



Editorial

Health Clubs for the Mind

By the time this first issue of the current volume of *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* appears, the Dutch cultural sector will have awakened a few weeks earlier from an enforced hibernation brought about by government measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The lockdown in the winter of 2021-22 lasted from mid-December to the end of January – considerably shorter than the previous one, which shut down the cultural sector for more than six months. In the period just behind us, however, widespread protests and demands to reopen society became increasingly clamorous. Frustration built to such an extent that, in protest, for one day many theatres in the Netherlands opened as ‘hair salons’ and museums as ‘health clubs for the mind’.

Sometimes nicknames like this stick. It is unlikely that theatres will continue to advertise themselves as hairdressers, but now and then the analogy of the museum and the health club will be a useful one – certainly for this issue of *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin*. The three articles published here attest to great stamina in pursuing thorough and lengthy research to uncover the personal stories behind some paintings in the Rijksmuseum collection, and to shed light on the history of the creation of the stained-glass windows in the museum’s Entrance Hall.

Using information in the Rijksmuseum archives in Het Nieuwe Instituut and the North Holland Archives, Julia van Leeuwen has reconstructed the way the building’s architect, P.J.H. Cuypers, set out the specifications for these monumental windows in a closed, international competition. The commission was won by W.F. Dixon’s workshop in London, which within a year executed three large and two smaller windows in accordance with the iconographic programme created by Cuypers and his sparring partners J.A. Alberdingk Thijm and Victor de Stuers. In the design process, new national heroes were constructed, born of the nationalist wishful thinking of the time and given substance by drawing freely on works of art from other eras.

Frans Grijzenhout has solved a puzzle posed by Thomas de Keyser’s painting *Group Portrait of Three Brothers* since it was acquired in 1987. His research in Amsterdam’s notarial deeds and the registers of births, deaths and marriages, in conjunction with a topographic relationship between the probable family of the sitters and the painter’s family led to a plausible identification of the three children. This has given them not just an identity but a life story, and their portrait opens a window on the Catholic community in seventeenth-century Amsterdam.

It was likewise archive research, this time in The Hague and Utrecht, that enabled Ruud Bosscher and Fabian van Boheemen to give more historical depth to two people whose portraits are in the Rijksmuseum. The small, gentle portraits that Godfried Schalcken painted of Josina Clara van Citters and Anna Maria Gool record their intimate relationship, which had to withstand the pressure of their families and society in the early eighteenth century. The two portraits are part of the *Female Power* exhibition in which the Rijksmuseum focuses on the role of women in cultural history. If museums are health clubs for the mind, this exhibition at Schiphol Airport is an exercise in emancipation for travellers from all over the world.