By the 1660s, the expansion of the Dutch market for paintings had come to an end, and decline soon set in. These trends were, moreover, accompanied by a qualitative slump. Late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings have long been brushed aside as derivatives of international fashion and of Golden Age painting. To some extent, this perception can be traced back to eighteenth-century sources in which a general criticism of the current state of affairs in the Republic became fashionable due to a perceived decline of morals and manners, and earlier artistic styles were praised over contemporary ones. The fascination for seventeenth-century art was further strengthened during the nineteenth century when the notion of typically ‘Dutch art’ developed.

Following the Second World War, interest in the eighteenth century increased, but it remained somewhat apologetic. More recently, appreciation of these later works of art has become more prominent with the rehabilitation of styles and genres previously disregarded as not representative of Golden Age painting, such as the Leiden fijnschilders and classicist history painting. As a result, the idea that post-1670 art was symptomatic of the decline of the art market has become more nuanced. Painters such as Gerard de Lairesse, Adriaen van der Werff, Caspar Netscher, Jan Weenix, Nicolaes Verkolje, Jan van Huysum, Willem van Mieris, Rachel Ruysch, and several others are now reconsidered and associated with quality. Still, the extraordinary commercial and artistic achievements of the Golden Age have cast a shadow over the subsequent period.

This chapter should be read therefore within the framework of recent revisionist literature in which both the eighteenth century in general and its art market and artistic achievements in particular are being re-evaluated. Because this chapter covers a period of around 150 years, a broad-brush approach is inevitable. It may come as a surprise that a painter such as Johannes Vermeer is discussed in the same chapter as classicist Gerard de Lairesse, flower painter Jan van Huysum, and painter of mural canvases Jurriaen Andriessen. The reason is that they were all active during a period in which the market for newly produced easel paintings contracted. The works of these artists and their peers reflect specific strategies to adapt to maturing markets. In the following sections the business strategies that Dutch painters developed from the middle of the seventeenth century on will be discussed, as well as their consequences for the organization of artistic production and for growth rates and patterns of innovation. The
established explanations for the demise of Golden Age painting will be complemented by focusing on the spatial and diachronic distribution of Dutch art production.

The downturn in the art market

By the 1650s, the rapid growth of the Dutch art market was coming to an end.7 According to Jan de Vries, the ‘collapse [of the art market] after 1660 was much more abrupt than the surprising emergence of Dutch art early in the century’.8 Figure 9.1 shows that this was not entirely true, but the number of painters active in the Dutch Republic did decline considerably after about 1660.9 The period 1650-1674 did not witness any significant increase in the number of active painters, and throughout most of the eighteenth century the number of painters remained at its 1600-1624 level. Even if the decline did not happen overnight, these figures suggest that the mass market for newly produced easel paintings indeed disintegrated during the second half of the seventeenth century.10 This slump did not go unnoticed at the time. Contemporaries attributed falling demand to changes in taste, more specifically the new fashion for painted wall hangings and the revived interest in old masters, and to the fallout of war.11 More recent interpretations of the decline of the Dutch art market point to two
additional sets of factors: a decline in purchasing power and a structural overproduction of paintings during the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{12}

The timing of the decline, however, suggests that trends in purchasing power are less important in explaining the declining numbers of active painters than is generally assumed. To be more precise, there was no dramatic decline in Dutch purchasing power during the period in which stagnation and decline set in; real wages in Holland continued to increase until the end of the seventeenth century, albeit more modestly than before.\textsuperscript{13} In fact, demand for many luxury goods increased.\textsuperscript{14} During and especially by the end of the seventeenth century, wealth distribution did become more skewed, but this alone does not explain the trends.\textsuperscript{15} While it may well be true that the absence of further increases in purchasing power could have limited potential expansion of the market, it does not fully explain the dramatic fall in the number of painters or in the number of prominent painters.\textsuperscript{16} Nor can changes in fashion in favour of other types of wall decoration fully account for the timing of decline in the art market. Although the use of paintings as decorative wall coverings did become less popular, this only really set in towards the end of the seventeenth century, whereas market stagnation and even decline can be observed earlier.\textsuperscript{17}

In short, the problem in the art market was not so much a loss of interest in paintings or visual art in general, but rather a decline in demand for newly produced paintings.\textsuperscript{18} The major factor contributing to the mid-seventeenth century decline in the number of new painters seems to have been structural overproduction.\textsuperscript{19} Paintings were durable, and as a result by 1650 there was an abundant supply and range of decent and affordable products on the Dutch art market. Moreover, many Dutch consumers were using paintings as wall

\textbf{Fig. 9.2 Entry rates and number of newcomers in the seven largest towns (left) and Amsterdam (right), 1650-1700}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{entry_rates_and_newcomers.png}
\caption{Entry rates and number of newcomers in the seven largest towns (left) and Amsterdam (right), 1650-1700}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: Ecartico, accessed 7 February 2011}
decoration, and as wall space in the typical Dutch house was quite limited, there was a hard constraint on the number of individual pieces needed for this purpose.\textsuperscript{20} In other words, consumers, especially those who had fuelled the development of the mass market for paintings, lost interest in purchasing new ones. Michael Montias has demonstrated that the share of paintings that could be attributed to contemporary masters dropped to under 50 per cent after the 1650s and was less than 20 per cent after the 1670s.\textsuperscript{21}

These explanations suggest that the rapid downfall of the art market should be attributed to a combination of a downward trend in entry rates and an upward one in exit rates. Regarding the latter, several painters and dealers were indeed experiencing financial difficulties, the most famous being Johannes Vermeer and Gerrit Uylenburgh.\textsuperscript{22} Others were leaving the country. On top of this, the number of new painters registering for marriage licences in Amsterdam also decreased significantly which suggests that there were fewer aspiring painters.\textsuperscript{23} Entry rates can only be calculated for the period prior to 1700 because the ECARTICO database does not cover the eighteenth century and the RKD\textsuperscript{artists} data does not currently allow for this. The data presented in Figure 9.2 clearly shows that after the growth period, made possible by a series of innovations and by increasing returns between c.1620 and c.1640, entry rates started to decline. This suggests that the wheels of decline were set in motion well before the 1660s and that the events of the 1670s played a smaller role than commonly believed. When we focus on the local level, it becomes clear that all artistic centres witnessed a period of stagnation before the real decline set in. The years of post-war distress after 1672 mainly dealt another blow to an already struggling contemporary art market.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig9.3.png}
\caption{Number of painters active in the seven largest artistic communities, 1650-1700}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source:} Ecartico, accessed 20 November 2010 (5-year moving average; semi-log scale)
Geographic distribution

On the local level, most markets had become saturated even before mid-century (Figure 9.3). Delft had reached its quantitative limits relatively early in the century; Haarlem and Utrecht were next, followed by Leiden, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and The Hague. Rotterdam was the least affected, followed by Amsterdam and The Hague. The size of artistic communities in Haarlem, Delft, Utrecht, Dordrecht, and Leiden shrank by 20 to 30 per cent from their 1650 size. Industry-wide factors determined the general patterns of stagnation and general decline, but local features also influenced the extent and timing. Towns such as Amsterdam and The Hague became increasingly prominent, as they provided ample opportunities for commissions for works of art. At the same time, production remained relatively dispersed (Figure 9.4).

