At Home in Renaissance Bruges
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CONNECTING THE HOUSE TO THE STREET?
THE SHOP AND WORKSHOP

Introduction

In 1551, Bruges painter Pieter Pourbus completed the portrait of Jacquemyne Buuck and her husband Jan van Eyewerve; this painting was probably commissioned by the couple on the occasion of their wedding (fig. 1).¹ The portrait consists of two separate pendant paintings, one for each spouse. The couple was staged as if they were standing in a room of a multistorey house (perhaps even their own house) on the Vlamingstraat in Bruges, right across from the Vlamingbridge, a place of great commercial activity, because many ships had to pass through the bridge to reach the Waterhalle, where they could unload.² Judging from their clothes and accessories – Jan’s black velvet doublet fitted with fashionable long slashes and leather gloves, the gold embroidery on Jacquemyne’s white linen colette, her golden necklace and ring, and her finely decorated leather gloves, long fur sleeves, velvet sleeves and probably velvet tippet with damask lining³ – these people belonged to the higher social echelons of Bruges society.⁴ Their citizenship and Jan’s link with (the wine) trade was made clear through the vistas behind both subjects. The window or vista behind Jan offers a view of the city crane, the Kraanplaats and the Vlamingbrug, all important centres of trade in sixteenth-century Bruges. But the window behind Jacquemyne shows a fragment of the tower of Saint John’s chapel and a house with a shop called ‘de Haene’ or ‘the Rooster’.⁵ So a shop – not a market square or stall – was depicted as a pendant for retail, while the city crane was used as a pendant for the wholesale business in Bruges.

The scenes behind the sitters in portraits such as these were often gendered. In this case, the city crane would then symbolise (manly) trade and business, and the shop would refer to (feminine?) retail. In the double portrait by the Leiden painter Cornelis Engelbrentchtz (1515) of brewer Dirck Ottenz and his wife Cornelia, the vista behind the brewer depicts the business of the donor as well, while a shop was painted behind the image of his wife.⁶ Was this a coincidence? Why exactly a shop
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was depicted behind the donator is not yet entirely clear. Were the wives of both tradespeople connected to the sale of derivative products? Or was the shop more a symbol for steering the household and making sure that all the necessary consumables were bought, a task linked to the lady of the house? The question nonetheless arises about the position of the shop – often part of a dwelling – in a late medieval commercial urban centre, where markets were held on a regularly basis and where guilds fiercely oversaw the production in each of their members’ workshops. The fact that a shop was depicted might indicate that shops were already well integrated in the retail circuit of late medieval Bruges. But because production regulations were fierce, to what extent did the shop connect to the rest of the building?

In the painting of Pieter Pourbus, barrels, tubs and trays with all kinds of merchandise were positioned right in front of the house, in the front window and in the corridor that leads up to the shop (fig. 2). Below the wooden structure of the shop, there was a hint of yet another type of retail activity that took place there: a man displaying and selling some goods from a small, simple and movable wooden counter (fig. 3). The small vista in the portrait of Jacquemynne, therefore, depicts a vivid scene of retailing both inside and outside the house; a woman is closing a deal with the

Fig. 1. Portraits of Jan van Eyewerve (left) and his wife Jacquemynne Buuck (right), Pieter Pourbus, 1551, Oil on Panel, © Groeningemuseum, Bruges, www.artinflanders.be
shop owner or shop assistant inside the shop, whereas another woman is entering the space of the shop. Although goods were on display outside, the transaction took place in the interior space of the shop. So the shopping occurred partly inside the house and partly outside of it. Or in the words of Peter Stabel, the shop, therefore, ‘offered a combination of privacy and openness’.

But a shop was only rarely situated in a building that did not fulfil other functions as well. The shop in this painting was positioned on the ground floor of a multistorey building, so in all likelihood, the house also contained spaces other than the retail outlet at the front. How did shops – such as the one on the painting – relate to other sites of commerce and business and to the more domestic spaces in the same building? The main research question then is to what extent this commercially furnished retail or production space situated in a dwelling interrelated with the personal living spaces of shop owners and their families. Was the material culture of the home consciously brought into the shop (objects such as paintings and statuettes or textiles, chairs, tables and cushions) and actively put to use to attract customers?
customers?\textsuperscript{12} To what extent were ‘domestic values’ or practices associated with domestic life such as devotion, social interaction, (family) honour and comfort\textsuperscript{13} present or to be performed in the business area of a house?

‘Historians and the Nation of Shopkeepers’

Research on the specificities of retail space in the late medieval and early modern period in the Low Countries is still in its infancy.\textsuperscript{14} Several historiographic concerns are responsible for this lack of attention. Most research on retail practices was, until recently, predominantly focused on developments in the British commercial landscape in general and on the great evolutions (or rather revolutions) in the nineteenth century in particular.\textsuperscript{15} The retail systems before this period were seen as ‘backwards’ and ‘traditional’; shops before the nineteenth century were presented as ‘dark, unappealing places’ and as ‘a mere exchange point of goods for money’.\textsuperscript{16} So areas of retail were confined to markets, stalls and the tiny, busy workshops of artisans (\textit{werkwinkels}).\textsuperscript{17} Not only did the pre-industrial consumer suffer from a lack of a well-developed consumer mentality, pre-modern (and especially late medieval) shops were deemed to have been too small and too full of tools and utensils to be labelled shops.\textsuperscript{18} This presumed lack of a well-developed consumer mentality also meant that pre-modern shop owners were not expected to test commercial seduction strategies, because pre-modern consumers were, according to classical theory, insensitive to marketing techniques.\textsuperscript{19} After all, according to that same theory, marketing strategies and new sales techniques were only invented in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{20}

According to Ilja Van Damme, who wrote a review article on the current state of affairs in the historiographical debate on retail mechanisms, a recent scholarly interest in retail developments and in the rise of the shop has arisen due to a growing fascination for middle-group people in society, a new history of guilds and crafts, and especially to a renewed interest in consumption patterns and material culture.\textsuperscript{21} And because these interests manifested themselves for the early modern and late medieval periods, they sounded promising for the study of the late medieval and early modern shop. As a kind of counterweight to the dominance of British studies in this field, scholars started to catch up with research about retail developments in continental European (urban) contexts.\textsuperscript{22} But also the focus shifted slightly to the
period before the nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{23} and the existence of a pre-industrial consumer was finally acknowledged. However, this focus did not go any further back than the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, leaving the late medieval and early modern period still underexposed.

Furthermore, in this new strand of research, the interest in retail and consumption developments was mostly focused on the experiences of the consumer or the individual shopper and not on the practices of shopkeeping. Research was driven by what John Benson and Laura Ugolini have labelled a 'demand-led model'.\textsuperscript{24} It was a development that was probably caused by the current interest in material culture and consumption patterns that were focused on the buyer and not directly on the seller. One exception to the rule in this state of affairs is a series of articles that was published in the volume \textit{Buyers and Sellers}, in which the focus was on both parties to the retail transaction.\textsuperscript{25}

Whereas scholars of the late modern period have to be encouraged not to forget market selling, hawking and peddling, ‘since non-fixed shop retailing continued to play a vital role in the late modern economy’,\textsuperscript{26} scholars of the medieval and early modern period have to be reminded that besides selling products on the weekly, daily or international market, fixed shop retailing was an important part of the late medieval and early modern urban economy as well. Indeed, the scholarly interest in retail systems in late medieval and early modern cities was focused mostly on the patterns of periodic retail and the urban distribution system as a whole. It was instigated primarily by a close scrutiny of market practices and retailing structures, questioning the degree of control of corporate bodies mostly organised into craft guilds.\textsuperscript{27} Shops arguably had an odd place within this retail system controlled by the guilds, because these spaces were more difficult to control than outdoor markets. Some types of hoops for barrels, for example, were forbidden to be sold indoors in shops but had to be sold on the market by coopers.\textsuperscript{28} Recent research has already convincingly proven that a late medieval urban market system was mainly characterised by multidimensionality; several distinct market systems and retail outlets coexisted, and it was the specificity of commodities that determined what form of exchange was preferred.\textsuperscript{29} But artisans could have had several different retail outlets to sell their goods, depending on the time of year. Bruges turners, for example, could retail their goods from their shops as well as from a market stall.\textsuperscript{30}

Just like markets and halls, shops were under the control of guilds and other corporate institutions.\textsuperscript{31} Guilds decided, for example, how many retail outlets their members were allowed to operate and proclaimed whether and how members were
allowed to display their products to the public. According to their *keuren* or guild regulations, turners, for example, had to choose whether they would sell their goods from their shops or from a market stall during a fair, because they were not allowed to run two *meesterijen*, or two selling outlets, at the same time. The deans of the guilds also frequently visited shops and houses belonging to members of their own guild or to members of other guilds to verify whether the regulations had been complied with, whether there were foreign goods sold in the Bruges shops and to sanction product quality. That these searches were often traumatic for the shop owners and their family members – especially when the deans of one guild entered the shop and house of guild members of another guild – was made clear in Harald Deceulaer’s research. They were experienced as infiltrations into the private realm of a guildsman, so there must have been a strong connection between the (work)shop of the guildsman, his family honour and his house. And there must have been at least psychological boundaries between workspace, domestic space and the street. Were these psychological boundaries also materialised? And were these boundaries maintained by the shop owner himself during the act of shopkeeping or producing goods?

