

Dutch Still Life (II)





After 1650:
“Pronk” or “sumptuous” still life

Barend van der Meer, *Finely Laid Table with a Moor*, c. 1675-80

Willem Kalf
(1619-1693)

- Developed “pronk” or sumptuous still life
- Emphasis on costly and exotic objects
- Presented with dramatic tonal contrasts and splashes of saturated bright colors



Willem Kalf, *Still Life with Nautilus Cup*,
c. 1662 (“pronk”)



Claesz, *Still Life with Tazza*, 1636
 (“breakfast”)



Willem Kalf, *Still Life with Nautilus Cup*, c. 1662 (detail)

Nautilus shell: brought back to Europe from Indian and Pacific Oceans;
highly valued collectible, often embellished with metalwork



Jeremias Ritter, *Snail Nautilus and Rider*, c. 1630.
Nautilus shell & gilt silver



Heinrich Jonas,
Nautilus Cup, 1580s



Willem Kalf, *Still Life with Nautilus Cup*, c. 1662 (detail)

Nautilus shell: brought back to Europe from Indian and Pacific Oceans;
highly valued collectible, often embellished with metalwork



Willem Kalf, *Still Life with Nautilus Cup*, c. 1662 (detail)

Porcelain: exotic import from China





After 1650: “Pronk” or
“sumptuous” still life

Willem Kalf, *Still Life with
Nautilus Cup*, c. 1662

Willem Kalf, *Drinking Horn with a Lobster*, c. 1653



Buffalo drinking horn, 16th century
Ritual object in civic ceremony for guilds. Made from a buffalo horn—seen as
an exotic object set into a silver mount.



Willem Kalf, *Drinking Horn with a Lobster*, c. 1653 (detail)



Willem Kalf, *Drinking Horn with a Lobster*, c. 1653 (detail)



Willem Kalf, *Drinking Horn with a Lobster*, c. 1653



Dutch floral still life





We have already seen Jan Brueghel's Flemish floral still lifes.

Jan Brueghel (Flemish), *Vase with Flowers*, c. 1605

There were a number of Dutch specialists famous for their floral still life paintings ...

Willem van Aelst, *Flowers in a Silver Vase*,
1663



Jan Davidsz de Heem, *Still Life with
Flowers in a Glass Vase*, 1650-83



... including renowned female artists.

Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*, 1716



Maria van Oosterwijck, *Bouquet of Flowers*, c. 1670





Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750)

- Specialist in floral still life
- Father was professor of anatomy and botany
- Trained with still life painter Willem van Aelst
- Worked for international wealthy and aristocratic collectors

Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*, 1716



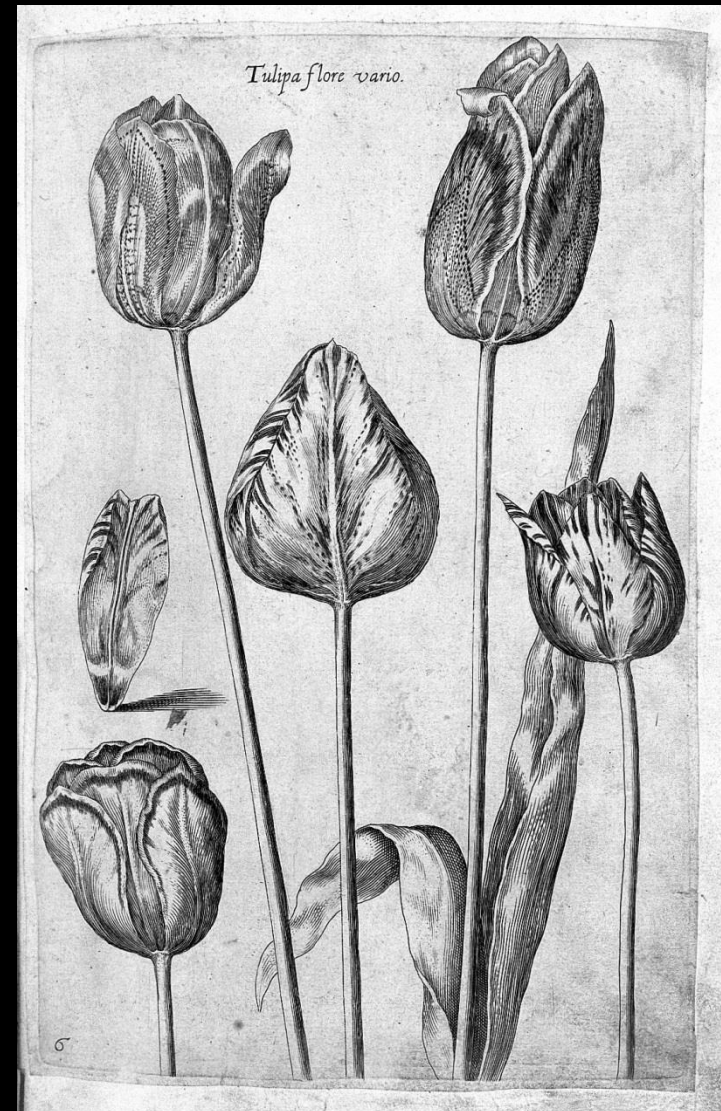
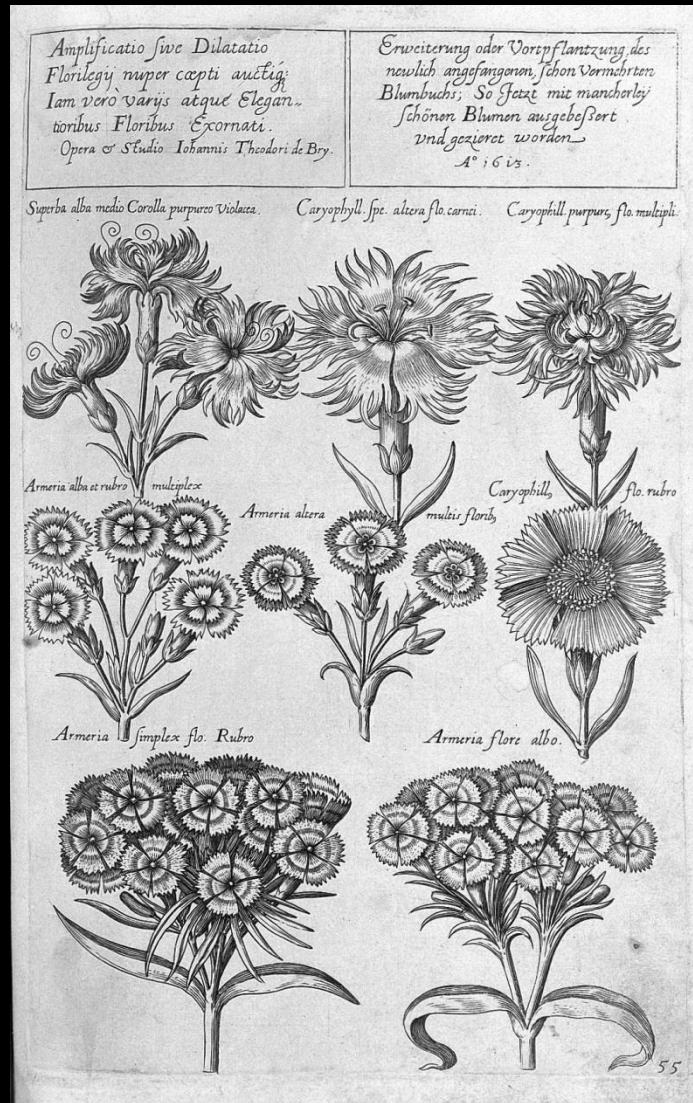
Possible meanings to Dutch viewers in the 17th century?

A vanitas symbol: flowers wilt;
beauty is fleeting and life is
fragile

Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with
Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*,
1716

Intense interest among Dutch intellectuals in natural history, botany, entomology.

Johann Theodor de Bry, plates from illustrated book of flowers, 1611.



Horticulture as an important industry in the Dutch Republic
The *Bloemenmarkt* (Flower Market), Amsterdam





Possible multiple meanings:

- Vanitas symbol
- Dutch intellectual interest in botany and natural science
- Pride in horticulture industry

Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*, 1716

Oil on canvas, 19 x 26 inches

Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*, 1716 (detail)

Precise descriptions of details reflect intense study of nature.



Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*, 1716 (detail)





Also display of artistic skill:

- Flowers that bloomed at different times of the year; picture shows something that cannot exist
- But presented in convincing fashion
- Art trumps nature

Rachel Ruysch, *Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Tabletop*, 1716

Oil on canvas, 19 x 26 inches

Dutch Still Life Paintings

- Known for their detailed rendering of objects and textures; artists paid close attention to the effects of light
- Convincing images, but not simple transcriptions of reality
- Types of still life paintings: vanitas, breakfast pieces, pronk (sumptuous), flower pieces
- Possible meanings and interpretations
 - Mortality, fleeting nature of life
 - Deals with moral concerns about material riches
 - But also appreciation of exotic and well-crafted objects
 - Interest in nature
 - Artistic skill