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The gender of colors in Dutch art theory

Thijs Weststeijn

Philip Sohm's 1995 article, 'Gendered style in Italian art criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia', revealed a striking constant in art theory below the Alps: ideas about painting styles, techniques and materials were defined to a great extent by a gendered vocabulary centering on the masculine-feminine opposition.¹ One of Sohm's key quotations, Michelangelo's reported negative judgment on oil as a binding medium, deserves elaboration in the context of Dutch art. The sculptor allegedly preferred fresco and condemned oil paint as 'effeminate'; the art of the Netherlands, traditionally associated with the new oil medium, was likewise, in Michelangelo's view, only appreciated by women — especially very young or very old ones at that, as well as nuns.

In Francisco de Holanda's original account, Michelangelo asserts that the art of the Northerners is only suitable for the feeble-minded and has a strong emotional effect on them, for it concentrates on the mere surface of things and on deceiving the eye: 'in Flanders they paint to deceive the gaze directed at the external'.² We do not know whether the master ever said this; what is more important is that contemporary Dutchmen took the statement seriously. Both Karel van Mander and Samuel van Hoogstraten repeated that Michelangelo regarded oil as only fit for the weaker sex (calling it *vrouwen ambacht*, woman's craft, and *wijvenwerk*, wives' work).³ In their treatises, which contain specific information on artists' materials and practical issues such as brushwork, the gendered language attributed to Michelangelo resonates. The gender division was related to the Italian stereotypical view of painting materials in the Netherlands, an assumption rooted in the myth about the invention of oil paint. It was said that this Netherlandish technique was pitting a deceptive, seductive, and illusory art against the true conception of art based on antiquity's linear purity.⁴ Van Hoogstraten, for instance, said that Jan van Eyck only discovered oil paint 'after long, alchemistic research', a view he shared with his Italian predecessor, Vasari, who for the same reasons described Van Eyck as a 'sophist', seeking intellectual misdirection.⁵ As late as the eighteenth century, Arnold Houbraken condemned a style that indulged in the blending (*verdrijven*) of colors, which led to weak chiaroscuro and soft highlights, calling this a feminine (*vrouwelyk*) manner — in this, we hear a remote echo of De Holanda.⁶

This article explores the afterlife of Michelangelo's remarks in Dutch art theory. Even though the fresco versus oil dichotomy lost its practical significance for painters in the Netherlands, the opposition of a masculine

Detail fig. 5

Rembrandt, *The conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*, 1662

versus a feminine choice of materials, brushes and illusionistic techniques kept determining the debate throughout the century. The male-female opposition thus adds to that great opposition that Jan Emmens identified as the key differentiation in Dutch art theory: the pitting of learned against vulgar painting, which was essentially an elaboration of the ancient division between the Attic and Asian styles in rhetoric.⁷ As this article argues, Emmens ignored the opposition's fundamentally gendered nature.

It is striking that a very practical element of art theory — relating to binding medium, pigments and brushwork — became attached to a very indeterminate and wide-ranging one, namely gender. 'Color', in effect, appears as a problematic term with meanings ranging from the most material one (the pigment itself) to a metaphorical one (for instance, in relation to a woman's makeup) and ultimately an ideological one (the 'rhetorical colors' that should be applied with utmost care for a text or artwork to remain persuasive). An echo of all these connotations resonates in the modern English — and Dutch — usage of the term 'colored' as, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 'imbued with an emotive or exaggerated quality'.⁸

This article explores, firstly, the metaphor comparing the painter's colors and a woman's makeup; and secondly, the association of the 'rough' paint layer with a 'masculine' style. This reveals how a specific kind of brushwork could turn the 'weak' art of oil into a respectable demonstration of virtuosity.

Frail as mirrors. Women and oil paintings

Dutch art theory often identifies paintings as women — and Pictura, the art of painting, as a particularly seductive one. Van Mander, for instance, states that 'in many respects, the art of painting is like a beautiful woman who is very jealous of her lovers or suitors'⁹; Van Hoogstraten mentions the 'alluring power' with which the Muse, a 'flattering siren', 'seduces one to become an artist'.¹⁰ Since Eric Jan Sluijter's recent studies, Dirck Raphaelsz. Camphuysen's remark on art's feminine deceitfulness as seductress of sight (*verleydster van't gesicht*) is well-known; the term *liefhebber* (art lover) itself reveals to what extent the discourse on art was infused with notions stemming from courtly love lyric.¹¹ But Camphuysen's text has additional strong language condemning viewers of paintings for their 'fornication through seeing', in effect repeating an old commonplace in Christian apologetic texts that associated idolatry with fornication.¹² The more successful the painting was in its deceit and its quality as a 'mirror', the more prone it became to the accusation of feminine charm and shallowness. As in Michelangelo's statement, the fickleness and vanity attributed to women were associated with certain paintings that were likewise deceitful and as superficial as mirrors. It is a striking feature of Dutch art theory that it often turned these negative qualities into laudable aspects. Indeed, paintings that succeeded the best at deceiving were praised the most. One of the first theoretical statements in the vernacular was Lucas de Heere's paeon to the Van Eycks' *Ghent Altarpiece*, calling it a set of 'mirrors, not panels'.¹³ For Van

Hoogstraten, too, the comparison with a mirror's surface remained the consummate expression of praise.¹⁴

Camphuysen's remark on the 'whorish' character of paintings echoes Shakespeare's better known, yet facetious metaphor comparing paintings to prostitutes — they both use paint layers to hide their true nature.¹⁵ As the pimp Pompey asserts in *Measure for Measure* (IV, 2), 'Painting (...) is a mystery; and (...) whores (...) using painting, do prove [their] occupation a mystery'. Elsewhere in the play (II, 4), the metaphor of fickleness returns as women are called as 'frail (...) as the glasses where they view themselves, / Which are as easy broke as they make forms'; they are 'soft as [their] complexions are, / And credulous to false prints'. The mirroring quality of oil paint, similar to a sophistical delusion dissimulating the object's true substance (namely mere pigment and canvas), is associated with women enhancing their beauty through a deceptive layer of makeup colors.

A key term in discussions of the seductive quality of the paint layer is therefore 'ornament', which stems from rhetorical theory.¹⁶ The ancient rhetoricians used *ornatus* to refer to the *colores rhetorici*, or 'lively colours of Rhetorike' to quote Franciscus Junius: the figures of speech with which the speakers tried to make their arguments more persuasive.¹⁷ The orators stressed that figures of speech must be used with moderation to avoid affectation. They equated this allure of figurative rather than literal speech with feminine charm.¹⁸ Some therefore criticized rhetoric in general, such as Agrippa of Nettesheim, an author well known to Van Hoogstraten: 'Rhetoric [is] nothing but (...) an art of persuasion, and of stirring the inclinations; charming the souls of the unthinking with (...) well-wrought gaudery, and deceptive semblance (...) [by] those strumpets' cosmetics of exposition'.¹⁹

These remarks all have their roots in the classics; the poet Propertius's criticism of his sweetheart's only-too-obvious makeup is perhaps the best known example. It inspired the Italian author Lodovico Dolce to make a literal equation of painterly coloring and the colors used in makeup.²⁰ He observed that Titian never allowed his colors to descend into artificial ornament (*ornamenti affettati*), but focused on 'the warm softness and delicacy of nature'.²¹ In the Dutch literature, the painterly metaphor was treated as commonplace in relation to female vanity. Jan de Brune, for instance, compared the deceit of women who adorn themselves with cosmetics to that of an artwork: these ladies 'are nothing but paintings, made to deceive the eyes'.²²