As we have seen, the act of shopping – and therefore the existence of *full-grown* shops – was for a long time considered to be something of the nineteenth century, something that did not yet exist in a late medieval urban context. The ground-breaking volume by Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, was one of the first to start a new debate after providing convincing proof that the shop and the act of shopping ‘already’ existed in Renaissance Italy, though she warns that ‘the experience of the Italian Renaissance challenges rather than reinforces a sense of linear transfer from past to present’. In the chapter on markets and shops, Welch cites the words of the Italian theorist Leon Battista Alberti, who in his 1471 treatise on architecture described his ideal version of the *bottega* or shop: ‘Within the city, the shop that lies beneath the house and provides the owner with his livelihood should be better fitted out than his dining room, as it should appear more in keeping with his hopes and ambitions’. Translating this according to Alberti’s principle of the hierarchy of spaces, the shop was then the (aspired) outwards expression of the respectability and (professional) status of the shop owner or artisan – even more so than the owner’s (otherwise, according to Alberti, luxuriously furnished) dining room. So the shop as a retail space and sometimes also as a space of manufacture most likely had to serve several purposes, but above all, it had to convince outsiders of the credibility of the craftsperson playing a role in the commercial system of the
city. But what were these purposes in reality? Moreover, regardless of all the guild regulations, shop owners and artisans still needed to sell their goods and had to encourage customers of substantial or modest means to buy their goods. These customers therefore needed to know the quality of the goods that were for sale in the different shops and probably wanted to have a choice of goods as well. So to what extent was the shop designed to seduce the potential customer to buy some of the shop's goods? Did a shop's interior actually matter? Or as Bruno Blondé and Ilja Van Damme have put it, 'was shop design functional' in selling sixteenth-century material culture?³⁹

**Shops and Shopping in Bruges**

Shops were only one selling outlet or retail circuit in the commercial landscape of late medieval and early modern Bruges. But the 'rise of the shop' was one important characteristic of late medieval retailing.⁴⁰ As Felicity Riddy rightly asserts, this concept of 'shop', or *winckele*, in a late medieval context is, however, ambiguous, because 'it can imply “workshop” as well as “place of sale” because in some crafts – such as shoemaking and tailoring for example – goods for sale were made on the premises'.⁴¹ Indeed, the typical artisan was not only a retailer or shopkeeper or a person 'who does not actually work upon, make or manufacture the goods he sells'.⁴² Most artisans were what historians would call 'producer/retailers'.⁴³ In any case, the shop both as a place of sale and as a place of manufacturing was seen as a semi-private (or semi-public) space, protected from the outside world (in contrast to market stalls) and excluding certain people (such as thieves) when needed. It also represented an open invitation for customers (merchants and guild members) to interact with the shopkeeper and to buy some goods. And because the open market allowed visibility, comparison, price controls and guarantees of quality as well as common agreement on value, shops needed to match these requirements to be credible.⁴⁴

The character of these spaces and the extent to which domestic life penetrated the realm of work, production and commerce (and vice versa) were, in all probability, highly dependent on the nature of the craft and the method of exchange.⁴⁵ Indeed, there were different infrastructural requirements for different types of commercial enterprises.⁴⁶ This is also the reason why it is important to consider *both* shop interior and business activity to say something about the potential interconnection
between shop design, retail space and domesticity. Mercers’ shops were, in all likelihood, furnished and organised differently than bakeries and the shops of turners. Indeed, not every craft needed to have a shop as a place of retail in the first place; the dwellings of weavers and shearers, for example, combined manufacturing and living accommodation, because they most likely produced their goods indoors to sell them to a merchant or entrepreneur. So the extent to which their production activities penetrated domestic life was probably different from, for example, stocking makers and hatters who had a room or a shop where they would sell their products direct to their customers. Nonetheless, in each case, visitors, business associates and customers had to cross a threshold – figuratively or literally – to close a deal or engage in social and business interaction.

Shop owners and artisans used the exteriors of their shops to make themselves and their trade visible on the street. On the one hand, they were obliged to do so, because customers and guild officials had to know where particular shops were to be found. On the other hand, artisans and retailers were probably eager to attract potential buyers to sell their wares. Colourful and large shop signs with names and symbols, voorwinckels, or outdoor displays of goods, colourful shop fronts and counters were used to attract the attention of passers-by. However, the actions that were taken by the city authorities against infringements of the public space undoubtedly also had consequences for the shopkeepers. The pavements and streets in Bruges were, at one point, so cluttered with the stalls that were erected by shopkeepers in front of their shops and by the counters of street vendors that the city had to intervene by levying a tax on all the stalls that hindered traffic. Craftspeople who did not have sufficient space to store their raw materials or finished goods in or behind their own house and therefore simply left them on the street were also dealt with more strictly. According to Deneweth, this led to craftspeople having less stock on hand or looking for additional storage space or an extra workshop. The signboards, which until then, protruded above the street to attract attention from afar, also had to be attached to the facades. That way, they would no longer hinder passers-by and carts with loads. Iconography, such as the image of ‘the Rooster’ house mentioned before, signals the importance of the exterior of shops (shop signs and the presentation of goods outside the shop, for example) in creating a retail environment in and around the physical location of the shop. But how intriguing the exterior design of shops is, it is a subject not treated here, because there is almost no data about the specificities of the exterior of late medieval shops in Bruges. Yet by looking at the objects inside the shop, crucial characteristics of the interior of these
sixteenth-century commercial outlets can be deduced. This chapter is therefore about the shop interior and its connection with the rest of the domestic environment, focusing on furnishing, interior decoration and the display of goods, fittings and tools.

Benson and Ugolini argue that to stress the innovative nature of early modern retailing, most researchers’ attention has been concentrated on what they call the ‘minority of urban, often London-based, innovative, “modern” shopkeepers at the expense of the majority of retailers, particularly “traditional” craftsmen-retailers such as shoemakers, tailors, saddlers, bakers and cabinetmakers, about whom we still know all too little’. Indeed, most research was focused on the so-called ‘high-class shop design’ for which most material survived. In contrast to earlier research on shop design, we chose to include all types of retail in the sample in the survey.

For our sample, we first selected all the inventories (with room indication) of people who worked at home (forty-four inventories out of 502); some sold their products in a room labelled winckele or vloer; others simply produced goods (or intermediary goods) and sold them to a merchant or had their toog or shop elsewhere. The latter was, for example, allowed for members of the Bruges painters’ guild from 1475; those artisans of the guild that produced their goods in a small room at the back of the house and did not have the space to have a counter (or shop) in their own houses were allowed to have a shop (or counter) elsewhere. To be able to say something about the character of the retail space and/or production spaces at home, we divided the inventories (and professions) into subcategories according to product (or commodity) and profession. Most artisans produced or sold consumer durables and semi-durables, but some shop owners such as grocers and bakers, sold foodstuffs: altogether, they served a wide range of customers. So in general, we do not limit ourselves to the inventories comprising shops alone, but also include inventories of craftspeople that were only producing goods without selling them directly to the consumer. These artisans, including weavers and dyers, worked at home as well, occupying a certain amount of space in the whole of the domestic space indoors.

The inventories that meet the criteria for this chapter were spread over time. Some date back to the fifteenth century, while others date from the mid sixteenth century. We are aware that differences and evolutions must have occurred during this period of nearly a century and a half, but because the data are so limited in number and according to Bert De Munck, major changes in the structure of the craft guilds already occurred in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and then again
from the end of the sixteenth and during the seventeenth century, we are inclined to look at all the inventories from different time frames together when discussing the interiors of shops and workplaces and the character of the retail environment.

