A Group of Related Buyers at Orphan Chamber Auctions

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Introduction

The auction records of the Orphan Chamber of Amsterdam preserved in the Gemeentearchief Amsterdam have been studied and used by art historians and archivists for over a century. The 29 notebooks recording the proceeds of estates sold (‘erfhuizen’) and voluntary sales (‘willige veroepingen’) span the years 1597 to 1638, with the exception of a five-year gap from March 1630 to February 1635 and of other smaller gaps. Most of the auctions recorded were of miscellaneous household goods. A few, of special importance to art historians, were held to sell paintings or prints and drawings exclusively; still fewer were devoted to the sale of books. The goods, for the most part, belonged to deceased citizens of Amsterdam and were sold for the benefit of their heirs, usually at the request of the guardians of their children of minor age. Some auctions were held at the request of painters and engravers who wished, for one reason or another, to dispose of part of their stock. I analyzed the contents of 423 sales in my article ‘Auction Sales of Works of Art in Amsterdam (1597-1638)’ in Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 50 (2000), concentrating on the occupation, geographic origin, age and wealth of buyers.

The present fragmentary study concerns a group of buyers at auction, active chiefly from 1607 to 1613, who were all related by blood or marriage to a rich jeweler named Jan (or Hans) van Merlen (or van Merlen). After the death of Jan van Merlen in 1637, his extensive collection of paintings was put up at auction. Three of his five daughters and two of his three sons-in-law bought paintings, drawings and prints at the Van Merlen auction. Sales transactions within the extended Van Merlen family and probate inventories taken after the death of two of their members (in 1659 and 1681), give us an idea of their collecting interests in later years. This group of collectors is especially interesting because they are related by blood or marriage to several artists.

Jan van Merlen’s father, named Dirck van Merlen, was born in Grave around 1540. He migrated to Antwerp in his youth and became a citizen of the city in 1567. He practiced the liberal profession of attorney (‘procureur’) in the city. The next year he married Christina van Mansdale. Many years later, one of Jan van Merlen’s daughters, Constantia, would marry David van Mansdale who almost certainly belonged to the same prominent Antwerp family as his grandmother. Jan van Merlen, born in Breda around 1570, became a jeweler in Antwerp. It is not known in what year he migrated to Amsterdam; the move, in any case, must have taken place before December 1598, when he was betrothed in the Town Hall to Maria Sibreechs van Ghils. He was not the only member of the family to migrate to Amsterdam. On July 4, 1603, Jan’s brother, Jonas van Merlen, painter, was betrothed to Catelijne Gillis van Coninxloo, the daughter of the landscape painter Gillis van Coninxloo. He was 25 years of age; she was 24. Both were said to be from (i.e. born in) Antwerp. He was assisted with his brother Jan, she by her father Gillis van Coninxloo, who had himself migrated from Antwerp to Middelburg, then to Frankenthal, finally to settle in Amsterdam in 1595. It is not known in what year Jonas began to work as an apprentice for Gillis van Coninxloo, as he was said to be at the auction sale of his father-in-law’s paintings. There is evidence, however, that at some point he became a master in Amsterdam’s Guild of St. Luke, perhaps after his master’s death. In 1604, Jonas’s first child, named Dierick, was baptized in the ‘Oude kerk’ (Old Church).

The acquisitions of the Van Merlen family

At the sale of Gillis van Coninxloo’s paintings on March 1, 1607, Jonas bought paintings and materials for a total of 74 ‘gulden’ 7 ‘stivers’. Of the paintings with titles, five were landscapes and one represented dogs. He also bought various ground colors and prepared papers. In 1608, he sold his house on the Breestraat to Barber Jacobs, the mother of the painter Pieter Lastman. Soon after he took advantage of the Twelve-Year Truce in the war with Spain to return to Antwerp. In 1609, his daughter Constantia was baptized in Antwerp.

