

Summary

Jurriaan Andriessen (1742-1819), painter of mural canvases

From the reconstructed oeuvre of Jurriaan Andriessen it became evident that mural canvases with mainly landscapes and smaller decorative paintings form the major part of his work. The quantity of his easel pictures is insignificant. This is the reason that Andriessen is hardly known by the general public. One does not meet his paintings in permanent exhibitions of museums: the small number of his decorative paintings which have been preserved *in situ* are kept behind the closed doors of private houses. One could say that Andriessen's actual oeuvre consists for the major part of drawings. Of the nearly five hundred sheets (for the larger part in their entirety kept in the Municipal Archives of Amsterdam and in the print room of the Rijksmuseum) two thirds concern designs. The other drawings consist for the major part of topographical views and sketches after artworks by other artists, mainly old masters. Since these drawings and sketches have been regularly used as models and inspiration for his decorative paintings, one can say that Andriessen's oeuvre of drawings was directly as well as indirectly at the service of his main work: decorative painting.

Andriessen started his education at the age of twelve in the studio of the history and decorative painter Antoni Elliger (1701-1781) and later for a year with the portraitist Jan Maurits Quinkhard (1668-1772). Since both of his teachers did not prove to be practitioners of landscape painting Andriessen must have learned this genre in one of the workshops where he was active afterwards until 1767 when he became a registered master in the St. Luke's Guild of Amsterdam. The first prize awarded by the Amsterdam Drawing Academy the year before, helped establish his reputation.

From the great number of auction catalogues annotated by himself one can conclude that his role in the art market was far more significant than has been supposed until now. Only a few of the drawings, prints, books and paintings he bought, could be found in his estate which was auctioned in 1847 after the death of his son Christiaan Andriessen. His considerable library and the books that according to his acquisitions must have gone through his hands, testify an interest in art theory, architecture, perspective, anatomy and classical antiquity. This confirms his great theoretical knowledge in which he had quite a reputation at the time.

From different sources 66 of his pupils are now known by name, of which 27 were active as professionals. Considering their ages, twenty of them could have been trained and active in Andriessen's studio. But he only paid the St. Luke's Guild to employ two apprentices. The pupils must have stayed at least three years in his workshop. Besides them, Andriessen got help from his younger brother Anthony and later his son Christiaan. Dilettantes took instruction for the most part after 1800, when the production of mural canvases declined considerably due to the changing taste and the consequences of a stroke which Andriessen suffered in 1799. During the reign of King Louis Napoleon (1806-1810) he could support himself by painting festive decorations, besides giving lessons in drawing and painting. But later, due to his bad health, his diverse activities brought little relief.

As well as in size as in process the studio of Andriessen cannot be compared with the so called factories for wall coverings, where besides mural canvases – painted after designs or models from other artists – often all sorts of stencilled or printed products were manufactured, nor with the workshops of decorators which could also deliver mural canvases. Among his artistic equivalents in his own time Andriessen was almost the only one who was specialised in decorative paintings of high quality.

When Andriessen started his career, in the Republic there had been - in the art of mural canvases - a long tradition of depicting the Italianate landscape, which had its origins in the late 1660's. By the 1760's there was an expanding production of mural canvases which resulted in a larger variety of types of landscape. The Italianizing landscape which had degenerated towards the middle of the eighteenth century underwent a revival around 1770, due to a renewed interest in antiquity. But the classical arcadian landscape which developed as a consequence was only depicted by a small group of artists and was only practised by Andriessen at the end of the eighteenth century. Although he was a specialist in this genre, his landscapes with figures in "modern" costume are in the majority in his oeuvre.