Table 9.1 presents an overview of places of birth as well as main work locations of the combined A and B samples of prominent Dutch painters. The small number of painters for this period justifies a combination of the A and B samples. Amsterdam was still the largest among prominent artistic centres, and by far. Dordrecht comes a surprising second in terms of place of birth, but could not retain its high-quality painters. The figure of seven Dordrecht-born painters in the A and B samples is fairly high, especially considering the fact that they were not directly related by family ties. Leiden’s relatively prominent position, on the other hand, is primarily due to the presence of a single dynasty (the Van Mieris), while The Hague still imported most of its talent. Table 9.2 shows the same variables for the C sample. Here, Amsterdam features prominently. The relation between place of birth and main work location proves to be strong, with only Amsterdam functioning as an importer and Dordrecht as an exporter of talent. The virtual absence of Delft, with only six in both columns, is striking, as is the third place of Dordrecht. Clearly, the size and character of the art market of the eighteenth century, small in relation to the Golden Age and much more dependent on commissions, also changed the geography of artistic production. This may also have had consequences for the development of local specializations and levels of innovation.
Fig. 9.4 Distribution of prominent painters, according to main work location (C sample), start career between 1630-1669, 1670-1709, 1710-1749, 1750-later (clockwise)

Source: Table 6.4
### Table 9.1 Place of birth and main work location, A&B samples, artists active in the eighteenth century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Amsterdam</td>
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<td>11.9</td>
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<td>10.4</td>
<td>Leiden</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Haarlem</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hague</td>
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<td>7.5</td>
<td>Rotterdam</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Dordrecht</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>London</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utrecht</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
<td>Rome</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorinchem</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>Middelburg</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4; RKDartists

### Table 9.2 Place of birth and main work location, C sample, birth cohorts 1630-1790

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
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<th>Town</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>5.3</td>
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<td>Rotterdam</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leiden</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>(7)*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Nijmegen</td>
<td>(8)*</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middelburg</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>Middelburg</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Various</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

Table 6.4; RKD-artists. * = counted in the category ‘other’.
Artistic decline

Eighteenth-century art critics such as Arnold Houbraken, Johan van Gool, and Jacob Campo Weyerman acknowledged the decline in the art market after the middle of the seventeenth century, but their opinions on when this began differed somewhat. More importantly, these early art historians were more forgiving than their later counterparts in their judgements of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists. In fact, classicist painter and art theorist Gerard de Lairesse held artists such as Adriaen Brouwer and Pieter van der Laer responsible for the decline of Dutch art, and he believed that his own generation restored it to its former glory. Painter and poet Samuel van Hoogstraten observed that ‘the painting in our country, as in a new Greece, is at the peak of its florescence’, and painter-authors Arnold Houbraken and Johan van Gool likened painters such as Adriaen van der Werff to the great seventeenth-century masters. Koenraad Jonckheere had demonstrated that this theoretical or sometimes perhaps also rhetorical approval was matched by monetary appreciation; works by contemporary painters, most notably those by Van der Werff, sold at auction for prices comparable to those of the old masters.

In order to map these historical and current evaluations, we turn to the samples of prominent painters active after approximately 1670. Art-historically, the eighteenth century, a period of late Baroque and Rococo styles, does not appear to have been a particularly successful time for European painting in general, if the studies by Kelly and O’Hagan, as well as by Murray, are any indication. Although the authors use different sources and criteria, both datasets demonstrate a roughly 25 per cent decline in the number of prominent painters in Europe compared to the seventeenth century. In Murray’s selection, the United Kingdom, Italy, and France housed between 20 and 30 per cent of the 48 painters in total. According to Kelly and O’Hagan, France accounted for about 20 per cent and the British Isles for as much as 50 per cent. During the seventeenth century, the number of what would become art-historically prominent painters in Europe had been considerably higher than in the eighteenth century, and this had much to do with the many excellent Dutch painters in the sample. During the eighteenth century, the Dutch Republic went from an innovative and large artistic hub to being almost non-existent in the international ranking of painters.

The Oxford Dictionary mentions sixteen prominent Dutch painters who were active in the Republic at some point in the eighteenth century, thirty-nine were referenced in Kroon op het werk, and thirty in Age of Elegance.
Adjusting for the recurrence of names, this totals sixty-seven painters. The decline in the number of art-historically valued painters per decade is obvious, but interestingly the 1680s display a revival to Golden Age levels (Figure 9.5). This was the decade when painters such as Jan van Huysum and Frans van Mieris the Younger were born. Moreover, there is an obvious discrepancy between the number of painters included in art-historical reference works and the number discussed in contemporary accounts. The sample reflecting contemporary appreciation (the C sample) shows that a low point was reached in the birth decades of 1700 and 1710 but that the number of painters worth mentioning in contemporary reference works soon increased to the level of the 1650s. This demonstrates once more that the present-day conception of artistic decline differs from that of contemporaries. Although saturation in the market for paintings had set in significantly earlier than is usually recognized, in artistic terms the crisis in the art market was less pronounced.34

Artists’ strategies

Although in theory cultural products embody the potential for infinite variety, this is often not realized, nor was it feasible in the early modern Dutch Republic. As Marten Jan Bok has pointed out, ‘Creative freedom was an ideal rather than a reality’, and like their predecessors and their foreign peers, Dutch painters had to respect existing formats if they were to appeal to customers.35 Eric Jan Sluijter commented on the popularity of certain subjects and the virtual absence of others: ‘Although the tremendous wealth and diversity of subject matter and motifs in the visual arts give the
impression that literally anything and everything was depicted, we see time and again just how selective artists were, and how limited their repertoire’.36

Limitations on the opportunities for product differentiation and innovation also affected the development of individual subgenres. In his study of the genre of merry companies, Elmer Kolfin observed: ‘The continual variation, without the introduction of true innovations, could not keep the public interested forever, and by the mid-1640s there was no flexibility left, with the result that the merry company stagnated both in quantity and quality’.37 The genre overcame this impasse around 1650, when a new generation started producing merry companies using more refined styles, themes, and techniques. Once again, these stylistic shifts can be understood as resulting from changing business strategies. By the 1640s, Dutch painters were already feeling the dual burden of stagnating demand and overproduction. The economic and political difficulties of the 1670s only aggravated structural problems long present in the Dutch cultural industries in general and in the art market in particular.

Unquestionably, existing and aspiring painters faced a very different market situation than had previous generations, and they responded to these challenges with rational strategies that targeted market segments with more potential. On the one hand, this meant catering to the demands of local and international collectors by incorporating foreign fashions and building associations with the work of Dutch predecessors. On the other hand, artists turned to the lower parts of the market, specializing in decorative painting or, in some cases, by entering the profession of ‘house painters’ (kladschilders). The sections below discuss six sets of strategies and their consequences for the development of the art market as well as for the reputation of Dutch art. When these are taken into account, the artistic collapse and commercial downturn of the art market appear less dramatic than is often made out.

Luxury and elegance

Around 1650, a new string of artistic novelties was introduced to the market. This time brighter colours, stylization, and more meticulous production methods characterized the innovations, sharply contrasting with the restrained compositions and rapid techniques of the 1610s and 1620s. The most obvious examples were the Leiden fijnschilders, whose style, initiated in the 1630s by Gerard Dou, found an increasing following after 1650.38 Frans van Mieris, by contrast, fits well into the broader tendency toward refined techniques, smooth surfaces, and much detail. Other examples
include the interiors of Gerard ter Borch and Gabriel Metsu, the luxurious still lifes of Jan Davidsz de Heem and Willem Kalf, Italianate landscapes by Nicolaes Pietersz Berchem, and townscapes by Jan van der Heyden. At roughly the same time, in Delft, a number of painters started to produce labour-intensive interior and exterior urban perspectives.

