like the artist himself.
similarly to the Dresden self-portrait, he sits amongst studio objects like the globe, the plaster cast on the floor, the scroll, the skull, the pen and ink, the open book, the sword seen hanging on the wall, and the lute. Behind him there is a panel on an easel.

The Colnaghi panel demonstrates influences from one of the most renowned examples of Rembrandt’s early works, A Young Painter in his Studio (c.1629, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) (fig.26), in the chiaroscuro, un-modulated application of paint, monochromatic palette, and the motif of panel on an easel turned away from our view. Dou’s painter is also shown holding the painter’s attributes. In both Rembrandt’s and Dou’s paintings there are no models or assistants and the painter is solitary making the studio a private place of work. Yet, Dou’s Colnaghi composition demonstrates several differences.153 His painter is seated near a table with a variety of objects that allude to his scholarly and musical endeavors. He is not only a master of his craft, but he is a representation of the ideal artist who by his intellectual and painterly abilities wins immortality.154

Beginning in the early sixteenth century there are accounts that some painters and sculptors preferred to study and enjoy a solitary existence, like gentlemen scholars.155 They did not want assistants or apprentices to be present in their workshops. Leonardo da Vinci, for instance, wrote about this desire to seek privacy:

Lest bodily prosperity should stifle a flourishing talent the painter or draughtsman should be solitary, especially when intent on those speculations and reflections which continually appear before his eyes to

154 Baer, Gerrit Dou, 64.
provide subjects for safekeeping in the memory. If you are alone you belong entirely to yourself.\textsuperscript{156}

Moreover, Vasari wrote that Michelangelo was also “a lover of solitude, devoted as he was to Art, which demands the whole man, with all his thoughts, for herself…Art demands earnest consideration, loneliness, and quietude; she cannot permit wandering of the mind.”\textsuperscript{157} From these varying descriptions, it seems that the artist needed his peace and quiet in order to engage in creative activities. This, however, goes against what is known of actual practices of artists and studio organization, which will be addressed in the final chapter of this paper. Artists’ studios, for the most part, were collaborative enterprises, and it is known that Rembrandt’s pupils, for instance, would not only help prepare materials but they worked in their master’s style copying his works which he then sold as his own.\textsuperscript{158} This, however, does not mean, that in terms of artistic production and creation, there were no exceptions to the rule.

In Dou’s Dresden self-portrait, a large cast of a sculpture depicting Hercules conquering Cacus occupies the centre of the composition. The same sculpture is found in representations of several seventeenth-century artists’ studios, also appearing in Frans van Mieris’ and Pieter Codde’s works.\textsuperscript{159} Apparently it was used for anatomic studies in studios in Leiden. Willem Goeree, a Dutch art theorist who wrote a very extensive treatise on drawing in 1668, instructed artists to study “Work in the round, be it copied after or


\textsuperscript{157} Wood, “Indoor-Outdoor,” 37, note 4.


\textsuperscript{159} Frans van Mieris, \textit{Self-Portrait of the Painter in his Studio} (c.1655-57, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister) and Pieter Codde, \textit{Conversation about Art} (c.1630, Paris, F. Lught Collection, Foundation Custodia, Institut Néerlandais) among many others.
cast in plaster from good masters, which can easily be acquired for a reasonable price nowadays.”

Furthermore, Dou was probably familiar with Karel van Mander’s theoretical treatise, *Het Schilder-Boeck* (Painting-Book) of 1604, the earliest Dutch text to attempt to write a comparative history of the pictorial arts, in which van Mander explains that Hercules’ victory over Cacus was perceived to represent the triumph of virtue over envy, vice, and trickery. These evils were seen as the greatest enemies of art and when Dutch artists would depict Hercules overpowering Cacus the hero was cast as the protector of art – hence, his relevance in scenes of the studio.

The still-life arrangement in the Dresden self-portrait consists of typical Dutch seventeenth-century studio props. The extinguished candle in its holder placed on the ledge on the left connotes the diligence and constant practice appropriate to the painter, and it probably symbolizes the time won through productive use. Angel wrote that diligent study and labor guaranteed an immortal name and therefore was a way of conquering death, since achieving fame would immortalize the artist through his art. These types of objects, like the candle, were traditionally interpreted as symbols of *vanitas*, but in an artist’s studio setting they could probably be seen in allegorical terms as attributes of meditation, study, and invention. In addition, the lute, the violin and a music book demonstrate the presence of music in this studio. The open book of music

---

162 Hunnewell, *Gerrit’s Dou’s Self-Portraits*, 165.
163 Ibid, 244.
might signify an interest in studying and performing music. This might imply the act of playing musical instruments in Dou’s studio.\textsuperscript{165}

The violin and lute may also refer to harmony, a quality necessary to the composition of both painting and music. This idea can be found in discussions in Dutch art theory early in the century. The fifteenth-century comparisons of the principles of musical harmony with those of proportion were revived in the seventeenth century and applied to painting; the theory relates the range of intervals and tones in music to the balance of colors in painting.\textsuperscript{166} Parallels between the principles of harmony created by notes in music and by the interactions of color and proportion in painting would have been recognized by educated viewers.\textsuperscript{167}

Ivan Gaskell suggests that this concept is embodied in the image beneath Dou’s hand, described as a male figure seated beneath a tree in which a bird is sitting, along with a stone and a cow or an ox. He interprets this image as a representation of Orpheus charming the animals, trees, and stones with his music, as described in the tenth book of Ovid’s \textit{Metamorphoses}. Ovid’s text is considered to be one of the principal classical sources for Netherlandish artists in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{168} This scene was frequently engraved in illustrated editions of the book. Gaskell further insinuates that the book which Dou studies could very well be Ovid’s volume, and argues that Dou must have been aware of it especially since Karel van Mander recommended it for painters. He thus argues that by means of this motif, Dou here depicts himself as a literate artist. Thus,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item [165] Laabs, \textit{The Leiden Fijnschilders}, 29.
\item [166] Ibid, 29; 70 and Sluijter, et al, \textit{Leidse Fijnschilders}, 101.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Dou’s theme is that the painter captures nature with his art, just as the musician captures nature with the harmony of his music.¹⁶⁹

This explanation, which appears to be convincing, has not been mentioned by any other scholar, and the image that Dou is drawing is difficult to discern. According to Hunnewell, on the other hand, Dou is not drawing any of the objects shown in the painted studio; rather, he is drawing the Biblical scene, the “Rest on the Flight into Egypt.” This, he argues, identifies the artist as a history painter and elevates his status to the scholarly, noble painter.¹⁷⁰ Both Gaskell’s and Hunnewell’s interpretations of the image Dou is drawing seem far-fetched. Although it is apparent that Dou is in fact drawing, and he might have been acquainted with Ovid’s writings and subjects from sacred history, the illustration that he is working on is really hard to make out especially since his hand rests on more than half of the page. The only legible image is on the right-hand corner, and it appears to be a type of creature. Moreover, the artist’s gaze is outwards into space outside of the composition suggesting that he is focused on copying or drawing after something that he might be looking at outside the picture plane.

Finally, musical instruments, maps, books, and exotic shells seen on the shelf on the right of Dou’s Dresden self-portrait are samples of collectable curiosities that appealed to bourgeois art collectors since they associated acquisition of paintings and other rare objects with intellectual range and a gentlemanly way of life.¹⁷¹ Rembrandt’s inventory of possessions, as an example, included globes, books, exotica, armor, antiquities, and naturalia, as well as a pictorial reference library made up of art books, and

¹⁶⁹ Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, his Patrons,” 17.
¹⁷⁰ Hunnewell, Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits, 166-171.
¹⁷¹ Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes,” 87.
albums that contained renowned prints and drawings. Artists kept reference books in their studios that included treatises on painting, the Bible, and other literature, as well as prints of renowned works of art.

In summary, Dou’s Dresden self-portrait displays and asserts his social ambitions as a scholar, artistic ambitions as a painter, and possibly musical talents as well. These associations are conveyed through the elegant clothing, the surrounding objects and musical instruments, and the setting that depicts the artist’s studio as a scholar’s study. Overall, the self-portrait may have been intended as an emblem of practice, which is reinforced by the presence of the lute, the violin, and musical tablature, the three prominent attributes personifying custom, habit, and practice. In this self-portrait Dou presents himself as the artist-scholar who practices the art of drawing, painting, writing, and music-making.

II. Musical Instruments and the Atelier as a Place of Creativity and Practice

Musical instruments can also be found in generic depictions of the painter’s studio by Dou and his contemporaries, such as Hendrick Gerritsz. Pot’s Painter in his Studio (c.1636, The Hague, Bredius Museum) and Jan Steen’s The Drawing Lesson (c.1663-65, Los Angeles, Getty Museum). In Steen’s painting, for instance, there is an art lesson taking place (fig.27-28). Uncharacteristic to Steen’s usual style, he employs a fijnschilder

172 Chapman, “The Imagined Studios,” 121-122 and also see Amy Golahny, Rembrandt’s reading: the artist’s bookshelf of ancient poetry and history (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003).
175 Hunnewell, Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits, 164, Laabs, The Leiden Fijnschilders, 27-29, and Baer, Gerrit Dou, 35.
technique.\textsuperscript{176} There are two students, a girl who is shown sharpening a pen, which probably suggests that she is personifying Practice, and a younger boy seated at a table.\textsuperscript{177} Their teacher, a painter who is wearing a large hat, is leaning next to them to correct their artworks. The two youngsters are not necessarily professional apprentices. Members of the Dutch elite would raise their children to be proficient in cultural pursuits such as playing musical instruments and drawing. Constantijn Huygens, for instance, made sure that his four sons received drawing lessons.\textsuperscript{178}

Women drawing, furthermore, was a theme represented in other paintings of the period such as Eglon van der Neer’s \textit{A Lady Drawing} (c.1665, London, The Wallace Collection) and Gabriel Metsu’s \textit{Young Lady Drawing} (c.1655-60, London, National Gallery) (fig.29-30). They most likely represented ladies of the upper class rather than specific female artists. In elite families the daughters would sometimes participate in learning drawing, painting or calligraphy as social accomplishments.\textsuperscript{179} Drawing, moreover, was an amateur pastime for upper class men. There are many examples of Dutch amateur artists’ works. Among them it is known that the textile merchant Abraham Rutgers (1632-1699) drew in his leisure time while his friend Jacob Esselens (1626-1687), also an Amsterdam textile merchant, sketched landscapes probably on his business travels.\textsuperscript{180} Practicing art as a pastime was perceived as a productive and virtuous diversion for the cultural elite. In courtesy books by humanists like Baldassare Castiglione’s \textit{Il

\textsuperscript{176} Chapman, “The Imagined Studios,” 133. After moving to Warmond in or before 1656 Steen was influenced by the \textit{fijnschilder} style of nearby Leiden; Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” XLVIII.
\textsuperscript{177} Chapman “The Imagined Studios,” 133 and Walsh, \textit{Jan Steen}, 61.
\textsuperscript{179} Franits, \textit{Dutch Seventeenth-Century}, 251.
\textsuperscript{180} Zell, “A Leisurely and Virtuous Pursuit,” 335.
Libro del Cortegiano (1528) and in the seventeenth century Henry Peacham’s The Gentleman’s Exercise (1612) drawing was identified as a requirement of a courtier and a gentleman. Huygens the Elder also claimed that it was important for a gentleman to practice drawing and painting so that he would be able to converse knowledgably about art.\textsuperscript{181}

In Steen’s work there are many props lying around the studio space. There are plaster casts of sculpture hanging near the window, tools of drawing and painting, and scattered objects that include a book, a skull, and a basket seen on the floor. A putto hangs from the ceiling, its presence evoking the idea common in seventeenth-century art theory that the artist paints for the love of art rather than for profit (fig.28).\textsuperscript{182} There is a large tapestry hanging behind the occupants of the studio, which seems to separate the working space into two. On the right hand side, it partially reveals a painting on an easel. The master is holding a palette covered with paints and several brushes in his left hand while he is correcting his student’s work with his right. It could be that he stepped out to assist his young students, interrupting his own process of painting in the space behind the curtain. This, hence, indicates that the background is the master’s workspace.\textsuperscript{183}

Additionally, there are two musical instruments, a violin hanging on the far back wall and a lute placed on the floor in the foreground. It can be suggested that the artist plays music to himself and possibly to his students during their drawing lessons or break time for relaxation and fun. The presence of the lute and the violin probably refers to the inspirational powers of music and indicates that the teacher is a cultured and learned

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid, 336.
\textsuperscript{183} Walsh, Jan Steen, 1.
artist. As in Dou’s Dresden self-portrait, stringed instruments have metaphorical connotations and might also allude to the harmony and proportion that exists in both painting and music.

Dou’s studio paintings are manifestations of the worthiness and dignity of the artist’s profession, which requires practice, intellectual effort, and possibly stimulation of the senses with musical activity. Dou’s paintings such as the Man Writing by an Easel (c.1631-32, Montreal, Private Collection), Artist in his Studio (ca.1630-35, Duisburg, Collection G. Henle), and Painter in his Studio (c.1628-30, London, Robert Noortman Ltd.) address the process of art making, and musical instruments are present in all the panels (fig.31-33). In the Duisburg work there is a trumpet, and in the Montreal and London paintings there is a violin. Each artist is seen occupied with his craft.

Furthermore, in the Man Writing, Dou shows the aged artist in a study-like studio interior, leaning over as he writes in the big book held in his hands. In front of him there is an easel with a canvas, which is turned away from the viewer. However, there are no common painter’s materials such as a palette, brushes, paints, oils, or a maulstick. Since the man is seen writing in front of his easel, Dou could be implying that the artist-scholar is putting some ideas down into his book, which could be filled with sketches, drawings, or notes, prior to beginning work on his panel. The intended meaning in this painting is slightly ambiguous, but the action seems to allude to the intellectual creative effort required for artistic composition.


Baer suggests that this man is writing, and not drawing, which is Hunnewell’s unconvincing point of view; *The Paintings of Gerrit Dou*, cat. 9.3 and Hunnewell, *Dou’s Self-Portraits*, 174-75; moreover, Hunnewell believes that this man is an embodiment of Practice and that he is the personification of *disegno*. 
The message in the Montreal, Duisburg, and London panels seems to be strengthened by the military objects, which suggest the practice of art as a virtuous occupation. In contrast to the books, globe and in some cases a Bible, the presence of a helmet or a shield could be there to contrast the active and physical combat life of a soldier with the contemplative and peaceful life of a scholar-artist. In his *Schilder-boeck* van Mander urged aspiring artists to advance courageously and perfect their art to the best of their abilities, which can be achieved through persistence and without bloodshed. He argued that the accomplishments of artists are as worthy of remembrance and applause as the famed military heroes, and he writes “It is to be hoped, in some measure, that in future ages the laudable reputation of the most outstanding painters will not readily disappear from peoples’ minds and mouths.” Art theorists of the period discussed the idea that artistic pursuits are not vain, but they are virtuous occupations that capture nature and captivate beholders through pictorial virtuosity, thus bringing fame and honour to the artist. In addition to being inborn for men of nobility, virtue came to be attributed to skilled professionals who exercised their talents in the service of the state, which included artists.