In what follows, we will discuss each category of retail separately, taking the differences between the various trades – and even among artisans from the same craft – into account. Questions considering the spatial and internal organisation of the retail or production space will be posed, focusing in short on visibility, security and accessibility, in other words, its location in the house (accessibility for costumers, links between retail space and storage space, between retail space and space of production and between commercial space and domestic space, importance of light and display windows), its content and furnishing (presence of decorative items, traces of devotion, furniture, supplies and display of goods) and the act of buying and selling while paying attention to guild regulations and the specificities of the trade.

Category 1: Faiseurs de rien, vendeurs de tout

The first subcategory or group of people with shops comprises retailers, people using a shop to display and sell different products that they have not made themselves (occasionally supplemented with a small quantity of products for public sale they have produced themselves). In addition to the mercers and grocers, a herring and a dairy seller also make up part of this category of retailers. These artisans and retailers lived in houses of various sizes, but the houses contained at least one room that was labelled by the appraiser as winckele. In some cases, however, such as in the inventories of grocer Pieter van Steenkiste, dairy seller Christoffel de Valcken and Margriete, grocer Ingel Potter’s wife, the shop was not described as such. However, the presence of merchandise in boxes, bags, baskets and barrels situated at the front of the house might indicate that the room called the vloer in the inventories served the purpose of a shop as well. In mercer Rubrecht Hanevil’s inventory, we even find the label vloer ofte winckele, or ‘floor or shop’, indicating that the floor could fulfil similar functions to a room labelled winckele.

Mercers and grocers were retailers of different kinds of goods, ranging from yarn to majolica plates, hollowware, soap, colophony and spices (the last applies particularly to the grocers). In most cases, they did not produce the goods they sold. In some studies, these retailers were therefore labelled ‘faiseurs de rien, vendeurs de tout’. The inventories of Rubrecht Hanevil (1563), Pieter Van Steenkiste (1530)
and Luc van Slingelande (1480) were the most detailed mercers’ and grocers’ shops of our sample. Luc Van Slingelande’s shop or ‘t winkelken was situated at the front of the house, next to a little room that seems to have been some a sort of annex of ‘t winkelken. The shop contained tubs with butter, a chest with some linen and an unspecified quantity of wicker wood. The shops of Rubrecht Hanevil and Pieter van Steenkiste, on the other hand, were situated at the front of the house as well, but their goods also included spices, exotic fruits and sugar, in addition to wool and yarn. The shops of both retailers were located in the middle of the international quarter of the city – in the Vlamingstraat – with their exotic fruits and spices possibly attracting many of the international merchants that lived and worked in that neighbourhood.

All the goods the grocers and mercers sold were displayed in containers such as barrels, baskets, boxes and tubs. The shop owners used different display fittings to show different types of goods. The rarer and more expensive the goods were, the smaller the containers (and the smaller the quantity) in which the goods were shown to the customer. In the shop belonging to Rubrecht Hanevil, who sold larger quantities of wool and cotton yarn and all kinds of exotic (and imported) fruits, nuts and spices, these differences in display are very apparent. Plums, currants, almonds, capers and olives were put on display in larger tubs and barrels, whereas the more expensive spices such as cinnamon, saffron, mastic and mace (foelie, or the netting around the nutmeg fruit) were shown to customers in smaller boxes (dozen) and so in smaller quantities. Inneke Baatsen calculated the prices of these spices and the number of days a master mason in Bruges had to work to buy one ounce (or twenty-seven grams) of a particular type of spice. Her results indicated that although most of these spices were not as unaffordable as previously assumed, they were still considerably more expensive than local fruits and herbs and the dried fruits, olives and other wares the grocer had for sale. One might assume that the limited quantity of spices that was for sale could be explained by the relatively high prices the grocer had to pay to the supplier. Welch asserted for the Italian mercers and apothecaries as well that ‘the large capital investments in the stock contained within their shops made these spaces more like storehouses or treasure-chests than open areas for browsing’.

But on closer inspection, it seems that other strategies were at play as well. The remaining stock of the spices was in fact preserved in a special cruutcamere in Hanevil’s cellar. Although we cannot tell for sure what this cruutcamere actually looked like, it is clear from the inventory that it contained several small bags of different qualities and types of ginger, pepper, salt, cloves and anise. So not only were certain quantities of spices stored and preserved elsewhere, some of
the spices in this cruutcamere were not offered for sale in the shop at all. Perhaps the grocer would have wanted to limit the array of spices on sale in the shop to ensure that customers could not enter and browse the full stock? In this way, grocers could limit to some extent the access to the shop (and goods), had control over what was shown and could force contact between them and potential buyers. Moreover, the enclosed nature of this storeroom could better protect the shop owners and their goods and stock from theft. Especially in the case of the expensive spices, it was necessary to have larger quantities stored in enclosed spaces to better protect and preserve their integrity.

Except for the small quantity of spices Hanevil kept in his cellar, all the other goods were on display in the shop. Retailers – like any other guild member – had to guarantee the quality of the goods they had on offer. Many guild statutes insisted, therefore, that manufacture would take place in public to ensure the quality of the production process and of the raw materials that were used and to facilitate control. Because retailers did not produce their own goods, it might follow that they had to display the goods that were on sale as clearly as possible and all in the same space. According to Bert De Munck, retailers and artisans had to adopt strategies aimed at ‘reducing information asymmetries’ (i.e. ‘the seller of a product having more or better information on product quality than the buyers, resulting in a lack of trust among the latter’). In the houses of the retailers in our sample, we could therefore find no trace of stock or commodities elsewhere in the house, except for the aforementioned cellar and cruutcamere of Hanevil. But even in the latter case, the spices were stored in a closed entity separate from the other objects in his cellar. So there was no risk of the spices getting compromised or mixed up with other wares not to be sold. All the other rooms in the houses of Hanevil, Van Steenkiste and Van Slingelande were furnished as living rooms with beds, chairs, tables, cooking and eating utensils, hearth equipment, clothing and accessories, but without stock, groceries or any other tools or objects that would have played a role in the retail business of their trade.

The same goes for herring seller Wouter van Gheldre (1502) and dairy seller Christoffel De Valcke (1584). Although other rooms in their houses were also mentioned in their inventories, and some of the rooms were also located at the front of the house, such as Van Geldre’s kitchen, there were no stock or tools found elsewhere than within the boundaries of the shop.

The case of grocer Ingel Potters (1469) is somewhat different, caused by the small size of his abode, though the same basic assumptions apply to his shop as
well. Ingel Potters and his wife Margriete inhabited two small rooms on the Braamberg, situated onder de menhalle (attached to the small meat hall, or Oostvleeshuis), owned by the butchers’ guild. The first room was labelled winkel or ‘shop’ and contained all kinds of exotic fruits such as oranges, figs, dates and currants, as well as dried herring and majolica dishes. Some of the goods were displayed in a cabinet (schaaprade), but most were displayed in barrels, tubs and baskets, like the wares of the other two grocers in the sample. The second room was described as ‘back room’ and harboured cooking utensils, kettles, a table, three chandeliers and a bed, indicating that the room was particularly used as a cooking, eating and sleeping area. No stock or tools were found in the latter room either, but a bed, a bench (lijis), two cabinets (schaaprade) and several items of tableware were found in the shop, suggesting a mixture of living and working in the same room. Was it because the back room was too small to harbour all the furniture the couple needed for comfortable living? Or were some pieces of furniture and tableware taken from the back room and put in the shop to facilitate appraisal? We can only guess. The fact remains, however, that although some pieces of furniture that were not intended to be used in the shop (like the bed) were found in the shop at the time of the appraisal, the commodities that were on sale were clearly separated from the furniture and remained visible to the eyes of the public outside and in the shop.