Painting skin, paint as skin. Cosmetic colors

The gendered appreciation of color comes to the fore most clearly in relation to the painting of faces. Painting's great power, in comparison to sculpture and even to poetry, rests to a large extent in its ability to make visible the motions of the mind through the colors of the face (and according to the Aristotelian theory of the passions this should be interpreted literally: the passions consist of the heating and cooling of the blood, rising from the heart to the head, thus changing the colors of the face).²³ 'Picture,' says Junius, is able 'to performe greater matters with one colour, then any other Art is able to effect with diverse meanes: shee doth

shew the shadowes, shee observeth the diversitie which is in the looke of a mad man, in a sad or cheerfull countenance also'.²⁴ This author, who attaches great value to the depiction of emotion, allots a special role to materials and explains how in antiquity, sculptors tried to represent the figures' facial discoloration through the skillful mixture of metals. Dutch epigrams often highlight how the material used reflected the sitter's temperament (a golden effigy of Mary of Burgundy expresses her beneficence; a statue of the murderous Duke of Alva should be made from copper).²⁵ But Junius's statement on alloys is more subtle. The artist Aristonidas used an alloy when he had to make an image of a man who had a 'mad fit' after hurting his own son — clearly an instance of mixed emotions, anger, pity, regret and paternal love: 'he mixed iron and brasse, that the rustinesse of the iron shining through the clearenesse of brasse might represent a shamefaced rednesse'. Likewise, for making a statue of pale-faced, languishing Jocasta, a tragic heroine, the artist 'found a way to mixe in her face some silver with the brasse, knowing that the brasse would draw from the languishing silver such a colour as might serve the present occasion'.²⁶

Yet, as Junius's theory makes clear, this critical aspect of art is also most prone to failure. When an artist's colors betray their artificiality, the effect of lifelikeness is lost — just like the application of the wrong colors in a woman's makeup destroys the effect of beauty by betraying its falsehood: 'Adorne a thing purely and soberly (...) and it shall grow better and better; daube it over on the contrary with the painting colour of women, and it shall resemble a jugglers delusion'.²⁷ He refers to *veruw-cieraeten*, coloristic ornaments, and ascribes 'bewitching' powers to them, which is in effect a commonplace from the tradition of art theory²⁸: 'coloured pictures for all that, as they shew a more lively force in the severall effects and properties of life and spirit, so doe they most commonly ravish our sight with the bewitching pleasure of delightsome and stately ornaments'.²⁹

The Dutch equivalents of the term *ornatus*, such as *verzieringen* and *opsmuk*, are associated with color as the added embellishment of the foundation laid down by drawing.³⁰ Van Hoogstraten, for one, makes a clear distinction between the rendition of flesh tone that derives its success from its 'naturalness' and the recognizably artificial 'cosmetic': 'The nature of soft flesh color is so appealing that no cosmetic can come near'.³¹ Van Mander, who also uses the term *versieren* in connection with paint,³² conceives the metaphor so literally that in his chapter on color, he discusses the depiction of jewelry (*sieraden*) and gems — and, in the case of ultramarine, there was indeed a direct connotation between gemstones and pigments.³³ We may only refer obliquely to the rich connotations between the supposed magical power of gemstones to 'act at a distance' and the equally seductive powers attributed to women's attire and the art of painting alike.³⁴ As Van Hoogstraten tells us, certain elemental qualities are inherent to particular colored stones³⁵; he echoes his Italian predecessor Gianpaolo Lomazzo, who analyzes in more detail the affective power of the colors of gems, comparing their effectiveness with that of alchemy.³⁶

The comparison between the painter's pigments and female makeup is popular in early modern literature. Artistic metaphors occur in this context in books that codify civilized behavior. The best example may be a French treatise by Jean Liébault, featuring a woman who criticizes the use of cosmetics (*De l'embellissement et ornement du corps humain*, 1582). The text advises that women should follow the example of good painters and be moderate in their use of gaudy colors, or avoid them altogether:

[The virtuous woman] thinks that colors, paints, and all types of pigments most often serve as stimulants to all the immodesties that infect, pollute, and contaminate the singular beauties of the spirit. That it does harm to nature to dissimulate, sophisticate, and adulterate the form and figure of the body, which [nature] has shaped with such great providence. A good painter would consider that a great injury had been done to him and would have just occasion to become indignant against him who would wish to correct and remake a picture or likeness that he had perfected with great care and diligence.³⁷

In the context of the *paragone* between color and draftsmanship, theories of painting might develop a more positive appreciation of pigments and paints. Jacqueline Lichtenstein has analyzed recently how the French Academy (especially the *Rubénistes* among them, who favored the master's art) judged Rubens's brushwork using traditional terminology that compared it to feminine makeup, but in a positive sense. The academician Gabriel Blanchard, for one, used the expression *le beau fard* (beautiful cosmetics) to characterize Rubens's art.³⁸ Lichtenstein observes how the rhetoricians' 'metaphorization of makeup', when discussing the rhetorical colors, developed in the seventeenth century:

[The metaphor] acquired even more resonance to the degree that its object, coloring, appeared in the work as a physical fact. Coloring, when applied to painting (...) became no longer just a word but sensible, tactile, and visible, made of paste and ointments, genuine pigments like those used in women's cosmetics. The seductive artifice of the coloring praised by the colorists [i.e., the *Rubénistes*] partook of the courtesan's and prostitute's allures.

When the art critic Roger de Piles wrote that the work of Rubens was based on deceptive coloring and pretense, he was being positive: 'it is true that it is only cosmetics [*un fard*]; but one would wish that all these paintings that are made nowadays had been similarly fake [*fardés*]'.³⁹ Turning the reproach of alluring pigments into a positive statement, De Piles echoes P.C. Hooft's Dutch epigram that praises Rubens's *Maidens Crossing the Tiber* for the physical excitement aroused by the painted female nudes.⁴⁰

In this context, we may also think of the many seventeenth-century poems in which the seductive qualities of a painting are specifically connected to the flesh color (*lijfverwe*, in Junius's vocabulary) of the

depicted women: this may delude the spectator so much that he even reaches out to touch the paint surface.⁴¹ In his chapter on color and paint, Van Mander illustrates their seductive power (*der Verwen cracht*), pointing out that ‘the hearts of many swim in a sea of luxury’ when looking at women.⁴² Similar commonplaces have been analyzed in Eric Jan Sluiter’s publications about the female nude in Dutch art. In works such as Goltzius’s *Danaë*, the protagonist’s fully exposed skin that earns her a golden reward, demonstrated the painter’s powers. Goltzius dazzled his public through he seductive gloss of the oil medium, turning the paint surface into a seemingly animate human being, for which they paid him handsomely (fig. 1).⁴³ His painting in Basel, which may be an allegory of alchemy, conveys that the skillful mixing of materials enables the artist to equal a woman’s powers in transforming her appearance (leading to financial rewards in the form of gold).⁴⁴ Portraying a woman looking in a mirror and adjusting her ornaments could also allude to the fraudulent character of both female beauty and the mirroring surface of the oil paint

1
Hendrik Goltzius, *Danaë*, 1603,
oil on canvas, 173.3 x 200 cm, Los Angeles,
Los Angeles County Museum of Art (photo:
Image Collection Institute of Art History,
University of Amsterdam).

layer. Rubens’s *Venus at her mirror* and Rembrandt’s *Young woman trying on earrings* present these associations (figs. 2–3).⁴⁵

In this context, we should observe how art theory presents ornament, a subjective quality, as the opposite of beauty, an objective quality; this opposition responds to the *paragone* pitting color against design. Beauty is seen as a property of the thing that the painter depicts. *Ornatus*, in contrast, is an added value that the painter only achieves in the stage of the handling of the brush (the relevant Dutch term is *handeling*, equivalent to the rhetorical concept of *actio*): adding colors to the framework laid by drawing as a ‘final touch’.⁴⁶ *Ornatus*, closely associated with the quality of grace, is essentially a subjective illusion. It has to persuade the beholder of an impression of beauty: ‘to persuade our souls in regarding it, such that one truly greets them as beautiful’, as Willem Goeree’s treatise on painter’s anatomy puts it. This grace is a rhetorical effect that derives not from innate physical proportions but ‘from a sweet and charming gesture or motion of the eyes, mouth and hands that expressly accompanies the caressing tones of the tongue’.⁴⁷ Goeree associates *verciersel* directly with deception⁴⁸: beauty, he says, must be simple, and so true to itself ‘that it is not easily achieved by a cosmetic embellishment’; ornament can only be an effective ‘bewitchment of the eyes’ where it acts as ‘a wise and well-used adornment’.⁴⁹ He refers for confirmation of this view to Cicero’s opinion that ‘feminine beauty’ consists of women’s ability to suggest that ‘they are pleasing in the eyes of men because of it; and spur them to caresses’. This view of the affective power of beauty was supposedly why, in antiquity, it was regarded as ‘less of an offence to have abused a beautiful woman than an ugly one’.⁵⁰

The term ornament is thus connected with how art theory contrasts subjective charm or grace (related to *colorito*) with objective beauty (related to *disegno*) using a gender-related vocabulary. The supposedly feminine grace has a treacherous character that shows only on the outside, whereas masculine beauty is said to arise out of physical health and good proportions, which cannot be faked. Junius, for instance, says that what matters in art is not the paint surface, but its underlying strength or essence: ‘the true following of a rare Masters Art, doth not consist in an apish Imitation of the outward ornaments, but rather in the expressing of the inward force’.⁵¹

Paintings as shields. The manly brush

Dutch theories of painting do not consistently condemn color. By contrast, they often elevate it above draftsmanship; texts such as Van Mander’s and Van Hoogstraten’s stand out from the tradition of art theory by devoting an inordinate amount of attention to the subject. We can therefore begin with the hypothesis that in addition to the Propertian condemnation of feminine paints, another ideal was developed that foregrounded a ‘masculine’ manner of coloring.