Based on the examples described, it can be deduced that musical instruments were a significant recurring motif. In view of the fact that the studio could have functioned as a

---


189 Brusati, “Pictura’s Excellent Trophies,” 64.

190 Ibid, 65.

place of artistic, intellectual, or educational activity, the reasons for their presence could have varied. In part, like many complex still life details, they were included to showcase the artists’ technical abilities and skill at rendering different surface textures, which were trademarks of Netherlandish art. Secondly, since music was perceived to possess evanescent qualities, musical instruments implied the transience of passing time. Furthermore, these still-life arrangements could have served as vanitas elements meant to generate thoughts on the transience of life and vanity of the arts. However, they might have also been intended to reflect on the power of art over death; artists were familiar with the idea of the ability of diligence and skill to lead to eternal fame and immortality.

Lastly, it appears that in paintings representing the studio, musical instruments were another pictorial motif used by artists to suggest their erudition and gentlemanly nature, and thus to elevate the status of the artistic profession to a level of a liberal art. In his self-portraits and in the Violin Player, Dou suggests that music and musical instruments were present in the studio of the learned artist. The practice of music-making in the painter’s study-studio context will be further investigated as we now focus more closely on the representation of the painter as musician in the artist’s workshop.

---

192 Ibid, 81.
8. Isaac Claesz. van Swanenburgh, *Self-Portrait*, 1568, oil on panel, 94 x 71.5 cm, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal


10. Herman van Vollenhoven, *Self-Portrait with Elderly Couple*, 1612, oil on canvas, 89 x 112 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

11. Anthonis Mor, *Self-Portrait*, 1558, oil on wood, 113 x 84 cm, Florence, Uffizi

12. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, c.1635-38, oil on panel, 18.3 x 14 cm, Cheltenham Gallery and Museums

13. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, 1665, oil on panel, 59 x 43.5 cm, Boston, Private Collection

15. Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Artist’s Studio*, c. 1655-1657, oil on panel, 59.5 x 47 cm, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, formerly Dresden, destroyed in World War II

16. Michiel van Musscher, *Self-Portrait in the Artist’s Studio*, 1679, oil on panel, 57 x 47 cm, Rotterdam, Historical Museum

17. Job Adriaensz Berckheyde, *Self-Portrait*, 1675, oil on panel, 36 x 30.7 cm, Florence, Uffizi

18. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait*, 1652, oil on canvas, 112 x 61.5 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

20. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, 1663, oil on panel, 54.7 x 39.4 cm, Kansas City, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art

21. Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of David Bailly*, c.1627, oil on panel, 73.5 x 53.5 cm, Private Collection

22. Thomas de Keyser, *Constantijn Huygens and His Clerk*, 1627, oil on oak, 92.4 x 69.3 cm, London, National Gallery

23. Gerrit Dou, *Man Interrupted at His Writing*, c.1635, oil on panel, 24 x 22.5 cm, Winchcombe, Sudeley Castle Trustees

24. Gerrit Dou, *Old Painter at Work*, 1649, oil on panel, 68.5 x 54 cm, Germany, Private Collection

25. Gerrit Dou, *Artist in his Studio*, c.1630-32, oil on panel, 59 x 43.5 cm, London, Colnaghi
26. Rembrandt van Rijn, *A Young Painter in his Studio*, c.1629, oil on panel, 24.8 x 31.7 cm, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts

27. Hendrick Gerritsz. Pot, *Painter in his Studio*, oil on panel, 42 x 48 cm, c.1636, The Hague, Bredius Museum


31. Gerrit Dou, *Man Writing by an Easel*, c.1631-32, oil on panel, 31.5 x 25 cm, Montreal, Private Collection

32. Gerrit Dou (and Rembrandt), *Artist in his Studio*, ca.1630-35, oil on panel, 66.5 x 50.7 cm, Duisburg, Collection G. Henle

33. Gerrit Dou, *Painter in his Studio*, c.1628-30, oil on panel, 53 x 64.5 cm, London, Robert Noortman Ltd
Chapter 5: The Painter as Musician in the Artist’s Studio

This chapter will discuss Dou’s Violin Player as a representation of the artist as musician, by first examining Dou’s visual sources and iconographic influences for the work, then by examining the context of music as an inspirational tool for the painter in the workshop. My analysis will show that Dou presents the artist as a poetically inspired musician who engages in elevated and noble subjects.

I. Sources of the Violin Player

The musician is leaning out from a window niche, a motif that Dou had reinvented and adopted from various pictorial sources. It became one of his most frequent personal devices in his compositions. He introduced this motif around 1645-1650, and it was embraced and imitated by his pupils and followers. Its form and function have been under-examined until recently. Although it was used by preceding artists, Dou popularized the niche motif and made it his own. His reinterpretations were to influence the Leiden school of painting and later generations of Dutch and foreign painters.

The window niche has many variations in a long tradition that goes back to fourteenth-century manuscript illuminations, Flemish Renaissance paintings and prints, and sixteenth-century emblem literature. Dou’s arched window is akin to the framing device from the niche-like motif of fifteenth-century Netherlandish altarpieces and manuscript illuminations as well as seventeenth-century flower still-lifes. A variation of the arch is encountered as the framing device for panels in earlier religious works. It was frequently used in the circle of Rogier van der Weyden and can be seen in his Miraflores Altarpiece (1437-38, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie) (fig.34). In such works it functioned as a

grisaille proscenium iconographically serving to strengthen the narrative.\textsuperscript{194} The framing device also appears in still-lifes by artists like Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder and his followers and Jacques de Gheyn II. In de Gheyn’s \textit{Vanitas} (1603, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) a skull and a hovering bubble are framed in a niche-like setting (fig.35). Together with the vase of flowers and the smoking urn they represent the concept of \textit{memento mori}, which refers to the vanity of material things and the transience of life and acts as a warning against wasting time.\textsuperscript{195} The wall niche creates a darker recess of space to provide a backdrop for the illusionistic display of objects. This was a formula used by Dou in varied contexts prompting the viewer to focus on the essentials of the composition and intensifying the power of illusionistic painting.

Some scholars argue that the direct pictorial source for the imaginary arched window in Dou’s and other \textit{fijnschilders}’ paintings is Jost Amman’s illustrations in Hans Sachs’ \textit{Das Ständebuch}.\textsuperscript{196} Sachs’ \textit{Das Ständebuch}, The Book of Trades, was published in 1568 and served as pictorial prototype for the depiction of craftsmen at work in arched settings. The emblem book is a collection of illustrated sayings or proverbs that often carried moralistic meanings that were made up of a motto, an illustration, and an explanation.\textsuperscript{197} Sachs’ book was an important source of reference for artists. The images depicted the trades of various artisans at work in their shops. The combination of Amman’s woodcut illustrations with Sachs’ verses was intended to provide exempla of the virtuous and hard working artisans who should refrain from idleness.\textsuperscript{198} As mentioned

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 90.
\textsuperscript{195} Liedtke, \textit{Dutch Paintings}, 153.
\textsuperscript{196} Hunnewell, \textit{Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits}, 156 and Sluijter, \textit{Seductress of Sight}, 231-32.
in Chapter 2, Eddy de Jongh was the first scholar to interpret Dutch painting by using emblem books as iconographic sources of inspiration for Dutch artists. Emblem books were enormously popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and large numbers of them were published, widely circulating in northern Europe as well as Italy. Therefore, they were well known by Dutch painters who then consulted them for their paintings. This is evident in the subject matter and the formal qualities of many compositions.\footnote{Brown, Images of the Golden Past, 13.}

In Sachs’ book, each emblem offers a view through an arched window, behind which we see a merchant or a craftsman in his workshop busy with his particular craft. For instance, the Wood Turner is shaping a piece of lumber to make boxes and cases, the Brush Maker is manufacturing brushes, and the Lantern Maker is pounding metal (fig.36-38). Dou was also influenced by other emblem books and incorporated their ideas in his compositions. He used the format of Sachs’ emblem images by framing a figure in a window niche, and each is seen occupied with his or her craft.

The settings of many of Dou’s paintings, including the Violin Player, evoke a shop window from which a craftsman would display and sell his product. In Amman’s images the tools and products of these craftsmen are usually depicted on the ledge. For instance, the ledge of the Turner is piled with table legs. In his paintings, similarly, Dou shows various professions in shop window settings and on the ledge he lays out the tool of the trade. Paintings like The Doctor (c.1660-65, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst) and the Boston Self-Portrait (1665, Private Collection) (fig.13), as well as paintings by his followers like Willem van Mieris’ Grocer’s Shop (1717, The Hague, Mauritshuis) and Adriaen van der Werff’s Self-Portrait of the Artist Holding a Small Painting (1678, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) are among many variously themed works that
demonstrate this influence (fig.39-41). In the Violin Player Dou placed the book of music on the ledge, as the attribute of the musician. Overall, the encoding of a hidden message in an emblem was what attracted artists to use this as visual source material for their own works. Evidently, Dou’s Violin Player interweaves influences from emblematic images of the trades and pictorial devices of still-life and religious paintings.

In the Violin Player the arched window and the relief below function together on multiple levels. The motif is an architectural structure, a shop window, but also a pictorial device that may be more allegorical than naturalistic. Stone window frames and elaborate relief carving were not common features in seventeenth-century Leiden architecture, and the window with a stone ledge as constructed by Dou was probably neither an actual window nor a niche. Rather, such devices would imply that aspects of the painting are artificial and the depicted image is not meant to be understood as real. Therefore, the violinist leaning out from the window niche in Dou’s painting could be understood in allegorical terms. Genre paintings repeatedly show architectural settings that may seem plausible but are in fact imaginary. For the most part, these scenes are not part of the viewer’s reality even though they might appear true to life.

The arched window motif derives not only from prints of the Book of Trades, still-lifes and religious panels, but also from works by Dou’s immediate predecessors. The illusionistic archway was used in sixteenth-century portrait and allegorical figure painting to enable the artist to create distance effects by separating the subject from the viewer’s space. Consequently, the half-length depiction of a figure leaning on a ledge

---

201 Franits, Dutch Seventeenth-Century, 1.
202 Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 54.
was a well-established format by the seventeenth century. Rembrandt had occasionally used the rounded top format for his drawings, etchings, and paintings. His portrait paintings such as *Portrait of Agatha Bas* (1641, London, Buckingham Palace) *Portrait of Maria Trip* (c.1639, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), especially his *Self-Portrait at Age of 34* (1640, London, National Gallery), works made a little over a decade prior to Dou’s *Violin Player*, might have been visual source-material for the student (fig.42-44). The lack of dated paintings by Dou from the thirties, by which time Rembrandt had moved from Leiden to Amsterdam, makes it difficult precisely to establish the extent to which Rembrandt’s window niches influenced the young artist.  

The rounded top format, which was taken and reinvented by Dou, was already used by Rembrandt in his works, and, Hunnewell points out, was increasingly deployed by Rembrandt during the 1630s and 1640s to depict figures leaning through Dutch doors as if to chat with traveling passersby. Rembrandt also used the rounded arch-like top in some of his etched and painted self-portraits. The London self-portrait of 1640, for instance, was painted in the middle period of his career and at the height of his success. In this painting, he poses in an elegant costume with one arm on the ledge. By adopting an old-fashioned costume, he places himself among the ranks of renowned painters of past centuries. The painting was based on preceding Italian sources like Raphael’s *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione* from 1514-16 (Paris, Musée du Louvre), which Rembrandt saw and made a pen sketch of in 1639 at a sale in Amsterdam (fig.45), and Titian’s *Portrait of Ludovico Ariosto* from around 1512 (London, National Gallery)

---

204 Hunnewell, *Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits*, 93.

71
Similar to Titian and Raphael, Rembrandt leaves the background empty of artistic attributes, depicting himself in the image of a nobleman. The image of artist as craftsman, as we have seen, would become characteristic of his later self-portraits.

Dou was probably aware of Rembrandt’s superb achievements in the use of the arched format, particularly the arm resting on the balustrade and projecting into the viewer’s space, making the device of the illusionistic ledge one of his most influential motifs. The illusion created the much needed effect of the central figure projecting into the viewer’s space while the background is pushed further back into space. This is perfectly demonstrated in the Violin Player. Dou not only used an arched opening, he made it into a niche aperture with a relief at its base and the falling tapestry as further trompe l’oeil invading the space of the viewer.

The illusionistic depiction of musicians was already a subject type popularized by Utrecht Caravaggisti. The single musician type was introduced by artists of the Utrecht School such as Gerrit van Honthorst around 1620. These works appear to represent professional entertainers rather than genteel amateurs. The strong chiaroscuro contrasts, which also appear in Rembrandt’s work, are adapted in Dou’s painting from the Caravaggisti. Dou’s Violin Player owes a debt to Utrecht paintings such as Gerrit van Honthorst’s Merry Violinist (1623, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (fig.47). Honthorst arrived in Rome around 1610-1612, mastering Caravaggio’s nocturnal effects and chiaroscuro

---

207 Hunnewell, Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits, 94.
208 Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 54.
210 Baer, Gerrit Dou, 29.
and enjoying Italian patronage; he was the first Dutch painter to depict a half-length figure of a violinist leaning out from behind a window ledge, which creates the illusion of the fiddler bursting into the viewer’s space.\textsuperscript{211}

In contrast to Dou’s violinist, who is engaged in his music playing and unaware of the viewers’ presence, van Honthorst’s cheerful musician is life-size and engages spectators by meeting their gaze with a smile and holding a glass of wine in a toasting-like gesture; in his other hand he holds his violin. The \textit{trompe l’œil} possibilities inherent in the motif are realized since the use of the illusionistic opening gives the appearance of the musician projecting forward into the viewer’s space.\textsuperscript{212} Although Dou’s musician poses as if an actor frozen at a moment’s time, he also leans into the viewer’s space.\textsuperscript{213} Dou’s \textit{Violin Player} creatively adapts motifs, like the arched niche and representation of an illusionistic figure protruding into the spectator’s space, derived from religious panels, still-lifes, emblems and contemporaneous portrait and genre paintings.

\textbf{II. The Artist as Musician}

Let us now turn to a discussion of Dou’s \textit{Violin Player} as a possible representation of a painter playing music in the atelier. This was a popular theme in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings and was discussed in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writings on art. As will be demonstrated, an artist playing musical instruments was a conventional and widespread pastime in the studio.

\textsuperscript{212} Hunnewell, \textit{Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits}, 89.
\textsuperscript{213} Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 40.
For centuries, instruments and the act of making music had been conventionally associated with inspiration. Artists like Leonardo da Vinci recommended making art while listening to music. In discussing gentlemanly and social demeanor of the painter versus the sculptor, he wrote, “The painter sits before his work at the greatest of ease, well dressed and applying delicate colors with his light brush, and he may dress himself in whatever clothes he pleases...he often enjoys the accompaniment of music or the company of the authors of various fine works.”