The styles and compositions of the newly popular paintings required much more time to produce and were generally painted for a select group of rich collectors rather than for the open market. As only collectors and financially secure citizens maintained a relatively stable interest in buying newly produced paintings, painters geared their production towards precisely these market segments. In so doing, they opted for the safer route of personal relationships and commissions. As had also been the case in the previous round of product and process innovations, these stylistic adaptations and innovations were at least partly inspired by economic circumstances. When competitive pressure had increased in the 1610s, painters had responded with market strategies that included cutting labour costs, specializing, and differentiating, succeeding thereby in broadening the market for paintings. When markets became saturated during the 1640s, these strategies had already achieved all that could be expected of them. The walls of middle class homes had become crowded with pictures of all shapes and sizes, and the prices of paintings could not be further reduced. With an ample supply of good and cheap paintings on the market, demand for newly produced ones declined, especially in the middle segments of society. In response to market saturation and increasingly uncertain demand, painters experimented with more laborious painting techniques and international classicist styles and used larger sizes and more embellishment.

**Interior decoration**

Around the middle of the eighteenth century, artist-biographer Johan van Gool and art dealer Gerard Hoet engaged in a fierce discussion about the causes of the artistic downturn, eventually agreeing on two factors: the demise of artists’ specializations and the substitution of painted mural canvas for paintings as wall decorations. From the end of the seventeenth century, a general expansion in the variety of available decorative items reduced demand for paintings as interior decoration. Moreover, and while porcelain, silver, chinaware, and mirrors were not direct substitutes for paintings, they did compete for a share of the limited money available for interior decoration. Even in households without extensive collections in every room, paintings increasingly disappeared from living rooms, bedrooms, and hallways in line
with the notion that they no longer belonged in ‘modern’ interiors. During the eighteenth century, separate cabinets, in which paintings were used for display rather than decoration, became more prominent. And mural canvases, a relatively new segment in the Dutch art market, constituted a direct competitor for easel paintings as wall decoration.

From the 1660s onwards, grand decorative wall and ceiling paintings gained in popularity in the Dutch Republic. The idea of covering a wall with a large image was not new, as the histories of tapestries, gilded leather, large Southern Netherlandish watercolour paintings, and Italian frescos all show. Tapestries and gilded leather were, however, relatively expensive, and they became popular mainly with wealthy burghers from the 1620s onwards. After the middle of the century, full mural canvases were increasingly sought. Gerard de Lairesse and Daniel Marot may be regarded as crucial figures in this development. At first, mural canvases were advertised as cheaper imitations of the more expensive tapestries, but soon more durable oil-on-canvas paintings, no longer mere imitations, started to replace both watercolour hangings and tapestries. Soon this gave rise to other painters experimenting with reproductive techniques in wall decoration, while producers of serial works also introduced the painting and printing of ornaments on linen, often producing a whole range of complementary items such as tablecloths.

The new fashion for painted and printed mural canvases brought increasing competition for producers of cabinet pieces, but it also offered artists a possible exit strategy from a market that was saturated. A distinction should be made between painters of commissioned grand interior scenes on ceilings, walls, and doors such as Isaac de Moucheron, Jacob de Wit, and Dirck Dalens III, and so-called ‘factories’ that mass-produced painted and printed wall coverings. Grand interior scenes were executed by the most prominent painters of the period and held in high regard. Due to limited demand or talents, not everyone could make the move to high-end commissions. But moving downwards did not prove so easy either, as the new fashion brought with it altered organizational challenges on the production side. An increasing number of painters tried their luck at setting up their own studios, but few succeeded in building noteworthy businesses. Managing the more complex supply chain proved difficult and other entrepreneurs, familiar with the range of techniques and specialties required to deliver a finished product, stepped in. Tapestry weavers in particular were responsible for developing the wall hanging workshops (fabrieken) that would eventually offer employment to individual painters as structural or temporary labour. In
fact, during the second half of the eighteenth century, the Amsterdam market became dominated by a handful of large firms of which the one established by Jan Hendrik Troost van Groenendoelen was the most prominent. Eventually many painters would find both training and employment in these firms.47

The scale, variety, and quality of Dutch interior scenes, landscapes in particular, were remarkable. Though they were not a Dutch innovation, high-quality and large-scale production developed relatively early in the Republic. Moreover, the scale and scope were exceptional; virtually all houses of the Dutch well-to-do had one or two rooms with painted murals. While they could also be found in the Southern Netherlands and German areas, they were not a widespread phenomenon in France or England.48 It is possible that Dutch consumers were atypical in their preferences, but the profusion of this type of wall decoration may also have been supply driven. Dutch painters, faced with decreasing demand for cabinet pieces, developed a rational strategy by developing proficiency in grand interior scenes.

Decorative painting

Whilst some painters shifted their focus from easel paintings to mural paintings in the upper level of the market, and others tried their hand at developing cheaper forms of wall decoration, yet another market segment offered ample business opportunities. The art market not only included easel painters and decorative painters but also kladschilders who decorated furniture and carriages, plus the interiors and exteriors of buildings including walls, panelling, and mantelpieces.49 Piet Bakker has demonstrated that when such kladschilders are taken into account, the Leiden art market remained relatively stable in terms of size during the later decades of the seventeenth century.30 As yet no such study has been undertaken for the eighteenth century, and a tentative look at the Amsterdam guild registration is only marginally instructive. The annual registration of new members in the Amsterdam Guild of St. Luke between 1748 and 1809 reveals that as many as 1,564 new members were registered during the period. Unfortunately these figures cannot be compared to the earlier stages in the life cycle.

Figure 9.6 shows that the share of painters in the total number of entrants was relatively stable throughout the fifty years presented here. Around 1784 there was a peak in the number of painters who had also completed the glassmaker’s master test (Figure 9.7), but this can be traced back to an ordinance from the same year on the formal requirements of painters involved in glassmaking.51 The rapid drop at the end of the century does
not necessarily reflect changes in the art market as it was around this same time that the guilds were being abolished. Since the label ‘painters’ in the registration also includes the *kladschilders*, at this juncture it is impossible to differentiate between the different kinds of painters in the art market. Still, the findings of Bakker suggest that, as in publishing, market segmentation and occupational differentiation took place from the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Through the loss of middle segments of the market, the Dutch art market came to resemble other European art markets of the time. Like publishers, many artists also turned to a different and familiar ‘reproductive technique’, that of copying.

**Creative reproduction**

From the last decades of the seventeenth century onwards, collectors increasingly focused on work by ‘old masters’. With consistent domestic and foreign demand for paintings by masters who had been active during the second half of the seventeenth century such as Gerard Dou and Frans van Mieris the Elder, scarcity and thereby potential market value increased. This had significant consequences for the role of copies and imitations in the art market. The prolific production of copies was in itself nothing new. It has been estimated that as many as half of all seventeenth-century
produced autographed copies. These not only served as exercises and models within painters’ workshops, but they could be and were sold.54

Although painters who imitated and emulated are often criticized for their lack of innovation and creativity by present-day researchers and art lovers, their works reflect sensible business strategies, especially in the transforming art market of the late seventeenth century. Old master paintings were in demand among collectors, and the supply of these paintings was limited, not only because the death of the artists in question prevented expansion of the supply pool, but also because collecting became increasingly popular both in and beyond the Republic. Moreover, imitation provided an association with renowned names, which could boost the reputation of emulating artists.55 Strategies of new design and copying could also be easily combined, with the latter adding value to the former. Certainly if one could copy well, it was proof of skill. Thus, by offering substitutes for scarce and expensive seventeenth-century paintings, painters could bolster demand.

For the genre of figure painting, Junko Aono has observed a change in the function of early eighteenth-century copies, as commercial objectives became more important and copies increasingly served as cheaper and more readily available substitutes.56 Collectors could commission painters to make copies to substitute for unavailable originals, and copies were also produced for the open market.57 If the copies were of high quality, they could fetch high prices while remaining cheaper than the originals. Not all figure paintings that resembled seventeenth-century originals were clear-cut copies. Aono distinguishes between different forms of imitation: outright reproductive paintings, emulation updates according to contemporary visual vocabularies, and the more innovative combination of the classicizing trend with seventeenth-century figure painting. Artists emulating seventeenth-century masters made use of established motifs, compositions, and themes but adapted them to contemporary fashions. In other words, they were recognizable but different.58 These artists not only copied; they selected certain motifs and compositions, thereby creating new niches.

