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7 Concluding observations

Life

Jan Davidsz. de Heem's biography had been rather well researched, but it has turned out that a fresh look at archival documents could yield some new information, or new interpretation of some known data, the most important being the discovery of the artist's probable burial date, 10th February 1684, which leads to a death date in the previous week, plausibly between 4 and 9 February 1684, at the age of 77. A documental gap in the biography remains for the years 1631 to 1635, between the artist's disappearance from Leiden and his appearance in Antwerp. It is conceivable that he lived in Amsterdam in those years, but no archival evidence for such a sojourn has been found.[613] No birth record has been traced for de Heem's daughter, Torentiana, who was probably born in 1635, neither in any Dutch town, nor in Antwerp. A gap also exists, be it to a lesser extent, for the period between 1655 and 1665. Circumstantial evidence indicates that de Heem moved from Antwerp to Utrecht sometime in the years 1658 to 1660. It was well known that he went back to Antwerp in 1672, where he remained until his death, twelve years later.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem's biography shows that he must have been quite flexible. When after his years of training as an artist painter the funds for a journey to Italy were refused, he settled for a move with his mother and stepfather, and probably further family, to Leiden. There, after a while, he changed his subject from still lifes of fruit to books. Perhaps he sensed, or hoped, that there would be a market for this subject in Leiden's academic environment. Also, looking at the work of artists that surrounded him, such as Jan Lievens and Rembrandt, there was clearly an artistic interest in the subject of books. Having accumulated substantial debts, de Heem appears to have left Leiden silently in 1631, not leaving a trace for his creditors (or later researchers). As I have argued on stylistic grounds, he may well have moved to Amsterdam.[614] Judging from his extant production from 1631 to 1635, he will have been relatively successful in those years, painting small to moderately large still lifes that give a personal twist to the Haarlem 'monochrome banquet piece' and to related work by Jan Jansz. den Uyl. For those paintings, de Heem had clearly found a niche in the market, which he was serving as well as possible. It may be that after some time the interest for his work dried up in the north, or otherwise he may have been persuaded by enthusiastic reports, perhaps from Jan Lievens, about opportunities for skilled artists in Antwerp, where he probably moved in the months around the turning of 1635-1636. It seems that Jan Davidsz. de Heem and his wife, both from protestant families, blended in well with the Roman-Catholic community in Antwerp; already in April of 1638, their son Thomas Maria received a Roman-Catholic baptism. In view of his production from the 1640s, de Heem must have struck an eager market for his still lifes, which ranged from small cabinet pieces, which he may in part have produced randomly for the free market, to impressive large luxury still lifes that were most likely painted in commission, perhaps for specific locations, and for affluent patrons. Jan Davidsz. de Heem and his wife Aletta, at the time of her death in 1643, had built up a small capital, which is another indication of the artist's success in Antwerp. While little over a decade earlier they had been forced to evade their creditors, they had now become relatively wealthy citizens. Unfortunately, for none of de Heem's large luxury still lifes a first owner is known. We do know, however, that around 1648 – most likely – he painted some works for the fervently Catholic Archduke (and Prince Bishop) Leopold Wilhelm of Austria, who resided in Brussels as Governor of the Spanish Netherlands from 1647 to 1656 (cat. nos. A 114, 116 and 119).

In 1644, de Heem had married into the Roman-Catholic Ruckers family, after the death of his first wife. While living in Antwerp, he appears to have secured the patronage of the wealthy – and protestant – collector and dealer Marten Kretzer in Amsterdam. Kretzer is known to have owned work by de Heem by 1650, and the painter had an edition of a print after a work by Rubens dedicated to him in 1652. After his move back to Utrecht, in or around 1658, he appears to have shaken off his Roman-Catholic guise and worked for a protestant and, particularly, Orangist market. For several years, he shared his studio with Abraham Mignon, who also served as a dean in the French-reformed church in Utrecht. After his move back to Antwerp, when the Dutch economy had taken a blow in 1672, de Heem seems to have blended into the Antwerp Roman-Catholic community again, but nevertheless appears to have continued to work for a Dutch Orangist patronage, judging from, among others, his 'Vivat Oraenge' still life from about 1674.

Work

To study and present Jan Davidsz. de Heem's oeuvre in chronological order proves to be very fruitful, since the artist developed and changed his style and handling continuously, even though often subtly and gradually, throughout his career. As a result, a chronological presentation provides the clearest possible picture of his development. The first three decades of de Heem's activity, 1626 to 1655, provide a firm framework of dated works that allows for rather accurate dating of paintings that the artist himself did not furnish with a date. In some cases, it may be that works were dated one or two years after they were started, having remained unfinished earlier or having been reworked after one or two years. Generally, however, it appears that the dates found on the paintings are indeed in agreement with those on other stylistically and technically similar works, which indicates that the artist could count on relatively swift sales of his work. De Heem's production, going by the dated works, had a rather consistent continuity, although the production for some periods or years, as it has come down to us, was more substantial than for others. A gap occurs, for instance, for the second half of the 1630s, the years after de Heem had settled in Antwerp, from which period very few paintings are known. The same is true for the second half of the 1650s, around the time when he moved from Antwerp to Utrecht. Also, after an outburst of productivity in the first years of the 1650s, including many dated examples, only one dated work from 1654 is recorded, and also from 1655 only one dated example is currently known.

