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## CHAPTER 6

### A Pledge of Marital Domestic Bliss: Samuel van Hoogstraten's Perspective Box in the National Gallery, London

HERMAN COLENBRANDER

This essay explores Samuel van Hoogstraten's reasons for designing his intriguing perspective box in the National Gallery in London [Fig. 45].<sup>1</sup> Susan Koslow, one of the scholars who dealt in depth with the few extant boxes, presumed that there was a romantic love story behind the London work. More recently, Celeste Brusati did not deny that there was an erotic element to the depictions on the outside of the box, but she was inclined to regard the work as an artful self-portrait and a proud self-reflexive demonstration of the artist's accomplishments in the art of perspective.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I shall put forward another, more 'domestic' suggestion with regard to what may have moved Samuel van Hoogstraten in creating his perspective box.

In his book *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* of 1718-1721, Arnold Houbraken gave a rare insight in the pedagogical gifts of Samuel van Hoogstraten, to whom he was once apprenticed. The following remarkable passage suggests that Van Hoogstraten's works must always have been purposeful and never devoid of meaning:

His lessons or precepts had firm roots, his instructions were always accompanied by examples, he taught with calm and seriousness, his explications were clear, and when his words were not understood at once he patiently explained himself .... Once upon a time I happened to make a sketch of a biblical subject and showed him the work, in which I had added in the background, just for embellishment, some fanciful things, convinced of having made some pleasant invention. ... He immediately pointed to these things in the background asking: 'What do you mean by that?' I answered: 'Well, that is my fancy. I made it just for pleasure'. His reply was: 'You should not make things just as they come to your mind. You have to give reasons for everything you make, or you should not make them at all'.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 45 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Perspective box with Views of a Dutch Interior*, 1656?, wood, 58 x 88 x 63,5 cm, National Gallery, London



Fig. 46 Overview image of the interior of the perspective box, National Gallery, London



Fig. 47 Overview image of the exterior of the perspective box, National Gallery, London



Fig. 48 Reconstruction of the floor plan of Van Hoogstraten's perspective box in the National Gallery, London (by H. Colenbrander)

If we contemplate Van Hoogstraten's perspective box in the National Gallery in London with this last sentence in mind, we may wonder what the artist intended [Figs. 46-48]. The depicted rooms are nearly empty of living beings except a lonely little dog waiting obediently, and, 'in the background', a sleeping woman in a bed, another woman reading a book beside a window that opens on the street; a little boy is peeking inside. Perfect peace reigns in these homey rooms. What the painter wished to express remains something of a mystery. It would seem that the box is an emptied doll's house; that, of course, is not the case.

According to Houbraken's statement, Van Hoogstraten seems to have been a rather sober-minded, even cerebral man. It is unlikely that he did not have something special in mind in creating the box with these curious rooms. Koslow, taking as her starting point the figures on the top of the box presumably representing Venus and Cupid, as well as various objects depicted in the interior, suggested that it tells the story of a woman who was seduced by a visitor. According to Brusati, the exterior – the three side panels and top – would show 'eroticized allegories of art making'. The presence of a certain erotic aspect cannot be denied, but it is hard to understand the entire box in this spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Before exploring this theme further, it is worthwhile to take account of the character of several similar perspective boxes.<sup>5</sup> Of the total of six perspective boxes that have survived intact and were studied by Koslow, there are three (by anonymous painters) that I shall discuss in some detail, because they, just like the box in London, show a *voorhuis*, or front room.

The first is the box now kept in the National Museum in Copenhagen [Fig. 49].<sup>6</sup> It depicts a *voorhuis* with an open, round front door and a terrace with a balustrade that offers a view onto a landscape. In this front room there is a richly dressed man with two small children.<sup>7</sup> The room is decorated beautifully with chairs and cushions, a cupboard (*kussenkast*) with porcelain vases on top, paintings, and a mirror on the walls; a cage, possibly containing a monkey, hangs from the ceiling. The stained-glass windows are decorated with roundels showing coats-of-arms.



Fig. 49 Anonymous, *Perspective box*, c. 1665-70, wood, 58.5 x 45 x 49 cm, National Museum, Copenhagen



Fig. 50 Pieter Janssens Elinga (attr.), *Perspective Box*, c. 1670, wood, 84 x 82 x 42 cm, Museum Bredius, The Hague

The open door, decorated with figure reliefs on the right, reveals a cat on the threshold, and in the background a man standing in front of an object that may be a chimneypiece. On the left, there is a map depicting the two hemispheres framed by a series of portraits and what seem to be cityscapes. The map's upper right corner contains an image of a ship; in the lower right corner is a picture of a land surveyor. Moreover, one can see the banister of a staircase leading to an upper floor. Through the two stained-glass windows, framed by a series of plates and another open door, the viewer is allowed a peek into the kitchen, where one sees the back of a small child standing in front of the dresser and hearth. Above this door there is a map framed by coats-of-arms and a legend. It has the inscription 'MARE GERMANICUM', 'De Noord See' (the North Sea), and several other letters. Most of the paintings seem to be Italianizing landscapes; one of them shows a large round tower and a couple on horseback in the manner of Jan Asselijn.