Aono rightly draws attention to our contemporary bias for uniqueness and originality. Models of innovation tend to assume (often implicitly) that innovation must be vertical – all buyers will prefer the new product to the old, at a given price, because it is inherently better than the old product. This ignores two other possibilities: horizontal innovation, which takes place when some consumers prefer the new product and others the old, even when
the new is priced similarly to the old; and product differentiation, which occurs when people desire both the new and the old.\textsuperscript{59} Clearly, innovations in early modern art were incremental, horizontal rather than vertical, and characterized by sometimes very subtle differentiation.\textsuperscript{60} This indicates an expansion rather than a replacement of the variants on offer. Inventions in painting were more about connecting with historical trends than radically departing from them. Pictorial traditions and iconographic conventions formed the visual frame of reference for both artists and consumers, and novelty and invention were not seen as ‘indispensable artistic qualities’.\textsuperscript{61} For the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall also observed a ‘prevalence of repetition’: subjects were rather standard, and often originals were trivial reworkings of borrowed ideas and compositions.\textsuperscript{62} This would not have been much different in the early modern Republic, where most artists were no Rembrandts or Dous. Different styles, genres, and techniques existed side by side, and in between radical innovation and outright copying lay a whole range of creative (re)production, including that of the mezzotint.
Mezzotint

Developed during the 1640s, the printmaking technique of mezzotint gained in popularity in the Dutch Republic through the 1670s, reaching its zenith in the 1680s. Mezzotint’s potential as a medium for reproductive techniques was vast, and it successfully lent itself to the depiction of materials such as cloth and to the contrast of light and dark. Gerdien Wuestman has observed that a striking number of painters attempted the technique, including well-known artists such as Michiel van Musscher, Ludolf Backhuysen, and Gerard de Lairesse. The latter explained that he preferred mezzotint to engraving, and that it could be ‘a delightful diversion to painters’. Given the timing and the shape of the art market, experimenting with reproductive techniques was probably more than a pastime and very much a commercial strategy. De Lairesse also stated that ‘[...] mezzo-tint is even more expedient that either of them [etching and engraving]; and in neatness has not had its fellow: it may even compare with a painting, how soft and fluent soever, abating for the colours. Indeed, in duration and wear it is the weakest; but, on the other hand, its expeditiousness brings in more money.’

Struggling painters could use the technique as a substitute for painting original work or as a means to acquire additional income from original designs. That mezzotint prints could be utilized in the same way as paintings is visible in the sizes and the mediums in which they were printed. During the 1680s, mezzotint was practised at the highest level by engravers such as Wallerant Vaillant, Petrus Schenk, and Abraham Blooteling. Nevertheless, its popularity was relatively short-lived. Although mezzotint prints remained fashionable collector’s items, their popularity waned. Of the 63 artists in our 1710 prosopography, 9 were involved in mezzotint, a ratio that declined to 1 out of 35 in 1740. Of the 54 artists active in 1780, not one was characterized as a mezzotint artist. After the deaths of a handful of specialists such as Vaillant and Schenk, mezzotint was simply practised alongside painting, drawing, and other graphic techniques.

One of the reasons for the declining popularity of mezzotint engraving was that the technique did not lend itself to the type of bright compositions that were fashionable during the eighteenth century. The lack of colour was a major shortcoming, and even though Jacob Christoph le Blon invented colour mezzotint, the results were disappointing and it involved a time-consuming process. Still, the technique continued to thrive in England, and Dutch engravers experienced fierce competition from the high-quality products imported from England during the eighteenth century. Although more research is required, the reason high-level mezzotint did not endure
in the Dutch Republic may perhaps be sought in the fact that the technique, although appreciated, was nonetheless deemed inferior to painting and engraving. Compared to England, both painting and engraving were firmly established traditions in the Dutch Republic. Artists already had specific skill sets, and although De Lairesse referred to the technique as ‘easily learned’, in practice mezzotint printmaking was rather difficult; few painters who tried it became truly skilful.67

Internationalization

Often-quoted foreign travellers were amazed at the large number of painters and paintings they encountered in the Dutch Republic, but in general, typical Dutch styles and subjects were not well received outside the Republic during the seventeenth century. Apart from the individual exception here and there, Dutch art only achieved a positive international reputation after c.1660. Dutch painters’ craftsmanship, though recognized, was deemed of little value in the absence of ‘great ideas’. Accusations that Dutch art lacked ideas can be traced back to sixteenth-century humanist treatises that were fairly condescending about northern styles and their depictions of realistic scenes and landscapes. In French academic circles, Northern Netherlandish art was not held in high esteem until well into the eighteenth century. The collection of the French King Louis XIV, for instance, contained hardly any paintings by Dutch masters.68 In the treatise on painting by the French art critic Roger de Piles, Dutch seventeenth-century painting only featured marginally.69 In de Piles’s opinion, Rembrandt had a ‘beau Génie et un Esprit solide’, but was unable to match the taste and ingenuity of Italian painters. To blame was his Dutch (read: misguided) origin, training, and background.70

In England, the appreciation of Dutch art intensified after the Restoration in 1660 and after the crowning of King William III in 1689, but during the eighteenth century, art critics still poured scorn on the lack of a ‘deeper meaning’.71 These judgments notwithstanding, seventeenth-century Dutch painting eventually became relatively popular in eighteenth-century England and France. During the Romantic period, ‘the picturesque’ works of Dutch landscapists became increasingly popular, and in (pre-) revolutionary France the artistic focus moved away from royal classicist elite styles toward a re-evaluation of simple, honest burgerlijke themes. As classicist ideals lost ground, Dutch masters and styles moved to the fore, and the realistic Dutch depiction of everyday life, derided during the previous century, proved particularly inspiring.72
But even if foreign art theorists still marginalized Dutch painting, foreign collectors had showed interest from shortly after the middle of the seventeenth century. Leaving the exceptional case of Rembrandt aside for the moment, the interest of international collectors gained in importance with the *fijnschilder* style. This referred to the styles of Frans van Mieris and his master Gerard Dou, both of whom had specialized in figure painting and proved particularly popular with foreigners such as Cosimo de Medici and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm. Supposedly, in 1675, Cosimo de Medici commissioned Van Mieris to paint the Holy Franciscus Xaverius, a commission Van Mieris refused, explaining that he could only depict what he was able to observe in reality. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, a combination of highly refined painting technique and classical repertoire became increasingly prominent, most notably in the work of Van der Werff and his master Eglon van der Neer. Highly skilled painter Adriaen van der Werff even made a full transition to painting within an historical and biblical repertoire.

In his *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (1678), Samuel van Hoogstraten pointed out that a conscious pursuit of the export of painting could be lucrative for the Dutch state and its inhabitants. During the seventeenth century, several Dutch painters had been active at European courts whilst others travelled around, but the export trade was not thriving. Van Hoogstraten explained that, given the high level of Dutch painting, hardly any investments had to be made in order to start profiting from this resource. In Van Hoogstraten’s words, painting ‘as befits our fatherland, like an invaluable quarry, a pearl fishery, or a mine of precious stones, can daily produce many rich jewels of cabinet paintings, which without squandering too great costs could be turned into objects of great value through the ingenuity of only a few eaters’. Van Hoogstraten advised the authorities to increase foreign demand for Dutch paintings by offering privileges to art dealers and presenting representative paintings to foreign heads of state.

