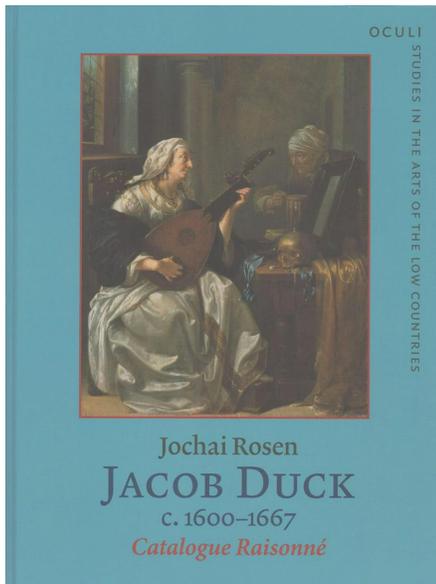


Review

Jochai Rosen, *Jacob Duck c. 1600-1667, Catalogue Raisonné*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017, 294 pp. ISBN 978-9-027-24968-5.



Several hundred artists lived and worked in the town of Utrecht in the seventeenth century. Most of them were painters. In 1611, a guild was instituted especially for painters, and the foundation of a drawing academy a year later led to the spectacular rise in the number of young painters and, consequently, an enormous increase in the production of paintings. This all happened more or less under the surveillance of Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1651), who should be seen as the doyen of the Utrecht art world. Bloemaert was the teacher of dozens of young painters who were inspired by the international developments that they encountered on their journeys abroad, especially in Italy and France. It was through them that new movements in art, like Caravaggism, Classicism, and Italianate landscape painting became known

in the Northern Netherlands. Utrecht's inclination towards the internationally highly appreciated styles was, in the long run, detrimental to its painters' reputation. From the nineteenth century onwards seventeenth-century Utrecht art was considered to be not really Dutch. Under the collective term 'academism', it was rejected and thrown into oblivion.¹ Thus it was largely forgotten that painters like Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656), a Caravaggist and Classicist, or Cornelis van Poelenburch (1594/95-1667) who painted Italian landscapes, were very famous in their days. They received important commissions at home and from abroad, for which they were highly rewarded financially.

Although over the past decades there has been a positive change in the appreciation of the Utrecht painters, they are still not very well known by the general public, because they

¹ This opinion was put forward most forcefully by Wilhelm Martin in his *De Hollandsche schilderkunst in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1935), I.

have never entered the canon of Dutch art, which is still headed by the illustrious names of Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Frans Hals. These icons, and their Dutch compatriots in Haarlem, Amsterdam, Delft, and Leiden, still dominate the common image of what the painters from the Golden Age really were supposed to do, namely painting in the globally admired Dutch national style.

As their reputation gradually improved in the twentieth century, quite a number of monographs were written on Utrecht painters, beginning with those on Joachim Wtewael, by C.H. Lindemann in 1929, and the Moreelse family, by C.H. de Jonge in 1938. Monographs on Hendrick ter Brugghen (1959), Gerard van Honthorst (1959), and Dirck van Baburen (1965) followed, probably inspired by the important exhibition on Caravaggism in the Low Countries held in Utrecht and Antwerp in 1952. In 1964, the Italianate landscape painters were the subject of a large exhibition, also in Utrecht. Caravaggism was again the subject of an exhibition held in Utrecht and Braunschweig in 1985-86. It would go too far to present a complete overview of what has been written on Utrecht painting but, a choice selection will do, because meanwhile monographs (most of them with a catalogue raisonné) have been published on Joachim Wtewael (1986), Roelandt Savery (1988), the Bloemaert family (1993), the Bronchorst family (1993), Jan van Bijlert (1998), Gerard van Honthorst (1999), Nikolaus Knupfer (2005), Hendrick ter Brugghen (2007), Dirck van Baburen (2013), and Cornelis van Poelenburch (2016). Jochai Rosen's book on Jacob Duck is the latest addition to this growing library.² Rosen has written a traditional biography of the artist followed by a *catalogue raisonné*, based on his dissertation on the same subject.