He did not prosper there. After his death, which took place some time between 1609 and 1614, his widow Catelijne, accompanied by her children Dierick and Constantia, came back to Amsterdam, where she died impoverished (apparently of the plague) on December 19, 1617. Besides her cousins Hans II and Isaac (sons of Gillis’s brother Hans van Coninxloo I), who were themselves painters and/or dealers, several artists or members of their families lent Catelijne money in the time of her need, including the wife of Abraham Vincx, the children of the painter Willem van den Bundel, and a ‘niece’ of the painter Jacques Savery. Most of her possessions were sold at auction on January 8,

1. I am grateful to Wout Spies for his careful research in the Amsterdam Gemeentearchief’s Doop-, Trouw-, and Begaafboekjes on the individuals cited in this present article. The results of this research appear in the genealogical charts. To save space, I will not provide references to genealogical evidence documented in the charts.
2. There are, in addition, two notebooks containing auction records of the period 1536-1537 which I have not consulted. The notebooks are preserved in the GAA, Weenskamer, inv. no. 5073-935 to 5073-962 (‘Erfhuizen’) and 5073-966 (‘Willige veroepinghe van imboel begonnen 22 july 1608’). Even though only this last notebook is entirely devoted to voluntary sales, it should be noted that many of the notebooks of ‘Erfhuizen’ (sales of estates) contain the records of voluntary sales made at the request of artists and other individuals wishing to dispose of goods.
3. From now on, I spell the name ‘Van Merlen’, even though a number of variant spellings occur in biographical and other records (Van Merle, Van Meerle, Van Maaerle, Van Maaerlen).

5. This emerged, after the death of Catelijne, from the payment of 1 gulden 10 stivers to ‘the servant of the guild’ to summon members to her burial and to pay for the pall (‘Reckening’ of 1 November 1618, cited below).
7. GAA, Weenskamer, inv. no. 5073942. Note: ‘guldens’ and ‘stivers’ were the common currency of the Netherlands before the 19th century: 1 ‘gulden’ contains 20 ‘stivers’.
10. N. de Roever, in his article titled ‘De Coninxloo’s’, Oud Holland 3 (1885), claimed on p. 39 that Jonas van Merlen had been dead ‘at least eight years’ in 1622, but he offered no evidence for that assertion. “Catarina van Koningloof”, who is surely identical with Catelijne van Coninxloo, was a witness at the baptism of Joannes van Merlen on 21 February 1610. It may be that her husband Jonas had already died by that date and that she had decided to return to live in Amsterdam.
11. GAA, Weenskamer, inv. no. 5073191, ‘Reckening’ drawn up by Hans van Coninxloo, dated 1 November 1618.

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The acquisitions of the Van Solt family

A good deal is known about the Van Solt family. Hans van Solt de Oude was an early investor in the V.O.C. (the Dutch East India Company, the ‘Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie’). A sum of 3,000 guilders was invested on his behalf by his nephew Lenard Sweerts de Jonge. In 1631, he was living on the Ooster Achterburgwal when he paid a wealth tax of 800 guilders, corresponding to assets estimated at 160,000 guilders. He was married to Elisabeth Rombouts, who died some time after 1608. He was buried on 20 December 1633. Archival records reveal the names of seven of his children: Catharina (born c. 1581), Hans van Solt de Jonge (born c. 1583), Susanna (born c. 1586), Elisabeth (born c. 1588), Willem (born c. 1593), David (year of birth unknown), and Daniel (year of birth unknown).

Hans van Solt de Jonge, was a silk cloth merchant, who supplied raw silk to ‘finishers’ (‘ziijdebeiders’). He was an important client of the Wisselbank. He was living in or near the Groene Burgwal in 1631 when he paid a tax of 90 guilders (on an assessed wealth of 18,000 guilders). His brother Willem van Solt, born in London, jointly owned with his father Hans van Solt de Oude a ‘compagnie’ with a capital of 11,000 Flemish pounds (66,000 guilders). After he died, in 1621 or 1622, his brother Hans van Solt de Jonge had to pay 3,800 Flemish pounds (22,800 guilders) to his daughter Elisabeth plus some jewellery as part of the settlement of Willem’s estate, of which he had been curator.

Hans van Solt de Jonge was first married to Maria de Wolf (the betrothal took place on 15 September 1607), with whom he had the following children: Joanna, born in 1609; Antonij, born in 1612; and
Chart 3: Genealogy Van Merlen – Van Rijksen.

I.

Dick van Merlen (born c. 1540)
X le Christina van Massadale

II.

Hans van Merlen (1570-1637)
† 1598
Maria Sijbrechts van Ghisl († 1637)

III.

Christina van Merlen (c. 1601-1669)
X 1621
Gerard van Rijksen (c. 1591-1659)

Maria van Merlen (1604-1685)
X bef. 1639
Gott van Langen († 1670)

Johannes van Merlen (1610-1679)

IV.

