The menagerie of "The White Elephant" in Amsterdam: with some notes on other 17th and 18th century menageries in The Netherlands
Pieters, F.F.J.M.

Published in:
Die Kulturgeschichte des Zoos

Citation for published version (APA):
Florence F. J. M. Pieters

The menagerie of “The White Elephant” in Amsterdam, with some notes on other 17th and 18th century menageries in The Netherlands

Introduction

People have always been fascinated by wild animals from faraway countries. Especially at fairs, the travelling shows of exotic animals—for instance, elephants, rhinoceroses, monkeys, snakes—drew the attention of everyone. The curiosity was enhanced by accounts of travellers and seafarers. The expansion of trade and commerce during the 17th and 18th centuries, mainly overseas, made more permanent exhibitions of exotic animals possible. These collections of animals developed into stationary exhibitions or menageries and were the precursors of zoological gardens. In Holland, the Dutch East and West Indian Companies were usually commissioned for the transport of the animals. Their ships took orders for delivered animals—either alive or stuffed—intended to be used as presents for people in high office, or to be sold to the numerous owners of menageries and cabinets.¹

As early as the seventeenth century, menageries and the cabinets connected with them were of considerable value to the study of natural history and were, moreover, an inspiring source of art. However, not only scientists and artists felt drawn to the great diversity of forms and shapes observed in the animals on display. Also amateurs, who were called “curious nature lovers” at the time, used pen and brush to express their amazement of the exotic. One of them was Jan Velten. His manuscript of Wonderen der Natuur (Wonders of Nature) is kept in the Artis Library of the University of Amsterdam.²

The manuscript of Wonderen der Natuur

Wonderen der Natuur by Jan Velten is a unique folio scrapbook containing texts and drawings, and various loose sheets pasted in. In the Artis Library it is commonly referred to as “Boek van Blauw Jan” (Blue John’s Book), which is derived from its full title which reads in translation (in quasi-facsimile):

¹ For an exhaustive list of Dutch zoological cabinets and menageries, see Engel 1939; 2nd ed. prepared by Smit et al., 1986.
² The name Artis is an abbreviation of “Natura Artis Magistra”, the name of the Royal Zoological Society of Amsterdam, founded 1838. In 1939 Artis had to transfer the ownership of all its possessions, except the living animals in the zoo, to the municipality of Amsterdam in order to escape from bankruptcy (see e.g. Smit, 1988). Ever since then, the extensive Artis Library (of which I am the present curator) and Artis’ museum collections became part of the University of Amsterdam.
"Wonders of Nature: I described by Jan Velten which he himself in his time has seen in Amsterdam such as Humans, Beasts, Bloodless little animals, Fowl, Fish, Conches, Shells, Sea plants, Trees, Plants, Flowers next to their images. In ink: drawn from nature I and all most prominent and exotic I birds: and beasts shown by Jan Westerhof [= Westehoff] I otherwise commonly named Jan blauw, I or Blauw Jan [Blue John] in his Theatre or I aviary, set off with water-I colour, after their live colours I all done by I Jan Velten" (Velten, ca. 1695-1709).

Fig. 1. Bardt's elephant. Reproduced from Wonderen der natuur (Velten, ca. 1695-1709), S. 66-67 (55 x 62 cm).

Apparently, Jan Velten sketched and described "nature's wonders" as they were shown in Amsterdam's illustrious menagerie Blauw Jan, under the direction of Jan Westerhof at the time, which was situated on the Kloveniersburgwal. Upon an examination of the 265 pages of the manuscript one finds that he also sketched exotic animals and people observed in the streets and at fairs, as well as animals housed in a much less known menagerie, called "De Witte Oliphant" (The White Elephant), situated on the Botermarkt. Scattered through the book, contemporary prints had been pasted in; two of them are extremely rare advertising posters.

3 For the menagerie of Blauw Jan, see e.g., van Eeghen 1962 and Pieters & Mörzer Bruyns 1988.
Bekentmaking
Aan alle Heeren, Kooplieden en Inwoonders dezer Stad Amsterdam.

Het is met dezen Schoenen, uit Ost-Indien gekomen, een Ost-Indiërsvadder, die op het Eyland Olyam, in het jaar 1701, heeft laten zien een leeker Dier, meeverwond
en, en deze ware gebebben op’t Nederlands, in de Malcroarte taal genaamt Allegro, in’t Portugaals Bijge de Bemonge, en in’t Nederlandschen Nigomen Duyvel, en naar dat het slechts vijf dagen
by hem in’t leven is geweest, zonder te drinken, heeft hij het voornomen Dier van vier mun
nen laten doodelijk, door dien het niet anders als tot quodd doen genoegens was; want, naar dat het met een Ylere ketting aan zijn lyf vast gedley-
flet is, heeft het gemelde Dier des inslags door een brave vloer en door de Fundamenten van een
laar gebouw doorgegraven.