Masculinity, in Van Hoogstraten’s book, seems to come to the fore especially in his many military and martial metaphors, which have been identified by Celeste Brusati.⁵² Essential here is the etymology that derived

2

Peter Paul Rubens, *Venus at her mirror*, 1614/1615, oil on wood, 124 x 98 cm, Vaduz, Liechtenstein, Sammlungen des Fürsten von Liechtenstein (photo: Image Collection Institute of Art History, University of Amsterdam).

the Dutch verb for painting, *schilderen*, from *schilden*, shields: the metaphor of the painting as a mirror is replaced by a manlier one — the artwork as a piece of armor.⁵³ Van Hoogstraten explains that ‘one will easily admit that the ancient Batavians have known no other paintings than their shields’.⁵⁴ Hence he states that Teutons and Batavians should be represented wearing shields with painted images. Contemporary prints confirm this idea; Philip Cluverius represents Germanic soldiers with large, rectangular shields, one of them decorated with a painted bird (fig. 4).⁵⁵ Van Mander and Junius cite the same etymology of the ‘Dutch verb *Schilderen* (...) since it is probable that for a long time, the ancient martial inhabitants of these lands have used Art only to ornament their shields’.⁵⁶ This belief reflects a fundamental attitude in the Dutch appreciation of their ancestors. Ultimately, the ‘Golden Age’ of Dutch painting (*gulde eeuw* in Junius’s Dutch) reflects the *aetas aurea* of Germanic history when Tacitus praised the Batavians for their martial prowess and their noble simplicity. Junius highlights the *stoutmoedigheyd der Duytschen*, Germanic

3

Rembrandt, *Young woman trying on earrings*, 1654, oil on panel, 39.5 x 32.5 cm, St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum (photo: © The State Hermitage Museum / photo by Vladimir Terebenin, Leonard Kheifets, Yuri Molodkovets).

courage⁵⁷; Van Hoogstraten praises in particular the weaponry of the Rhinelanders.⁵⁸

Praising the military virtues of the Germanic tribes — virtues that allegedly reflected cultural values — was problematic, because the ancient Romans, especially Tacitus, had presented them as a primitive people. Therefore, as a study by Hans van de Waal has shown, Dutch writers reiterated a commonplace of ancient historiography for describing and appropriating foreign civilizations: the simplicity of the barbaric tribes was deemed a positive value that had been lost by the Romans themselves.⁵⁹ For our discussion, it is relevant that the ‘rhetorical colors’ were the main metaphor to articulate this paradoxical appreciation of the barbarians.

The preference for Germanic antiquity follows closely the topical preference of ancient authors for the ‘roughness’ and ‘crudity’ of an earlier age. Cicero’s formula in *De oratore* was made famous by Ernst Gombrich: ‘How much more brilliant (...) in beauty and variety of coloring are new pictures compared to the old ones. But though they captivate us at first

4a | 4b

Nicolaas van Geilenkercken, *Batavians*, 1616, engraving, published in Philippus Cluverius, *De Germania antiqua*, Leiden 1616 (photo: Special Collections, University of Amsterdam).

sight the pleasure does not last, while the very roughness and crudity of old paintings maintain their hold on us'.⁶⁰ This primitive civilization was positively judged in gendered terms: its 'uncorrupt nature', simplicity and masculinity served as a foil to the Romans' 'whorish' or 'effeminate' appearance.⁶¹ One English author, discussing the Dutch, praised their ancestors' 'honesty of lyf, a rare thing among pagan people'; Caesar would have reported that 'the youth of Germanie were not given to the lusts of the flesh': these healthy men refrained from intercourse with women younger than twenty years and married only virgins.⁶²

The topical remarks on primitive virtues are echoed in Junius's theory, where the appreciation of uncorrupt civilization and that of an art which is 'close to nature' apparently overlap. In fact, many of Junius's Dutch terms reflect a gendered opposition: he speaks of effeminate (*verwijft*) and unmanly (*onmanlick*) art.⁶³ To strengthen his aversion to coloristic (*valscheverwig*) artifice, he uses the term *blancketsel* — which originally refers to cosmetic pigmentation — as a term of art criticism, a synonym for *bedrieghlick verwen cieraet*, the 'deceptive ornament of color'.⁶⁴ Yet, it is harder to establish what practical matters he has in mind when he praises

a work's 'very manly boldness' (*gantsch mannelicke kloeckheyd*), its 'masculine impression of stateliness' (*manhaftige schijn-staetelickheyd*), or when he contrasts masculine *ornatus* with effeminate *fucus*.⁶⁵

Junius, for whom Germanic antiquity was a central focus of his studies (although most of these developed only after his treatise on painting), equated masculine appearance and behavior with a certain crudity that was the opposite of 'smoothness'.⁶⁶ Moreover, he thought that the painter should evade gaudy effects and give the impression that a minimum of colors had been used. His book quotes Quintilian: 'The dignitie belonging to a man must be stout and uncorrupted; it cannot abide an effeminate smoothnesse, nor such a colour as is procured by choice painting; seeing bloud and strength must make it goodly and faire'.⁶⁷ The Dutch text speaks about healthy coloring (*ghesonde verwe*) that contrasts with the 'consumed smoothness of gaudy-colored cosmetics' (*de vertaerde glattigheyd van hoogh-verwighe blancketsels*).⁶⁸ It is worth quoting a longer passage where Junius explains his vision of ideal antiquity, determined by the virtues of virile, martial simplicity, and praises plain coloring above gaudy ornamentation:

Those who are taken with an outward shew of things (...) iudge sometimes that there is more beautie in them which are polled, shaved, smoothed, curled, and painted, than incorrupt Nature can give unto them: even as if pulchritude did proceed out of the corruption of manners. (...) if any man study to trim bodies with an effeminate kinde of polling and painting, the very labour and affectation of such a forced beauty shall make them most ill-favoured and ugly.

Junius continues this simile with a quote from Lucian, which declares that refined dress is not befitting to masculine strength, and he concludes that painters should address the subject matter around them in an uncorrupted, simple painting style. In Dutch, Junius speaks here about the painter's use of 'whorish makeup' (*hoerachtige cieraeten*):

If any man should offer to adorne a lusty and stout wrestler (...) with purple cloaths and other whorish ornaments, disguising likewise and painting his face; would he not seeme to be very ridiculous, for shaming the man after this manner? Even so is it for the most part better to decke his worke in a rug [i.e., rough] gowne, than to adorne it with strumpet-like ornaments.⁶⁹

Among Dutch painters, Van Hoogstraten, for one, retains Junius's preference for nature above artifice. Thus, he not only mentions the sobriety in the attire of the Teutonic tribes,⁷⁰ but he also repeats Junius's criticism of extravagance, quoting Vitruvius's statement that 'a ship should look like a ship, an image like a human being, or (...) a known or natural creature'.⁷¹

Here, we may introduce an artwork as an example illustrating these ideological debates on the 'roughness' of ancient Dutchmen, combining a subject from Batavian history with a decided lack of 'smoothness' in the

5

Rembrandt, *The conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*, 1662, oil on canvas, 196 x 309, Stockholm, Nationalmuseum (photo: Image Collection Institute of Art History, University of Amsterdam).

execution: Rembrandt's *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* (fig. 5). Rembrandt's painting demonstrates a stylistic roughness of brushwork, using blurry contours as a technical shorthand and for spatial effect, which may have contributed to the Amsterdam Burgomasters' discontent with the work.⁷² Junius foreshadowed what Van Hoogstraten and others would later write about loose brushwork: the artist must take care that when 'he hitteth the maine and weightiest points of art aright, in making of an entire body, the same needs not trouble himselfe much about the neatnesse of some little haire, and of the uttermost ends of the nailles'.⁷³

Yet Rembrandt may have sought to create an impression of 'rough' materiality for iconographical reasons too. The master was not only faithful to Tacitus's account that Civilis, the Batavians' leader, let his beard grow from the beginning of the uprising, as the tribesmen were wont to do before they killed a man; he also depicted Civilis's full face with his one eye, identifying him as an apparent enemy of Rome, similar in appearance to Hannibal. The rough paint surface accorded with the kind of antiquity preferred by Junius — not 'polled, shaved, and smoothed', but unadorned. In the *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*, the crusty paint surface was no longer a mirror — if any metaphor might come closer, it may be that of the battered shield of one's forefathers. The female attribute was replaced by a manly one. Calling attention to a work's materiality was, perhaps, a conscious effort to avoid the accusations of effeminate fraud and frailty that were traditionally associated with oil painting.