It is impossible to tell how many works by Jan Davidsz. de Heem have been lost over the centuries. In view of the fact that his paintings were always held in relatively high esteem, and were considered as valuable objects, it seems unlikely that many were lost due to neglect, but certainly a number of his paintings will have been lost to fire or will have been destroyed as a result of other calamities. Going by old descriptions, among others in eighteenth-century auction catalogues, a number of his still lifes is missing and regularly previously unrecorded examples turn up. The count at the time of wrapping up this study is 270 extant paintings that can be considered as autograph works, including paintings on which de Heem collaborated with (an)other artist(s). It is quite likely that de Heem's total production exceeded 300 and perhaps even 350 paintings. For a period of activity of at least 55 and perhaps even more than 60 years – counting the years of his apprenticeship and assuming that he painted until his death – this production is not very high, even considering the fact that de Heem worked very meticulously, building his images up in many layers, and that several of his still lifes were quite sizable. He will most likely have worked on more than one painting at the same time. 350 paintings done over a period of 60 years comes down to an average of five or six a

year. For his most productive years, 1651 to 1653, the present count of extant works is around fourteen paintings a year.

Like Jan Davidsz. de Heem's style and handling, his signatures also show a distinct development (see Appendix 2). De Heem rather consistently signed his work and, as remarked above, also dated his paintings regularly during the first three decades of his career. Although signatures on documents are not many, from the years 1627 to 1683 a series of thirteen signatures is known, rather evenly distributed over the years. Appendix 2 reproduces about 80 signatures, found on paintings and on documents, in chronological order. In those, the artist shows himself to be a keen calligrapher. His earliest known signature in a document, dated 27 September 1627, betrays a confident, well-trained hand, fully in command of the pen. The initial J has elaborate flourishes, and at the end of the m he adds a firm but elegant curved stroke. Many of his early signatures on paintings spell out his name in full, 'Johannes [or: Johannis] de Heem'. Initially, the H is broad and square, but already in 1628 he first uses the script h, curved and roundish, looking slightly like a curvy b, which shape he consistently used for his signatures in documents. In 1629, he first signs a painting 'JDHeem', with JDH in ligature, a form he used frequently during the 1630s. A document from May 4, 1629 is signed 'Johannes hem' (sic), with the flourishes of the J done in such a way that it can be read as JD. He would later use this feature often in his signatures on paintings. In signatures on documents from the 1640s, the round J with flourishes has become a long, spiralling one. In some paintings, such as cat. no. A 094, de Heem has signed upon a depicted document and it is clear that in such cases he has applied the actual signature he would use on such documents. Occasionally, he would sign paintings in a rather plain, print-letter fashion, such as cat. no. A 072 and 097. It would appear that he reserved this type of signature for unusual subjects, such as the barn interior from 1643 and his two landscape paintings. Up to about 1651, Jan Davidsz. de Heem usually signed his paintings 'J De heem'. Occasionally, due to the elaborate flourish, the J can be read as JD. Subsequently, he started to sign 'J.D.De.heem'. This form becomes predominant sometime in 1654. A document from 12 April 1658 is also signed 'J.D.De Heem' with the addition of what seems to be a lower cast r, which is also the case for the signature on a document depicted in cat. no. A 194, from *c.*1660. On paintings, de Heem's signature is usually followed by '*f*' or '*fecit*', but sometime in the second half of the 1660s, signatures with the addition 'R' instead of '*f*' appear. No proper explanation for this letter has thus far been found.[615] It is interesting to note that a signature on a late work, probably from the early 1680s looks very much like the last known signature by Jan Davidsz. de Heem in a document, including the lower cast 'r', written down on September 14, 1683, less than half a year before his death.

The quality and elaboration of the signature occasionally seems to emphasize the quality and importance of the piece, like the extraordinary signatures on some of the large luxury still lifes, such as cat. nos. A 051 and 054, or the (for the period) unusually elaborate signature 'Joannes D. heem. *f*. A^{o} 16[41]' on cat. no. A 057. On the other hand, the beautiful signature on cat. no. A 087 (Ghent) from 1645 is in sharp contrast with the rather mediocre quality of the painting itself, while the flimsy signature on cat. no. A 198 does not at all match the high quality of that flower painting. Since signatures were often added at the last moment and thus in the uppermost layer of the paint, and often included vulnerable black pigments, it is no surprise that they are often somewhat abraded and occasionally will have been erased. It is unlikely that an important flower painting such as cat. no. A 251 was not signed when it left the studio.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem was not a child prodigy. By the time of his move to Leiden in 1626, at the age of 20, he was apparently a fully trained artist painter, but this was not exceptional. His early works do not express an extraordinary talent. During the first years in Leiden, he was playing around with motifs he had brought with him from Utrecht, from his probable teacher Balthasar van der Ast, and with motifs he encountered in and around Leiden. His earliest compositions are not particularly strong, and more ambitious larger formats, such as cat. no. A 002, clearly presented a problem to him. De Heem was inquisitive and eager, however, and 'shopping around'. The young painter was obviously searching for what his artistic strengths could be. Clearly, they did not lie in figure painting (cf. cat. nos. A 001, 008, 008a, and 018). He must soon have acknowledged that his talents concerned the detailed rendering of still-life motifs, with a variety of textures and reflections, with an intricate play of light, and a well-balanced colour scheme. Soon he acquired a good sense for composition, and, by the end of the 1620s, started to attain a degree of monumentality in his work, also in somewhat larger formats (cf. cat. no. A 020). After mid-1628, his palette became rather monochrome and would remain so for several years, but he cannot really be counted to the – predominantly Haarlem – school of the 'monochrome banquet piece', despite having tried his hand at that type of still life (cat. nos. A 012, 019 and, to some degree, A 020).[616] While his work from this period is generally restrained in its palette, colourful accents such as that of a red lobster (cat. nos. A 024, 025 and 041) and of bright yellow lemons show his true spirit. Towards the end of the 1630s, de Heem's palette quickly became more variegated.

