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The Amsterdam Town Hall in Words and Images

The Amsterdam Town Hall in Words and Images

Constructing Wonders

Edited by
Stijn Bussels, Caroline van Eck and
Bram Van Oostveldt

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Introduction

Stijn Bussels, Caroline van Eck and Bram Van Oostveldt

Right in the heart of Amsterdam stands the Royal Palace, one of the most famous monuments in the Netherlands. In a typical year, the building has many visitors, from the leading international politicians received by the Dutch king to the hundreds of thousands of tourists buying tickets to enter. Even more visitors pose outside to immortalize themselves in front of this building. From the perspective of its founders – the citizens of Amsterdam, with the Burgomasters taking the lead – we could say almost four centuries after the start of its construction, the building still succeeds in its main aim of putting Amsterdam prominently on the world map.

In 1808, when Louis Napoléon ruled over the Kingdom of Holland, the building was transformed into a royal palace, but originally it was a town hall. Although the first plans were made in the late 1630s, construction did not start until 1648, in the wake of the Peace of Münster; the moment when the Dutch rebels were able to definitively – and victoriously – end their revolt against Spain and their Republic of the Seven United Provinces was recognized as an independent nation. At last, Amsterdam could fully invest in international trade. Although building works would continue until the early 1700s, the building was officially inaugurated in 1655. A few years prior to this, the building's predecessor, a dilapidated gothic town hall, had gone up in flames, so construction had to be expedited. There was, however, more going on than this mere practical problem. The old Town Hall had become a bigger and bigger thorn in Amsterdam's side. Long before it had burned down, the Burgomasters were so ashamed of their building that they had decided to have it replaced by a new one which could give the city and its inhabitants, as well as themselves, the dignity they felt they all deserved.[1]

At that time, Amsterdam had great political independence. It was an oligarchic city state in which the Burgomasters had supreme power. They came from a

small number of mostly wealthy merchant families, such as Bicker, Backer, de Graeff, Huydecoper and Valckenier.[2] There were always four Burgomasters in order to not only share the administrative responsibilities, but also to represent the different factions in the civic elite. Each year, the sitting Burgomasters and Magistrates elected their successors from within their own ranks. There was a religious constraint, as only a Calvinist could become Burgomaster or Magistrate. Nevertheless, as trade had to be guaranteed by all means, a pragmatic and successful model of pluriconfessional society evolved in Amsterdam throughout the seventeenth century.[3] Because Amsterdam had become Europe's centre of trade, the Burgomasters had an important voice in the Republic. With the Town Hall, the Burgomasters wanted to visually represent their leading position in the city and the Republic, as well as their aspirations to world domination.

The new Town Hall also had to strengthen community spirit among the inhabitants of Amsterdam. As a result of international trade, the population of the city increased six times between 1575 and 1675.[4] The very high levels of immigration, as well as the emergent gap between extremely successful merchants, a group which included the Burgomasters, and the rest of the population, led to an eager search for a common identity. Many seventeenth-century poets praising the new building suggested that the construction of architectural splendour would bring people closer to each other, all rejoicing in Amsterdam's success. Such a shared sense of identity and civic pride was also strengthened by awe and admiration for the Town Hall, all the more as it was constructed at the legendary place of origin, a dam in the river Amstel (Amstel-dam) around which fishermen had once settled and which had led to the construction of Dam Square with its fish market. Here the new building was accompanied by three other iconic buildings, the New Church (Nieuwe Kerk), the Weigh House (Waag) and the Stock Exchange (Beurs).

Inside the building, citizens and their guests could also celebrate the prestige and civic coherence of Amsterdam, above all in the majestic Citizens' Hall (Burgerzaal) (Figure 1.1). After visitors had climbed the relatively modest stairs leading to the first floor, they suddenly came upon this public hall, the largest secular interior space in Europe at the time, made even more impressive through the many sculptures and huge maps in the marble floor. Another highlight in the building was the Tribunal (Vierschaar) that served only to proclaim the death penalty on felons (the trial and the actual execution were performed elsewhere), but was nevertheless the room that took central stage at the front of the building, taking up three floors and displaying the richest sculptures of the entire building (Figure 1.2). In this elaborately decorated Tribunal, the Burgomasters and

Figure 1.1 The Citizens' Hall seen from the west. Courtesy Stichting Koninklijk Paleis Amsterdam. © The Royal Palace of Amsterdam, photograph: Benning & Gladkova.

Figure 1.2 The Tribunal. Courtesy Stichting Koninklijk Paleis Amsterdam. © The Royal Palace of Amsterdam, photograph: Tom Haartsen.

Magistrates were able to exercise with full dignity their ultimate power, the decision over life and death, in order to protect their subjects by preserving order and discipline. The prominence of the Tribunal was evident from the earliest of plans. The architects competing to construct the new building had all reserved a central place for it and made it clearly visible from Dam Square, thus serving the old, respected tradition of public jurisdiction.[5]

Eventually, the Burgomasters gave the commission for the new Town Hall to Jacob van Campen (1596–1657),[6] rejecting a design by the experienced architect Philips Vingboons, who proposed a building with clear echoes of French palatial architecture, in favour of van Campen's Palladian approach.[7] The architect presented a design defined by rigorous proportions and a clear and hierarchical arrangement of the rooms. He had already acquired a reputation in Amsterdam as a fashionable architect through the façade he designed in 1625 for houses built for a wealthy merchant family, the Coymans, and even more through the construction of the city's first permanent theatre, begun in 1638. Van Campen had powerful family connections in the city himself; for example, his second cousin Nicolaas van Campen was a member of the city council,[8] but Jacob also maintained close ties to prominent figures connected to the Oranges, the dynasty of Stadholders. He designed Palace Noordeinde (1639) in The Hague for Frederick Henry, and he was very friendly with Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), the poet, patron of the arts and secretary of the Stadholders. Together, they studied Vitruvius' treatise on architecture, and collaborated closely on the royal palace, Huis ten Bosch (1645–52). Throughout the construction of the Town Hall, Huygens would congratulate the Burgomasters in several poems on their excellent choice (see infra).