Thus, in the process of creating and painting, the painter can be dressed in elegant clothes but also can play or listen to musical instruments to inspire and stimulate his artistic senses. Of course, this ideal may not always reflect the actual practices of artists in the studio, but Leonardo’s aim is to distinguish the intellectual work of painting from the messier manual labor of sculpture.

The elegance of the painter’s dress and the presence of music in his studio elevate the artist and his craft. Vasari, in his discussion of the musical interests of Leonardo, emphasizes the latter’s predilection for the *lira da braccio*.

At the courts of Ferrara and Milan, virtuosi of the *lira da braccio* were engaged to entertain. Indeed, Leonardo himself was introduced to the Duke at the Milanese court in 1494 as a player of the *lira da braccio*. Vasari also reports that Leonardo built a *lira* in the form of a horse skull, writing that it was “an instrument which he had made with his own hands, in great part of silver, in the form of a horse’s skull...with which he surpassed all the musicians who had

---

215 The *lira da braccio* was one of the most important string instruments of the High Renaissance, the instrument of the recitlists who improvised polyphonic accompaniments for their singing, and therefore one of the most characteristic implements of the intended revival of the rhapsodic art of the ancients; Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art: Studies in Musical Iconology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 86.
216 Ibid, 87.
come together [to Milan] to play.”  

He continued by further describing, “[Leonardo] who by nature possessed a spirit both lofty and full of grace which enabled him to improvise divinely in singing and playing the *lira da braccio,*” and he similarly described Raphael’s teacher Timoteo Viti who also played the same instrument.  

More than any other instrument of the Italian Renaissance, the *lira da braccio* is associated with the attempted revival of ancient musical practice, and as early as the quattrocento it appears as the symbolic attribute of great poets and musicians. As an attribute of the humanists, the *lira da braccio* appears in numerous book illustrations and frontispieces, to characterize the poet or philosopher. In classical mythology and in the Old Testament it was related to legendary people like Apollo, Orpheus, Homer, King David and others. In the numerous depictions of Apollo’s contests with Marsyas and Pan, for example, Apollo usually plays the *lira da braccio,* a symbol of the noble ‘mathematical’ music as opposed to the guttural and lascivious music of the various reed instruments played by his opponents. Various passages in writings by Vasari and others demonstrate that this instrument was a favorite of virtuosos and dilettantes. In shape, the later examples of this musical instrument gradually approached that of the violin.  

Like Leonardo, it has been mentioned that the artist Gaudenzio Ferrari was a builder of musical instruments. He must also have been an expert player. One of Ferrari’s frescoes, *Angel Musicians* (fig.48) from the dome of the sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie (1534-6, Saronno), shows angels playing various musical instruments. It reveals that he was deeply familiar with specific forms of instruments, their function, and their

218 Winternitz, *Musical Instruments,* 94-95. Also, the names of the *lira da braccio* (with more than seven strings) were *lirone, lirone perfetto, lira da gamba,* and *arciviolatalira;* ibid, 87.
219 Ibid, 94-98. The origin of the violin is still obscure.
practical uses. As Winternitz observes, in Ferrari’s painting, the body language of musicians, the position of their arms and shoulders, and the truthful rendering of their hands and fingers on the string instruments are most likely based on sharp observations. Lomazzo, Ferrari’s nephew, who was also a painter and a poet, wrote in his *Idea del tempio*, “[Ferrari] was born in Valdugia, and was a painter, sculptor, architect, master of perspective, natural philosopher, poet, and performer on the *lira* and the flute;” this *lira* was most likely the *lira da braccio*, the most noble and difficult bowed instrument of that time. Some artists, therefore, were familiar with and knew how to play the *lira da braccio*. It was an instrument similar to the violin and could have been used by artists in their studios. The type depicted by Dou is similar to the more modern shaped violins.

It was possible that artists were capable of building, fixing, adjusting, and playing their instruments. Pieter Codde’s painting *An Artist in His Studio, Tuning a Lute* (c.1630, present whereabouts unknown), now only known through an old photograph, testifies to such behavior in the studio (fig.49). The artist in this work is adjusting his lute so that he can play it before or during a break from painting. There is a viola da gamba among a still-life of old albums and rolls of paper.

Other Dutch paintings also show artists-musicians playing musical instruments at their easels. Gonzales Coques’s *The Painter’s Studio* (c.1650, Schwerin, Staatliches Museum) and Johannes van Swieten’s *Lute-Playing Painter* (c.1660, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum) exemplify this tradition (fig.50-51). They depict painters dressed in upper class clothes, seated in elegant studios, and playing musical instruments. In Coques’s painting, the painter is seen playing a guitar with his back turned towards a large landscape painting placed on the easel. Besides the instrument the painter is playing, a viola da

---

gamba stands against the clavichord in this artist’s studio. It might be implied, therefore, that the artist, in addition to being a talented painter, is also a versatile musician able to play three distinct musical instruments. The combination of instruments also holds potential for a social gathering, since hosting musical parties was a popular social pastime for the elite also depicted in genre painting in works such as Gabriël Metsu’s *A Young Woman Composing Music* (c.1662-1663, The Hague, Mauritshuis) and Jan Molenaer’s *A Young Man playing a Theorbo and a Young Woman playing a Cittern* (c.1630-32, London, National Gallery) (fig.52-53). In Coques’s painting, the visitors of the studio are engaged in conversation or a music lesson.

Such visual imagery may have been intended to communicate to the viewer that a painter is not a mere craftsman, but, similarly to a musician, is a skillful and elevated intellectual who uses his skills and talents in order to produce fine works of art. As Baer suggests, music was one of the ways to inspire the tired painter’s sensibilities, restore his creative flow of energy, and set him back to work. With the purpose of creating fine artwork, the artist should inspire his senses through musical activity, either playing or listening to music. The painter in Coques’ work turned away from his easel with an unfocused gaze, seems to be taking time to rouse his senses through music.

Paintings of the painter in his studio playing a musical instrument were depictions of the poetically inspired artist. Van Swieten’s *Lute-Playing Painter*, Joris van Swieten’s *A Painter Playing the Violin* (ca. 1645-50, present location unknown) (fig.54), as well as a painting attributed to Dou, *Young Man Playing the Lute in an Artist’s Studio* (unknown

---

date, present whereabouts unknown) (fig.55) are examples of many works that depict the painter seated next to his easel and playing a musical instrument.

In van Swieten’s painting, the artist is seated at his easel with a painting that seems to represent a hermit praying. He is dressed in black and white fanciful attire and red leggings that distinguish the inspired lute-playing painter from the two men behind him. Some scholars have interpreted the lute as an instrument with erotic associations; it was identified with women and could symbolize female genitalia, and it was sometimes seen as an attribute of Lust or Unchastity.\(^\text{222}\) However, in these types of paintings it can be interpreted within the positive context of music-making as inspiration. The artists are involved with matters of intellect that go beyond the physical realm.

The upward gaze and feathered beret of van Swieten’s musician-artist have been interpreted as signifying his imagination or poetic *ingenium*.\(^\text{223}\) In Western European art the upward gaze became a customary facial expression by early mid seventeenth century for representations of musicians, saints and secular performers, epitomizing inspiration.\(^\text{224}\) Van Swieten’s artist-musician is seated in a workshop setting revealed through an arched opening and a hanging drapery. The base of a column peeks from behind the dark blue tapestry. In many cases columns symbolize constancy, strength of character or chastity. Dou included this motif in several self-portraits and other paintings, and in this context it may well signify constancy in the artist’s practice of art or music.\(^\text{225}\) In the background, there are two assistants; one is the pigments grinder and the other is a fashionably dressed gentleman seen holding a palette and pointing in the direction of the musician-artist, as if

\(^{222}\) De Jongh, “Realism and Seeming Realism,” 50.
\(^{223}\) Chapman, “The Imagined Studios,” 146 and de Winkel, “Rembrandt’s Clothes,” 60, see note 99.
\(^{224}\) Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century*, 50-51.
instructing the younger lad in the types of pigments the painter requires and admonishing him to work as quietly as he can to avoid interrupting the master. These details further identify the space as an artist’s studio.\textsuperscript{226}

Paintings like the ones by van Swieten and Coques are two of many depictions of the artist’s studio in which painters are shown busy playing their instruments, turned away from their easels and panels, and absorbed in their music and meditation. Music as an inspiring force that animates the soul to pure ecstasy was a well-known concept in this period. It originated in antiquity with Pythagoras, who wrote that playing beautiful music had the power to elevate the soul.\textsuperscript{227}

In contrast to representations of cultivated and elevated artists as musicians by Dou, van Swieten, and Coques, Jan Steen’s depiction might seem vulgar. Steen’s \textit{Self-Portrait as a Lutenist} (c.1663-65, Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza) is an informal self-portrait in which he is laughing, drinking, and playing a lute (fig.56). He shows himself seated on a chair next to a table with his right leg crossed over his left leg. His head is tilted to the side and in his arms he holds a large lute. There is a massive dark curtain behind him, and there is a jug of beer, open books, and folio pieces on the table. There are no objects relating to the artistic profession, like brushes, palettes, or an easel, which may suggest that Steen is not in a studio setting.\textsuperscript{228} His pose is informal and he wears simple shoes, and reinforced by his broad brushwork, this painting conveys an atmosphere of coarse jocularity.

\textsuperscript{226} Chapman suggests it to be a double self-portrait, where the lute player is the ideal artist and the man in the hat with a palette in the background is the artist’s alter ego; “The Imagined Studios,” 146.
\textsuperscript{227} Franits, \textit{Dutch Seventeenth-Century}, 50-51.
In many of his works Steen portrayed himself as the comic actor who plays diverse roles. In the Madrid painting, he probably takes on the guise of a theatrical suitor, as indicated by his archaic stage costume. By portraying himself as a comic actor Steen satirized the Leiden tradition of representing artists playing musical instruments for poetic inspiration. He transformed the music-making artist from the ideal of the *pictor doctus* – a poetically inspired painter – to a comedian in theatrical garb. While Rembrandt rebelled against tradition in his self-portraits by painting himself in the role of artist as craftsman, Steen did so by presenting an informal and comedic image of himself. Painting the opposite of the idea that prevailed in Leiden, he mocked, violated, and satirized the decorum of the period.

Painters seen playing musical instruments in the studio may be doing so to stimulate ideas and creativity before beginning work on their paintings or during their working process. Houbraken wrote that Gerard de Lairesse, a leading artist of his day and the author of two treatises on academic theory and practice, would play the violin for inspiration in front of his easel, and Houbraken writes:

He brought out his Violin from there, tuned the strings, and played a tune, so well according to the Art [of Music]...after he put the Violin aside, he took the crayon pen and in the wink of an eye made a sketch, or preparation for his piece, which depicted a stable for animals, and in it Joseph and Mary with her Infant. Then he took up his Violin again and played a small piece, but quickly exchanged the Violin for the palette, and in the same morning painted the Child, the heads of Mary and Joseph, and the head of an Ox, completely, and so artistically.

230 This was a tradition associated with Leiden, see, Chapman, et al, “Catalogue,” 181-182.
231 Chapman suggests that Steen was masking his literary knowledge drawing from theatrical comic themes and such. She also claims that he resembles Ripa’s personification of the sanguine temperament who “is clever at all the arts.” His oeuvre demonstrates that he was an alternative to the classical ideal of the painter. H. Perry Chapman, “Persona and Myth in Houbraken’s Life of Jan Steen,” *Art Bulletin* 75, no. 1 (March 1993): 149.
Houbraken proceeds by saying that music was an important part of de Lairesse’s life and mentioned that he “amused himself by playing a tune on the Flute, or the Violin, at which he was amazingly accomplished;” other fiddling painters mentioned by Houbraken are Pieter van Laer and de Lairesse’s pupil Philips Tidemans.\(^{233}\)

In the university town of Leiden, the ideal of *pictor doctus* had particular importance, and was interpreted to mean the educated, poetically inspired painter of noble subjects. Karel van Mander in his *Schilderboek* (1604) discussed the idea of the cultivated and well-to-do painter who should acquire the necessary social graces.\(^{234}\) Baldassare Castiglione’s famous courtesy book, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (1528), was influential into the seventeenth century, appearing in Dutch translation as *De volmaeckte hovelinck* in 1662.\(^{235}\) Castiglione observed that a gentleman could find “nothing more worthy or commendable to help [the] body relax and the spirit recuperate…than music.”\(^{236}\) Stringed instruments, in particular, were associated with Pythagorean harmony and were considered to elevate the mind to the contemplation of celestial and intellectual things.\(^{237}\) While wind musical instruments like recorders were usually found in the hands of peasants and shepherds, violins, or *lire da braccio*, were played by people of elevated status.\(^{238}\)

In Dou’s oeuvre there are a number of painted interpretations of the violin-playing musician-artist standing at the window ledge of an artist’s studio. In addition to the Vaduz Violin Player, Dou’s Dresden Violin Player (1665, Gemäldegalerie) is one of these examples (fig.57). Even though some argue that the features of the foreground figure are

---

\(^{233}\) Ibid, 202.
\(^{236}\) Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, 78.
\(^{237}\) Ibid.
\(^{238}\) Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century*, 50.
reminiscent of Dou’s own, in my view it is most likely not a self-portrait. Consider the Boston self-portrait of around 1665, painted the same year as the Dresden Violin Player. Notice the difference in the roundness of the face and the extra distance between the eyes of the fiddler. Unlike Rembrandt or Steen, Dou did not take on guises in his paintings, but portrayed himself as the master painter.\textsuperscript{239} It is, therefore, highly improbable that Dou would depict himself as the violin player. However, a generic figure may still carry individual associations. The concept that the artist paints unconsciously something of his own personality and soul no matter what the subject of his painting was formulated in the fifteenth century in the Italian adage, “Ogni pitto re dipinge sé,” and was also incorporated in the Neoplatonic theory of art.\textsuperscript{240} It reaffirms the possibility that a generic face can resemble that of its maker.\textsuperscript{241}

The violinist in the Dresden panel is standing in a niche-like window playing his violin, and, in contrast to the Vaduz violinist’s serious demeanor, this musician is smiling at the viewer. He is dressed in casual attire and there is a book of music opened and placed on the ledge. The lavish tapestry pulled to the side exposes the background setting in which there is a stool set in front of an easel with an unfinished landscape painting, a globe, and a painting hanging on the wall. The relationship between the musician and the background, however, is unspecified and ambiguous.