Relatively few paintings are known that can be assigned to the second half of the 1630s, while one would expect that Jan Davidsz. de Heem was building up his reputation in Antwerp in those years. 1640 still does not yet appear to have been an extremely productive year, but it is marked by the appearance of one of de Heem's major efforts, the large luxury still life now in the Louvre in Paris (cat. no. A 051). In this painting, he situates a complex still-life arrangement in a larger space, with objects placed around the table that carries the costly objects and comestibles, an architectural structure in the background, and with a view into a landscape, partly obscured by impressive velvet draperies. It surpasses all his works from the previous fifteen years in scale and complexity. Only one similar work, tentatively dated to 1639 (cat. no. A 050, in the Metropolitan Museum in New York) probably precedes it. Prior to that, de Heem had been experimenting with more complex compositions (such as cat. no. A 035), but he had never included anything other than a plain background, perhaps with the exception of cat. no. A 048, which includes the 'ghost' of a stone column. The Louvre painting is unmistakably Flemish in character, in its size, sumptuousness, and palette. Although it can by no means be regarded as an imitation, de Heem must have been inspired by the large compositions of Frans Snijders and, in particular, Adriaen van Utrecht, painted in the previous decades, but he omitted the prominent figures and anecdotal details those masters would include. However, he had such a figure included, by Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert, in a second, even larger painting from the next year (cat. no. A 054, Brussels). Several more such large luxury still lifes followed, at the rate of about one a year, but cat. no. A 054 would remain the only example with a figure in it.

The 1640s were a very productive decade for de Heem, with an extant number of 71 paintings of widely varying measurements, and with extant dated examples from every year, except for 1644 and 1647. The majority are relatively rich still lifes upon a table, the first serious efforts in the area of flower painting appear around the middle of the decade, and occasional deviating subjects were painted: the interior of a larder, with figures by David Teniers the Younger (cat. no. A 072, Los Angeles), and a small landscape (cat. no. A 103). Some paintings, as mentioned above, are

collaborative works with Flemish colleagues, such as Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert and David Teniers. He also worked on a large collaborative piece, in conjunction with several artists: an altar with the Virgin Mary, to which de Heem contributed the flowers and fruit (cat. no. A 118, Laxenburg), and which was painted for Archduke Leopold Wilhelm. Also for the Archduke, de Heem painted a cartouche still life with a chalice and host (cat. no. A 116, Vienna), the first of a number of paintings of this type he would execute in the following decades, as well as a small festoon of flowers (cat. no. A 114), which he may well have presented as a sample of his abilities.

Also after 1648, Jan Davidsz. de Heem's production of still lifes in a wide variety of sizes, rich in detail and meticulous in execution, remained steady. In fact, the first half of the 1650s belongs to his most prolific periods, particularly the years 1650 to 1653. Flower paintings did not yet have a preference with him, his preoccupation was with beautiful fruit, mixed with oysters, shrimps, and the occasional red-boiled crab, crayfish or lobster. He also forayed into the subject of the out-door still life of fruit, which allowed him to include garden snails, snakes and lizards. Contrary to many of his contemporaries, he did not include lizards in any of his still lifes upon a table, apart from an early, van der Ast-inspired example, cat. no. A 007.

Animal life did attract his attention, however. Up to 1648, there are virtually no insects in his images, but in Leopold Wilhelm's cartouche still life from that year, there are a grasshopper, a damselfly, two butterflies, and a maybug. From then on, de Heem's still lifes more and more often included little crawling, flying and creeping animals. A meticulously painted red-admiral butterfly would become almost a signature feature from 1650 on. Initially, particularly the cartouche still lifes became infested with animal life; in an example from 1650 (cat. no. A 129) he also introduced a sparrow, balancing on a branch, about to pick at a blackberry, and the same feature appears in a similar painting from the following year (cat. no. A 138). Small live birds also appear in some of de Heem's flower paintings from the first half of the 1670s (cat. nos. A 242 and 248).

In an unusual composition from (probably) 1653 (cat. no. A 172), he combined a stone bust, probably of the Virgin and adorned with flowers, with a group of parrots and a parakeet. Parrots had appeared occasionally in works from the 1640s (cat. nos. A 054 and A 073), and in rare examples from 1626 (cat. no. A 001), and 1628 (cat. no. A 006). A red macaw also plays a prominent role in two of de Heem's better known luxury still lifes, both datable to 1654, in Vienna and in Sarasota, Florida (cat. nos. A 186 and A 188). Some ten years later, de Heem would again paint two rather unusual compositions in both of which a red macaw features prominently, together with a cockatoo (cat. nos. A 245 and A 246). It is unlikely that these parrots bear a strong symbolism, they were rather included as exotic, colourful, and rare prized possessions, and as a highly decorative and lively motif.

