



**Cornelis de Man**

(Delft 1621 – 1706 Delft)

---

### How to cite

Bakker, Piet. “Cornelis de Man” (2017). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. <https://theleidencollection.com/artists/cornelis-de-man/> (accessed February 03, 2026).

A PDF of every version of this biography is available in this Online Catalogue's Archive, and the Archive is managed by a permanent URL. New versions are added only when a substantive change to the narrative occurs.



Cornelis de Man was baptized in Delft on 2 July 1621. His parents were Willem Cornelisz de Man and Sara Doen de Vries. De Man's father was a successful goldsmith, a craft practiced by three generations of the family, who had risen to the position of dean of the Guild of Saint Eligius. The De Spiegel apothecary shop established by De Man's grandfather in 1584 also remained in the family.<sup>[1]</sup> Two of De Man's aunts married clergymen: Jacobus Crucius (1579–1655) and Johannes Stangerus (d. 1636), both of whom became teachers. Crucius was headmaster of the Latin school in Delft from 1619 to 1655, and his brother-in-law, Stangerus, was deputy headmaster there from 1630 to 1636.<sup>[2]</sup> De Man, therefore, came from an educated family, most of whose members practiced professions that generally guaranteed a higher than average level of prosperity.

De Man would have received drawing lessons from his father, but his painting teacher is not known. He became a member of the Guild of Saint Luke on 29 December 1642 and a year later left for Italy, where he stayed for some time. "Paris was the first city where he stayed to practice his art, but because he desired to go to Rome, he did not allow himself to remain there for longer than a year."<sup>[3]</sup> Via Lyon and Lombardy, De Man ended up in Florence, where he came into contact with "a great nobleman, in whose service he remained for two years."<sup>[4]</sup> He then continued his journey to Rome "where following illustrious examples he practiced his craft for a number of years." Before returning to Delft, he traveled to Venice, "where there was no shortage of patrons, who richly rewarded his art."<sup>[5]</sup>

Around 1653 De Man was once again back in Delft, where he soon garnered artistic and professional praise. This is apparent from the many offices he held: from 1657 to 1695 he was dean of the guild no less than thirteen times; in 1672 he shared the position with Johannes Vermeer (1632–75). In 1661 De Man and Leonard Bramer (1596–1674) provided paintings for the Guild of Saint Luke's meeting room free of charge; De Man was responsible for the mantelpiece and Bramer for the ceiling. He also received paid commissions. In 1675 he copied several portraits of the stadholders for the city council.<sup>[6]</sup> In 1682 he also painted a mantelpiece picture with a scene of Caritas for the *Camer van Charitate* (Chamber of Charity) of which his cousin/nephew, the apothecary Cornelis Anthonie de Man, was regent for some time.

Despite his apparently comfortable position, Delft painters in general were struggling to support themselves at this time. The situation De Man met on his return from Italy differed greatly from the one he had left behind in 1643. In that year, the Delft painting community had been larger than at any other time thanks to a thirty-year period of uninterrupted growth.<sup>[7]</sup> Thereafter, a fall in the demand for paintings led to a decline in the number of painters, gradually at first, but after 1654—the year of the catastrophic Delft explosion, or Thunderclap, when a gunpowder store exploded—numbers began to drop rapidly. By 1706, the year De Man died, only seven painters remained in Delft.<sup>[8]</sup> This decline was not limited to Delft, but that city was the first to feel the effects of the crisis, followed soon by the other cities in Holland.<sup>[9]</sup>

Despite the decline, De Man, unlike Vermeer, never seems to have suffered financially, in part due to his versatility, which enabled him to paint in many genres.<sup>[10]</sup> The talented De Man may not have been an innovator, but he did have a keen understanding of the market. Not until 1660, long after Hendrick van Vliet (1611/12–75) and Gerard Houckgeest (ca. 1600–61) had become successful in the 1650s with their novel paintings of church interiors, did De Man become versed in this genre as well.<sup>[11]</sup> He also only began to paint genre pieces once Pieter de Hooch's (1629–84) and Vermeer's innovations of the 1650s and 1660s had proven successful. Yet De Man was not a slavish imitator. Although he did not distinguish himself in relation to Van Vliet and Houckgeest with regard to his church interiors, De Man developed his own style in genre painting. De Man derived many themes and motifs from Vermeer and De Hooch, but his own idiom and

character make his work easy to distinguish.<sup>[12]</sup>

Portraiture, which De Man practiced throughout his career, was a particular focus in the 1650s upon his return home from Italy.<sup>[13]</sup> After the Disaster Year of 1672 he had little competition as a portraitist in Delft other than Johannes Verkolje (1650–93), who arrived in Delft in that year.<sup>[14]</sup> A fine example of De Man's talent is a monumental portrait he painted around 1673 of the family of Reyer van der Burch (1630–95), clerk of ammunition at the General Depot.<sup>[15]</sup> Other likenesses suggest that he benefited from his family's contacts. It is striking, for instance, that apart from the portrait of his uncle, Jacob Crucius (1655), he also portrayed three other (Delft) clerics in prints.<sup>[16]</sup>