Jacob Duck was born around 1600, most likely in Utrecht. His family originally came from the small place of Vleuten, some 15 kilometres northwest from Utrecht. At first he wanted to become a goldsmith and in 1611 he was enlisted as a pupil in the guild of the goldsmiths. In 1619 he was accepted as master goldsmith. The following year he married Rijckgen Croock with whom he had at least eight children. The municipal archives in Utrecht provide little information on Duck's life, but it is certain that at some point in the early 1620s he must have decided to become a painter; according to the financial books of the guild of St. Luke he became a master painter in 1630-32. A document dating from 1621 suggests that he was at that time a pupil of Joost Cornelisz Droochsloot (after 1585-1666), a painter of genre pieces. Droochsloot declared to have received the apprentice fee of six stuivers 'from a young man named Duyck'. Whether the Duyck in this document really refers to Jacob Duck is uncertain, however. 'Young man' in this context means bachelor, and Jacob Duck had already married in 1620. Moreover, the name Duck or Duyck was not uncommon in those days. The painter Jacob Le Ducq (of Duc) from The Hague, for instance, has often been confused with Jacob Duck from Utrecht. This is not strange at all since we know that Jacob Duck also worked in The Hague, where he might have joined a new society for painters in 1656, the *Confrerie*, afterwards called *Pictura*. The painters who belonged to this society were previously members of the Guild of St. Luke, but they considered themselves better than the common craftsmen who were also members of that

² Duck was studied before in: Nanette Salomon, *Jacob Duck and the Gentrification of Dutch Genre Painting* (Doornspijk 1998).

guild.³ All in all it seems that Jacob Duck was not very successful as a painter. In 1661 he returned to Utrecht, where he died in 1667. After his death his heirs refused to pay for the large debts he had left behind.

Duck specialized in scenes depicting soldiers, commonly called *kortegaarden* after the French term *corps de garde*, which means guardroom.⁴ He may have been inspired by his would-be teacher Joost Droochsloot who also painted such compositions. Yet whereas Droochsloot did so in the Flemish style of Sebastiaen Vrancx (1573-1647), Duck was closer to his Dutch colleagues Pieter Codde (1599-1678), Anthonie Palamedesz (1601-1673), and Simon Kick (1603-1652). In Utrecht, Duck was the only painter who specialized in *kortegaarden*. The history of this subject in genre painting and Duck's position in it, as well as the development and character of his art, are discussed at length in the opening chapters of Rosen's book. He divides Duck's oeuvre into three groups: guardroom scenes, brothel scenes, and a remaining group of vanitas paintings and miscellaneous works. This division is maintained in the catalogue. The guardroom and brothel scenes make up about two-third of the oeuvre. There are also about fifty replicas and copies known of paintings by Duck, which is quite a lot. It is possible that Duck ran a workshop, although there are no documents to corroborate this. Only five paintings (of 157 listed as autograph) are dated, yet Rosen, taking the signature types into account, believes that he can establish a chronology within the oeuvre. Given the fact that Duck's paintings are usually of the same type, and that he received commissions only sparsely, this reviewer can only emphasize that it is virtually impossible to outline a chronology on the basis of so few 'hard data'. Nevertheless, the suggested dates can serve as a tool for further research.

The strength of this book lies in the catalogue and the illustrations. The catalogue is detailed, with substantial information on the provenances of the paintings and iconographical interpretations whenever necessary. All the paintings are illustrated, mostly in colour, and only in black and white when no colour illustration was available. The catalogue of 157 numbers is followed by groups of paintings with a doubtful attribution, the rejected works, and the drawings and prints. There is no list of the documents, but as it has been stated, Jacob Duck did not appear in archival records often. Jochai Rosen has to be complimented for bringing his study on Duck to such a good end. With this book another painter from Utrecht now has his monograph with *catalogue raisonné*.

Paul Huys Janssen, Noordbrabants Museum

³ Edwin Buijsen, *Haagse Schilders in de Gouden Eeuw, Het Hoogsteder Lexicon van alle schilders werkzaam in Den Haag 1600-1700* (The Hague/Zwolle 1998), 41-43.

⁴ For an overview, see: Ellen Borger, *De Hollandse kortegaard. Geschilderde wachtlokalen uit de Gouden Eeuw* (Zwolle/Naarden 1996).