Apart from the frequently appearing dead lobsters, crayfish, crabs, and the occasional herring, and apart from one dead finch in cat. no. A 210, Jan Davidsz. de Heem appears to have avoided to include dead animals in his still lifes. No game still lifes or still lifes of fish are known or recorded by him.[617]

A composition full of animal life, intrinsically, is cat. no. A 232, a large still life of flowers arranged around a dead tree in a landscape, which includes a flying kingfisher and a flying goldfinch, frogs, snakes, a lizard, snails, butterflies, an earthworm and a variety of bugs and insects. This painting may have resulted from de Heem's earlier experiments of rendering fruit and flowers in a different setting than indoors on a table, such as the still lifes of fruit in the open air from 1652 and 1653. It also indicates that de Heem had developed an interest in landscape painting. This interest was already apparent from the landscape backgrounds in several of his still lifes, from the little signed landscape painting from the mid-1640s, as well as from the out-door still lifes from the first

half of the 1650s, but here (in cat. no. A 232), the landscape takes up a substantial part of the composition. An unusual landscape painting with folk gathering ice floes (cat. no. A 231) must date from the same period, around 1670. In a similar vein as cat. no. A 232, de Heem also produced a few paintings in the 1660s and 1670s that are an interesting amalgam of his own out-door fruit still lifes and 'forest-floor' paintings in the manner of Otto Marseus van Schrieck (cat. nos. A 210, 258 and 259). They are good examples of how Jan Davidsz. de Heem picked up subjects and trends he came across, giving his own twist to them. In turn, these paintings initiated such still lifes by Abraham Mignon.

As remarked above, Jan Davidsz. de Heem only occasionally painted or included a vase of flowers in the first fifteen years of his painting career and produced some first serious efforts in this area in about 1645, after which his production of floral still lifes diminished again. In 1651 and 1652 some modest vases of flowers appear, but only after his move to Utrecht, flower paintings start to emerge in substantial numbers. From after *c*.1658, about half of his extant still lifes are flower paintings, both vases and garlands, or compositions in which flowers play an important part. The majority are bouquets of flowers in vases, usually globular glass vases, that allow for detailed rendering of the stems inside, combined with intricate reflections in the glass and in the water. Often, de Heem included some fruit in these paintings, both on the ledge in front of the vase, and by means of branches of small fruit included in the bouquet. Many of the flowers are beautiful cultivars, but the artist also included field blooms, stalks of wheat, grasses, umbellifer flowers and even corn cobs. Most of the bouquets are enlivened by a choice of butterflies, caterpillars, grasshoppers, flying insects, bugs and ants, but occasionally their numbers have been kept to a minimum or they were left out, perhaps at the request of a patron. Fine details such as ants and small bugs were added as a finishing touch, as also would appear from a complex still life that was apparently never finished by de Heem himself (cat. no. A 268) on which these details are missing.
In the 1660s and 1670s, Jan Davidsz. de Heem occasionally experimented and varied his compositions and types of still lifes. Cat. no. A 209 is an unusual composition with silver-gilt cup-and-cover in the centre, flanked to the right by a 'cascade' of bunches of white grapes. In addition to his various garlands of flowers, there are a garland and a festoon of mainly fruit (cat. nos. A 208, Mauritshuis, and A 243, Rijksmuseum), as well as several more mixed garlands (A 240, Karlsruhe, 241, Florence, and 250, Cheltenham, and the only dated example, from 1675, cat. no. A 256). The two unusual (cartouche) still lifes with a parrot and a cockatoo have already been mentioned above, and in the early 1670s a few more cartouche still lifes were painted, among them the one with the (added) portrait of Prince William III. The majority of de Heem's production from his last two decades, however, consisted of still lifes of flowers and of fruit.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem's strength, next to his excellent skills and the verisimilitude of his details, was lying in his chameleon-like ability to pick up artistic tendencies around him and to reshape them into something highly individual. Already in his earliest works, he combines motifs inspired by Balthasar van der Ast with motifs from others: a Utrecht Caravaggist boy, Delff's cauldron, Torrentuis' Jan-Steen jug, David Bailly's scroll, compasses and oval miniature portrait, thus transforming van der Ast's idiom into works with a new, individual character. The first consistent group of fully original compositions are the still lifes with books and manuscripts from 1628 and 1629, even though they tie in with a general interest in representing books also found with other artists. In the meantime, de Heem was experimenting with paintings of interiors with a single figure, or without figures, such as his two early barn still lifes. Also for the latter type of painting, de Heem appears to have been in the

forefront of its development, even though he himself barely pursued the genre any further. In the first years after 1630, de Heem must have been looking at developments in Haarlem – he had briefly emulated Claesz. and Heda – and in Amsterdam, painting still lifes of luxury items in relatively modest, but increasingly monumental compositions, again in a recognizable style and idiom of his own. Around this time, it appears, other artists start to notice and imitate his work. Only after his move to Antwerp in 1635 or 1636, however, and after he had developed his large luxury still lifes by 1640 – works in a manner and an idiom that combine Flemish taste with his Dutch background – he became a highly influential artist and many imitations and emulations of his still lifes start to appear, particularly in Antwerp. De Heem himself, however, kept exploring new subjects and styles. He started to experiment with flower painting, for which Daniel Seghers clearly was an important source of inspiration, but he soon more or less abandoned the subject for a number of years, only to return to it properly after his move to Utrecht in about 1658. He developed several original types of still lifes, such as the out-door still life of fruit and unorthodox compositions such as cat. no. A 172 (Le Puy) and the large out-door still life, cat. no. A 232 (Liechtenstein).