The rough paint layer as a ‘mask of ignorance’

We see here the fundamental division that Jan Emmens recognized as the most enduring dichotomy in Dutch art theory. He traced it back to the ancient ‘Attic’ versus ‘Asiatic’ styles. Seventeenth-century authors use the terms *net* or *fijn*, meaning ‘smooth’ or ‘fine’, versus *ruw* or *los* — ‘rough’ or ‘loose’.⁷⁴ The distinction derives in essence from a line of verse by Horace, which Van Hoogstraten quotes: ‘You may look at this Painting from close by: / And the other has a more pleasing appearance from farther away’.⁷⁵ The statement suggests that the painter has a choice here, as a remark by Gerard de Lairese seems to confirm: ‘The handling of the brush is of two kinds, very different from each other, for the one is fluid, and tender or smooth; the second is robust and quick, or bold’.⁷⁶ Dutch art theory presents a couple of topics in which this debate is particularly relevant: Rembrandt’s manner, in which the very surface structure of the paint is used to illusory effect (discussed in some detail in Van Hoogstraten’s book), and the smooth painting style of the *fijnschilders* (whom Van Hoogstraten fiercely criticizes at several points in his treatise).⁷⁷ Van Hoogstraten regards those among his countrymen who produced ‘unnecessarily finicky work’ as particularly objectionable, criticizing painters who finish their works with ‘a smooth strictness, or precise finickiness’, a ‘sleepy’ manner of working that only pleases ‘mindless’ art lovers — we are reminded of Michelangelo’s condemnation of those works that only appeal to women.⁷⁸ The *liefhebbers* are clearly in love with the wrong sort of Muse — one who paints her face, and is only after their money.

Instead, Van Hoogstraten prefers an impression of simplicity and sincerity: ‘an artist’s brush must always be honest, and never false, in order to properly express virtue and truth’.⁷⁹ It is therefore not surprising that he expresses his dislike of an excess of ornament in a comparison with the cosmetics used by damsels (*Jufferen*): artificial ornament actually causes them ‘to lose that which they seek with such fervent desire’. The ultimate paradox is perhaps a ‘forced looseness (*lossicheyt*)’ in outward appearance, ‘this all too forced casualness’ that provokes disgust ‘because we see that everything is artificial’.⁸⁰ Here, in the context of ‘seeming artlessness’, the courtly ideal of *sprezzatura* comes to the fore as an essentially manly manner of dissimulation (and an echo resonates with the Italian poets, including Bronzino, who compared the painter’s brush to the male sexual organ).⁸¹

Although Van Hoogstraten does not explicitly call the fine manner feminine and the rough one masculine, there are older sources for this idea, especially in relation to Titian’s style, which is a great topic of discussion in Dutch art theory. Titian’s late works are consummate examples of the Venetian pole of the *paragone* pitting design against coloring; Van Hoogstraten contrasts the fine manner of the painters from Rome and Tuscany with the more vivid handling of the Northern Italians who ‘not only adorned art with beautiful colors, and shining varnish, but gave it all life’.⁸² In connection to the master’s much-discussed brushwork, Van Mander analyzed Titian’s *sprezzatura* as hiding consummate skill

behind an appearance of looseness.⁸³ In Italy, Titian’s late style was defined as a masculine one in contrast to his earlier, more feminine works:

Titian (...) sometimes painted with so many and so diligent brushstrokes that he almost seemed to want to make the hairs countable, and sometimes he contented himself with suggesting his works roughly with few and extremely sketchy strokes. Intelligent viewers of such a different manner will recognize the grace of the female in the one, the masculine robustness in the other; the one they pass by in praise, before the other they halt with astonishment; they feel softly affected by the delicate, but ravished violently by the rough.⁸⁴

When Van Hoogstraten praised Titian’s late manner, which even left the ground layer visible for an abbreviation of his method, he may have been thinking of his own master who, as Van de Wetering has argued repeatedly, imitated and emulated precisely this element from Titian’s late style.⁸⁵ As Van Mander and Van Hoogstraten stress, the *semblance of simplicity*, behind which great skill is hiding, determines the qualities of Titian’s late manner: ‘There is much more difficulty in it than one would think (...) the labor is concealed by great art (...) things appear effortless, which were yet done painstakingly’.⁸⁶

The courtly virtue of *sprezzatura* presents an interesting parallel between the painter’s colors and the ‘lively colours of Rhetorike’. When the poet and statesman Constantijn Huygens, whose ideas on painting echo his rhetorical ones, praises the portraitist Michiel van Mierevelt, he points out that the master demonstrates simplicity and naturalness both in his manner of painting and in his style of speaking: ‘No one has been able to state that [Van Mierevelt] was not himself (...) When one looks at his actions, one sees that they echo his manner of painting. In the treatment of difficult subjects his behavior, attitude and language are plain’. What is described here is *professed* artlessness: Van Mierevelt ‘deliberately hides behind a mask of ignorance and in so doing makes it very difficult for experts’.⁸⁷

This way of thinking about the rough manner is probably what made it possible for Dutch authors to be so positive about brushwork in oil painting; carelessness could be a manly virtue only when it gave the impression that it *hid great skill*. For a literary source confirming the qualities of the rough manner, Van Hoogstraten may also have been inspired by his reading of Juan Huarte’s *Examen des ingenios para las ciencias*, a text combining rhetorical and painterly metaphors that was translated into Dutch in 1659.⁸⁸ This author bluntly asserts that affected speech is distasteful to right-minded people: ‘the putting together of pure and smooth words is not to be found in men of great understanding’.⁸⁹ In this context, Huarte compares Socrates’s awkward, unrhetorical manner of speaking to a ‘roughly’ painted picture that in fact conceals true wisdom and ‘excellent work and painting’.⁹⁰ Aristotle himself would have deliberately written in ‘an obscure, rough style (...) thus ponderously and carelessly, without including any embellishment of his words, or any fine manner of speaking’.⁹¹ Supposedly, the paradox became very clear in the

example of Saint Paul, whose lack of education enabled him to speak with great persuasive force despite the fact that 'his innate ability was not trained sufficiently to learn foreign languages, and to express them with perfect and refined polish (*netticheyt*), and add all the necessary ornaments (*vercieringen*)'.⁹² For a similar view in the context of the art of painting itself, we may point to the 'handling' in Rembrandt's *Self-portrait as the Apostle Paul* (1661): here, the artist consciously sought a rough style in contrast to 'refined *netticheydt*', perhaps to harmonize form and content and ally them to the reputed oratorical style of the subject (fig. 6).