Het voorneming Dier den Nigoms Duyvel,
kun de grootste Oliphansen, die op de Eylanden menigte lyf, met een draag dwijning, wringt
hem om den Stoty en bijzij daar zoo vult aan hun
gen, die den Oliphane het met zijn grote kragt,
haar niet kan van afkrijgen, voor en al eer den
Oliphane in’t water loopt, se de het sig teels
los laat, want geen water verdragen kan.
Het maakte zich alleen makende en vult, dat men
het selve met geene Ylere Broek-Yleren kan los
maken, maar zoo da men water over syn lyf giet,
zooy laat hy zijn sig teels los, hy die een niet als Mie-
zen, die alzoo in de Bollen met genooy ontmegige
gevonden werden, gebruikende daar toe zijn tong
ger, die wel een halve lang is, spryt de wyer over
de groote uut, en altzoo werden daar met menigte op
komen kruppen; zooy haat hy zijn tonge voor egen
bijyn, en deze zijn een niet bekent.

Het vlees is alzoo een Venken, geheel goed om
t te eet; (maakt geheel fott, en is Medecinsch)
dat zyn etelijcke waarne inwoorders die door die
geleerde Nigoms Duyvel om het leven zyn ge-
bragt, niet door zijn bycre, want het en heeft
geen raden; maar door dien gemelde swarten,
naar dit hy het gestagen hebben, op de Schou-
dos-dingen, dat zig niet met syn staart oonden hat,
en wringt die soo vult toe, dat onmogelijck is een
los te krijgen en alsdics door gedrongen werden,
geen konden van damage, genempt Wra-
gens, die alzoo mete gevonden werden, ook
hier, gelyck de Liefhebbers de veilen van deze
nigoms alhier meelen kunnen zien.

Wat zyn vorde krage en zouden kunnen belan-
gen, hy zyn niet bekent, maar het boevenstaan-
de verklauw de een soever en waaruit, te zyn, en
ik vind mijn teels verijagt om aan alle de wereld
een te tezyn, die allervoore Dier te mugen ver-
tonen.

Ook heb ik meede gebracht een levend Dier, in’t Malwater genoemt Campergoo, behendige me-
de vier voeten; welk Dier zyn genereert met Cro-
codillen of Kaisers en daarvan de Indiaansers,
as de gemelde Crocodillen, voor haar algemeen
wederstaanigheid, digt afgevoerd geen quad.

Ook heeft hy meede gebracht een Blad van een
Baum dat in’t Malhaut genoemt Carnegoo, behendige me-
de vier voeten, welk de in der luide van de Indiaansers,
as de gemelde Carnegoo, voor haar algemeen
wederstaanigheid, digt afgevoerd geen quad.

Deze boevenstaande Dieren zyn te zien op de Botermarkt in

Fig. 2. Advertising poster in which the arrival in The White Elephant was announced of (among other things) a stuffed "Nigoms' Devil" and a living animal called "Campergoo" (probably an Indian pangolin and a Two-banded monitor). Reproduced from Wonderen der natuur (Velten, ca. 1695-1709), S. 149 (23 x 15 cm).
showing animals on display in The White Elephant (Figs. 2, 4). The frontispiece renders a fair
glimpse of all the curiosities the manuscript offers.\textsuperscript{4}

The book cannot be precisely dated; it is a kind of compilation, after all. Jan Velten appears
to have worked on it over a number of years and a few dates occur throughout the manuscript:
1695 is the earliest relevant year given;\textsuperscript{5} it is found on page 29 commenting on a drawing of a
catfish, reading: “Fish: 7 feet large: caught in the Haarlemmermeer in 1695”. The latest date
occurring is that of 1709, found on page 223, in a description of a “fish with hands” (a sea dev-

\textsuperscript{4} The frontispiece is reproduced in an account on the South American tapir in The White Elephant (Pie-
ters & Pinkster 1994, S. 83) and in a paper on the animals in The White Elephant in Dutch (Pieters

\textsuperscript{5} On S. 120 Velten mentions an older date, viz. 1687, but it appears from the text that a copied picture
is concerned, the original of which dates from 1687: “a rare bird having been on view at Batavia in the
stable of the Company in the year 1687, and painted after life by Vinandt and re-drawn by Jan Velten".

50
ADVERTIESMENT,

Mits denz maakt men bekent alle Heeren, Dames, Borgers, Cooplicden en verdier aan alle Liefehebben van Gedierde, dat tegenwoordig alhier is te zien een levendig Diergenaamt EQUUS AQUATICUS, of anders te zeggen, waaterof Zelpaart, is gevange door groote moeite en korteinde Revier den Euphanir in AMERICA: waar veel Schrijvers gewag maaken, diergelyken niet in de wereld zijn souden en dewel men zoekt de Liefehebbey van dag tot dag aan te queeken en te toonen war de Natuur als Moeder zindende aller dingen voortbrengen doet, talmen fulecks eenige dagen voor een kleyne prijs van enoonezels en meedborgers vande Stad Amsterdam laten zien. Reden, om dat het iets remarcbabel is, en de Meester van het seluide daar veel moeite en ook kosten om gedaan heeft (4jaaren lang) wij zijn Keyzelijke Majesteit daar expresselijks heeft laten zoeken en het selve ook verwagende is. Die begeerig of Cunieus zijn moge, om dit wonder Schijpsel, 't welck door geen geheugens van menchen in deze Landen geffen is: kan hem vervoegen opde Botter-Markt, in de groote witte Oliphant, aenaar het selve zien is van de Morgen tot den Avont.