The second perspective box showing a *voorbuis* is kept in Museum Bredius in The Hague [Fig. 50]. This box has a triangular floorplan and depicts, just like the box in Copenhagen, views into other rooms to the left and right of the hall. In the foreground, there are two chairs at a table with a water kettle, a tin, a teapot, and two porcelain teacups: it seems that tea has just been





Fig. 51 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Perspective Box*, 1663, wood, 41.9 x 34.5 x 28.6 cm, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit

served. On the left, the viewer is offered a glance onto a staircase where a man stands; a woman is sweeping the floor, while another woman sits at the window on the right. Above the door is a relief (or a painted relief) representing Mercury. There are paintings and prints on the walls.<sup>8</sup>

The third box meriting our attention, as it shows a *voorhuis* as well, is now in the Institute of Arts in Detroit [Fig. 51]. This box has a pentagonal floorplan and still has its original door and peephole.<sup>9</sup> It represents a hall with sizeable round columns; to the right and left are views through little rounded gates. Above one of the gates is an inscription with the year 1663. In the middle is a larger gate with an additional inscription reading 'memento mori'. A shining sphere hangs from the ceiling in the center of the hall.<sup>10</sup> In the foreground, a table is laid for a small meal, or *ontbijtje*, and a man and a woman appear in the background: they may be a betrothed couple, as the woman is represented on the man's right side. The laid table displays a pewter plate with a small knife, a piece of white bread, a plate with oysters, a watch, a salt vessel,<sup>11</sup> some cheese on a pewter plate, an apple, a bunch of grapes and a rummer containing a half-peeled lemon. A cat, looking at the viewer, sits among these objects, and in the foreground a seemingly sniffing dog recalls the animals in a pair of still lifes by Alexandre-François Desportes of 1705 (Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Schleissheim) [Figs. 52 and 53].<sup>12</sup>

These three perspective boxes all represent a domestic setting, but the erotic aspect is absent. The box in Detroit, however, seems to offer several clues for the interpretation of the 'genre' of perspective boxes representing a *voorhuis*. To Koslow, the inscription 'memento mori' in the Detroit box represents not only the theme of *vanitas*, but also that of the choice between virtue and vice. The watch, the burned-out candle, and the spherical mirror could be symbols of vanity, while the fruit and oysters could represent earthly pleasures. Koslow also thought that the choice between virtue and vice was depicted in the paintings above the gates, respectively an *Adoration of the Magi* and a still life. These arguments may not be very strong, but there is no doubt that the inscription suggests that the work belongs to the genre of *vanitas* paintings. In what follows, we shall examine more arguments for this interpretation.<sup>13</sup> I will suggest that the key to the interpretation lies in the objects on the table in the foreground. They may be interpreted as a variant on the so-called *ontbijtjes*, a genre of still-life paintings representing a modest breakfast. If we can suppose that these *ontbijtjes* were often marriage presents, this specimen would be an unusual variant. *Ontbijtjes* referred to the first breakfast after the wedding night.<sup>14</sup> The Detroit box is decorated on the outside to look like a small chest of drawers, which may be an additional indication in support of this idea. According to Dutch tradition, couples were given household goods at their wedding; the box may have functioned as a playful piece of furniture in this context. Possibly, the married couple is represented in the background of the interior.

We shall now return to the perspective box in London, which is no less unusual: we will explore whether it can also be interpreted anew from the perspective of marriage. The box has, in contrast to other extant exemplars, no covering panel with a peephole up front; remarkably, it is completely open on one side, where a platform allowed for the placement of a candle or another source of light.<sup>15</sup> This chest has two peepholes located in the side panels. Just like the ones in Copenhagen, Detroit, and The Hague, the box in London offers a view onto a *voorhuis* with addi-



Fig. 52 Alexandre-François Desportes, *Still Life with a Cat*, 1705, canvas, 70 x 91 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Schleissheim



Fig. 53 Alexandre-François Desportes, *Still Life with a Dog*, 1705, canvas, 70 x 91 cm, Munich, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Schleissheim

tional sights in a number of adjacent rooms. In its entirety, however, this box is far more complex and sophisticated in its representation of perspectives, each of which shows two rooms en suite.<sup>16</sup> According to Brusati, as we noted before, the exterior of the box would show ‘eroticized allegories of art making’.<sup>17</sup> In effect, it is hard to deny a certain erotic atmosphere, but it is difficult to bring her idea into conformity with the scenes represented on the inside.<sup>18</sup>

