The Art of Anthonie Palamedes (1602-1673)

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With an Attached Oeuvre Catalogue

By

Jochai Rosen

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2024
Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-0364-0472-2
ISBN (13): 978-1-0364-0472-7

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Acknowledgments

During the preparation of this book, I received the generous support of many individuals whom I would like to acknowledge.

Many thanks go to Marten Jan Bok; my ideas and thoughts were significantly refined during our many discussions. His help in deciphering documents from the Delft city archive quoted in this book was critical to my work. Heartfelt thanks to Marten Jan Bok and Kitty Kilian for their true friendship and support throughout the years.

Special thanks to Lizi van Volenhoven and Floris Löffler for making their house in Voorburg (The Hague) my home away from home and for keeping the tradition going despite our great loss. This book is dedicated in part in loving memory of Erik Löffler RIP; his sensitivity and care I will always miss.

Warm thanks go to Anna Bianco and Eddy Schavemaker for their lasting support and for sharing so many cups of coffee and joyful discussions of this book and my other projects.

I am also very grateful to Liesbeth De Belie, Sander Bijl, Martin Bijl, Albert Blankert RIP, Peter van den Brink, Jean Delaey, Eric Domela Nieuwenhuis, Astrid Ducke, Claudia Einecke, Jeroen Giltaij, Irene Groeneweg, David de Haan, Dagmar Hirschfelder, Tim Huisman, Annette Kanzenbach, Elmer Kolfin, Zoltan Kovacs, Peter Kristiansen, Rieke van Leeuwen, Machteld Löwensteyn, Maja Markovic, Gary Schwartz, Larry Silver, Eric Jan Sluijter, Nicolette Sluijter-Seijffert, Irina Sokolova, Annemarie Stefes, Cécile Tainturier and Bas Wielaard, all of who shared their knowledge with me.

I owe a special debt to the helpful and friendly employees of the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) at The Hague. The RKD is an oasis for the art historian specializing in Netherlandish art, and thanks to this wonderful institute, the city of The Hague became my second home.

I am also indebted to the many cooperative museum curators who contributed their expertise, and to the many art dealers and auctioneers who kindly sent me information and reproductions of the paintings they had handled.

Special thanks to the editor of this book Mr. Yoav Cohen and to the layout designer Ms. Sapir Haad.

This book is dedicated as always to my darlings Yael, Naomi and Amos.

Haifa, Israel
July 2022

Introduction

The painter Anthonie Palamedes spent his entire career in the city of Delft. This city gained importance in 1572 when William the Silent (1533-1584), the main leader of the Dutch Revolt, decided to settle there with his court. The assassination of Willem the Silent there in 1584 ended Delft's brief spell as the seat of government but did not prevent it from becoming one of the most thriving urban centers of The Netherlands during the Dutch Golden Age of the following century. The fact that Palamedes Stevens settled in the city with his family around 1606 meant that his offspring, Anthonie Palamedes in particular, were now able to enjoy the fruits of the new wave of economic and cultural flourishing that engulfed the city after the ceasefire of 1609. In the years that followed, Delft became a unique center of scientific curiosity, in which many scholars labored diligently to study the world around them and for that purpose began to use various optical instruments to further their quest. The most prominent of these scholars was no doubt Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723), who in his efforts to study insects and cells invented the modern microscope. This phenomenal scholarly interest in the tangible world also found unusual expression in the art created in Delft, which in turn reflected the exceptional curiosity of the city inhabitants. Artists developed various visual formulae that gave expression to this remarkable interest, wherein the constant factor was the extraordinary effort to depict the illusion of three-dimensional reality on the two-dimensional surface. Painters like Pieter de Hooch (1629-c.1679), Cornelis de Man (1621-1706), Pieter Janssens Elinga (1623-1682), Jacob Vrel (active between 1654 and 1662) and others depicted Delft interiors and courtyards in careful and painstakingly detailed projections. These were sometimes developed into illusionistic peepshow boxes, which unlike paintings served as an active means of entertainment for this curious public.[1] Delft was also the center of a particular branch of architectural painting that focused on church interiors, which also flourished due to the residents' unique interest in perspectival illusions of depth. Painters like Hendrick van Vliet (c.1612-1675), Emanuel de Witte (1617-1692) and Gerard Houckgeest (1600-1661) were among the leaders of this genre in Delft, and the latter even collaborated with Anthonie Palamedes, who at least on one occasion painted the staffage in his church interior (see cat. no. H28). The efforts to study three-dimensional reality and render it on two-dimensional paintings led some painters - among them Carel Fabritius (1622-1654) and Johannes Vermeer (1632-

[1] See for example Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House*, c. 1655-1660, oil and egg on wood, 58×88×60.5 cm, London, The National Gallery and Pieter Janssens Elinga, *Perspective Box*, c. 1650, o/p, 84×82×42 cm, The Hague, Museum Bredius.

1675) - to use the camera obscura, the forerunner of the camera, to bring about a revolution in art.[2]

One of the most wonderful public buildings in 17th-century Delft was no doubt the municipal Surgeon's Guildhall. The multi-room house, which served as the meeting place of the city surgeons and doctors, was designed and decorated as a "Wunderkammer" or a Cabinet of Curiosities. It included a wonderful assembly of ethnographical and natural specimens and a grandiose artistic program. Among the most striking works of art in this program were the large anatomy lesson portraits, among them *The Anatomy Lesson of Willem van der Meer* (fig. 68, illustrated in chapter 4) painted in Delft in 1617 by Pieter (1596-1623) and Michiel van Mierevelt (1566-1641), while the other was Cornelis de Man's *The Anatomy Lesson of Cornelis van 's Gravensande* of 1681.[3]

It is now clear that Anthonie Palamedes had a central role in the design and execution of the guildhall's decoration program, although much of it was destroyed and thus lost for us.[4] We are still familiar with his two painted doors for the surgeon's instruments cabinet depicting two unique group portraits of Delft doctors and surgeons during operations on living patients (cat. nos. 83 and 84) and his unusual portraits of deformed dead fetuses (cat. nos. 85 and 86). In other words Anthonie Palamedes, as well, took an active part in Delft's unusual phenomena of pseudo-scientific painting.

Anthonie Palamedes was a figure painter, and portraits were his constant source of income throughout the years, which he bolstered by constantly painting staffage for other painters. However, what makes him unique is his genre paintings, in which he incorporated figures dressed in contemporary costumes, which were known at the time as "Modern Figures".[5] His style and choice of genre topics were unique in Delft. While most of the painters mentioned above painted in a style that can be identified as that of the Delft school - one that emphasized the illusion of space - his was rather in line with the style and topics that evolved in the second decade of the century in Haarlem and then further developed in Amsterdam during the 1620s. Anthonie Palamedes shared this style with a few colleagues who specialized in painting merry companies as well as brothel and guardroom scenes. Together they constituted a distinct group of painters who were active in the Netherlands during the middle of the 17th century. This group includes Pieter Codde (1599-1678), Willem Duyster (1599-1635), Simon Kick (1603-1652), Pieter Quast (1606-1647) and Pieter Potter (1597-1652) from Amsterdam; Jacob Duck (c.1600-1667) from Utrecht; and Jan Olis (c.1610-1676), who was active mainly in Dordrecht. All were born around the turn of the century, and although living and working in different cities, they specialized in a similar range of subjects and painted in a similar style. These were mostly figure painters who specialized in genre painting but occasionally, and when the need arose, painted other subjects too.

The similarity in style and subject matter has led, over the years, to confusion between these masters and to constant cross-misattributions. In this group, Anthonie Palamedes has by far the largest known oeuvre, and his paintings are endowed with a certain

[2] For Carel Fabritius, see *A View of Delft, with a Musical Instrument Seller's Stall*, 1652, London, o/c, 15.5×31.7 cm, London, The National Gallery. For Johannes Vermeer, see *View of Delft*, c. 1660-1661, o/c, 96.5×115.7 cm, The Hague, Muritshuis; *The Girl with the Red Hat*, c. 1665-1666, o/c, 23.2×18.1 cm, and *Girl with a Flute*, c. 1665-1675, o/c, 20×17.8 cm, both Washington (DC), The National Gallery of Art.

For literature on this topic, see Delasaute, J. L. 1998, "The Camera Obscura and Painting in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries", *Vermeer Studies*, *Studies in the History of Art* 55, edited by I. Gaskell and M. Jonker, pp. 110-123; Fink, D. A. 1971, "Vermeer's Use of the Camera Obscura – A Comparative Study", *The Art Bulletin* 53, pp. 493-505; Mills, A. A. 1998, "Vermeer and the Camera Obscura: Some Practical Considerations", *Leonardo* 31, no. 3, pp. 213-218; Schwartz, H. 1966, "Vermeer and the Camera Obscura", *Pantheon* 24, pp. 170-180 and Seymour, Ch. 1964, "Dark Chamber and Light-Filled Room: Vermeer and the Camera Obscura", *The Art Bulletin* 46, pp. 323-331.

[3] Cornelis de Man, *The Anatomy Lesson of Cornelis van's Gravensande*, 1681, o/c, 173×212 cm, Delft, Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof.

[4] On the decoration program of the Delft Surgeons' Guildhall, see Rosen 2021B.

[5] See [chapter 2], p. 12, note 50.

grace and loveliness that sets him conspicuously apart. His genre paintings are among the most delicate and pleasing by any 17th-century Dutch master, and they are indeed "Sweetly Painted and Highly Finished", as characterized by an anonymous auctioneer in the early 19th century.[6]

Anthonie Palamedes was a successful and highly regarded painter throughout his career, and up to the last years of his life he was also economically stable.[7] He was constantly nominated to be a dean of the guild of painters, painted portraits of the leading families of Delft, regularly received commissions for other topics, and was steadily selling paintings on the open market. His known oeuvre of original works includes about 330 paintings, and there are hundreds of contemporary copies after them. This is strikingly different from his city fellowman, Johannes Vermeer, whose known oeuvre includes about 33 paintings and hardly any copies. Unlike his phenomenal colleague, Anthonie Palamedes is a typical 17th-century Dutch master, and studying him can give us a better picture of painting in the Dutch Golden Age. Therefore, the main goal of this book will be to present the first overall critical study of Anthonie Palamedes' paintings: his iconography, style, and the chronology of his development. It will, finally, enable us to come to conclusions as to his unique and lasting contribution.

This study is based on a critical oeuvre catalogue and a laborious firsthand study of many of Anthonie Palamedes' paintings. Chapter 1 will be dedicated to a short biography. According to the dates on some of his paintings, Palamedes launched his career in the early 1630s, with paintings of garden parties and merry companies. Therefore, the discussion of his work begins in chapter 2 with these works and follows with other civic genre themes. Chapter 3 follows the discussion of his genre paintings and is dedicated to his guardroom scenes, which he began painting in the late 1640s. Palamedes painted portraits throughout his career, and they are the subject of chapter 4. The following chapter 5 is dedicated to the staffage he contributed to the paintings of other painters, to his students, and to the many followers he had, who occasionally adopted his topics and style.

[6] Quoted from the catalogue entry of the Mosenau sale, London, Squibb, 28-3-1803, lot 28.

[7] In his thorough socio-economic research on the Delft school of painters, Montias classified Palamedes in the group of the most successful. See Montias 1982, pp. 133-134, 181.

Chapter 1

Biography

The earliest childhood memories of Anthonie Palamedes must have been wonderful. He was baptized in the small town of Leith in Scotland, only three kilometers away from Edinburgh Castle. Leith is situated on the estuary of the Water-of-Leith and for centuries served as the major port of Edinburgh; as such, it played an important role in Scottish history. His father, Palamedes Stevens, was summoned from Delft to work as a lapidarist in the service of King James VI of Scotland. Young Anthonie was born into the comfortable circumstances of court life and must have enjoyed a wonderful childhood in a vibrant port town against the backdrop of breathtaking scenery. He was still a young child when the family returned to Delft. Therefore, he must have also cherished in his heart the memory of the journey across the channel and settling in Delft. It seems that these early experiences instilled in Anthonie Palamedes a sense of self-esteem, and it also seems that from their resettlement in Delft and onwards, the Palamedes family were highly respected by their townspeople.

Anthonie Palamedes' parents were Palamedes Willemsz. Stevens (died 1651) and Maeijken van Naerssen (alias Marie Arsene, died 1649). The evidence suggests that they were both born in Flanders to Calvinist families and therefore had to immigrate to Delft sometime in the late 16th century.[8] It seems as if Anthonie Palamedes' parents met and maybe were even betrothed in Delft since they got married in Leith on January 6, 1601. This suggests that they probably arrived in Leith in late 1600 and that they must have been quite young, in their early twenties at most. This also suggests that Palamedes Stevens must have been an outstanding lapidarist, to merit such a prestigious summoning at such an early age.

A contemporary portrait of King James VI of Scotland (fig. 1) depicts him lavishly bejeweled. Jewelry and precious stones were important in all

Figure 1 After John de Critz, *James VI and I Wearing the Jewel called the Three Brothers in his Hat*, c. 1605

[8] Havard 1878, p. 363. Since the couple was married in 1601, it is not likely that they immigrated together to Delft, nor is it certain that Maeijken van Naerssen was indeed Flemish.

royal and ecclesiastical courts, but it seems that they were especially important to King James VI. This means that a lapidarist must have enjoyed an important role in his court. The couple had their first son, Guilliaem (1601-1668), baptized only three months after their wedding! This premature birth also supports the idea that the couple arrived in Leith already betrothed. Anthonie Palamedes, their second son, was baptized in Leith on November 9, 1602.[9] On April 5, 1603, the king left for London, where he became King James I of England, but the couple stayed in Lieth for at least two more years since on August 6, 1605, they baptized there a third son, named Palamedes Palamedesz.[10]

We do not know when and under what circumstances the couple returned to Delft, but we know for certain that it was before March 21, 1611, since on that day Palamedes Stevens is recorded as a witness in the city.[11] Therefore, we can roughly surmise that sometime between 1606 and 1610, Palamedes Stevens and Maeijken van Naerssen returned to Delft with their three young boys and settled in a house on Vlamingstraet. This canal is located right in the center of Delft and not far from the Nieuwe Kerk. This is the same street depicted in Johannes Vermeer's famous painting known as 'The Little Street' (fig. 2). Anthonie and his younger brother Palamedes lived in this house at least until they both got married in 1630.

The resettlement of the Palamedes family in Delft almost coincided with one of the key events in the history of the young Dutch republic: the signing of the Twelve Years Truce in 1609 between the United Provinces and Spain. The signing of this truce brought about the so-called Dutch Golden Age, and the city of Delft, like so many other cities in the Netherlands, began to experience an

Figure 2 Johannes Vermeer, *View of Houses in Delft, Known as 'The Little Street'*, c. 1658

unprecedented period of growth and prosperity. The growth and prosperity of the Delft art scene was a significant part of this phenomenon. It was right at this moment, sometime around 1615 or maybe earlier, that Anthonie Palamedes began his apprenticeship as a painter. The most outstanding Delft artist at the beginning of the 17th century was the portraitist Michiel van Mierevelt (1566-1641), and although we have no proof of the fact, it is assumed that Anthonie Palamedes served as an apprentice in his studio.[12] If Anthonie Palamedes was indeed an apprentice in the studio of Van Mierevelt, he might have assisted with the latter's famous *The Anatomy Lesson of Willem van der Meer*, which was completed in 1617 (fig. 68, illustrated in chapter 4); he was certainly familiar with it, as it was later hanging in the Oude Kerk in Delft.[13] In any

[9] Westhoff 2018, p. 188.

[10] Palamedes Stevens and Maeijken van Naerssen had two additional children: a daughter by the name of Susanna, who died in Delft in 1654, and a baby boy by the name of Gabriel, who died three days after his birth in 1618. See Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 6, p. 5 and Westhoff 2018, p. 189.

[11] Archief Delft, Delft: Oud notarieel archief Delft (toegangsnummer 161), 1560: 13 (21-3-1611).

[12] Havard 1878, p. 366 and Havard 1880, p. 39. Some sources (Wegener 2017, p. 166) claim that he was also the student of Hans Jordaens I, and others (Wurzbach 1906-1910, vol. 2, p. 298) argue that he studied with Hendrick Pot in Haarlem; however, I found no support for these claims, nor do they sound plausible to me.

[13] Houtzager and Jonker 2002, pp. 51-52.

case, on December 6, 1621, Anthonie Palamedes registered as a master painter in the Delft guild of Saint Luke.[14] It is clear that Anthonie Palamedes traveled often within the Netherlands, especially to Amsterdam, but despite his adventures as a child, it does not seem that he traveled abroad again; rather, he settled into a comfortable bourgeois life in Delft.

Anthonie's younger brother, Palamedes Palamedesz., became a painter too and quickly made a reputation for himself as an expert in battle scenes. Since the two brothers lived together in their parents' house, and since there is no record of Palamedes Palamedesz. studying with any master, Havard made the plausible assumption that Palamedes studied with Anthonie. He pointed out the fact that a person had to bring proof that he had trained for at least six years with a master to be listed in the Guild of Saint Luke,[15] and that this explains the interval from 1621, when Anthonie became a master, to 1627, when Palamedes became one.[16] Indeed, on October 25, 1627, Palamedes Palamedesz. registered as a master in the Delft Guild of Saint Luke.[17]

If one checks early modern sources, such as Van Bleijswijck, Houbraken and others on the Palamedes brothers, one gets the impression that Palamedes Palamedesz. was the more significant painter of the two. He is usually allotted a glorifying paragraph, while his brother is only mentioned marginally. This is of course quite different from our understanding of their status in relation to each other: today it is clear that Anthony was by far the more respected and successful of the two. One might speculate that Palamedes Palamedesz.'s early death contributed to his glorification - and this is true to some extent - but there are actually three other more significant reasons why Palamedes Palamedesz. was highly regarded by early modern authors. The first one has

Figure 3 Paulus Pontius after Anthony van Dyck, *Portrait of Palamedes Palamedesz.*

to do with Dirck van Bleijswijk. When the Delft lawyer wrote his *Description of the City of Delft* (Beschryvinge der Stadt Delft) in 1667, Palamedes Palamedesz. had long been deceased. One can imagine that he consulted his brother Anthonie, who was still alive at the time, before writing a flattering paragraph that addressed Anthonie only marginally. This paragraph became the source of all evil, so to speak, as it was then copied by other biographers, beginning with Houbraken, who maintained the same attitude that hailed Palamedes Palamedesz. and marginalized Anthonie.[18] The second reason has to do with the portrait of Palamedes Palamedesz. printed by Paulus Pontius after a (now lost) drawing by Anthony van Dyck (fig. 3). This print and the association with Van Dyck contributed significantly to immortalizing Palamedes Palamedesz. Havard made the reasonable assumption that Palamedes Palamedesz. traveled to Antwerp around 1631, where he met with Anthony van Dyck, who then

[14] The original document is quoted twice in Havard 1878, p. 364 and Havard 1880, p. 13. See also Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 1, p. 18.

[15] See Montias 1982, p. 133 and Van der Veen 1996, p. 126.

[16] Havard 1878, pp. 364-365.

[17] The original document is quoted twice in Havard 1878, p. 363 and Havard 1880, pp. 10-11. See also Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 1, p. 24.

[18] Havard 1880, pp. 5-8.

took his portrait.[19] It is not farfetched to assume that Palamedes Palamedesz. traveled to Antwerp, since we know that his battle scenes were very popular there. It is known that when the Delft art dealer Abraham de Cooge met with a prospective buyer in Antwerp, he offered him a battle scene by Palamedes Palamedesz. for the impressive sum of one hundred and fifty guilders.[20] It is, therefore, reasonable to believe that part of the glory attained by Palamedes Palamedesz. stems duly from the reputation he gained during his lifetime.

On February 1, 1630, Palamedes Palamedesz. married Maria Ewoutsdr. van Sgravenzande Storm,[21] and two months later, on March 30, 1630, Anthonie married Anna Joosten van Hoorendijk;[22] both weddings took place in Delft. The dates and proximity of these two weddings raise at least three questions that are still unanswered: the first, why did Anthonie wait nine years from the day he became a master until he married, while usually masters married shortly after they registered in a guild? The second, why did Anthonie, the older of the two, marry second? And finally, why did he marry so soon after his younger brother? One gets the impression that Anthonie waited for some reason for his younger brother to marry first before he allowed himself to do the same. Be that as it may, Palamedes Palamedesz. lived only eight years after his wedding and was buried on March 28, 1638, in Delft. He was but 33 years old.[23]

Despite the loss of his younger brother, who seems to have been very close to him, the 1630s mark the beginning of Anthonie Palamedes' prosperity. His earliest dated paintings are from 1632, and judging from the style of his undated paintings, we have no reason to believe that he painted independently

cat. no. 1A

before that year. Therefore, a clear picture emerges according to which Anthonie Palamedes became a licensed master painter in 1621, married in 1630, settled his shop shortly after the wedding and only then began painting independently. This is, by all means, an unusual sequence of events, since 17th-century Dutch painters usually registered as masters, married and began producing their paintings within a year or so. Be that as it may, four years later, in 1634, Anthonie Palamedes created a self-portrait wherein he depicts himself seated in his studio in front of the easel and contemplating while smoking a pipe. Almost a century later, the artist Tako Hajo Jelgersma created a drawing after this painting as a design for prints (cat. no. 1A). Unfortunately, the follow-ups made after this drawing (see cat. nos. 1B-1D) did not contribute to altering the contemporary distorted appreciation of the brothers in relation to each other.

The 1630s was also the decade in which Anthonie Palamedes raised a family: the eldest son of Anthonie Palamedes and Anna van Hoorendijk was the bookkeeper Palamedes [Anthonisz. Palamedes]. He

[19] Havard 1878, p. 369.

[20] Van der Veen 1996, p. 129.

[21] The original document is quoted in Havard 1880, pp. 23-24. The couple apparently lived in the Voorstraet, where Palamedes Palamedesz. died in 1638; see Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 6, p. 8.

[22] The original document is quoted in Havard 1880, pp. 24-26. See also Havard 1878, p. 368 and Westhoff 2018, p. 189.

[23] See Havard 1878, p. 363; Havard 1880, p. 9; Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 6, p. 8 and Westhoff 2018, p. 189.

Figure 4 Jan van der Heijden, *The Oude Kerk on the Oude Delft at Delft*, 1675

was baptized in Delft on February 10, 1632, and in 1664 moved to Amsterdam, where he married Diewertje Hettens and where he died in 1705.[24] Anthonie Palamedes and Anna van Hoorendijk had at least two other children: Joost [Anthonisz. Palamedes], born around 1635, and Marietje [Maria Anthonisdr. Palamedes], born around 1640, but as of yet we know almost nothing of their whereabouts.[25]

It was also during the 1630s that his career skyrocketed. He received many commissions for portraits and staffage, but also sold numerous genre paintings on the open market. His professional achievements immediately brought recognition and in 1635, only five years after embarking on an independent career, he was already chosen to be a *hoofdman* in the Delft Guild of Saint Luke. Economic success was not long in coming either and found expression in the purchase and furnishing of two houses. On April 27, 1638, Anthonie Palamedes bought a large house on the south side of the Burgwal (also known as Broerhuislaan) in Delft for 3400 guilders.[26] This is the largest known sum of money to be paid for a house by any Delft master, and it was in this house that he lived for the rest of his life. On January 23, 1643, he bought an adjacent smaller house for 900 guilders.[27] These houses stood in a prestigious spot in the city center, just one block away from the city hall, Grote Markt and Nieuwe Kerk, and only two blocks from the Oude Delft (fig. 4), the canal where the elite of Delft resided.

The signing of the Peace of Münster in 1648 brought formal recognition to the Dutch Republic and should have brought with it further success, but things did not turn out this way for neither Anthonie Palamedes nor his country. On April 16, 1651, Anna van Hoorendijk, the first wife of Anthonie Palamedes, died in Delft and was buried in the Nieuwe Kerk a day later.[28] It was only two years after the loss of his mother and only a few

[24] De Roever 1883, p. 165.

[25] On March 24, 1646, we find a record of the burial of a child of Anthonie Palamedes, who is recorded as living on the Turfmarkt (The Burgwal meets the Turfmarkt at its southwestern end). This may be an additional child or a baby but also one of the aforementioned two children. See Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 6, p. 25.

[26] Bredius 1890, p. 308.

[27] Delft NA 1691, Notary W. de Langue. On October 11, 1653, Anthonie Palamedes sold this house for the sum of 700 guilders. See Havard 1878, p. 370. Havard 1880, p. 30, brings the date of October 11, 1658, for this transaction which seems to me to be a clerical error.

[28] Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 6, p. 26.

months after the loss of his father that Anthonie found himself also a widower, with three children.[29]

It is not clear why, but it was only two years later, on September 15, 1653, that Anthonie Palamedes had the notary Govert Rota draw the inventory of the contents of the house he shared with his deceased wife (Appendix II).[30] It was the same Govert Rota who two days later escorted Anthonie Palamedes as a witness, together with a man by the name of Sixtus van Sysbergh, when the painter appeared before the magistrates of the Delft chamber of orphans (Weeskamer) and listed his three children, bringing his two houses on the Burgwal as a guarantee.[31]

The contents of the house included two portraits, probably pendants, of Anthonie Palamedes and his deceased wife, as well as a copy after a merry company by Palamedes ("1 copie van modern beelden nae Pallamedes"). There were also paintings by Jan van Goyen (1596-1656), Leonard Bramer (1596-1674) and Joachim de Vries (c.1610-1670).

Anthonie Palamedes' circumstances must have worsened when on the morning of Monday October 12, 1654, a huge explosion rocked the city of Delft. It later became clear that a gunpowder arsenal known as 'The Secret of Holland' (*'t Secreet van Hollandt*), where 30 tons of gunpowder were installed in barrels, had ignited. It is said that the explosion was heard as far as the island of Texel. An entire quarter of the city was erased, and the explosion created an enormous crater where a huge pool of water appeared. Dozens of people were killed, hundreds were injured and hundreds of others were left homeless. This traumatic event became known as 'The Delft Thunderclap' (*De Delftse Donderslag*).[32] The painter Egbert van der Poel (1621-1664) miraculously survived the blast but lost his daughter and most likely other family members. In the following years, he made a name for himself by depicting views of Delft in the aftermath of the explosion (fig. 5). The impact on Delft and its people was devastating. We do not know if Anthonie Palamedes was hurt or if he lost relatives, but he certainly lost acquaintances and colleagues, the most famous of them being the painter Carel Fabritius (1622-1654).

We know that it took the city about twenty years to fully recover from 'The Delft Thunderclap', but there are many signs that clearly indicate that normal life was soon restored. On December 14, 1658, Anthonie Palamedes was engaged to a woman by the name of Aagje Woedewart (1621-1695), who was twenty-two years his junior.[33] He married her in Delft later that month[34] and they had a son named Arthur, the only known offspring of this marriage, born in 1661.[35]

Ten years later, on November 10, 1671, we hear of the birth of Anthonie's [first?] grandson, the son of Palamedes Anthonisz. in Amsterdam, who was named Anthonie, after him.[36] The painter was probably very happy with his grandson, and it is clear why he wanted to spend the holidays with his son, daughter-in-law, and grandson in the winter of 1673. It was during this visit that Anthonie Palamedes passed away in Amsterdam, on November 27, 1673, at the age of 71.[37] He was buried in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam on December 1, 1673.[38]

[29] Marie Arsene, the mother of Anthonie Palamedes, was buried in Delft on May 2, 1649. See Archief Delft, Delft: DTB-registers (toegangsnummer 14), 39: 191 (2-5-1649). His father, Palamedes Stevens, died in Delft on February 7, 1651. See Westhoff 2018, p. 188.

[30] DCA, notary G. Rota, Notarial Archive 1984, deposition 205. Quoted by Bredius 1890, pp. 312-313 and Van der Veen 1996, p. 127, note 14.

[31] Anthonie Palamedes stated that the houses are located on the south side of Broerhuislaan, west of the property of Jan Gerrits van der Graff. See Havard 1878, p. 370. Havard 1880, pp. 29-30, brings the date of this transaction as 17-11-1655, but the ages of the children as stated do not accord with this date.

[32] See Logan 1996 and Meijer Drees 2016.

[33] Westhoff 2018, p. 189.

[34] Aagje (Agatha, Aagie) Woedewart or Woodward was the daughter of the English trader Arthur Woodwart and Catharina (Trijntgen) Albrechtsdr. [Catharina Woedewart]. She and Anthonie Palamedes were married on December 29, 1658; see Westhoff 2018, p. 189.

[35] Havard 1880, p. 32.

[36] De Roever 1883, p. 164. On April 29, 1727, a woman by the name of Anna Palamedes, wife of Dirk Hoogeboom living in the Leidsche poort in Amsterdam, was buried in the Zuiderkerk in Amsterdam. De Roever speculated that she was also the daughter of Palamedes Palamedesz II. See De Roever 1883, p. 165.

[37] De Roever 1883, p. 174 and Westhoff 2018, p. 188.

[38] De Roever 1883, p. 164.

Figure 5 Egbert van der Poel, *A View of Delft after the Explosion of 1654*, 1654

On January 21, 1674, in the presence of Agje Woedewart, widow of Anthonie Palamedes, the notary Joan van Ophoven drew an inventory list of the contents of the house they shared on the Burgwal (see Appendix III).[39] Two days later, she was escorted by the same notary and the faïencier Bastiaen van Cwyck when she appeared before the magistrates of the Delft chamber of orphans (Weeskamer) and listed her 13-year-old son, Arthur.[40]

On February 10, 1674, a little bit more than a month after the death of Anthonie Palamedes, the painter Leonard Bramer was buried in Delft,[41] and Johannes Vermeer was buried there on December 16, 1675. The death of these three masters marks the end of the Golden Age of Delft painting.[42]

The inventory list made in 1653 to the estate of Anthonie Palamedes revealed that he was in a good financial state. However, we know that the first Anglo-Dutch war, which took place between 1652 and 1654, was followed by economic stagnation[43] and that Delft suffered even further following the disastrous Thunderclap of October 1654. Unsurprisingly, at some point during the 1650s, many artists in Delft began to experience financial difficulties.[44] The Second Anglo-Dutch war, which took place between 1664 and 1667, did not pose an immediate danger to the population of the Netherlands, as it took place mainly at sea, but it certainly created a further economic strain on the country and its inhabitants. Indeed, we find the first sign of financial difficulties met by Anthonie Palamedes in 1668, when he is recorded as receiving financial support from the city magistrates.[45] The invasion of The Netherlands by the armies of Louis XIV and his allies in 1672, which later became known as 'The Disaster Year' (*Het rampjaar*), shuttered the Dutch economy completely, along with its painters.[46] The inventory drawn to the estate of Anthonie Palamedes in 1674 revealed that he and his wife continued to live in comfort, but it also showed that he died leaving debts behind him - the same fate that befell Vermeer two years later.

[39] Bredius 1890, pp. 308-312.

[40] Havard 1878, p. 370 and Havard 1880, pp. 30-31.

[41] Obreen 1877-1890, vol. 6, p. 26.

[42] Christiaen van Couwenbergh died in 1667 and other significant painters left the city earlier.

[43] Bok 2001B, p. 202.

[44] Bok 2001B, p. 210.

[45] Lopende Memoriaelen van de Stad Delft 1668 fol. 196 verso (29-12-1668). Quoted by Wichmann 1925, p. 69 and Montias 1982, p. 189, note e: "… The city treasurer's payment of 25 gulden and 9 stuivers to Anthony Palamedes 'as an extraordinary subsidy' is the only other known example [apart from 100 gulden awarded to Bramer in 1669] of Delft municipal support for an artist that did not call for delivery of a work of art."

[46] Bok 2001B, p. 210.

Chapter 2

Civic Genre Paintings

The civic genre paintings by Anthonie Palamedes discussed in this chapter can be divided into two groups: the first depicting merry gatherings and the second depicting figures in a landscape. The latter group is in fact negligible, and the chapter is mostly about the merry company formula and its derivatives.

The visual formula known as the merry company constitutes a central part of Anthonie Palamedes' oeuvre, and he had a major role in its development and widespread popularity in 17th-century Holland. Anthonie Palamedes launched his independent career in the early 1630s by painting garden parties (cat. no. 196) and merry companies celebrating in middle-class interiors (cat. nos. 106, 111, and 116). He then continued to paint merry companies throughout his career, and they will serve as the focus of this chapter.

The Garden Party

The immediate source for the Dutch merry company must be the outdoor merry gatherings of elegant youths that appeared in Amsterdam early in the 17th century in the works of David Vinckboons (c.1576-c.1632). These outdoor merry companies can be seen as a descendant of the medieval notion of the 'love garden', which also found expression in visual art in the theme of *The Garden of Love*.[47] In his merry outdoor scenes, Vinckboons was clearly a follower of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, but in his paintings the figures were not only members of the middle classes; they were now larger in scale and thus more important.[48] Vinckboons's *buitenpartijen* were probably the type of pictures to which van Mander referred when he spoke of landscapes with modern figures.[49] The term "modern figures" was henceforth often used in the 17th century to describe merry companies of young men and women dressed in contemporary fashion.[50]

These *buitenpartijen* first appear in prints at the turn of the century and in paintings only a decade later.[51] A typical outdoor merry company by Vinckboons is found in a print done after his design by Claes Jansz. Visscher in 1608 (fig. 6).[52] It depicts a group of men and women merrymaking in a garden. Most of them are gathered around a table on the right, conversing, making music, playing games,

[47] Brown 1984, p. 179; Sutton 1984, p. xxviii and Kolfin 2005, pp. 103-104.

[48] Sutton 1984, p. xxix.

[49] Sutton 1984, p. xxix. This term was first used by Karel van Mander in *Het Schilderboek* (1604, fol. 229v) to describe David Vinckboons' landscapes occupied by figures in contemporary dress ("Landtschappen, met Moderne beeldekens").

[50] Slive 1995, p. 123; Franits 2004, pp. 2, 32-33; Salomon 2004, p. 67 and Kolfin 2005, pp. 99-100, 112.

[51] One of the earliest examples of an outdoor merry company by David Vinckboons appeared in 1602 on a title page. See Anonymous after David Vinckboons, *Title Illustration of "The New Pleasure Garden"*, 1602, engraving, The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek. For his painted outdoor merry companies, see David Vinckboons, *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1610, o/p, 41×68 cm, Vienna, Akademie der bildenden Künste; *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1619, o/c, 93×71 cm, sale, London, Christie's, 5-7-2007, lot 64; *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1622, o/p, 40×65 cm, sale, London, Christie's, 29-10-1999, lot 28.

[52] Kolfin 2005, p. 59.

Figure 6 Claes Jansz. Visscher after David Vinckboons, *The Prodigal Son Spending his Inheritance*, 1608

cat. no. 196

eating and drinking. A couple is dancing in the left foreground to the music performed by an ensemble of two professional musicians seated behind them. The company is attended by two waiters: one of them is seen behind the table pouring wine from a jug, while the other is seen in the middle rushing toward the table holding a plate with fruits. This gathering clearly takes place in the garden of an inn, since an innkeeper marks the drinks consumed by the merrymakers on a board in the right foreground. Their attitude - groping, hugging and kissing each other - and the fact that the company is divided into pairs points to the amorous content of this print. The peacock chasing a peahen on the hedge in the middle distance completes this scene of courting. In the back, the prodigal son is driven away from the inn by the prostitutes, while one of them, seen in a window above, is pouring the contents of a chamber pot on his head. Vinckboons depicts contemporary merry makers, but his presentation is still based on two traditional topics: *The Garden of Love* and *The Prodigal Son*. Nevertheless, he was "…a central figure in the evolution and popularization of the 'merry company' scenes."[53]

David Vinckboons was followed in Haarlem by Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630),[54] whose outdoor merry companies were enacted by smaller groups of young people with clothing that clearly identifies them as contemporary Dutch. These were depicted from up close and thus looked much more intimate than the companies of Vinckboons.[55] The Dutch outdoor merry company scene was developed and refined in Haarlem by Willem Buytewech during his stay there between 1612 and 1617,[56] and while Buytwech seems to have been the inventor of many motifs, it was the prolific Dirck Hals who helped to popularize them.[57]

One of Anthonie Palamedes' paintings dated to 1632 is indeed a *Garden Party* (cat. no. 196). It depicts a company of elegantly dressed men and women, conversing and music-making in a garden. They are situated around a table laden with luxurious foods and drinks, which include a swan pie. In the

[53] Brown 1984, pp. 177-178.

[54] Sutton 1984, p. xxix.

[55] See for example Esaias van de Velde, *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1614, o/p, 28.5×40 cm, The Hague, Mauritshuis and *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1624, o/p, 47×67 cm, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum (with Bartholomeus van Bassen).

[56] Brown 1984, pp. 177-178 and Kolfin 2005, pp. 104-105. See Willem Buytewech, *Merry Company Outdoors*, c. 1616-1617, o/c, 71.5×94 cm, private collection on permanent loan to Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.

[57] Sutton 1984, p. xxxii and Kolfin 2005, p. 105. See for example Dirck Hals, *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1621, o/c, 34×61 cm, Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts; *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1623, o/p, 25×39 cm, sale, Paris, Christie's, 23-6-2009, lot 28 and *Merry Company Outdoors*, 1627, o/c, 78×137 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

cat. no. 195

foreground, a dog is crouched on the ground and gnaws on a bone, while another is seated nearby. On the right, the composition is opened to a distant view of the garden, which includes a fountain and a pavilion. A similar composition and details is found in the *Banquet in a Park* from Berlin (cat. no. 195). Here, too, a company of men and women are located around a table, which is set parallel to the picture plane and against the background of a thick forest; some conversing figures are standing on the left side while the rest are seated on the right; and a cooler with drinks is located in the lower right corner, with a servant pouring wine from a pewter jug. This company is also enjoying luxurious refreshments, which include a peacock pie.

These paintings by Anthonie Palamedes have roots in the outdoor merry companies of David Vinckboons from the first decade of the century, such as the one from Vienna (fig. 7). Here the painter depicted a group of enamored young men and women celebrating in the thick forest of a castle garden. The immediate source for Palamedes, though, must have been paintings such as Esaias van de Velde's *Merry Company in a Garden* of 1615 (fig. 8), which depicts a much smaller group seated around a table, with a cooler in the foreground and a view to the garden on the right.

Along with *Merry Company on a Terrace* (cat. no. 197), we are only familiar with three paintings by Anthonie Palamedes that depict a Garden Party. This is a small output, if compared with the dozens of such paintings produced by Dirck Hals (1591-1656) in Haarlem, suggesting that perhaps the Delft audience did not find this visual formula particularly appealing. It is also interesting to note that these three garden parties also share a unique signature whereby the name is indicated in capital letters, a signature never used again by Anthonie Palamedes in any other painting (see Appendix I). This short-lived wandering into the formula of the garden party and the unusual signature seems to be typical of a painter in the early stages of his career who is still trying to establish both his specialty as well as his signature.

Figure 7 David Vinckboons, *Outdoor Merry Company*, 1610

Figure 8 Esaias van de Velde, *Merry Company in a Garden*, 1615

The Merry Company

Art was fairly thriving in Holland even before the outbreak of the Golden Age in the 17th century. Utrecht, the bishopric city of Holland with its governing elite, had a thriving art scene in the late 16th century and the early 17th century. It saw the flowering of the Dutch Caravaggisti, who created bold genre and history paintings based on half-length figures depicted on large formats and under extreme Chiaroscuro. Haarlem, the old industrial city with its thriving textile manufacturing scene, also had a blooming art scene in the late 16th century, led by painters such as Maerten van Heemskerk (1498-1574), Karel van Mander (1548-1606), Hendrick Golzius (1558-1617) and Cornelis van Haarlem (1562-1638). In the early 17th century, it was home to Frans Hals (c.1582-1666) and his followers, and it was under his spell that painters such as Willem Buytewech (c.1591-1624), Esaias van de Velde and Dirk Hals popularized genre paintings depicting merry social gatherings in the late 1610s and early 1620s. These were mostly small paintings depicting gatherings of figures in full length and dressed in contemporary fashion, known to contemporaries as a *Vrolijk gezelschap*, i. e., a Merry Company.

It was during the period between 1616 and 1622 that Willem Buytewech began painting merry gatherings of Dutch youngsters indoors. This idea revolutionized the theme and detached it from the long-lasting pictorial tradition of the Bruegelesque outdoors scene crowded by a multitude of celebrants, which was continued to some extent by the outdoor merry company. The introduction of the merry celebrants into the interior of a middle-class house turned the scene immediately into a more intimate and seemingly civilized gathering.[58] The productivity

Figure 9 Pieter Codde, *Merry Company*, 1631

of Dirck Hals and his role as an assimilator proved to be even more important in the case of the indoor merry company.[59]

The merry company was adopted by Pieter Codde in Amsterdam, who then refined it. The participants in his merry companies are more elegant, and since the paintings are monochrome - as part of the new fashion of the Tonal Phase - they seem much more reserved and respectable. A typical example would be his *Merry Company* from Montreal, dated 1631 (fig. 9). This painting shows a gathering of young men and women in a middle-class interior, busy conversing and drinking. This painting is done in an unusual format of an elongated horizontal rectangle. The figures are arranged in a horizontal strip, which is further emphasized by the wainscoting behind. This painting is characterized by an unbalanced composition, with the group located slightly to the right of center and with the left side less crowded. The room is lit from a window on the upper left side, which creates lovely chiaroscuro effects. These are

[58] Sutton 1984, p. xxx and xxxii; Kolfin 2005, p. 107. For Willem Buytewech's indoor merry companies, see: Willem Buytewech, *Merry Company*, o/c, 49.3×68 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boymans van Beuningen; *Merry Company*, o/c, 52×62 cm, The Hague, Museum Bredius; *Merry Company*, o/c, 72.6×65.4 cm, Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts and *Merry Company*, o/c, 65×81 cm, Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.

[59] Kolfin 2005, pp. 107-110. Dirck Hals painted numerous indoor merry companies from the early 1620s and well into the 1640s. For some examples, see Dirck Hals, *Merry Company*, 1629, o/p, 50×64 cm, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst; *Merry Company*, 1623, o/p, 43×47 cm, St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum; *Merry Company*, 1623, o/p, 22.6×31.1 cm, sale, London, Christie's, 29-4-2014, lot 31; *Merry Company*, 1626, o/p, 27×38 cm, London, National Gallery; *Merry Company*, 1629, o/p, 72×95 cm, Dublin, National Gallery (with Dirck van Delen).

all traits typical of Pieter Codde's merry companies of the late 1620s and early 1630s.[60]

Starting at about 1632, Anthonie Palamedes began to paint similar merry companies, as can be seen in this specimen from the Mauritshuis, dated to that year (cat. no. 106). It depicts a company of young men and women feasting in the living room of a middle-class house. In the right foreground, a company is busy music-making and singing; in the middle, a man smokes a pipe and gazes at the viewer, while the rest of the figures converse around a table laden with food in the background. In the left foreground, a servant boy is seen from behind as he pours wine from a pewter jug. The cello-playing man and the lute-playing woman are similar to their counterparts in the *Garden Party* (cat. no. 196). As in the *Merry Company* by Codde (fig. 9), the painting is executed on an elongated horizontal rectangular panel. The figures are depicted within a horizontal strip, which is further emphasized by the interior decoration, in this case a pair of paintings hanging on the back wall. This painting, too, is characterized by an unbalanced composition, as the group is located on the right side with the left side less crowded. The room is lit from a window on the upper left side, which creates lovely chiaroscuro effects. Though the similarities with the merry company of Codde are striking, the motif of the pouring servant boy - who is emphatically separated from the group of celebrants - is an invention of Palamedes. He is found in a very similar painting with a *Merry Company in a Room* dated 1633 (cat. no. 108), which also depicts a similar buffet and a large earthenware jug standing on the floor nearby. This painting's focus is a seated man playing the lute, who turns to look at the viewer. A *Musical Company* by Anthonie Palamedes dated 1632 (cat. no. 116) reveals similar characteristics. Here the painter focuses the viewer's attention on a standing man holding a lute, with the chiaroscuro effect enhanced by hiding the window and using a fireplace as a repoussoir. A similar effect - with a slightly sharper repoussoir - is found in a painting representing an *Elegant Company Gaming and Drinking* (cat. no. 112).

[60] Rosen 2020, pp. 134-139.

cat. no. 106

cat. no. 108

cat. no. 116

cat. no. 112

Figure 10 Jacob van Velsen, *Merry Company*, 1631

cat. no. 149

This group of merry companies includes also the specimens from Helsinki dated 1632 (cat. no. 111), from Harvard dated 1633 (cat. no. 113), from Vienna dated 1634 (cat. no. 155) and an undated *Merry Company*, previously with the dealer Alan Jacobs (cat. no. 109). The merry companies by Anthonie Palamedes following the formula practiced by Pieter Codde in Amsterdam are all dated or dateable between 1632 and 1634.

This visual formula might have been brought first to Delft by Jacob van Velsen, whose earliest *Merry Company* is dated 1631 (fig. 10). However, this one and two other known merry companies by Van Velsen are slightly different from those by Codde and Palamedes, as they depict smaller groups of celebrants in a room stripped of any decoration.[61] Jacob van Velsen registered in the Delft guild of painters in 1625 and must have been acquainted with Anthonie Palamedes. He was a successful businessman and owned a large art collection.[62] He had many business dealings in Amsterdam and Utrecht, and his frequent trips obviously influenced his art.[63] His financial standing improved even further after his marriage to a rich woman,[64] and altogether he did not have a great deal of motivation to paint, a fact which might explain his small oeuvre.[65]

This group of merry companies by Anthonie Palamedes depicts an assemblage of well-dressed middle-class men and women merrymaking in a living room. The celebrants are usually gathered around a table and busy playing music, singing, dancing, playing board games, conversing, smoking, eating and drinking wine. The room is usually furnished with a buffet, on top of which stand glasses and cups, while a cooler rests on the floor beside it. There is almost always a young page standing nearby and pouring wine from a pewter jug to a glass. This figure became the signature motif in Anthonie Palamedes' merry companies throughout his career.[66] These merry companies are all painted on an elongated horizontal rectangular panel with the figures organized in a horizontal strip, and they are usually typified by an unbalanced composition and a yellowish tone.

Immediately after this first wave of merry companies in Codde's style, Palamedes began to develop his own unique merry companies. After establishing his brand of merry companies, he more or less repeated the same formula into the 1640s and until his death. These merry companies were based on

[61] See also Jacob van Velsen, *Merry Company*, 1633, o/p, 37.5×56 cm, St. Petersburg, the State Hermitage Museum and *Merry Company*, o/p, 35×44 cm, Wilhelm Gumprecht collection, Berlin, 1918.

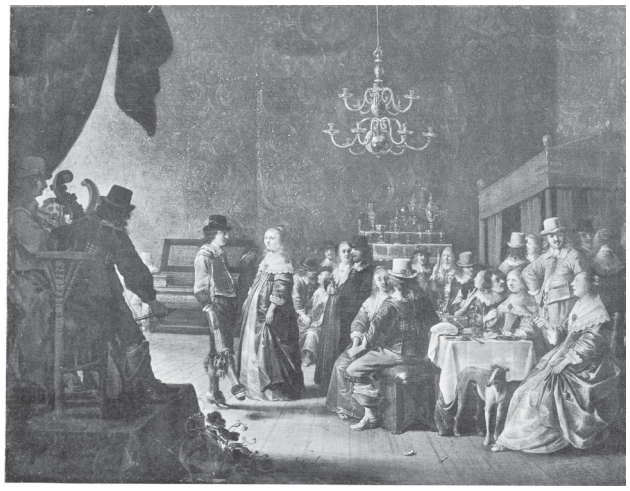
[62] Bredius 1915-1922, vol. 3, pp. 875-886.

[63] Plomp 1996, pp. 26-28 and Playter 1972, p. 74, note 4 and p. 142.

[64] Montias 1982, p. 177.

[65] My current checklist of his paintings includes only eighteen and some of them are doubtless painted by him.

[66] Lammertse 1998, p. 138.



cat. no. 151

cat. no. 139

a pool of unique sub-themes, motifs and details. Some of these were also used for other interior themes and will be detailed later in this chapter.

One of the most striking sub-themes used by Anthonie Palamedes is that of the dancing party: it is actually a merry company with a couple dancing in the middle of a room to the tune of a band of professional musicians, with the rest of the company engaged in conversation and the consumption of refreshments. This gathering takes place in a spacious room hung with curtains and with a striking brass chandelier. A typical example of this sub-theme is a *Merry Company* datable to the early 1650s (cat. no. 149). It depicts a couple dancing in the middle of a spacious room with a band of musicians seated in the back. A company of men and women is seen in the right foreground in front of a canopied bed. A servant is washing cups by a buffet in the left foreground with a greyhound standing right next to him. The room is illuminated by a strong beam of light coming from the left, and the silhouette of the group around the buffet serves as an emphatic repoussoir.[67] Another example of this sub-theme (cat. no. 151) reveals how Anthonie Palamedes enlivened his paintings by rearranging a similar set of details. Here the couple is again located in the middle of the room and the other celebrants are again in the

cat. no. 145

right foreground; however, the band of musicians is now moved to the left foreground to serve as yet another striking repoussoir, the buffet is pushed to the back and the greyhound is moved to the right foreground. The band of musicians includes one of Anthonie Palamedes' most favorite motifs: the viol player seen from the back. This figural motif finds a central place in Palamedes' *Merry Company* from Karlsruhe (cat. no. 139) and again in a *Merry Company* depicting *The Five Senses* (cat. no. 145). In these two examples, the viol player is seated but in others, such as in the *Merry Company* from Nottingham (cat. no. 147), he is standing.[68]

[67] For other examples of this sub-theme, see cat. nos. 148, 150, and B52.

[68] For a merry company with a viol player seen from the back, either sitting or standing, see also cat. nos. 140, 141, 143, 144, A12 and B41.

cat. no. 147

cat. no. 180

Another motif favored by Palamedes is that of toasting with a glass, as can be seen in a *Merry Company* dateable to the late 1640s (cat. no. 180). Here a vivacious company of men and women is seen celebrating in the right foreground. This group is dominated by the figure of a seated man who raises a flute glass full of wine in his right hand. This man also lifts his right leg and holds his hat in his left hand, which is stretched in the opposite direction. Overall, he looks as if he is dancing while seated in his chair, which excites the adjacent dog. In other cases, as in a *Merry Company* from Frankfurt (cat. no. 182), the toasting man is standing and seen from the back, but he still dominates the composition. Here, too, the man is toasting the glass of wine with his right hand and holding his hat with the other. Here we again find that Anthonie Palamedes uses the same motifs but arranges them slightly differently to create diversity.[69] This is also achieved by the use of a different glass - here a Berkemeier.

Of the motifs that Palamedes repeated in numerous paintings, a particularly noticeable one is the dog reclining on the floor and gnawing on a bone. It is found for example in a *Merry Company* (cat. no. 120), where the dog is reclining on the floor in the lower right foreground. His paws are stretched in front of him and are resting on a bone, which it is gnawing on. This motif appears in two merry companies illustrated above (cat. no. 145 and 163) as well as a few others.[70] It further appears in countless paintings by Anthonie Palamedes, including a *Family Portrait* (cat. no. 69), *A Christening Party* (cat. no. 193), a *Garden Party* (cat. no. 196) and guardroom scenes (cat. nos. 207, 221 and 274). It was obviously used by him as both a compositional as well as an animating implement. Since this reclining dog is not the exact same dog nor is it in the exact same posture, it is clear that Palamedes drew this detail out of habit and not after a model. That is to say, it is quite probable that at the beginning of his career he had a drawing containing such a dog, but after a while, he no longer needed it and drew this detail from memory.

The few merry companies brought above as examples can all be grouped around a dominant subtheme and/or motif, but most merry companies by Anthonie Palamedes defy this sort of classification. They are merely lovely and witty rearrangements of a set of limited details presented within similar interiors. The merry company by Anthonie Palamedes depicts a group of young men and women merrymaking in an interior. The participants are all in their twenties, and these merry gatherings

[69] For merry companies with the figure of a toasting man, see cat. nos. 127, 177, 179 and 181.

[70] See cat. nos. 122, 123, 140, 167 and 181.

cat. no. 182

cat. no. 120

will never include children or elderly people. These youngsters are always dressed in the latest fashion. They are usually gathered around a table in a living room of a typical 17th-century Dutch house fitted with a wooden floor and a large fireplace. They are always engaged in a conversation and otherwise in making music and singing. Some members of the company are playing instruments such as a lute, violin or viol; others are singing from music books or music sheets, while another might be keeping the beat with his hand. The merrymakers might also be engaged in a game of cards or backgammon. The company is attended by a servant boy who is usually depicted as emphatically separated from the celebrants, on the other side of the room. He is usually standing near a buffet stocked with drink vessels and with a cooler nearby. Palamedes favored the motif of the servant boy pouring wine from a pewter pitcher into a glass. Members of the company might be depicted holding glasses, toasting with them or drinking, and the table might be laden with food, but the celebrants are never shown actually eating. The room is usually furnished with a canopied bed and a cupboard, and the walls hung with paintings, prints and a geographic map. The room is sometimes also decorated with items such as a statuette, ceramic bowls, dishes etc. The company is often accompanied by a dog, in many cases reclining and gnawing on a bone, and there will almost always be a central figure, or even a few, seen from the back.

One of the key questions regarding the merry companies by Anthonie Palamedes is whether they depict decent people gathering in the living room of a house or dubious encounters in a brothel. This is a question that is difficult to answer, partly because some of the nuances familiar to 17th-century spectators are foreign to us and partly because it seems as if painters like Anthonie Palamedes tended from the outset to maintain a deliberate ambiguity regarding this distinction. Since these paintings depict imaginary situations rather than actual gatherings, there was no intention in the first place to make a clear distinction between these two forms of encounter, and it certainly was not important for Palamedes. Nevertheless, in some cases, certain happenings and details make it clear that a painting depicts a brothel or an inn, making it a brothel scene. A gathering takes place in a brothel when the figure of the old procuress is in attendance and/or when a maidservant is seen marking the drinks on a slate. We can find both these motifs in a painting depicting *The Prodigal Son in the Brothel* (cat. no. 103), where we also see

cat. no. 103

cat. no. 188A

one of the prostitutes pickpocketing the client - yet another sign that the gathering takes place in a brothel.[71] Regardless, and unlike some of his close colleagues such as Jacob Duck[72] and Pieter Codde,[73] this type of rude painting is very rare in Anthonie Palamedes' oeuvre.

Poor Parents, Rich Children

Anthonie Palamedas' oeuvre includes several genre themes that stand out both in their rarity and in the significant number of exemplars he created of them. The next two sub-chapters will be devoted to such themes, the first of them dealing with the one known as *Poor Parents, Rich Children*. Anthonie Palamedes returned to this theme on a few occasions, and although his rendering of it is known today only through copies, this fact nevertheless seems to suggest that it was quite popular among his clientele.

One of these copies (cat. no. 188A), depicts a poor elderly couple entering a house through a door on the left. The man is clearly begging for money and the woman supplicating. They implore a well-dressed middle-class man who stands in the middle of the room, his wife seated next to him, while their little son greets the elderly couple by taking his hat off and smiling at them. The rest of the figures and details actually function as a typical merry company by Palamedes. The painting depicts an impoverished old couple coming to the house of their well-to-do son and begging for money, and the son rejecting their call claiming he has to take care of his own family first. The subject was known as *Poor Parents, Rich Children*, a topic that has existed in Dutch art at least since 1590, its earliest known example being a print by Bartholomeus Dolendo entitled *The Ungrateful Children* dated to that year (fig. 11). Here we find the elderly couple entering a courtyard through a portal on the left and the woman imploring the young man, their son, standing in the middle. He, in return, makes a gesture of indifferent rejection, as his wife stands immediately behind him. They are surrounded by their sons and daughters, their youngest son standing close to his father. "The position of the youngest son is important. He is cast as a schoolboy, with ink-pot and pen-holder, and unlike his rude father he has removed his hat for his grandparents - a motif that was to become a standard element in the iconography of the scene… The composition is

[71] For other Brothel Scenes, see cat. nos. 97-102, 104-105 and B9-B10. For Brothel Scenes in the guise of a *Woman at her Toilet,* see cat. nos. 95 and 96.

[72] For the 17th-century Dutch Brothel Scene in general and for those by Jacob Duck in particular, see Rosen 2017, pp. 49-75.

[73] For the dubious capacity of 17th-century Dutch merry companies and for those by Pieter Codde in particular, see Rosen 2020, pp. 121-138.

Figure 11 Bartholomeus Dolendo, *The Ungrateful Children*, 1590

closed off on the right by the splendid entrance to the son's house. Before it, dressed only in trousers, stands a Herculean figure armed with a club, who is clearly not a member of the family.

Above the figures the same text is repeated from left to right in French, German and Dutch. In English translation it reads:

Honor thy father and thy mother,
That thy days on earth may be long.
For so hath the Lord commanded.
No power to thy wife or children give,
Lest later ye come to perish…

Under the scene the same four-verse poem is repeated three times horizontally, with French at the top, German in the middle and Dutch at the bottom.

O children dear, give us aught,
For the wedding gift we gave,
Give us from thy surfeit
Our confused hearts to lave.

Parents dear, we cannot, no,
For food and clothes are dear.
And children cost so much to feed,
We cannot go short for thee.
By the measure are you kept
That you meted out before.
As you did to your parents,
So shall we do to thee.

Who fails to keep this doctrine,
But dominates instead (as here we see),
Dishonoring and sorrowing parents,
As a lesson will I strike dead.

The first two verses reproduce the conversation between the father and son. The parents gave their son a marriage settlement, but now the son refuses to give them anything in return, with the excuse that he needs all his money for his family, although according to his father he has plenty to spare. He, then, is breaking the fifth commandment, but nor are the parents entirely blameless, for they should have taken to heart the wisdom of Ecclesiasticus 33:23…

'Give not thy son and wife, thy brother and friend, power over thee while thou livest, and give not thy goods to another: lest it repent thee, and thou intreat for the same again. As long as thou livest and hast breath in thee, give not thyself over to any. For better it is that thy children should seek to thee, than that thou shouldest stand to their courtesy. In all thy works keep to thyself the preeminence; leave not a stain in thine honour. At the time when thou shalt end thy days, and finish thy life, distribute thine inheritance.'

The third verse is directed at the viewer. It is not altogether clear who is speaking. It is apparently the collective voice of all children, addressing all parents: as you treated your parents, so shall we, your children, treat you. The last verse is spoken by the man with the club. He declares that he will strike dead all who break the fifth commandment as an example to others. He thus personifies the wrath of God…"[74]

Palamedes' painting is clearly a descendant of this print, which also inspired a painting by Aert Pietersz. dated 1599 (fig. 12).[75] Here two women are separated on the right, and Van Thiel speculated that they might be the unmarried daughters of the elderly couple.[76] Considering the gesture made by the son and the way the little boy takes his hat off,

[74] Van Thiel 1987, pp. 101-102.
[75] Van Thiel 1987, pp. 100, 107-108.
[76] Van Thiel 1987, p. 106.