As it turned out, the Dutch government had to do next to nothing to make this happen. Initially it was not just paintings but other luxury Dutch products such as garden architecture, porcelain, prints, lacquered cabinets, and books that were popular export goods. Everhard Korthals Altes has pointed out that a number of foreign rulers developed galleries of paintings as well as cabinets and that in the case of the latter, smaller frames were particularly well suited. The smaller Dutch paintings were a good alternative to expensive Italian art that was hard to come by due to closed circuits of art exchange in Italy, and because of the competition from other royal families. The so-called ‘cabinet pieces’, by contrast, were cheaper and easier
to transport and proved highly collectable. In the end, though, the export market was mainly built on the market for second-hand paintings by or in the tradition of Dou, Van Ostade, and Van Mieris, and could therefore not redress waning local demand for new pictures.

**Institutional organization**

The strategies discussed above show different ways in which artists could deal with the problems in the early modern art market and with issues associated with cultural industries in general, such as structural overproduction, uncertainty surrounding quality, and information asymmetries. Such features were not new or exclusive to Dutch art production, but they became increasingly significant as painters and art dealers were faced with stagnating demand. In addition to developing product adaptations or producing substitutes, painters also responded to stagnating demand by implementing organizational modifications. In order to manage the dynamics of durability, uncertain quality, and demand uncertainty, Dutch producers innovated in the areas of marketing and distribution and formalized advanced education. They also attempted to reduce competition by strengthening guild regulations and by intensifying social differentiation. In the new market situation, the middle segments were saturated and the gap between lower-end and higher-end painters increased. Painting evolved from a craft into an art, as art lovers and dilettantes gained prominence and joined the ranks of professionals in artists' associations, such as societies and drawing academies.

In the previous chapters, two rounds of guild reorganization were discussed: one at the beginning of the phase of emergence, and one at the beginning of the growth phase in the 1610s. In this chapter, two more rounds are brought to the table. The third round took place around the middle of the seventeenth century and is most evident in the strengthening of guild regulations and the organization of artists' societies. The establishment of formal urban drawing academies characterizes the fourth round. Apart from the founding of artists' guilds in the early 1630s in the relatively small artistic centres Alkmaar and Amersfoort, and the reissuing of regulations concerning selling by interlopers, the Guilds of St. Luke do not appear to have been particularly active in the 1620s and 1630s. However, in the 1640s and 1650s, when the market was becoming more competitive due to saturation, Dutch painters' guilds became more pronounced. It is no coincidence that issues concerning competition and transparency first arose in the two
front-running towns of Haarlem and Utrecht, and only later in the large and more secure markets of Amsterdam and The Hague. The increasing activity of guild members and guild masters during the onset of the mature phase in the industrial life cycle shows that local painters were once again experiencing problems of competition and selection.

Second-hand markets

During the 1640s, guild regulations were being adapted to the changing market situation. The most frequently cited example of the concerns they had during this period stems from Haarlem and has to do with public sales. Haarlem was the first artistic hub to take off, and its market was the first to experience local market saturation. Whereas at the start of the growth phase it was outsiders and imports that threatened guild members, by this time it was local competition, rather than foreign, that needed to be controlled. Controversies about public sales are well exemplified by a serious dispute in the Haarlem guild following a 1642 ruling concerning public sales. The main cause of friction was an attempt in 1642 by the guild to regulate public sales and lotteries of works of art. In that year the guild was asked to pass a new rule ‘to forbid improper sales, as they are held at present’ to which the officers of the guild responded positively. This invoked a fierce reply of twenty-eight articles, signed by established Haarlem painters Frans Pietersz de Grebber, Pieter de Molyn, Cornelis van Kittensteyn, Salomon van Ruysdael, Frans Hals, and Cornelis Vroom.

That group was strongly convinced that public sales held benefits for artists, both new and established, and that art dealers and retailers rather than artists would be the ones to benefit from the new requests. The supporters of sales advanced four arguments: master painters should be entitled to sell their own paintings in any way they saw fit; art lovers (liefhebbers) should be enabled to rid themselves of their old paintings and buy new, better ones with the profits; public sales were beneficial to young painters, both as a way to sell their work but also as a stimulus to artistic inspiration. Fourthly, they argued that public sales stimulated new markets, as they appealed to people who would not normally buy paintings using the regular channels of distribution. Evidently they rejected the idea that the market was static and actively sought to include new sorts of buyer. In their view, open public sales were considered to be one of the main venues whereby amateur buyers could develop a taste for art and become liefhebbers.

The increased guild activity was the consequence of an increasing use of auctions and catalogues as channels of distribution and marketing.
As with books, durability and the increasing turnover time of paintings strengthened the need for more efficient distribution methods. These could be found in a less restrictive policy towards public sales and in better regulation. Guild boards initially resisted, but within a few decades they began to adapt and even organize auctions themselves. From 1664, biannual auctions were permitted in Haarlem to encourage local demand. Amsterdam artists gained permission relatively late, around 1700. There, the local Guild of St. Luke altered its regulations concerning auctions three times: once in 1701, once in 1702, and then again in 1704. The new rules regarding public sales resembled those drawn up decades earlier by the booksellers’ guild. Two issues stood out. First, there was a conflict between the overseers of the booksellers and the overseers of the painters as to who should examine which auctions. Second, in order to discourage the practice of including illegal works in auction sales, sales catalogues, hand-written or printed, had to be presented to representatives of the guild three days before the sale and made available to overseers who visited the auction itself.

Auctions had been a common feature of the art market, but now this practice was professionalized. The Dutch Republic had been the cradle of specialized book auctions early in the seventeenth century but of specialized art auctions only during the last quarter. A collection of sales catalogues from the period 1684-1752 assembled by art dealer Gerard Hoet and published in 1752 shows that specialized art sales featuring printed catalogues became more widespread during the 1690s. A sample of advertisements for art sales published in the *Amsterdamsche Courant* between 1672 and 1725 confirms this and suggests that the rise in the number of catalogues found in Hoet’s collection not only reflects an increase in the use of this adjunct to auctions, but also confirms the public art sale as a general method of distribution. Amsterdam was the metropolis of art auctions: 70 per cent of the auctions listed by Hoet for the period 1676-1739 took place in Amsterdam compared with 7 per cent in The Hague, 6 per cent in Rotterdam, and the remainder in Haarlem, Utrecht, Leiden, Dordrecht, Leeuwarden, Antwerp, and Brussels, excluding isolated events in smaller towns such as Hoorn and Groningen.

The key figure in the development of specialized painting auctions and the use of catalogues and advertisements was Amsterdam dealer Jan Pietersz Zomer. Zomer had been trained as a glass painter, but by the time of his death in 1724, he was a key figure in the Amsterdam art market, dominating auction sales and playing a central role in the local connoisseurs’ milieu.
first to register as such with the brokers’ guild.\textsuperscript{93} In theory, every broker could auction off paintings, but in practice, after 1690, it became Zomer's prerogative. In the first decade of the eighteenth century he organized between 60 and 90 per cent of the Amsterdam art auctions.\textsuperscript{94} Zomer did not buy and resell exclusive works of art but lived off his commissions as intermediary.\textsuperscript{95} He professionalized the auctioning of pictures through his pioneering use of newspaper advertisements and catalogues.\textsuperscript{96} Although neither of the two were genuine innovations as they were already in use in the book trade, he was the first to employ them systematically for art auctions. Zomer increased the transparency of art auctions by including information on type, style, and brand (using the master's name as brand whatever the master, studio, or school).\textsuperscript{97}

