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Growing up with Eight Brothers

A Biographical Exploration

KATLIJNE VAN DER STIGHELEN

✎ *Mysterious Michaelina*

Who was Michaelina, where did she come from and how did she become what she did? It is often hard to gather information about historical women artists, as the customary clues that enable us to reconstruct the careers of their male counterparts are often lacking. They are rarely if ever named in the membership lists of guilds and corporations, making it virtually impossible to identify the town where they trained or who their teachers were. What biographical information does survive is generally found in sources relating to their contemporaries – relatives, other artists or patrons. This is also the case, sadly, for Michaelina Wautier, for whom fascinating personal documents have yet to be unearthed. Sufficient references can nevertheless be found to her social, family and professional network for us to attempt a sketch of her biography. The account of her life includes lacunae and mysterious coincidences, yet this information, albeit incomplete, is all we have at present to illuminate and to some extent understand her exceptional position and talent.

✎ *Magdalena or Michaelina? Woutiers or Wautier?*

Her very name poses a dilemma: the most important surviving source – the foundation on which all our knowledge of Wautier as an artist rests – is an inventory that Archduke Leopold Wilhelm had drawn up of his collection of paintings on his return to Vienna after spending the period between 1647 and 1656 in the Low Countries (fig. 2).¹ The inventory itself dates from 1659 and was drafted with considerable precision: not only are her first name and surname stated a total of four times, extremely important details are provided concerning her origins. The painter's *Saint Joachim* (see cat. 12, fig. ●a) is described as an 'Original von Jungfraw Magdalena Woutiers von Mons oder Berghen, Henegaw in Niderlandt'. Item 87 lists 'der heyl. Joseph' (cat. 11) as an 'Original von der Jungfrawen Magdalena Woutiers' and the subsequent item, no. 88, is another *Saint Joachim*, described as an 'Original von Magdalena Woutiers' (*Saint Joachim Reading a Book*, cat. 12). Her name does not appear again for another fifty pages, at which point it is linked to the *Bacchanal* or *Triumph of Bacchus*, an 'Original von N. Woutiers' (cat. 13).² The inventory provides us with one secure fact: the paintings were the work of a *Jungfraw* – i.e. an unmarried woman – called 'Magdalena Woutiers'.³

FIG 1 Michaelina Wautier
Self-Portrait. Detail of cat. 3. Private collection

This information matches the only point of reference that can be gleaned from parish records in Mons. On 2 September 1604, the baptism was recorded at Saint-Nicolas d'Havr  of 'Maria Magdalena Watier, filia Carolj Watier, patrius, Johannes Watier, Mar[ia] Magdalena de Hou st Athest[antes]' (fig.   5). Surprisingly, the record in question fails to mention the name of the baptized infant's mother.⁴ The godfather was Johannes Wautier and the name of the godmother is given as 'Maria Magdalena de Houst'.⁵

Both the first name and surname by which the artist is identified in the Vienna catalogue differ from 'Michaelina Wautier', the name with which she signed a substantial proportion of her paintings; the question remains, therefore, as to whether this was the same person? 'Michaelina' was an unusual name in the early modern period, but that is not sufficient reason in itself to conclude that the names 'Magdalena' and 'Michaelina' were interchangeable. On the other hand, a similar vagueness can be detected at an earlier date in the inscription 'MICHELLINE WOVTEERS', which appears on the back of *Saint Joachim* (see cat. 12, fig.   a).⁶ In other words, the artist identified as 'Jungfraw Magdalena Woutiers' in the 1659 inventory was named as 'Michelline' on the back of one of her paintings. It would seem, therefore, that the two given names were used interchangeably as early as the seventeenth century.

The rendering of her name was still evidently deemed worthy of explanation in the early nineteenth century: when Pietro Zani published his *Enciclopedia metodico* in 1824 in Parma, the name 'Wouters Michelina' accompanied by the comment 'Michelina, detta anche Madalena' ('Michaelina, also called Magdalena') appears in the list of artists the book contains.⁷ Alphonse Wauters likewise suggested in 1884 that the painter 'Magdalena Woutiers' and 'Michaelina' must have been one and the same. Virtually every subsequent author has followed his example,⁸ with the exception of those historians who drew on the nineteenth-century genealogy of F.V. Goethals (see Chapter 2  ) and who therefore considered 'Marie Madelaine' and 'Michelle' to be sisters.⁹ Archive research has demonstrated, however, that these cannot have been two different people. As far as we can ascertain, all the available sources relate to just one woman: Michaelina, whose name also appears in the variations 'Madeleine', 'Michelle' and 'Michiel[l]e'.¹⁰

Her surname was also written in several different ways. Variations in the spelling of family names were still extremely common in seventeenth-century records, even within the same document. The Dutch form 'Woutiers' was used in the previously mentioned inventory of 1659 and appears on the engraving that Paulus Pontius made in 1643 after her painted portrait of Andrea Cantelmo (cat. 1): 'Michaelina Woutiers pinxit'. Pontius's print was much sought-after by collectors while few other works by Michaelina were in circulation, with the consequence that the spelling 'Woutiers' came to be used in later publications. In her native Mons, the family used 'Wautier' – the form that also appears on her paintings. Whatever the case, the notarial deeds in which she is mentioned, and which were variously drawn up in French and Dutch, tell us that the painter spoke both languages.

Michaelina Wautier's exceptional activities whet our curiosity as to the milieu in which she grew up. Based on the reference in the archduke's inventory, Mons is the obvious place to start looking for the Wautier family (fig. 4),¹¹ which is referred to in a variety of sources as '*anciennement noble et originaire de la ville de Mons...*'.¹² Wautier's forebears in the male line had served as aldermen of the city since the fifteenth century.¹³ Her great-grandfather, Fran ois Wautier, is identified as 'Seigneur   Courri res', and was 'Secr taire des  tats du Hainaut'. Jean Wautier, Michaelina's grandfather was an alderman of Mons in 1541, 1544, 1545 and 1548, and he too is described as 'Seigneur   Courri res'.¹⁴ According to Goethals, the painter's father, Charles Wautier (d. 24 November 1617), bore the title of 'Seigneur de Ham-sur-Heure'. This does not appear, however, to be correct. Well-documented publications on the lords of Ham-sur-Heure make no mention of his name, and they were, moreover, without exception members of or related to the Merode family.¹⁵ Goethals also claims that Charles Wautier was

FIG 2 David Teniers II
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, c.1652.
Oil on canvas, 203.5   136 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, GG 3504