The Dresden musician’s dilettantish handling of the violin and the disregarded sword, according to Hans-Joachim Raupp, might have been a way to show him as

\textsuperscript{239} On Dou representing himself as a figure of secondary importance in larger compositions see last chapter.
\textsuperscript{240} Cartwright, \textit{Hoe Schilder Hoe Wilder}, 65-66, and note 152.
someone indulging in ‘vermaeck’, pleasurable diversion, in this case music.\footnote{Hans-Joachim Raupp, “Musik im Atelier,” \textit{Oud Holland} 92 (1978): 110-11.} One of the copies of this work, now in St. Petersburg, has been interpreted as an image of \textit{vanitas} and the violin, the sword, the easel, the globe, the painting, and other objects as symbols of transient worldly sensual pleasures.\footnote{Yury Kuznetsov and Irene Linnik, \textit{Dutch Paintings in Soviet Museums} (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982), 115 and Baer, \textit{The Paintings of Gerrit Dou}, cat 108.2-108.3.} It has been also argued that Dou intended moralistic undertones by including music in his paintings, and that this painter-musician is succumbing to the sensual pleasures of music and is therefore someone who does not perfect his talent by diligent practice.\footnote{Laabs, \textit{The Leiden Fijnschilders}, 41.} Alternatively, Raupp argues that the musician-artist could have personified the sanguine temperament.\footnote{Raupp, “Musik im Atelier,” 111.} The sanguine person was thought to have a round, flushed face, resembling the fiddler’s facial features, which identified him with a type of merriment and amusement.\footnote{Kolfin, \textit{The Young Gentry at Play}, 100.}

Although such interpretations are possible, perhaps Dou was suggesting that the figure in the Dresden panel put other endeavors aside, like the sword for fighting and the panel on the easel for painting, with the aim of enjoying the sound of music for pleasure and for inspiration. Considering the context and the setting of the Dresden panel, the identity of the jolly musician is most likely that of a painter. As Baer suggests, just like Castiglione’s nobleman, he could represent the image of a gentleman-artist who could master both painting and music.\footnote{Baer, \textit{The Paintings of Gerrit Dou}, cat 108.2-108.3.} Like the artist-musicians in paintings by Coques and van Swieten, Dou’s violinists might be playing their instruments to be inspired by music, thus illustrating the ability of music to stimulate creativity.\footnote{Franits, \textit{Dutch Seventeenth-Century}, 116.}
The costume that the violinist in the Vaduz painting is wearing identifies him as a painter. His soft cloth hat, or beret, is similar to the one worn by Rembrandt in his 1640 self-portrait and many others. Rembrandt’s adoption of this bonnet was very influential, and was imitated by his followers and students like Dou.\(^249\) It was an accessory derived from sixteenth-century academic dress, and the adoption of academic garb was linked to the desire to elevate the status of the artist and his profession by associating the work of painters with scholarly pursuits.\(^250\) The beret was already a feature of studio attire for sixteenth-century painters.\(^251\)

In the seventeenth century, however, it was not part of everyday fashions, and in fact was regarded as démodé.\(^252\) It then came to be associated with learning and was worn by scholars old and young, and can be found in works by Dou, such as *Astronomer by Candlelight* (c.1665, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum) and *The Night School* (c.1665, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) among paintings by other artists (fig. 58-59). In paintings, students were sometimes depicted with a bonnet. Johan de Brune wrote that, “They [unschooled students] have perhaps eaten three letters on a gingerbread and have run through school with a sow: and for this, they may have obtained the ring on their finger and the ‘klapmuts’ [bonnet] on their head.”\(^253\) In the course of time it became the artist’s attribute *par excellence*.\(^254\) Significantly, the head gear was also an essential part of seventeenth-century theatrical outfits worn by musicians and fools, as depicted in Dutch genre scenes. Thus, the hat may bestow on the artist the intellectual and romantic

\(^249\) De Winkel, “Rembrandt’s Clothes,” 63.
\(^250\) Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes*, 52 and Hunnewell, *Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits*, 32-34.
\(^251\) Ibid, 67, note 28.
\(^254\) Ibid. 62.
associations of a performer.\textsuperscript{255} Since the Vaduz violinist is depicted in a painter’s studio, his beret is most likely to identify him as an artist. Moreover, it can be suggested that he is an apprentice playing music in the master’s studio.

Additionally, the garments of the Vaduz artist-musician resemble the jacket and undergarment worn by the violinist-painter in Dou’s Dresden panel, and it is an identical jacket to that worn by Dou’s pipe smoking painter in the \textit{Painter with Pipe and Book} (c.1645, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), although the collar there is of a more contemporary style (fig.60).\textsuperscript{256} Based on the violinist’s dress and the artist’s studio setting it is reasonable to assume that this is an apprentice-painter playing music on his violin for inspiration for himself and others present in the workshop. As the personification of the painter who is skillful in both the arts of music and painting, this figure fits in with the tradition of the poetically inspired, intellectually and spiritually elevated artist.

\textsuperscript{255} Hollander, \textit{An Entrance for the Eyes}, 52.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid, 55.
34. Rogier van der Weyden, *Miraflores Altarpiece*, 1437-38, oil on panel, 71 x 43 cm each panel, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie

35. Jacques de Gheyn II, *Vanitas*, 1603, oil on wood, 82.6 x 54 cm, Charles B. Curtis, Marquand, Victor Wilbour Memorial, and The Alfred N. Punnett Endowment Funds, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art


39. Gerrit Dou, *The Doctor*, c.1660-65, oil on panel, 38 x 30 cm, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst
40. Willem van Mieris, *Grocer’s Shop*, 1717, oil on panel, 49.5 x 41 cm, The Hague, Mauritshuis

41. Adriaen van der Werff, *Self-Portrait of the Artist Holding a Small Painting*, 1678, oil on panel, 17 x 12.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

42. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Agatha Bas*, 1641, oil on canvas, 104 x 82 cm, London, Buckingham Palace

43. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Maria Trip*, c.1639, oil on panel, 107 x 82 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

44. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait at Age of 34*, 1640, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 80 cm, London, National Gallery

45. Raphael Sanzio, *Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione*, 1514-16, oil on canvas, 82 x 67 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre

46. Titian Vecelli, *Portrait of Ludovico Ariosto*, ca.1512, oil on canvas, 81.2 x 66 cm, London, National Gallery

47. Gerrit van Honthorst, *Merry Violinist*, 1623, oil on canvas, 108 x 89 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
48. Gaudenzio Ferrari, *Angel Musicians*, fresco, 1534–6, Saronno, dome of the sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie

52. Gabriël Metsu, *A Young Woman Composing Music*, c.1662-1663, oil on panel, 57.8 x 43.5 cm, The Hague, Mauritshuis

49. Pieter Codde (circle of), *An Artist in His Studio, Tuning a Lute*, c.1630, oil on panel, 41 x 54 cm, present whereabouts unknown

53. Jan Molenaer, *A Young Man playing a Theorbo and a Young Woman playing a Cittern*, c. 1630-32, oil on canvas, 68 x 84 cm, London, National Gallery

50. Gonzales Coques, *The Painter’s Studio*, c.1650, oil on canvas, 65 x 82 cm, Schwerin, Staatliches Museum

54. Joris van Swieten, *A Painter Playing the Violin*, ca. 1645-50, oil on panel, 47.5 x 63 cm, present location unknown

51. Johannes van Swieten, *Lute-Playing Painter*, c. 1660, oil on panel, 65.2 x 53.1 cm, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum
55. Attributed to Dou, *Young Man Playing the Lute in an Artist’s Studio*, oil on panel, unknown date, present whereabouts unknown

56. Jan Steen, *Self-Portrait as a Lutenist*, c. 1663-65, oil on wood, 55.5 x 44 cm, Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza

57. Gerrit Dou, *Violin Player*, 1665, oil on panel, 40 x 29 cm, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie

58. Gerrit Dou, *Astronomer by Candlelight*, c.1665, oil on panel, 32 x 21.2 cm, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum

59. Gerrit Dou, *The Night School*, c.1665, oil on panel, 53 x 40.3 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

60. Gerrit Dou, *Painter with Pipe and Book*, c.1645, oil on panel, 48 x 37 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
Chapter 6:  Smoking, Painting Deception, and Studio Practices

In the seventeenth century, tobacco smoking was perceived as both healthful and pernicious. One of its connotations, like music, was as a stimulus for creative inspiration, and artists are often shown smoking in their studios. In the background of the Violin Player, as mentioned in a previous chapter, there are two figures, one seated smoking a pipe in front of an easel and the other preparing pigments. The relationship between the violinist and the background scene requires further investigation and analysis with the purpose of examining the connection that smoking, painting, and music-playing had in the context of a painter’s atelier. The following segments will examine smoking as overindulgent behavior and as a means of artistic inspiration. I will also explore Dou’s innovative combination of several motifs to create a witty, allegorical deception in his Violin Player.

As will be demonstrated, the general demeanor of the pipe smoker in Dou’s painting belongs to the pictorial tradition of depictions and self-portraits of artists in their studios. Interestingly enough, in this case, the unidentified smoking gentleman, although hidden in the background of the composition, could very well be a self-portrait of the artist. Such ambiguities and tricks of illusion reveal Dou’s understanding and mastery of both genre and self-portrait paintings. Through this analysis it will be shown that Dou painted in the fijn manner to show off his skills of textural imitation and also created certain hidden messages and coded ambiguities in his work with the purpose of entertaining his educated clientele.
I. Tobacco Imagery in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Paintings

Tobacco smoking was perceived primarily as a social deviance in seventeenth-century Dutch culture. Moralists were concerned that smoking tobacco, like alcohol, would weaken the right reason and Christian duties of the smoker by inducing dangerously stupefied reveries. Smoking was used both as a recreational activity and as medical treatment, as described in treatises such as Anthony Chute’s *Tobacco*, translated into Dutch in 1623, where the author argues that smoking tobacco in pipes could have beneficial medicinal effects. In a play of 1630, Pieter Schrijver expressed the view that the only justifiable use of tobacco was medical, and smoking for pleasure was wasting time and a dirty activity.

Depictions of tobacco use, like the equally problematic consumption of alcohol, were frequent in Dutch seventeenth-century genre paintings and moralizing prints. The act of smoking was normally associated with the lower classes, and can be found in paintings of men smoking to excess in taverns and brothels by Adriaen Brouwer and Adriaen van Ostade (fig.61-62). Brouwer’s lowlife smoking scenes of the 1620s and 1630s captured the expressions of deep inhalation resulting in drowsiness. Van Ostade portrays (fig.62) a tavern scene in which the two men are smoking with silly, laughing facial expressions, as if inebriated. In fact, it has been argued that tobacco was often spiked with some sort of narcotic. H. K. Roessingh, the historian of the Dutch tobacco industry, wrote that there was a possibility that some of the product imported from the

257 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: University of California Press, 1987), 212; there was a subgenre of still life paintings devoted to tobacco pieces, see, ibid, 195.
259 This idea was published in the 1630 pamphlet Saturnalia, or a Poetical Shrovetide Play in which Schrijver used conventions of festive comedy to project this point across, see further, ibid, 73-74.
New World might have been “sauced” with *Cannabis sativa*.[261] Paintings of pipe smokers, often with a comic tone, were another variation in Dutch art of imagery expressing the vain and careless passing of time.

Genre painters also frequently combined smoking with music making. Both activities were perceived as sensual pleasures that should be indulged in moderation. Gerard ter Borch’s *Violinist* (c.1648-50, St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum), Frans van Mieris’ *The Old Violinist* (1660, Boston, Private Collection) and Willem van Mieris’ *The Merry Toper* (ca.1699, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister) and *The Trumpeter* (1700, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister) are paintings of musicians in window niches with smoking utensils (fig.63-66). These types of paintings engaged the viewer to contemplate his own mortality and suggested that all things in life are vain except piety.[263] These images seem to suggest that creative people should refrain from unproductive and wasteful time-spending that leads to excess and idleness. Therefore, they should enjoy smoking, drinking, and music-playing in moderation.

In paintings, smoking was also used to symbolize the sense of Smell (one of the five senses), and since smoke dissolves quickly, it would remind the viewer of the transience of earthly things.[264] Depicting smoke, therefore, was another way to comment on the ephemerality of earthly pleasures, like Sartorius’ variation of the Old Dutch

---

261 Ibid, 213.
262 The ivy, a traditional attribute of Bacchus (the mythological God of wine) seen around the arched window is part of this silent criticism; see Buelot, et al, “Catalogue,” 136.
264 Hecht, “There’s No Problem Enjoying It,” 25.
saying, “Man’s life passes even as smoke.”\textsuperscript{265}\ The senses had been regarded with suspicion since the times of antiquity and were considered the way by which sinful behavior could gain control over man.\textsuperscript{266}

Incorporated into scenes of artists’ studios, tobacco imagery varied in meaning. Both the Flemish painter Joos van Craesbeeck and Jan Miense Molenaer painted scenes of the painter’s studio in which smoking, like playing music, is a pursuit linked with the painter’s process of creation. Craesbeeck’s painting \textit{Scene in a Studio} (c.1640, Paris, Institut Néerlandais) shows the artist seated at his easel with his back turned to the viewer (fig.67). On the right hand side, there is a globe, a palette and brushes, books, and drawings, attributes of the learned painter.\textsuperscript{267} The jug of beer and the painter’s pipe are placed beside him on a bench. Pipes were common in \textit{vanitas} still-life, and like other \textit{memento mori} objects such as shells, sand-timers, and candles, they could reflect the transience and the vainness of material life.\textsuperscript{268} However, the pipe could also suggest that the painter stops periodically to smoke when he needs stimulus and time to reflect.

The image that the painter is working on, seen on his panel, shows a group of fashionably dressed people. The models appear in front of him. They are shown drinking and smoking and there is a man playing a lute. This combination of studio activities was popular in Haarlem paintings of the 1620s and belongs to the larger category of the merry company theme.\textsuperscript{269} The painted merry companies had a wide range of variants and

\textsuperscript{265} “Des menschen leven gaat als een rook voorbij”; Schama, \textit{The Embarrassment of Riches}, 213.
\textsuperscript{266} Kyrova, “Music in Seventeenth-Century Painting.” 51.
\textsuperscript{267} Martin suggests that he does not need his painting materials for the moment because he is currently engaged in the preliminary drawing part of his work; “How a Dutch Picture was Painted,” \textit{The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs} 10, no. 45 (Dec., 1906): 149.
\textsuperscript{268} Schama, \textit{The Embarrassment of Riches}, 214.
\textsuperscript{269} Westermann, \textit{The Art of the Dutch}, 73.
interpretations to appeal to a broad public. Some of these representations were idealizing and humorous depictions and others had a more moralizing nature.270

Craesbeeck’s work possibly alludes to the five senses, which in the seventeenth century were often symbolized by ordinary people engaging in sensory activities.271 An example is Isack Elyas’ *Merry Company* (1620, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (fig.68). Elyas’ composition includes a lute player who symbolizes Hearing and a woman with a dog on her lap as a metaphor for Smell, while the man with the upturned glass and the man holding a hat in his hand represent Taste and Touch. Finally, Sight is portrayed by the man reading a letter. The combination of realistic form and symbolic thought was typical in seventeenth-century imagery.272 Earlier, the senses had been portrayed by figures who were quite clearly personifications, thus removed from everyday reality.273

Considering that smoking and tobacco pipes are depicted in the context of both the painter’s studio and the merry company gathering, Craesbeeck’s overall intention might have been to contrast the activities of the merry company with the painter painting at his easel. The juxtaposition contrasts the wasteful diversions of the company with a favorable view of artistic creation as the painter diligently pursues his work. In addition, on a symbolical level, Craesbeeck might be suggesting that whereas human life passes as

---

271 It is probably as follows: the pipe and man holding it stand for Smell and Touch, the wine for Taste, the note being read for Sight, the lute for Hearing; Walsh, *Jan Steen*, 71. The depiction of the five senses in genre scenes occurred from the end of the sixteenth century onward; Kolfin, *The Young Gentry at Play*, 56.
273 The Calvinist society was deeply disapproving of fancy dress, conspicuous consumption, and idleness, for further see, Brown, *Images from the Golden Past*, 176-181.
smoke and the musical sounds of a lute are equally fugitive, art bestows the artist with immortality.\textsuperscript{274}

Tobacco usage taking place in scenes of comic disorder was a specialty of Jan Steen, who usually sets such scenes in taverns and brothels, but also depicts smoking and drinking as activities pursued in the family home.\textsuperscript{275} Molenaer, also an artist well known for his comic subject matter, provides insight into the working methods of the seventeenth-century Dutch artist, by depicting the operating procedures that might have taken place. In his \textit{Painter in his Studio} (1631, Berlin, Staatliche Museum) the viewer becomes a participant or witness to a disorderly and chaotic studio scene (fig.69). The artist has gotten up from his stool, leaving his pipe on his three-legged chair and the jug of beer on the floor. It seems that he is taking a break from his work and walked over to the table, which is crammed with artist’s materials, possibly to refill paints onto his palette. To the painter’s left there is a lute. There is an old, bearded man playing a hurdy-gurdy, a maid, a pupil, and a dwarf with a dancing dog. These are the models of the painting that the artist has been working on, which we see set up on his easel.