Moreover, as a talented painter, van Campen could also have important input into the Town Hall's rich decor.[9] He worked closely with the sculptor Artus Quellinus (1609–68), in whose house he lived for many months during the construction of the Town Hall. Quellinus came from Antwerp, where he had acquired international fame after studying in Rome with François Duquesnoy from 1635–9.[10] The Burgomasters persuaded him to come and work in Amsterdam with a very generous honorarium. In the end, the sculptor would work for the Burgomasters and their Town Hall for fifteen years (1650–65) and would complete his most important work there. Besides sculpture, there was also painting, most prominently in monumental canvases showing the Revolt of the Batavians against Roman rule in the galleries adjacent to the Citizens' Hall. These were painted from the early 1660s by Jan Lievens, Ferdinand Bol, Jacob Jordaens and Rembrandt van Rijn, among others.[11]

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Challenges for the Town Hall

In the only English monograph on the building, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam* (1959), Katharine Fremantle argued that the collaboration of the Burgomasters with van Campen, Artus Quellinus and these eminent painters resulted in the magnum opus of the Dutch seventeenth century.[12] Later studies of the Town Hall, mostly written in Dutch, further develop the idea of the ultimate masterwork by relating the building to the complete oeuvre of van Campen, tracing the origins of the design and its use of ornament to Greco-Roman and Italian Renaissance architecture, as well as rigorously tracing the steps taken throughout the entire building process.[13]

This book wants to add to these studies by shifting the focus from the architectural and artistic aspects to the *impact* of the building. We start from the questions which the Town Hall raises for current architectural historiography. Thanks to studies on architecture in the early modern Low Countries, as well as Britain, it has become clear that the use of Greco-Roman and Italian Renaissance architectural tropes was not as self-evident as was previously accepted.[14] The new architectural style developed in cities such as Amsterdam and London was strongly associated with Catholic church architecture in Rome, but became interwoven with local traditions, idioms and values in complex manners. We will study these appropriations in the context of the Town Hall, as we can no longer simply assume an unproblematic taking-over of classical forms and models in the Dutch seventeenth-century context, as presented in traditional architectural history.[15] Because of its monumentality, which completely disrupted the existing medieval urban fabric, its conspicuous display of classical orders and harmonic proportions, as well as the use of rare and costly materials such as Carrara marble, the Town Hall shared striking similarities with the most prestigious buildings in papal Rome. Could the Burgomasters appropriate the architecture of their religious enemies in the centre of their city without any objection?

The cost of the building was also problematic. The merchants of Amsterdam had become extremely rich thanks to an unprecedented flowering of international commerce, but as exemplary burghers they were urged not to show their riches too openly.[16] From their pulpit, Calvinist preachers pressed the wealthy businessmen to consider carefully how to use their profits, more particularly to serve God and to help their less fortunate fellow townsmen.[17] An enormous building for which no equal could be found in the Republic – either in the shape of previous town halls, or city palaces – seems to be completely contrary to that ideal. How could an edifice that in design, size, wealth and costs was so unfamiliar

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to the Dutch be built by god-fearing burghers? How was it possible that Amsterdam dared to express its riches so openly?

To find answers to these questions, we can first look at how the advocates of the Town Hall succeeded in coping with two acute problems. First, there were the plans for a new tower for the New Church, situated directly adjacent to the location of the new Town Hall. Even within the group of Burgomasters, there were moves to drastically save money by constructing a less grand building, which would leave enough money to construct instead the highest tower in the Republic.[18] However, the debate was really about how closely the city administration had to be related to Calvinism. Were the Burgomasters allowed to fully display their power in this new building, or did they have to acknowledge the superiority of religious power by giving a substantial part of their finances to the construction of a new church tower? Eventually, the Town Hall obtained funding. Only the foundation and the first ten metres of the tower were built; after that, the plans were shelved once and for all.

A new (and costly) war was a second threat to plans for the Town Hall. Directly after the Dutch concluded peace with Spain in Münster, problems began with Britain. In the opinion of the British, Dutch trading overseas obstructed their own interests.[19] Between 1652 and 1654, the First Anglo-Dutch War was fought. These years were also crucial for the construction of the Town Hall. The war threw a spanner in these works, as the costs for the war ate into Amsterdam's budget extensively. The Burgomasters adapted their building project by removing two floors, but as soon as the war was finished, they completely reversed that decision and the construction of the Town Hall continued as originally designed.

The Burgomasters, supported by the majority of the civic elite, could thus fully execute their ambitious plans. In this book we ask, to begin with, how public support for the building was created and how the new style and high costs played in this. To answer these questions, the first essays in this book will look at new insights in the specific choices that the founders made in the design of the Town Hall, in the decorations on the façades and inside the building. Every building, and certainly the Town Hall, is more than a series of usable rooms, as a building can interact with its surroundings in expressing ambitions. In one of the tympana of the Town Hall, for example, the City Maiden sits enthroned as the ruler of the seas. On the floor in the Citizens' Hall, two enormous world maps, as well as a map of the heavenly firmament, proclaimed the belief that the city occupied the centre of the universe. Allegories appeared inside and on the façades to show the importance of peace and justice for Amsterdam, celebrating the actual impetus

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of the construction, the peace of Münster, as well as the most important function of the building: jurisprudence.

The Town Hall also urged its visitors to connect prosperous events in the present with Greco-Roman and Biblical precedents, and with a radiant future for the city. The many references to the Temple of Jerusalem, for instance, are surprising, because they are not used in a religious context for the construction of a church, but rather in the secular context of the Town Hall.[20] They served as a legitimization of the classical style, which here was presented as originating in Solomon's Temple; only subsequently would it be developed in Greco-Roman architecture. Moreover, by referring to Solomon, the Burgomasters could present themselves as the most competent leaders of God's new chosen people, the citizens of Amsterdam. Solomon was also present in a relief in the Tribunal as an *exemplum virtutis* for the magistrates.