The number of auctions held in the Dutch Republic, in Amsterdam in particular, and the numbers of paintings by Dutch masters in foreign collections and in French auctions testify to the development of the successful dissemination of Dutch paintings.\textsuperscript{98} In fact, public second-hand sales proved to be crucial instruments in the development of the export trade. After the failing demand for newly produced works of art, Dutch artists and dealers transformed the art market from a primary to a secondary market, placing themselves at the centre of an integrated European art trade, much like Leiden booksellers had done a century earlier.\textsuperscript{99} The dissemination of printed catalogues and the inclusion of information true or false, stimulated further internationalization and may even have enabled an increase in demand as less experienced buyers could gain easier access to second-hand paintings.\textsuperscript{100}

For this period, the only other specialized art auctions were known to be in London, but these were much less transparent and organized.\textsuperscript{101} The early advantage certainly paid off, as the Dutch Republic became the centre of international art auctions until Paris and later London took over in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

**Quality uncertainty**

Trust and transparency were crucial to the success of art markets both primary and secondary.\textsuperscript{102} By the 1640s, mediocre paintings in a wide range of genres and styles had entered the Dutch art market. The broad variety of styles, techniques, and genres put pressure on the objective notions of quality. Art historians have examined the topics of quality, authorship, and authenticity in this period.\textsuperscript{103} Anna Tummers, for instance, demonstrated that while connoisseurs were indeed concerned with discerning the master's touch, their main objective was to assess quality rather than originality.
Whether or not the painting was entirely by the master’s own hand was not a major issue. In a general sense, these remarks apply to the whole period under study here. Nonetheless, around the middle of the century, some changes did take place.

Jaap van der Veen has observed a concentration of court cases concerning issues of authenticity in Amsterdam in the first quarter of the seventeenth century and again in the 1640s and 1650s. The first period coincided with the threat of imports around 1610, as discussed in previous chapters, and the second with the onset of maturity in the life cycle of the Dutch painting market. Van der Veen attributes the rise in the second period to the fact that the number of art collectors increased considerably. He also discerns tensions between workshop practices and expectations of buyers around this time. Montias also observed a growing interest in attributions and the autograph status of works of art in Delft in the same period. Moreover, by that time, a growing number of painters who had no artistic training were trying their hand at painting. The timing of these developments is no coincidence – they can be interpreted as consequences of declining transparency in a maturing and increasingly competitive market.
In the large and varied Dutch art market and in art markets in general, quality was arguably too subjective to be prescribed. Still, the establishment of guilds could play a role in diminishing quality uncertainty. Ed Romein has used George Akerlof’s economic theory on quality uncertainty to explain tensions in the Dutch art market in the 1640s as well as guild restructuring.\(^{108}\) This theory concentrates on the consequences when sellers of goods possess information that is inaccessible to buyers regarding the quality of their goods. Increased uncertainty as to the quality of products can create tensions in the market and eventually even drive worthy products off the market. According to Romein, the increasing size and variety of the Dutch and the Leiden art market in particular created problems in the flow of information, resulting in consumer anxiety. In the case of Leiden, this put downward pressure on price levels and pushed painters to relocate their businesses to other towns. Only the establishment of a guild-like structure in 1642, Romein suggested, could reverse such trends.

In previous times and in other sectors, guilds played a crucial role in quality control. The exclusive right of the guilds to sell certain goods in certain markets, together with quality standards written into the guild regulations, assured buyers that all goods under the guild’s jurisdiction would be of a certain quality.\(^{109}\) Quality control could take different forms: imposing regulations requiring painters be members of a guild in order to sell; having them finish an apprenticeship before becoming a member of the guild; keeping a register of all painters and apprentices; controlling material; setting up a curriculum; testing skills via masterpieces at the end of the training period; and providing facilities where local painters could display their work. As we have seen, in the case of Dutch painters, there were no stipulations to produce masterpieces, no curricula, and no quality control on materials.\(^{110}\) Still, the guilds exerted a certain quality control via different channels.

The establishment of public retail outlets and attempts at setting quality standards in art-theoretical texts and lectures may be interpreted as responses to the decreasing transparency of the art market.\(^{111}\) Deans of the Guilds of St. Luke also became active in establishing commercial public retail outlets. These so-called salesrooms (\textit{schilder-kamers}) were first established in Antwerp and Bruges in the late fifteenth century where they allowed both artists and potential buyers to compare prices and quality.\(^{112}\) In the Northern Netherlands the first to be established was in Utrecht in 1644, followed by The Hague in 1656, while in Amsterdam it took until the end of the century.\(^{113}\) Amsterdam members of the Guild
of St. Luke went to the magistrates, asking for official recognition of a ‘gallery’ they had established and through which Amsterdam artists might sell, under the strict supervision of masters. Lovers of art, they urged, had a right to know the truth about what they bought and ‘what are copies and what principals’.

Guild efforts in Leiden during this period dealt primarily with public sales, but they also included attempts to define criteria as to what made a good painter, as presented by Leiden painter Philips Angel in his famous 1641 lecture ‘In praise of painting’. This lecture has been interpreted as an extended plea for the establishment of a Guild of St. Luke as well as a tribute to patrons of the arts. At the end of the seventeenth century, painter and art theorist Gerard de Lairesse also gave a series of lectures about painting and drawing for fellow painters and art collectors.

During the eighteenth century, the issue of quality uncertainty raised its head once more. In this age of collecting, works by old Dutch masters had increased in value. The expansion of artistic theory and terminology and the increasingly determined establishment of artistic canons both followed from and fostered collecting habits as well as the growing need for information and transparency. This, combined with the many imitations circulating in the art market, appears to have further increased concerns surrounding authenticity. Copying may have been a practical business strategy, but contemporaries increasingly complained about its misuse. Texts by Jacob Campo Weyerman, Johan van Gool, and Gerard Hoet shed light on the practices of art dealers and the consequences for the art market. All three acknowledged that the sale of copies as originals was a problem, but they differed as to who was to blame. Van Gool and Weyerman both criticized art dealers for selling copies as originals, for commissioning copies, and for providing painters with originals to copy, all for profit. Hoet, on the other hand, being a dealer himself, argued that painters were the ones putting false signatures on the paintings. Weyerman did not discard all art dealing practices, as he distinguished between knowledgeable, trustworthy art dealers and ‘swindlers’.

As emphasized by Koenraad Jonckheere and Filip Vermeylen, trust and accurate information were crucial in art dealing and ‘...false attributions, bogus information, and especially copies (when sold as originals) undermined the very foundations of the art market’. In the eighteenth-century art market in which very high prices were charged and paintings may even have been used as investments, these issues were paramount. Previous studies have shown that during the eighteenth century, a new breed of
art dealer developed. For most of the seventeenth century, art dealers had functioned as merchants or facilitators, and around the turn of the century, Dutch broker-dealers such as Zomer made the art market more transparent whilst also keeping valuable information to themselves. A few decades later, Paris dealers such as Gersaint further modernized the auction system by increasing market transparency and by employing both commercial expertise and artistic insight to translate value into price. As in the case of the maturing book market, we see clearly an increasing importance of distribution over production, in both guild regulation and industry structure.