The presence of smoking pipes, the jug of beer, and musical instruments, as well as the activity of painting, playing music, and even dancing indicate that these were pastimes that took place in the artist’s studio. Such motifs might have been intended to represent lessons of excess of the senses with moralistic implications of the dangers of human tendencies to overindulge, and the chaotic and carefree behavior that ensued as a result. In this context, the painter’s workshop might be considered a place for idle,

\textsuperscript{274} On the concept of art and immortality see, Hunnewell, \textit{Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits}, 244. For further on Craesbeeck see, Karolien de Clippel, \textit{Joos van Craesbeeck: een brabants genreschilder} (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).
\textsuperscript{275} Gaskell, “Tobacco, Social Deviance,” 75.
overindulgent, and unproductive leisure. Nonetheless, in studio settings, activities that involved the senses could also be opportunities for the productive artist to unwind and revitalize his creativity. Molenaer’s painting, therefore, could represent the artist staging a scene to paint, but, in all probability, was meant to demonstrate the importance of relaxation as well as self-restraint and motivation in playful and lighthearted situations, depicting studio life in a humorous and comical manner.

II. Revealing the Man behind the Curtain

The identity of the smoking man in the background of Dou’s Vaduz Violin Player is ambiguous (fig. 1). The perplexing nature of his presence may have been meant by Dou to act as a hidden deception with the purpose of entertaining his viewers. Following in the footsteps of scholars such as de Jongh and Sluijter, I would like to argue that Dou did in fact intentionally include hidden or coded messages in his works. This is contrary to Hecht’s perception of Dutch fine painting by which he claimed that the fijnschilders such as Dou did not intend deeper or veiled meaning in their works, which were only meant for a demonstration of their maker’s talents. Hecht argues that the meticulous, realistic mode of painting came about because pupils were trying to outdo their master teachers by producing the most convincing illusion of surface texture, products of a competitive art market.276 Dutch painters created deceptive realities that sophisticated viewers would recognize and appreciate, and like other painters’, Dou’s ultimate purpose was to please and entertain his audience through his art.

Prior to an examination of the smoking man in the painting, it is important to briefly discuss the uses of a dark background by Dou in his paintings with the intention of

creating an air of obscurity and blurring of vision. As in Dou’s earlier paintings from the late 1640s, the Violin Player places a half-length figure in front of a relatively dark interior scene. In the background there are two men, one seated in front of the easel and the other is shown grinding pigments on a stone, a common practice in studio scenes that shall be discussed later in the chapter (fig.1 and detail, fig.70). Van Mander described the technique of urging the viewer’s eyes deep into space of the painting by saying that the painter should create small pockets of space.²⁷⁷ In Dou’s work, the foreground is rich in exquisite detail, while the background is painted in more subdued tonalities. The dimly lit settings, therefore, are hard to make out clearly and are obscure in meaning, giving the viewer a playful challenge in deciphering that which he sees. The umber paint and multiple layers of thin paint and varnish that Dou used have darkened irremediably; removing these layers could destroy the surface detail.²⁷⁸ Considering many of Dou’s interior scenes, however, although the dim backgrounds have darkened more over time, they were meant to contrast with the much lighter foreground scenes thus urging the viewer to contemplate that which he sees.

Dou, it seems, was influenced by the highly esteemed emblem tradition. These darkened settings could be literal embodiments of aenghename duysterheit (pleasing obscurity), which was praised by Jacob Cats, seventeenth-century Holland’s most popular moralist, as a feature of allegorical imagery. He wrote a number of emblem books that were widely known and read, and in his Spiegel van de ouden en nieuwen tijd (Mirror of Old and New Times, 1632), Cats wrote on the attraction of emblems by stating:²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 5.
²⁷⁸ Further see, Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 68.
Proverbs [proverbs or sayings in emblem form] are particularly attractive, because of a certain mysterious quality, for while they appear to be one thing, in fact they are another, so that when in time the reader grasps the exact meaning and intention, he experiences great pleasure in the discovery – not unlike someone who, after a search, finds a beautiful bunch of grapes under thick leaves. Experience teaches us that many things gain by not being completely seen, but veiled and concealed.\textsuperscript{280}

Such suggestive dimnesses were intentional, challenging the viewer or reader and his perception. Perhaps Dou, like Cats, believed that viewers would find pleasure in discovering shadowed meanings. Although it may appear that Dou painted a violin player in a setting of an artist’s studio, the meanings of this combination are intentionally hooded.

The concept of veiling and revealing figures is seen repeatedly in Dou’s inventive use of curtains and tapestries. In Dou’s oeuvre, there are two types of curtains: one is a carefully arranged swag of fabric and the other is a drape that hangs on a rod. Both motifs derived from a long tradition of religious and secular paintings and became a decorative convention of genre painting and portraiture in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{281} The trompe l’oeil curtain was used by painters to deceive the viewer into believing it could be pulled aside to reveal a painted scene. Originally, the trompe l’oeil curtain alluded to the Zeuxis and Parrhasius story in which the latter artist painted an illusionistic curtain that deceived his competitor, allowing Parrhasius to win the competition. Among many other examples of the period, this type of curtain can be seen in Dou’s Painter with Pipe and Book (fig.60) and Rembrandt’s The Holy Family (1646, Kassel, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister) (fig.71). This also relates to the actual practice of covering paintings. Owners of expensive works of art would hang curtains to protect them against smoke.

\textsuperscript{280} Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” XXII.
\textsuperscript{281} Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 68-70.
from open fires, tobacco pipe smoking, flies, and also to help reduce the fading of pigments.\textsuperscript{282}

In the \textit{Violin Player} Dou depicts a hanging drapery in the middleground which separates, reveals and possibly conceals the background scene. As in several of his other genre works and self-portraits, like the Cheltenham \textit{Self-Portrait} (fig.12) and \textit{Girl at a Window} (1657, Waddesdon Manor, The National Trust) (fig.72), this curtain functions not as an illusionistic projection into the viewer’s space, but within the inner realm of the work. It might act as a tool of revelation to expose the meaning of the scene, which recalls the tradition of pulling back a curtain to reveal the truth, sacred or another kind. For example, in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century religious paintings the curtain was a tool of divine revelation by which the sacred entity was hidden and unveiled.\textsuperscript{283}

(i) The Visiting Art Client

The smoking man in the Vaduz painting could be a connoisseur or client visiting the artist’s studio. There are a number of paintings of atelier scenes in which artists are seen in the company of well-dressed visitors, such as Frans van Mieris the Elder’s \textit{Self-Portrait of the Painter in his Studio} (c.1655-57, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister) and \textit{Artist’s Studio} (c.1655-1657, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, formerly Dresden) (fig.15), and Job Adriaensz Berckheyde’s \textit{The Artist’s Workshop} (c.1659, St. Petersburg, The Hermitage) (fig.73-74).\textsuperscript{284} Depicting the artist entertaining elite customers was another means to add prestige to the profession.


\textsuperscript{283} Hollander, \textit{An Entrance for the Eyes}, 69-72.

\textsuperscript{284} Also, there is a globe and lute on the table.
It is known that artists used their family, friends, and colleagues as models. Van Mieris is known to have portrayed himself and his wife, and Rembrandt depicted his wife Saskia and other family members. Consequently, it was not uncommon for artists to use authentic people as models to portray certain roles within the fictionalized realities of the image. Thus, it is a possibility that the mystery visitor in Dou’s painting is a portrait of someone he might have known, such as a colleague, pupil, or family member. In van Mieris’ painting (Fig. 73), for instance, there is another man sitting in his place in front of the panel placed on the easel. There are various objects next to them, such as a globe, a sculpture, an oil jar, and a viola da gamba, which identify the setting as an educated artist’s studio. The seated visitor, according to Laabs, could be an art dealer, a collector who came to commission or buy art from the artist, or even Dou himself. Since Dou was van Mieris’ teacher, he could have come to appraise, give advice, or buy the other painter’s work. Successful painters who achieved sufficient funds would sell their works directly to the client and might also deal in the artworks of other painters. In van Mieris’ painting, however, the resemblance of the seated gentleman to Dou is vague, making it hard to pass clear judgment on his identity. Most likely the artist simply wishes to demonstrate that he is a painter who enjoys visits from illustrious guests to his studio.

286 The sculpture of *Hercules* was used in studios in Leiden, and van Mieris, like his teacher Dou, possessed a cast of it; it reflects the learned and educated artist see, Buvelot, et al, “Catalogue,” 88.
287 Laabs, *The Leiden Fijnschilders*, 70; Sluijter, *Seductress of Sight*, 215, states that Dou may have appraised paintings as many experience artists did.
The shop was a public place where patrons would come and examine finished or in-progress works for purchase.289 Rembrandt, for instance, received guests in his house, and he conducted his art dealing business in the *sijdelcaemer*, the anteroom.290 Potential buyers could come in to sit for their portrait, commission a painting of a theme they wanted, or buy a finished work of art. Pieter Codde’s *An Artist and Connoisseurs in the Studio* (c.1630, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie) portrays an artist in the company of three stylishly dressed gentlemen (fig.75). They are shown wearing the latest fashion, the doublet with a high waist. The artist, on the other hand, wears a doublet that was fashionable in the 1620s, which is open around the neck, with a lower waist, large shoulder wings, and slippers. He wears a tied neckerchief rather than a collar. Codde’s painter is dressed in his daily studio attire which suggests comfortable wear, perhaps for the reason of not restricting his freedom of movement by superfluous cuffs or collar. The clothing was most likely not intended to be demeaning, but used to show a working painter.291 The sword seen lying on the floor in the foreground of the painting alludes to the cultivated gentleman-artist.292 Codde probably painted a transaction taking place, where the guests have come to the painter’s studio to examine and maybe purchase some of the artist’s paintings.

Dou must have had many prospective Dutch and foreign buyers. Documented visitors to his studio include Pieter Teding van Berkhout, Ole Borch, and Balthasar de Monconys.293 There are accounts that describe how Cosimo III de’ Medici traveled

293 Lammertse, “Catalogue: Gerrit Dou,” 144.
through the northern Netherlands. On his journey he visited several artists in their studios, visiting Dou in 1669. He mentioned in his travel journal three of the artists he met as being famous, Rembrandt, Dou, and van Mieris. The purchase of paintings seems to have taken place frequently in the painter’s studio.

At times, illustrious guests would come to the studio simply to converse about art. Constantijn Huygens, for example, would regularly practice this custom. Huygens’ account of his visit to Rembrandt’s atelier around 1629 is one of the most often quoted and detailed sources on the painter. Another of Codde’s paintings titled Conversation about Art (c.1630, Paris, F. Lugt Collection, Foundation Custodia, Institut Néerlandais) shows two men seated, facing each other, apparently engaged in a discussion on art (fig.76). The same instruments, the violin and lute, as seen in Dou’s Dresden self-portrait (1647, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister), lie on the table amidst other attributes of the artist’s study (fig.3). On the evidence of the unpainted panels against the wall, the box that contains chalk and a small knife for sharpening it on the floor, as well as various sculptures among which is the Hercules and Cacus statue, the gentlemen are most likely in an artist’s studio.

(ii) The Self-Portrait

The smoker’s direct stare at the viewer gives him a sense of subtle authoritativeness, especially since he is the only figure to meet the viewer with his gaze.

294 Liedtke, Dutch Paintings, 154, Buvelot, “Frans van Mieris’ Reputation,” 20. It should be noted that van Mieris also enjoyed visits from Giovacchino Guasconi, Cosimo III’s assistant, who came frequently to his studio, as mentioned in Laabs, The Leiden Fijnschilders, 69. The Grand Duke of Tuscany’s visit to the artist’s studio mentioned by Horn, The Golden Age Revisited, 272.
This direct gaze was a characteristic by which scholars identified hidden depictions of Rembrandt’s features in his history paintings of his early career, and indeed, a long tradition in self-portraits where the artist acts as a bystander in his own composition. The darkness of the background in the Vaduz panel makes it harder to detect the details of the sitter’s face and costume. It is apparent that he is wearing a hat with a slightly curled rim and a coat over a lighter, presumably white, collar. As already mentioned, men would wear a hat both outdoors and indoors. In his right hand he holds a smoking pipe. Thus, besides being a possible representation of a guest visiting the painter’s studio, the man with a pipe in Dou’s *Violin Player* could be a self-portrait of the artist. Various elements defy the clarity and singleness of interpretation of the smoking man, and this ambiguity makes it possible to interpret it as Dou’s self-portrait. There was an important pictorial tradition in the seventeenth century that linked artists and smoking. Artists like Pieter Jansz Codde, Jacob van Spreeuwen, and Anthonie Palamedesz had depicted themselves in their self-portraits seated in front of their easels, smoking. As discussed above, it was thought that smoking tobacco, like music, would stimulate the artistic senses. Representations of smoking in the studio, therefore, were perceived as inspirational pastimes for the artists.