According to Michelangelo, Netherlandish art would please only women, especially the most emotionally unstable ones, and also monks and 'gentlemen without genuine feel for harmony'.⁹³ Although Dutch art theorists may have realized that the 'weak' art of oil was *wijvenwerk*, and coloring in general was hard to reconcile to the manly intellect, there was a clear way to turn the medium of oil into an exemplary masculine technique: a demonstration of the paradoxical quality of *sprezzatura*, hiding consummate skill behind a mask of looseness and ease. This studied nonchalance was seen as a clear demonstration of *virtus* (related to *vir*, man), according to the courtly ideas put forward authoritatively by Baldassare Castiglione, who was among the authors quoted in the introduction to Junius's book — and who indirectly (via a French translator, Nicholas Faret) influenced Van Hoogstraten, too.⁹⁴ Again, Junius's treatise is the most enlightening about such an argument in which brushwork may acquire masculine virtues through 'unstrained facilitie of working', masking great skill behind an impression of carelessness.⁹⁵ He coins the expression 'negligent diligence', and his formula is paradoxical indeed as it refers to the kind of 'pure ornament' that renders feminine grace into an attribute worthy of a man, and manly simplicity into a fitting attribute for a woman: 'so doth want of ornament make many women more comely'. Junius gives the example of the Assyrian Semiramis, reported as 'the fairest of all women living, though shee did very much neglect her beautie'.⁹⁶

Conclusion

Our analysis suggests that we may bring nuance to the Emmensian division contrasting vulgar coloring with intellectual linear design in Dutch art theory. One answer to the criticism leveled at colorism and at the medium of oil in general was, paradoxically, calling attention to the work's materiality through its rough manner. Only by leaving the brushstroke visible could the allegations of the fraudulent, superficial, mirroring qualities of oil painting be countered: like the rhetorician who evaded colored speech to avoid allegations of sophistry, painters using the shorthand of the rough manner avoided the accusation of duplicity that came with painterly illusionism. In fact, the rough manner encouraged the viewer to pay attention to the painted surface. The virtuosity of the rough manner could be properly evaluated only by contrasting the materiality of the visible brushstroke to the illusionistic effect that occurred at a certain distance — just as how in Titian's late style, according to Van Mander, the artist's 'bold brushstrokes and

6

Rembrandt, *Self-portrait as the Apostle Paul*, 1661, oil on canvas, 91 x 77 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (photo: Image Collection Institute of Art History, University of Amsterdam).

7
Judith Leyster, *Self-portrait*, c. 1635, oil on canvas, 72.3 x 65.3 cm, Washington, National Gallery of Art (photo: Image Collection Institute of Art History, University of Amsterdam).

patches' were visible from close at hand 'but were highly effective seen from afar'.⁹⁷

Rembrandt's *Apostle Paul* suggests that painters who demonstrated their preference for the rough manner in a self-portrait expressed topical assumptions about their temperament. Obviously, in painting as in play-acting, style is rooted in the body according to the early modern view, as Sohm has remarked in a recent publication: if 'every painter paints himself', how then can there not be 'masculine' and 'feminine' style and technique?⁹⁸ We may note that the majority of woman painters of the Dutch golden age chose to keep to their supposed lasts and painted their self-portraits, which demonstrated who they were and how they painted at the same time, in a fine manner, highlighting the mirroring qualities of oil paint. When they made still lifes, they may have indulged even more in the 'finicky work' that Van Hoogstraten condemned (in theory only — he is infamous for not obeying the ideas set out in his treatise in his painting practice!).⁹⁹ What is more, when the biographical literature deals with special skill in materials, some women get special attention: Van Mander describes a certain 'Propertia of Bologna' who was not only *schoonlijvich* herself but who apparently made works of 'Persian stone', marble and copper. Houbraken's account of one 'Juffrou Rozee' stands out; she made images using pieces of colored silk. Apparently, the consummate words of praise for these works, which seemed to have 'magical' properties, were that 'the colors of the nude were so softly merged together in a melting manner, just as if it were painted in oil'.¹⁰⁰

One exception to women applying colors in a womanly fashion was Judith Leyster. Our findings suggest, however, that Leyster had a specific reason to choose the manly, loose manner that left visible some of the traces of her brush (fig. 7). In her well-known self-portrait, this painter who obviously belonged to the female sex handled her colors in a distinctly robust way in suggesting the texture of her dress and collar: in this fashion, she demonstrated the ability to beat her male colleagues on their own field.

Notes

- 1 Sohm 1995. The ideas put forward here are elaborated outside the Netherlandish context in Lichtenstein 1987 and Berrahou Phillippy 2006.
- 2 'Pintam em Flandres propriamente para enganar a vista exterior'; 'A pintura de Flandres (...) satisfará (...) geralmente a qualquer devoto, mais que nenhuma de Itália, que lhe nunca fará chorar uma só lágrima, e a de Flandres muitas (...) A mulheres parecerá bem, principalmente às muito velhas, ou às muito moças, e assim mesmo a frades e a freiras, e a alguns fidalgos desmúsicos da verdadeira harmonia', De Holanda 1984, 29. The passage is discussed in Averni 1981.
- 3 'Nochtans den Florentijn, die soo wel hrouwen/ Als verwen const, doe sy des Vaticanen/ Oordeel in Oly hem wilden doen bouwen,/ Welck hem niet en luste, want niet dan Vrouwen/ Ambacht oft werck gherekent was soodanen/ Wijse van schilderen, naer zijn vermanen,/ Dan in Fresco wercken heeft hy ghepresen/ Een constich, en Mannelijck doen te wesen', Van Mander 1604, 'Grondt', f. 47r; Van Hoogstraten 1678, 77.
- 4 This is a key contention in Goodchild 1998.
- 5 '[N]ae een lang, en alchymistisch onderzoek', Van Hoogstraten 1678, 338; cf.: 'Giovanni da Bruggia (...) si mise a provare diverse sorte di colori; e, come quello che si dilettaua dell'archimia, a far di molti olj pe far vernici, ed altre cose, secondo i cervelli degli uomini sofisticati,

- come egli era', Vasari, *Le vite*, quoted in Torresan 1981, 17.
- 6 A poem by L. Smids quoted in the biography of Van der Plaas: 'De diepzels zyn te teer en licht,/ En hoogzels veel te zagt verheven,/ En vrouwelyk door een gedreven', Houbraken 1718–1721, vol. 3, 230.
 - 7 Emmens 1979.
 - 8 *Gekleurd* in Dutch can also mean 'biased'. Modern Dutch has lost some of the original richness of meaning: in the seventeenth century, *verw* was ambiguous and could refer, like the modern English 'color', to the painting material as well as to the optical or psychological phenomenon. Modern Dutch strictly differentiates *verf* (the material) from *kleur* (the optical phenomenon).

9 ‘De Schilder-const is genoeg gelijk een
schoon Vrouwe, die over haer
Liefhebbers oft naevolgers seer jeloers
is’, Van Mander 1604, *Leven der moderne,
oft dees-tijtsche doorluchtighe
Italiaensche schilders*, fol. 143v.

10 ‘[L]okkende vermogen’, ‘verleidster tot
de kunst’, ‘vleyende Syreen’, Van
Hoogstraten 1678, 1.

11 Sluijter 2000.

12 ‘[O]verspel ontrent / Sulck sien’,
Camphuysen 1638, 110. For more on this
theme see Weststeijn 2012.

13 ‘t[*S*]ijn spieghele, spieghele zijnt, neen
t’zijn geen Tafereelen’, De Heere’s eulogy
is reproduced in Van Mander 1604,
‘Leven der doorluchtighe
Nederlandsche, en Hooghduytsche
schilders’, fol. 201r.

14 On the mirror metaphor see Weststeijn
2008, chapter 6.

15 Looking at paintings is likewise
condemned as the ‘prostitution of the
eyes’ in Molanus 1996, 248: ‘Scortatae
sunt aures vestrae, fornicati sunt oculi.
Et quod est magis novum, ante
complexum vestri adulterium
admiserunt aspectus’.

16 The four *virtutes dicendi* are *latinitas*,
ornatus, *perspicuitas* (or *evidentia*) and
decorum.

17 Junius 1991, 50; cf. Cicero’s statement on
the essential role of ornament: ‘Quem
deum, ut ita dicam, inter homines
putant? Qui distincte, qui explicate, qui
abundanter, qui illuminare et rebus et
verbis dicunt, et in ipsa oratione quasi
quemdam numerum versumque
conficiunt — id est quod dico ornate’,
Cicero, *De oratore* III.xiv.53. See also
Pierre 2009.

18 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoriae* VIII.iii.6,
quoted by Junius: ‘De manhaftige schijn-
staetelickheyd, ghelijckse
voornaemelick in de rechtschaepene
rustigheyd van een onverseerde
kloekheyd bestaet; soo moet se haer
meeste cieraet zoeken in de ghesonde
verwe van een onghekrenckte sterckte,
sonder sich met de vertaerde glattigheyd
van hoogh-verwighe blanketsels in’t
minste te behelpen’, Junius 1641, 273.