When we look at still lifes from the Northern and Southern Netherlands from the 1640s, 1650s, and 1660s, those by Jan Davidsz. de Heem stand out for their individual qualities in originality, composition, arrangement, light and finish. All other works that have a visual similarity responded in some way to de Heem's examples, such as paintings by Andries Benedetti, Laurens Craen, Alexander Coosemans, Jan Pauwel Gillemans, Carstiaen Luyckx, and Joris van Son, to name a few. Beside de Heem, many still-life painters were working in different styles and tackling different subjects, several of whom also attracted their own following, such as Frans Snijders, a genius in his own field and an older artist who inspired de Heem in an indirect manner. As also pertains from the writings of the likes of Cornelis de Bie, Jan Davidsz. de Heem was rated very highly by many of his contemporaries and considered as a leading artist in his field. Also after his return to Utrecht, artists such as Maria van Oosterwijck and Jacob Rotius were clearly attracted by his reputation and according to contemporary sources they came to the senior artist to improve their skills and to learn from him. Abraham Mignon, who settled in de Heem's Utrecht studio in 1664, clearly emulated the master's work and became an influential artist himself. From the years after de Heem's return to Utrecht in about 1658, his floral compositions are probably the most influential, serving as a source of inspiration to a whole generation of flower painters, and they remained to belong to the summit of his production, also after he returned to Antwerp again in 1672. While painting some highly original compositions in the course of his last decade of activity, such as cat. no. A 246, which is a bird painting rather than a still life, de Heem mainly stuck to his successful types of still lifes during this period: flower paintings and still lifes of fruit on a table. And though still a high-class artist, was no longer really an innovator.

Patrons and prices

On the whole, little is known about de Heem's patrons and early buyers. Few first owners of his paintings are known. The Amsterdam collector Anthoni Gaillard, at the time of his death in 1639, owned three paintings by Jan Davidsz. de Heem, among them possibly cat. no. A 014, painted in Leiden, but also 'Een groot stuck van Jan de Heem', and 'Een grote kan met roomer van Jan de Heem' the latter perhaps identifiable as cat. no. A 044, which belongs to de Heem's presumed Amsterdam production.[618] Unfortunately Gaillard's inventory does not include valuations for the paintings. Interestingly, the 1636 inventory of the Amsterdam painter Pieter Codde includes a 'vanitas van Johannes de heem', presumably also one of his Leiden book still lifes.[619] Another early mention is

'een fruytagie van Jan de Heem' in the Leiden inventory of Joan van Harlaer in 1644, estimated at 42 guilders. In view of the location, this too may well have concerned a painting from de Heem's early Leiden period. As such, a candidate for this mention might be found among cat. nos. A 001 to A 007.[620] In Amsterdam, in 1647, interestingly, 'een trony van de Heem' (a character head) was recorded, valued at 18 guilders.[621] No such painting can be identified today. Cat. no. A 065, one of de Heem's large luxury still lifes, may well be identified as the work that, according to a note from 1783, "was painted for one of the Nobles at Brussels, and the present proprietor has seen a receipt for 1220 guilders, paid for it to the artist." The fact that in 1648 de Heem was commissioned to work for Leopold Wilhelm, one of the most powerful figures and at that time probably the most important patron in the country, indicates that he had risen to high esteem. In 1661, Cornelis de Bie observed that "Den Gouverneur van t'Landt, en Hertoch hoogh van macht / Die houden dese Const in groote eer en acht" (The Governor of the Country, and Duke high and mighty, they hold this art in high honour and esteem).[622]

De Heems marriage with Anna Ruckers in 1644 had undoubtedly secured his position in the Antwerp upper middle class. His father-in-law, Andreas Ruckers, was a celebrated harpsichord maker with connections both in artistic circles, as well as with the Antwerp upper class, and de Heem may well have engaged patrons through such family connections. Among Ruckers' relations was the diamond trader and art collector Gaspar Duarte (1584-1653). He is not known to have owned work by de Heem, but the inventory of his son, Diego Duarte, made up in 1682, lists two still lifes by de Heem. One of them was a painting that can probably be identified as cat. no. A 218, which Diego Duarte may have bought directly from the artist, the other an unspecified still life of fruit, which may, or may not, have come into his possession through his father Gaspar.

A lottery organized by the painter Jan de Bondt in Wijk bij Duurstede in 1649 included six copies after de Heem and two autograph works by the artist.[623] It is interesting to note that the estimate for one of the two originals, 66 guilders, was not substantially higher than that for one of the copies, which was valued at 50 guilders. This may indicate that the copy was a large painting. The other autograph work by de Heem in the lottery, with an estimate of 200 guilders, was the most expensive painting, together with a landscape by Willem de Heusch, which was also valued at 200 guilders, and followed at some distance by a painting of dogs by Jan Baptist Weenix, at 136 guilders.[624]

Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, still lifes by de Heem are found in inventories, both in the North Netherlands and in Antwerp, but their descriptions, in the majority of cases, are far too superficial to allow identification, while measurements are never given, other than, occasionally, 'groot' or 'kleijn' (large or small). Most often, de Heem's paintings are recorded as 'een fruytagie' (a fruit piece). Occasionally there is 'een stuck met blommen' (a piece with flowers), and regularly simply 'een stuck' (a piece), as well as the odd 'copy naer de Heem'. The name of the artist is usually given as 'de Heem', without initials, so after *c*.1660 and particularly towards the end of the century, confusion with Cornelis de Heem or even with Jan's grandson David Cornelisz. de Heem is possible.[625] There are some exceptions, however. The acount of receipts and expenses of the estate of Hieronimus van der Straten and Joanna Drijwegen, Goes, for 1662 and 1663, submitted to the orphanage board in 1665, includes a list of "fine paintings […] to be sold on a proper occasion to the benefit of these three orphaned children […]", including a painting described as: "Den selven [Johannes] de Heem groote fruitage met een pot met roosen, no. 21 op 1000 gulden" (the same [Johannes] de Heem large fruit painting with a pot of roses, no. 21, [estimated] at 1000 guilders). The previous painting in the list was 'gold and silver dishes' by 'Joannes de Heem', estimated at 120

guilders, which indicates that the second still life was probably of exceptional size and quality.[626] The painting in question may well have been cat. no. A 190 (St. Petersburg), from 1655. Considering the fact that Goes, in Zeeland, is quite close to Antwerp, it is likely that van der Straten was the first owner of his two de Heem paintings.[627]