The interiors of these shops showed no sign of decoration or seating furniture. The shops of the grocers, the mercer, the herring and the dairy seller simply contained the wares that were on sale. This does not mean, however, that the retailers could not have had a strategy to entice potential customers to buy goods. But it was mostly the quality, variety, colours and sometimes even rarity, smell and sight of the wares themselves that had to do the trick and convince the customer to buy goods – far more than the design of the shop. The only thing the retailer could do to lure customers into the shop and persuade them to buy products was organising the presentation of the goods and making this the key visual focus for the customers. Showing smaller quantities of certain spices, for example, as in the case of grocer Hanevil, could hint at the rarity of these goods, stimulating the potential buyer to do some business and eventually purchase them. Displaying larger quantities of other goods, for example, of dates, currants and olives, could in turn seduce potential buyers to indulge in the richness of taste, smell, bite and shape of the goods displayed right in front of their eyes. Moreover, as Claire Walsh asserts for the eighteenth-century London shops, drawers, boxes and parcels had the positive connotation of being organised and expressing visually the good management and
organisation of the stock. In other words, in the shops of the retailers of foodstuffs and spices, it was the goods themselves that were the decoration of the space and the invitation to come in and do business. The interiors emphasised quantity, choice and accessibility and the good reputation of the well-organised and well-informed retailer. The only 'decoration' we came across in Ingel Potters's shop was the papegay metten huiscken or the parrot in his cage. Van Damme and Deceulaer both noticed the presence of birdcages in shops of retailers of different sorts, but they interpreted it as a means to attract the attention of passers-by or as the pet animal of the seller. In the context of this Bruges shop of exotic fruits, we would suggest that the parrot was either on sale as some other foreign product (as it was summarised together with the other wares) or that it was a sort of 'mascot' of the shop, underlying the exotic character of the goods on sale and filling the retail space with colour and noise.

Category 2: Cloth and Linen Sellers

Fernand De Vlime (1562), Claes De Man (1464) and Jacob Obbelaer (1564) were also retailers – like the grocers, mercer, and herring and dairy sellers – so most likely did not produce or manufacture anything themselves but sold both fabrics and finished products made from the same type of fabric they had for sale. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that they were selling a different kind of product, the same principles also appear to have applied to these sellers and their houses. Fernand De Vlime was a seller of especially Friesch cloth and Friesch cloth products such as children's stockings, gloves and mittens, headwear and nightgowns (nachtkeerels). But his most important commodity was the cloth itself; eighteen rolls of Frisian cloth and fourteen flassages or smaller pieces of the same type of fabric were registered in his shop. The finished products in cloth, in contrast, were only available in smaller quantities; only three nightgowns, one hood and five pairs of boxen, a sort of trousers. Linen seller Jacob Obbelaere sold fabric and finished products as well. Apart from the rolls of linen fabric of all measurements and colours, he sold all types of collars, tablecloths and shirts. The latter were probably displayed in the three lijnwaet schaprades, or cabinets, mentioned in his inventory. Linen seller Claes De Man, on the other hand, mainly sold finished linen products such as tablecloths (of different sizes), shirts for men and women, and linen pillowcases. So although these three men sold different types of fabric, they all displayed the commodities they had for sale in the space that was labelled as a shop, and none of them had
stock or raw materials elsewhere in the house. All the other rooms in the houses of De Vlime, Obbelaer and De Man were furnished with objects and furniture that bore no reference to their trade or could be of use in the shop itself. So here as well, all the wares that were sold by the retailer had to be on display in (or outside in front of) the shop, making the wares visible to the public and to guild officials. The trades that were only selling goods without producing them themselves were looked upon with greater suspicion, because no monitoring was possible of the quality of the raw materials used or the production process. The retailers had to rely on their intermediaries or suppliers, and the guilds and customers, in turn, had to rely on the expertise of the retailers in selecting and selling products of the best quality.

Another remarkable thing two of the three textile retailers had in common was the presence of some decoration in their shops – two small pictures in Obbelaere’s shop and a painted cloth in De Vlime’s – as well as seating furniture such as chairs and benches. Herein lies a major difference with the shops of the other retailers discussed earlier. In his research on eighteenth-century Brussels, Roger De Peuter interpreted the presence of seating, paintings, mirrors or other decorative items in shops as part of a particular retail strategy of the shop owner. According to De Peuter, these items and furniture enticed customers to come in and feel as comfortable as in their own home. Claire Walsh made a similar remark in her study of shop designs in eighteenth-century London. Bruno Blondé and Ilja Van Damme, in turn, used the presence of paintings as a proxy to see whether shops were conceived as part of the larger living culture of the house or as distinct places in eighteenth-century Antwerp. Perhaps the chairs in the shops of the fabric retailers were placed there for the customers who were waiting for a fitting or to ask for more information about sizes and dimensions and to negotiate prices once the seller was available? But perhaps the explanation should not be too far-fetched; the seller could have had a rather practical use in mind. Chairs were indeed perfect for displaying textiles: the retailer simply had to unfold a piece of textile and drape it over a chair, so it was more visible and wouldn’t touch the floor and get dirty. And perhaps the painted cloth in De Vlime’s shop was a reference to his textile trade? Curiously, the retailer did not own any more paintings than the one canvas piece he had on display in his shop. However, we do not know the theme of the cloth painting nor of the two smaller panel paintings in the shop of linen seller Obbelaere, so it remains difficult to interpret. Obbelaere’s latter two paintings, by contrast, were part of a larger collection of four, of which one was displayed in an undefined room and one in his front room.
Category 3: Producer/retailers

The third category is slightly more comprehensive and includes inventories of people who not only sold their products in the shops but also manufactured the goods they sold. Hatters, bonnet makers, belt makers, wheelwrights, shaft makers, painters, turners and coopers were all part of this category. They were called producer/retailers. In most cases, the shop was therefore not only a retail outlet but also the artisan’s workplace – although there were some exceptions to this rule. Consequently, differences between these crafts in shopkeeping and organising production and retail occurred, though similarities between them can be demonstrated as well. One of these similarities is that in each case and notwithstanding the production technique, the retailing of products took place at the front of the house. The more dangerous occupations used fire to produce their goods, such as belt makers and bakers, and often had a workplace that was detached from the shop and often also detached from the house itself. In general, the organisation of retail spaces of the producer/retailers was different from the shops of the retailers we have already discussed. The sale of bonnets, for example, seems to have occupied more space in the house than the retail of spices and dairy products.

Most bonnet sellers did not themselves make the bonnets they sold – the process of bonnet making involved multiple steps of production performed by specialised craftspeople, such as wool spinners, knitters, fullers and dyers. This clearly differed from the hatters, who made their own hats. In the inventories of the mutsenreeders in our sample, we could not trace any tool of the trade, though there were some references to piles and baskets of wool. So it might seem possible that the mutsenreeders did not perform all the production phases in the process of making bonnets, but restricted themselves to the end process of felting and finishing.

In our sample, we have two mutsenreeders who both sold bonnets: Stevin Sremont (1541) who lived and worked in the Carmersstraet, and Jan Martin (1541) who resided in a house on the east side of the river Reie, between the Snaggaard and Olie bridges. Although their houses were of different sizes – Jan Martin’s house was probably much larger, because it contained more rooms (at least nine rooms), than Sremont’s (at least four rooms) – the spatial organisation of their professional activities was very similar.

In Stevin Sremont’s house, the vloer, or floor, at the front was used as a shop. According to the inventory, the space contained an unspecified quantity of unprocessed (rauwe) or unfelted white bonnets, some components of particular bonnets
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(vizieren), some wool and a small counter (wynkelkin). Furthermore, the space contained one bench, a scale or balance and one cabinet (schaprade), probably used as a fitting to display the bonnets. The shop furniture was completed by three barrels and eight baskets. Other items in the shop were pieces of armour such as a busse, or arquebus, and two wapenstocken, or pointed weapons, which could be peaks, halberds or spears. The shop was also equipped with a hearth (one of the few in our sample), which was also used to cook food, given the presence of a spit and grill, pots, pans and kettles. Except for the bench and the cabinet that were of use in the shop, no other pieces of furniture (chairs, smaller benches or tables, suggesting eating or dining facilities) were found. Because only his sleeping room contained another hearth, the heated floor was probably the best location in which to cook food as well as to sell the bonnets. The hearth and the kettles might also have served a double use and could have played a part in the process of felting as well, because warm water was needed to felt the yarn. Fellow bonnet seller Jan Martin’s shop had only a buffet or a cupboard, a long bench, five barrels and two baskets of wool and several unfelted (onghereede) bonnets.

