



Gerrit Dou

(Leiden 1613 – 1675 Leiden)

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Gerrit Dou was born in Leiden on 7 April 1613. He was the youngest son of the glazier Douwe Jansz de Vries van Arentsveld of Harlingen (ca. 1584–ca. 1656) and Marritge Jansdr van Rosenberg (d. 1657). According to Dou's first biographer, Jan Jansz. Orlers (1570–1646), burgomaster of Leiden and author of a city chronicle in 1641, Dou evinced “a pleasure and desire toward painting” at a young age.^[1] In 1622, his father sent him to study for a year and a half with the engraver Bartholomeus Dolendo (ca. 1570–1626), and subsequently, for two and a half years, “to the skillful glass-painter Master Pieter Couwenhorn (ca. 1599–1654), so that he could learn the same art.”^[2] Thereafter, Dou and his brother Jan (1609– ca. 1647) worked in their father's shop.^[3] Dou, still relatively young, seems to have been so reckless in his treatment of the glass that, fearing he would have an accident, his father reluctantly decided “to send [his son] to learn the art of painting.”^[4] On 14 February 1628, the fourteen-year-old Dou was apprenticed to Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), a neighbor living in the Weddesteege, just a mere 100 meters from Dou's family home on the Kort Rapenburg. Dou stayed with Rembrandt until the latter moved to Amsterdam in 1631. During the last two years of his training, Dou was joined by Isaac de Jouderville (1612/13–45/48), who lived across the street.^[5] In Rembrandt's workshop, Dou ultimately developed into “an excellent master, especially in small, subtle, and intricate things.”^[6] According to Arnold Houbraken, whoever was surprised “that such noble painterly ability had sprouted from the school of Rembrandt” had forgotten that Rembrandt, too, in his early years “had painted meticulously.”^[7]

Dou probably established himself as an independent artist shortly after Rembrandt's departure, despite the fact that in 1631 he was just eighteen years old. Because of this, his first workshop was in his parents' house.^[8] Dou must have been successful almost from the start. This emerges not only from Orlers's biography, but also from a lecture given by Dou's colleague Philips Angel (ca. 1618–64) to an assembly of Leiden artists.^[9] The most concrete expression of Dou's early fame may well be the right of first refusal that the newly appointed Swedish ambassador to the Dutch Republic Pieter Spiering (ca. 1594–1652) acquired for an annual stipend of 500 guilders in 1635.^[10] When Joachim von Sandrart (1606–88) visited Dou's workshop around 1640, he saw a portrait of Spiering depicted with his wife and mother-in-law and surrounded by his art collection. At the time of this visit, Dou's workshop was no longer on the Kort Rapenburg. In 1640, Dou had bought a house for 2,000 guilders on the Korte Oude Vest (now the Galgewater), where he would work and live until his death.^[11] Dou never married; his house was run for some time by his niece Anthonia van Tol (d. ca. 1684), the sister of the painter Dominicus van Tol (ca. 1635–76). Anthonia was living with her uncle certainly as of 1669, but probably already much earlier. Dou named her his universal heir in the final will he executed in 1674.^[12]

Several of the Dous that Spiering bought found their way to the court of Queen Christina (1626–89) in Stockholm.^[13] Dou also received royal recognition in London, as two works by him were part of the famous Dutch Gift that the Dutch Republic presented to King Charles II (1630–85) upon his restoration to the throne of England in 1660.^[14] Just how many pictures by Dou entered royal collections during his lifetime cannot be determined precisely. We do know that Archduke Leopold William of Austria (1614–62), in Vienna, owned two paintings by Dou in 1661.^[15] Cosimo III de' Medici (1642–1723), too, admired Dou's work. According to his travel journal, he visited the artist's workshop in Leiden on 23 June 1669, and in 1676, the year in which Cosimo became Grand Duke of Tuscany, he instructed his Amsterdam agent to secure work by Dou.^[16]

Given Dou's international reputation, it seems peculiar that he would have preferred Leiden over cosmopolitan Amsterdam, especially considering the high prices he could command for his work. They were so high, in fact, that in