In any account, the interpretation of the scenes on the three side panels, including a young painter seen on the back, has offered few problems of interpretation, since there are concomitant inscriptions:<sup>19</sup> respectively ‘Amoris Causa’, ‘Lucri Causa’, and ‘Gloriae Causa’ (meaning, respectively, for the sake of love, money, and glory). These three ‘causes’, or motivations of the painter, can also be found in an epigram of the ninth chapter in Van Hoogstraten’s *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, and they are explained further in sub-sections four, five, and six of this chapter. The three causes are mentioned in Seneca’s *On Benefits* (*De beneficiis* II.XXXIII), but Van Hoogstraten’s immediate source was probably Karel van Mander, as Koslow has noted. The inscriptions effectively represent Van Hoogstraten’s personal credo, to quote from his treatise: ‘Three desires are the stimuli to learn the arts: for love, for profit and to be respected by everyone.’<sup>20</sup>

The images accord with Van Hoogstraten’s work also in a visual sense, especially to the frontispieces to the *Inleyding*’s chapters in which the young painter, seen from the back, can be found, namely the chapters ‘Euterpe’, ‘Polymnia’, and ‘Terpsichore’ [Figs. 54-56].<sup>21</sup> It is even possible that Van Hoogstraten represented himself when painting the artist on the box’s exterior.

Eroticism certainly plays a role in the interpretation of the nude woman who is depicted in an advanced state of undressing on the top panel. She is usually taken to represent Venus or Erato, the *minnesangster*, or muse, of love poetry. She wears a diadem and rests in a bed with Cupid beside her. The image is distorted in the manner of an anamorphosis, which means that it can only be perceived correctly from one vantage point – in this case from a point somewhere at the back and to the right of the box.<sup>22</sup> Upon closer consideration, one may question whether the identification is correct. That the putto represents Cupid seems incontrovertible in light of the little bow in his hand. But it is less certain that the nude woman is Venus or even Erato. The woman and Cupid are both looking upward, full of expectation, and above them we see white fragments of what may be clouds. But why do they look upward so intensely? Are they expecting something to come down? It seems as if Cupid has just shot his arrow and they are both waiting for his action’s effect.

If this is the representation of a mythological scene, it seems that not Venus or Erato has been depicted, but Danaë waiting for Jove’s shower of gold. Identifying the female figure as Danaë would be very much in keeping with the scene on the long side of the box that represents the putto with his cornucopia full of moneybags and coins: financial gain.<sup>23</sup>

Obviously, seventeenth-century painters worked for their bread and butter. But here, the aspect of financial gain has an additional important meaning in light of the assumption that the box may have been related to a wedding. In the seventeenth century, marriage was in fact the privilege for those who had money. Who was without earnings or capital could not offer his wife and offspring the benefits of a good livelihood. Hence the basis of marriage was money.



Fig. 54 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Euterpe*, from *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst*, Rotterdam 1678, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam

When we suppose that Van Hoogstraten depicted himself in the figure of the painter on the three sides of the box, it is likely that the depiction of Danaë was an allusion to his own bride and hence to his own marriage. This idea seems to be supported by the images of the coats-of-arms of Van Hoogstraten himself and his wife, Sara Balen, in the interior of the box.<sup>24</sup>

This assumption seems in keeping with what is known about Van Hoogstraten's biography. After his training with Rembrandt from the early 1640s onwards, from 1648 Van Hoogstraten stayed in Dordrecht for some time before departing (in 1651) to Vienna, where he tried



Fig. 55 Samuel van Hoogstraten, Polymnia, from *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderconst*, Rotterdam 1678, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam

to further his career. During that period he also visited Rome. In any event, he was back in Dordrecht in 1656 and on the 22th of May of that year he claimed the hereditary right to the chair in the college of the Masters of the Mint in Dordrecht held by his grandfather Isaac de Coninck, which had remained vacant since the latter's death in 1640. As unmarried Masters of the Mint had no right to the privileges that were connected to the office, he apparently decided to marry. Three weeks after receiving the investiture of his office he married Sara Balen, niece of Dordrecht's city historian Matthijs Balen. On the 31st of May 1656 he took out the banns, and the wedding took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June.<sup>25</sup> It is my contention that the perspective box was Van Hoogstraten's marriage gift to his bride.<sup>26</sup>



Fig. 56 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Terpsichore*, from *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderconst*, Rotterdam 1678, Special Collections, University of Amsterdam

### *The interior*

Thus far, we have only examined the exterior panels of the box in detail; we will now test our assumptions against what is represented in the interior. Brown remarked in 1987 that ‘the notion, suggested by Koslow that [the scene in the interior] tells the story of an amorous encounter between the man at the window and the woman reading is entirely fanciful. Such meaning as the box does possess is contained in the scenes painted on its exterior’.<sup>27</sup> But even though the message on the exterior panels is rather clear, it does not automatically explain the scenes on the box’s inside.<sup>28</sup> It is, however, highly unlikely that the interior contains a scene entirely devoid of meaning (a ‘subjectless painting’, to paraphrase Fromentin’s famous idea): a purely artistic demonstration