Intriguingly, it seems that only the unfelted or unprocessed bonnets were on display in the shops of both gentlemen, complemented with some components or accessories (vizieren) of specific types of bonnets and some wool. But strangely enough, no finished or felted specimens were mentioned. So it was the intrinsic qualities of the goods that added value to the shop. The felted pieces were stored in another room in the house – in both houses, a room probably situated right next to (or behind) the shop. In Sremont’s case, this room was labelled the ‘back room’, and in Martin’s inventory, the room was situated next to the shop (neffens de vloer). In both rooms, the appraisers found a large cabinet in which to put finished and felted bonnets (grote schaprade omme bonetten inte leggen). At the time of appraisal, these cabinets were not empty either, and they contained an unspecified number of red and black bonnets in Sremont’s case and no fewer than sixty-seven white felted bonnets and forty-eight black felted bonnets in Martin’s case. Besides this bonnet cabinet, other pieces of furniture were mentioned in these rooms in both inventories: a chair in Martin’s inventory, and a cupboard, a bench, a table, a chest and a mirror in Sremont’s.

In Sremont’s house, the felted (and therefore finished) bonnets might have been kept elsewhere to avoid the smells and the smoke produced when using the hearth. But there were also strong similarities between the retail spaces of both mutsenreeders and these cannot be coincidental. It is difficult to assess the reason behind
the spatial distinction between felted and unfelted bonnets. Perhaps the unfelted bonnets that were on display in the shop were used as samples or fitting models that customers could fit and try while discussing preferred sizes, measurements and colour. The bonnets that were stocked in the other room were then probably the finished goods that were awaiting a final fitting and perhaps a final retouch. The fact that there was also a mirror and a chair in the back room where the finished bonnets were stored, clearly indicates that finished or nearly finished bonnets were tried on beforehand. So the act of selling a bonnet was probably done in several stages: an initial stage of consultation with a customer, followed by a production stage that – in this case – ended in the artisan’s house itself and a final fitting stage. Elizabeth Currie found a similar course of events for Florentine and Milanese tailors. She even found that some of the tailors made use of workshop books that were consulted by the clients first to select the models they preferred.88

It follows that, in contrast to the shops of the retailers discussed before, the retail space of the mutsenreeders comprises more than one room. Moreover, in the inventories of the bonnet sellers, we could find some traces of wool supplies in other rooms of the house. In Sremont’s case, wool was found in the front room, and the wool in Martin’s house was stored in the rooms upstairs. Interestingly, though the finished products were not on display in the shop but were stocked in other spaces near the shop, we could still see a kind of spatial limitation to the spread of retail or professional tools, goods and activities in the house. Cooking utensils and hearth equipment were found in Sremont’s shop, but no tools of the trade nor samples of bonnets were found in other domestic spaces in the house except for one. The same goes for Martin’s house; unfelted bonnets were on display in the shop, and finished products were kept in another room. The finished bonnets were not immediately visible to the public, but they were easily accessible when needed in case there was guild inspection or when requested by customers. Only for the raw materials, in this case wool, could we say that there was some sort of spill over from the business area to the domestic space.

Belt maker, or riemslager, Yserael Negheman (1541)89 had a werckhuus, or detached workplace, where he produced the copper rings that were used to assemble the metal belts. The werckhuus included a trestle table, baskets with coals, an undefined quantity of copper rings that were probably already made there by the artisan and several pieces of hearth equipment such as bellows, shovels and tongs. In the shop (in this case labelled vloer), the appraiser found thirteen copper rings, tools and specialist items needed for the shop’s main business, as well as some kettles and two
balances or scales. The back room was used as a living area and was equipped with all the necessary furniture such as a well-made bed, cabinets, cupboards, chandeliers, eating utensils and so on. But no stock or tools were found there. Although it is difficult to deduce, because there is not much information given in the inventory, the raw production of forging brass rings near a fireplace may have been done in a separate space because of fire hazards. But the finishing of the products and the retail sales took place in the shop at the front of the dwelling. Though there were other rooms in the house, the presence of tools typical for the craft and needed for working on the goods was spatially restricted to the detached workplace and to the shop.

Hatter Silvester van Pamele (1571), who lived and worked in the Korte Noordzandstraat in Bruges, had a shop where he produced hats in front of his customers. His shop contained artisan’s tools, six finished hats and several moulds for hats that were – according to the inventory – hanging by the shop door. In this way, potential buyers and passers-by were immediately informed about the nature of the shop and could also immediately see what types of hats were available. Wool that was probably used by the hatter in his manufacturing process was stored in the back room and upstairs in the camere onder tuck. But as with the belt maker, there are no tools or finished products found in rooms other than the shop. A similar layout of the commercial environment can be found in the house of turner Rombout de Doppere (1583). His floor was also his shop, and it contained all his artisan’s tools, including a particular chair (mansstoel), a basket and a saw. The courtyard was used as a storage place for the wood: large piles of wood were found there, accompanied by bundles of firewood.

That raw materials were often stocked or stored in rooms and places in the house other than the shop or workplace becomes evident when we look at the records of the two shaft makers, Jan Duivelinck (1559) and Sander Collet (1568). The inventory of Jan Duivelinck, who also lived in the Korte Noordzandstraat, is most detailed. His ground-floor room vloer was used as a retail and manufacturing site, storing an undefined number of spikes and sticks, another eight sticks used to make torches and artisan’s tools (alaam). His back room was used to store another quantity of the goods he produced and sold: a pile of brewers’ forks and a bunch of hammer shanks. Except for a chest, there were no other pieces of furniture or other items found in that room. The back room is mentioned in the inventory immediately after the floor or shop, so it was probably seen and used as an annex to the shop. In the front room, kitchen and upper room (probably the attic), raw materials such as several pieces of wood were stored, next to some smaller quantities of produced
goods such as spikes and sticks for torches. This is quite unusual though and to some extent, in sharp contrast to the regulations of most guilds. Finished goods should by all means be made visible to ensure product quality and to discourage fraud. But in the inventory of fellow shaft maker Sander Collet, the only craft-related items that were found elsewhere in the house were different types of houd dienende ten ambochte vanden schachtmakers, or wood used by the shaft makers. So perhaps Jan Duivelinck’s house and shop were simply too small to house all the products, all the woods and all his tools at the same time. The surplus of products was then spread throughout the house, but his tools – symbolising his bond with the craft and the guild and guaranteeing the quality of his products – were confined to the specific production and commercial area of the house.

Spatial constraints could have had a profound effect on the manufacturing process and retail practices for particular goods. Wheelwrights, for example, needed more space to manufacture their goods than other craftspeople, and the finished goods themselves were also too large to be sold in the shop. So in the case of the two wheelwrights in our sample, Jan Parcheval (1559) and Cornelis Veyts (1559), the production and possibly also the retailing of carriages and wheelbarrows was done in the workplace (werckhuus), and the wood was stored upstairs in the attic, in the courtyard and on the street. The latter was actually not allowed, because it disturbed traffic and cluttered the streets. In Cornelis Veyts’s inventory, the workplace where the wood and the artisan’s tools were stored is even described by the appraiser as winckel ofte werckhuus, indicating that the space was much more of a workplace that was also used as a retail space. The stacks of wood and cut planks on the street immediately made clear what type of craft these two gentlemen were practising and informed the passers-by of the quality of the wood that was used.

In the case of the coopers, the manufacturing of barrels, tubs and casks was done within the boundaries of the shop. The inventory of cooper Geraert Coop (1568), for example, clearly mentions a small table, a small closable desk, three three-legged stools (driestael), a workbench, some tools and several barrels, with one tub standing in front of the door. The other rooms in his house did not contain any tools, stock or raw material, or references to or traces of the production process. In the inventory of fellow coaper Stevin De Groote (1572) were parts or components of barrels and tubs (such as hoops) stored in rooms other than the shop such as the upstairs room above the front room, the back room and the attic, but all the finished goods and all the tools and specialist items needed for the cooper’s trade were kept solely in the shop. Even in the small and humble abode of cooper Jan Sheerlippens (1561), where
the inventory mentions only two rooms (kitchen and front room), and where the tools, stock and raw materials of the cooper were located in the front room together with his household goods, the appraiser differentiated clearly between the goods. The newly made goods were labelled: eight *nieuwe cuupkens* and two *nieuwe coelvaten*, to indicate that they were the cooper’s own products destined to be sold at some point in time. And the hoops and tools of the artisan were mentioned thereafter.