Constructions before and beyond the construction

Besides the Town Hall itself, the authors of this book will look at what they call ritual, textual and visual 'constructions before and beyond the construction'. There is the building itself, the construction in the literal sense of the word, but there are also several ceremonies, as well as numerous poems, prints, drawings and paintings that continued to construct the identity of the building. Seventeenth-century writers were very conscious of its novelty and uniqueness, and the need to produce new constructions of it in different media that would give it a historical and civic context. Everard Meyster (1617–79), a country gentleman known to van Campen for example, wrote a play in which Jupiter summons all the great architects of history – from Vitruvius to Michelangelo – to give the Olympians some understanding of the building. Nevertheless, even Michelangelo has to admit that, for him, van Campen's architecture leads 'far more to wonder, than to fathom completely'.[21] The Italian architect mentions Joost van den Vondel (1587–1679) as the most appropriate person to help, as he wrote famous and influential poems celebrating the building. Inaugural rituals as well as countless texts and images began this work of interpretation and explanation, even before its construction had begun, as the Burgomasters performed ceremonies on the building site, poets wrote poems expressing their admiration for the building as it was being built and for its founders, and artists experimented in powerfully visualizing it.

The solemn public ritual celebrating the laying of the first stone amalgamated traditional Christian church-building ritual with civic rites into an artificial

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novum to mark such an important moment. It included the ritual itself and its celebrations in word and image. In the medal celebrating the inauguration in 1655, the building is made part of a classical allegory in which Mercury, the god of commerce, figures prominently (Figure 1.3). Amsterdam is likened to Thebes as Amphion is sitting in front playing the lyre with which he once made stones gather to form the Greek city's walls. The choice of a Palladian model is contextualized as part of the concerted attempt to make Amsterdam one of the successors of Greco-Roman antiquity. Thus, the inauguration ritual and its visual representations already prepared the public for the extraordinary character of the Town Hall and created public acceptance when the very first stones were laid. Its visual and textual representations enable us to connect its design with the aspirations of its founders and its broader civic context.

The texts and images celebrating the Town Hall are far from neutral. They give us a privileged insight in what the Burgomasters wanted their building to bring about. Poets often received handsome compensation for their efforts. For instance, the Burgomasters gave Vondel 'a silver cup or plate' (*een silvre kop of schaal*) for the extensive poem he wrote for the inauguration.[22] Often patrons and poets worked to mutual benefit. The equally comprehensive poem written for the inauguration by Jan Vos (1612–67) would have come as no surprise, given Vos was not only an extremely successful playwright of bloody tragedies, but a glass maker as well, who had received a huge commission as part of the Town Hall's completion.[23] In the case of Huygens, we can see his poems as a diplomatic

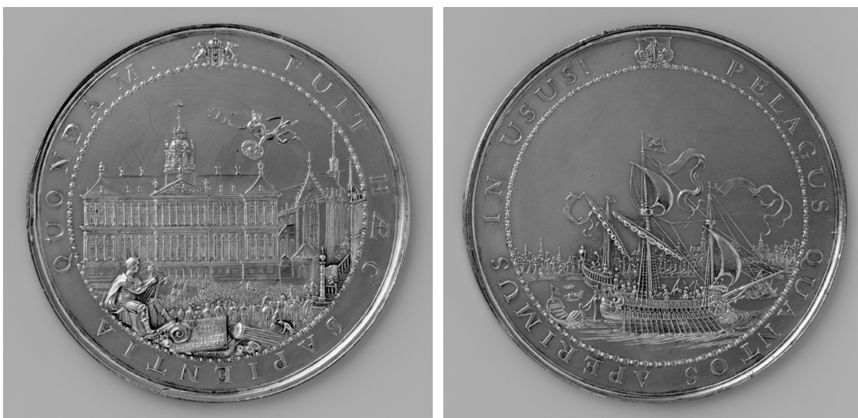

Figure 1.3 Jurriaan Pool, silver medal commemorating the inauguration ceremony of the Amsterdam Town Hall, 29 July 1655, d. 70 mm. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Public Domain.

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means to strengthen his contacts with Amsterdam. After the sudden death of William II in 1650, whom he served as secretary, no new stadholder was appointed. This vacuum made the province of Holland, and certainly the city of Amsterdam, more powerful than ever before in the Republic. Huygens' attempt to charm the Burgomasters was well received, as his congratulations for their new building of 1657 were recited in the Town Hall at several occasions. They also had the poem engraved in black marble and gave it a prominent position in their chamber.[24]

Bringing magnificence to Amsterdam

Biblical and Greco-Roman antiquity interacted in the stylistic choices and the iconography of the Town Hall. So did magnificence or *ghrootdaadigheidt* (a literal translation of the Latin *magnificentia*, that is, performing great deeds), a prominent Greco-Roman concept used to defend the grand project. Laudatory poems often proclaimed this ancient virtue.[25] Dozens of authors, including Vondel, Vos and Huygens, present the Burgomasters as magnificent because they founded the Town Hall and, more precisely, because they spent extraordinary sums of money in a carefully considered way to increase the splendour of the city to an unprecedented degree and thus to serve the common interest of the citizens of Amsterdam. Poets present the founding Burgomasters as having the exceptional foresight, wisdom and courage to acknowledge that constructing a grand building was a bare necessity for the city.[26]

The Dutch poets refer to Solomon as the principal example of magnificence through building the Temple. Essentially, however, they fall back on Aristotle who developed the concept of *megaloprepeia* in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, which was subsequently taken up by Latin authors as *magnificentia* and which early modern Europe used gratefully to legitimize grand political projects.[27] The Greek philosopher presented magnificence as a virtue of the rich man who spends money abundantly. He deserves the fullest respect from his fellow citizens as his money serves the public good. In his ethics of big spending, Aristotle explicitly points up the difference with liberality. Everyone can be liberal, even if they give away only a small amount of money. By contrast, the virtue of magnificence is about being exceptional, since there one has to deal with spending extraordinary riches to support an outstanding project. Moreover, the enormous costs need to correspond with the public aims of the project. Because of these restrictions, Aristotle argues that performing magnificence is as hard as

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creating an excellent work of art. Like a talented artist, a magnificent person has to act in a well-considered and tasteful way.

In the imagery of the Town Hall, the magnificence of Amsterdam and her rulers is nowhere more explicitly visualized than in a drawing attributed to Jürgen Ovens (1623–78), an artist from the German city of Tönning who came to live in Amsterdam around 1640 (Figure 1.4).[28] On Dam Square, where the Town Hall is under construction, the Amsterdam City Maiden is seated on a triumphal wagon pulled by a pair of lions. A multitude of ancient gods and allegorical figures accompany her. We would relate these figures far more quickly to Counter-Reformatory Rome or the Southern Netherlands than to the Calvinistic Republic. Nevertheless, the artist explicitly connects the Baroque triumph of the City Maiden to the four Burgomasters at whom she looks. The Burgomasters are in full conversation while one of them ostentatiously holds a purse. Chained men and kneeling women beg Amsterdam's rulers for their attention. Between these supplicants, Abundance with her horn of plenty suppresses Envy and her serpent. Amsterdam luxuriates in her extreme wealth. Her rulers ensure that this wealth is spent carefully in their liberality and help for people in need. The Town Hall, which has already advanced to the first floor, from where people are looking at the triumphal parade through the windows, shows their magnificence.