19 Agrippa von Nettesheim 1661, 60–63,
speaking of ‘hoere-blanketzel’. Van
Hoogstraten 1678, 171, refers to Agrippa’s
‘Onzeekerheit der wetenschappen’
translated by his friend Joachim Oudaen.

20 Roskill 1968, 299; reference to Propertius,
Elegies I, 2 lines 21–22: ‘Sed facies aderat
nullis obnoxia gemmis,/ Qualis Apelleis
est color in tabulis’.

21 ‘Non ha dimostrato Titiano nelle sue
opere vaghezza vana, ma proprietà
convenevole di colori: non ornamenti
affettati, ma sodezza da maestro, non
crudezza, ma il pastoso e tenero della
Natura: e nelle cose sue combattono e
scherzano sempre i lumi con l’ombre, e
perdono e diminuiscono con
quell’istesso modo, che fa la medesima
Natura’. Dolce 1557, 184.

22 ‘[N]iet anders als schilderyen, tot
bedrogh van de ooghen gemaect’, De
Brune 1657, 181, para. CDLXXVI.

23 As discussed in Weststeijn 2008, 181–182.

24 Junius 1991, 241.

25 Vos 1726, vol. 1, 285, 489, 496, 506–507;
quoted in Weber 1991, 150–151.

26 Junius 1991, 268, with more examples of
‘this rare skill of tempering the metals’.

27 Junius 1991, 105; Junius 1641, 97. Junius
ends this chapter on a note on what is
even worse than a woman: a eunuch —
and he laments the ‘counterfeit
effeminate-ness of the maimed sex’.
Junius 1991, 107.

28 Cf. Kwak 2002.

29 Junius 1991, 252; ‘d’ over-veruwde figuren
(...) gelijckse de verscheydene
eyghenschappen ende werckinghen van
eenen levendighen gheest klaerder
uytdrukken, soo plaghtense met eenen
oock ons ghesicht door d’aenlockelicke
lustbaerheyd van menigherley
treffelicke veruw-cieraeten seldsaemlick
te beguychelen’. Junius 1641, 275.

30 ‘[Z]oo is de konst van wel koloreeren wel
by een schoon gebouw te c.f.en, zonder
welke de Teykenkonst van haere
voornaemste versieringen ontbloomt
blijft’, Van Hoogstraten 1678, 217; cf. Van
Mander 1604, ‘Grondt’ II,1, f.8, and XII,1, f.
46v. Ornament and incarnadine are
linked in the letter written in Raphael’s
name to Leo X: ‘senza ornamento (...)’
l’ossa del corpo senza carne’; Alberti also
makes this connection and treats
incarnadine in books 6–9 of *De re
aedificatoria*, cf. Biermann 1997, 145.

31 ‘De natuer der zachtvlezige verwe is
zoo bekoorlijk, datter geenerley
blanketzel by halen mach’, Van
Hoogstraten 1678, 229.

32 ‘T’vermoghden der verwen in veel
manieren/ Is openbaer aen Voghelen en
Beesten/ Die hen gheeft een edel
heerlijk versieren’, Van Mander 1604,
‘Grondt’ XIII, 13, f. 51r.

33 Van Mander 1604, ‘Grondt’ XIV,10, f. 53r.

34 Cf. Chayes 2002.

35 The ruby, for instance, is associated with
the element of fire and the emerald with

the element of water. Van Hoogstraten
1678, 341.

36 Lomazzo 1584, ch. 15. Lomazzo’s
contemporary Lodovico Dolce wrote
treatises on the art of painting and on
gems.

37 ‘Qu’elle pense que les couleurs,
peinctures et toutes sortes de pigments
le plus souvent servent de stimule à
toutes impudicitez qui infectent,
polluent et contaminent les beautez
singulieres de l’esprit: Que, c’est faire tort
à nature, de dissimuler, sophistiquer, et
adulterer la forme et figure du corps,
qu’elle a formé avec une si grande
providence. Un bon peintre reputeroit
grande iniure luy estre facte, et auroit
iuste occasion de s’indigner contre celuy,
qui voudroit corriger et reprendre un
tableau ou simulachre qu’il auroit
parachevé avec grand soing et diligence.
Ne se servira donc d’aucun
embellissement, sinon en grande
nécessité’, Liébault 1595, ‘au lecteur’,
unpaginated.

38 ‘On the merit of color’, lecture at the
Academy of 7 November 1671, quoted in
Lichtenstein 1989, 87.

39 ‘[I] est vrai que c’est un fard; mais il
serait à souhaiter que tous ces tableaux
qu’on fait aujourd’hui fussent tous fardés
de cette sorte’; De Piles, *Cours de
peinture par principes*, 274, quoted in
Lichtenstein 1989, 200.

40 In three similar epigrams, Hooft
highlights that the river Tiber turns
steamy upon seeing the maidens, only to
cool down in the face of their manly
behavior: ‘De Thiber u gewaar waer
maeghden droogh gebraën/ En had hy
niet geijst van’t mannelijck bestaen’
('The Tiber, upon seeing you maidens,
would have dried up with the heat/ Had
he not frozen because of the virile
courage’), ‘Op Rubens schilderij der
swemmende maeghden’, in Hooft 1899.

41 Junius 1641, 286.

42 ‘De verwen in jeuchdighe Menschen
beelden,/ Sonderlingh der Vrouwen,
doen wonder pooghen,/ Menichs herte
swemt in een Zee van weelden,/ Die
siende dunckt of de Gracikens
speelden,/ Aen monden, wanghen, en
lieflijcke ooghen/ Der Vrouwen, om
welcker in fell’ oorloghen/ Menich stout
Heldt den hals heeft moeten buyghen,/ Waer
uyt der Verwen cracht is te
betuyghen’. Van Mander 1604, ‘Den
grondt’, fol. 51v.

43 Cf. Sluijter 1999 and Sluijter 2000.

44 Hendrik Goltzius, *Allegory*, 1611, oil on

canvas, 180 x 256 cm, Basel,
Kunstmuseum Basel. The female nude
holds an object that has often been
connected to Goltzius’s own interest in
alchemy.

45 We are reminded of Jan Vos’s poem on a
young lady looking in the mirror, which
could as well be an ekphrasis of a
painting of this subject: ‘Gy waant, nu gy
u ziet, u schoon en sterk te zijn/ Den
mensch is brosser dan dit brijslendt
kristallijn’ (‘When you see this
[reflection], you think you are beautiful
and strong/ But human nature is even
frailer than this delicate crystal’), Vos
1726, 517, quoted by Weber 1991, 89.

46 Cf. ‘ornamentum autem afficti et
compacti naturam sapere magis quam
innati’, Alberti quoted in Biermann 1997,
144.

47 ‘[O]m onse gemoederen in het
beschouwen der selve soo te overtuygen,
datmense waarlijk soodanig voor
schoon groet (...) de pogingen van ons
hert [worden] als’t ware daar heenen
getrokken (...) Gracie, of liever de
Bevalligheyd (...) [komt voort] uyt een
zoet en aanminnig gebaar of bestuur der
Oogen, Mont en Handen, die
bescheydentlijk de streelende toonen
der tong (...) ver[ge]sellen’. Goeree 1682,
24.

48 For this term see Goeree 1682, 25.

49 ‘Maar alhoewel [de] bevalligheyd die de
ware schoonheyd verseld, soo eenvoudig
en nauw in haar selven bestaat, datse
niet ligt door een moyelijke
opsmukkingh bekomen werd, egter
bevindmen dat de Bevalligheyd,
schoon’er de schoonheyd ontbreekt,
door een verstandig en wel toegepast
Cieraat, veel schoonheyd kan werden
bygesett; sulx datwe door dese
beguicheling menigmaal buyten staat
gesteld worden; de Gemaakte van de
waarachtige Schoonheyd wel te
onderscheyden’. Goeree 1682, 28.

50 ‘[S]e daar door behaaglijk in de oogen
der Mannen sijn; en haar tot liefkosingh
aansetten (...) [it was deemed] min
strafbaar, sich aan een Schoone, dan aan
een Leelijke vrouw te vertasten’, Goeree
1682, 23.

51 Junius 1991, 38; ‘dat wy (...) de kracht der
oprechter imitatie niet behooren te
stellen in ‘t nae-afen van d’uytwendighe
verciersels, maar dat wy meest van allen
d’inwendighe kracht des wercks moeten
uyt-drucken’, Junius 1641, 30.