FIG 3 Dominicus Custos
Pedro En riquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes, 1600–1604.
Engraving, 160   125 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam,
Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-31.639

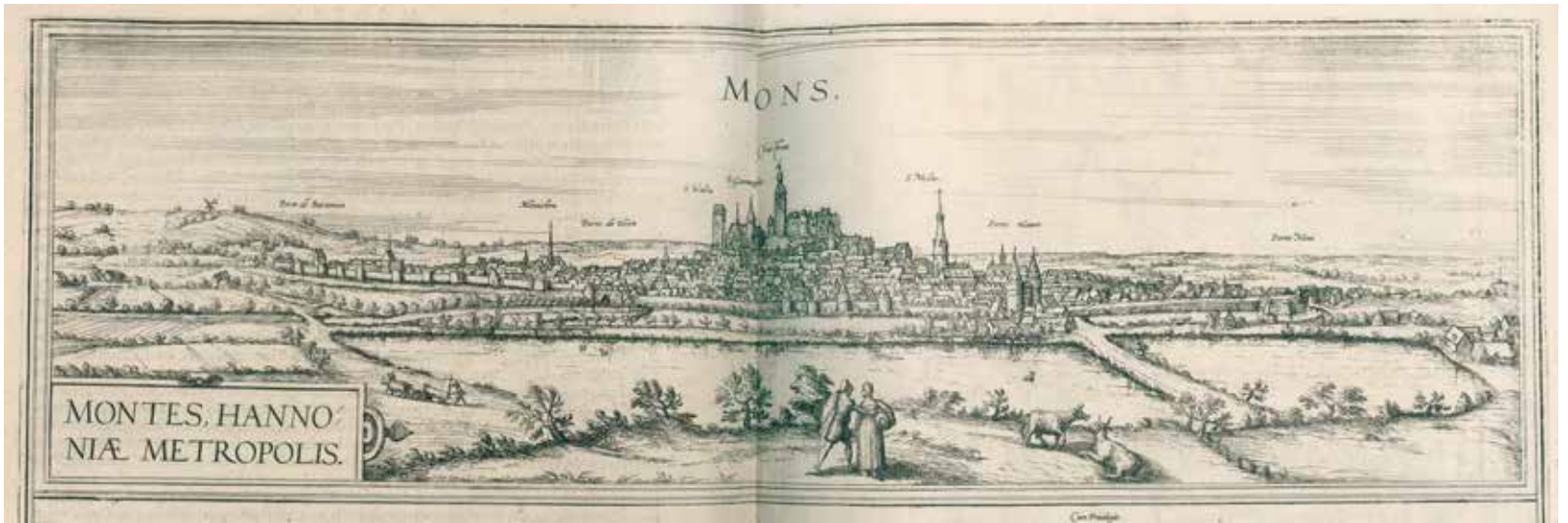


FIG 4 View of Mons.
Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg,
Civitates Orbis Terrarum, Cologne 1572.
Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, inv. 236

‘page’ to the ‘marquis’ of Fuentes, the viceroy of Naples. Since ‘page’ refers to a boy or young man – not necessarily noble – who was trained in the arts of heraldry and etiquette in a nobleman’s immediate circle, this phase in the life of Michaelina’s father must have occurred before or shortly after his first marriage in 1593.¹⁶ Although there never was a ‘marquis’ of Fuentes, the person referred to was in all likelihood Pedro Enríquez de Acevedo, Count of Fuentes (Zamora 1525–Milan 1610), who served as commander of the Spanish army. This brought him to the Low Countries in 1592, where he captured Cambrai in 1595, but was subsequently defeated by the advancing troops of Maurice of Nassau. By the time he returned to Spain in 1596, the Count of Fuentes had been Governor of the Low Countries for two years (fig. 3). It is possible that Charles Wautier belonged to the count’s entourage during that period and took an active part in his military operations.

☞ *The two marriages of Charles Wautier, Michaelina’s father*

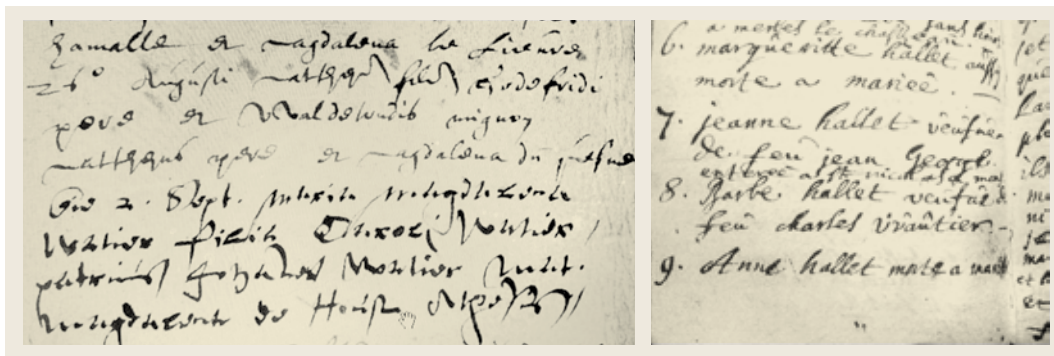
Charles Wautier married Barbe Hallet, daughter of the ‘*pensionnaire de la ville*’ in Mons on 1 December 1593.¹⁷ The couple’s five children – Jean, Françoise, Marie, Pierre¹⁸ and Albert¹⁹ – were baptized between 1594 and 1601. Jean died at an early age and Françoise when she was twenty.²⁰ Barbe Hallet must have died before 12 February 1602, as Charles Wautier was married for a second time on that date to Jeanne George at the Church of Saint-Germain.²¹ The couple had six children, of whom Michaelina was the second oldest and the only girl.²² Her brothers all went on to play an important role in advancing the family’s social status.

Jacques was baptized on 8 December 1602, Michaelina on 2 September 1604, Nicolas on 18 March 1607, Charles on 15 August 1609, Pierre on 18 December 1611 and Leon on 11 July 1616. Michaelina’s father, the ‘semi-aristocratic’ Charles Wautier, married two different women from the wealthy bourgeoisie of Mons. Barbe Hallet was the daughter of a city magistrate, while according to Goethals, Jeanne George came from Valenciennes, although this is disputed by other sources.²³

The state archives in Mons contain very few records relating to the two families of in-laws, but they do give us an impression of the network to which they belonged. It is particularly interesting to note in this regard that there were constant contacts – not to mention an element of endogamy – between members of the Hallet and George families. The second wife of Jean George, the brother of Michaelina’s mother, for instance, was none other than Jeanne Hallet, the sister of Charles Wautier’s first wife. In short, Michaelina’s family on her

FIG 5 Register of baptisms of Saint-Nicolas d'Havré,
2 September 1614: 'Maria Magdalena Watier, filia
Carolj Watier, patrius, Johannes Watier, Mar[ia]
Magdalena de Houst Atest[ari]'. Mons, AEM, no. 126
(baptisms 20 Jan 1580–30 March 1609)

FIG 6 Jean George
Mémorial. Mons, AEM, MS 370, II 3120, no. 980



mother's side played an important part in the city of Mons and no doubt in Michaelina Wautier's family life as well.