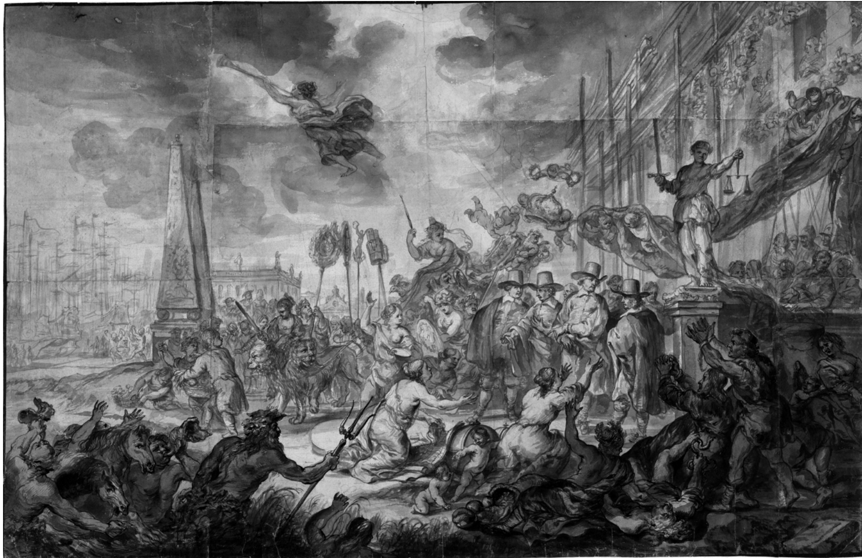

Figure 1.4 Jürgen Ovens (?), *Entry of the Amsterdam Burgomasters*, *c.* 1662, black crayon, pencil in black and brown, d. 70.22 cm. Courtesy Hamburger Kunsthalle / bpk. © Hamburger Kunsthalle / bpk, photograph: Christoph Irrgang.

The Town Hall is situated on an idealized Dam Square with two prominent obelisks. In the early modern period, obelisks were not so much associated with Egypt as with Rome, where Pope Sixtus V had them resurrected throughout the city in the 1580s with impressive public ceremonies.[29] The obelisks lent splendour to the squares in front of the Lateran Palace and St Peter's Basilica, behind the Santa Maria Maggiore and on the Piazza del Popolo. In the background, there is a building whose roof statues resemble those of the Palazzo dei Conservatori on the Capitoline Hill. This drawing is not unique in connecting Michelangelo's design with the Town Hall. At the very start of its planning, the Burgomasters and some of the architects who submitted a design took the Roman building as its stylistic model. This connection takes us back to the Roman Kingdom and Republic, because the first political centre of ancient Rome was believed to be situated there. Dutch poets took this up immediately and claimed that Dam Square could be compared with the most famous of the seven Roman hills, precisely because the Town Hall was situated on Dam Square. For example, in his *Bouw-zang* of 1648, Vondel mentions Numa, the second king of Rome, famous for building the first administrative building on the Capitoline Hill, as well as for his peace-keeping, which was another important consideration for the Burgomasters: 'He planned to build the splendid Town Hall, the Capitol, high and proud on an arid rock.'[30]

But references to the Palazzo dei Conservatori largely disappeared from the building designs. Van Campen's final plans moved away from the Roman civic model to privilege the Biblical model of Solomon's Palace. Besides, in the visual arts, this drawing is the only one to suggest such a close identification between Rome and Amsterdam. The majority of the artists appeared to stay much closer to the reality on Dam Square, but nevertheless used innovative pictorial strategies to present the Town Hall as an example of pure magnificence. They employed perspective and colour, and manipulated the size of the figures in front of the building.

One of the most famous artists to explore these means is the Haarlem painter Gerrit Berckheyde (1638–98), who painted the front façade seen from Dam Square a dozen times. We can take a painting that is now in the Amsterdam Museum as an example (Figure 1.5). The painter uses a viewpoint in such a way that the two other prominent buildings on the square appear far less prominent than they were in reality. The Weigh House is placed far to the left side and the New Church pushed to the back. The façade is not perpendicular to our point of view, but twisted slightly, which gives a dynamism to the composition. The façade is bathed in sunlight, but shows a rich play of shadows as well. The clouds seem to float extraordinarily close to the cupola, suggesting it reaches into the skies.

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Figure 1.5 Gerrit Adriaensz. Berckheyde, *The Town Hall on Dam Square,* 1665–80, oil on canvas, 75.5 × 91.5 cm. Loan from Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN), Rijswijk/Amsterdam on loan to Amsterdam Museum, Public Domain.

Many figures appear to look at the Town Hall, and are dressed in black, except the two men in the front who stand out with their colourful, exotic costumes. They illustrate that Amsterdam is a booming metropolis attracting varied, international visitors. The dark group seems to topple into a dark puddle of water, falling into nothingness in front of the monumental building.