Fig. 57 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Minerva Chasing the Vices*, detail of the left wall of the perspective box, London, National Gallery



Fig. 58 Jan de Bray, *'Sinite parvulos venire ad me'*, 1663, canvas, 136 x 175.5 cm, Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum



of Van Hoogstraten's skills in linear perspective. Koslow's suggestion may be less fanciful than Brown thought. In any account, hers was a first move to a more complete interpretation. She described the paintings represented on the walls of the various rooms; we may suppose that the choice of themes was not an arbitrary one. Taking as our starting point the assumption that the perspective box was a marriage gift, and taking account of the iconography of the exterior, it seems possible to reconstruct tentatively the story that is being told on the inside. We will assume that the box represents a number of rooms in a single imaginary house (for a reconstruction of the floorplan see Fig. 48). We will begin with the scene that is visible through the peephole on the right side of the box, which displays the exterior scene of the painter and his model (who can be identified as Abundance). It is also the side from which the anamorphosis of Danaë and Cupid can be seen in its right perspective. This peephole thus seems the logical starting point for the exploration of the domestic interior.

### *Looking through the peephole on the right*

We see the house's entrance hall: three coats, a baldric with a sword, and a feathered hat hang on the wall. There is a view through the opened door on the left showing a back room decorated with gilt leather hangings; there is also a second room, probably the kitchen with, behind it, the scullery where a fire is lit; through an open door we see a backyard.<sup>29</sup> The wall in the *voorhuis* is decorated with three paintings: to the left, in a rich gilt frame, a mythological scene that McLaren has identified as Minerva with helmet and shield; around her are fighting figures with torches. Probably it represents the goddess chasing away the vices [Fig. 57]<sup>30</sup> The oval painting in a black octagonal frame, hanging above the door, represents the *Liberation of Saint Peter*.<sup>31</sup> To the right, also in a rich gilt frame, is a painting of *Christ Blessing the Children* (Matthew 19:13-15): 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'. The theme is represented frequently in contemporary Dutch paintings and had a special meaning. Jan de Bray's painting of 1663, now in the Frans Halsmuseum in Haarlem, is a good example because it includes inscriptions [Fig. 58]. It represents Pieter Braems and his family, and the inscriptions are 'Sinite parvulos venire ad me', Christ's quotation according to Matthew, and 'Memores estote parentum', which is the fifth of the Ten Commandments: 'Honour your father and mother'. The latter inscription is particularly relevant to our discussion, as it refers to the education of children in the Christian faith.<sup>32</sup>

Elsewhere on this side of the perspective box's interior, we see a part of the longitudinal wall showing a window with a broken pane and an object that may be a piece of chalk on the sill. There are small figures on the panes in the window's four corners that cannot be identified. On top sits a small red phial.<sup>33</sup> Through the window we see a courtyard allowing a view onto a high wall of an adjacent building. Next to it there is an open portico.

In the center of the *voorhuis*, there is a chair and a dog looking faithfully at the viewer; a pillow has fallen off the chair. Furthermore, there is a large round mat on the floor. Finally, on the far right there is an open door providing a view onto a corridor with red tiles filled with



Fig. 59 Jacobus Vrel, *Old Lady Reading in a Room*, c. 1650, panel, 50 x 33 cm, formerly in Paris, Henri Schneider Collection



Fig. 60 Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Chair with Signed Letter*, detail of the perspective box, London, National Gallery

a curiously bright light. On the wall directly to its right is a print, pasted on linen or printed on satin hanging on two sticks (a so-called ‘rolcaert’): a medallion portrait of a man looking at the viewer and gesticulating in the direction of the open door. The medallion is flanked by two female figures and crowned by a putto with the Van Hoogstraten coat-of-arms; below it there is an illegible inscription.<sup>34</sup>

### *Looking through the peephole on the left*

Through the hole at the left side of the box is again visible the open door with the brightly lit corridor and the print with the portrait of the pointing man. There are additional views through two open doors. Above these doors hang two pictures in black frames. The left one shows a landscape with a man standing high upon a rock, maybe Moses on Mount Sinai. The picture to the right depicts a figure in a valley with a city – possibly burning – in the background, and in the foreground sit three more figures. But if the two pictures form a pair, they may together depict the story of Lot and his daughters: Lot’s flight from Sodom, his wife transformed in a salt pillar, and his stay with his daughters in a cave in the mountains. Between the doors stands a chair above which hangs a mirror. A comb and a necklace of pearls lie on the chair, representing worldly vanity, or *vana gloria*.<sup>35</sup> To the right of the second door stands a broom and hangs another *rolcaert* with a cartouche with a figure clad in an animal skin with an undecipherable inscription underneath.