✧ *A glimpse behind the scenes*

A surviving notebook document – a hand-sized leather-bound manuscript, in which the aforementioned Jean George, Michaelina's uncle, recorded all sorts of memorable facts and events relating to his family²⁴ – provides us with a glimpse of the George family's private life (fig. ••6). There is little structure to his notes and no obvious chronology, and the account is disjointed and probably unreliable in some cases.²⁵ Moreover, Jean George's style is anecdotal and his handwriting messy: the little book is full of grammatical errors, with regular use of dialect words.²⁶ Concerning his wedding with Jeanne Hallet, he writes that the reception was postponed for a day as it fell on a Sunday,²⁷ and there is a moving passage about his son Jean who was born 'with a caul' and died shortly afterwards. Jean recalls his young son Albert's first day at school;²⁸ excursions with his wife to the castle of 'Boussu' (Binches) and the pilgrimage place Notre-Dame de Chièvres; and a relative who was run over by a coach on the road from Mons to Merbe and died of his injuries. He likewise records the plague epidemic that struck Mons in 1615, killing between 7,000 and 8,000 people.²⁹ There is even room for a toothache remedy.³⁰ In all, the manuscript paints a disarming picture of everyday reality in Mons at the time over a period of more than a century.³¹

✧ *At home in Rue d'Havré, Mons*

The kind of news that appears in her uncle's notebook must have been familiar to Michaelina too. As a child, she experienced the birth of her four younger brothers, while the outbreak of plague that carried off so many victims is bound to have made a powerful impression on a twelve-year-old girl. And when she was thirteen, her father died on 24 November 1617. The children from his first marriage were aged between sixteen and twenty-three at the time,³² and Michaelina's full brothers between one and fifteen. It is not known how her now single mother managed to support such a large brood. Even if the children of her husband's first marriage had already more or less left home, she would still have had at least six other mouths to feed. It is difficult to reconstruct Jeanne George's financial situation, but we do have an idea of where the Wautier family lived thanks to the annually updated population register for Mons. The 'District Books' contain a street-by-street record of home owners '*qui ont payé bourgeoisie*'.³³ In 1608, 'Charles Waultier' and his half-brother Jean Waultier occupied a house in 'Rue de Havrech' (Rue d'Havré).³⁴ The two men were recorded in the same street in





FIG 5 **Lorenzo Tinti**
Giovanni Luigi Picinardi, *Il Pennello Lagrimato*
[funeral oration for Elisabetta Sirani, Bologna],
Giacomo Monti, 1665. Frontispiece. The British
Library, London, inv. 72.i.16

FIG 6 **Jérôme David**
after Artemisia Gentileschi
Self-Portrait, c. 1627. Engraving,
141 × 80 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam,
Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-63.787



FIG 7 **Anna Maria van Schurman**
Self-Portrait, 1633. Engraving and etching,
198 × 152 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam,
Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-59.344



FIG 8 **Maria Theresia van Thielen**
Flower Piece Presented to Her Aunt Elisabeth van Beeck, Prioress of the Nobertine Convent in Mechelen, on the Occasion of her Silver Jubilee, 1664. Oil on canvas, 55.5 × 91 cm. Museum Hof van Busleyden, Mechelen, inv. 179

FIG 9 **Anna Maria van Schurman**
Self-Portrait, 1633. Engraving and etching, 198 × 152 mm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, RP-P-OB-59.344



verscheyde Nederlandsche jofvrouwen haer selven oeffenende inde seer edele schilder-const' [the fame of several young Dutch women who exercise themselves in the noble art of painting]. Artists such as the sisters Maria Theresia, Anna Maria and Françoise van Thielen (fig. 8), Anna Maria van Schurman (figs. 7 and 9), Catharina Peeters, Johanna Vergouwen and the 'daughters of Pepijn, d'Egmont and Van Dijck' were praised to the skies with statements about their '*onsterffelijcke Faem*' [immortal fame], '*wonder seldsaemheyt*' [amazing rareness] and '*manhaftich werck*' [brave work]. From some of these women not a single work of art survives – and by Van Schurman and Vergouwen no more than a single painting each – while the style of Justiniana van Dyck's paintings and drawings is a matter of pure conjecture.³⁵ Oddly enough, attention was paid to the dilettantes, but not a word was devoted to the only fully-fledged contemporary woman painter,³⁶ and that in spite of the fact that Michaelina far surpassed these artists on both an artistic and technical level. The portrait engraving of Commander Cantelmo played a modest role in disseminating her name, but even this could not replace the function of an engraved self-portrait. Moreover, she lacked the lyrical words of admirers to help spread her fame in prose.³⁷ Shortly after her death in 1689, or perhaps even prior to this, Michaelina disappeared from the public realm. Her name was barely circulated, and her virtuoso paintings were stored safely in the archduke's collection or hung on the walls of her relatives behind velvet drapes and expensive façades.