Jean van Rijksen (1623-1689)
X 1663
Sara Lestevens (1642-1678)

Christina van Rijksen (b. 1664)

Jean Daniel van Rijksen (b. 1665)

Gerard van Rijksen (b. 1667)

Jacob van Rijksen (b. 1668)

Note: Only information directly relevant to the text of the article is incorporated in this chart.
Paulus, born in 1616. On 30 January 1626, as we have already seen, Hans was again betrothed, this time to Agatha van Merlen, the daughter of Jan van Merlen. One of the eight children from this second marriage, who are listed in the genealogical charts, was a son named Jacobus, born in 1628. It is likely that Jacobus was the future painter, some of whose paintings turned up in the collection of Agatha van Merlen in 1659, as will be related in greater detail below.

Both Hans van Soldt de oude and his son Hans de jonge were frequent buyers at auction. It was almost certainly the father who bought four paintings for a total of 65 gulden 10 stuivers, plus prints for 13 stuivers at a sale organized at the request of Pieter Lodowycz on 24 and 25 February 1609. At the estate sale of Jacques Rombouts, exactly a month later, the father purchased one of the most expensive lots in the sale, a landscape for 102 gulden. In this case, we can be sure that it was he, and not his son, who did so because the clerk drew a line across the words “de jonge” that he had initially written following his name. At the Rombouts sale, Hans van Soldt de jonge bought an East Indian shield for 7 gulden 10 stuivers and a painting of an undescibed subject for 31 gulden. At the sale organized at the request of the art dealer Lucius Luce, the young Van Soldt bought a painting for 21 gulden. At the Raywert sale of 1612 already cited, he bought two paintings of unspecified subjects by Karel van Mander for 11 gulden and 7 gulden 10 stuivers respectively, a “tronie” (probably a portrait) for 20 gulden, a lion for 11 gulden and a “stuck” for 3 gulden 10 stuivers. At some time in the 1620s, he subscribed to a lottery in Amsterdam, on which occasion he appeared in the company of the well-known painters / dealers Barend van Someren (also of Flemish origin) and Michiel de Blon.

The acquisitions of Isaac Haack

Hans van Soldt de jonge’s sister, named Elisabeth, was betrothed to Isaac Haack – 26 years old, from Antwerp – on 13 November 1608. He owned a silk dyeing establishment on the Bloemgracht and worked either in partnership or at least in close cooperation with his father-in-law, Hans van Soldt de oude. Haack, who died in 1617, at the age of 35, was a frequent buyer in the period 1609 to 1614. At the sale organized at the request of Pieter Lodowycz, where, as we have seen, his father-in-law Hans van Soldt de oude had bought a number of lots, he purchased an painting for 11 gulden 5 stuivers. At the Leonard Rombouts sale, which both Hans van Soldt de oude and Hans van Soldt de jonge had made purchases, he bought a painting for 35 gulden. At the sale organized at the request of Lucas Luce in March 1610, it was probably he (under the name of “Haack”) who bought the most expensive lot, a painting for 232 gulden. At the 1611 sale of Burchman Claesz, (Dob) (another collector known to Karel van Mander), he bought a painting for 13 gulden as well as one lot of prints for 8 gulden (all the paintings referred to so far were of unspecified subjects). At the sale of the painter Crispiaen Collijn of 20 March 1612, Haack bought a painting of Neptunus for 3 gulden 15 stuivers; at the Cloes Raywert sale of 1612, he bought 15 lots – paintings, drawings and prints – for a total of 242 gulden 10 stuivers, including a painting on canvas by Cornelis van Haurlem (monogrammed ‘CC’ in the register of the sale), a water color by Hendrick Steenwijck (1 or II) for 40 gulden, two unattributed pen drawings of “tronies” for 50 gulden, and prints by Albrecht Dürer for 7 gulden 5 stuivers. Finally, at the sale held at the request of the painter Cornelis van der Voort on 7 April 1614, he bought a landscape for the high price of 59 gulden, a portrait of Jan van Leyden by (Maerten van) Heemskerck for 42 gulden, a “naked personage” for 7 gulden 10 stuivers, a still life of cabbages by Beuckelaer for the modest sum of 7 gulden, and four round “tronies” for 5 gulden. These were his last known purchases at the Orphan Chamber auctions. After he died, apparently insolvent, three years later, the works of art in his death inventory, were assessed by the painter Francois Luce, at the request of Haack’s widow, Elisabeth van Soldt, who had sought protection from his creditors from the court of Holland (“mandemante van beneficie van inventaris”). Hans van Soldt, father and son, declared themselves sureties for the widow. The total value of the works of art in the inventory came to 513 gulden 10 stuivers, which was quite a bit less than the estimated 666 gulden 10 stuivers corresponding to the total of his known purchases at auction. The discrepancy may be due to several causes, including sales effected before Haack’s death, works of art kept out of the inventory by Elisabeth van Soldt, and differences between auction prices and evaluations. With the possible exception of a “naked woman”, valued at 12 gulden, which may be identical with the “naked personage” he had bought for 7 gulden 10 stuivers at the sale of Cornelis van der Voort three years earlier, none of the paintings in the inventory can be matched with paintings Haack had purchased at auction.