The view through the first door shows a room hung with gilt leather and a blue four-poster bed with a sleeping lady. The bed’s lower part is decorated with a medallion depicting a seated couple. Through another half-open door we have a view to a second room. Above the

door there is a landscape in a black frame. This second room shows a stained-glass window with a standing figure in a long garment and a staff in his raised hand. Above him there is a coat-of-arms, according to Brusati, of Sara Balen's family.<sup>36</sup> In the middle there is a chair and table, displaying a rummer on a plate.

The view through the second open door to the right shows two other rooms. In the first room, the left wall has a large painting in a gilt frame, representing the musical contest between Apollo and Pan and its judgment by King Midas.<sup>37</sup> The picture above the door to the second room shows a cavalry battle in a black frame. In the second tiled room is a lady sitting on a wooden platform (a *zoldertje*), reading near the windows. The upper half of the door is open and a boy with a hat is peeping in through the window. The motif of a child peeping through a window can also be found in two pictures by Jacobus Vrel, respectively in the collection of the Fondation Custodia and in the former collection of Henri Schneider, both in Paris [Fig. 59].<sup>38</sup>

Close at hand on the right side of the *voorhuis*, as we look through the peephole on the left, we see two red chairs. On one of them is a letter with a clearly legible but somewhat damaged address: 'A Monsieur / Mon (s?) S: de Hoogstraten /a/ ...d ( )echt'. Undoubtedly, the last word was 'Dordrecht' [Fig. 60].<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, it seems impossible to determine precisely the narrative on which the depictions in the box's interior are based, for a number of elements remain mysterious and seem to elude an unambiguous explanation. Nevertheless, I shall propose an interpretation even though it may be no more than a starting point for others to solve the riddle – for that must have been Van Hoogstraten's intention, with Samson's marriage riddle in mind (Judges 14:12).

The inside of the box consists effectively of five depicted surfaces, but there are only two peepholes. Through the peepholes, these surfaces merge more or less into a whole: it seems that there are two 'domains' that overlap in the central panel. What these two 'domains' have in common is the open door with the bright light in the panel's center. Through this door, one can arrive from one domain into the other; it represents the connection between the bridal couple's two domains.

The peephole on the right shows the man's domain: his office, decorated with gilt leather; his baldric with his sword, hat and coats that represent his public position; his virtue represented by the painting of Minerva; the Christian education of his family represented by the painting of Christ and the children; his loyalty symbolized by the dog; his burning love represented by the fire in the hearth.

The peephole on the left shows the domain of the woman: her loyalty to her husband who is portrayed next to the door (a portrait of Samuel van Hoogstraten?); the expectation of childbirth represented by the woman in the bed; the concomitant celebration symbolized by the rummer on the table. The latter object may be interpreted by reference to Matthys Naiveu's *The Nursery* (Leiden, De Lakenhal), in which the father holds a large rummer with a stick of cinammon, and a portrait by Jan Albertsz. Rotius in which he depicts himself with his wife and child, in his one hand a palette and brushes, in the other brandishing a silver rattle, and in which a so-called ontbijtje with a big rummer hangs on the wall.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, the woman's domain

contains a warning against intemperance provided by the paintings of the story of Lot; the paintings of Apollo, Pan, and Midas and the battle scene that represent sin; a warning against vanity provided by the mirror, comb, and necklace;<sup>41</sup> the woman's good housekeeping represented by the broom;<sup>42</sup> the reading of the Bible by the woman may be interpreted as a remedy against infertility or a personification of faith. Finally, Van Hoogstraten presents the fruit of the chaste marriage, the offspring, represented by the boy looking through the window.<sup>43</sup>

The letter on the chair, delivered at the right address, allowed the proud maker and donor of the perspective box to reveal his identity: Samuel van Hoogstraten in Dordrecht. Thus he promised to his bride Sara Balen their married domestic happiness in their future house.<sup>44</sup>