A man with a pipe was a recurring subject in Dou’s art associating smoking with inspiration and meditation. Some examples include *Old Man Lighting a Pipe* (c.1635, England, Private Collection), *Man with a Pipe* (c.1645, London, National Gallery) (fig.77-78), and *Painter with Pipe and Book* (fig.60). In the latter work Dou shows an

---

299 De Winkel, “Rembrandt’s Clothes,” 58.  
300 Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, 94.
artist leaning out from what appears to be his studio window.\textsuperscript{301} In this painting, smoking is associated with thought and reflection.\textsuperscript{302} Seventeenth-century Dutch writers on art advised the painter to form the idea, a \textit{denkbeeld}, or mental image in his mind, and van Mander wrote that this visualization of the idea, imagination, or thought had to come to the artist before he began creating.\textsuperscript{303} Devoting a whole chapter to the mental processes of artistic creation, he believed that the idea or creative thought was formed by the spirit or mind, stating that “The art of painting…is first born in the spirit or the mind through the inward imagination, before it can be nurtured by the hand and brought to perfection.”\textsuperscript{304} Consequently, Dou’s pipe smoking painter could be caught in a moment of quiet contemplation in which he formulates concepts, an important part of the artistic process of creation.

It has been argued by Hans-Joachim Raupp that the artist-musician seen playing his instrument might symbolize the overindulgent painter while the artists in the background represent virtuous practice. Several of the versions of the Vaduz painting composition were interpreted to possibly represent \textit{vita voluptuosa} contrasted to the \textit{vita contemplativa}. A practical reason for making several copies of the same composition with varying iconographical motifs was because artists were focusing on efficient production of multiples rather than invention. This would, in turn, reduce the cost of the painting, while it would also make the artist better known.\textsuperscript{305} Van Hoogstraten wrote in 1678, “Good copies make good pieces celebrated,” alluding to both the financial profit and the

\textsuperscript{301} Some scholars attribute this to be a self-portrait while others believe it to be a generalized representation of a painter. Hollander calls it a self-portrait; \textit{An Entrance for the Eyes}, 55; Hunnewell and Baer disregard the work as a self-portrait; Hunnewell, \textit{Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits}, 99 and Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 92.
\textsuperscript{302} Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 94.
\textsuperscript{305} Kolfijn, \textit{The Young Gentry at Play}, 174.
fame gained for the artist.\textsuperscript{306} Dou’s version from the De Buleratt Collection (c.1650s, Basel) (fig.79), for instance, was interpreted by Raupp to represent the theme of playing music as a sensual activity, like indulging in alcohol and associating with women.\textsuperscript{307} In the Basel version there is a grapevine, which according to Raupp’s analysis represents Bacchus and drinking; as in other paintings discussed previously, this feature would allude to wine and the idea that one should refrain from overindulgences.

In the Vaduz and Basel versions, the violinist seems to be gazing towards a birdcage that hangs to the left side of the arched window. This is a recurring motif that appears on the outside of arched windows in several of Dou’s paintings. Raupp interpreted the birdcage in the Basel painting as a representation of Venus, thus symbolizing sensual indulgences.\textsuperscript{308}

Eddy de Jongh has argued that depictions of birdcages or of people buying birds carried an overtly sexual connotation for the contemporary viewer. The Dutch word for bird-catching, \textit{vogelen}, was a widespread colloquialism for sexual congress, and the bird in a cage known as a \textit{lichtekooi} was a Dutch word that indicated a prostitute.\textsuperscript{309} The birdcage, however, could have multiple meanings that depend on its context. Those of sexual nature include imprisoned love, the uterus, purity, and unchastity. Hunnewell mentions van Mander’s description of a drawing by Cornelis Ketel depicting the virtues attending \textit{Musica, Pictura, and Poëzia}. Here, van Mander cited the birdcage with a bird

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid, 274, note 36.
\textsuperscript{307} There are various versions and copies of this composition: some with grapevine and birdcage like the one from the collection De Burlett, Basel, and others with neither birdcage nor grapevine, see Baer, \textit{The Paintings of Gerrit Dou}, cat 63.1 and Raupp, “Musik im Atelier,” 110, fig. 2.
\textsuperscript{308} Raupp, “Musik im Atelier,” 109.
as an attribute of verduldicheyt – patience.\textsuperscript{310} In the Vaduz panel it is hard to make out the presence of a bird, but the closed birdcage, which implies the bird’s presence, could be symbolic of the virtue of patience. This is consistent with connotations of practice and diligence discussed earlier.

Raupp interprets the Basel panel as a warning that the painter should refrain from indulging his senses. On this view, the background scene with the artists at work is pictorially and symbolically separated from the main figure. The scholar believes that the birdcage refers to associating with women and the goat in the relief below is a symbol of the libido.\textsuperscript{311} Thus, the musician embodies the indulgent lifestyle while the background scene represents the virtuous behavior that should be practiced by an artist. It appears, however, that the man in the background seen sitting before an easel is smoking a pipe. This, then, contradicts with Raupp’s proposed symbolic division in the composition since smoking could also be perceived as indulgent pastime just as much or more so than music.

I would agree with Baer that, instead, in Dou’s Vaduz painting the act of smoking, like that of music-making, can be interpreted to have been a source of amusement, pleasure and inspiration for the tired painter.\textsuperscript{312} It seems that in the Dou’s work and those of other artists a painter taking a few puffs from his pipe may not be overindulging, but taking a moment to reflect on ideas and thoughts for his art. Although some believed that pipe smoking was a seductive source of sensual pleasure and a distracting activity that

\textsuperscript{310} Hunnewell, \textit{Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits}, 241. For further references to text on birdcages and their meanings see, 261-262, note 52.
\textsuperscript{311} Translated in Baer, \textit{The Paintings of Gerrit Dou}, cat 63.3, note 6 and originally in Raupp, “Musik im Atelier,” 109-110.
\textsuperscript{312} Baer, \textit{The Paintings of Gerrit Dou}, cat 63.3-63.4.
should be avoided, like music-making it probably acted as a source of inspiration and an aid to creative reverie in the context of the studio.

The depiction of an artist smoking a pipe in his studio can be seen in a number of self-representations, such as Codde’s *Self-Portrait* (date unknown, Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen), Jan van Mieris’ *Painter Smoking a Pipe in His Studio* (1688, Hamburg, Kunsthalle), Cornelis Saftleven’s *Portrait of A Man* (1629, Paris, Musée du Louvre) and the unattributed *Portrait of Cornelis Saftleven* (after a lost self-portrait of c.1630, present whereabouts unknown) (fig.80-83) among many others. Significantly, these artists are not seen at work. Codde, for instance, portrays himself seated with one hand on his knee and in the other he holds a pipe. His work is visible before him on the easel. It has been suggested that the painter’s demeanor in this type of painting should be seen as a form of self-mockery. Lammertse claimed that some of the artists and writers at that period made fun of their own weakness for tobacco and alcohol.\(^{313}\) Although this is a plausible argument, Codde, like other artists in the above-mentioned paintings, painted himself fashionably dressed. He is wearing lace collars and elaborate cuffs, a fancy overcoat, and high boots, which act as visual testimony to his elevated social status. He is most likely depicting himself smoking as an act of relaxation and inspiration, perhaps imitating the behavior of a high-class gentleman.

By compositionally placing the smoking man in the background of the Vaduz painting Dou deceptively suggests that the figure is of secondary importance. The figure is seen peeking from the dim background at the viewer. The smoker in the *Violin Player* is a subsidiary figure endowed with subtle authoritativeness, resembling the fifteenth- and

---

sixteenth-century painters who included their likenesses into commissioned paintings. Giorgio Vasari wrote that several Renaissance artists represented themselves as witnesses or spectators in religious and secular commissions. This practice was rooted in antiquity; Pliny in his *Natural History* mentions that self-portraits of antique painters and sculptors would be inserted in narrative scenes. Well-known Italian Renaissance examples include Raphael in the *School of Athens* (1509, Rome, The Vatican), Botticelli in the *Adoration of the Magi* (c.1475, Florence, Uffizi) and Ghirlandaio in the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (1482-85, Santa Trinita). The best known antecedent in northern tradition is surely Jan van Eyck’s painting of himself in the reflection of the mirror as one of the witnesses in *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434, London, National Gallery) (fig.84-87). These self-portraits acted as *Memoria*, originating out of a desire to be commemorated and immortalized. The Renaissance tradition of depicting one’s likeness in historical or religious paintings continued into the seventeenth century influencing Rembrandt’s role-playing in his own works. Thus, this was something that Dou could have learned from his teacher.

The young Rembrandt, like some of his Italian and northern predecessors, began his series of self-portraits by incorporating himself into history paintings. This is evident in the earliest known works by the artist, such as *The Stoning of Saint Stephen* from 1625 (Lyon, Musee des Beaux-Arts) and *History Piece* of 1626 (Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal), among many others (fig.88-89). Some of his other works, in which he is a minor participant, were painted during Dou’s apprenticeship to his studio. Similarly to his

---

artistic predecessors, in most of these paintings, Rembrandt is not the central figure but a participant in a larger event.\textsuperscript{317}

Houbraken described the idea of including a contemporaneous face in a historical piece by stating, “Certainly when the [painters’] own likenesses were included in the depictions of the old historical scenes, the literate art-lovers would have enjoyed finding them there.”\textsuperscript{318} Van De Wetering convincingly argues that the lover of art would have recognized the features of a popular artist like Rembrandt.\textsuperscript{319} This would surely apply to Dou as well. Chapman argues that Steen’s self-inclusions in his many genre works were an innovative strategy that would have distinguished him from his fellow artists and added value to his works while offering a fun and witty challenge for the sophisticated viewer.\textsuperscript{320} As far as research shows, Dou did not participate in role-play to the extent that Steen or his master teacher did, but he did include himself as a minor figure in larger compositions, the painting called \textit{The Quack} being a significant example (1652, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen) (fig.90).

Additionally, comparing Dou’s features in his painted self-portraits of the 1640s and 1650s with the physiognomy of the smoking man seems to confirm the mystery sitter as a self-representation. In the Uffizi (1658, Florence) (fig.91) and Spain (c.1645, Private Collection) (fig.4) self-portraits Dou depicted himself facing the viewer in a three-quarter view. These self-portraits share similarities with the facial characteristics of the smoker. The features include a chubby face, heavy chin, bulbous, long nose, plump cheeks, and a

\textsuperscript{317} See Chapman, \textit{Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits} and Buijsen, \textit{Rembrandt by himself}.

\textsuperscript{318} Van de Wetering, “Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits,” 179.

\textsuperscript{319} Van de Wetering, “The Multiple Functions,” 21.

suggestion of a moustache. In addition, he has longish wavy hair that is falling off onto his shoulders. Moreover, the smoker is wearing a hat that has a curled upward sweep of the brim, which resembles the one Dou is wearing in several self-portraits. A similar hat appears in Rembrandt’s etched *Self-Portrait* of 1631 (London, British Museum) (fig.92).\textsuperscript{321} According to Ernst van de Wetering, artists included their likenesses in various settings to serve a dual function of providing the buyer with a portrait of a famed painter and a display of the mastery that made him renowned.\textsuperscript{322} The seated gentleman in Dou’s Vaduz painting functions as a representation of the painter taking time for refreshment and inspiration.

(iii) Painting Deception

The purpose of including himself as a secondary figure in the *Violin Player* might have been to deceive and amuse the sophisticated viewer. This is a feature of some of his other works like *The Quack* and *The Grocery* (1647, Paris, Musée de Louvre) (fig.93). These works not only present instances in which he included himself as a minor figure, but they are fine examples that demonstrate his skillfulness in trickery through the painted image.

Dou’s *The Quack* (fig. 90) is an unusual work on several counts. The composition is populated by a greater number of figures than in any of his other works.\textsuperscript{323} It is larger than usual in size, and its setting is outside.\textsuperscript{324} In the scene, there are diverse types of

\textsuperscript{321} Baer, *Gerrit Dou*, 90.
\textsuperscript{322} Van de Wetering, “The Multiple Functions,” 30.
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid, 100.
\textsuperscript{324} The size is 112 cm by 83 cm, uniquely large for Dou who usually worked on much smaller panels. Lammertse also comments that the wood he chose is also unusual, and instead of oak, which was most commonly used, he used a tropical cedar wood (cedrela odorata) from Central America; *Dutch Genre Paintings*, 67.
people, like the pocket picker, the pancake baker seen wiping a baby’s rear, and the hunter with a dead hare, characters that occupy a social echelon below the painter and his patrons.\footnote{Furthermore, these bystanders as carefully chosen types associated with gullibility and stupidity, see Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 100.} Dou shows himself peeking from inside of an opened window while holding in hand the painter’s attributes. To his right, the quack is standing on a makeshift podium. In front of the charlatan there are various objects set on the table which include a small chest, a shaving basin, bottles, and a document or permit.

The swindler posing as a qualified doctor was a familiar figure at markets and fairs in literature and the visual arts in seventeenth-century Holland. Such tricksters appeared in books with comical names like “Kackadoris” or “Master All-Embracing Braggart,” and the quack was treated as a cruel deceiver, a fun figure, or a symbol of duplicity.\footnote{Lammertse, \textit{Dutch Genre Painting}, 64 and Brown, \textit{Images of the Golden Past}, 94.} The boy trapping a bird with his bait might be a satirical comment on the way in which the quack is trapping his audience with his words.\footnote{Ibid, 45.} Although the topic of the quack physician was a common subject in Dutch art, Dou’s work is unusual in that, with the artist’s inclusion in the scene, its real subject becomes the deceptive nature of the art of painting.\footnote{Gaskell, “Gerrit Dou, his Patrons,” 18.}

Many scholars noted that Dou must have intended a type of a symbolic comparison to be drawn between the juxtaposed quack and the artist.\footnote{Baer, \textit{The Paintings of Gerrit Dou}, cat 58.5.} Gaskell believes that the comparison between the quack and the painter stems from the depiction of the place as Dou’s studio, a place of work and artistic license. He argues that the background scene in the painting is in fact a view of Blauwpoort, a town gate that appears in several of his paintings; the presence of the windmill and the bridge allows one to speculate that...
the scene is that of the Galgewater in Leiden, where Dou’s working quarters were located. Gaskell concludes that the distinctive city gate of Leiden could have been seen from Dou’s studio. Although Dou did intend to juxtapose himself and the quack, the rest of Gaskell’s argument is debatable. Firstly, the visual imagery of the tankard seen hanging from the wall would identify the place as a tavern or an inn, not an artist’s studio. The Blauwoort, in actuality, did not assume the form in which it is represented until 1667, fifteen years after the dating of the panel. It was a device cleverly used by the artist to heighten the impression of the immediacy of place and time, which not only demonstrates that the panel was later reworked by Dou, but that he originally intended to give a believable impression, not a necessarily realistic description of a place. The appearance of an accurate depiction and representation of a slice of everyday life is in fact a sophisticated allegory of the nature of deception.

Although Dou, like many of his contemporaries, depicted a realistic impression of everyday life, such scenes were composed in the studio from carefully selected naturalistic and imaginary motifs. Additionally, Alpers states that the combinations of examples of human behavior in this painting could be an indication to the viewer of the duplicity and trickery of the quack and also of the deception of the painted surface. Various motifs in this work could have been inspired by proverbs and circulating emblem

---

332 Lammertse, Dutch Genre Paintings, 66 and Baer, Gerrit Dou, 100.
333 Baer, Gerrit Dou, 100.
334 Ibid.
books, which would have been familiar to educated seventeenth-century viewers. The motif of the dead and flourishing tree, for instance, as discussed by Gaskell, was an established emblematic conceit that concerned moral choices.