N. B. Dit veenwaardige Gedierte is mak en tam gemaakt, zoo dat 't zelfde van yedereen kan gehandeld werden.

Zegget voort.

Fig. 4. Advertising poster in which the arrival in The White Elephant of a South American tapir was announced. Reproduced from Wonderen der Natuur (Velten, ca. 1695-1707), S. 254 (38 x 27 cm).

il). We may therefore safely assume that Jan Velten started the manuscript towards the end of the 17th century and kept working on it during the first decade of the next century.

Except for this work (Velten, ca. 1695-1709) hardly anything is known about Jan Velten. The historian P.H. Witkamp thinks it likely that Jan Velten was a sailor who became later associated
with Jan Westerhof's establishment. Another historian, D.C. Meijer, has his doubts about that and takes Velten for a "nature lover", describing him as an amateur conchologist. Evidence of that would be Velten's note alongside the drawing of a marine conch: "I've had two of them, one alive", and his drawing of another shell accompanied by the words: "presented to me, Jan Velten, by Mr Pieter van Dalen, together with various marine conches, presented to his father 25 years ago" [Velten ms. p. 102].

This controversy took place during the years 1888-1889, when the Velten manuscript had just been discovered. In an earlier article on "The Natura Artis Magistra of our ancestors" which Witkamp wrote for Artis' Yearbook for 1875, no mention is made of Velten's book. At that time Witkamp acted as librarian of Artis and would no doubt have mentioned the Velten manuscript in an article on Blauw Jan's menagerie had it been acquired before that year. The first mention made of the Velten manuscript is in 1881, in the first printed catalogue of the Artis Library, compiled by the library curator Gilles Janse (1852-1912). Probably the manuscript was acquired by the library somewhere between 1875 and 1881. I have not been able to trace its provenance.

As to the artistry of the drawings: the ones in pencil are of rather poor draughtsmanship—some look like child's drawings. The ones in ink, however, were drawn with much more care and attention to detail, in many instances to the extent of exaggeration. The gouaches, however, show Velten as a master of this technique. Those of birds are particularly fine, and some of the gouaches—the parasitic twin, for instance—seem rather modern. Because of the uneven quality of the drawings, some commentators tend to think they may have been done by different persons.

Whatever the case may be, the Velten manuscript is a rare curiosity of great historical, cultural and scientific value. It was often consulted and therefore in a deplorable condition after some three hundred years of use. The library even had to make the album inaccessible for consultation because of its fragile condition. Besides the usual traces of frequent handling, such as dog-ears, tears and holes, in some places the gall-ink had burnt through the paper due to oxidation. Also, most of the gouaches, which had been thickly varnished with animal glue, were so heavily crackled, that its paint was in danger of flaking off when the page was being handled.

---

6 Witkamp (1888, S. 314, note 1) does not mention a source for his supposition. Probably his source was "Poortersboek" (Book of burghers of Amsterdam; present in the Municipal Archives of Amsterdam) Nr. 4, S. 636. Here is listed "Jan Valentijn (alias Velten), sailor, Bergen op Zoom", who gets the burghership of Amsterdam on 30 January 1679. I thank Angela Vanhaelen for bringing this to my attention. Further research at the Municipal Archives did not yet yield any substantial evidence about the identity of Jan Velten: there appear to be some more citizens of Amsterdam with the name Jan Velten at the time.

7 Meijer 1889, S. 43.

8 Witkamp 1875.

9 Janse 1881, S. 11, Nr. 97: headword "Blaau Jan"; erroneously dated 1650.

10 The man with a parasitic twin growing out of his breast was a great attraction at fairs at the time; his name was James Poro (see Sliggers, 1993; portrait of the parasitic twin by Jan Velten reproduced on S. 26; other Velten drawings of displayed human objects reproduced on S. 27, 30, and 31).

The conflict arising from the demand for consultation and the necessity of preservation was solved in 1992 by a proposal for restoration by Peter Poldervaart, head of the restoration department of the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum. He carried out an experimental restoration of nineteen leaves as a contribution to the exhibition “De wereld binnen handbereik” (The world within reach), organized by the Amsterdam Historical Museum in 1992. The entire restoration took six months and was carried out by the Parisian restorer Isabelle Lambert in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. To everyone’s surprise, previously unknown drawings were discovered during the restoration, or rather, uncovered: several drawings had been glued over by other ones.

After the restoration the manuscript was returned to the Artis Library in loose-leaf form: separate leaves wrapped between acidfree cardboard and melinex, secured in eight acidfree boxes, together with its restoration report, kept in five document files. Meanwhile the Velten album has been published on photo-CD, which means that now everybody can watch every detail on his or her PC or television screen. I compiled the companion data-base of the manuscript with the assistance of experts from various disciplines.

The menagerie of The White Elephant

The Botermarkt in Amsterdam (now called Rembrandtplein) was a well-known location for travelling animal shows during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. From 1669, the Amsterdam dairy market was held here on Mondays, but it was not just butter, cheese and such that were sold there, but sometimes also small live-stock, as well as poultry, pigeons, geese, ducks and other fowl. This is illustrated by legends on market stalls’ awnings like: “Ik slacht Arien, ik zocht Entvogels en koop Kanariën” (“I slaughter Aries [rams probably], procure Mallards and buy Canaries”).