1669 the Leiden town council was deterred from ordering a painting from him.^[17] According to Sandrart, a work by Dou no larger than a hand easily commanded 600, 800, 1,000, or more guilders. These prices reflected not only the artist's reputation and the artistic quality of his work, but also his exorbitant hourly fee of six guilders. Given the painstaking, labor-intensive manner in which Dou worked—according to Sandrart, Dou spent five days alone on the hand of Spiering's wife in the couple's portrait—this hourly rate could increase the price of a painting significantly. Nevertheless, there were art lovers in Leiden willing and able to pay such steep amounts for Dou's work. Johan de Bye (ca. 1621/22–ca. 1670/72) stands out within this exclusive circle of Leiden clients. He owned no fewer than twenty-seven pictures by Dou, which he exhibited in the home of the Leiden still-life painter Johannes Hanoth on the Breestraat in 1665.^[18] Another major client was the famous physician Franciscus de le Boë Sylvius (1614–72), who owned ten pictures by the artist that hung in his stately house on the elegant Rapenburg.^[19] Ten more seventeenth-century Leiden owners of original work by Dou are known, all belonging to the city's elite circles.^[20]

Naturally, Dou's fame and success attracted many pupils, the most important of whom, Frans van Mieris (1635–81), would eventually rival his master. In addition to Dou's relatives Dominicus van Tol and Jacob Toorenvliet (1640–1719), other pupils were Matthijs Naiveu (1647–1726), Bartholomeus Maton (ca. 1643–after 1682), the unknown Gerrit Maes, Pieter van Slingelandt (1640–91), Carel de Moor (1655–1738), and Godefridus Schalcken (1643–1706) from Dordrecht. Moreover, the works of Adriaen van Gaesbeeck (1621–50), Jan Adriaensz van Staveren (1613/14–69), Peeter Leermans (1655–1706), Abraham de Pape (ca. 1620–66), and Isaac Koedyck (1616/17–68) display Dou's influence so strongly that these artists may likewise have studied under him, or at least spent some time in his workshop. This seems particularly likely in the case of Jacob van Spreeuwen (1610–after 1650).^[21]

Dou died in early 1675, and on 9 February, “Mr Gerrit Douw, schilder” (Master Gerrit Dou, painter) was buried in the Pieterskerk. He left his heirs an estate worth approximately 20,000 guilders, an indication of his commercial success.^[22] Dou's art had an enormous impact. He founded a school of painting that flourished well into the eighteenth century. For a long time, he was the most highly acclaimed Dutch painter of the Golden Age, both at home and abroad, even more so than his teacher Rembrandt. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, however, with the rise of Impressionism and the rediscovery of painters such as Frans Hals (1582/83–1666) and Johannes Vermeer (1632–75), appreciation for Dou's work began to wane and his style came to be branded as insipid and fussy.^[23] Even the author of the first in-depth study of Dou's life and work, Wilhelm Martin, confessed in his dissertation of 1901 to having little affinity for the artist's manner of painting and concurred with Joshua Reynolds's assessment that one viewed Dou's pictures “with admiration on the lips, but indifference in the heart.”^[24] In the past few decades, Dou's work has once again been garnering attention and appreciation; notably, he was the subject of a survey exhibition held in The Hague and Washington in 2000.

- Piet Bakker, 2017

Endnotes

1. “Lust ende begeerte tot te Schilder-Konst.” Jan Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), 377.
2. “By den Kunstigen Glaes-schrijver Mr Pieter Couwenhorn, op dat hy deselve konst mocht leeren.” Jan Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), 377. On Dolendo, see Rudolf E.O. Ekkart, “Leidse schilders, tekenaars en graveurs uit de zestiende en het begin van de zeventiende eeuw,” *Leids Jaarboekje* (1974): 171–96. On Couwenhorn, see Egbert Pelinck, “Pieter Couwenhorn, glasschrijver te Leiden,” *Oud Holland* 68 (1953): 51–56.
3. Jan Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), 377. The periods of training with Dolendo and Couwenhorn given by Orlers cannot be correct. In Orlers’s account, assuming that Dou began studying with Dolendo in early 1622, he would have been with Dolendo until mid-1623, and then with Couwenhorn until the end of 1625. According to the registers of the Glassmakers’ Guild, however, on 7 August 1624, Douwe Jansz paid the contribution for the first time for his two sons, Jan Douwes van Arentvelt and Gerrit Douwes van Arentvelt (for the period until August 1625); Regionaal Archief Leiden, Gilde Archief Glazenmakers, inv. 523, fol. 5. He repeated this on 25 August 1625 for his “twee sonen” (two sons), on 10 August 1626 for “syn twee sonen Jan en Gerrit” (his two sons Jan and Gerrit) (Regionaal Archief Leiden, Gilde Archief Glazenmakers, inv. 524, fol 8v [13]), and once again on 12 August 1627 for “syn twee soonen” (his two sons). On 25 July 1628, more than five months after Gerrit went to study under Rembrandt, Douwe Jansz paid only for “syn soon” (his son), referring to Jan. He would continue to pay for Jan until the latter joined the guild in 1632. Gerrit never became a member of the Glassmakers’ Guild because he never worked as an independent glazier. For this, he would have had to submit a work demonstrating his mastery, which he never did. His brother Jan did with success in 1629.
4. “Hem te besteden om de Konste van’t Schilderen te moghen leeren.” Jan Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), 377.
5. Isaac de Jouderville’s father ran an inn on the corner of the Noordeinde and the Kort Rapenburg, diagonally opposite the house where Dou was born and just a stone’s throw from the Weddesteege, where Rembrandt lived. See the biography of Isaac de Jouderville in this catalogue.
6. “Een uytnemend Meester, insonderheydt in cleyne, subtile ende curieuse dingen.” Jan Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), 377.
7. “Dat uit de school van Rembrant zulk een eel konstpenceel ontsproot . . . uitvoerig geschildert heeft.” Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1719; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), 2: 3.
8. Each of the three wills that Dou executed (1657, 1669, 1674) mentions three adjoining houses on the Kort Rapenburg and a house in the Kabeljauwsteeg, all four of which he had inherited from his parents.