The two examples we have of painters offer peculiar cases. The first example is the inventory of well-known painter and engraver Marcus Gerards, painter of the famous city map of Bruges. Gerards was also a devout Protestant, so in 1568, he fled to London to escape the death penalty imposed on him by the ferocious Council of Troubles. His goods were seized by the Council of Troubles and the Duke of Alva; they were inventoried and valued to be publicly sold. His inventory is therefore the only one in our sample that was constructed in a very unusual and specific context. It mentions five rooms: the hall, the kitchen, a sleeping room, a room above the hall and the back room. In terms of Gerards’s profession, the appraiser could find three panel paintings with unidentified themes in his hall and one map. Given the period, this could well have been the famous city map Marcus Gerards made for the city of Bruges only six years before, though more detailed information about the map in his hall is missing. Intriguingly, his painting materials and tools were found not in a room at the front of the house, but in a room above the hall and in the back room. One would suppose that this was not in accordance with the guild regulations considering visibility of production, but the only thing that the painters’ guild required was that painters sell their works in the open, either from the fronts of their shops or within public view. After all, it was important for painters to work in good light (preferably northern light). And that light could have been better in a room other than the one at the front of the house. The guild regulations of the Bruges guild of Saint Luke even stated that: ‘degene vanden voorseiden ambachte, die wercken op cameren of achterwaert vande strate, ende gheenen tooch en hebben binnen haerlieder werchuuse, dat die zullen moghen houden eenen tooch daert hemlieden ghelloven zal.’ So painters were allowed to work in a room that was not directly visible or open to public view and to sell their products elsewhere. Parish records reveal that the Bruges painter Peter Claeissin lived in a house on Jan Mireal Street, while he had a shop together with Adriaan Eyeman in another part of town. The most important thing was that the retail sale of paintings was done in the open and within public view, at home in the shop or elsewhere in the city. And although Marcus Gerards did not have a shop attached to his house (perhaps
the shop was located elsewhere in the city? Or perhaps he worked only on commission?), he did have some paintings (and a map) on display in his hall. Perhaps these paintings were used as a business card or signboard of his profession and were therefore displayed in the room closest to the street? In the inventory of painter Pieter de Clievere (1541), no signs of a retail space were found either, though it seems that his floor was used as a sort of display room as well, because it contained no fewer than two painted cloths, three other (cloth?) paintings in frames and a panel painting of Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness on top of a cupboard. These were not the only paintings De Clievere owned, however, because in the second room, two panel paintings were displayed on a cupboard. This large number of paintings owned by a household was rather exceptional in Bruges at that time, so we would suggest that De Clievere kept some of his produced paintings to himself as a way to show his skills and expertise to potential buyers.

In general, we can safely conclude that in all the houses of these producer/retailers, professional activity was confined to the retail area or the workplace. No tools or specialist instruments of the crafts were found anywhere else in the house than in the shop or workplace (werckhuus). In houses where the functions of working, selling and living were combined, there was often a spill over of raw materials, stock and parts from the commercial environment into the domestic area, but it seems that most craftspeople were eager to keep this spill over to a minimum and that they were careful not to store tools and finished products in domestically furnished living areas. The tools of a craftsperson symbolised a bond with the craft and guild and externalised the craftsperson's status as a master; therefore, tools were preferably kept in the business area of the house. Tools refer to the master's skills and ability to perform the trade. Craftspeople (or master guildsmen) were only allowed to use the tools inherent to the craft after they had proven (by means of a master's proof) that they knew the tricks of the trade and were therefore capable of starting their own businesses. So the tools of a craftsperson not only represented his participation in the trade but also symbolised his master status, his skills and his trustworthiness in using them to manufacture high-quality goods.

Another similarity between all the aforementioned shops of producer/retailers was the absence of any piece of decoration or furniture except for the furniture that was used by the craftsperson during production and retail. It seems that the shops all had basic interiors. In contrast to the shops of the retailers of cloth and linen discussed before, not a single shop displayed decorative items (except of course in the case of the painters, but here the paintings should be seen as saleable goods) or was
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equipped with seating to accommodate customers. In the end, it was the skills and reputation of the artisan, symbolised through the tools of the craft and safeguarded by the location of the shop in the house, combined with the intrinsic qualities of the commercial stock that had to entice and convince potential buyers of the integrity of the craftsperson and to proceed to a purchase.

Category 4: Bakers

In the later Middle Ages, there were several types of bakeries active in a city. In addition to ‘ordinary’ bread bakers, pastry bakers were also members of the bakers’ guild. But in our sample are only the inventories of bread bakers. The bakers’ shops did not differ much from the shops of the other producer/retailers. The three bakers in our sample, Adriaan Stalpaert (1569), Charle Raison (1542) and Quinten Lucas (1567), all had a retail space or shop in the house and a bakehouse, or a separate building with an oven. The bakers were obliged by the city government to have their ovens in fireproof buildings to prevent any form of fire hazard. These bakehouses were equipped not only with ovens but also with all the other necessary tools bakers needed to bake their bread.

The loaves of bread were sold in the shop. Remarkably though, these shops seem to have contained a lot of furniture such as chairs, benches, desks, chests and cabinets. Baker Raison’s shop, for example, included one desk or counter (contoir), a bench with storage space underneath (lys), several baskets, two chests and a balance with weights. Stalpaert’s shop, in turn, contained only two chairs and a balance; Lucas’s shop had several baskets, a balance and a cabinet to put the bread in. So although the shops themselves were not decorated with paintings or mirrors, there was seating that would suggest possibilities for longer visits or stays in the shops. To some extent, it would be counter-intuitive. This could mean several things: chairs and benches were present in a baker’s shop, because people would buy bread on a more regular basis than, for example, a new hat, so the human interaction between buyer and seller of the bread was deemed more intense; or the seller of bread did not have to do anything more than hand over the bread to the customers in his shop and was perhaps in need of a place to sit down when there was no one to be served; or people had their dough already prepared themselves and came to the bakery to have it baked. The actual experience of the buying of bread (and other goods) is in need of more research, so more answers to these questions will become possible.
Category 5: Textile Trades

The fifth category comprises people who were producing goods or semi-finished goods at home, but were not selling them direct to the end user (or the consumer). In our sample, they were all employed in various branches of the textile industry of the city, ranging from dyers and weavers to shearers and silk reeders. The textile trade had for a long time been one of the strongholds of the Bruges economy. In the words of Stabel, Puttevils and Dumolyn, ‘it was textile manufacture that provided Bruges with an industrial foundation’. But the economic climate for textiles changed drastically between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries; the traditional luxury cloth industries, which dealt with heavy materials, had to make way for the increased importance of lightweight woollens or cloth that was ‘very similar in appearance to the traditional luxury cloths, but somewhat cheaper and of medium quality’.

In her research on dress and clothing in sixteenth-century Bruges, Isis Sturtewagen found a whole array of these light textile products in the inventories of middle-class Bruges citizens, made by the so-called Nouvelle Draperie Légère.

The textile production from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was ‘organized within the framework of guilds and the small-scale entrepreneur, usually a guild master, became the pivotal figure in the industry’. People of different social and economic backgrounds were working in the textile industry, ranging from wealthy entrepreneurs such as drapers to middle-class guild masters and relatively poor wage-earning skilled or unskilled workers. Almost every stage in the production of textiles was carried out by a different branch of the textile industry with occupations ranging from shearers, combers, and fullers to dyers, spinners and weavers. Most of these guildsmen were not producing directly for the customer (and end user of the textiles), but most likely for another guildsman, merchant or entrepreneur.

In our sample, we have several guildsmen who were actively involved in the textile industry who worked at home but did not sell their products directly to end users (in contrast to the producer/retailers we discussed earlier). Most of them were subcontracted by an entrepreneur or wealthy guildsman. But some were at the head of their own company, like the drapers. The zydeereeders, dyers, tapestry weavers, shearers and say, fustian and cloth weavers in our sample were all working in some room at home. So although they did not invite potential customers in, their occupation did occupy certain rooms in their homes, making it worthwhile to question (and measure) the impact of employment in the textile industry on the rest of the...
domestic environment (and vice versa). And just as with the producer/retailers, we are well aware that there were differences between the trades, even among the guildsmen within the same trade – more often than not depending on personal wealth and the size of the house.