Berckheyde was not unique in his development of these painterly strategies, but became one of their most influential practitioners.[31] Before long, they were adopted in the depiction of other buildings. As diverse as their political regimes might be, across Europe the buildings which rulers used to show their magnificence were represented carefully in images. Dutch artists were pioneers in visualizing grand buildings. The most notable, but rather late, example is Casper van Wittel (1653–1736) or Vanvitelli, a painter from Amersfoort whose *vedute* of ancient monuments and grand buildings became popular in Italy. In his *View on St. Peter's Square*, he uses the pictorial strategies Berckheyde had developed to great effect, highlighting the grand, embracing gesture of its

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colonnade (Figure 1.6). In Paris, decades earlier, a far less famous Dutch painter, Hendrick Mommers (1619–93), used related strategies in his paintings of the Grande Galerie of the Louvre and the Amsterdam Town Hall (Figures 1.7 and 1.8): light and dark effects emphasized the radiance of the buildings, contrasting with the everyday scenes in front of them, while the distortion of perspective

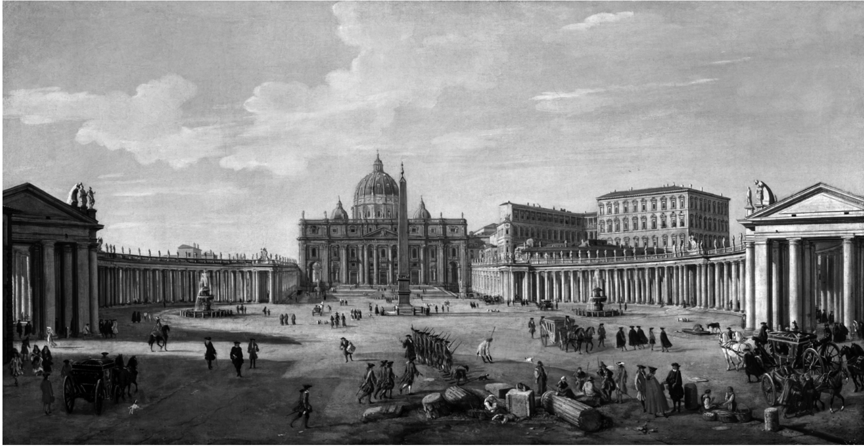

Figure 1.6 Casper van Wittel (alias Vanvitelli), *View of St. Peter's Square, c.* 1700, oil on canvas, 44.5 × 84.2 cm. Courtesy KHM-Museumsverband, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

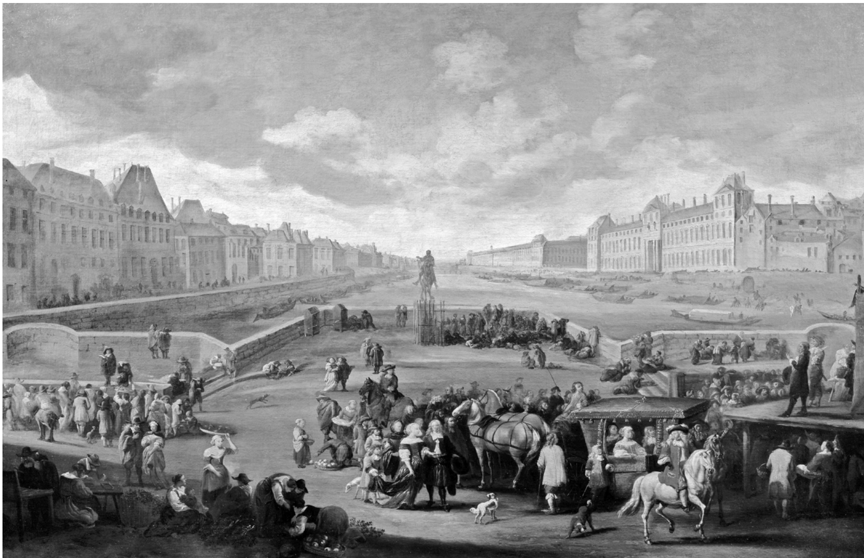

Figure 1.7 Hendrick Mommers, *View of the Louvre from the Pont-Neuf, c.* 1665, oil on canvas, 90 × 110 cm. RMN, Musée du Louvre. © 2020, photo Josse/Scala, Florence.

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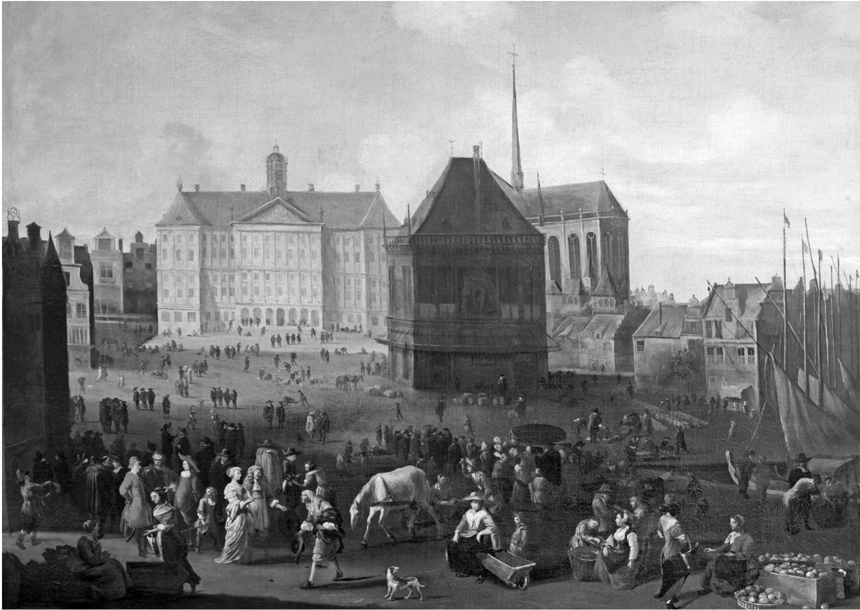

Figure 1.8 Hendrick Mommers, *Market Scene before the Dam*, *c*. 1665, oil on canvas, 84.5 × 120.7 cm. Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire, courtesy of the National Trust.

exaggerating their vastness. The Louvre becomes a revelation of the infinite because perspective is manipulated to make the Grande Galerie extend to the horizon. The Town Hall emerges in his hands as supernatural manifestation in the middle of human hustle and bustle.