The Kabeljouwsteeg was right behind the Kort Rapenburg, and the four separate houses would have constituted a single entity. Douwe Jansz bought the fourth house, located on the Kort Rapenburg, in 1632. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Stadsarchief van Leiden, Stadsbestuur (SA II), Bonboeken, 6612, fol. 291. This purchase, made shortly after Gerrit completed his training under Rembrandt and just before Jan established himself as an independent glazier (see note 3), may have been informed by a need for more work space.

9. Angel gave his lecture on Saint Luke's day, 21 October 1641. It appeared in printed form one year later. Philips Angel, *Lof der schilderkonst* (Leiden, 1642).
10. According to Angel and Houbraken, this was a stipend of 500 guilders. Sandrart, however, mentions 1,000 guilders. Joachim von Sandrart, *Joachim von Sandrarts Academie der Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste von 1675: Leben der berühmten Maler, Bildhauer und Baumeister*, ed. Arthur R. Peltzer (Munich, 1925), 196. See also the essay *Gerrit Dou and His Collectors in the Golden Age* in this catalogue.
11. Dou bought this house on the Korte (Oude) Vest on 1 May 1640. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Oud-rechterlijke archieven, Schepenbank, Waarboek PPP, inv. 67, fol. 189. Four years later, in 1644, Dou had a conflict with a certain Arent van Dam (b. 1615) whose household effects he had taken for nonpayment of rent. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary A. de Man, inv. 549, deed 44 and 46, 24 May 1644. Baer wondered whether this conflict meant that Dou owned yet another house. Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)" (PhD diss., New York University, 1990), 6n16. He did not, for even though the location of the house that Van Dam rented is not mentioned in this document, from other documents pertaining to Van Dam it can be deduced that the dispute was related to the house on the Korte Vest that Dou had bought in 1640. For example, according to a document of 1 March 1641, Van Dam was living "over de Brouwerie van de Hamer aan de Oude Vest" (opposite Brouwerie van de Hamer on the Oude Vest). This is the same address Dou gave in his will of 1657. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary H. Brasser, inv. 395, deed 51, cited in Wilhelm Martin, "Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd" (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901), 166. Three months later, Van Dam and neighbors—including one of the signees of Dou's deed of purchase of 1640—made a statement indicating that he was living on the "Corte Vest." Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary J.J. Verweij, inv. 113, 26 June 1641.

We may thus assume that in 1641 and 1644, Arent van Dam was living in the house that Dou purchased in 1640. Moreover, Van Dam, who married in 1639, probably lived there from the very beginning. Perhaps the relationship between Van Dam and Dou extended further than simply that of landlord and tenant. Arent van Dam was also a painter and the brother-in-law of Joris van Spreeuwen, who was a painter and, according to an anonymous eighteenth-century biographer, a "discipel" (pupil) of Dou in 1643 (see note 21). Therefore one cannot exclude the possibility that Van Dam—by whom not a single work is known—was a close assistant of Dou's, just like his brother-in-law. During this period, Dou probably lived with his family on the Kort Rapenburg. In the seventeenth century, it was not unusual to live with one's parents (or another family member) as long as one remained single.