- 1 Berger 1883••.
- 2 See Chapter 1.
- 3 For this, see also Chapter 1, note 8••.
- 4 Michel De Marolles, *Catalogue de livres d'estampes et de figures en taille douce. Fait à Paris en l'année 1666*, Parijs 1666, p. 62. For less well-known artists – such as Wautier – the author often adopted the spelling of names and the forms of address from the prints: many names are shown in their Latinized form and accompanied by qualifications such as *pictor*. 'Pictrice' can be considered a corruption of the feminine form of *pictrix*.
- 5 Namely a scene with Cain and Abel and one from the History of the 'Sacrament of Miracle' (a fourteenth-century anti-Semitic legend recounting a miracle which allegedly took place in Brussels).
- 6 G. P. Mensaert, *Le peintre amateur et curieux, ou Description générale des tableaux des plus habiles maîtres qui sont l'ornement des églises, couvent, abbayes, prieurés et cabinets particuliers dans l'étendue des Pays-Bas autrichiens*, Brussels 1763, I, p. 46: 'on voit quatre tableaux, dont l'un représente le meurtre d'Abel par Cain, l'autre une femme, connuë sous le nom de Catherine, qui remet la coupe avec les Hosties percées de coups de côuteaux par les Juifs; c'est une partie de l'Histoire du très-Saint Sacrement de Miracle, ces deux tableaux sont peints par du Châtel & les autres par N. Woutiers'.
- 7 See also Chapter 1, note 2••, and cat. 13 (*Bacchanal*).
- 8 'Achter by het Portael siet men van weder zeyde over de Beucken twee Schilderyen: d'een verbeldt eenen gekruysten Christus, geschildert door N. Woutiers, ende d'ander verbeldt de Boodtschap van O. L. Vrouwe, geschildert door de Suster van den voorsz. Woutiers.' J. F. G. Cuypers van Alsinghen, *Provincie, stad, ende district van Mechelen opgeheldert in haere Kercken, Kloosters, Kapellen, Gods-huysen, Gilden, publieke Plaetsen, met de Fondation, Patronaetschappen, ende Voorrechten, daer aen klevende*, Brussels 1770, II, p. 86.
- 9 Works by Wautier might also have been kept in the aristocratic milieu of Maria-Theresia Bette.
- 10 Zani 1824, pp. 356–7.
- 11 Georg Kaspar Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexicon; oder Nachrichten von dem Leben und den Werken der Maler, Bildhauer, Baumeister, Kupferstecher*, XXII, Munich 1852, 101: 'Mahlerin, machte sich... durch Bildnisse bekannt'.
- 12 Christiaan Kramm, *De levens en werken der Hollandsche en Vlaamsche kunstschilders, beeldhouwers, graveurs en bouwmeesters van den vroegsten tot op onze tijd*, v, Amsterdam 1861, 1887: 'een schilder die zich, in de eerste helft der XVII. eeuw door Portretten heeft bekend gemaakt, onder anderen, door dat van "Andreas Cantelmus"...' The text continues: 'dijstuk, in wapenrusting; in het verschieft een veldslag; MICH. WOUTERS pinx., P. PONTIUS sc. et exc. 1643, gr. in f.'.
- 13 Anton Ritter von Perger, *Specification deren Malereien, welche aus Ihre Kais. Majestät Kunstkammer ausgesucht und nach Prag übersetzt worden*, Nr. 4; 'Prager Inventar' 1737, Nr. 496: 'Der betrunkene Bacchus, wie er auf einen karn geführt wird. Wiener Bilder, Nr. 7; 4 Elen 14 Zoll x 6 Elen, 17 Zoll, ohne Rahmen, Cornelio Vaudrier'. With grateful thanks to Gerlinde Gruber for this information.
- 14 A.J. Wauters, 'Micheline Woutiers, peintresse Montoise du XVII^e siècle', *Messenger des sciences historiques ou archives des arts de Belgique*, 1884, pp. 486–7: 'Voici un nom nouveau à ajouter à la liste déjà si longue des maîtres flamands du XVII^e siècle.'
- 15 A.J. Wauters, *The Flemish School of Paintings*, London and Paris 1885, p. 279.
- 16 Eduard von Engerth, *Kunsthistorische Sammlungen des allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses. Gemälde. Beschreibendes Verzeichniss, II. Niederländische Schulen*, Vienna 1884, pp. 560–61, nos. 1401–2.
- 17 In ••Erasmus Engert's•• catalogue, *Kurzgefasstes Verzeichnis der Kaiserl. Königl. Gemäldegalerie*, Vienna 1869, p. 27, nos. 6–7, they were still listed as 'F. Wouters, Der heil. Joachim; Der H. Joseph'.
- 18 L. Devillers, *Le passé artistique de la ville de Mons*, Mons 1885, p. 51.
- 19 Theodor von Frimmel, *Geschichte der Wiener Gemäldesammlungen (Band 1,1): Einleitung und Geschichte der kaiserlichen Gemäldegalerie*, Leipzig 1899, nos. 1064, 1091, 1092.
- 20 Gustav Glück, *Rubens, Van Dyck und ihr Kreis*, I, Vienna 1933, 229: 'Freilich bieten die beiden Halbfiguren von Heiligen wenig Anhaltspunkte zum Vergleich mit der großen Komposition des Bacchuszuges.'
- 21 She is described as 'Woutiers. Michelina (Magdalena)...Portraitmalerin aus Mons oder Berghem in Hennegau' in Alfred von Wurzbach's *Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon...* (Amsterdam 1910, II, p. 901). The entry that precedes hers is dedicated to 'Charles Woutiers oder Wautiers', but no connection is made to Michaelina; E. Bénézit writes in his *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs*, Paris 1923, x, p. 800: 'On connaît peu de chose sur cette artiste.' He refers to the engraving of Cantelmo, to the male portrait of 1646 in Brussels (cat. 2) and the two saints in Vienna (cat. 11 and 12); in the *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* by Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker (xxxvi, Leipzig 1942, p. 264), eight lines are given to 'Woutiers (Wautier), Michaelina'. Only the portrait of a man from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels, and the 'zwei Halbfigurbilder: Hl. Joachim; Hl. Josef' are mentioned, alongside the portrait of Cantelmo, 'Durch Stich bekannt'.
- 22 *Bloem en tuin in de Vlaamse kunst*, exh. cat. Ghent: Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1960, p. 142, fig. 77 (as 'Michaëlina Woutiers, Bloemenguirlande'). The still life was then in the possession of the Parisian art dealer Benito Pardo.
- 23 Günther Heinz, 'Studien über Jan van den Hoecke und die Malerei der Niederländer in Wien', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 63 (1967), pp. 149–52.
- 24 Heinz 1967, p. ••?••: 'die charakteristische Handschrift... ein so deutlich Gemeinsames, dass diese Werke...als Schöpfungen einer Hand erkannt werden können.'
- 25 Heinz 1967, pp. 149, 152: '[Glück] glaubte ein Gemälde so grossen Formats der Hand einer Frau nicht zutrauen zu dürfen'.
- 26 I would like to thank Dr Karl Schütz, former director of the Gemäldegalerie, who in April 1994 gave me the opportunity to visit the 'Sekundärgalerie' where, by chance, I first noticed *The Triumph of Bacchus*.
- 27 Van der Stighelen 1996; Huet/Grieten 1998, pp. 147–158; Van der Stighelen/Westen 1999, pp. 36–37, 172–177.
- 28 Kairis 2000 and Kairis 2002, pp. 31–49; see also cat. 9 and 10.
- 29 Van der Stighelen 2005.
- 30 Samuel Herzog, 'Mehr als nur Geschlecht', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 16 September 2009: 'Das Gemälde, daß gleichermassen Mut wie Humor seiner Schöpferin belegt, ist der undeklarierte Höhepunkt einer kleinen Ausstellung.' On 12 November 2009, Katlijne Van der Stighelen was invited by Dr Gerlinde Gruber to give a lecture at the Kunsthistorisches Museum entitled 'The Enigmatic Michaelina Woutiers (1617/18–1689). A Woman's Touch in Brussels during the Baroque'.
- 31 This was the first time that a painting by Michaelina Wautier had been sold for such a large sum (480,500 CHF or \$399,800), while the original estimate for the portrait was 7,000 to 10,000 CHF. See Koller. *International Auctions Swiss Made*, [2016], pp. 28–9. The sudden financial appreciation of her work kept pace with her discovery as a portrait painter.
- 32 For the position of these women in contemporary discourse, see Chapter ••5••.
- 33 Modesti 2014, pp. 386, 398–400. See also Andrea Bianchini, *Prove legali sull'avvelenamento della celebre pittrice bolognese Elisabetta Sirani*, Bologna, 1854, pp. 27–28, in which numerous printed orations from the seventeenth century are still included (1665, 1666, 1678, etc.) and again from the nineteenth century onwards (1841, 1842, 1844, 1849, 1853).
- 34 For the diversity of the highest magistrates, see Catherine Thomas, *Le visage humain de l'administration. Les grands commis du gouvernement central des Pays-Bas espagnols (1589–1700)* (Académie royale de Belgique, Mémoire de la Classe des Lettres, 4th series, 5) (January 2014), no. 2095.
- 35 Tobé 1999, pp. 59–62.
- 36 It is striking that the painters enumerated by De Bie were largely active in Antwerp. The fact that his book was published there indicates a greater familiarity with the local art production and may help explain why he does not mention Michaelina. The Dutch 'star' Judith Leyster (1609–1660) was only praised during her lifetime in two descriptions of the city of Haarlem. See Honig 1999, pp. 43 and 55.
- 37 About the complexity and reasons why some women 'survived' and the role of publications in this respect, see also Chapter ••5••.