De Man's connections in the apothecary trade led to several commissions from members of the medical profession. The commission for a group portrait of three apothecaries would have come from his family's immediate circle.<sup>[17]</sup> However, his most famous "doctor's portrait," *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Cornelis's Gravesande* of 1681, features numerous local physicians and scholars, including Antonie van Leeuwenhoek (1632–172), who enjoyed renown beyond Delft. That his family's contacts were not limited to this city is apparent from the portrait De Man painted of the Rotterdam doctor and apothecary Ysbrand Ysbrandsz (1634/35–1705), scion of a prominent family and, following his mother's third marriage in 1651, stepson of the famous Rotterdam admiral, Witte de With (1599–1658).<sup>[18]</sup>

Cornelis de Man, like his sister Jannetje, twelve years his junior, never married. They lived together for many years and, from 1684, wrote a number of wills together. According to some authors, De Man also worked in The Hague toward the end of his life, but no proof of his living there has been found.<sup>[19]</sup> He died in Delft where, on 15 March 1706, the dead body of "Cornelis Willem de Man, elderly bachelor in the *Gekroonde Pelikaan* on the Marktveld" was taken from his home by six pallbearers and laid to rest "in the choir of the Nieuwe Kerk."<sup>[20]</sup>

- Piet Bakker, 2017

## Endnotes

1. The founder of De Spiegel was Cornelis Gerritsz, a cobbler's son who married Jannetje Anthonisdr Puffliet in 1584. After his death in 1600, Jannetje married the apothecary Arent Dircksz van den Bosch. Her son Anthonie eventually took over the apothecary with his wife Cornelia van Halmael. He retired from the business in 1649 and was succeeded by his son Cornelis—often confused with the painter—and his wife Maria Blaeu. See H.A. Bosman-Jelgersma, *Vijf eeuwen Delftse apothekers. Een bronnenstudie over de geschiedenis van de farmacie in een Hollandse stad* (Amsterdam, 1979), 76, 148. When Cornelis Anthonie died in 1679, the apothecary closed because his son, Cornelis, had decided to become a goldsmith. In this Cornelis Cornelisz de Man was following in the footsteps of his grandfather Willem Cornelis de Man and his uncle Doede Willems de Man, who had both practiced this profession.
2. E.P. de Booy, "Het onderwijs in Delft van 1572 tot het midden van de 17de eeuw," In *De Stad Delft, cultuur en maatschappij van 1572 tot 1667*, ed. I.V.T. Spaander and R.A. Leeuw (Exh. cat. Delft, Museum Het Prinsenhof, 1981), 114. The scholar Jacobus Crucius, who was born in Antwerp in 1585 and fled to the Dutch Republic with his parents, was the second son of Maria Cornelisdr de Man, who had been married to Gerrit Dircksz van Roon, a town mason. In 1613 her elder sister Trijntje Cornelisdr de Man married Johannes Stangerus, who was a clergyman in Rijsoord in that year.
3. "Parys was de eerste stadt daar hy stil hield om zyn Konst te oeffenen; maar om den trek dien hy naar Rome had, liet hy zig daar niet langer dan een jaar ophouden." Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 99.
4. "Een groot Edelman in wiens dienst hy twee jaren bleef." Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 99.
5. "Daar hy zig verscheide jaren naar doorluchtige voorbeelden oeffende" and "waar hem geen Mecenassen ontbraken, die zyne konst rykelyk beloonden." Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–21; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 99.
6. John Michael Montias, *Artists and Artisans in Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth-Century* (Princeton, 1982), 187.
7. From around 1610, the Delft painting community had grown steadily from twenty to forty-seven painters. Piet Bakker, "Crisis? Welke crisis? Enkele kanttekeningen bij het economisch verval van de schilderkunst in Leiden na 1660," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 27 (2011): 232–70.
8. Piet Bakker, "Crisis? Welke crisis? Enkele kanttekeningen bij het economisch verval van de schilderkunst in Leiden na 1660," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 27 (2011): 232–70.
9. Marten J. Bok, *Vraag en aanbod op de Nederlandse kunstmarkt, 1580–1700* (PhD diss., Utrecht

University, 1994), 121–27.