The estate of Jan van Merlen

Jan van Merlen, both Hans van Soldt de oude and de jonge, and Isaac Haack apparently bought works of art at auction only in the period 1608 to 1613. Van Merlen lived until 1637 and Van Soldt de oude until 1633. Both Van Soldt’s and Van Merlen may have depended on dealers later in life to build up their extensive collections. Less than a month before the post-mortem auction of Van Merlen’s jewelry and works of art took place on 3 September 1637, Agatha van Merlen appeared before a notary in The Hague and named as her beneficiaries Johanna van Merlen, Christina van Merlen, wife of Geraert van Rijssen, and Maria, Constantia and Lucretia van Merlen, all children of the late Jan van Merlen. She declared also that she did not wish to be considered an heir of her deceased parents Jan van Merlen and Maria van Ghiis. It is not clear why Agatha desisted from her father’s inheritance. Had her husband Hans van Soldt de jonge become so wealthy that she did not need it? Yet the sequel of the story shows that Hans van Soldt...

32. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/944.
33. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073/944.
34. GAA, not. arch. Amsterdam, inv. no. 318. (not. N. Jacobs), f1m 6413, 27 December 1617. The inventory is cited by Bredius, without specification of its contents (Künstler-inventare, vol. 4, p. 1149).
35. The comparison of the sum total of works of art purchased at auction and of the assessed value of such works in Haack’s death inventory is of course based on the assumption that the individual designated only by the last name Haack who bought a painting for 232 gulden at the sale organized by Lucas Luce was actually Isaac Haack.
36. The only attributed painting was “groot stuk scheldijen van Momper”, evaluated at 36 gulden, which hung in the house where the dye works were located. But there was another landscape in the inventory (“teun weie”), valued at 72 gulden, which might be identical with the landscape Haack bought at the sale of Cornelis van der Voort for 56 gulden. The Momper painting may also be identical with one of four robberies (“toverij”, “afsetting”), valued between 30 and 35 gulden.
sold to his sister Maria three years later a number of paintings, some of which belonged to his own children – hardly the behavior of an individual so rich that he did not need to cash in on an inheritance. I suspect the opposite: that he had borrowed heavily from one or more of his sisters-in-law with the expectation of recompensing them from his wife’s share of the inheritance.

The sale of Jan van Mieris’s jewelry and precious stones on September 7 brought 25,130 guilden37, the sale of his works of art on September 30 and the following days (paintings, drawings and prints) brought 8,210 guilden, among the highest proceeds of any Orphan Chamber auction38. Of the entire prints, drawings, and prints (plus a few carved agate stones sale that were included in the jewelry part of the sale), the direct heirs of Hans van Mieris (the two unmarried daughters, Maria and Lucretia; Constantia, married to David van Mandsaedelen; Hans van Soldt and Geraert van Rijssen, the husbands of Agatha and Christina) bought for 1,047 guilden 9 stuivers. The purchases were as follows.

Maria: total 759 gulden 5 stuivers, consisting of 13 landscapes in 11 lots for 207 gulden 5 stuivers (including a “winter” by Stomme – Hendrick Avercamp – for 75 gulden), a siege for 38 gulden, a storm (at sea) for 2 gulden 15 stuivers, a banquet of the gods for 25 gulden 5 stuivers, a painting of Maria for 25 gulden, a tooth-puller for 10 gulden, 12 Emperors (of Rome) for 40 gulden 4 stuivers, Hercules for 15 gulden, Susanna by (Adriaen?) van Nieulandt for 30 gulden, two portraits for 160 gulden, an image of Christ for 31 gulden, 2 tondos of unspecified subjects for 12 gulden 10 stuivers, a ‘Massacre of the Innocents’ for 11 gulden, a pen drawing for 41 gulden, some prints by Albert Dürer for 10 gulden, and two framed drawings of unspecified subject for 16 gulden.