3

‘L’abondance & la diversité’

The Gallery of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm

FRANCESCA DEL TORRE SCHEUCH

GERLINDE GRUBER

Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614–1662) (fig. 1) is to date the most important and – almost – the only collector of pictures by Michaelina Wautier of the seventeenth century.¹ He owned four works by her,² including the *Bacchanal* (cat. 13), which he most probably even commissioned – such large paintings³ were not normally produced for the open market.

The circumstances under which Leopold Wilhelm was able to assemble what was undoubtedly the most important collection of the seventeenth century in terms of the number, quality and variety of its paintings, have already been reconstructed and presented in numerous publications.⁴ Our current knowledge is based primarily on the correspondence between Leopold Wilhelm and his elder brother Ferdinand (1608–1657). The two men shared a passion for art and from the start of their collecting activity they acted in consultation, seeking each other’s advice and keeping each other up to date on acquisitions and opportunities to expand their respective collection. This approach, to which they adhered steadily over the years, culminated in Leopold Wilhelm’s purchase of the Duke of Buckingham’s collection for Ferdinand III.

We do not know which paintings Leopold Wilhelm’s collection contained when it was still housed in his Amalienburg apartments within the Hofburg palace complex. Walter Crowne, however, who was received by the Empress and the then twenty-two-year-old archduke in June 1636 as part of the retinue of the Count of Arundel, noted that ‘we saw only a few pictures’.⁵

Leopold Wilhelm’s love of paintings was well known outside Austria, too. In June 1641, during an extended stay in Regensburg, Ferdinand received the English ambassador, who presented him with a letter from King Charles I and a crate that evidently contained paintings for the Emperor’s brother, since Ferdinand subsequently wrote to Leopold Wilhelm asking what he should do with the chest and whether he might open it to look at the pictures.⁶

In 1643 the art dealer Stainer, who had already been paid the sum of 1100 fl. in 1636,⁷ offered Leopold Wilhelm (in a now-lost document) sixty-six works from the collection of Mr Steininger in Augsburg.⁸ The Steininger collection was evidently quite significant: Joachim von Sandrart had visited it and specifically admired its works by Venetian masters.⁹ We know that the archduke proceeded with the purchase, since various paintings in his collection inventory of 1659 can be identified with those offered to him by Stainer.¹⁰ The majority are Venetian, among them six paintings by Paris Bordone, which were produced for the

FIG 1 David Teniers II
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His Gallery in Brussels, c. 1650.
Detail of fig. 4. Kunsthistorisches Museum,
Vienna, Gemäldegalerie



FIG 2 **Pieter Thys**
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, 1650–56.
Oil on canvas, 127 × 86 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
Gemäldegalerie, GG 370

Fuggers and later passed into Steininger's possession. They include two representations of women and an allegory of *Mars Disarming Cupid and Venus* (fig. 3).

We know that the archduke employed the services of Frans Luycx (1604–1668) and Caspar Della (c. 1583–1661), court painters to his imperial brother, and that the artist Joachim Khobler (documented 1646/47)¹¹ was instructed to make purchases in Venice, of which we have no further details, however.¹² In 1647 Leopold Wilhelm was appointed Governor of the Spanish Netherlands. Prior to his departure, the archduke asked his brother not to use his apartments during his absence, since his paintings were hanging in them and he had nowhere else to house them.¹³ On several occasions during the journey from Vienna to Brussels, Leopold Wilhelm took the opportunity to buy works of art, maps, tapestries and antiquities, as he reported to his brother.¹⁴ The profile that emerges in the light of this information is that of a collector with a great passion for art, in particular for painting, and first and foremost Italian painting. This corresponds with the general trend in tastes throughout Europe. What is certain, however, is that his stay in the Spanish Netherlands opened up unexpected perspectives for Leopold Wilhelm, who was enraptured above all by the variety and wealth of what was on offer. Thus he wrote in reference to Antwerp, for example: 'A chaos of paintings reigns there', and although he complained about being constantly short of money, he undertook to buy works by local contemporary painters, namely in each case one for his brother and one for himself. He nevertheless also continued to collect Italian paintings. In 1647 he received two 'Roman' landscapes, which his court painter Jan van den Hoecke had brought back from Rome,¹⁵ and in a letter to his brother he spoke of his successful purchase in Lille of twenty-nine paintings by various artists and schools and in different genres. Some of these appear in the inventory of 1659 and are still housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum today. Among these partly identified works¹⁶ we may mention a *Crucifixion* from Michelangelo's circle, on the obverse and the reverse of a copper plate, as described by Leopold Wilhelm in his letter and later confirmed in the 1659 inventory.¹⁷