Constructing wonders

Where visual artists emphasized the extraordinary nature of the buildings with the use of colour and perspective, writers linked the virtue of magnificence with the overwhelming effect of the Town Hall by presenting it as a pure wonder, thus placing it in Greco-Roman and Christian traditions.[32] These writers often drew on the topos of the seven Wonders of the World. Originally, these formed the highlights for travellers throughout the ancient world.[33] Eventually, however, only the list was preserved and the wonders themselves (with the exception of the Pyramid of Cheops) disappeared. In the early modern period, they were very popular, in the Low Countries among other images thanks to the prints of Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574) (Figure 1.9). Writers used them to praise a new building, and Dutch poets eulogizing the Town Hall were certainly no

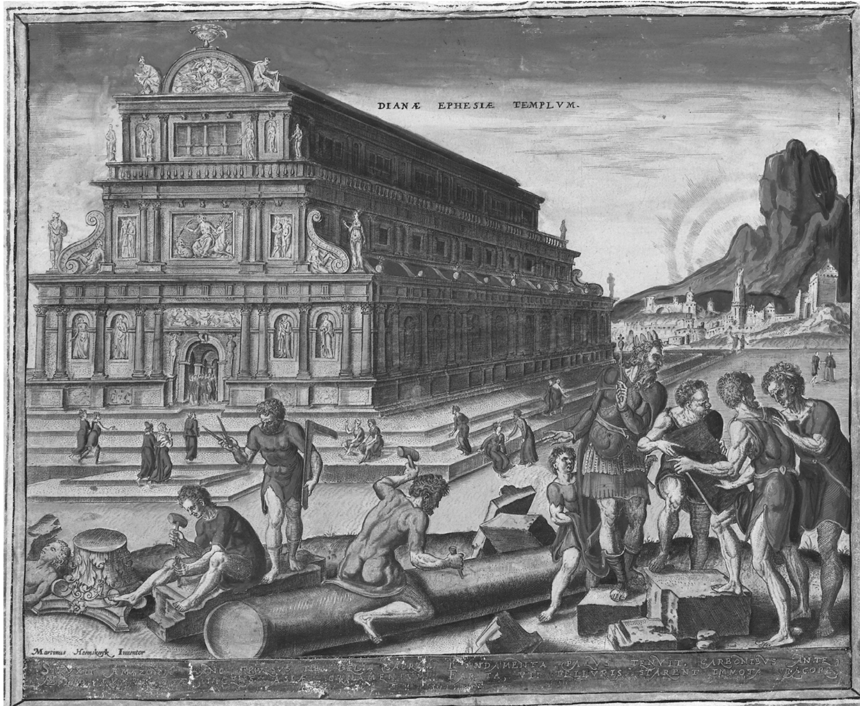

Figure 1.9 Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The Temple of Diana at Ephesus,* 1572, engraving, hand-coloured, 211 × 258 mm. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Public Domain.

exception. Such praise became so popular that it was soon a fixed topos and even today figures in travel accounts of Amsterdam, such as those posted on TripAdvisor.[34] To give the topos maximal persuasiveness, poets exhausted themselves in creativity. In the lengthy laudatory poem that Vos made for the inauguration, he wrote 'This wonder that makes the eye of wonders wonder', using the rhetorical device of employing as many meanings and declensions of the same word as possible in one sentence.

A second tradition of wonders concerns the divine. In this case, the overwhelming effect is even more closely related to benevolence and thus to the virtue of magnificence. Since Greco-Roman antiquity, the concept of *sacer horror* is used to define the shattering impact of the close, physical presence of the divine.[35] *Sacer horror* indicates the religious consternation in which admiration goes together with complete astonishment and fear caused by the belief that the gods or cosmic powers are near, but that contact is at the same time presented as a sanctifying gift. From the sixteenth century onwards, the Jesuits in particular

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tried to evoke this set of conflicting emotions in their education, art and architecture.[36] Dutch Calvinist preachers often refer to the *Vreze Gods* (Fear of God) as well. The Amsterdam preacher Petrus Wittewrongel (1609–62), for example, devotes an extensive chapter of his influential *Christelicke Huys-Houdinge* to this concept. He defines it as a sensation that goes beyond mere anxiety, but a contrasted combination of it and awe, delight and consternation.[37]

Dutch poets wrote about feelings of attraction and repulsion, of joy and fear, thus playing on the tradition of *sacer horror*, when writing about the Town Hall. What makes the Town Hall stand out in this tradition, is that elements of that convention are deployed in a secular context. According to the poets, the visitors are completely overwhelmed because they want to be as close to the building as possible to enjoy its rich, beautiful, tasteful and ingenious characteristics to the fullest extent possible. They also sense that the building is so exceptional, it even becomes upsetting and frightening. The laudatory poems feature many personages – even ancient gods who once evoked *sacer horror* themselves – who are completely stunned by what they see and start to panic. After a while, they are able to control their feelings again, and begin to express their admiration for what Amsterdam and her magnificent rulers have achieved. An intriguing example can be found in a poem that Huygens dedicated to the enormous maps in the marble floor of the Citizens' Hall. He urged his readers to leave everyday feelings behind in order to be fully responsive to the contact with heavenly heights.

Treedt vrij in 't gedruijs,
Als vander aerd' geresen
Op Sterr en Son en Maen;
Hier werdt u in bewesen
Hoe dat het eens naer desen
Den saligen sal gaen.[38]

Enter freely in the bustle,
As if you rise from earth
Towards the Stars and Sun and Moon;
Here it is demonstrated to you
How, after [this life]
The blessed will once fare.

It is important to note that Huygens includes a careful 'as if' in his description of the overwhelming effect of the Citizens' Hall floor. It can be compared to the feelings aroused by divine contact, but not totally equalled. Thus, the appropriation of *sacer horror* to praise the Town Hall comes close to the sublime. Greco-Roman

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poetical and rhetorical treatises such as Longinus' *On the sublime* were read attentively in the academic circles of the legal theorist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and the classical scholar Gerardus Vossius (1577–1649), who were closely connected with the poets Vondel, Huygens and Vos.[39] The sublime evokes similar feelings as *sacer horror*, total shock as well as pure admiration going far beyond everyday experiences, but it is mainly associated with powerful, but human, means of persuasion. Thus, it could play an important part in the evaluation of the Amsterdam Town Hall.

A New View

To resume, this book starts from the question of how the Town Hall, a building unprecedented in scale and richness in the Republic, could be constructed in Amsterdam. How could the Burgomasters be sure that the public would accept it? In particular, the authors will consider how two problems were addressed. First, the problem of the evident associations of the building's classical style with papal Rome was solved by drawing attention to much earlier contexts, namely the Greco-Roman past and the Solomonic era, as well as by developing local varieties of that order. Second, the concept of magnificence was used to justify the huge costs. The Town Hall was presented as an indispensable means of strengthening the dignity of Amsterdam and her rulers. To discuss these strategies of legitimization, we will first focus on the building itself, its building process and decorations. Then we will look at the 'constructions before and beyond the construction', the ceremonies in and around the building, as well as the texts and images representing it.