Lucretia: “A wet nurse with a child” for 5 gulden and a landscape for 6 gulden 5 stuivers, a total of only 11 gulden 5 stuivers.

Constantia: total 126 gulden 11 stuivers, consisting of eight landscapes (six small ones for 27 gulden and two others for 20 gulden and 2 gulden 1 stuiver); 5 still lifes (three vases of flowers for 10 gulden 10 stuivers, 5 gulden 51 stuivers, and 5 gulden 5 stuivers; a wreath of flowers for 20 gulden 11 stuivers; a fish banquet for 25 stuivers); three religious paintings (“Christus calling on those who are heavily laden to come to him” for 18 gulden 5 stuivers; a gilded image of Maria for 21 stuivers; and a “Peters-nacht” for 5 gulden 5 stuivers); 2 carved stones with three plates for 8 gulden 5 stuivers.

Hans van Soldt: a total of 130 gulden 5 stuivers, consisting of a painting of ‘Junco and Pallas’ for 100 gulden, a vase of flowers for 4 gulden 5 stuivers, an oyster still life for 10 gulden, and two drawings for 16 stuivers.

Geraert van Rijssen: a total of 47 gulden, consisting of an agate stone carved with a “tronic” for 11 gulden (probably for his jewelry trade), paintings by Albert Dürer for 25 gulden 10 stuivers, and “Venus and Idone” (Adonis?) for 10 gulden 10 stuivers. The expensive purchases made by Maria, who was the older of the two unmarried daughters, are particularly worthy of note for any one wishing to study the independent taste of a relatively wealthy 17th-century woman (inventories of married women do not provide this sort of information because the works of art they contain may have been purchased by their late husbands; even those of unmarried women may have been “contaminated” by inheritance.) The lots Maria bought, as we have seen, included many landscapes (such as the expensive winter scene by Avercamp); surprisingly few religious paintings (a “Susanna” and a “Massacre of the Innocents”, together with an image of Christ and one of Mary, these last two hardly the religious paintings we should expect in a Reformed – Calvinist – family39). It would have been appropriate for the older unmarried daughter to buy the family portraits. This may explain why the only portraits bought by any of Jan van Mieris’s heirs, were the pair that Maria obtained for the high sum of 160 gulden. They may well have been portraits of her parents, Jan van Mieris and Maria van Ghils, done by some unknown but presumably reputed master. The sophistication of Maria’s taste is reflected in the Dürer prints and the pen drawing for 41 gulden, a very high auction price for such a work (very few pen drawings beside those of Goltzius attained such prices). The taste of Constantia was clearly oriented toward still lifes (vases of flowers). The gilded image of the Virgin Mary that she bought for 21 gulden is also suggestive of a Roman Catholic or Lutheran religious inclination.

Given the fact that Hans van Soldt de jonge had been a frequent purchaser at auction in his youth, it is curious how little he bought at his father-in-law’s sale. After all, he was representing the interests of his wife Agatha, who did not buy any lots on her own. Yet, as we shall see presently, she is said to have made purchases of works of art out her own savings. The meagerness of his purchases may perhaps be explained by a difficult financial situation, as I have suggested earlier. The ‘Pallas and Juno’ bought by Hans van Soldt, however, was an expensive painting, which showed that he had not lost his earlier interest in art. The even more meager purchases by Geraert van Rijssen raise the same questions. That he bought drawings by Dürer for 25 gulden 10 stuivers, however, shows that he, too, had sophisticated tastes.