As Governor of the Spanish Netherlands from 1647 to 1656, Leopold Wilhelm had the opportunity to make two major acquisitions within a short period of time. In 1649, following the tragic events of the English Civil War, two magnificent collections came onto the market: that of the Duke of Hamilton, who had been beheaded in March that year, and that of the Duke of Buckingham, whose collection had been restituted to his heirs in 1647 following his murder in 1628.¹⁸ Both collections rapidly found their way to the Continent and were then taken to Antwerp. Leopold Wilhelm purchased the first for himself and the second for his brother, in order to fill the gaps left in the imperial collection by the Swedish troops after they had plundered Prague Castle in 1648. At the heart of the Hamilton collection was the collection of the Venetian Bartolomeo della Nave,¹⁹ comprising Venetian paintings of great variety and quality as well as antique and modern drawings and sculpture. Della Nave probably founded his collection at the start of the seventeenth century, taking advice from his friend Jacopo Palma Giovane.²⁰ When it became rumoured that the heirs of Della Nave (d. 1632), were thinking of selling his collection, several of the most famous collectors of the day (including Thomas Howard, 14th Earl of Arundel, Francesco Barberini and others) entered into negotiations with the family via their respective agents. In the end it was Basil Feilding, the brother-in-law of James, 3rd Marquis (later 1st Duke) of Hamilton, who secured the purchase of the Della Nave collection for Charles I of England. Hamilton financed the purchase on the assumption that the monarch would take at least some of the paintings and reimburse him accordingly. Charles I had no more money, however, and in his delicate political situation could not afford to spend another vast sum on works of art. Hamilton therefore remained the owner of the Della Nave collection for the rest of his life. These core holdings were joined by paintings from the collections of the painter Nicolas Régnier (ca. 1591–1667) and the senator Michele Priuli (1565–1637). Following the Duke of Hamilton's execution, his

brother and heirs managed to transport the collection in secret to the Continent, where it was immediately offered for sale to the new governor.

There is no doubt that archduke Leopold Wilhelm was extremely proud of this exceptional and fortunate acquisition: at the start of the 1650s his court artist David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690) made a series of paintings showing the archduke in his picture gallery in Brussels. Leopold Wilhem sent these gallery pictures to relatives and to other rulers with whom he was on friendly terms.²¹ The Vienna version (fig. 4), probably painted around 1650 and thus the first of the group,²² went to his brother Emperor Ferdinand III, who displayed it in his gallery in Prague Castle; another is documented at the Madrid court in 1653.²³

The Vienna gallery picture shows only paintings which the archduke had indeed acquired shortly beforehand. Yet the pictures are not reproduced true to scale, since they could not otherwise hang so closely side by side:²⁴ the entire representation is pure fiction. The interior architecture nevertheless appears so convincing that several authors have sought to identify it with a real location. It has been regularly suggested, for example, that Teniers has here portrayed part of Coudenberg palace, Leopold Wilhelm's residence in Brussels,²⁵ or a view of a specially built picture gallery. But although payments for a 'galleria' in the gardens are indeed documented between 1653 and 1656,²⁶ in 1659 this building is described more specifically as a 'Domus et hortus floreus Archiducis Leopoldi,'²⁷ from which we may conclude that it was more probably a garden house or greenhouse. At the same time, moreover, the type of interior seen in Teniers's gallery pictures corresponds to an Antwerp pictorial invention of the first half of the seventeenth century.²⁸ Such pictures traditionally show a box-shaped room full of paintings, in which art is being discussed. Many such gallery pictures have allegorical overtones and the majority are at least partly fictional.²⁹ Teniers goes one step further and, with sophisticated visual rhetoric, communicates the archduke's appreciation of art and the power of painting to convey prestige and status.³⁰ Pictures dominate; tapestries, the medium of princely luxury, are excluded. By presenting these paintings as gifts, Leopold Wilhelm increased his renown as a collector and connoisseur.

Many of the paintings reproduced in the Brussels gallery picture (fig. 7) carry numbers on their frames, which match those in the inventory of Leopold Wilhelm's collection compiled in 1659 in Vienna. This inventory took up and continued the numbering employed in

FIG 3 **Paris Bordone**
Allegory: Mars Disarming Cupid and Venus, c. 1560.
Oil on canvas, 110 × 176 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
Gemäldegalerie, GG 69





FIGS 4–6 **David Teniers II**
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm
in His Gallery in Brussels, c. 1650.
 Oil on canvas, 124 × 165 cm.
 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
 Gemäldegalerie, GG 739.
 The details show the names
 of the artists on the paintings.



a previous inventory, evidently already in existence in Brussels³¹ and perhaps drawn up in 1651 at the same time as Leopold Wilhelm's will.³² In most of Teniers's gallery pictures, the names of the artists can be read on the frames – only in the Vienna canvas are their signatures integrated within the paintings themselves (figs. 5–6).³³ These artist names inform the viewer about the attribution of each work and are thus very useful, since the name of the artist is also a pointer to the importance of the painting.

The next step in the presentation and representation of the archducal gallery was the production of a volume of engravings: the famous *Theatrum Pictorium* ['Theatre of Painting'], which Teniers published in 1660, four years after Leopold Wilhelm's departure for Vienna.³⁴ The project was conceived in consultation with the archduke, who probably also financed it.³⁵ Reproduced within its pages were the famous Italian paintings which also appear so



FIG 7 **David Teniers II**
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm
in His Gallery in Brussels, 1651.
Oil on canvas, 96 × 129 cm.
Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium,
Brussels, inv. 2569

prominently in Teniers's gallery pictures. But while these latter remained confined to a very narrow circle of individuals, the *Theatrum Pictorium* – which could be printed on paper in a large number of copies – was addressed to a wider public wishing to discover the archduke's collection, and at the same time to artists and art lovers as a study aid.³⁶ David Teniers, who had already demonstrated his ability to reproduce the characteristic elements of individual paintings in his gallery pictures, now executed miniature copies of the works selected for the *Theatrum Pictorium* in oil on panel, scaled down to the three main formats chosen for the engravers' plates. The reason for this unusual practice of issuing the engravers with a painted model (from which they would still have to make a drawing) was evidently the imminent departure of the archduke and his collection for Vienna; with the originals no longer available, it would be necessary to have a replica against which to check whether the colour values