As mentioned, Marten Kretzer must have been an important patron in Amsterdam, who already owned work by de Heem in 1650, but we have no indication of which painting(s) this may have been. Also, in 1652 it was noted that one Jacob van Wijningen from Utrecht gave some paintings to Kretzer as collateral for a loan of 1000 guilders, among them '2 stucken van de Heem'.[628] According to Arnold Houbraken, Jan van der Meer claimed that he had paid Jan Davidsz. de Heem 2000 guilders for the cartouche still life into which another artist (or he himself) painted the portrait of Prince William III of Orange, which must have been in about 1671. In 1682, a flower painting by de Heem, probably cat. no. A 218 (which is in fact a collaboration with Abraham Mignon), now in Stockholm, was valued at 300 guilders, and in 1689, a Joan Fox brought into his wedding goods 'een stuck schilderij van de Heem' (a painting by de Heem) with an estimated value of 315 guilders.[629]

Thus, in all, only very few data survive concerning the (early) prices of work by Jan Davidsz. de Heem, but it is clear, also from the praise the artist received from contemporaries and early biographers, that his work was definitely in demand and commanded from relatively high prices to very high sums. Some of them rank among the highest prices paid for works by contemporary expensive artists such as Gerard Dou and Frans van Mieris.

From a few examples it pertains that de Heem's paintings, apart from as works of art, could be considered as fashionable objects that could be altered according to change of taste. In three cases, still lifes by Jan Dz. de Heem were 'modernized' by identifiable painters. In cat. no. A 028, probably from 1632, now in the Hamburger Kunsthalle, of which a second version exists (cat. no. A 029), a silver-gilt cup-and-cover was painted over with a rummer and a tall wine glass by Simon Luttichuys, some twenty years later. Cat. no. A 094, in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, is not, as has always been assumed, a collaborative work by de Heem and Nicolaes van Verendael, but a de Heem original from (probably) 1645, that was 'modernized' and co-signed by van Verendael in about 1670. Those changes and additions, too, can quite easily be recognized by comparison with a variant of the composition, cat. no. A 093. Something similar happened to cat. no. A 202, now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, to which painting Jan van Huijsum added several flowers in the second half of the 1710s. De Heem himself appears to have made some changes to a still life from the second half of the 1650s after returning to Antwerp in 1672 (cat. no. A 191).

One of de Heem's early efforts to a more complex composition, cat. no. A 035, was later cut up to form two separate still lifes. Several of de Heem's still lifes were reduced in size at some point, perhaps in order to fit into a specific spot, or into a more modern frame, or perhaps because a damaged area was removed. Cat. no. A 074 was cut down to an ornamental shape, probably in the eighteenth century, apparently because it was chosen to serve as a decorative overdoor painting.

Technical aspects of Jan Davidsz. de Heem's paintings.

As mentioned in the introduction, few paintings by de Heem have been analysed technically and personally I have not initiated such research. The technical aspects – (pigment)changes, damages, restorations, additions and possible repainted areas – of de Heem's works have, however, continuously been an important aspect of my assessment of them.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem was obviously a very skilled painter who was in complete command of his materials and techniques, and as a result, many of his paintings have survived the ages quite

well to very well. In general, he appears to have used high-quality materials of which he made highly efficient and effective use, as was concluded in 1999 for cat. no. A 234 (Amsterdam): "… De Heem made this painting with the use of pigments that in many respects (behavior, structure or isotope composition) seem to stand out from what we presently know of material used by other contemporary painters. The layer structure encountered in the study of the painting is rather straightforward and highly efficient, demonstrating the hand of an experienced artist who knew how to obtain optimal effects with a rather academic technique. With this painting De Heem stretched the possibilities of the systematic approach to its limits. With this technique he was able to achieve a liveliness that could not have been accomplished by lesser hands."[630] A similar conclusion could be drawn for cat. no. A 206 (Antwerp) when it was restored and researched in 2015.[631] With the recently developed Macro X-ray fluorescence method the layering of the painting could be analysed, revealing how de Heem layered his paint and showing areas of dead-colouring and local preparative colours for the flowers. For many of his motifs, he applied multiple glazes to attain a specific suggestion of texture, translucence and depth. Throughout his career, he was experimenting with variations of his technique, for instance concerning the rendering of grapes. Interestingly, in a manuscript by Daniel King (*c*.1616-1661), kept in the British Museum, some descriptions of techniques are included that are attributed to 'de Heem'.[632] A recipe on page 45 reads as follows: "Grapes / The hightning of grapes with that purplish / mealie colour is made with white lake, bige / of earth a little, and earth of Colon to divertion / Mr Deheem / The shadow of linen is white cole blake / and a little lake or white Colon earth, coale / and a little yellow oker. Deheem, no umber / Deep green and darke gloomy shade of / wood and trees is made with terra varda and smalt / sometimes adding brown red an excellent colour / for this purpose and of great use in landskip […]".[633] Whether the source was Jan Davidsz. de Heem or perhaps Cornelis can be the subject of speculation.[634] However, before 1661 their techniques were not substantially different.