The following sign must also have hung at this site or at Blauw Jan’s on Kloveniersburgwal, just a little to the north:

Hier verkoopt men ten dienste van de lui,
Apen, Bavianen, Papegayen en al zulk gebrui.
(Here are sold for the benefit of the public,
apes and monkeys, baboons and parrots, and the like.)

12 These nineteen leaves from the Velten album are reproduced in the exhibition catalogue (cf. De Bell in Bergvelt et al. 1992 S.: 139-142, catalogue Nr. 285a-n, including 5 illustrations occupying two pages; please note that these reproductions were made before the restoration).
13 These photo-CD’s are published by the Expert Centre for Taxonomic Identification (ETI) and the Artis Library, University of Amsterdam in the series “ETI Digitized Rare & Historical Books” (Pieters 1998). A general introduction to the manuscript is in preparation (Pieters, in Vorbereitung).
14 Cf. Wagenaar 1765.
15 van Lennep & ter Gouw 1869, S. 298.
16 van Lennep & ter Gouw 1869, S. 298.
Judging by advertising posters, such as those of Casal & Ekhorst's Menagerie and Bernardus Broekman's, quite large menageries could be visited here at the annual fair held in the month of September.\(^{17}\)

We know from research in Amsterdam's Notarial Archives by Dr. Isa H. van Eeghen,\(^{18}\) that “The White Elephant” was not a fairground marquee but an inn, situated between Bakkersstraat and Balk in Oogsteeg, at the corner of the latter—that is on the northeastern side of Botermarkt/Rembrandtplein; on the exact spot we now find the left part of the Caransa Hotel. The premises, including two lean-to houses at the back, were bought by one Bartel Verhagen on January 4th, 1681. From Bartel Verhagen's will, dated 1703, it emerged that of all the animals in his possession he favoured an elephant he rented out for shows on fairs both at home and abroad.

The White Elephant not only displayed rare animals in September when Amsterdam's annual fair was held but also at other times of the year. An advertisement in the newspaper Amsterdamsche Courant of 20 October 1707, for example, announced that from 9 o'clock in the morning till 8 o'clock in the evening, a big living sea turtle could be seen in The White Elephant on Botermarkt; it weighed as much as 564 pounds, was 6 feet long and 5 feet wide, and had been caught in the Wijker Lake near Amsterdam.

Both Bartl's (or Bartel's) elephant and the sea turtle, “as big as a Frisian horse, to be seen alive in The White Elephant on Botermarkt”, feature in Velten's manuscript, as well as two extremely rare advertising posters of The White Elephant. This shows that the Velten album is a reliable source, and also the most extensive primary source for knowledge about this particular menagerie. All animals of The White Elephant that feature in the Velten album will now be reviewed separately.

**Bartel's elephant**

Bartel's elephant is shown in full in a drawing on pages 66 and 67 of the album (Fig. 1) and with only its front half on the frontispiece.\(^{19}\) The relatively small ears make it clear that this was not an African elephant, but an Indian elephant *Elephas maximus* Linnaeus, 1758, and the absence of tusks could indicate that Bartel's elephant was a female. The text on the back (p. 68) reads:

> Bardt en oliphant, na leven afgebeelt  
> En die voor meenicht mensch, sijn kunsten heeft gespeelt  
> Soo dat ick daar nu, niet veel hoeft 't verhaalen –  
> Wandt hij is wel bekendt, in ons nederlandt geraaken –.

---

17 These small posters consist of letterpress only; they are present in the Atlas “Zeden en gewoonten” of the Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Portfolio XXVIII A, nr. III b 74 (Casal & Ekhorst), III b 80 and III b 84 (both B. Broekman).
18 All previously known data about The White Elephant's menagerie and its owners mentioned here are derived from her study (van Eeghen 1962).
(Bardt and elephant, drawn from life, 
Who for many a man has played its tricks 
So that I do not have to tell much now —
for he has become well-known in our Netherlands —.

Although Bardt himself in this short verse is mentioned explicitly, he is strangely missing from the picture and not to be found on the pages before or after it—only animals are depicted there (Giant armadillo, Purple-naped lory and a "beaver from new nederland" [= North America]). Possibly Bardt's picture, or his elephant, was accidentally removed during an early re-binding (long before the recent restoration) and placed elsewhere in the book. The book's binding sequence actually showed irregularities. A quaint example of this is the West Indian turkey cock on pages 103-106, whose feet, one body-half and tail were formerly shown on page 103 and the other half of the body on page 106; the folio paper was apparently folded the wrong way in this case (Pages were, by the way, numbered recently, shortly before the restoration in 1992/1993). During the restoration it also became evident that not all drawings were made directly in the sketchbook proper; especially the gouaches seem to have been pasted in later. It may well be that Bardt's portrait features in a prominent place in the book, viz. on page 5, after the frontispiece (p. 1) and the title-page (p. 3) and before the portrait of Blauw Jan on p. 7 accompanied by the text "Here you see scaled down the image of Blauw Jan...".\(^{20}\) I used to think that the portrait on page 5, which lacks an epithet, was that of Jan Velten, but it now seems to me that it is much more likely that the two menagerie holders are both portrayed at the beginning of the book.\(^{21}\)