FIG 8 Giorgione
The Three Philosophers, 1508–9.
 Oil on canvas, 125.5 × 146.2 × 3.5 cm.
 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,
 Gemäldegalerie, GG 111

FIG 9 David Teniers II after Giorgione
The Three Philosophers.
 Oil on canvas, 21.5 × 30.9 cm.
 National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, NGI.390





FIG 10 **David Teniers II**
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His Gallery in Brussels.
Detail of fig. 4 (Vienna): Giorgione's *Three Philosophers*



FIG 11 **David Teniers II**
Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His Gallery in Brussels.
Detail of fig. 7 (Brussels): Giorgione's *Three Philosophers*

had been translated accurately into lines.³⁷ Teniers set to work, therefore, and systematically, professionally and efficiently copied the vast majority of the archduke's Italian paintings.³⁸ The twenty-seven paintings that Teniers did not manage to copy in miniature were engraved in Vienna by Nicolaus van Hoy and Jan Frans van der Steen, who then sent the plates to Teniers in Brussels, together with those showing the hanging of the gallery in the Stallburg. Along the bottom of Teniers's *pasticci*, notes written to the engravers regarding proportions are in many cases still visible through the paint layer.³⁹ After the *pasticci* had fulfilled their purpose, Teniers put them on the market. In the case of Giorgione's *Three Philosophers* (fig. 8), he turned his copy into a genre scene that would be easier to sell, namely by transforming the philosophers into peasants (fig. 9).⁴⁰ From this decision, too, we can recognize the intelligent and ready way in which Teniers turned his work to his own commercial advantage to the maximum possible extent.

Leopold Wilhelm's gallery pictures celebrate the fame of Italian painting, and above all that of the Renaissance; paintings from the seventeenth century are only sporadically represented. The dominance of works of (Venetian) Renaissance painting in these gallery pictures thereby corresponds to that in the archducal collection as a whole: of 517 Italian paintings, over 310 date from the Renaissance and only around sixty from the seventeenth century; the remainder are without an attribution in the inventory of 1659.⁴¹

Yet Leopold Wilhelm also owned a considerable body of 'Northern', that is German and Netherlandish paintings (880 inventory entries). Alongside the Venetian Renaissance, Flemish painting forms another clear focus of the collection: the archduke owned some 120 early Netherlandish pictures and around 270 Flemish Baroque paintings, as compared with some 120 paintings by German artists and some seventy by the Dutch School. Leopold Wilhelm was determined that his collection should be as wide as possible – the description of its 'abundance and diversity' in the *Theatrum Pictorium* is truly appropriate. He managed to acquire paintings by a number of important early Netherlandish masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; in April 1648, for example, he bought Jan van Eyck's *Portrait of Cardinal Albergati* from the Antwerp collection of Peter Stevens.⁴²

Leopold Wilhelm was also very interested in contemporary Flemish art.⁴³ When the archduke took up his post as governor, Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck had only recently died (in 1640 and 1641 respectively) and Rubens's estate (with the exception of the drawings) had already been sold. Several paintings from this estate nevertheless found their way into Leopold Wilhelm's collection, including Rubens's *Stormy Landscape with Philemon and Baucis* (fig. 13), which Charles I, who had coveted it, was prevented from buying on account of the English Civil War. Leopold Wilhelm's court painters played an important role in securing these acquisitions. Both Jan van den Hoecke (1611–1650) and, after his death, David Teniers had excellent contacts with the art trade and Flemish artists. Thus Jan van den Hoecke, for example, was related to the prominent Antwerp art dealer Matthijs Musson (1598–1678), who knew Antwerp's art collections very well and was also in contact with Peter Stevens.⁴⁴ Teniers was likewise acquainted with Stevens and was firmly part of Antwerp's artist network through his own marriage to Anna, the daughter of Jan Brueghel the Elder and the god-daughter of Rubens. And the majority of the contemporary works in Leopold Wilhelm's collection were produced by painters either native to or working in Antwerp. Brussels artists are represented in much smaller numbers and Michaelina is the one and only female artist by whom Leopold Wilhelm owned works. Interestingly, the name of her brother Charles does not appear in the inventory compiled by the Brussels court artist Anton van der Baren. Even if the archduke cannot be said to exhibit a clear preference,⁴⁵ his collection undoubtedly testifies to a certain open-mindedness and a desire to include representative works by all the leading Antwerp painters of the day.