Joos van Cuevele (1562) was a silk twiner (zydereeder) and lived in the Goezeputstraat in Bruges. Silk twining is a process of literally twisting the silk threads to create stronger silk yarn. It was preparatory work that was carried out prior to the process of weaving or dying the yarn (usually done by somebody else). In Van Cuevele's house, the activity of silk twining was performed in the workhouse (werckhuus), where the tools of the trade were found, namely mills, spools, bobbins, chairs and workbenches. Because he had no fewer than five workbenches and several mills, he likely employed some journeymen or workers as well. The finished silk yarn, however, was stocked elsewhere – in the room next to the hall at the front of his house. So the room where the finished (or semi-finished) goods were stored was clearly separated from the work floor. In the room at the front of the house, the appraisers found a basket filled with twined silk of different colours and another eight baskets with silk and several bobbins. In the other ground-floor room (vloer), Van Cuevele kept some tools and raw materials such as raw silk, blank bobbins and some sticks that were used ter neeringhe vanden zydereeders, a balance or scale and some weights. In the other rooms of the house, no stock or tools were found, except for some zydewinden, or silk spools, in the kitchen. So it seems that the production of the silk yarn took place at the back of the house in a separate space, large enough to hold the necessary tools and equipment, whereas the finished goods were kept in a room at the front of the house. The presence of a balance, several bobbins, silk and finished goods might indicate that merchants, entrepreneurs and other guildsmen were received there.

The situation is somewhat different for dyers. The location of their activity seems to have been highly dependent on the size of their houses. To a certain extent, this has to do with the fact that dyeing is a rather space-consuming activity and perhaps even more than others, an activity in which a lot of filthy kettles and jugs are needed (for heating, decanting and fermentation, and vats with water, potash and dyestuffs), as is apparent from the description of the activity by textile historian John Munro. The relatively wealthy dyer Jan Lenaert (1540), who lived in a six-room house, had a separate workplace (werckhuus) where his kettles with dyestuffs and water and his tools were stored and used. Consequently, he was well able to separate the production area from the rest of the house even more adequately than his
fellow craftspeople. Dyer Joos Vlamync (1546), on the other hand, had to keep his kettles and barrels with dye and water and his tools in his kitchen and in two other cellars (though it is uncertain whether the latter were attached to the house where he lived or were rented elsewhere in the city). His house consisted of merely three rooms, of which two were labelled ‘small’, so he had no choice but to house his tools and equipment in his living quarter. Dyers Jacop de Clercq (1560) and Jacop vanden Sip (1585), in turn, practised their occupation in a room labelled as floor, but stocked the raw materials upstairs in the attic.

What they all had in common though – and also with most of the other craftspeople in our sample – was that there were no other furnishings or objects found in the rooms where the guildsmen performed their trade, except for items that were related to the trade itself. In the case of the shearers (droogscheerders), the situation is rather similar; the house size determined where the activities of shearing and carding could take place. Adam Coeman (1566) and Cornelis Oudemarc (1572) both performed their trade in a room called the floor (vloer) at the front of their houses. Both men owned the necessary tools for the trade of shearing, such as shears and one or two shearer’s workbenches that were adapted to the specificities of the trade and had a padded, slanted top and small hooks along its two ends for securing one section of the cloth. Furthermore, Oudemarc had a spinning wheel, teasels for carding, two reels, a press, a scissors block and several cabinets in his workplace as well. The press was usually used in the final stage of the process, when the finished cloth was pressed and then folded and packed for delivery. Intriguingly, in both cases, the rooms that fulfilled the task of workspace also contained two types of seating furniture: a preekstoel and a woman’s chair (vrouwenstoel). The first type of chair was, according to literature, brought to church and used for praying at home. But the chair could have had other functions or served other ends as well. It was small and usually foldable, so it was an ideal piece of seating furniture to be used in a workplace where space was limited and it might well have been used by the craftsperson while performing activities. The other type of chair is the woman’s chair. It is as yet not completely clear what this gendering of a chair exactly means, but scholars assume that the chair was probably smaller in size and used predominantly by women when performing their daily tasks. So the presence of a woman’s chair in the workplace might point to a particular female participation in the trade.

The third shearer, Pieter Douchet (1562), had a much larger enterprise. His tools and equipment were concentrated in two separate spaces in his dwelling: in the floor room, where he stored two special workbenches and nine shears (together
with a balance and some teasels); and in a detached workplace (*werckhuuse*), where he had no fewer than four looms, three spinning wheels (in the back room of the workhouse) and another loom and several baskets. The presence of all these different types of tools might indicate that he was combining three activities of the textile trade (shearing, spinning and weaving) and was employing other skilled or unskilled workers to do part of the job. His main employment of shearing (which was also the final stage after weaving) was done at the front of the house – in the floor – whereas other activities were done at the back in a building that was detached from the first. Though the second building was mainly used for production and manufacturing, it also contained rooms that were equipped with household goods such as clothing, accessories, beds and chairs. But the tools and the equipment of trade were, again, never mingled with these household objects. Perhaps the journeymen or workers were receiving room and board as part of their wage?

The last group of craftspeople in the textile industry were weavers of all kinds of fabrics. Our sample consists of four weavers (which are identified as such), each producing a different type of fabric: cloth weaver Cornelis de Corte (1568), fustian weaver Laureins De Doncle (1568), say weaver Richard Janszuene (1561) and tapestry weaver Antheunis De Sant (1542). What all these weavers had in common was that they had only one loom in their possession and that this loom, with all its accessories, was positioned in a room at the front of the house. Only say weaver Richard Janszuene had some combed and uncombed wool in his back room as well. That the production of the weaves was done (or had to be done) at the front of the house, visible to passers-by and guild officials, is not surprising. The guilds of the tapestry weavers, for example, were often confronted with severe abuses and fraudulent businesses. Some weavers had dared not to weave characters and landscapes into their tapestries, but had painted them with wet paint on the warp. In this way, inferior work was produced that brought the reputation of the trade into disrepute. The famous edict or general ordinance of Charles V that was published by the general authorities in 1544 codified all the statues and regulations of the tapestry trade. The edict was specifically intended to safeguard the quality of the weaves and tapestries produced in Flanders, Brabant and Hainaut and had to restrict abuses and other trade- and quality-related problems. So transparency of manufacturing techniques to safeguard the quality of the product and the reputation of the guild was important for the guilds in the textile trade as well.

The last category is somewhat different from the earlier ones. In our sample, Jan de la Meire (1569) was a draper. The profession of draper is somewhat peculiar,
It is not a real producer/retailer type, because the draper only buys the raw materials from suppliers and gives them to his subcontractors or workers, who process them to finished or semi-finished goods that the draper then sells to fellow entrepreneurs or guildsmen.\textsuperscript{143} Draper Jan de la Meire lived in the Ganzestrate in Bruges in large premises that consisted of no fewer than ten rooms (a workhouse included). The floor of his house was occupied by an array of tools and equipment, including six shears, two workbenches, nine teasels, a barrel with some shorn wool, two iron combs, a balance with lead weights, a large press, two spinning wheels, several barrels and baskets with wool yarn, and thirteen reels of yarn. Judging by the nature of these tools and raw materials, we can deduce the particularities and tools of different trades all engaged in textile and wool processing that were performed in that single space, such as carding, combing, spinning and shearing wool. Because there were also four woman’s chairs in that space and one woman’s sofa chair with a cushion, we could suppose that women were also performing some of these tasks.\textsuperscript{144} Spinning, combing and carding are seen by many scholars as typical female (and unskilled) occupations.\textsuperscript{145} In contrast to what we have seen so far, not only raw materials such as wool but also some of the tools were scattered all over the house. In the front room of the house, De la Meire stored some Spanish wool and three packets of an unidentified type of wool; in the attic (upperzoldere), a number of new teasels were kept, and in a room called middelcamere, the draper kept seventeen reels or bobbins of yarn, two barrels with bobbins and three combs, two baskets and fourteen pairs of teasels. Also in the back room, the draper stored two piles of Spanish wool and several reels. But he also had a detached workhouse that, according to the appraisers’ description, was located at the back of the house. And this was a place of production that was used for manufacturing only. There, the appraisers found two looms with cloth weaves, four baskets and several reels. So contrary to shearing, carding and spinning, the activity of weaving was assigned to the space at the rear of the house.