During the first decade of his activity, Jan Davidsz. de Heem used oak panels as the support for the majority of his works. Subsequently, also because he occasionally opted for larger formats, he regularly worked on canvas. In the following decades he would generally choose canvas for larger formats and oak panel for smaller paintings up to about 55 centimetres on the short side, but occasionally large panels or smaller canvases occur. Exceptionally, he would work on a (small) copper plate, in most cases for flower paintings. Unique in his oeuvre is a probable pair from 1652 of still lifes upon a table, painted on copper plates of about 39 x 57 centimetres (cat. nos. A 151 and 152). After his return to Antwerp in 1672, de Heem worked almost exclusively on canvas, probably also due to the fact that, as a result of the Baltic wars, the importation of oak for panels had decreased substantially.

Like virtually every seventeenth-century painting, also de Heem's products have changed to some degree over time. For spectacular effects many of his contemporaries would use strong colours that, despite their effectiveness when applied, easily deteriorated or faded over time. De Heem is no exception. The most obvious is his use of orpiment (*schietgeel*) for bright yellow roses which will have discoloured already after a few decades. This effect can be seen in most of his floral compositions. Also lemons, oranges and other yellow(ish) motifs occasionally received a glaze of orpiment and are now perceived as a dull yellow ochre. For decorations on porcelain, de Heem appears to rather often have used smalt or an unstable mixture of ultramarine, which in both cases resulted in a grey tone over time, rather than its original strong blue. The artist also used red and yellow lakes, which often have faded. The somewhat dull, dark-red drapery in cat. no. A 101 (Toledo), may originally well have been a brighter red and the same may be true for the one in cat. no. A 117

(The Hague). The grey tablecloth in cat. no. A 132 (Liechtenstein) and the grey drapery in cat. no. A 186 (Vienna) may well have been glazed with a red lake, and possibly the bright blue tablecloths in cat. nos. A 127 (Edinburgh) and 137 may originally have been a bright green, but only proper pigment analysis can provide proof of such an assumption. We may also wonder whether some, or many, of de Heem's pink roses were originally glazed with a layer of red lake which has now faded and which would have made them a brighter red.[635] Certainly in the case of orpiment, the artist will have been aware of the future changes of the pigment, but he will have decided that he simply had no choice if he wanted to attain its specific bright yellow, and perhaps presumed that once the orpiment had faded, a later painter could add a new transparent layer in order to revive the effect. Unlike Otto Marseus van Schieck and his own pupil Elias van den Broeck, however, de Heem has always painted his butterflies, so his paintings do not show the blank patches found in the work of those artists, where they had impressed actual butterfly wings onto a wet ground.[636]

Studio practice

Nothing is specifically known of Jan Davidsz. de Heem's studio practice, but some observations can be made. As mentioned above, in some instances de Heem worked together with other artists. The earliest example would appear to be the large luxury still life from 1641 in Brussels, cat. no. A 054, to which the blackamoor, and probably the monkey, were contributed by Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert. In 1643, de Heem painted a barn interior, into which the figures were painted in by David Teniers the Younger. This painting may well have been a special commission by a patron of both artists. While the figures appear to have been added after de Heem had finished his work on the painting, they were planned upfront. Although it has occasionally been suggested differently, for instance already in 1673, probably for catalogue A 101, the landscape backgrounds in de Heem's still lifes were done by the artist himself, and not by a specialized collaborator. De Heem was clearly not a brilliant landscape painter, but he made a proper effort.[637] Occasionally, de Heem himself served as a collaborator in a work by (an)other painter(s). For instance, he contributed the flowers and fruit to a large altarpiece for Leopold Wilhelm in 1648 (cat. no. A 118), he painted a tiny cabinet still life into a painting gallery by Jacob de Formentrou in 1653 (cat. no. A 178) and supplied some fruit in a painting by Thomas Willeboirts Bosschaert, probably in the following year (cat. no. A 189). Several of de Heem's cartouche still lifes, from the first half of the 1650s, as well as from the 1670s, were done in collaboration with Erasmus Quellinus II, who painted the hard-stone scrolls and sculptural details upon which de Heem applied his fruit and flowers in some of his cartouche still lifes.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem was also active as a teacher. Some contracts with prospective pupils are known, and the Antwerp guild also registered several of his pupils. Of some of these artists-in the-making not a single work is recorded and neither did they ever register as a master in the guild. We cannot be sure that they ever produced a finished still life, or painting of any other kind. Other de Heem pupils, such as Andries Benedetti and Alexander Coosemans, became relatively successful still-life painters in their own right. Of several other artists, such as Laurens Craen, Jan Pauwel Gillemans the Elder, and Johannes Hannot, we can only surmise on the basis of their style and choice of subjects, that they spent time in de Heem's Antwerp studio. De Heem without doubt trained his son Cornelis. In 1654, at the age of 23, Cornelis produced his first known dated works, in which he shows himself to have become a skilful and fully trained still-life painter. Some paintings by him certainly date from the years prior to 1654. His style and subject matter are close to Jan Davidsz. de Heem's works and he must have been given the opportunity to spend all the time he needed to finish them in full detail. His later works, painted after his father had left Antwerp, would become generally less

elaborate and less meticulously finished, which indicates that he had his own clientele which was not of the same level as that of Jan Dz. de Heem. Clearly, most of the time he was unable to maintain the high level of quality that working with his father had allowed him to attain.