### Notes

- 1 N. MacLaren & C. Brown, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Dutch School 1600-1900*, II Vols., London, 1991, Vol. I., 203-206 no. 3832, Figs. 176(a-i); C. Brown, D. Bomford, J. Plesters and J. Mills, 'Samuel van Hoogstraten: Perspective and Painting', *National Gallery Technical Bulletin* 11 (1987), 60-85; Jan Blanc, *Peindre et penser la peinture au XVIIe siècle: La Théorie de l'art de Samuel van Hoogstraten*, Berne 2008, 390-391 (contains additional bibliography).
- 2 S. Koslow, "'Wonderlijke Perspectyfkas': an Aspect of Seventeenth Century Dutch Painting", *Oud Holland* 82 (1967), 35-56, spec. 46; C. Brusati, *Artifice and Illusion: The Art and Writing of Samuel Van Hoogstraten*, Chicago & London 1995, 169-217, spec. 212.
- 3 A. Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 3 vols, Amsterdam 1718-1721, II, 162-163; M. Roscam Abbing, *De schilder en schrijver Samuel van Hoogstraten, 1627-1678. Eigentijdse bronnen en oeuvre van gesigeneerde schilderijen*, Leiden 1993, 21-22.
- 4 Several drawings by Leonaert Bramer may have been designs for a peepshow, cf. W. Liedtke, *A View of Delft: Vermeer and his Contemporaries*, Zwolle 2000, 230-231, fig. 285 (Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam), 286 (Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf); W. Liedtke (ed.), *Vermeer and the Delft School*, cat.exh. New York (The Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2001, 458-461, nr. 108-109.
- 5 On perspective boxes in general cf. Koslow 1967 and R. Fabri, 'Perspectiefjes in het spel: optische 'Spelers-eien' in Antwerpse kunstkasten uit de zeventiende eeuw', *De zeventiende eeuw* 15/1 (1999), 109-117.
- 6 Koslow 1967, 54-5 no. 5; B. Gundestrup, *Det kongelige danske Kunstkammer 1737*, II vols, Copenhagen 1991, Vol. II, 416-417, no. 895/4, no. 2 C20 'A ditto with a Dutch Antechamber,' height incl. pedestal: 182 cm, box: 83 x 53 x 66 cm.
- 7 Some elements, such as the cage and the human figures, seem to have been painted on pasted papers.
- 8 A. Blankert, *Museum Bredius: catalogus van schilderijen en tekeningen*, The Hague 1980, 56-57, no. 57, attributed to P. Janssens Elinga, ca 1670. Koslow 1967, 55-56, no. 6.
- 9 Koslow 1967, 33-56, spec. 53-54 cat. no. 4; G. S. Keyes, S. Donahue Kuretsky, A. Rüger, A.K. Wheelock Jr., *Masters of Dutch Painting*, Detroit & London 2004, 120-123, no. 48; E.P. Richardson, 'Samuel van Hoogstraten and Carel Fabritius', *Art in America*, XXV (1937), 141-152; Brusati 1995, 211-217; for the sphere, cf. the frontispiece of Chapter 5 in Van Hoogstraten's treatise, according to Brusati 1995, 244, fig. 159.
- 10 The hall in Detroit is comparable to the hall in the doll's house of Petronella Dunois in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (ca 1675), cf. J. Pijzel-Dommisse, *De 17de-eeuwse poppenhuizen in het Rijksmuseum*, Wormer 1994, 38-39; J. Pijzel-Dommisse, *Het Hollandse pronkpoppenhuis. Interieur en huishouden in de 17de en 18de eeuw*, Zwolle & Amsterdam 2000.

- 11 Koslow 1967, 53 identified the salt vessel as a burnt-up candle.
- 12 Cf. C. Grimm, *Stilleben. I. Die niederländischen und deutschen Meister. II. Die italienischen, spanischen und französischen Meister*, Stuttgart 2001, II, 196-197, figs. 119 and 120.
- 13 Koslow 1967, 46-47.
- 14 Cf. H.T. Colenbrander, "In Promises Anyone can be Rich!" Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini Double Portrait: A Morgengave', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 68 (2005), 413-424.
- 15 The pedestal and platform are not original but of later date.
- 16 MacLaren 1991, I, 203-206 no. 3832, pls. 176(a-i); Koslow 1967, 49-53, cat. no. 3; Brusati 1995, 173-182. Cf. J. Loughman and J.M. Montias, *Public and Private Spaces: Works of Art in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Houses*, Zwolle 2000, 9-12. Van Hoogstraten's peepshow makes one think of the decorated painter's chest attributed to Antonie Jansz. Croos in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, nr. RBK 15234, cf. C. Veth, 'Een schilderskist uit de XVIIe eeuw [met grisailles van Adriaen van de Venne (?); coll. Paul Arntzenius, 's-Gravenhage]', *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten XI* (1934), 45-50.
- 17 Brusati 1995, 212; cf. J. Woodall, 'Love is in the Air – Amor as Motivation and Message in Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Painting', *Art History* 19 (1996), 208-246.
- 18 For an example of an erotic perspective box see Leonard de Vries, *Venus Lusthof*, Amsterdam 1977, 141.
- 19 The three scenes on the exterior can also be compared to the frontispiece of Pieter de Jode's *Varie figure academice*, Antwerp 1629. These exterior scenes have broad flat painted borders which are hardly visible.
- 20 'Drie driften prikkels zijn, waerom men konsten leert: / uit liefde, om't loon, en om by elk te zijn geeert', S. van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst, anders de zichtbaere werelt*, Rotterdam 1678, 345; cf. Koslow 1967, 45 n. 22; Brusati 1995, 213 n. 56. On De Jode cf. E. de Jongh, 'De schildersleerling en het geheim van Minerva', in: *Kwesties van betekenis. Thema en motief in de Nederlandse schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw*, Leiden 1999, 149-165: 157, Fig. 12. We may add that the female figure on the scene labelled *Amoris Causa* can be interpreted, because of her many breasts, as the personification of Nature or Abundance, cf. Woodall 1996, 214 note 16. The figure returns in Van Hoogstraten's drawing in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, cf. Brusati 1995, 216, fig. 153, and Weststeijn 2008, 101-103.
- 21 Brusati 1995, fig. 1, 156 and 162.
- 22 Brusati 1995, 212-213 preferred the identification of the woman as Erato.
- 23 In the iconographic tradition, Danaë was sometimes represented with Amor or several putti, for instance in Correggio's painting in the Galleria Borghese in Rome and Titian's work in the Galleria Nazionale di Capodimonte in Naples. Cf. E.J. Sluijter, 'Emulating Sensual Beauty: Representations of Danaë from Gossaert to Rembrandt', *Simiolus* 27 (1999), 4-45; E.J. Sluijter, *Seductress of Sight: Studies in Dutch Art of the Golden Age*, Zwolle 2000, 87-159: 150-153; E. Panofsky, 'Der gefesselte Eros (Zur Genealogie von Rembrandts Danae)', *Oud Holland* 50 (1933), 193-217; W.S. Heckscher, 'Recorded from Dark Recollection', in: M. Meiss, *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, 2 vols, New York 1961, I, 192.
- 24 Brusati 1995, 177. See also below, notes 34 and 36.
- 25 According to Roscam Abbing 1993, Van Hoogstraten was born on August 2, 1627 and died on October 19, 1678. Long deliberations between families usually preceded a marriage.
- 26 The moneybag at the exterior and Jove's shower of gold for Danaë might be also understood as a reference to the solid position as Master of the Mint. The profession of painter was profitable but this seat at the Mint was of a higher social standing.
- 27 Brown a.o. 1987, 60-85, spec. 63.
- 28 The suggestion that the views have to be interpreted according to the mottos *Amoris causa* and *Gloriae causa* on the side panels disregards the fact that the three mottos constitute a whole.
- 29 The fire reminds of a *doorkijk* (view-through) in Jan Steen's *In weelde siet toe* in Vienna (Kunsthistorisches