- 1 Flower painting is the only genre for which just one pair of pendants survives. Both garlands of flowers, of which one is included in the exhibition (cat. 22) and the other is untraced, are dated 1652.
- 2 Examples of this are the *Portrait of the Jesuit Martino Martini* (cat. 8): 69.5 × 59 cm; *Portrait of a Commander in the Spanish Army* (cat. 2): 63 × 56.5 cm; *Study of a Young Man* (cat. 4): 69 × 58 cm; *Young Man Smoking a Pipe* (cat. 20): 68.5 × 58.5 cm; *Study of a Young Woman* (cat. 5): 62.5 × 57.5 cm; *Portrait of a Commander* (cat. 7): 73 × 58.5 cm.
- 3 See, for example, Van der Stighelen and Westen 1999, pp. 133–6 (Catharina van Hemessen, 1528–after 1581); p. 140 (Cornelia toe Boecop, after 1553–after 1629); p. 147 (Magdalena de Passe, 1600–1638); pp. 150–51 (Geertrui van Veen, 1602–1643); pp. 152–3 (Maria de Grebber, c. 1602–1680); pp. 156–7 (Anna Maria van Schurman, 1607–1678); pp. 168–9 (Eva van Marle, active c. 1650); pp. 204–5 (Margaretha Wulfraet, 1678–1760); p. 206 (Maria Verelst, 1680–1744). For the context of this phenomenon, see Chapter 5.
- 4 *Catalogue d'une très belle collection de tableaux des écoles flamande, hollandaise, française, allemande et italienne, la plupart du XVII^e siècle et de dessins anciens et livres d'art dont la vente aura lieu par suite du décès de feu M. de Malherbe*, Valenciennes, 17–18 October 1883, lots 86–90: 'leur facture et leur coloris dénotent un excellent disciple de Brauwer et Hals'.
- 5 This is probably true of both, but it has only been proven for the work exhibited here.
- 6 Mertens and Aumann 2003, pp. 288–90.
- 7 This motif is extremely rare in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlandish painting. It does occur, however, in Italian works derived from Roman prototypes. Tommaso Vincidor (b. c. 1536) used the motif in Henry II of Nassau's palace in Breda. Just as in Michaelina's bouquets, the garlands are hung between two ox skulls adorning with ribbons. See G. W. C. van Wezel, *Het paleis van Hendrik III, graaf van Nassau te Breda*, Zwolle/Zeist 1999–2011, pp. 90, 216–218.
- 8 Among all Michaelina's signed works, only cat. 10 and 16 carry a signature that includes both 'fecit' and 'invenit'. Unsurprisingly, they are both history paintings requiring an elaborate 'invented' composition.
- 9 Cf. note 2.
- 10 The date '1649' which supposedly appeared on the work (see cat. 3) would seem to be unreliable.
- 11 The extent to which her work is a stylistic and thematic aberration in the Netherlands is explained elsewhere (see Chapter 5).
- 12 See Delvingt 2009, pp. 67–78. Bullart's writings were published in 1682 in Brussels, Amsterdam and Paris, precisely ten years after his death, and form one of the most important biographical repertoires of the seventeenth century. The *Académie des Sciences et des Arts, contenant les vies et les éloges historiques des hommes illustres, qui ont excellé en ces professions, depuis environ quatre siècles, parmi diverses nations de l'Europe*. For thirty years, Bullart had collected material for this compendium of scholars and artists. The two-volume publication contains 279 biographies.
- 13 Francart played an important role in the entourage of the archdukes. Together with Erycius Puteanus, he organised the funeral of Albert in 1620. See Papy 2003, pp. 217–220.
- 14 Van der Stighelen 2018 (forthcoming).
- 15 The present whereabouts of these small paintings is unknown.
- 16 See also Pierre Vanderlinden, *La Chapelle Notre-Dame du Bon Vouloir à Havré*, Mons 1982.
- 17 See Van der Stighelen 2005, pp. 94–5: 'Vera amicitia quam rara est! sed nostra vera est...'
- 18 Duerloo and Wingens 2002, pp. 132–43; quote p. 133.
- 19 See Chapter 1, note 56.
- 20 Even at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Brussels painters did not always follow the rules. Denijs van Alsloot never became a master. He probably started his career around 1599–1600 when he simultaneously came into contact with the court of the archdukes, although he was only paid for a first commission in 1603. However, between 1599 and 1604 he taught three students who were registered in the guild. Here, too, he was breaking the rules of the painters' corporation, since he was only allowed to have one pupil at a time (whom he was required to train in his studio for three years). See Sabine van Sprang, *Denijs van Alsloot (vers 1568-1625/26). Peintre paysagiste au service de la Cour des Archiducs Albert et Isabelle* (Pictura Nova, xv, 1), Turnhout 2014, pp. 30–31.
- 21 Florent le Rieu, *Les tableaux parlans du peintre namurois*, Namen 1658, p. 15. The poem continues: 'Wautier dans l'Art de la Peinture/ Fait beaucoup plus que la Nature, Puis que comparee à ses traits/ elle prise pour ses Portraits'; Van der Stighelen 2005, p. 212.
- 22 Victoria Sancho Lobis, 'Printed Drawing Books and the Dissemination of Ideal Male Anatomy in Northern Europe', in De Clippel, Van Cauteren and Van der Stighelen 2001, pp. 51–64.
- 23 Erna Kok, 'The Female Nude from Life: On Studio Practice and Beholder Fantasy', in De Clippel, Van Cauteren and Van der Stighelen 2001, pp. 35–50, here pp. 41–4.
- 24 An exception to this rule was Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665) who, as the daughter of the famous artist Giovanni Andrea Sirani (1610–1670), established her own Accademia di Disegno in Bologna, where she also trained female pupils. A study of a male nude by her hand survives (c. 1664). See Modesti 2014, pp. 67–78, 99, 377, fig. 113b and Chapter 5, pp. 5. Until the late nineteenth century, discussions took place in Antwerp and Brussels over who could be allowed to draw from a living male model (fully swathed), whether or not in mixed classes for girls and boys. See Mayer 1987, pp. 21–40; Garb 1994; Gerrish Nunn et al. 1997; Wiertz and Desmedt 2018. With thanks to Wendy Wiertz for providing additional information.
- 25 De Laet 2001.
- 26 Yeager-Crasselt 2015b, pp. 112–15. Peeter Capuyns, for example, was registered on 6 July 1661 as a young apprentice to the famous Brussels painter Pieter Meert (1619/20–1669) in order to learn 'to draw'. Because he only wanted to learn to draw and apparently didn't want to learn to paint, he was allowed to pay half the tuition fee ('half gelt'). See ARAB, T 082, 226.
- 27 Yeager-Crasselt 2015a. In a petition sent to the Brussels magistrate on 28 February 1656, Sweerts refers to the fact that he has opened a drawing academy in that city: 'met grooten kost opgericht ende nu langen tijt onderhouden d'accademie van die teeckeninge naer het leven, tot die welcke veele Jongelingen daegelijcx zijn frequenterende'. He cites this as a reason why he should be exempted from paying taxes and participating in other urban obligations such as the civil militia. See Yeager-Crasselt 2015b, pp. 92–4, 121–2.
- 28 In connection with the specific situation of brothers and sisters who were both artists (particularly twins), see León Krempel, 'Hoeveel kunst zit er in de genen?', in León Krempel, Rainer Zuch et al., *Family Affairs. Brothers and sisters in art. Frères et sœurs dans l'art* (exh. cat. Brussels: Bozar, 2006), pp. 11–17. No examples are given for the seventeenth century.
- 29 See Vlieghe 2005, pp. 63–6; Vlieghe 2011, pp. 30–45; Yeager-Crasselt 2015b, pp. 107–10.
- 30 This connection has already been noted by Huet and Grieten 1998, p. 154.
- 31 Tapié and Sainte Fare Garnot 2007, p. 49.
- 32 Tapié and Sainte Fare Garnot 2007, pp. 168–9. The *Portrait of Jean-Pierre Camus* (1643) is a fine example of his austere and sober style.
- 33 See Hans Vlieghe, 'Beschouwingen over de invloed van Theodoor van Loon', in Van Sprang 2018 (forthcoming); Van Sprang et al. 2011, pp. 19–39.
- 34 Held 1955.
- 35 See Meulemeester 1984, pp. 372–3, fig. 271.
- 36 Yeager-Crasselt 2015b, pp. 41–3.