On 30 June 1639, Hans van Soldt appeared before the same notary in The Hague who had recorded his wife’s desistence two years earlier but this time in Amsterdam40. The document was drawn up in Hans van Soldt’s house situated on the Prinsengracht. Van Soldt declared that he had sold to his wife’s sister Maria van Mieris certain paintings, together with porcelain, a spread and six upholstered chairs. In addition to the paintings listed in the inventory, he still had in his house a painting by (Willem II van?) Nieulandt entitiled ‘Antiqua’ and two paintings out of Ovid with black gilded frames – a porridge eater (“papeter”) and a Pomona –, which he promised to hand over to Maria van Mieris at her request. He further specified that these items belonged to his children, procated by his wife Agatha van Mieris, which had been in part inherited from her father Jan van Mieris and in part had been bought from her own pin money (“met hère eigene potpenningen”), with his approval, for the sake of the children. Maria van Mieris also appeared before the notary, accompanied by her husband; Ers. Sr. Otto van Langen, and declared that she had received the paintings and other subjects specified in the inventory as security for 442 gulden 18 stuivers that her brother-in-law owed her. In fact, the prices of the works of art that she received were considerably in excess of the sum of 442 gulden 18 stuivers cited in the document. Not counting the three paintings that Hans van Soldt still had in his house, which were not valued, the total

37. One of the buyers of Van Mieris’s jewelry was named Jan le Thor (or Le Toor) II. He was the son of the jeweler Jan le Thor I, who was also an art dealer. The son was said to be “bij” (at the house of) Jan Jenz Uijf (the still life painter). His personality was Gerard van Rijssen, the husband of Christina van Mieris. Jan le Thor (1601-af. 1654) was married to Susanna Tielens, the daughter of Jan Tielens (or Tiels) and Sara Lestevenos (an aunt in the second or third degree of the individual of the same name who married Gerard’s son Joannes). Jan Tielens was a frequent buyer at Orphan Chamber auctions. It is interesting to note that Hans van Soldt de jonge stood surety (along with Diego Ferdinondo Pari) for the purchase of a ruby ring bought by Abraham Mesudaro “portugese”, who was probably a Portuguese Jew.

38. GAA, Weeskamer, inv. no. 5073962.

39. Christina, Agatha, and Constantia van Mieris were all betrothed “in de kerk”, as was usual for Reformed (Calvinist) couples. Only the betrothal of Hans van Soldt de jonge with his first wife Marjole de Wolff took place in the town hall (“de pui”).

40. GAA, not. arch. Amsterdam, inv. no. 992 (not Jan Bosch), film no. 4941.
came to 830 gulden 5 stuivers. It consisted of two original ("principael") vases of flowers for 150 gulden and 100 gulden respectively, two pairs of small "tronies" painted by "the son of Mr. Ritzerdt" for 20 gulden each, a peasant "kermesse" for 50 gulden, four landscapes by Willem Nieuwlandt (II ?) for 100 gulden, a pen drawing by Matham for 20 gulden, a painting of Joseph for 75 gulden, one of Rebecca for 25 gulden, a landscape by Savery for 10 gulden 5 stuivers, John the Baptist for 170 gulden, and 2 "tronies" done by Geldorp and (Adriaen?) van Nieuwlandt for 90 gulden. It is not known who Ritzerdt or his painter-son were (they were presumably relatives). The reference to objects that Agatha had inherited from her father suggests that not all the jewelry and works of art owned by the wealthy jeweler had been auctioned off in 1637. Some of them had gone directly to Agatha and her husband. This may also explain why Hans van Soldt de jonge had bought so few lots at the sale.

On 10 November 1640, Hans van Soldt de jonge transferred a number of paintings to his brother-in-law Geraert van Rijssen, including a landscape by Van den Hecke (4 gulden), two of unspecified subjects by the same Van den Hecke (10 gulden and 20 gulden respectively), and a painting of Acteon by (Adriaen?) van Nieuwlandt. None of these paintings can clearly be identified with lots that Van Soldt had bought at auction, either in his youth or at his father-in-law's sale in 1637. Who was "Van den Hecke"? Several painters by that name, or by variants thereof, are known, including Abraham van der Hecke of Alkmaar.