In this book's first essay, Pieter Vlaardingerbroek provides new information regarding building models and processes. Where previous studies primarily referred to the influence of Vitruvius, Palladio and Scamozzi, Vlaardingerbroek argues for the great importance of the Temple and especially the Palace of Solomon as models for the Town Hall. By using these models, rather than the Capitoline buildings, the Burgomasters wanted to strengthen their public image as protectors of social cohesion in Amsterdam, and encourage the citizens to believe they were part of God's chosen people. At the same time, they neutralized associations with Roman architecture, both pagan and Catholic.

Caroline van Eck takes a different perspective: the Dutch Republic was a successor state, and had been recognized as a sovereign state at the Peace of Münster in 1648. This was unprecedented, and paradoxically made the search

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for precedents even more urgent. The Solomonic precedent is one of the strategies followed to create a pedigree for the young state, but as van Eck argues, van Campen and Quellinus also drew on two major and very widely used features of Roman art and the material culture of religion: the triumphal arch and the festoon. Both the interior and exterior display many features derived from the triumphal arch, and are covered in festoons of endless variety, carved with utmost care. The triumphal motif embodies the triumph, obviously, of the Dutch over the Spanish, and suggests a link to ancient Rome; the festoons embody notions of sacredness and festivities associated with this motif since the Minoan age. Thus, in a move typical of successor states from the Hellenistic period to the present, well-known elements from a regime with particular prestige are deployed in completely different political and cultural contexts.

In the second part of the book, we will turn to 'constructions before and beyond the construction' or how authors and visual artists experimented with capturing, in texts and images, the wondrous effect of the Town Hall and the magnificence of its founders. The Town Hall stands out because of the very large corpus of poems written in praise of it. As noted above, some of these are well known, such as those by Vondel and Vos, but the large majority have barely been studied before, let alone published in an English translation. We have, therefore, included a selection of these poems to show their richness and variety.

The genre of the poem in praise of a building or city goes back to classical rhetoric, where such praise was part of the tradition of *ekphrasis*.[40] This was eagerly echoed in early modern Europe, for example in Calderon de la Barca's *auto* (one-act religious play) in honour of the new palace of the Retiro (1634) and de Scudéry's praise of Versailles (1669).[41] In the Dutch Republic, laudatory poems about buildings enjoyed a true Golden Age thanks to the exceptional quantity and quality, with Constantijn Huygens's poem on his mansion *Hofwijck* as one of the most famous and striking examples.[42] Other highlights of this flowering are the more than 100 poems on the Town Hall.[43] The diversity of the laudatory poems on the building is considerable, ranging in length from the very first poem, a couplet by Mattheus Tengnagel in 1641, to Vondel's *Inwydinge*, comprised of no less than 1378 verses.[44] They are also distinguished by a surprising originality, twisting familiar themes and topoi into new shapes.

The counterpart of these laudatory poems are the countless seventeenth-century images of the Town Hall. In his essay, Stijn Bussels takes one of the earliest paintings Berckheyde painted of the building as his starting point for an exploration of how painters 'portrayed' grand buildings. A painter of portraits

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has to find a balance between depicting the individuality of a person and conveying their status and excellence. Similarly, painters portraying buildings had to do so in a way that made them directly identifiable, but also showed their greatness. We will even see that some seventeenth-century poets go one step further and praise painters such as Berckheyde because in their portraits, they have succeeded in giving life to the buildings.

As already mentioned, Quellinus played an important role in the decorations of the exterior and interior, which are of an unprecedented richness, opulence and variety. His astonishing white marble sculptures are present throughout the building, but play a very prominent role in the Tribunal. By placing Quellinus's caryatids of the Tribunal in a long and international history of the reception of antique models, Frederik Knegtel's essay argues that the exceptionally popular architectural topos was certainly not always slavishly imitated. A comparison with Goujon's caryatids in the Louvre and Rubens's for the ephemeral decorations of Don Ferdinand's entry into Antwerp in 1635, both important models, shows that the caryatids express many varied emotions, but also defines the uniqueness of the Amsterdam versions. Their effect on the public is documented in a series of poems, many of which have never been studied before.

Minou Schraven looks at the ceremonies that have contributed to the construction of the Town Hall in the mind of the public, and more particularly, the laying of the first stone in 1648 and the inauguration in 1655. Such rituals in and around the building have a very long and widely spread history in which they were used, both in the shaping of the actual ritual and its dissemination in word and image, to project the magnificence of the ruler or founder. The case of the Town Hall is no exception. Together with countless texts and images of the building, ceremonial performances strengthened its impact. Beside the broad historical perspective on the ceremonies of 1648 and 1655, Schraven also looks at the objects used during these rituals. The Burgomasters consciously used them to preserve memories of the ceremonial events. They certainly succeeded in this pursuit, for centuries later the objects, such as the silver trowel used for the laying of the first stone, are still displayed in the Rijksmuseum as a material reminder of the magnificence of the founders.

Finally, Freek Schmidt further adds to our knowledge of the impact of the building by studying how in the eighteenth century, the 'constructions beyond the construction' continued, but also changed fundamentally. There are many examples of eighteenth-century visitors who write about their admiration and complete astonishment, but there are also disapproving accounts. Critical visitors notice a striking discrepancy in what they are actually looking at and how they

see the building represented in texts and images. Their critique is often fed by a change in taste due to new aesthetic ideals and architectural visions. Yet others disagree with such criticism, inspired by emergent nationalistic feelings that present the Dutch seventeenth century as the Golden Age and the Town Hall as its most important monument. Thus, appreciation of the building evolved from the admiration, mixed with awe and fear of the chief monument of the energetic city of commerce to a memory of an exceptional past.

Notes

1 Pieter Vlaardingerbroek, 'An Appropriated History: The Case of the Amsterdam Town Hall (1648–1667)', in *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture*, ed. Karl Enenkel and Konrad Ottenheym (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 455–81.

2 For a broad view on the role of Amsterdam within the Republic and the world, see Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

3 Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, 'Introduction', in *Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia and Henk van Nierop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.

4 Erika Kuijpers, *Migrantenstad. Immigratie en sociale verhoudingen in 17^{e}-eeuws Amsterdam* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005).