On page 63 an engraving had been pasted in of a male Indian elephant who could do all sorts of tricks. This engraving is vaguely reminiscent of a much earlier anonymous print, from 1642, entitled "Feats performed by an elephant, named Hansken". Probably a similar representation has been re-engraved on the occasion of Bardt's elephant's performance.\(^{22}\)

We know that Bardt's elephant appeared in London in 1701/1702.\(^{23}\) In his final will Bartel Verhagen stipulated that his elephant was just rented out and never to be sold (The story goes that once in a drunken mood Bardt sold his elephant for 1.000 English pounds, and that the transaction had afterwards to be annulled). Shortly after the passing of his will on August 10 in 1703, Bartel Verhagen died. He had named one Jan Jansz as his heir and he had also made him executor of his will, together with the notary public Hendrik de Wilde. His two daughters received annuities which would be paid for by renting out his elephant.

It seems probable that the elephant that put on an act in Berlin in 1704 was Bardt's elephant, because elephants were very rare in Europe at the time. It was said that he could do tricks

---

20 Velten's portrait of Blauw Jan is reproduced in de Bell 1992, S. 139, fig. a).
21 The portrait ascribed to Bardt or to Velten, depicted on S. 7 of the Velten album, is reproduced in Pieters 1995, S. 186.
22 The 1642 print is reproduced in Bakker 1994, S. 28 and Oettermann 1982, S. 128; the advertising print pasted in the Velten album is reproduced in Pieters 1995, S. 187. Though the elephant on the latter print has tusks, this print may nevertheless be engraved as an advertisement for Bardt's elephant, as such prints were often re-engraved after an older example.
23 Cf. van Eeghen 1962 and note 18; cf. also Oettermann 1982, S. 133.
much to anyone's wonderment: „Er konnte allerlei Exercitien, daß man sich verwundern muß“. Furthermore, it is very probable that the female elephant that died 27 April 1706 near Dundee and was later dissected by Patrick Blair, is the same individual as the one once owned by Bartel Verhagen.

The Indian pangolin

On p. 149 of the Velten album an extremely rare, possibly unique, advertising poster of The White Elephant was pasted in (Fig. 2). It announced a stuffed "Nigoms' Devil", to be seen from 19 September in 1703 (or 1704?). The way it is depicted makes it clear that this is a pangolin and since it came from Ceylon it is undoubtedly the Indian pangolin *Manis crassicaudata* (Gray, 1827). Velten's ink drawing (Fig. 3) renders the pangolin much more true to life than the one on the advertising poster (Fig. 2). This poster tells us the following about the pangolin:

"Announcement To all Gentlemen, Merchants and Inhabitants of the City of Amsterdam. Here is come with these ships returning from East India, an East Indiaman who on the island of Ceylon, in the year 1702, had caught a certain animal, with four feet, its body covered with very thick scales, in the Malebar tongue named Allegoe, in Portuguese Bitje de Bengonje, and in Dutch the Nigomsen Duyvel, and after it had been kept alive by him for eight days without food or drink, he had the Animal in question killed, since it was only inclined to evil; because, after it had been put in irons chained to its body, the aforesaid Animal dug through the stone floor and through the foundations of a substantial building during the night.

The aforesaid Animal can control with its tail, the biggest elephants, which are numerous on this island, wrings them round the tusk and clenches so steadfastly, that the Elephant with its immense strength cannot shake it off, until the elephant walks into the water, where it will automatically loosen itself, since it cannot endure water.

They also cling to themselves, and this so forcefully that they cannot be untied even by iron crowbars, but as soon as one pours water over their bodies they let go; it eats nothing but ants, which in the Woods here are abundant, using its tongue, as long as half a (Dutch) ell, spreading it wide on the ground; and when the ants swarm over it, draws it in slowly; what else it eats is unknown.

Its meat is similar to Pork, fit for human consumption in its entirety, quite palatable, and is Medicinal; many a black natives have been killed by such a Nigoms' Devil, not by its bite, for it possesses no teeth; but when the aforementioned blacks have caught the beast, and carry it over their shoulders, it puts his tail round the neck, and wrings it so tightly, that one cannot free oneself, and is squeezed to death, just like some Snakes, called Wringers which are found there too, can strangle you; the skins of these Snakes are likewise on display.

If there is more to tell about this beast or its strength, it is not known to me, but the preceding passage I declare to be nothing but the truth, and I feel obliged to exhibit the Animal mentioned to all in the world in Europe."

---

The Two-banded monitor

The text on the advertising poster concerning the lower animal figure reads:

"Also, I brought with me a living Animal, in the Malebar tongue named Campergoo, with four feet, belonging to the same genus as crocodiles or caimen, which is why the Indians, like the aforesaid crocodiles, worship them as their idols, but they do not do any harm."