52 Brusati 2003.

53 In antiquity, the term *ornatus* could also

refer to the quality of a soldier’s armor
and armaments. More research is
needed to determine how this
connotation survived in the early
modern discourse on painting.

54 ‘[W]ant dat d’oude Batavieren van geen
andere schilderijen als van haer schilden
geweeten hebben is licht toe te staen’.
Van Hoogstraten 1678, 328–329.

55 Van Hoogstraten 1678, 156, 161.

56 ‘[D]it woordt/ Van Schilder, oft Schildry,
comt van den Schilden voort:/ (...) Dit
Schilder schildren, siet, en is sindt noyt
vergaen,/ Waer uyt dat is ghevolght, en
voort en voort ghecommen’, Van Mander
1604, ‘Het leven der oude antijcke
doorluchtige schilders’, fol. 58 v; ‘So
magmen oock seer wel staende houden
dat ons Nederlandsche woord *Schilderen*
oorspronckelick van dese ghewoonte
hervoord komt, want het waer
schijnelick is dat d’oude strijdbaere
inghesetene deser landen dese Konst
voor eenen langhen tijd maer alleen tot
op-pronckinge haerer schilden
gebruyckten; (...) dit woord in’t eerste
sijn benaeminghe ende eyghenschap uyt
het schild-cieraet ghenomen heeft’,
Junius 1641, 143.

57 Junius 1641, 133.

58 Van Hoogstraten 1678, 96.

59 Van de Waal demonstrates how Dutch
historiography first condemned
Germanic tribes and later positively
evaluated them for their ‘primitive’
characteristics; Van de Waal 1952, vol. 1,
172–210.

60 Cicero, *De oratore*, III.xxxv.98; cf.
Gombrich 2002.

61 Verstegan 1605, 46.

62 Verstegan 1605, 49. Verstegan’s book is
quoted in Van Hoogstraten 1678, 96, 146,
151.

63 Junius 1641, 100, 119.

64 Junius 1641, 277, 273, 329. Cf. *blanketten*,
geblancket, Junius 1641, 97. We should
remark that the Dutch terminology for
coloring always oscillates between
associations with the mixing of
pigments on one hand and literary
tropes on the other. Although the term
blanketten has a technical meaning in
relation to skin color (Van Hoogstraten
1678, 226 uses *blanketzel* in relation to
skin color), it may also refer to the
beguiling figures of speech that
rhetoricians apply to hide their deceitful
intentions, just like whores who apply
makeup to hide their defects. For
instance, the poet Joost van den Vondel
describes how untalented poets have

tried to equal the ancients through
‘either boasting and bluffing, or glazing
and *blanketten*’, Vondel s.a., 74. Related
to this important issue of beguiling the
senses through cover-up colors, Junius’s
treatise contains terms such as
valschverwig (Junius 1641, 277), ‘with a
false or deceptive color’, and *toonschijnig*
(277), ‘deceiving through the tones’ of
color and chiaroscuro. Unlike modern
Dutch, where *verf* only means paint,
Junius’s term *verwe* may refer both to
pigment and to the optical phenomenon
— thus *lijfverwe*, or ‘body color’, may not
only denote the right mixture of paints
to suggest incarnadine, but also refer to
the hues of human skin itself. In many
cases, Junius’s statements on coloring
derive directly from the ancient orators’
conception of the ‘lively colours of
Rhetorike’ (Junius 1991, 50), or the
figures of speech that ‘embellish’ a
speech to cover up its argumentative
flaws. When he speaks of *bedrieghlick
verwen cieraet*, the ‘deceptive ornament
of color’ (Junius 1641, 329), Junius has
this rhetorical association in mind
rather than the technical one.

65 Junius 1641, 321, 251, 273.

66 See Weststeijn 2011.

67 Junius 1991, 284.

68 ‘De manhaftige schijn-staetelickheyd,
ghelijckse voornaemelick in de
rechtschaepene rustigheyd van een
onverseerde kloekheyd bestaet; soo
moet se haer meeste cieraet zoeken in de
ghesonde verwe van een onghekrenckte
sterckte, sonder sich met de vertaerde
glattigheyd van hoogh-verwighe
blanketsels in’t minste te behelpen,
seght Quintil. VIII.3’. Junius 1641, 273.

69 Junius 1991, 255, cf.: ‘Indien yeman een
van dese kloecke worstelaers die van
weghen haere sterckte uyt eenen boom
schijnen uytgehouden te sijn, seght
Lucianus, niet alleen met purpere
kleederen ende allerley bordeelachtige
verciersels bestond t’overladen, maer
oock sijn aenghesicht met allerley
blanketsels gingh overstrijken; de
selvige soude nimmermeer de
schimpachtige hoon-spraecke en
spotwoorden der gantscher wereld
machtigh sijn t’ontgaen, van sulcken
welghemaecten lustighen quant soo
schandelick mishandelt te hebben. Dus
vernemen wy hoe het meinigmael
gevoeghlicker is, datmen sijn werck met
eenen ruyghen rock bekleede, dan
datmen ‘t met d’ omhangsels van
hoerachtige cieraeten ontschoone. ...

Dies moghen wy niet dencken dat het
altijt beter is het ghene sich als noch
verborgen houdt: Het beste behoeft niet
verde ghesocht te worden; het is dicht by
der hand, en met de dinghen selver soo
vermenght, datmen het door sijn eyghen
licht ghemackelick kan uytvinden, ‘t en
sy datmen ghesint is het selvighe puer
willens en met winckende ooghen voor
by te gaen’, Junius 1641, 278.

70 Van Hoogstraten 1678, 151.

71 ‘[Z]oo zeg ik met Junius, dat het een
Konstenaer niet wel kan voegen, grillige
wanschepsels, die de natuer niet en
kent, aen een te klampen. “Gelijk
Vitruvius zegt, dat de verdorve gewoonte
het daertoe gebracht hadde, datmen in
de grotissen veel eer gedrochten en
monsters, dan eenige waerachtige
dingen vertoonde: tegen de gewoonte
der ouden, die haer kamers, gaenderyen
en eetzaelen, met konstige
naebootingen van’t geene natuerlijk
was, oppronkten. Hy wil dat een schip
een schip, at een schip een schip, een
beelt een mensch, of een beest, of een
bekent, of immers natuerlijk gedierte zal
gelijken”’, Van Hoogstraten 1678, 184
(erroneously numbered as 176), quoting
Junius 1641, 33; Junius 1991, 41. See
Vitruvius, *De architectura libri decem*,
IV.ii.6.

72 For the quite commonly accepted view
that the painting was rejected because
of ‘Rembrandt’s rough style and the
unpolished conception of the Batavians’,
cf. Westermann 2000, 298.

73 Junius 1991, 255–256; ‘datmen sijn werck
met eenen ruyghen rock bekleede, dan
datmen ‘t met d’omhangels van
hoerachtighe cieraeten ontschoone ...
een moedvaerdigher dapperheyd ...
sonder ons selven veele ontrent de
nettigheyd van eenighe dunne hayrkens
en d’uyterste naghelen te kekommenen
[sic]’. Junius 1641, 278. Cf. Van
Hoogstraten’s criticism of Holbein’s
precision, preferring a certain
‘looseness’: ‘Ik laet dien grooten meester
inzijn verdiende waarde, maer houde
meer van de verwe, die’t vlees en hair te
zamen maekt met een lossicheit na te
bootsen; de glansen en wederglanssen
op haer rechte plaets te zwieren, zonder
juist hair voor hair aen te wijzen’. Van
Hoogstraten 1678, 229.

74 Wybrand de Geest, for instance, writes
of ‘a rough Painting, as by Rembrand’. De
Geest 1702, 92.

75 ‘Dees Schildery moogt gy van by
bekijken: / En d’ander heeft meer

welstants uit der hand’, Van Hoogstraten
1678, 241.

76 ‘De Handeling van het Penseel is
tweedery, doch zeer verschillende van
malkander, want de eene is een
vloeiijende, en malsde of gladde; de
tweede een wakkere en vaardige, of
stoute’, De Laireesse 1740, vol. 1, 7.