Several scholars have suggested that Dou encoded a hidden message to his viewers in the painting. According to Gaskell, it could mean that if one chooses to buy the quack’s drugs it would be to choose wrongly since one would purchase useless goods, but to buy a painter’s product would be the rightful choice since it would provide the customer pleasure and moral instruction. Others have suggested that like the quack who deceives with his performance and glib talk, the artist deceives the viewer with his craft of illusions. Both the painter and the quack earn their income through deception, one by selling his false remedies and the other by authentically imitating nature. Dou, painting for the wealthy echelons of society, not only instructed them to guard themselves from choosing the path of sensual pleasures but also provided these sophisticated viewers with an entertaining experience.

The idea of the painter’s skill to deceive the viewer with his painting abilities and cleverness of the mind can be also seen in Dou’s painting, The Grocery (fig.93). Through an arched opening there is an interior of a greengrocer’s shop in which an unknown figure is meeting the viewer’s gaze. A young boy holding a silver pitcher stands in the background of the main scene in which a woman is selling products to two other female customers. Like the artist in The Quack and the smoker in the Violin Player, the boy in

---

337 Brown, Images of a Golden Past, 44.
341 To read further on the interpretation of the quack painting within the bounds of influences of emblem literature and the idea of guarding oneself against choosing the wrong path of sensual pleasures is discussed by Baer, The Paintings of Gerrit Dou, cat 58.5, note 7.
The Grocery is the only figure looking straight at the viewer; also, the lad is the only male figure present in the shop. He is smiling and he wears a typical sixteenth-century hat similar to the beret characteristic of Rembrandt’s and Dou’s self-portraits. This could represent Dou at a younger age since at the time he painted The Grocery he would have been more than thirty. Baer does not believe it to be a self-depiction of Dou, and she deems the boy’s presence in the shop and his role there unclear. She interprets the boy’s function there as simply to provide contrast to the women of three ages. This figure has also been suggested to be a portrait of the young Rembrandt, explained as homage by Dou to his teacher. It is evident that the artist intended some sort of meaning by including this peculiar and arresting figure. The image, besides recalling the tradition of self-portraits embedded in Renaissance paintings (mentioned above), serves as a hint to the viewer of possible inherent trickery in the self-representation of the painter.

Another Leiden artist, David Bailly, in his Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait (1651, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) portrayed himself at a younger age, the way he looked some forty years earlier (fig.94). The portrait he holds in his hand, moreover, is a self-portrait that he made when he was fifty-eight years old. Bailly made the Vanitas, however, at the age of sixty-seven. Perhaps Dou, like Bailly, depicted a youthful self-portrait. Maybe he wanted to demonstrate his capacity to trick the viewer, making it hard to differentiate between what is real and imaginary. In The Grocery, therefore, like his fellow artist, he possibly intended to display the transience of human life, but ultimately the painter’s ability to conquer the passage of time.

342 Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 58.
343 Baer, The Paintings of Gerrit Dou, cat. 47.1 and see 47.2, note 1; on the unclerness of the boy’s presence see cat. 47.5.
344 Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 58 and on the debate of the identity of the young boy in the painting see ibid, 210, note 12.
The power of painting and the inherent deception in the painted image is embodied in the relief underneath the ledge in the Vaduz Violin Player. The sculpture depicts putti trying to overpower a goat, one holding it by the horns, while another is grasping its back. Another putto is shown seated on the ground holding a mask up to his face. They are at play making mock of the old goat. This was a scene based on a relief by the renowned Flemish sculptor François Duquesnoy (1597-1643), which in turn was influenced by ancient sarcophagi; it is now known as Children with a Goat or Bacchanale of Children (1626, Rome, Galleria Doria Pamphilj) (fig.95). Duquesnoy’s sculpture was familiar to Dou and other Dutch artists through cast copies that circulated in northern Europe from the 1640s onward. In several paintings by Dou and his contemporaries, Duquesnoy’s relief acts as a clue for the meaning of the main painted scene.  

The relief has inspired several interpretations. For instance, the trick-playing by the putti has been explained to allude to the trustfulness of human desire, while the goat is usually interpreted as a symbol of lust or libido. Hunnewell and Raupp speculated that the putto holding the mask to his face, the relief’s most prominent element, was associated with an antique tradition according to which the mask represented death; the preoccupation with death was a frequent theme in Leiden during this time. Baer further

---

346 A variety of Dou’s paintings include this relief, such as The Doctor (1653, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), Maidservant and an Old Woman in a Window with Game and Poultry (c.1665, London, The National Gallery), The Grocery Shop (1672, Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II), the Self-Portraits (1658, Florence, Uffizi Gallery; 1660-65, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), as well as by his followers like Willem van Mieris in his The Merry Toper (ca. 1699, Dresden). On cast copies see Liedtke, Dutch Paintings, 164.

347 Baer, The Paintings of Gerrit Dou, cat 63.3.

348 Hunnewell, Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits, 229. For other associations of the mask see, ibid, 239.
notes that one of the major reasons was because of the traumatic memories of the Spanish siege and the recurrence of the plague that came to the city in 1635.\footnote{Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 49, note 110.}

Nonetheless, in the context of Dou’s painting, Duquesnoy’s subject metaphorically stands for visual deception in painting, so important to the artist.\footnote{Laabs, \textit{The Leiden Fijnschilders}, 41.} The motif of the putto holding a mask to his face is convincingly interpreted by Sluijter as an attribute of \textit{Pictura}, the Art of Painting.\footnote{Sluijter, \textit{Seductress of Sight}, 211.} The mask personifies \textit{Pictura} and the relief overall acts as a symbol of the decepiveness of the art of painting. The ability to fool the eye is being tried on the resistant goat. It can be said that Art triumphs over Nature since it can fool this animal into mistaking art for life.\footnote{Liedtke, \textit{Dutch Paintings}, 164 and Baer, \textit{Gerrit Dou}, 104.} Even though the relief, with its Bacchic associations, could have been intended to comment on the overindulgence of the senses, like playing music, smoking, and painting, it seems that here Dou was most likely showcasing his workmanship as well as mastery of paint’s ability to deceive.

Angel compared the art of painting and the art of sculpting, ranking painting as the highest art since it can imitate all things in nature.\footnote{Sluijter, “Didactic and Disguised,” 81.} He wrote that “[painting] can be used to depict a rainbow, rain, thunder…the rising sun, early morning…none of which the sculptors can imitate.”\footnote{Angel, \textit{Praise of Painting}, 239.} This argument and the relief in Dou’s \textit{Violin Player} refer to the concept of \textit{paragone}, the Renaissance debate concerning whether painting or sculpture was superior. In the painting the striking contrast created by the colorful tapestry hung directly over the monochromatically dull relief implies that a painter’s brush is more...
capable at creating illusionism than by the sculptor’s chisel. Angel noted in his lecture of 1642 that the faithful imitative qualities of painting were highly regarded by contemporary theorists and art lovers. Van Hoogstraten and others wrote about paintings that possessed the ability to bedriegen, or to deceive, a viewer’s eye, although the actual term bedriegertje – “little deceit,” was not used as has sometimes been suggested.

On the whole, it is evident that Dou combined a variety of motifs as a pictorial category and sources of influence. Following the Renaissance tradition of participatory self-portraits, the smoker in the Violin Player is compositionally placed as the minor figure in the larger composition, and he deceptively appears to be a figure of lesser importance. Following the example of his teacher Rembrandt, Dou becomes a participant in several of his paintings, such as The Quack and The Grocery. These works specifically allude to the deceptive qualities of illusionistic painting and the artist’s skillfulness in mastering such painted deceptions. It can be argued, therefore, that although Dou did not practice role-play to the same extent his teacher did, the smoking gentleman in the Violin Player is a plausible self-portrait. Again following tradition, the true artist is the only figure who is seen looking directly at the viewer. He is sitting, relaxed in his pose and demeanor in front of his easel, as if patiently waiting for the viewer to grasp the trickery. This painting is perhaps another one of Dou’s witty allegories whose intended purpose was to amuse his upper-class clientele.

---

356 The misleading realistic appearance of paintings by Dou and others, who strove for realism in their work, acted as trompe l’oeil. Wheelock argues that in the seventeenth century the Dutch did not have a particular term for illusionistic works of art; Wheelock, “Illusionism in Dutch and Flemish Art,” 78.
357 De Jongh mentions that the term was used to describe these types of paintings; see, Questions of Meaning, 87.
III. Studio Practices

Next to the smoking gentleman in the Violin Player (figs.1; 70) there is a clean-shaven younger man with short hair. He is wearing a plain shirt, suggestive of the simpler clothes worn by the lower echelon in society. Unlike the smoker and the violinist, he faces downwards and focuses on the task of grinding pigments. These elements confirm that the setting of the Violin Player is a painter’s workshop. Could it be implied that the master artist and the apprentice-musician are men of class and intellect, deliberately contrasted with the physical labor of a beginner? Was Dou suggesting that artists, like scholars and musicians, practiced a superior and intellectually stimulating pastime which would then contrast with the dirty and menial labor of young apprentices? The following section will address these questions through a discussion of studio practices of Dou and other artists.

Self-portraits in Dutch paintings of artists’ studios convey a sense of the working conditions in seventeenth-century ateliers. The practices of artists in the workshop are mentioned in seventeenth-century theories on art and some traditional methods can be linked to Renaissance translations of ancient texts that were well known in that period. Preparing the palette and grinding pigments were often tasks of assistants or pupils, who typically performed menial and physical labor in the master’s workshop. The apprentice was in charge of grinding colors, cleaning palettes, placing fresh paint on the palette, stretching canvases and doing other similar kinds of work. Usually, painters or their studio assistants would purchase colors from a paints merchant, and then prepare them by pounding, grinding, and rubbing the pigments on a stone. Van Mander advised

---

students, “Have a care of the master’s palette and brushes and of mixing and preparing (the colors), have a care of canvas and panels, grind the colors right and fine and see to it that they are kept clean.”\textsuperscript{359} At times, the artist would ask for a fresh palette filled with colors to be brought to him by his servant, or his “palette-boy”, and in cases when he had no assistants he would carry it out himself.\textsuperscript{360}

There are a number of painted and etched works dedicated to the subject matter of studio practices. The Flemish artist Jan van der Straet, also known as Johannes Stradanus, was familiar with the Italian ideals and the older practices of the Netherlandish workshop.\textsuperscript{361} One of his images of artists at work, the engraving entitled \textit{Color Olivi} (c.1590, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) illustrates the ideal atelier (fig.96). The master is shown at work on a large painting in the centre of the composition. Next to him, also in the foreground, pupils are busy preparing a palette for the master, and on the right other participants of the studio are grinding pigments. This print shows that the atelier is a place that requires organization and hierarchy of skills.\textsuperscript{362} In Adriaen van Ostade’s A Painter’s Studio (c.1640, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (fig.2) and The Landscape Painter (c.1663, Dresden, Staatliche) the artist is dressed like a peasant and seated at his easel painting with his back turned to the viewer (fig.97). Even in this rustic studio, the master has an assistant, or at times a number of assistants, preparing the materials for him.

Dou’s representation of the studio in the Violin Player seems to have a hierarchy of actions. The apprentice is grinding pigments and preparing materials while the artists are meditating and getting inspired through smoking and music playing. Unlike the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{359} Martin, “A Painter’s Studio,” 23. \textsuperscript{360} Ibid, 17-18. \textsuperscript{361} He lived in Florence during Vasari’s lifetime, as noted by Walsh, \textit{Jan Steen}, 30. \textsuperscript{362} Ibid, 30-33.}
elevated violin-playing-artist or the meditative pipe-smoking painter, the pigment-grinder could personify the physical aspect of painting. His kind of work would then contrast with the poetic and musically inspirational qualities of artistic creation. Hollander interpreted the Violin Player as a triple self-portrait in which the smoker and grinder represent the thought and labor needed to be done to make a painting, and together with the painter playing the violin, who she identifies to represent the sensual pleasures of music, are allegorical depictions of Dou. She further believes that the violinist-painter is not facing the viewer because he is lost in thought and private meditation, which psychologically disconnects him from painting allowing the viewer to marvel at the surface detail.

The scene, however, is more likely a symbolical representation of the many efforts it takes to create a work of art, which includes physical labor of preparing the materials like grinding pigments, the meditative and contemplative aspects of creation, and finally talent and skill. Considering that the violinist was described as a self-portrait in the early nineteenth-century sale catalogues without any foundation and Hollander’s proposition of a triple self-portrait seems doubtful, the smoking figure seated at his easel, as discussed above, is the only self-portrait of the artist. The violinist, however, as suggested earlier, is probably a personification of the ideal painter who is skillful in both the art of music and painting. The embedded self-portrait, together with the putti relief, hints at the inherent deceptive qualities of Pictura and Dou’s illusionistic art.

---

363 Hollander, An Entrance for the Eyes, 49.
364 Ibid, 52.
365 On the catalogues that suggest that the violinist is a self-portrait see Baer, The Paintings of Gerrit Dou, cat. 63.2.
Significantly, it appears that in his own studio Dou did not practice the traditional division of labor. Joachim von Sandrart, who visited Dou in his studio in the early 1640s, wrote, “He ground his own colors only on glass in the end, and made his brush himself.” The purpose of this painting, therefore, was to exemplify and not illustrate the actual practices of the artist in his studio. Paintings depicting artists’ studios, like other Dutch seventeenth-century art, were not only describing but were embodying a constructed idea of the studio in ideal terms. Dutch genre paintings, Hecht reasonably argues, rarely can be considered faithful depictions of daily life, and depictions of the artist’s studio by Dou and his contemporaries could never be fully deemed realistic. The seventeenth-century viewer perceived these interior spaces as a reality effect rather than reality, and like still-life paintings, genre images were interpreted as schijnrealisme – apparent realism. Dutch art did not attempt to capture reality on the panel. Rather, it described the manner in which reality was perceived. Sutton states, “The appearance of reality…was not an end in itself but a style at the service of a message.” Dutch genre paintings were never spontaneous records of a moment or snapshots, and artists were not capturing particular moments in time. Dou and his followers made use of iconographic conventions referring to symbolic ideals or visual metaphors that were familiar to the contemporary viewer, which gave their paintings a sense of descriptive literalism. Scholars refrain from using the term realistic justly considering the term inappropriate when discussing seventeenth-

---

368 Franits, Dutch Seventeenth-Century, 121; 6 and Westermann, “After Iconography,” 351.
369 Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” LIX.
370 De Jongh, Questions of Meaning, 85.
371 Schama, The Embarrassment of Riches, 10.
century Dutch art.\textsuperscript{372} These panels are usually rendered in deceptive detail making it seem
that they were painted from direct observation. Thoré wrote that “Nothing is less real than
reality in painting. And what is called that depends strictly on a way of seeing.”\textsuperscript{373} The
central paradox of Dutch visual culture, as Westermann points out, is the “extraordinary
expansion and its mimetic persuasiveness or lush tactility, in a political culture committed
to, even founded on, distrust of sight and faith in the word.”\textsuperscript{374} Dou, like other Dutch
seventeenth-century artists, imitated life but depicted it with artifice.\textsuperscript{375}

Rather than accurate description of daily experience, the purpose of paintings
depicting a painter’s studio was to elevate the status and dignity of the artist’s profession.
They communicated the idea that the master artist was a creative genius who, unlike his
apprentices, did not engage in menial labor. In his representation of the studio in the
Vaduz panel, Dou shows that an artist had to employ his physical, intellectual, creative,
and musical skills in order to create a work of art that will be witty and pleasing for the
well-informed and erudite viewer. Consequently, the foreground and the background
scenes in this painting combine to present an ideal vision of the elevated artist who listens
to and plays music and enjoys pipe smoking, all for the creation of his art.