The crocodiles in this passage seem to be Indian gavials, *Gavialis gangeticus* (Gmelin, 1789), as this gavlal was dedicated to the god Vishnu and therefore considered sacred. True, the spiny tail of the animal pictured on the poster below the pangolin seems crocodilian, but its roundish head and forked tongue point to a *Varanus* only. One may well wonder what possible animal is depicted here. The Velten album helps us out, for immediately after the advertising poster (Fig. 2), beneath the detailed ink drawing of the pangolin (left), a very thin sketchy ink drawing can be seen of a reptile with a short snout, forked tongue and smooth tail (Fig. 3). This must be the awesome Two-banded monitor *Varanus salvator* (Laurenti, 1768), whose habitat is water (just like the Indian gavial), which may reach a total length of almost 3 metres (9 feet). The species is known to be easily tamed in captivity, which is in keeping with the above statement that it is harmless; this cannot be said of the gavial, which belongs to the crocodile family.

The King of Marsebiko

The final text on the advertising poster reads:

"Also he brought with him a Tree Leaf under which 13 or 14 people can stand, a spectacle never before seen in our country.

He also brought with him the King of Marsebiko, alive, also shown here for the 'Lovers of Nature'.

*All the animals mentioned are to be seen on Botermarkt in the white Elephant, on Friday, September 19th and following days.*"

I have not been able to identify this so-called King of Marsebiko. The last sentence on the poster apparently refers to an animal rather than a human being.

The four-horned sheep from Arabia

On p. 155 of the Velten album a clear ink drawing of a sheep with four horns is depicted, with the caption: "Sheep from Arabia seen at Bardt's". This must be a breed of the Domestic

---

The South American tapir

According to the Leiden professor of natural history Allamand, the very first tapir in Europe shown alive was the one on display in Amsterdam in 1704. The emperor of Austria ordered it captured and the animal was on show in The White Elephant for a few days. To draw the attention of the public, an advertising leaflet was printed. This very rare print was pasted in on p. 254 of the Velten album (Fig. 4). The text about this *Tapirus terrestris* (Linnaeus, 1766) reads in translation:

"Advertisement. It is herewith announced to all Gentlemen, Ladies, Burghers, Merchants and furthermore to all Lovers of Animals, that at present is to be seen a living Animal named EQUUS AQUATICUS, or in other words, water- or Seahorse, captured with great difficulty and cost in the River Euphrat in America: of which many Writers say that such animals do not exist elsewhere in the world; and while one tries to cultivate curiosity about Nature from day to day, and to reveal what Nature (as Mother of all creatures) brings forth, this animal will be shown for a few days, for a small charge, to the Inhabitants and fellow-burghers of the City of Amsterdam. Reason, because it is something remarkable, and the Master of the beast spent great pains and costs upon it (4 years on end) because His Majesty the Emperor had expressly ordered to search for it, and is awaiting it now. Those who long to see it or wish to know more of this wondrous Creature, not seen by anyone in this country ever, can now visit Botermarkt, where, in the great white Elephant, the same is to be seen from Morning till Night.

Pass it on. N.B. This illustrious Beast has been tamed and is so gentle that anyone can handle it without fear."

Velten was fascinated by this animal, tame as it was and easily approached at a close distance. He devoted one gouache to it and four pages of ink drawings. On the frontispiece the tapir was given a prominent place as well. Only one ink drawing was given a legend, viz.: "True picture of an Equus Aquaticus or, otherwise, the Water or Seahorse: that was shown alive on Botermarkt in the white elephant".

---

27 Reproduced in de Bell 1992 S. 140, fig. c. I used to name this clumsy drawing "a menagerie (of The White Elephant ?)". But the seemingly free-walking rhinoceros in the foreground in the middle proves that at least part of the drawing must be based on phantasy: if a living rhinoceros would have been in Amsterdam at the time, traces of it should be found in literature. However, it could concern a stuffed specimen that was temporarily exhibited, just like the Indian Pangolin (at The White Elephant ?). One could also object that this rhinoceros seems to be only a very bad copy of Dürer’s engraving (note the so-called "Dürer-hornlet"). However, we should keep in mind that all rhinoceroses ought to look like Dürer's at the time (Boudewijn Bakker, pers. comm.; cf. Clarke 1986). Anyhow, the Dane Holger Jacobaeus saw a stuffed rhinoceros aboard a ship in Amsterdam in 1672 (Maar 1910, S. 27; cf. also Dittrich 1997).

28 Allamand 1771, S. 67.

29 All of Velten's drawings of tapirs are reproduced in Pieters & Pinkster 1994.
The large sea turtle

An ink drawing of two turtles is found on p. 174 of the Velten manuscript. The turtle is also featured on the frontispiece.\(^{30}\) The caption on p. 174 reads:

"True depiction of a turtle which was as large as a Frisian horse, captured in the Wijcker lake and weighing over 500 and sixty pounds, which was to be seen alive on a botermarkt in the white elephant in Amsterdam."