In his Utrecht years, several artists came to de Heem for training and guidance. Maria van Oosterwijck probably moved to Utrecht in order to improve her skills in de Heem's studio. In 1664, Jacob Marrel left his pupil Abraham Mignon with the artist and Mignon and de Heem shared a studio for several years. Elias van den Broeck became a pupil in 1669 and remained with de Heem when he returned to Antwerp in 1672. Jacob Rotius must have paid extensive visits to de Heem's studio, first in Utrecht and later in Antwerp.

In general, Jan Davidsz. de Heem appears to have started, elaborated and finished his paintings entirely by himself. Only a few examples include some details that appear to have been painted by Abraham Mignon, in particular cat. nos. A 218 and 234, while de Heem's hand can be recognized in a few of Mignon's flower paintings. Houbraken mentioned that de Heem "voor gewoonte had hunne werken met zyn konstpenceel t' overloopen of over te polysten, gelyk ook de stukken van Minjon die eenige jaren by hem woonde om de Konst te leeren" (had the habit to retouch or polish their [his sons] works with his art brush, and also the pieces by Mignon who lived with him for some years in order to learn the art). I have found no evidence of this in Cornelis' work, however, and have argued that Jan Jansz. de Heem, as a painter, is most probably a myth, partly evoked by a misconception of Houbraken.

Only one drawing is known that can rather convincingly be attributed to Jan Davidsz. de Heem (cat. no. D 01), but a few other drawings, probably from the mid-1640s, appear to have originated in de Heem's studio and can be connected with paintings by (probable) pupils. This seems to indicate that preparatory drawings were used in the studio, although perhaps not for the master's own compositions, which he probably laid out directly on the canvas or panel. The suggestion that pupils or assistants would have done preparatory work for him is, in my view, in contrast with the creative process of the highly original and precise artist de Heem was.[638] In any case, de Heem must have made frequent use of studies of motifs, since identical objects, fruit and flowers occur in different paintings, sometimes years apart. He must have retained a substantial stock of such studies, of which, however, no examples appear to have survived. Whether these were studies in oils or drawings, in black and white or colour, can only be speculated upon. In view of the degree of detail of the repeated motifs, these studies must in any case have been quite detailed.[639]

Iconography and symbols

The last decades of the previous century, in particular, have seen a tendency in art history to search for 'hidden meanings', symbolism, and an emblematic contents of seventeenth-century paintings, not in the least of still lifes. There can be no denying that many, if not the majority of still lifes from the period are more than simply attractive images. Also the oeuvre of Jan Davidsz. de Heem includes several paintings that are obviously emblematic, but even his most explicit vanitas still lifes cannot be read as rebuses in which every motif has a symbolic meaning. However, general symbolic references that were familiar to contemporary viewers can often be found in his still lifes. The vast majority of them can be seen as images of transience: flowers fade, fruit rots, flies remind us of decay, wealth and luxury may incite contemplation of our timely earthly existence. Caterpillars and butterflies can be understood as representing the cycle of life, and lobsters may stand for inconstancy. Globes evoke thoughts of earthly or heavenly matters, musical instruments and smoking utensils may refer to the volatility of enjoyment. In bouquets, festoons and garlands, in specific combinations, white lilies may

well have alluded to the Virgin, and thorny roses to Christ. More than once, de Heem included motifs in his still lifes, such as in cat. no. A 218 (Stockholm), that represent the Four Elements. In the proper context, oranges referred to the House of Orange, and more particularly to the young Prince William III (cat. no. A 249), and in some of de Heem's still lifes bread and wine could easily be read by contemporaries as symbols of the Eucharist. Besides that, it is quite possible that there are motifs in his works that had a specific symbolic meaning for the owner which completely eludes the modern viewer. What exactly, for instance, does the arrow in cat. no. A 129 (Dresden) stand for, from which the wine appears to be dropping into the sturdy rummer in the centre? Nevertheless, apart from, perhaps, the explicit vanitas still lifes, such symbolism was not the prime *raison d'être* for de Heem's paintings.

Jan Davidsz. de Heem's core business was illusionism. He made every effort in his still lifes to present a convincing illusion, a seeming reality ('*schijn zonder schijn'* as Angel called this). Already in 1661, Cornelis de Bie, in his *Gulden cabinet der edel vry schilderkunst*, went out of his way to extol de Heem's abilities to paint fruit and other comestibles so deceivingly real, that viewers were easily fooled and that their appetite for the delicious dishes the painter presented them with would be aroused beyond measure.[640] Pregnant women, he advised, should avoid looking at de Heem's still lifes too closely, or they would get an insufferable appetite.[641] And, he said, "De *Heem* is soodanich schilderende dat den Natuer stom staet midts sijn Fruyten door Pinceel het leven schier overtreffen." (De Heem paints in such a way that Nature is speechless, since his fruits done by the brush all but surpass life [= reality]). [642]

This illusionistic quality has remained the strength of Jan Davidsz. de Heem's still lifes over the centuries. And while in the details his paintings are true to life, they surpass reality in many aspects. De Heem attained an atmospheric magic that overstepped the boundaries of exact rendition, giving his motifs a complementary strength and expressiveness by means of his highly individual use of light, texture, and composition. His works are the products of a very inquisitive, creative, and intelligent mind, an eager, sharp, and observant eye, an extremely skilled hand, and, undoubtedly , indefatigable stamina.