The estate of Hans van Soldt de jonge and Agatha van Merlen

I do not know the year of Hans van Soldt de jonge's death, except that it must have taken place between 1650, when he is last referred to, and Agatha's own death in 1659, at which time she was said to be his widow. The inventory of her possessions was taken in The Hague on 13-15 September 1659. Whatever may have been her husband's money troubles in the late 1630s, she seemed to have died far from destitute. Her pictures included a number of portraits of her extended family, such as "Sr. and Joffr. Haeck together with Sara van Soldt," "Sr. and Joffr. van Soldt de oude," "Sr. and Joffr. van Soldt standing, in one frame," three of "Heer ende Joffr. van Merlen" and the latter's mother, seven of the children of Sr. and Joffr. van Soldt, and three of Willem, Daniel and David van Soldt. They were the youngest sons of Hans van Soldt de oude and Elisabeth Rombouts. There was also a small portrait of greatgrandfather Van Merlen (presumably Dirck van Merlen of Antwerp) and a piece of calligraphy consisting of a poem by the old Van Soldt. (It is not known whether Hans van Soldt de oude published any of his poems). Finally, there were portraits of Theodore van Soldt and Paulus van Soldt de oude. Theodore (or Theodorus) was the son of Hans van Soldt de jonge and Agatha van Merlen, baptized on 22 June 1636; Paulus is probably the son of the same Van Soldt from his first wife Maria de Wolf, baptized in 1616, who was living in the Warmoesstraat in 1650 when he was betrothed to Catharina de Graever. Among

41. Bredius, Künstler-inventare, vol. 4, p. 1399. The inventory, drawn up in Amsterdam by notary G. Borsielaar, has not been located.

42. Bredius, Künstler-inventare, vol. 4, p. 1396-1398.

43. Wout Spies could not find any child baptized under the name of Sara van Soldt.
the attributed paintings were two by Jacobus van Soldt, one of them an Italian landscape. Little or nothing was known about the life of the painter until Wout Spies discovered his baptismal record, as one of the children of Hans van Soldt de jonge and Agatha van Merlen. There were also two seascapes by Willem van Diest, a landscape by Monper and Francken, and a print by Goltzius. The inventory was signed by Hans (Johannes), David, Elisabeth and Maria van Soldt, all children of Agatha van Merlen and Hans van Soldt. Two paintings seem to be identical with objects that Hans van Soldt had earlier sold to his sister-in-law Maria van Merlen: A ‘Pomona’ and a ‘papeterie with a satyr’ (the story out of Ovid’s Metamorphoses of the peasants who blew hot and cold on their porridge). From this I deduce that the sale had been fictitious (as I have suggested earlier) and that the paintings had remained in Hans van Soldt’s collection.

The collection of Jean van Rijssen

On 28 April 1681, the probate inventory of the jeweler Jean (Johannes) van Rijssen, the son of Geraert van Rijssen, widower of Sara Lestevenen, was drawn up in Amsterdam, at the request of Jan van Rijssen, the painter Daniel Schellincx, and Esayas Fournoy, all three guardians of Jean van Rijssen’s children appointed in his testament. Van Rijssen was living at the time of his death on the Nieuwe Hoogstraat, which may have been the house that his grandfather Jan van Merlen had once lived in. The inventory contained a number of family portraits, including a pair representing “grandfather van Meerlo and his wife” (presumably Jan van Merlen and his wife Maria van Ghils), portraits of Geraerd van Rijssen and his wife, a portrait of Jean Daniel van Rijssen (baptized on 28 October 1665) as a child, and two small portraits of “Wurnar and the late Jean van Rijssen”.

Wurnar was almost certainly the painter Wernard (or Warner) van Rijssen, who, according to Houbraken, was born in Zaltbommel around 1625, was a pupil of Cornelis van Poelenburg in 1646, and became a merchant in Spain in 1665 (ill. 1). It is not clear how he was related to Johannes van Rijssen. Wout Spies found the baptismal record of a daughter of “Wannenar van Rijssen” and Catharina van Elst, dated 16 March 1689, which may refer to the painter.

Jean van Rijssen’s inventory included, in addition to these family portraits, thirty-three paintings by Wernard van Rijssen. Most were landscapes, but there was also a painting of ‘Joseph and Mary’ and one of ‘Diana in her bath’, both unfinished (“onvolmaakt”), Worth mentioning, among the paintings by other masters, were a large picture by Lange Pier (Pieter Aertsen), a Winter by Willem Schellincx, a landscape by (Jacobus) van Soldt, a large drawing with the pen by Matham, a landscape by Jacob Esselens, and an Italian harbor by “Gomar” (Thomas?) Wijk.

Paintings in the possession of Daniel Schellincx

The painter Daniel Schellincx (1627-1701), one of the three guardians of Jean van Rijssen’s children, was married to Jean’s sister, Constantia, born in 1634. He was the brother of the better-known landscape painter Willem Schellincx (+1678), one of whose paintings was recorded in Jean van Rijssen’s collection. On 17 May 1698, Constantia and Daniel passed their testament. Among other bequests, they be-