**Occupational and social differentiation**

Throughout this period, higher fees and stricter controls on guild members raised local entry barriers. With the establishment of the Utrecht Schilder-Collegie in 1644, for instance, annual fees were required, something new for Utrecht but common in other towns. Annual dues were set at 12 stuivers, which was high compared with other towns. Twenty years later entry fees were raised once more, from f10 to f20, and from f3 to f5 for masters’ sons (in the 1611 ordinance, the fee had been 30 stuivers). In Haarlem and Dordrecht, entry fees also increased significantly. From the 1630s onwards, and especially in the 1640s and 1650s, changes can be observed in how painters saw themselves in relation to other sorts of artist. The so-called emancipation of the painter, as visible in the separation of painters from other craftspeople and the renaming of the guild, has, to some extent, been challenged. When a group of Haarlem guild members tried to reform the Guild of St. Luke in 1640 based on a 1631 charter, this was allegedly prompted by conflicts within the guild and complaints about the lack of proper oversight. In fact, however, painters at the higher end of the market were trying to set up associations to differentiate themselves from fellow members of the Guild of St. Luke. Although the town magistrate did not grant the charter, this motivation was echoed in later charters and in tensions within guilds. With the reorganization of the Haarlem guild, occupational differentiation would become more compartmentalized with the most important painters at the top, then fellow artists such as engravers, followed by practitioners of accessory professions such as house painting, while in the ‘inferior section’ there was a group led by goldsmiths. The charter displays a continual bias in favour of the painter and his art, and it is telling that the charter states that only master painters could become deans of the guild.
Although the Haarlem charter was never accepted, similar stratification is evident in independent painters' associations such as the Dordrecht Confrerie in 1642; the Utrecht Schilders-Collegie in 1644, which included the establishment of a sales room; the Hoorn and Zwolle Brotherhoods of St. Luke in 1651 and 1652 respectively; and The Hague confrérie in 1656. In Amsterdam, ties between the arts of poetry and painting became increasingly pronounced as is evident in the poems on paintings and the personal relationships between poets and painters. Here the Guild of St. Luke held annual banquets; the 1653 event was organized in honour of the famous writer and playwright Joost van den Vondel and attended by poets, art lovers, and perhaps as many as a hundred painters.131 Before long, in 1654, art dealer, collector, art appraiser, and former director of the Amsterdam Theatre Marten Kretzer and former director of the Theatre Jan Meures initiated the Brotherhood of Painting (Broederschap der Schilderkunst) together with painters Barthelomeus van der Helst and Nicolaas de Helt-Stockade.132 The establishment of societies was not unique to painting and in fact became commonplace during the eighteenth century.133 Still, the timing and context in which Dutch painters' societies were launched testifies to the specific aim of elevating the art of painting.

The new societies were not established as replacements for guilds but rather developed in response to the increasing popularity of amateur painting.134 As in Italy, guilds and academy-like organizations existed side by side and served different purposes. Overall, the goal of painters was twofold: to differentiate themselves from 'lesser' crafts, and to build a rapport with art lovers. These collectors were often active as amateur painters but could not find a place in the guild structure. The increased importance of this group in the art market changed the relationship between painter and consumer.135 The growing importance of both reputation and valuation by art lovers was well summarized in Samuel van Hoogstraten's advice to look for patrons, since ‘without the help of favourable guides and helpers who talk him up loudly, he [the artist] shall have difficulty becoming known’.136 It is no coincidence that artists' biographer Johan van Gool referred to amateur paintings alongside those of professionals in his Nieuwe Schouwburgh.137 Painters' societies, unlike guilds, were open to amateurs, facilitating closer relationships between artists and clients. As was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the increasing importance of patronage in whatever shape or form also had consequences for the geography of production. Masters active in smaller towns flocked to Amsterdam and The Hague where they would be in closer proximity to the pools of potential clients and patrons.
Academies

From the late seventeenth century, the balance of power in the art market shifted to the advantage of auctioneers, collectors, and gentlemen dealers. With new fashions, most notably classicist painting, came a need for additional training in the more intellectual and theoretical aspects of painting. Collectors and art lovers such as Cornelis Ploos van Amstel were driving forces behind the academies established during the second half of the eighteenth century. In the lectures given at the Amsterdam drawing academy (established in 1765), Enlightenment ideals feature prominently. Drawing lessons could prove a valuable asset to citizens, a boost to production by creating a better-informed demand side, and they improved the skills of Dutch craftsmen and painters.

By the time the Amsterdam urban drawing academy was established, the art academy was already a widespread phenomenon in Europe. In the Republic, quite late in establishing formal academies, only relatively informal gatherings had been organized in the first half of the seventeenth century. However, by 1631 the Haarlem charter displayed ambitions to organize meetings of members through which they could practice skills and exchange knowledge with other interested laymen and other guild members. It would take until 1688, however, for a dedicated drawing academy to be established. Several years earlier, a few members of The Hague's artists' society Pictura had already taken steps to transform their more guild-like society into a drawing academy.

Though one may expect significant changes in educational practices with the establishment of academies, the early Dutch drawing schools offered not much more than communal live-drawing sessions with established artists. These schools did not replace apprenticeships, and formal academies with a clear educational purpose were not established in the Dutch Republic until the second half of the eighteenth century. The academies would hold annual contests and lectures, but it would take until the nineteenth century for them to develop into institutions for higher professional education. Urban governments sometimes supported them, for example, by providing low rents or free lighting, but they were still basically private undertakings. The Dutch political structure prevented the top-down development of artistic academies, and although Dutch painters and authors paid attention to activities in other countries, they did not actively pursue a fully formalized academy. For example, Samuel van Hoogstraeten in the eighteenth century praised artistic education in France and Italy but did not call for the establishment of a similar institution in the Republic. In fact, he observed that many painters in the Low Countries had become celebrated without such organized art education. It is possible that previously established routines restricted the modernization of education.
Conclusion

During the period 1650-1800, Dutch painters and dealers employed a variety of strategies to deal with a shrinking domestic market. Painters turned to the market segments that held more potential, which included both the upper and lower levels of society. In trying to engage with potential buyers, groups of painters affiliated themselves with amateur painters, as is evidenced by the establishment of societies for art lovers and artists. Dutch art dealers, moreover, were able to use the initially adverse issue of product durability by developing and improving secondary markets. Notwithstanding several attempts to limit public sales, specialized art auctions developed within local guild structures. Guild masters also took control of distribution channels and tried to increase the turnover rate and transparency in local markets through, for example, the establishment of public retail outlets and the education of the buying public.

The art buying public’s interest in older Dutch works was not a good stimulus for the production of truly original work. This substantiates Seymour Slive’s observation of ‘a decline in the creative impulse of Dutch artists’ from the last quarter of the seventeenth century on.147 Still, this loss of creativity in a period of market saturation is not as self-evident as one might expect. In Antwerp, for example, cultural life experienced an ‘Indian summer’ after the severe post-Revolt crisis in the Southern Netherlandish art market at the end of the sixteenth century, with Baroque painters Peter Paul Rubens, Jacob Jordaens, and portraitist Anthony van Dyck leading the way. The town retained its status as a commercial centre within the Spanish empire as well as an artistic and cultural hub in the framework of the Catholic Counter-Reformation.148 It is true that Dutch painters, when dealing with market saturation and war-based complications, did not have the court and church patronage from which their southern counterparts had benefited some fifty years earlier, but this does not mean that they were predestined to lose their edge. Antwerp painters and merchants, for instance, also managed to set up a mass production of newly produced affordable paintings for export.

Moreover, the strategies developed by Dutch painters and dealers had several consequences. The downturn in the market for new cabinet pieces was compounded by the successful development of a second-hand market, by the growing demand for imitations and emulations, and by the successful shifts towards painted interior scenes and decorative painting. The professionalization of secondary markets reinforced the already prominent local demand for old masters. It also facilitated the collection and promotion
of Dutch paintings in foreign markets. By widening potential demand for seventeenth-century originals, painters and art dealers limited the expansion of contemporary art production. The demand for older styles, compositions, and themes may have hampered the development of contemporary art, but it also created demand for newly produced copies or adaptations of seventeenth-century originals. In the long run, the widespread distribution of copies and branding hindered transparency, increasing the need for quality arbitrage by art dealers and art theorists, which further supported the formation of artists’ canons.