- Museum), showing a fire with something broiled on the spit, possibly referring to the ardently burning fire of love. Cf. also Brusati 1995, Pl. XI: *Portrait of a Woman* (Dordrechts Museum).
- 30 McLaren 1991, 193.
- 31 Saint Peter Freed from Captivity, Acts of the Apostles 12:3-11; Jacques de Voragine, *La légende dorée*, 2 vols, Paris, 1967, 33-39, esp. 38: 'Le Seigneur délia miraculeusement saint Pierre de ses liens, et lui donna le pouvoir de lier et délier: or nous aussi sommes retenus dans les liens du péché et nous avons besoin d'être déliés. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous honorons le prince des Apôtres en cette solennité qui est dite aux liens, afin que comme il a mérité d'être délié de ses chaînes, et comme il a reçu du Seigneur le pouvoir de délier, de même aussi il nous délie des chaînes du péché'. Cf. L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, VI Vols, Paris, 1955-1959, III.3, 1092-1093; and A. Debold-von Ritter, *Studien zum Petruszyklus in der Brancaccikapelle*, Berlin 1975, 82, 124, 126.
- 32 J.B. Bedaux and R. Ekkart (eds.), *Kinderen op hun mooist: het kinderportret in de Nederlanden 1500-1700*, cat. exh. Haarlem (Frans Halsmuseum) and Antwerp (Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten) 2000, 258-261, nr. 71. For another meaning of this text see also Bedaux in E. de Jongh, *Portretten van echt en trouw*, cat. exh. Haarlem (Frans Halsmuseum) 1986, 325-328, nr. 82. The rest of Matthew's text is also of some importance in this context as it concerns marriage. The quote is preceded by the question posed by the Pharisees (Matthew 19: 1-12) whether a man is allowed to repudiate his wife (referring to the Commandments of Moses that mention divorce). Christ answers them, referring to Genesis 1:27; 5:2; 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh' (Gen. 2:24; Ephes. 5:31). 'So ought man to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself' (Ephes. 5:28). 'What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder' (Matth. 19:6). Bedaux referred to L.F. Groenendijk, *De nadere reformatie van het gezin: de visie van Petrus Wittewrongel op de christelijke huishouding*, Dordrecht 1984, 131-134.
- 33 The motif of the chalk and phial returns elsewhere in Van Hoogstraten's oeuvre, as in the *Trompe-l'oeil with a Rosary* in Prague (Castle Picture Gallery), and the *Old Man Looking Through a Window* in Vienna (Kunsthistorisches Museum). Cf. Roscam Abbing 1993, respectively fig. 15 and 14. The meaning eludes me. The small ampoule may have contained an elixir. This kind of small bottles can usually be found displayed on tables of quacks.
- 34 A mention of a print 'oprollende mette stocken' or 'rolcaert', occasionally printed on satin, can be found in: P. Biesboer & C. Togneri, *Collections of paintings in Haarlem 1572-1745: Netherlandish Inventories I*, Los Angeles 2001, 80 inv. no. 11 (1640) no. 21: 'Isabella in print met rolletgens'. According to Brusati 1995, 177, the portrait is crowned by the Van Hoogstraten family crest, but in reality the putto supports a crowned coat of arms of the Van Hoogstraten family.
- 35 E. de Jongh, 'Vermommingen van Vrouw Wereld in de zeventiende eeuw', in: *Kwesties van betekenis*, Leiden 1999, 59-82; idem, 'De interpretatie van stillevens: grenzen en mogelijkheden,' ibidem, 129-148; idem, 'Pearls of Virtue and Pearls of Vice', *Simiolus* 8 (1975/76), 69-97.
- 36 Brusati 1995, 177 states that it is Sara Balen's family's coat-of-arms, but this is not certain; it shows four unclear red dots, but there are no crossed bars; cf. Brusati 1995, Fig. 93.
- 37 See Gonzales Coques' *Portrait of a Couple*, 1640, Kassel, Staatliche Gemäldegalerie. The woman sits at a clavichord decorated with a painted scene of the contest between Apollo and Pan; AA.vv., *Staatliche Museen Kassel: Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Gesamtkatalog*, 2 vols, Mainz 1996, 84 G. K. 151, Taf. 84, Farbtaf. S. 94; Brusati 1995, 180.
- 38 Cf. the picture of Nicolaes Maes in the Wallace Collection in London: A child is looking through the window at a woman sitting in a room occupied with her needlework, making a gesture. A pot of flowers stands on the window sill. Behind her is a *rolcaert* with an oval portrait of a man; to her right is a book on a chair.