Imitations of daily life and iconographic ambiguities went hand-in-hand with a
deliberate intent of concealing deeper meaning for the profit of amusing the audience
with the painter’s cleverness and illusionistic abilities.\textsuperscript{376} Classically educated

\textsuperscript{372} Walter Liedtke, “Style in Dutch Art,” in \emph{Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art Realism
\textsuperscript{373} Schama, \emph{The Embarrassment of Riches}, 10. These deceptively realistic works provoked people as early
as the eighteenth century to believe the works of the Leiden painters to the role of ‘eye-witness’, the
function of which was to depict of things that actually took place in the parlors and studies of the
seventeenth-century in Leiden; ibid.
\textsuperscript{374} Westermann, “After Iconography,” 360.
\textsuperscript{375} De Jongh, \emph{Questions of Meaning}, 85.
\textsuperscript{376} Kyrova, “Music in Seventeenth-Century Painting,” 37.
connoisseurs knew that ancient texts had already discussed deception through painting.

Painters and their sophisticated clients might have been familiar with the writings of Philostratus the Younger, who wrote:

> The deception inherent in [the painter's] work is pleasurable and involves no reproach; for to confront objects which do not exist as though they existed and to be influenced by them, to believe that they do exist, is not this, since no harm can come of it, a suitable and irreproachable means of providing entertainment?\(^{377}\)

As Lammertse points out, the comical side of these works implies that people enjoyed being amused and deceived.\(^{378}\) In 1624, Johan de Brune the Younger observed, “We take more pleasure in puzzles, witticisms and jests in which something secretive and hidden has been inserted than in things that are understood at first glance.”\(^{379}\) Genre painting can be viewed, as Hecht wrote, as a type of “play-ground for the most diverse specialists, who found subjects in the world around them with which to amuse their contemporaries.”\(^{380}\) Also, Roger de Piles, a painter and engraver as well as writer and teacher of art, expressed his and his contemporaries’ opinion by saying that “the ultimate goal of painting is not so much to beguile the mind as to deceive the eye.”\(^{381}\) In Dou’s Vaduz painting, the self-referential nature of the secondary but eye-catching smoking gentleman asserts the painter’s presence as a participant in the scene and, indeed, its creative mastermind. The result of such pictorial realism is that one sees an utterly convincing illusionism, yet is ultimately reminded that what he sees is a visual deception and delusion. Like other paintings by Dou, the Violin Player represents ideas that were central to his art: it is meant to delight, amuse, deceive, and instruct the viewer.

\(^{377}\) D’Otrange-Mastai, *Illusion in Art*, 49.


\(^{379}\) Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” XXII.

\(^{380}\) Hecht, “There’s No Problem Enjoying It,” 26.

61. Adriaen Brouwer, *The Smoker*, 1630-38, oil on panel, 30.5 x 21.5 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

62. Adriaen van Ostade, *Piping and Drinking in a Tavern*, c. 1650s, oil on wood, Salzburg, Residenzgalerie

63. Gerard ter Borch, *Violinist*, c. 1648-50, oil on canvas, 29 x 24 cm, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum

64. Frans van Mieris, *The Old Violinist*, 1660, oil on panel, 28.1 x 21 cm, Boston, Private Collection

65. Willem van Mieris, *The Merry Toper*, ca. 1699, oil on panel, 25 x 20.1 cm, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

66. Willem van Mieris, *The Trumpeter*, 1700, oil on panel, 30.3 x 25 cm, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister


68. Isack Elyas, *Merry Company*, 1620, oil on panel, 47 x 63 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
69. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Painter in his Studio*, 1631, oil on canvas, 86 x 127 cm, Berlin, Staatliche Museum

70. Gerrit Dou, Detail of *Violin Player*, 1653, oil on panel, 31.7 x 20.3 cm, Liechtenstein Princely Collection, Vaduz Castle

71. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Holy Family*, 1646, oil on panel, 46.5 x 68.5 cm, Kassel, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

72. Gerrit Dou, *Girl at a Window*, 1657, oil on panel, 37.5 x 29.1 cm, Waddesdon Manor, The National Trust

73. Frans van Mieris the Elder, *Self-Portrait of the Painter in his Studio*, c.1655-57, oil on panel, 60 x 47 cm, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

74. Job Adriaensz Berckheyde, *The Artist's Workshop*, c.1659, oil on panel, 49 x 36.5 cm, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum

75. Pieter Codde, *An Artist and Connoisseurs in the Studio*, c. 1630, 38.3 x 49.3 cm, Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie
76. Pieter Codde, *Conversation about Art*, c.1630, 41.5 x 55 cm, Paris, F. Lugt Collection, Foundation Custodia, Institut Néerlandais

80. Pieter Codde, *Self-Portrait*, oil on panel, 30.5 x 25 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen

77. Gerrit Dou, *Old Man Lighting a Pipe*, c.1635, oil on panel, 49 x 61.5 cm, England, Private Collection

81. Jan van Mieris, *Painter Smoking a Pipe in His Studio (Self-Portrait?)*, 1688, oil on panel, 17.7 x 14.3 cm, Hamburg, Kunsthalle

78. Gerrit Dou, *Man with a Pipe*, c.1645, oil on panel, 19 x 14.7 cm, London, National Gallery

82. Cornelis Saftleven, *Portrait of A Man*, 1629, oil on panel, 31 x 23 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre

79. Gerrit Dou, *Violin Player*, c.1650s, oil on panel, Basel, De Buleratt Collection

83. After Cornelis Saftleven, *Portrait of Cornelis Saftleven* after a lost self-portrait, c.1630, oil on panel, 33 x 26 cm, present whereabouts unknown
84. Raphael Sanzio, *School of Athens*, 1509, fresco, 19 x 27’, Rome, The Vatican

85. Sandro Botticelli, *Adoration of the Magi*, c.1475, tempera on wood, 111 x 134 cm, Florence, Uffizi

86. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1482-85, tempera and (?) oil on panel, 167 x 167 cm, Florence, Santa Trinità

87. Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak, 82.2 x 60 cm, London, National Gallery

88. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Stoning of Saint Stephen*, 1625, oil on canvas, 89.5 x 123.6 cm, Lyon, Musee des Beaux-Arts

89. Rembrandt van Rijn, *History Piece*, 1626, oil on canvas, 90 x 121 cm, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal

90. Gerrit Dou, *The Quack*, 1652, oil on panel, 112 x 83 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

91. Gerrit Dou, *Self-Portrait*, 1658, oil on panel, 52 x 40 cm, Florence, Uffizi

93. Gerrit Dou, *The Grocery*, 1647, oil on panel, 38.5 x 29 cm, Paris, Musée de Louvre

94. David Bailly, *Vanitas Still Life with Self-Portrait*, 1651, oil on wood, 89.5 x 122 cm, Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal

95. François Duquesnoy, *Children with a Goat or Bacchanale of Children*, 1626, marble relief, Rome, Galleria Doria Pamphilj

96. Jan van der Straet, *Color Olivi*, c.1590, woodcut, 20.2 x 27 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

97. Adriaen van Ostade, *The Landscape Painter*, c.1663, 38 x 35.5 cm, oil on panel, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen
Gerrit Dou’s superiority in the oil painting medium and his innovative reinterpretations of conventional motifs have been overshadowed by some of the greats of the Golden Age like Rembrandt and Vermeer. The Vaduz Violin Player is a visual testimony to the artist’s invention and use of the meticulous fine painting manner as well as his extensive knowledge, understanding, and reinvention of pictorial traditions. In his own lifetime he was praised by contemporary art theorists and ranked among the most admired Dutch seventeenth-century painters. Unlike Frans Hals and Rembrandt who passed away in relative poverty, Dou had great fame and wealth.\(^{382}\) During his lifetime his paintings were amongst the most treasured in Europe, and there are accounts of the Leidener’s rejection of the King of England’s invitation to work in England.\(^{383}\) Dou commanded high prices, which in part, was as a result of the expansion of the market for genre painting by the early seventeenth century. This reflected the growing economic prosperity and the burgeoning middle-class, and his success materialized because of the current tastes for smooth and polished surfaces.\(^{384}\)

Despite the criticism in later centuries of the superficiality and the lifelessness of his perfected images, Dou had a wide range of influence on different artists extending well into the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century with German imitators.\(^{385}\) His pupils and followers include but are not limited to Gabriël Metsu, Frans and his son Willem van Mieris, Dominicus van Tol, and Jacob Toorenvliet. Many of his followers

\(^{382}\) Dou’s wealth was immense. Besides the expensive prices of his works, he inherited a fortune on his father’s death made up of houses; Martin, \textit{Gerard Dou}, 72-74.


\(^{384}\) Chapman, \textit{Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits}, 98.

emulated his style and pictorial motifs, and the window ledge design that he popularized became a standard feature in genre painting well into the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{386}

The \textit{Violin Player} presents a visual combination and culmination of ideas of that period by which the artistic profession and the status of the artist was elevated. Dou accentuated the intellectual and elevated attributes of the painter. The painting draws widely from the tradition of self-portrait iconography and the theme of the painter in his studio as a means of depicting the artist as a musically inspired practitioner of scholarly endeavors, a learned man who practices the art of painting and possesses artistic talents and skills in liberal arts. He gave unprecedented attention in his self-portraits to the representation of the painter’s virtue, as in the Dresden \textit{Self-Portrait} (fig.3) in which he derived iconography from paintings of contemplative scholars in their studies, to allude to the painter’s diligence, dedication, and perfection of his art.\textsuperscript{387}

Dou’s \textit{Violin Player} is a demonstration of the artist’s workmanship and craft, and the dialogue between the foreground and background in the niche painting demonstrates the relationship between various aspects of art making. The labor and skill that a painter puts into his work of art is fundamental, and it is a time-consuming process invisible to other eyes as the painter works quietly in his studio.\textsuperscript{388} Additionally, music-playing and smoking are significant inspirational ingredients for making an artwork. In studio settings, smoking and playing musical instruments were pleasure-inducing and inspirational activities, which in other contexts would be regarded as overindulgent and vain behaviors. In the atelier, therefore, they were most likely perceived as inspirational,

\textsuperscript{386} Ibid, 89-97; Sutton, “Masters of Dutch Genre Painting,” XLI.
\textsuperscript{387} Hunnewell, \textit{Gerrit Dou’s Self-Portraits}, 270.
\textsuperscript{388} Hollander, \textit{An Entrance for the Eyes}, 102.
spiritual necessities for the painter’s productivity. The outcome of these hard labors achieves fame and grants the artist immortality.

Dou’s skillful and inventive use of motifs from other genres showcases his workmanship as master painter of surfaces and also displays his cleverness and sophistication as a creative and intellectual master artist. The musician playing his violin, on the basis of his costume, his implements, and the setting in the background can be identified as a painter, and is perhaps a mature apprentice to the studio. In all probability, in this particular context, the violinist is a personification of the skillful artist who masters both the art of painting and music. The seated gentleman with a pipe appears to be a self-portrait of Dou in which he presents himself as the artist inspired through smoking in order to reflect and contemplate ideas for his art. Together, they embody one of the central tenets of Dutch art theory which views the ultimate purpose of painting as deception of the viewer achieved through one’s painting abilities and cleverness of the mind. It is therefore revealed that the maker and real artist of the picture is not the violinist but Dou himself seen seated in the background.

Dou, moreover, incorporated contemporaneous canons of art that were voiced by the likes of Karel van Mander and Philips Angel who emphasized the importance of imitation of texture details in an illusionistic manner. Ultimately, as stated by contemporary writers on art, the goal of the painted image was to deceive and amuse the viewer. Such witty tricks and illusions were esteemed by the educated clientele, and regarded as entertaining. It can be summarized from the above-discussed accounts that Dou’s contemporaries marveled at his small paintings, the refinement of his technique, and incredible attention to detail. In a closing paragraph on Dou’s life, Houbraken confesses the deep respect for the fijnschilder.
But this is certain: that through his way of proceeding he is a marvel to the World, and must be praised by all practitioners of art, above all [those] who in his time have applied themselves to detailed painting; because he has drawn, and stroked, more with the brush than others who tired to reach their goal with softening and fading. Which is why his brushwork has great power, even from far away; where, to the contrary [,] the brushwork handled in the other way disappears as in a mist.\(^{389}\)

As Robinson insightfully commented, in the most positive sense, Dou was a painter of surfaces, creating technical perfection and making jewel-like art on a small scale.\(^{390}\) The \textit{Violin Player} is visual proof of Dou’s inventive mind and supreme skill of the hand that led Philips Angel to give him the title of ideal painter “for whom no praise is sufficient.”\(^{391}\)

The purpose of this research, therefore, has been to examine the connection between music and painting and contribute to the study of the iconography and representation of the artist in the studio in Dutch seventeenth-century art. It has been my intention to demonstrate, reveal, and redeem Dou’s place among the leading and unique interpreters of the theme of the painter as musician and the artist in the studio in genre painting. The \textit{Violin Player} on the whole serves as a visual emblem of the diligent, sophisticated practitioner of art that the artist wanted to represent himself as to the sophisticated viewer. The painting exemplifies and affirms Gerrit Dou as master innovator, testifying to the skill of his hand and of his imaginative mind, hopefully by which he can reclaim his place among the finest, most prominent masters of the Dutch seventeenth-century school of painting.

\(^{389}\) Horn, \textit{The Golden Age Revisited}, 457.
\(^{390}\) Robinson, \textit{Gabriel Metsu}, 89.
\(^{391}\) Angel, \textit{Praise of Painting}, 248.
Bibliography


---------. “Persona and Myth in Houbraken’s Life of Jan Steen.” Art Bulletin 75, no. 1
(March 1993): 137-149.


De Jongh, Eddy. “Erotica in vogelperspectief. De dubbelzinnigheid van een reeks 17de


Franits, Wayne, ed. *Looking at Seventeenth Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*. 136


Hollander, Martha. An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth Century


Martin, Wilhelm. Gerard Dou. Trans. by Clara Bell. London: George Bell and Sons,
1908.


---------. “How a Dutch Picture was Painted.” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 10, no. 45 (Dec., 1906): 140-154.


---------, et al. *Leidse Fijnschilders Van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630-


Westermann, Mariët. *The Art of the Dutch Republic 1585-1718*. Calmann and King:


