Ann Jensen Adams

The Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie and the Subject of Dutch Art History: The Market, the Scholar, and National Identity

"To acquire a photograph of a van der Meer, I have done crazy things",[1] wrote French critic Théophile Thoré in 1866. When they invented the photograph in the 1820s and 30s, little did Daguerre and his contemporaries envision that their creation would later turn an art lover into a raving lunatic. But one can appreciate Thoré's excitement when we compare black and white photographs of Vermeer's *View of Delft* or his *Woman at a Virginal* with the reproductive prints with which Thoré illustrated his series of groundbreaking articles on the artist (figs. 1, 2).[2] In 1893, Bernard Berenson enthused over the photograph, equating the invention's significance for connoisseurship with the importance of the printing press for the study of texts.[3]

The photograph, and the systems by which photographic collections have been ordered, have importantly shaped the history of our field. The earliest photographs reproduced line better than tone, so the first art book to reproduce paintings by means of photographs, William Stirling-Maxwell's *Annals of the Artists of Spain* (1848), actually published calotypes of engravings after paintings. The first fully illustrated *catalogue raisonné* photographically reproduced Rembrandt's etchings (1853).[4] Shortly there-

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[1] W. Bürger [pseud. Théophile Thoré], "Van der Meer de Delft", in: *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 21 (1866), p. 299: "[P]our obtenir une photographie de tel van der Meer, j'ai fait des folies".

[2] Located respectively, Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Mauritshuis, The Hague; The National Gallery, London.

[3] "Printing itself scarcely could have had a greater effect on the study of the classics than photography is beginning to have on the study of the Old Masters", from: Bernard Berenson, "Isochromatic Photography and Venetian Pic-

tures", in: *The Nation* (November 1893), pp. 346–347; see also Wolfgang M. Freitag, "Early Uses of Photography in the History of Art", in: *Art Journal*, 39/2 (1979/80), pp. 117–123.

[4] William Stirling-Maxwell, *Annals of the artists of Spain*, London 1848, see Trevor Fawcett, "Graphic versus photographic in the nineteenth-century reproduction", in: *Art History*, 9/2 (June 1986), pp. 185–212, here pp. 188–189. Charles Blanc, *L'oeuvre de Rembrandt reproduit par la photographie*, Paris 1853.

1   *Maxime Lalanne after Jan Vermeer, View of Delft from the South, in: Gazette des Beaux-Arts, vol. 21 (1866), between pp. 298 and 299*

2   *Jan Vermeer, View of Delft from the South, Koninklijk Kabinet von Schilderijen, Mauritshius, The Hague*

after, art lovers began to pour over photographs of paintings themselves. The minutes of the meeting on 26 January 1863 of the recently founded Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap, Amsterdam, recorded that members examined "a few photographs after old and new paintings".[5] By 1901, W. Martin Conway recommended that connoisseurs form photographic collections for study, and envisioned in some detail a comprehensive institutional collection of photographs that would create, in the words of his page headings, "A Museum of Photographs" that recorded the history of art.[6]

Photographs figured prominently in the blockbuster exhibition of Rembrandt's work mounted in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in 1898. By the end of the nineteenth century, Rembrandt—both the man and his work—had become an icon of Dutch national identity. It seemed fully appropriate, then, to celebrate the coronation of Holland's new queen, Wilhelmina, with an exhibition of the works of the "King of Dutch Artists".[7] Pulling together all of the etchings and 350 drawings was not so difficult. Although the city of Amsterdam owned only four paintings by the master, the organizers brought together an astonishing 124 paintings, including the *Nightwatch*, which had to be shoehorned in through a window. But if this was to be an exhibition suitable for a queen, comprehensiveness was necessary: the organizers' goal was to display every known work by the artist. Given that by 1898 Rembrandt's oeuvre stood at over 500 paintings, 124 paintings was a pathetic percentage.[8] Not to be deterred, the organizers represented the remaining 400 paintings—on the walls of the museum—with photographic reproductions hung in a separate room

The two themes that undergirded the exhibition, national identity and comprehensiveness, also lay behind the parliamentary act of 1929 that established the Dutch national photographic archive: the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie in The Hague—fondly known to historians of Dutch art by its acronym, the RKD. Its founding purpose was to assemble an archive of photographs of all paintings ever produced by Dutch artists, in order to, in the words of the foundational Parliamentary act, "illustrate Dutch artistic history". Today the website of the RKD asserts that it is the largest centre in the world for art-historical visual material, with "more than six million photographs, reproductions, and slides of paintings, drawings, sculpture, graphic arts, and design" covering the Middle Ages to the present.[9] At the core of the collection lie the photographs of old master Dutch paintings of the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, some 700,000 strong.[10]

I first began using this resource in the late 1970s while preparing my PhD dissertation, a monograph and *catalogue raisonné* of the seventeenth-century Dutch painter Thomas de Keyser. The RKD was an incredible boon: photographs of almost all works by the artist (and comparative works by his predecessors, contemporaries, and followers) were located in the same building, a handsome nineteenth-century structure across the street from the Mauritshuis Museum (fig. 3). In contrast, a friend of mine, who was at the same time preparing a monograph on the seventeenth-century Italian painter Francesco Albani, found herself dashing all over Europe to consult photographs of works by her painter: to the Villani archive in Bologna to examine photographs of works produced or located in Bologna, to the Bibliotheca Hertziana and Gabinetto Fotografico Nazionale in Rome to examine photographs of works produced or located in Rome, to the Böhm archive in Venice, the Louvre in Paris, and the Witt Library in London.

[5] "Eenige photographiën naar oude en nieuwe schilderijen", cited by Mattie Boom, "Een geschiedenis van het gebruik en verzamelen van foto's in de negentiende eeuw", in: *Voor Nederland. De verzamelingen van het Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap in her Rijksmusem bewaard* (Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 10), Baarn 1995, pp. 173–294, here p. 277.

[6] Sir W. Martin Conway, *The Domain of Art*, London 1901, pp. 129–137.

[7] Pieter J. J. van Thiel, "De Rembrandt-tentoonstelling van 1898", in: *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, 40/1 (1992), pp. 11–93.

[8] Wilhelm Bode with the assistance of Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *Rembrandt. Beschreibendes Verzeichnis seiner Gemälde, mit den [595] heliographischen Nachbildungen. Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Kunst*, 8 vols., Paris 1897–1905. For a fine analysis of early Rembrandt connoisseurship see Catherine B. Scallen, *Rembrandt, reputation, and the practice of connoisseurship*, Amsterdam 2004.

[9] http://english.rkd.nl/Collections, accessed 19 August 2010.

[10] http://english.rkd.nl/Collections/Visual_Documentation/ Early_Netherlandish_Painting/default_Early_ Netherlandish_Painting, accessed 19 August 2010.

3   Study room, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, former location Korte Vijverberg, The Hague, 1965

Of course I, too, wore thin my Eurailpass viewing originals. But my work at the RKD tracing iconography and style was comfortable and civilized—tea was even brought to the drawings archive at 3:30 every afternoon. So while I worked in comfort, the system by which the photographs were ordered struck me as strange. Photographs of drawings were on the first floor, separated from photographs of paintings on the ground floor. Portraits were located in the Beelddocumentatie Portreticonografie (Iconografisch Bureau), a completely different department in the back of the building. Moreover— what puzzled me most about the ordering system—within each of these departments, boxes were filed on the shelves by iconographic subject, the number of whose subdivisions are staggering. Each genre— history, history painting, landscape, still-lives, genre painting, and portraiture—were again broken down, either by time period, or by a set of 'stylistic schools' that sometimes included separate categories for artists who are not always considered major figures today. (These individual categories appear to have been derived from a nineteenth-century taste for painters influenced by Italian art, and for the fine handling of paint, to which I return, below). The works of my artist, Thomas de Keyser, were— and still are—spread over boxes in no less than twelve different subject areas (fig. 4).

De Keyser was primarily a portrait painter. I soon discovered that many of his portraits were to be found not among the boxes of photographs of paintings but in another department entirely, the separate Iconografisch Bureau, where photographs—in all media—are arranged by sitter. While I was not spending my nights on trains dashing across over Europe in order to begin to assemble his oeuvre, I was traipsing all over the building—and had boxes on my study table from twelve different sections of the archive.

In the remainder of this essay, I would like to consider the source of this idiosyncratic ordering, and the implications this has had for the subsequent study of Dutch art history. I suggest that, unlike the

[11] John Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters*, 9   vols., London 1829–1842, vol. 1, 1829, p. VI, and vol. 7, p. VII.

very different organization of Italian archives by region and monument, it is in part the result the conception of art as being important to *national* identity as opposed to *regional* patrimony. In the case of Dutch art, this results in an emphasis on subject, or genre, over individual artists or local stylistic schools. And it is this organization, along with the qualities of the black and white photograph, that, I propose, has gone hand-in-hand with the iconographic turn taken by the study of Dutch art in the second half of the twentieth century.

At the time of the founding of the RKD in 1929, Dutch art history had in fact inherited two alternative approaches to its subject that implied two radically different ordering systems for Dutch art, both of which, however,—in different ways—shaped that of the RKD and by extension the practice of Dutch art history. The first was a succession of comprehensive catalogues of Dutch paintings ordered by artist, the organization of which created a hierarchy repeated in the RKD and has influenced the structure of the field up to the present day. The second conceived of Dutch painting primarily as subject pictures: specifically, as picturing the secular material world. Eventually, the latter—underscored by a national cultural identity that sought to differentiate its artistic production from the production elsewhere in Europe—shaped the ordering system of the RKD. Because of the importance of the RKD for the study of Dutch art history, its ordering system has, I argue, played a role in the types of questions investigated by twentieth-century students of Dutch art.

4 *Box numbers/location of photographs, works by Thomas de Keyser, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague*

It was the art market, and thus connoisseurship, that lay behind the first, artist-based, ordering system of the English dealer John Smith (fl. 1835) in his ambitious nine-volume catalogue of the work of thirty-five—primarily Dutch—artists published in London between 1829 and 1842. Smith's full title describes his project: *A catalogue raisonné of the works of the most eminent Dutch, Flemish and French painters; in which is included a short biographical notice of the artists, with a copious description of their principal pictures; a statement of the prices at which such pictures have been sold at public sales on the continent and in England; a reference to the galleries and private collections, in which a large portion are at present; and the names of the artists by whom they have been engraved; to which is added, a brief notice of the scholars & imitators of the great masters of the above schools*. In his dedication to Robert Peel in the first volume, Smith stressed that "the primary object […] of the work [i.e. his catalogue] is, to convey such information to amateurs of Pictorial Art as may prevent, in a great measure, the success of the frauds and impositions too much practiced"; in volume 7 he underscores that the purpose of his publication is to "improve the commerce of genuine works of art".[11] Smith included in his entries a brief biography of the artist, and then what he perceived to be the defining features of a painting, features that are still standard today in the genre of the *catalogue raisonné*, in the photographic mounts of the RKD, and now in the presentation of images in the Internet: description (often including his evaluation), date, dimensions and support, provenance and sales prices, present location, and today also the bibliography of books and articles in which the work has been published. Smith specifically noted when a description was based on a print, and warned his readers that "Prints do not always correctly correspond to the Pictures from which they are taken".[12]

In Smith's world, the archive was the text and the categorical unit the artist, although these are or-dered neither alphabetically nor by primary theme.[13] Within the work of each artist he arranged works primarily by collection, until he reached Rembrandt where paintings are grouped in categories loose-ly derived from the traditional hierarchy of genres codified by André Félibien in 1667.[14] While Félibi-en ranked, in descending order, histories, portraits, genre painting, landscapes, animal painting, and still lives, Smith inserted "Fancy and Familiar Subjects" before portraiture. Although this category in-cluded Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*, and the *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, it also contained the *Young Woman Bathing*, and *Boy with a Dead Bittern.*[15] For him these, including the group portraits, were sub-ject or genre paintings: by "Fancy" he understood works from the imagination, and "Familiar", works from life.[16] Secular subjects of everyday life, arranged or created by the imagination of the artists, had been moved to just below history paintings in stature.

Half a century later, Cornelis Hofstede de Groot (1863–1930) updated and expanded Smith's cata-logue in a ten-volume twenty-one-year project covering now forty, exclusively Dutch, seventeenth-century artists and published in German and in English translation beginning in 1907.[17] Although Hof-stede de Groot's volumes present artists in a different order, the work of every artist is organized by subject or genre, in the same hierarchical order that Smith had used for Rembrandt's paintings. Con-noisseurship and the market also lay behind his project, for Hofstede de Groot's primary occupation was expertising the authenticity of paintings (fig. 5): he even developed a form letter for the purpose.[18]

The hierarchical canon of major masters who cast their long shadows over their contemporaries is rooted in the early nineteenth-century taste of John Smith and his clients, shaped by their familiarity with artists that circulated on the London market. This list was supplemented by those artists who had attracted the attention of contemporary collectors as Hofstede de Groot was revising Smith's work. Smith had concluded the catalogue of each artist with a list of those about whom he knew little, but surmised to be the "scholars [i.e. pupils] and imitators" of the primary artist, in a practice that goes back at least to a publication by Jean Baptiste Pierre Lebrun at the end of the eighteenth century.[19] Like

[12] Ibid., p. XXIX.

[13] Smith's volumes treat the following artists: vol. 1: Gerrit Dou, Pieter van Slingelandt, Frans van Mieris, Willem van Mieris, Adriaen von Ostade, Isaac von Ostade, and Philips Wouwermans; vol. 2: Peter Paul Rubens; vol. 3: Anton van Dyck, and David Teniers; vol. 4: Jan Steen, Gerard ter Borch, Eglon Hendrik van der Neer, Pieter de Hooch, Gonzales Cocques, Gabriel Metsu, Gaspar Netscher, A. van der Werff, Nicolaes Maes, Godfried Schalcken; vol. 5: Nicolaes Berghem, Paulus Potter, Adri-aen van de Velde, Karel Dujardin, Aelbert Cuyp, Johan van der Heijden; vol. 6: Jacob Ruysdael, Meindert Hobbe-ma, Jan and Andies Both, Jan Wynants, Adam Pijnack-er, Jan Hackaert, Willem van de Velde, Ludolf Back-huijzen, Jan van Huysum, Rachel Ruysch; vol. 7: Rem-brandt van Rijn; vol. 8: Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorraine, and Jean-Baptiste Greuze; vol. 9: Supplement.

[14] In his preface to lectures to the French Academy, pub-lished as André Félibien, *Conférences de l'académie royale de peinture et de sculpture pendant l'année 1667*, Paris 1668.

[15] Smith 1829–1842 (note 11), vol. 7, pp. 59–77, respectively no. 139 (now Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), no. 142 (now Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen, Mauritshuis, The Hague), no. 165 (now National Gallery, London), and

no. 171 (*Self-Portrait with Dead Bittern*, now Gemälde-galerie, Dresden).

[16] I am grateful to Ann Bermingham for clarifying these terms as understood in the early nineteenth century.

[17] Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *Beschreibendes und kri-tisches Verzeichnis der Werke der hervorragendsten hol-ländischen Maler des XVII. Jahrhunderts; nach dem Muster von John Smith's Catalogue raisonné*, Esslingen am Neckar 1907–1928; Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century based on the Work of John Smith*, transl. by Edward G. Hawke, Lon-don 1907–1927. A comparison of the two works provides a study in changing information and taste. Hofstede de Groot excluded the French and Flemish artists treated by Smith, modified the order of artists treated, and added: Carel Fabritius, Jan Vermeer, Frans Hals, Adri-aen Brouwer, Eglon Hendrik van der Neer, Jan van de Cappelle and Jan van Goyen.

[18] Scallen 2004 (note 8), p. 130.

[19] Jean-Baptiste-Pierre Lebrun, *Galerie des peintres fla-mands, hollandais et allemands*, Paris 1792–1796, noted by Ivan Gaskell, "Tradesmen as Scholars: Interdepen-dencies in the Study and Exchange of Art", in: Elizabeth Mansfield (ed.), *Art History and Its Institutions: Founda-*
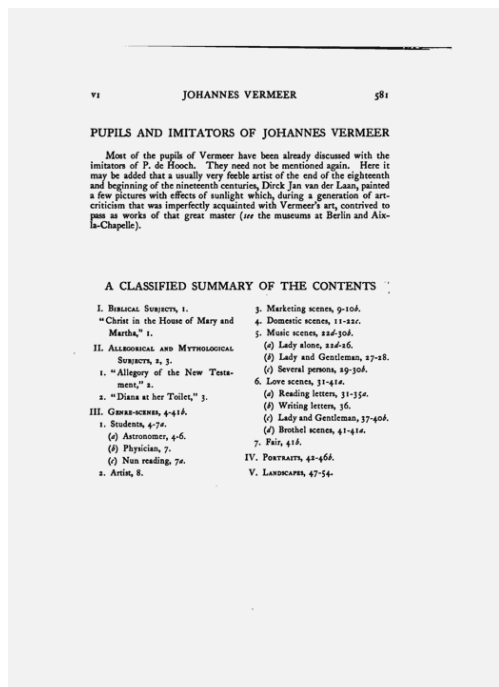
5   Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth, transl. by Edward G. Hawke, London 1907–1927, vol. 1, p. 581

Smith, Hofstede de Groot grouped artists about whom he knew less together with those better-known artists with whose work he found elements in common. This dividing of Dutch artists into major masters, and their minor "followers", who in many cases were so classified because of the lack of information available to Hofstede de Groot, influenced the system by which photographs are filed at the RKD. Other artists who had not attracted the attention of Hofstede de Groot were later added to the system under the respective genres and their own names. Much of this ordering affects—by association—the status of artists, art-historical monographs, and even their authors up to the present time.

In contrast to John Smith, Hofstede de Groot had at his disposal the important new tool for making his attributions: the photograph. Hofstede de Groot bemoaned that "it [is] […] difficult to gain a complete knowledge of […] works from personal inspection", because some pictures are 'banished' to such inaccessible corners of the globe as California (my home state), or South Africa and Australia. Unlike Smith, who at best had engravings of such paintings, Hofstede de Groot had the photograph. In making attributions, Hofstede de Groot emphasized the importance of viewing the original, and paid great attention to brushwork and signatures.[20] Nonetheless, he included the photograph among those works that he distinguished with capital letters as works that he knew from what he called "reliable sources": reliable sources comprised personal inspection of a work, "trustworthy reports", and personal inspection of "good photographs". He judged the photograph, therefore, as providing qualitative information for connoisseurship, equal in value to examination of the original.[21] In the process, Hofstede de Groot amassed an extraordinary archive of photographs. In 1929, one year after he finished this monumental catalogue, Hofstede de Groot bequeathed to the Dutch government over 100,000 photographs of works primarily by seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish artists. These, along with another 100,000 photographs donated in 1931 by another dealer and art expert, Frits Lugt (1884–1970), became the foundation for the RKD.[22]

In the resources available to art historians, a profound shift thus took place: from the representation of artists monographically in these published texts, to their representation in the photographic

tions of a Discipline, London / New York 2002, pp. 146–162, here p. 151.

20   For a good discussion of Hofstede de Groot's approach to connoisseurship, see Scallen 2004 (note 8), pp. 261–268.

21   Hofstede de Groot 1907–1927 (note 17 [English edition]), vol. 1, 1907, p. XV.

22   Lugt had been a partner in the Amsterdam auction house of Frederik Muller, and subsequently also an advisor to collectors. Obituary of Frits Lugt, in: *Burlington Magazine*, 112/812 (1970), p. 763.

archive of the RKD. Before the RKD became the central scholarly resource for the study of seventeenth-century Dutch art history, historians of Dutch art were writing monographic studies of individual artists—like their colleagues studying the art of Italy, France, Germany, or England. Dutch art was, however, originally understood as—and ultimately valued for—its subject matter. The inherited perception of Dutch art by both foreigners and natives alike focuses upon its secular subjects. In a widely quoted passage, Michelangelo is reported to have asserted:

> "In Flanders they paint […] stuffs and masonry, the green grass of the fields, the shadow of trees, and rivers and bridges, which they call landscapes, with many figures on this side and that."[23]

His description was, of course, to celebrate—in contrast—the genius of the Idea behind the art of his native Italy, for he continued:

> "And all this, though it pleases some persons, is done without reason or art, without symmetry or proportion, without skilful choice of boldness and, finally, without substance or vigour."[24]

Nineteenth-century French left-wing journalist and critic Théophile Thoré, with whose praise of Vermeer I opened this essay, celebrated Dutch art for just these qualities. In a well-known passage, he praised "these good Hollanders who care little for the hieroglyphs of pagan or Catholic mythology, and who paint, quite simply, human life",[25] sentiments followed by Hippolyte Taine, Eugene Fromentin, and later, in the twentieth century, Vincent van Gogh, and Roland Barthes, among others.

Seventeenth-century Dutch comments on painting, as well as inventory entries confirm that Dutch paintings were neither created nor understood by contemporaries according to the subject categories which were developed in the Renaissance, and codified in seventeenth-century France, for art that was predominantly religious in subject matter. As noted above, in their ordering of paintings within their catalogues of individual artists, Smith and Hofstede de Groot grouped Dutch paintings by these categories, but gave recognition to the diversity and prominence of secular subject matter by moving this category to second place. Photographs made it possible for Hofstede de Groot to compare similar subjects with a much finer grain, and were helpful in sorting out the large numbers of repetitions, copies, and variants of popular themes. His classifications of the work of Jan Steen, for example, included such categories as "the starved family and the well-fed family", under "Illustrations of Proverbs, and Pictures of a Didactic Nature", to "Scenes in and about the Tavern" broken down into seven sub-categories, including "people at play" divided again into five additional subjects including "backgammon"

23 Francisco de Hollanda, *Four Dialogues on Painting*, transl. by Aubrey F. G. Bell, London 1928, p. 16.

24 Ibid.

25 W. Bürger [pseud. Théophile Thoré], *Musées de la Hollande*, 2 vols., Paris 1858–1860, vol. 2, *Musée Van der Hoop à Amsterdam et Musée de Rotterdam*, 1860, pp. 115–116; elsewhere he wrote: "Mais vraiment il y a temps pour tout. L'Italie catholique a fait des dieux et des héros. Laissons la Hollande nous faire un peu des hommes et des bohémiens" (Catholic Italy made its Gods and heroes. Let us permit Holland to make for us a few men and tramps). W. Bürger [pseud. Théophile Thoré], *Musées de la Hollande*, 2 vols., Paris 1858–1860, vol. 1, *Amsterdam Et La Haye, Etudes Sur L'Ecole Hollandaise*, 1858, p. 92.

26 *Bulletin of the American Art Union* (1846), pp. 143–144, cit. by Fawcett 1986 (note 4), p. 188.

27 Princeton Index of Christian Art (medieval art), Charles Rufus Morey, conceived in 1912 and opened in 1917, see http://ica.princeton.edu/.

28 A guide to the system itself was published as Henri van de Waal, *Decimal Index of the Art of the Low Countries D.I.A.L. Abridged edition of the Iconclass System*, The Hague 1968; Henri van de Waal et al., *Iconclass, an iconographic Classification System*, 17 vols., Amsterdam / New York, 1973–1985.

29 To list only a few Monographs on history painting: Albert Blankert et al., *Gods, Saints & Heroes. Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt* (exhibition cat. Washington DC / Detroit / Amsterdam 1980–1981); Albert Blankert et al., *Dutch classicism in 17th-century painting* (exhibition cat. Rotterdam / Frankfurt 1999–2000). Dutch genre painting: Eddy de Jongh, *Zinne- en minnebeelden in de schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw*, [n.p.] 1967; Peter

and "cock-fighting". Once moved to the RKD, however, Hofstede de Groot's photographs, along with those of Frits Lugt, were reordered giving primacy to these subject categories: instead of being grouped together by artist, works were separated by media and then disbursed among a vast number of detailed subject categories. Pendent portraits of a man and wife, for example, can end up separated, in sections for "Portraits of men" and "Portraits of women", which are then divided into sections "with hands" and "without hands", subdivided again into folders titled "facing left" and "facing right". This has had a deep impact upon the practice of Dutch art history.

Most black and white photographs in photographic collections—and certainly the RKD—are of a quality that lends themselves primarily to identifying works by subject and composition, rather than colour, finer gradations of light, touch, or the handling of paint. Indeed, in 1846, the Bulletin of the American Art Union had described the qualities of the photograph itself—as they revealed no trace of the artist's touch or the handling of paint—as "triumphs of the Dutch school".[26] Ordering of works of art by subject matter had been employed for Medieval art by Charles Rufus Morey (1877–1955) in the establishment of the Princeton Index of Christian Art in 1917.[27] While originally useful for those works for whom the name of the originator was lost in the shadows of history after World War II, it gained further importance when, under the influence of such German art historians as Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968) and Willem Heckscher (1904–1999), an interest developed in analyzing the subject matter of Dutch painting—and in particular the study of iconography.

At the RKD, Henri van de Waal (1910–1972) created an extraordinarily ambitious project: to systematically order all art by subject, devising a decimal system entitled *Iconclass*—a system comprising 28,000 classification rubrics, with 14,000 keywords that has been adopted by many museums and institutions. An abbreviated version of this system, known as the Decimal Index to the Art of the Low Countries, or D.I.A.L., was used for a project publishing postcard-sized images of all known Netherlandish art.[28] The latter was ultimately aborted, but this ordering of Netherlandish painting by subject has remained the central organizing feature of the world's primary resource for the study of Dutch art.

While monographs continued to be written and monographic exhibitions continue today, since shortly after World War II a substantial number of publications have begun to examine Dutch art by subject: appearing with great regularity have been major studies of Dutch landscape painting, still life painting, history painting, genre painting, and most recently portrait painting in both exhibition catalogues and monographs.[29] Although some of these studies treat the formal aspects of their subject, the field was shaped in the second half of the twentieth century above all by more detailed iconographic

C. Sutton, *Masters of 17th-century Dutch genre painting* (exhibition cat. Philadelphia / Berlin / London 1984); Christopher Brown, *Images of a golden past: Dutch genre painting of the 17th century*, New York 1984; Wayne E. Franits, *Dutch seventeenth-century genre painting: its stylistic and thematic evolution*, New Haven/CN 2004; Nanette Salomon, *Shifting priorities: gender and genre in seventeenth-century Dutch painting*, Stanford/CA 2004. Portraiture: Eddy de Jongh, Alois Riegl, *Das Holländische Gruppenporträt*, 2 vols., Vienna 1931 [orig. ed. 1902]; Eddy de Jongh, *Portretten van echt en trouw: huwelijk en gezin in de Nederlandse kunst van de zeventiende eeuw* (exhibition cat. Haarlem 1986); Ann Jensen Adams, *Private Faces and Public Identities in Seventeenth-century Holland: Portraiture and the Production of Community*, New York 2009; Landscape painting: Wolfgang Stechow, *Dutch Landscape Painting of the seventeenth century*,

London 1966; Peter C. Sutton et al., *Masters of 17th-century Dutch landscape painting* (exhibition cat. Amsterdam / Boston / Philadelphia 1987–1988); Albert Blankert, *Dutch 17th Century Italianate Landscape Painters*, Soest 1978. Still lives: Ingvar Bergstrom, *Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth century*, New York 1956; N. R. A. Vroom, *A modest message as intimated by the painters of the monochrome banketje*, 2 vols., Schiedam 1980; Sam Segal, *A prosperous past: the sumptuous still life in the Netherlands, 1600–1700* (exhibition cat. Delft / Cambridge/MA / Fort Worth/TE 1988); Paul Taylor, *Dutch flower painting, 1600–1720*, New Haven/CN 1995; Alan Chong et al., *Still-life paintings from the Netherlands, 1550–1720* (exhibition cat. Amsterdam / Cleveland 1999–2000).

6 Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, on-line database, http://website.rkd.nl/Databases/ RKDartists, search result Thomas de Keyser

studies of these genres, first by Jan Gerrit van Gelder (1903–1980) and William Heckscher at Utrecht, and brought to the wider attention of art history in the work of Eddy de Jongh. In an apparently mundane domestic scene by Jan Molenaer, for example, de Jongh noted the reference to vanity in the skull used as a footstool, and the telling juxtaposition of the map of the world above the young woman's head—bringing to mind well-known contemporaneous emblems warning of the dangerous seductions of Lady World, whose primary attribute is the globe atop her head.[30]

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there were a few who voiced the opinion that for art-research photographs were even superior to the work of art. At one level, even the law now considers the photograph of a two-dimensional work of art as transparent to the original. In the case of Bridgeman Art Library vs. Corel Corporation in the year 1999, the courts decided that the photograph added no "sweat of the brow"—which began a process resulting in a boon for art historians seeking relief from outrageous reproduction fees for scholarly publications.[31] But we are all aware that the black and white photograph conveys a limited amount of information, foregrounding specific qualities of painting in favour of others. In so doing, the photograph has shaped and perpetuated definitions of artistic style in 'idea' conveyed by outline and tone—gradations of light and shade—first articulated in the Italian Renaissance. Only in the last forty years have the chemistry of paint composition and application techniques begun to figure prominently in connoisseurship decisions, such as those made from the early 1970s by the Rembrandt Research Project. For these, the photographic—and now digital—representations of the x-ray, ultra-violet light reflectography, autoradiographs, and paint samples viewed through high-powered microscopes are invaluable.[32] But until their systematic use and widespread circulation, Renaissance concepts of style as subject, outline, and tone will continue—if only subliminally—to shape our field.

The RKD has since moved to a new home. And some of is photographic resources are now available in digital form for searching on the Internet. Searches by artist, for example, now make possible the reassembly of an artist's oeuvre—or as much of it as may be on-line (fig. 6). But like all early adaptations to new media, the form this takes more or less reproduces the existing archive. Grouping of

30 Eddy de Jongh, "Vermommingen van Vrouw Wereld in de 17 de eeuw", in: Josua Bruyn / Jan A. Emmens (eds.), *Album amicorum Jan Gerrit van Gelder*, The Hague 1973, pp. 198–206, transl. as "The Changing Face of Lady World", in: Eddy de Jongh, *Questions of Meaning; Theme and Motif in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painting*, transl. and ed. by Michael Hoyle, Leiden 2000, pp. 60–82.

31 *Bridgeman Art Library v. Corel Corp.*, 36 F. Supp. 2d 191 (S.D.N.Y. 1999); http://www.law.cornell.edu/copyright/ cases/36_FSupp2d_191.htm, accessed 19 August 2010.

32 Maryan W. Ainsworth, "From Connoisseurship to Tech-

nical History: The Evolution of the Interdisciplinary Study of Art", in: *The Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter*, 20/1 (2005), pp. 4–10.

33 *Montias Database of 17th Century Dutch Art Inventories*, The Frick Art Reference Library, http://research.frick. org/montias/home.php, accessed 19 August 2010; *Economic and Artistic Competition in the Amsterdam Art Market, c. 1630–1690* (ECARTICO), research team: Eric Jan Sluijter and Marten Jan Bok (co-supervisors), Erna Kok, Elmer Kolfin, Frauke Laarmann, Harm Nijboer.

paintings by subject are still shaped by the keywords that cataloguers subjectively assign, and the thumbnail photographs are useful primarily for identification purposes.

At the same time, computer databases of historical material—such as the inventories and sales catalogues pioneered by economic historian Michael Montias and the remarkable database by Marten Jan Bok and his colleagues have opened up a new field of study—that of collecting and the marketplace.[33] We look forward to the next steps in computer assisted research, which will include the creation of a powerful relational database linking archival data with digitized images. Meanwhile, we can fully understand the excitement of Théophile Thoré, with whose comments about the black-and white photograph I began this paper, in our own excitement at the possibility to access, nearly anywhere, the technical aspects of a painting's creation, along with glorious colour images in digital form.