During the growth phase, the high number of quality masters had made for a correspondingly high number of quality teachers who then transferred their skills to an even larger pool of quality painters. In the growing and varied art market, these painters could choose their niche and become extraordinarily skilled in certain specializations. During the eighteenth century this pattern was reversed. Entry barriers increased, personal relations became more important, and painters were expected to master a variety of styles. There was also less room for experimentation and, as labour-saving styles went out of fashion, painters were increasingly trained and employed in wallpaper factories. In the absence of new exogenous stimuli, Dutch painters did not prove able to break the trend. As a result, the eighteenth-century Dutch art market was not the best environment in which to unlock artistic talent as we currently value it.

Notes

4. Consider two titles devoted to previously disregarded work: Loos et al., Age of Elegance; Mai et al., Kroon op het werk. Pioneering work was done in 1971 with the exhibition Dutch Masterpieces from the Eighteenth Century: Paintings and Drawings 1700-1800 and the catalogue by Mandle and Niemeijer, Dutch masterpieces.
5. The recent exhibitions devoted to some of these painters are testament to this rehabilitation.

9. Cf. Bok, ‘Vraag en aanbod’, pp. 120-127; De Vries, ‘Art History’, p. 273. The estimates on the number of painters active per 25 years are based on RKD-artists. De Vries based his estimates on attributions in probate inventories and museum collections; as a result his figures are biased towards trends in prominent painters, rather than the mass market.
25. An artist’s main work location is defined as the town in which the artist worked most years of his or her career. When an artist spent an equal amount of time in two locations, both are included. This explains the fact that the number of main work locations exceeds the total number of artists included in the sample. When an artist spent less than half of the duration of his or her career in one place, the main work location is labeled ‘various’.
31. We find a comparable discrepancy between the two samples for the seventeenth century. The Low Countries were responsible for circa 50 per cent in Kelly and O’Hagan and 30 per cent in Murray.
32. De Vries, ‘Art History’.
34. Cf. Bakker, ‘Crisis? Welke crisis?’.
38. Sluijter, Enklaar, and Nieuwenhuizen, eds., *Leidse fijnschilders*.
41. Fock, ‘Het interieur in de Republiek’.
42. Ibid., pp. 82-84; Baarsen, ‘Art for the interior’; Pijzel-Dommisse, ‘1700-1750’.
43. There have been few studies on Dutch mural canvases, a neglect that can be attributed to the poor reputation they acquired during the nineteenth century and to the fact that so few have survived. The dissertation on Jurriaen Andriessen by Harmanni includes the most comprehensive discussion of mural canvases. Harmanni, ‘Jurriaan Andriessen’, pp. 111-153. The following is based on his work, unless otherwise indicated. On the beginnings of the fashion of wall-covering paintings and the production of Ferdinand Bol in the 1650s in Van Eikema Hommes, *Art and Allegiance*. On Schweickhardt see Sluijter, ‘Hendrik Willem Schweickhardt’.
46. Painting ceilings, grisailles, and mural canvases required a more thorough knowledge of perspective.
47. Numerous mentions in Van Eynden and Van der Willigen Pz., *Geschiedenis der vaderlandse schilderkunst*.
50. Ibid.
51. SA Archief van de Gilden en het Brouwerscollege, inv. 1399, p. 107. 27 January 1784.


53. Bok and Schwartz, ‘Schilderen in opdracht’.


56. Ibid., p. 53.

57. Ibid., pp. 57-61.

58. Ibid., chapter 3.


60. See also De Marchi and Van Miegroet, ‘Pricing Invention’, vol. 237, p. 29.


63. Wuestman, ‘The Mezzotint in Holland’, pp. 72-73. There are few studies on mezzotint engraving in the Dutch Republic. This section is based on Wuestman’s article unless otherwise indicated.

64. Ibid., p. 73.


66. RKDartists&*, accessed 12-03-2011.


68. Grijzenhout, ‘A Myth of Decline’, p. 33. He had one work by Rembrandt, one by Jan Davidsz de Heem, and three panels by Cornelis van Poelenburch.

69. De Piles, *Conversations*.

70. Ibid., p. 424.


73. Sluijter, ‘Schilders van “clyne, subtile ende curieuse dingen”’, p. 15.

74. Hecht, ‘Het einde van de Gouden Eeuw’.


76. On the export of Dutch paintings see Korthals Altes, ‘De verovering’; Gerson, *Ausbreitung and Nachwirkung*.


78. Korthals Altes, ‘De verovering’.


81. Leiden can be seen as somewhat of an anomaly, because it was the only sizable art market not under guild control until the 1640s.


84. Ibid., p. 249; ibid., p. 280.

86. Miedema, ed., *Archiefbescheiden*, vol. II, pp. 289-290; ibid., p. 280. ‘Sommige schilders alhier ter stede weijnigh afftreck was’.

87. SA, Archief van de Gilden en het Brouwerscollege, inv. 1398, p. 36, article 3; inv. 1399, article 7.


89. Dudok van Heel, ‘Honderdvijftig advertenties’; S.A.C. Dudok van Heel has published surveys of all advertisements for art auctions in the *Amsterdamse Courant* for the period 1672-1725 (N=259).


94. Ibid., p. 56.


96. Ibid., p. 56.


103. Van der Veen, ‘By His Own Hand’, vol. 4; Tummers, “By His Hand”. See also Tummers, *The Eye of the Connoisseur*.

104. Van der Veen, ‘By His Own Hand’, vol. 4, pp. 6-7.

105. Ibid., p. 31.

Van der Veen, ‘By His Own Hand’, vol. 4, p. 7; Van der Veen, ‘De Amsterdamse kunstmarkt’.


110. Ibid., p. 144.


112. Vermeylen, Painting for the Market.


120. The discussion between Van Gool and Hoet took place in two pamphlets published as correspondence. The pamphlets are reprinted in De Vries, Diamante gedenkzuilen, pp. 219-241.


122. Ibid., p. 108.

123. Eighteenth-century Dutch art critic and biographer Arnold Houbraken (1660-1719), author of Grote Schouburgh, blamed the artistic decline on luxury and avarice and a general decline in the appreciation of art. Rather than appreciating l’art pour l’art, pictures, according to Houbraken, were seen merely as potential sources of profit. Houbraken, Grote Schouburgh.


126. Muller Fz., Schildersvereenigingen, p. 19; ibid., appendix II, Ordonnantie van het St. Lucasgild 13 september 1611, pp. 63-69; ibid., appendix III, Ordonnantie van het Schilders-College 24 Februari 1644.


128. The following is based on Miedema, ‘Kunstschilder, gilde en academie’.


132. Sluijter, ‘Schilders van “cleyne, subtile ende curieuse dingen”’. 


126. Muller Fz., Schildersvereenigingen, p. 19; ibid., appendix II, Ordonnantie van het St. Lucasgild 13 september 1611, pp. 63-69; ibid., appendix III, Ordonnantie van het Schilders-College 24 Februari 1644.


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128. The following is based on Miedema, ‘Kunstschilder, gilde en academie’.


132. Sluijter, ‘Schilders van “cleyne, subtile ende curieuse dingen”’. 

134. Miedema, ‘Over kwaliteitsvoorschriften’.
137. Ibid., p. 42.
140. Amstel, *Redenvoeringen*. Cf. Husly, *Redevoering*. Other members such as Jacobus Buys and Reinier Vinkeles also held lectures, but of many of these we only know the titles.
144. Reynaerts, *De Koninklijke Akademie van Beeldende Kunsten*.
145. Cf. SA, nr. 265, Stads Teken Academie.
146. De Klerk, “Academy-beelden”.
147. Slive, *Dutch Painting*, pp. 299-300.