The tools in the draper’s rooms also inform us that instead of purchasing the finished product from masters, the draper himself engaged in the process of cloth production by employing skilled or unskilled workers in his house.\textsuperscript{146} The workforce was set to work in rooms that were separated from the living quarters of the draper and his family, but the tools and raw materials were stored in all kinds of rooms, even in rooms that were used by family members. The work places were equipped only to perform the tasks of the trade and were therefore not furnished with additional furniture or decoration. These household goods were reserved for the domestic living rooms of the draper’s house.
Similarities and Differences: The Broader Picture

Whether retail and manufacture were combined in the same space or not, it was deemed important that the production of goods, the raw materials and the goods themselves were visible to potential buyers as well as to guild officials. Most shops and workplaces were therefore situated at the front of the house. Several guild regulations consider the presence of ample light as an important requirement for shops, because it was used as a convenient tool to prevent fraudulent, or secretelic, practices. One statute of the guild of the joiners, for example, illustrates this point clearly by stating that ‘niemande secretelic wercken en mach’.\(^{147}\) The guild of the coopers underlines the importance of ample light in the shop and workplace ‘omme de volcke ook niet te bedrieghene’.\(^{148}\) By producing and selling goods in adequately lit spaces at the front of the house (or outdoors as in the case of the painters), it was possible not only to safeguard the manufacturing process but also to sell the products within public view. Therefore, it seems that in sixteenth-century Bruges, the guilds had not yet relinquished the idea that the problem of product quality should be solved by tying together product quality, trade mark and master status in the front room of the masters’ house – where the product was made and sold under the sign or banner of the guild.\(^{149}\)

Quite the contrary even, and we would dare to say that shop design – or, better, the physical layout and organisation of the broader retail area, not the decorative design of the shop – and the ways in which goods were displayed were also used by as a way to ‘solve’ the issue of product quality and information asymmetries, guaranteeing and representing both the intrinsic quality of the goods and the skills of the artisan. So product quality was not only communicated to customers or merchants by means of collective hallmarks\(^{150}\) (especially not in the context of the shop); it was also done by shop design and infrastructure, the visibility of tools and equipment and the display of the commercial stock. The scale (balanse), for example, was an item that was present in all kinds of shops: it was used to sell products by weight and to showcase the credibility and professionalism of the seller/artisan perhaps even more clearly than the goods themselves. On the basis of a rather small sample size, guilds expert Bert De Munck asserted that the emergence of shops went hand in hand with either specialization within the sector (some masters specializing in retail, others producing exclusively for large entrepreneurs) or the gradual separation of work floor and shop within the house (the work floor moving towards the back of the house).\(^{151}\) In most cases, the work floor was situated at the front of the house,
like the shop, but in some instances, the production was indeed performed at the back of the house, often by skilled or unskilled employees, while the finished goods were stored in a room at the front. Was this evidence of a gradual evolution towards an increasingly wider separation between production and retail? At the moment, it is hard to prove because our sample size is rather small. More research should be undertaken to propose well-founded statements to challenge these debates.

Nevertheless, what Walsh concluded for the eighteenth-century shop fits the sixteenth-century shop perfectly well too: she argued that ‘quite clearly eighteenth-century shops were not places of “primitive barter”, dark and disorganized, where goods were “left to sell themselves”. Instead they were geared up to active and effective selling, using the available methods of enticement to their fullest extent’. Though the shops of sixteenth-century Bruges were not as fully furnished with seating furniture, paintings and mirrors as the eighteenth-century shops Walsh studied, their infrastructure was also consciously designed and furnished (with tools, instruments and finished goods) to convince potential buyers of the product quality of the goods on display and of the craftsman’s trustworthiness, professionalism and skill. So the retailing of goods in sixteenth-century Bruges still happened within the context of the ‘old model’ of intrinsic qualities.

An interesting similarity between nearly all shops seems vital in pinpointing the character of the retail space as part of a dwelling (and indirectly also of the rest of the home). That similarity is the virtual lack of any type of decoration and of any reference to religious or devotional practices. Although ‘guilds were a type of brotherhoods in which devotional practices and egalitarian ideals took centre stage next to economic benefits and calculation’, no statues or devotional paintings were found in the shops studied. Most of the artisans had these decorative and devotional objects elsewhere in the house, but clearly not in the shop or workhouse. The only exceptions to the rule were the two cloth sellers discussed earlier and a shearer and a dyer. But the latter two used their workspace also as a living space due to the limited sizes of their homes. Looking at the ratios for paintings in sample periods 4, 5 and 6 (table 4 and graph 5), it follows that it was not likely that paintings would have appeared in shops or workplaces (ratio < 1).

This is quite intriguing, because each guild normally had a patron saint that was related to the trade itself. Moreover, late medieval urban life was full of references to religion and devotion, so we would expect to find at least one reference to the guild patron (or to Mary or Christ) in the workplaces and shops of Bruges artisans. But it seems that devotional life was either reserved for the domestic area in the house or was
Connecting the House to the Street? The Shop and Workshop

Table 4. Ratio of Paintings in Shops or Floors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE PERIOD</th>
<th>RATIO SHOP</th>
<th>RATIO FLOOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1528–1549</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1559–1574</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1584–1600</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

Graph 5. Proportions or the Number of Paintings per Space compared to the Total Number of Paintings for the Sample

Source: Database of inventories © IB, JDG & IS

to be practised in places where members joined together, such as guilds’ houses, chapels and guild altars in churches.155 This should not come as a surprise though, because it has already been acknowledged that artisans were obliged to cease their activities and even close their workplaces and shops on Sundays and holidays. Clearly then, there was no room and no time for devotion and religion inside the shop and during commercial activities. Hence, at least in Bruges, private devotion, as well as decoration in general, and religion were explicitly reserved for the domestic environment of the house.

Even more telling, Bruges shops were often without heating and lighting equipment. Only one shop contained a hearth, and this was both used for the trade and for cooking the food of the artisan and his family (based on the utensils). So in this,
we can follow the finding of Blondé and Van Damme that heating – when present – ‘appears to have been functional and seems not to have constituted any aspired level of comfort or luxury in shop premises’. A fully equipped fireplace, used for cooking or just for heating, was clearly reserved for the domestic living spaces further back in the house.

Moreover, our evidence urges that the current theory about the lack of boundaries between ‘commercial’ and ‘private’ spaces indoors, in other words, that the economic and domestic functions of the urban household were inextricably intertwined and that there were few private domestic rooms, should be nuanced. Although in some cases, there was indeed some sort of spill-over effect of especially raw materials from the business area to the domestic area, in all other cases, it was a matter of course that tools and finished goods were never to be mingled with household goods. Even when in cases of space constraints finished goods were stored in rooms of the house other than the shop or workhouse or when pieces of (household) furniture were put in the shop, the mixture of the two types of goods (commercial goods and household goods) was kept to an absolute minimum (as is also apparent in the description of the appraisers). So ‘from the perspective of material culture, there was a clear demarcation between “the shop” and “the home”’. The fact that there was at least a psychological boundary (but in most cases also a clear physical one) between the spaces of work and the spaces of home might also explain why the house searches Decuelaer discussed felt intrusive to the affected guildsmen and their families. Furthermore, common law had always prohibited infringements of private property. Representatives of the law were not even allowed to enter houses. Only at the end of the Middle Ages were changes made in Bruges. Looking at it from a legal perspective, this could also be the reason why guild statutes state that artisans have to work in their front room, implying that there was even a legal demarcation between (semi-public) workshops and the – we might say ‘private’ – domestic spaces of the house. Though the house itself and the family honour were important in constructing and representing the guildsman’s honour and social and political status, they were clearly not part of his commercial activity and his daily pursuits.

Although houses might contain shops, the latter were usually treated as separate spaces. Shops as retail and production spaces seem to have operated by their own rules and values, which were far removed from the values that were expressed and materialised in the domestic quarters of the house. Moreover, from an economic point of view, sustaining an exclusively commercial environment would also have
helped to ban the sales of unregulated goods and other fraudulent activities. So in fact, it was especially the key values found in the guild regulations of most guilds at that time – visibility, integrity, product quality and transparency – that defined the social behaviour of buyers and sellers as well as the architecture and spatial organisation of the retail space – although strategies of enticement were not shunned either. The places of retail and manufacture reflected above all the requirements, responsibilities and values that artisans shared as members of guilds and as members of the community of Bruges. The evidence is convincing of both the existence of an exclusively commercial environment inside the house and of the existence (or at least a certain awareness) of the specificity of private domestic space.

But the shop or the retail space on the ground floor was only one site where public life met the domestic practices and material culture of the household. Houses could contain different types of these transitional sites, especially the larger ones. Another site in the house where business was welcomed was the office (contoor). It was a room where business matters were discussed, where accounts, invoices and family papers were made and preserved, and where books of all types were read and contemplated. In the next chapter, we will move therefore to supposedly one of the most exclusive, private, most gendered and at the same time one of the most formal spaces in the interior: the contoor.