Dou probably bought the large house on the Korte Vest primarily so he could have a larger workshop than the one in the small house on the Kort Rapenburg. Moreover, he set strict standards—for instance a minimum of dust—for his workshop, and these optimal circumstances could be realized better on the quiet Korte Vest, which faced a broad stretch of water. Wilhelm Martin, “Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd” (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901), 130. He is first documented as living in the house on the Korte Vest in 1657 (see note 12).

12. Assuming that Anthonia van Tol was at least sixteen when she moved in and kept house for Dou, this would have been in 1646 or 1647 at the earliest. Her parents married in February 1630 in Leiden, but then lived—until they settled in Leiden again in 1643—in Bodegraven, where the birth registers only started in 1642. Her exact year of birth is unknown, and since her age is not given in any other document, it cannot be narrowed down more specifically than sometime between late 1630 and early 1643. The first document in which explicit mention is made that Dou and his niece were living together in the house on the Korte Vest is the will he executed in 1669. Wilhelm Martin, “Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd” (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901), 168n1. That she came to occupy a special place in Dou’s heart much earlier emerges from his will of 1657, in which he names his half-sister Trijntje Vechters (ca. 1602–after 1674) as his universal heir, but also stipulates that in the event of her untimely death, the bulk of his possessions were to go to Anthonia. Wilhelm Martin, “Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd” (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901), 166–67.

After Dou’s death in 1675, Anthonia married, on 27 December 1677, the widower Willem van Dam (d. 1705), town messenger and bailiff (he was probably not related to the painter Arent van Dam; see note 11). Anthonia died before 1690, as Willem van Dam remarried in that year. Van Dam himself died in 1705, and the inventory of his possessions included three pieces “gecopieert nae Douw” (copied after Dou). Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary P.C. van Scharpenbrant, inv. 1292, deed 98, 25 October 1705.

13. Christina was only six when her father died in 1632. Accordingly, Count Axel Oxenstierna (1583–1654), who acted as regent during her minority until 1644, would have ordered the shipments. It was Christina herself, however, who returned eleven pictures by Dou to Spiering in 1652, a decision she took during a *crise de nerfs*, a condition that led her to abdicate two years later. See Walter Liedtke, “Gerard Dou,” in *Dutch Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum* (New York, 2007), 1: 155n18. See also the essay Gerrit Dou and His Collectors in the Golden Age in this catalogue.
14. Ronni Baer, *Gerrit Dou, 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (Zwolle, 2000), 31–32.
15. Wilhelm Martin, “Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd” (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901), 152. These were *The Physician*, 1653, and *Girl at a Window with a Lit Candle*, ca. 1660 (both Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). Leopold William’s nephew, Emperor Leopold I (1640–1705), inherited the archduke’s vast collection of paintings upon his death in

1662. The two works mentioned above are what the Amsterdam merchant Carel Quina (1622–89) saw when he passed through Vienna on his way to Jerusalem in 1668 and was given a tour of the imperial collections. The keeper of the collection took him to see “diverse kameren, daar ’t rontsom met ongelofeijckke veel schilderij van de oudste, raerste en beste Italiaense meesters behangen was, geleyck ook van hedendaeghse, als Pater Segers, De Heem, Dou, Mires en andere meer. Deese konst was, so men mij seijde, merendeels van den aertzhartogh Leopoldus vergadert en uijt Neerlant gebracht” (various rooms hung with an incredible number of pictures by the oldest, most rare and best Italian masters, together with modern [ones] such as [Daniel] Seghers, De Heem, Dou, Mieris, and others. This art, I was told, was largely assembled by Archduke Leopold and brought from the Netherlands). Carel Quina, *Door het land van de sultan: Carel Quina’s pelgrimage naar Jeruzalem (1668–1671)*, ed. Ingrid van der Vlis (Zutphen, 2005), 131. For Carel Quina’s pilgrimage and his portrait by Jacob Toorenvliet, see the biography of Jacob Toorenvliet in this catalogue.