The growing interest in nature and a re-evaluation of seventeenth century landscape painting by the 1760's resulted also in views inspired by the Dutch landscape. This was a completely new genre in the art of mural canvases. One started to observe the real landscape, which resulted by the 1780's in views inspired by the Dutch dunes and by the hilly countryside of Gelderland and also the flat polder landscape. The development in Andriessen's wall decorations with native landscapes is in line with the general trend. One sees in his landscapes also a slight tendency to depict in one ensemble the local countryside in combination with an idealised Italianate landscape. But he was not as extreme as some of his contemporaries who were not afraid to combine marines with views of woodlands, or landscapes with the four seasons or the times of the day. The prescribed rules of Lairesse, of unity in action, time and location, which had been abandoned increasingly by the 1770's, were adhered to by Andriessen.

Around 1780 Andriessen seems to be the first together with Joannes van Dreght to introduce in Holland imitations of cameos as an alternative for the grisaille. Traditional allegories such as the four seasons, elements or continents, Andriessen seems to have abandoned for mantelpieces and overdoors. He opted for subjects which referred in general to the occupation of the commissioner, such as trade or seafaring, or to their interest in politics. References to the commissioner are never found in the landscapes Andriessen painted on mural canvases. A preference for an Arcadian landscape with figures in classical costumes or for views on the native countryside with figures in "modern" costume, often consisting of farmers and other country folk, does not seem to have any connection with social class nor with any political interests. Only classical arcadian landscapes seem to be slightly more preferred by the patricians among Andriessen's commissioners.

At this moment 76 commissioners of Andriessen are known of which two are institutions and one a church. Of the 73 individuals, who appeared for the most part on the superscriptions on the designs, 70 persons have been identified and 65 houses have been located. Considering the incomplete sets of designs and the not located designs, known only through the art market, the total number of commissioners of Andriessen could be estimated to be at least a hundred, which means that for the thirty years he was active he must have had at least three commissions a year. Although patricians, noblemen and people from the business establishment belonged to his commissioners, the major part was formed by people who had climbed the social ladder in one or two generations by trade or otherwise. Commissions came not only from relatives of patrons but also through Andriessen's own network in the social and cultural circles of Amsterdam.

Of the 65 located houses there are 53 who had at least one room with mural canvases. They were for the major part installed in townhouses, only five can be found in country houses. The majority of the commissions are located in Amsterdam, mainly in the fashionable area of the canals. The mural canvases were not only applied in the main reception rooms but nearly as much in rooms on the street side near the entrance. These rooms were not only in use as a reception room but more often as antechamber or office, and sometimes as a dining room. Some wall designs of the 1780's show a lot of attention for the

decoration of the wainscot which could be the result of an interest in designing the whole interior. Since there is no evidence that Andriessen was active as interior designer it must have been a temporary interest which was undoubtedly the result of his interest in architecture.

Painting mural canvases with landscapes requires a thorough knowledge of the art of perspective, more so than easel pictures with landscapes. In his landscapes Andriessen made less use of a diagonal than central perspective. The vanishing point was placed in the centre of the landscape or a little to one side. Studying some *in situ* rooms by Andriessen as well as by others, proves that, apart from keeping the same horizon at eye level in all the landscapes, it is for the spatial functioning also very important to create a proper balance between the measurements of the room and the size of the painted landscapes, as well as the proportion of the depicted items. Besides these basic principles one can add an extra dimension to the spatial experience by manipulating the perspective. He gives the viewer the impression that he is standing on a higher point than the figures in the landscape paintings. Thus one can depict far more between the horizon and the lower edge than could be seen in reality. Construction lines in some of Andriessen's designs prove that he had a great interest in this aspect of perspective. Apart from all these characteristics some of Andriessen's *in situ* ensembles, and one of Jacob Maurer (1737-1780) show that with the help of repoussoirs and the use of light, effects are created which focus the landscape from a diagonal position; meanwhile the perspective is quite correct when standing in front of it. This effect was not only created when the entrance was placed in the corner of the room, but was also meant to invite the spectator to move through the room to benefit from the spatial experience. It is also by his creative manipulation of space that one can conclude that Jurriaan Andriessen was the last great artist in a long tradition of mural landscape painting in our country.