- Cf. L. Krempel, *Studien zu den datierten Gemälden des Nicolaes Maes (1634-1693)*, Petersberg 2000, nr. D. 25, Fig. 17, as: 'Frau beim spinnen von Wolle' [*sic!*].
- 39 See Michiel Roscam Abbing's contribution in the present volume, discussing the function and meaning of the letters in Van Hoogstraten's pictures.
- 40 Illustration in AA.vv, *Leidse Fijnschilders*, cat.exh. Leiden (Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) 1988, 189, nr. 58 (18th century). The *Van-tijd* was the period in which the new mother received neighbours and acquaintances. The father himself was supposed to stir the caudle with the cinnamon stick, cf. G.D.J. Schotel, *Oude zeden en gebruiken*, Haarlem 1859, 29 no. 22. On Rotius cf. De Jongh 1986, 58, fig. 67. We may ponder whether Rotius made the portrait on the occasion of his child's first teeth.
- 41 On the significance of the comb, cf. De Jongh 1999, 59-82; Roemer Visscher, *Sinnepoppen*, Amsterdam 1614 (ed. L. Brummel), The Hague 1949, '1<sup>st</sup> Schock IX "Purgat et ornat" (een kam): 'Een hooch Officier van een landt, is een kamme niet onghelijck, suyverende het landt van schadelijck geboefte, met goede justitie en scharp toesien; en versiene zijn ondersaten met goede wetten en willekeuren.' This, however, is obviously Roemer Visscher's interpretation of the figure and the text. On the necklace cf. De Jongh 1975-1976, 69-97.
- 42 E. de Jongh, 'De bezem als betekenisdrager', in: *Kwesties van betekenis*, Leiden 1999, 193-214.
- 43 As to the stages of the pregnancy and birth of the child I refer to the relative passages in [Hieronymus Sweerts, alias Hippolytus de Vrye], *De tien vermakelikheden des houwelyks*, Amsterdam 1683; see also the explanations by E.K. Grootes en Rob Winkelman in M.A. Schenkeveld-Van der Dussen's edition, Amsterdam 1988. Sweerts's text is undoubtedly ironic, but gives a good impression of a new housewife's preoccupations.
- 44 It was common for a recently married couple to live in the house of the bride's parents for a number of years, mindful of the birth of the first child. Cf. the marriage contract between Constantijn Huygens's daughter Suzanne and Philips Doublet: they would live in Huygens's house as long as they wished so, see A.D. Schinkel, *Nadere bijzonderheden betreffende Constantijn Huygens en zijn familie*, 2 vols, [The Hague] 1851-1856, I, 25-34 (esp. 28). Vermeer too lived with his mother-in-law. The practice was described in J. Cats, *Zinne- en Minnebeelden* (ed. H. Luijten), The Hague 1996, I, emblem XLV, 'Iam plenius nubilis annis', II, 671-683 and commentary. The suggestion that the box's interior represents Van Hoogstraten's own house was made by Brusati 1995, 178, although I do not agree with the idea that the artist represented the 'identification of the realm of painting with his own house' (p. 179).