16. He was able to acquire two works, including Dou’s *Self-Portrait*, 1658 (Uffizi Gallery, Florence). See also the essay *Gerrit Dou and His Collectors in the Golden Age* in this catalogue.
17. Wilhelm Martin, “*Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd*” (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901), 80–81.
18. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary A. Raven, inv. 777, deed 341, 11 September 1665. For a transcript of the contract and a list of the exhibited paintings, see Wilhelm Martin, “*Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd*” (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901), 171–73. See also the essay *Gerrit Dou and His Collectors in the Golden Age* in this catalogue.
19. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Notarial Archives, Notary A. den Oosterlingh, inv. 1073a (no. 66), 6 April 1673. For a transcription, see Theodoor Hermann Lunsingh Scheurleer, Cornelia Willemijn Fock, and A.J. van Dissel, *Het Rapenburg: Geschiedenis van een Leidse gracht* (Leiden, 1988), 3: 335. See also the essay *Gerrit Dou and His Collectors in the Golden Age* in this catalogue.
20. Of these ten owners of work by Dou, eight appear in the list of individuals taxed for the 200th Penny in 1674. The highest tax levied was from the cloth merchant Abraham Le Pla, residing on the Pieterskerkgracht, who had to pay tax over a capital of 75,000 guilders, followed by the merchant Alexander Koninck on the Nieuwe Rijn with 65,000 guilders, and Gerrit van Heussen on the Rapenburg with 38,000 guilders. These three owners were the twenty-fifth, thirtieth, and seventieth wealthiest inhabitants of Leiden, respectively.

The two lowest-taxed collectors of Dou’s paintings (Johan Apeus de Bye and Daniel Bolten) had a capital of 14,000 guilders. It should be noted that De Bye’s Dou was called a copy in a later inventory, raising the question of whether Bolten’s Dou, too, was a copy. Interestingly, in 1674, two owners of Dou copies (Dirck van Egmond and Jacob van der Bergh) had a capital of 3,500 and 15,000 guilders, respectively. Willem van Dam, who became the husband of Anthonia van Tol (see note 12) and was the owner of three copies of works by Dou in 1705, was taxed 7,000 guilders in 1674. Naturally, no general conclusions may be drawn from this information, but bearing in mind the prices that Dou commanded

for his work, the data indicates that originals by Dou were the sole preserve of the very rich, a relatively small group in Leiden. In 1674, only fifty families with a capital of more than 50,000 guilders were taxed. See Gerrit J. Peltjes, *Leidse Lasten: Twee belastingkohieren uit 1674* (Leiden, 1995).

21. Jacob van Spreeuwen's name does not appear in Houbraken or Weyerman, but is found in an anonymous eighteenth-century manuscript with biographies of Leiden painters, according to which he was a "discipel" (pupil) of Dou in 1643. Regionaal Archief Leiden, Bibl. 254-port. 41a. The veracity of this comment has been questioned (Eric Jan Sluijter et al., *Leidse fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge, 1630–1760* [Exh. cat. Leiden, Museum de Lakenhal] [Zwolle, 1988], 222), and not unjustly, as Van Spreeuwen was born in 1610 and married in 1639. Nevertheless, there are some indications that Van Spreeuwen's "biographer" was probably not entirely mistaken and that in 1643 Van Spreeuwen may have been a workshop assistant for Dou. A possible term of employment with Dou would also explain why he never joined the Guild of Saint Luke.

Jacob van Spreeuwen was the son of Cornelis Joris van Spreeuwen, a baker on the Noordeinde. His name (and the bakery) are mentioned in the deed of purchase (see note 11) of Dou's house on the Corte Vest. The properties were adjacent to each other, which also means that Van Spreeuwen lived less than 20 meters from the inn of Isaac de Jouderville (see note 5). In 1622, Jacob's father became the owner of three properties on the Kort Rapenburg, presumably just across from Dou's parents. The four painters thus grew up together in an area slightly larger than two soccer fields, and three of them (Rembrandt, Jouderville, and Dou) maintained their close relationships. In addition, Van Spreeuwen was the brother-in-law of Arent van Dam (see note 11), who was potentially also active in Dou's studio. It is thus hard to imagine that Van Spreeuwen was not one of Dou's assistants, although his oeuvre is stylistically related to both Rembrandt's and Dou's work.

22. In 1674, he was taxed 16,000 guilders for the 200th Penny Tax, indicating that he was one of the two hundred wealthiest families in Leiden. See Gerrit J. Peltjes, *Leidse Lasten: Twee belastingkohieren uit 1674* (Leiden, 1995), 7.
23. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Dou's Reputation," in *Gerrit Dou, 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, ed. Ronni Baer and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; London, Dulwich Picture Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (Zwolle, 2000), 12–24.
24. "Voorbericht." Wilhelm Martin, *Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd in verband met het schildersleven van zijn tijd* (PhD diss., Universiteit Leiden, 1901).

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