



HISTORIES OF BRITISH ART

1660-1735 RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION

ABSTRACT: SANDER KARST

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‘The participation of Dutch Migrant artists in the London art market at the end of the seventeenth century’

In this paper presentation I will focus on the many Dutch migrant artists who participated in the London art market at the end of the seventeenth century. During this period London started to take over from Amsterdam as Europe’s most important economic centre. Due to an economic depression in the Dutch Republic, the demand for paintings in the republic decreased, the Dutch art market collapsed and many artists were forced to seek their fortune abroad. Most of them migrated to London.

In London these Dutch artists found a new market for their paintings and anticipated the increasing demand for luxury products among London’s inhabitants. Whereas in the Dutch Republic pictures auctions had been organised from the early seventeenth century onwards and had enabled artists to produce their paintings on speculation, in London similar market conditions only began to emerge during the 1670s. For my masterthesis I made an analysis of a set of 132 London auction catalogues which cover the period between May 1689 and March 1692 (British Library, shelfmark 1402.g.1). This analysis demonstrates that 49% percent of all paintings which were offered at these auctions, and which were attributed to a specific artists, were produced by Dutch migrant artists.

During my paper presentation I will explain this analysis and will argue that the market for contemporary paintings was dominated by London-based Dutch artists. I will highlight some of these artists, such as Van Heemskerck, Van Roesraten and Wyck, and will show how they adapted themselves to the specific English market conditions. I will clarify my analysis by making use of the (often neglected) accounts of the Dutch authors of artists biographies Houbraken, Weyerman and Van Gool, who visited London during the early eighteenth century and who made several interesting remarks on the London art market and the many Dutch migrant artists in London.