10. In addition to the genres mentioned here, a few landscapes, fruit still lifes, seascapes, and allegorical works by De Man are known. His earliest known work is an atypical signed and dated painting from 1639, *The Whale-Oil Factory of the Amsterdam Chamber of the Greenland Company on Amsterdam Island off Spitsbergen* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).
11. Walter Liedtke, *Architectural Painting in Delft* (Doornspijk, 1981), 118–24, includes a summary of church interiors attributed to De Man. See also Michiel Kersten, Daniëlle Lokin, and Michiel Plomp, *Delftse Meesters. Tijdgenoten van Vermeer: een andere kijk op perspectief, licht en ruimte* (Delft, Museum Het Prinsenhof) (Zwolle, 1996), 83–86.
12. For a comparison of the work of De Man with that of De Hooch and Vermeer, see Michiel Kersten, Daniëlle Lokin and Michiel Plomp, *Delftse Meesters. Tijdgenoten van Vermeer: een andere kijk op perspectief, licht en ruimte* (Delft, Museum Het Prinsenhof) (Zwolle, 1996), 190–201.
13. Five portraits are known from this period. Moreover, only ten portraits in total can be attributed to De Man with certainty. Laura Bassett, *The Paintings and Career of Cornelis de Man: Art and Mercantile Culture in Seventeenth-Century Delft* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2003), 118.
14. Around 1680 Verkolje painted the famous *Portrait of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek (1632–1723)* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).
15. De Man must have had more than one commission from this family. Reyer van der Burch was married to Geertruida Graswinckel. That her relative Theodorus Graswinckel also owned a portrait by De Man is apparent from a will in which he bequeathes “the portrait of the testate’s late father painted on a plate by C. De Man in Delft” (het pourtrait van zijn Heere testaeurs vader zal. op een plaetje geschilderd door C. De Man tot Delft) to a family member. Gemeentearchief Den Haag, Notarial Archives, Notary P. de Cretser, 23 July 1680.
16. This refers to Samuel de l’Echerpière, Jean Pechlinus, and Volckert Oosterwijck.
17. *Group Portrait in a Chemist’s House*, 1670 (National Museum, Warsaw).
18. *Portrait of the Pharmacist Dr. Ysbrand Ysbrandz. (1634/35–1705) in an Interior*, ca. 1667 (The Leiden Collection, New York); see the entry in this catalogue. See also E.A. Engelbrecht, *De Vroedschap van Rotterdam 1572–1795* (Rotterdam, 1973), 181, 243–44.
19. Michiel Kersten, Daniëlle Lokin, and Michiel Plomp, *Delftse Meesters. Tijdgenoten van Vermeer: een andere kijk op perspectief, licht en ruimte* (Delft, Museum Het Prinsenhof) (Zwolle, 1996), 191.
20. “Cornelis Willem, z. De Man, Bejaarde vrijer op ‘t Marcktvelt in de Gekroonde Pelikaan” and “op t Choor’ in de Nieuwe Kerk.” Gemeentearchief Delft, Begraafboek Nieuwe Kerk 46, fol. 356, 15 March 1706.

- Bosman-Jelgersma, H.A. *Vijf eeuwen Delftse apothekers. Een bronnenstudie over de geschiedenis van de farmacie in een Hollandse stad*. Amsterdam, 1979.
- Houbraken, Arnold. *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*. Amsterdam, 1718–21; revised edition published in The Hague, 1753; reprinted in Amsterdam, 1980, 2: 99–100.
- De Booy, E.P. “Het onderwijs in Delft van 1572 tot het midden van de 17de eeuw.” In *De Stad Delft, cultuur en maatschappij van 1572 tot 1667*. Edited by I.V.T. Spaander and R.A. Leeuw, 112–21. Exh. cat. Delft, Museum Het Prinsenhof, 1981.
- Liedtke, Walter. *Architectural Painting in Delft*. Doornspijk, 1981.
- Montias, John Michael. *Artists and Artisans in Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth-Century*. Princeton, 1982.
- Bok, Marten J. “Vraag en aanbod op de Nederlandse kunstmarkt, 1580–1700.” PhD diss., Utrecht University, 1994.
- Kersten, Michiel, Daniëlle Lokin and Michiel Plomp. *Delftse Meesters. Tijdgenoten van Vermeer: een andere kijk op perspectief, licht en ruimte*. Delft, Museum Het Prinsenhof. Zwolle, 1996.
- Horn, Hendrik J. and Rieke van Leeuwen. *Houbraken Translated: Arnold Houbraken’s Great Theatre of the Netherlandish Painters and Paintresses*. The Hague, 2021, 2: 99–100 [<https://houbraken-translated.rkdstudies.nl/2-60-119/page-90-99/>] (accessed October 31, 2022).