According to Dr. L.D. Brongersma the turtle probably was a Loggerhead, *Caretta caretta* (Linnaeus, 1758). The Wijker Lake used to be an inlet of the IJ Lake, northwest of Amsterdam. This sea turtle had been caught there on October 2nd in 1707. It was first sold for 12 guilders, then was auctioned in Zaandam, where someone from Amsterdam acquired it for 146 guilders. It was subsequently resold for 300 guilders to The White Elephant. The giant turtle gingerly ate small fish and shrimps, but sadly died before the year ended.\(^{31}\) This must have been a heavy financial blow for the manager of The White Elephant. At the time that was one Johannes Hofstede, who rented the inn from May 1st in 1706 from Bartel Verhagen’s executors.\(^{32}\) After this serious financial setback the establishment may no longer have functioned as a menagerie. I have at least not come across any contrary publications. The reason for its decline must also be sought in the great success of the competitor, the menagerie of Blauw Jan that existed till 1784.

Other early menageries in The Netherlands

In the following I will use a few examples to illustrate some early contributions of these menageries to natural historical knowledge. Except for the elephants, all illustrations below are somehow connected with the engravings in Vosmaer (1766-1804; 1767-1805).\(^{33}\)

The menagerie of Blauw Jan

*Procavia capensis* (Pallas, 1766), Rock dassie. Died at Blauw Jan from fatty degeneration. Dissected and described scientifically by Pallas in 1766.

*Phacochoerus aethiopicus* (Pallas, 1766), Wart hog. First described by Pallas in 1766. In the same year a description by Arnout Vosmaer was published, however without using Linnaean nomenclature. Vosmaer was conservator of the cabinet of Prince William V and director of the prince’s menagerie at "Kleine Loo" near The Hague. He wrote a book with the short-title *Reg-

---

\(^{30}\) Velten’s drawings of the large sea turtle are reproduced in Brongersma 1961, pl. I and Pieters 1995, S. 184 and 194, lower part of drawing only.

\(^{31}\) For further details and references about this large sea turtle, see Brongersma 1961, S. 37-39.

\(^{32}\) See van Eeghen 1962.

num animale about the animals in this menagerie. The plates of the Rock dassie and the Wart hog are taken from Vosmaer's book, of which the Artis Library has several original drawings, including this Wart hog drawn by Aart Schouman. At first this animal looked rather tame and lived peacefully in the prince's zoo until it killed his keeper there. After this event, the Wart hog was moved to Blauw Jan. The Rock dassie figures in Vosmaer's book because after its death it was stuffed and sold to the prince's cabinet.

The menagerie of Prince William V

On the occasion of the bicentenary of the abduction of the Prince's menagerie and natural history cabinets by the French in 1795, an exhibition was held in the Teylers Museum at Haarlem and in the Institut Néerlandais in Paris in 1994-1995. In the book accompanying the exhibition, Le zoo du Prince, several new facts about the history of these collections are mentioned, e.g. about acquisition, gifts, etc.34 We owe these new insights to the study of the archives of our Royal Family (archive of Prince William V) and of the newly opened Vosmaer family archive in the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague. I will mention here some of the most spectacular animals that lived in the Prince's menagerie:

Nycticebus coucang bengalensis (Lacépède, 1800), Slow Loris. Vosmaer did some ethological observations on this animal. This is likewise a type specimen from the cabinet of the stadholder, described by Lacépède in 1800 (at the time the Prince's cabinet was taken by the French as war booty to Paris). The Artis Library has an original drawing of this specimen, which can be regarded as an "iconotype" (an illustration of a type specimen). An iconotype may be very important when the type specimen is lost—which is often the case in these old specimens.

Pongo pygmaeus (Hoppius, 1760), Orang-utan. This young female Orang-utan was the first specimen that ever reached Europe alive, in 1776. Vosmaer did some ethological observations on this animal. Besides two engravings in Vosmaer's book and two original drawings in the Artis Library, there exist oil paintings by the court painter T.P.C.Haag.35 After its death it was dissected by Professor Petrus Camper.36

Connochaetes gnou. White-tailed gnu (Zimmermann, 1780). Name given by Zimmermann in 1780 after the specimen described by Vosmaer, so this is again an "iconotype".

Eclectus roratus vosmaeri (Rothschild, 1922), Vosmaer's eclectus parrot. Described by Vosmaer in 1769, adapted to Linnaean classification by Philipp Ludwig Statius Müller in 1776 and described as separate subspecies named after Vosmaer by Lord Rothschild in 1922. Original

35 Drawings reproduced in Tuijn & van der Feen 1969, figs. 10-11; latter drawing presently missing; oil paintings present in Rijkmuseum Paleis 't Loo, Apeldoorn, and in Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig (Germany); oil painting presently in Apeldoorn reproduced in Smit et al. 1986, pl. 19.
36 Cf. Camper 1782.
pen and brush painting in Indian ink by Aart Schouman, once again an "iconotype", available in Artis Library.

**Geronticus calvus** (Boddaert, 1783), Bald ibis. Vosmaer thought he had a new species before him, different from the "Courlis à tête nue" of Buffon, and named it (for the first time using Linnaean nomenclature correctly!) Tantalus nudicollis. However, Vosmaer was mistaken in thinking his specimen differed from the one described by Buffon. When comparing Buffon's picture of the Bald Ibis with Vosmaer's, it is striking that Buffon's plate typically represents a stuffed bird, while Vosmaer's plate clearly represents a living bird. This is why Vosmaer's book excels among other zoological books of the time: its eminent plates were mostly drawn from living animals, not as so many others that were drawn from museum specimens only.