77 See Weststeijn 2008, 229–241. Van
Mander discusses this subject in Van
Mander 1604, ‘Grondt’ VII,10, f. 29v ff. De
Laireesse expresses a preference for the
‘bold and quick’, although not at the
same time wanting to endorse
Rembrandt’s radical approach to it, in
De Laireesse 1740, vol. 1, 324. He also puts
up a contrary argument, accusing
painters who become ‘enamoured’ of an
‘audacious and quick brush’ of
neglecting more important aspects; De
Laireesse 1740, vol. 1, 137. On this debate
see Van de Wetering 1991; Van de
Wetering 1997, chapter 7; and most
recently Pousão-Smith 2003.

78 ‘[E]en gladde stijvicheit, of een nette
fijmeling’, ‘verstandelooze liefhebbers’,
Van Hoogstraten 1678, 234. He calls Van
Honthorst ‘sleepy’ while preferring an
‘alert brushstroke’, cf. 233, 234, 235. His
term for masculine vigor is *wakker* (alert,
quick, brave): ‘Zoo zeggen wy (...) dat zy
gelukkigh zijn, die met ee n wakkere
hand, terwijl de geest noch onvermoeit
is, hunne werken kunnen ten einde
brengen’. Van Hoogstraten 1678, 236.

79 ‘[H]et penseel eens konstenaers moet
altijts oprecht, en nimmer valsch zijn,
om de deugt en waerheyd wel uit te
drukken’, Van Hoogstraten 1678, 235.

80 ‘Ziet onse Jufferen, verliesen zy niet daar
door zelf dat gene zy met zoo yverigen
begeerte zoeken? (...) Zoo ziet men ook
dat dese al te gedwongene lossigheydt
en apen-werk, waar mede zy te gunstiger
vermoeden omdat te worden, ons doen
walgen, vermits wy sien alles gemaakt
werk is. Dit zijn de gebreken der
gedwongenheyd, zoo wel van al te
beschroomt, als al te overvloeyend,
strijdende tegens het eenvoudige
cieraat, waar mede de harten getogen
worden. “Wat ciert de blanke Amaril?
(...) ‘t glimmend voorhoofd gevernist?/
Of roode verwe op’er kaken?/ O neen, ‘t
en was maar moeyt verquist,/ Haar
zedige ooggen’ t hart doen blaken”’, Van
Hoogstraten 1657, 15.

81 On the *pene/penello* analogy, cf.
Bronzino’s burlesque poem ‘Del penello’,
analyzed in Parker 2000. For a very
explicit Dutch example see Anonymous

1972, 183–186, especially 184, discussed in
Kolfin 2001, 132.

82 Van Hoogstraten 1678, 255.

83 Van Mander 1604, ‘Het leven der
moderne, oft dees-tijtsche
doorluchtighe Italiaensche schilders’, f.
177r. The topic is discussed in more
detail in Weststeijn 2008, 237–224.

84 ‘Titiano (...) tal’hora dipinse con tante, e
cosi diligente pennellate, che parve
quasi volesse far numerabili i capelli, e
tal’hora si contentò grossamente le
pitture di pochi, e rozzissimi colpi
figurare. Spettore intelligente di così
diversa maniera, nell’una riconoscerà il
vago della femina, nell’altra il robusto
maschile; quella passerà con lode, in
questa si fermerà con ammirazione,
sentirassi della delicata soavemente
inclinare, dalla rozza violentemente
rapire’. Malvezzi 1648, 13–14.

85 Titian had ‘de vlakke plaetstreeken
onverwerkt gelaten, welke uit de hand
staende, ook dies te grooter kracht
hebben’, Van Hoogstraten 1678, 233. See
Van de Wetering 1991 and Van de
Wetering 1997.

86 ‘Meer moeyt isser in als men soude
peysen (...) den arbeydt daer onder/
Groote Const bedeckt is (...) zijn dinghen
schijnen/ Lichtveerdich, die doch zijn
ghedaen met pijnen’. Van Mander 1604,
‘Grondt’ XII, 22–25, fol. 48r-v.

87 Huygens s.a., 75–76.

88 Van Hoogstraten 1678, 73.

89 ‘Bewijzende dat de wel-
spreekendtheydt, en het by-brengen
van die zuyvere, en nette woorden niet
weezen en kan by luyden van groot
begrip’. Huarte 1659, 288.

90 ‘[E]en man gantsch uyt-steekkende in
wijsheydt, en voorzichtigheydt (lijk
Sokrates was) en die geen gaaf van
sprekken en hadt; van de welke zy
zeyden (die verstonden wat een wonder
verstandt, en weeten in hem zat) dat
zijne woorden en spreukken eeven eens
waaren als een kas, of taefereel, ‘t welk
van buyten heel rou, en plomp gewrogt
daar uyt zag, maar dat oopen-gedaan
zijnde, men daar binnen zag zulke
oover-treffelijke werken, en
schilderyen’. Huarte 1659, 230.

91 ‘In diergelijk een mis-verstandt staakken
die ook, die de reeden (...) geeven
wouden waarom Aristoteles op zulk een
duystere, en rouwen stijl zijne werken
beschreeven hadt, en zeyden, hy dat al
willens soo hadt gedaan, omdaar door te
maakken dat zijne werken in meerder
agtbaarheidt zouden gehouden worden,

dies schreef hy zoo lomp, en slordig
heen (...) [hetzelfde geldt voor] die
harde, en rouwe stijl van Platoos
schrijven, en zijn kortheydt daar in hy
zijn werken in een dringdt, zijn
duysterheydt van reeden, en de
ongevoechelijke stelling van dien’.
Huarte 1659, 230.

92 ‘[Paulus, die] door zijne ingebooren
kragt niet afgerigt genug en was om
vreemde talen te leeren, en die met
treffelijke, en zuyvere netticheydt te
kunnen uyten, en alle vereyste
vercieringen daar in voegen, had hy
zelter aldus van hem niet gesprookken
gehad? “Ik meen dat ik niet minder
gedaan en heb als een van al de
Apostelen; en schoon ik wel wat
plomper als zy in het spreekken ben, in
goede kennis, en weetenschap ben ik
daarom by haar niet minder”’. Huarte
1659, 230.

93 ‘[A]lguns fidalgos desmúsicos da
verdadeira harmonia’. De Holanda 1984,
29.

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1604, ‘Grondt’, fol. 14v, § 37, and Junius
1641, ‘Voorrede’, unpaginated, vi. Van
Hoogstraten 1657 is an adaptation of
Nicolas Faret’s French translation of
Castiglione’s *Libro del cortigiano*. Van
Hoogstraten’s good friend Lambert van
den Bos translated Castiglione’s book
into Dutch in 1662.

95 Junius 1991, 35, 289. Junius 1641 speaks of
onbedwongen ghemackelicheydt, 27;
schijnlosse stoutvaerdigheyd, 319;
onbedwonghen vaerdigheyd, 328;
*stoutvaerdighe ende sorghe loose maniere
van wercken*, 320; *voordvaerende
sorghe loosheyd*, 320; and *achteloose ende
onbearbeyde vaerdigheyd*, 320.

96 Junius 1991, 289. The statement is based
on Cicero, *De oratore* XXIII.78.

97 ‘[T]en lesten wrocht [Titiaan] zijn
dinghen met cloecke pinceel-streken
henen, en ghevleckt, soo dat het van by
geen perfectie, maer van verre te sien,
goeden welstandt hadde’, Van Mander
1604, ‘Het leven der moderne, oft dees-
tijtsche doorluchtighe Italiaensche
schilders’, f. 177r. For the

‘complementarity’ of the two
perspectives (from a distance and from
close up) that are necessary to properly
evaluate the rough manner, see
Weststeijn 2008, 237–238.

98 Sohm 2001, 69–70. On the notion that
‘every painter paints himself’, see
Weststeijn 2008, 178–181.

99 A portrait of a paintress in Gerard van
Honthorst’s manner, oil on canvas, 106 x
98 cm, Provinciaal Overijssels Museum,
Zwolle, may be a self-portrait;
Honthorst’s own portrait of *Margareta
Maria de Roodere and her parents*, 1652,
oil on canvas, 140 x 170 cm, Centraal
Museum, Utrecht, is painted in the fine
manner that was condemned by Van
Hoogstraten as ‘sleepy’.

100 ‘[D]at zy een pourtret gemaakt had, dat
wel geleek, zynde de koleuren van’t
naakt zoo zacht in een gedommelt en
smeltende even of het met olyverf
geschildert waar geweest’. Houbraken
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