**Crotalus durissus** Linnaeus, 1758, Tropical rattlesnake. Vosmaer did some experiments to test the toxicity of its bite.

**Elephas maximus maximus**, Indian elephant from Ceylon. This young elephant arrived in the prince's menagerie at "Little Loo" near The Hague in 1773, but died as early as January 1774. Dissected by Petrus Camper, who wrote a standard work on this dissection.

During summer 1786 two young (about 4 year old) Indian elephants from Ceylon were given to the prince by the East Indian Company. They arrived in the menagerie near The Hague on 13 July, but stayed there only 5 days because the prince wished to have them near him, at his castle "The Loo" near Apeldoorn. Some drawings of "Hans" and "Parkie" (also in possession of the Artis Library) were made by Prof. Camper on 10 September 1786. Meanwhile, the prince had ordered the whole menagerie moved from The Hague to Apeldoorn; he even sold the estates "Kleine Loo" and "Grote Loo". [Please note that this fact escaped the notice of Loisel, perhaps due to the same name Loo.]

So the elephants lived there peacefully until the French came to take them along as war booty to Paris. Meanwhile, a farmhouse had been a bit converted to be used as a stable for the elephants. This building still exists; it is the oldest zoo building in the Netherlands—please note the high door! The elephants had plenty of space in the gardens around "The Loo" and enjoyed their relative freedom. This is proven by a protocol dated 28 February 1789 describing four copulation attempts on four different days, undersigned by three eyewitnesses in the presence of keeper-in-chief James Thompson, who later became the two elephants' mahout in

---

37 Cf. Buffon's plate (in Buffon & Bexon 1783), on which Boddaert's description is based, with Vosmaer's plate of the Bald ibis (reproduced in Pieters 1980, S. 552).
38 Ink drawing by Jacob Camper after a sketch of his father Petrus Camper present in Artis Library, reproduced in Pieters 1994, S. 54; engraving in Camper 1802, pl. X fig. 1.
39 Thus not one year, as stated by Loisel 1912, S. 35; cf. Pieters 1994, S. 57; based on archive Willem V. in Koninklijk Huis archive, inv. no. 39.
40 One drawing reproduced in Pieters 1994, S. 55; signed copy of the same drawing present in the archives of the National Museum of Natural History, Leiden, reproduced in van Bruggen & Pieters 1990, S. 266.
42 Recent photograph of the building reproduced in Pieters 1994, S. 56.
Thus, the elephants were about 7 years old at the time. In the protocol it is explicitly stated that the male was lying on his back. Though such a vis-à-vis posture looks impossible for adult elephants, young playful animals can apparently adopt it. In the protocol it is also stressed that the consequences [i.e. sperm] were found on the ground every time.

The last illustration (Fig. 5) is taken from Houel's famous book about the two elephants, though a copulation was not observed during their stay in Paris, as far as we know. Our present director of Artis Zoo called this engraving "an unknown variation in the reproduction of elephants". However, it is very probable that James Thompson told Houel about the copulation attempts in 1789, so the illustration might be based on the observations mentioned in the protocol. I thank mr. H. H. Jongbloed of the Algemeen Rijksarchief for bringing this new fact in zoo history to my attention.

45 Frankenhuis 1995, inside of front cover.
Conclusion

These early menageries have been very important, not only for scientists like Peter Simon Pallas and Petrus Camper, and artists as Aart Schouman, Tethart Philipp Christian Haag and Melchior d’Hondecoeter, but also for ordinary people. As a result of their wonderment, some “amateurs” developed into true “curious nature lovers”, who did interesting observations in the field of natural history.

Literature


Blair, P.: Osteographia elephantina: or, a full and exact description of all the bones of an elephant, which died near Dundee, April the 27th, 1706. with their several dimensions. Communicated in a letter to Dr. Hans Sloane, in: Philosophical Transactions (1710) 326-327, 51-168, pls. I-IV.


Janse, G.: Catalogus der Bibliotheek van het Koninklijk Zoölogisch Genootschap “Natura Artis Magistra” te Amsterdam, Amsterdam 1881.


Loisel, G.: Histoire des ménageries de l’antiquité à nos jours, II. Temps modernes (XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles), Paris 1912.


Smit, P., with the assistance of A. P. M. Sanders & J. P. F. van der Veer: Hendrik Engel's alphabetical list of Dutch zoological cabinets and menageries [= Nieuwe Nederlandse Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde en der Natuurwetenschappen 19], Amsterdam 1986.


65
Vosmaer, A.: Natuurkundige beschryving eener uitmuntende verzameling van zeldzaame ge-

Vosmaer, A.: Description d’un recueil exquis d’animaux rares, consistant en quadrupèdes, oi-

Wagenaar, J.: Amsterdam, in zyne opkomst, aanwas, geschiedenissen, voorregten, koophan-


Witkamp, P. H.: Vroegere diergaarden en beoefenaars der dierkunde, inzonderheid met be-