5 Pieter Vlaardingerbroek, 'Dutch Town Halls and the Setting of the *Vierschaar*', in *Public Buildings in Early Modern Europe,* ed. Konrad Ottenheym, Kirsta De Jonge and Monique Chatenet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 105–18.

6 On van Campen, see esp. *Jacob van Campen. Het klassieke ideaal in de Gouden Eeuw,* ed. Jacobine Huisken, Koen Ottenheym and Gary Schwartz (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Pers, 1995).

7 Pieter Vlaardingerbroek, *Het paleis van de Republiek. Geschiedenis van het stadhuis van Amsterdam* (Zwolle: WBOOKS, 2011), Chapter 1.

8 Marten Jan Bok, 'Familie, vrienden en opdrachtgevers', in *Jacob van Campen. Het klassieke ideaal in de Gouden Eeuw,* 27–53.

9 Quentin Buvelot, 'Schilderkunst' and 'Ontwerpen voor geschilderde decoratieprogramma's', in *Jacob van Campen. Het klassieke ideaal in de Gouden Eeuw,* 54–120 and 121–54.

10 Frits Scholten, *Artus Quellinus. Beeldhouwer van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2010).

11 It is still open to interpretation why the latter's *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis* was removed from the Town Hall only a few months after it was put up. Jan Blanc,

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'Rembrandt and the Historical Construction of this *Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*', in *Myth in History, History in Myth*, ed. Laura Cruz and Willem Frijhoff (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 237–53; Peter van der Coelen, 'Rembrandt's *Civilis*: Iconography, Meaning and Impact', in *Rembrandt 2006. Essays,* ed. Michiel Roscam Abbing (Leiden: Foleor Publishers, 2006), 31–56; Thijs Weststeijn, 'Rembrandt and the Germanic Style', in *Rembrandt and his Circle: Insights and Discoveries,* ed. Stephanie Dickey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 44–66.

12 Katharine Fremantle, *The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam* (Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1959). Cf. Jacobine Huisken, *The Royal Palace on the Dam in a Historical View* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1989).

13 M.G. Emeis, *Het Paleis op de Dam. De geschiedenis van het gebouw en zijn gebruikers* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1981); *Jacob van Campen. Het klassieke ideaal in de Gouden Eeuw*; Eymert-Jan Goossens, *Het Amsterdamse Paleis. Schat van beitel en penseel* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1996); Harry Kraaij, *Het Koninklijk Paleis te Amsterdam. Een beknopte geschiedenis van het gebouw en zijn gebruikers* (Amsterdam: Stichting Koninklijk Paleis te Amsterdam, 1997); Geert Mak, *Het stadspaleis. De geschiedenis van het Paleis op de Dam* (Amsterdam: Atlas, 1997); Pieter Vlaardingerbroek, *Het paleis van de Republiek. Geschiedenis van het stadhuis van Amsterdam* (Zwolle: WBOOKS, 2011).

14 See especially *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Art in Britain, 1550–1660,* ed. Lucy Gent (Yale: Yale University Press, 1996) and *Ambitious Antiquities, Famous Forebears: Constructions of a Glorious Past in the Early Modern Netherlands and in Europe,* ed. Karl Enenkel and Konrad Ottenheym (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

15 Wouter Kuyper, *The Triumphant Entry of Renaissance Architecture into the Netherlands: The Joyeuse Entrée of Philip of Spain into Antwerp in 1549, Renaissance and Mannerist Architecture in the Low Countries from 1530 to 1630* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto, 1994).

16 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana Press, 1987).

17 E.g. Petrus Wittewrongel, *Oeconomia Christiana ofte Christelijke huyshoudinge* (Amsterdam: Abraham vanden Burgh, 1655).

18 Thomas von der Dunk, *Toren versus traditie. De worsteling van classicistische architecten met een middeleeuws fenomeen* (Leiden: Primavera Press, 2015) and Gabri van Tussenbroek, *De toren van de Gouden Eeuw. Een Hollandse strijd tussen gulden en God* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017).

19 Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 714–15.

20 Vlaardingerbroek, *Het paleis van de Republiek*, 54–6. For the references to Solomon and his Temple in a broader European religious context, see Anne-Françoise Morel, *Glorious Temples or Babylonic Whores: The Culture of Church Building in Stuart England Through the Lens of Consecration Sermons* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), esp. 66–72, with an extended bibliography.

21 Everard Meyster, *Hemelsch Land-Spel of Goden Kout der Amersfoortsche Landdouwen. Bevattende den buytensten Opstal van 't Nieuwe Stad-Huys* (Amsterdam: s.n., 1655), 21.
22 Geeraardt Brandt, *Het leven van Joost van den Vondel* ('s-Gravenhage: Frijhoff, 1932), 68. Cf. Marijke Spies, 'Minerva's commentaar: Gedichten rond het Amsterdamse stadhuis', *De zeventiende eeuw* 9, no. 1 (1993): 15.
23 Nina Geerdink, *De sociale verankering van het dichterschap van Jan Vos (1610–1667)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012), 54.
24 Stijn Bussels, Laura Plezier and Marc Van Vaeck, 'Amsterdam sierlijk verbonden met God. Het lofdicht op het Amsterdamse stadhuis van Constantijn Huygens', *Spiegel der Letteren* 59, no. 2/3 (2017): 261–90.
25 See Lodewijk Meyer, *Woordenschat in drie deelen ghescheiden* (Amsterdam: Weduwe van Jan Boom, 1669) 209 where 'magnificentie' is defined as 'heerlijkheidt, pracht, ghrootdaadigheidt'.
26 Cf. Stijn Bussels, 'Meer te verwonderen, als immer te doorgronden. Het Amsterdamse stadhuis, een overweldigende burgerspiegel', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 126, no. 2 (2013): 234–48.
27 Nafsika Athanassoulis, 'A Defense of the Aristotelian Virtue of Magnificence', *Value Inquiry* 50 (2016): 781–95; Guido Guerzoni, 'Liberalitas, Magnificentia, Splendor: The Classic Origins of Italian Renaissance Lifestyles', *History of Political Economy* (1999): 332–78; Kornelia Imesch, *Magnificenza als architektonische Kategorie: Indiviuelle Selbstdarstellung versus ästhetische Verwirklichung von Gemeinschaft in den venzianischen Villen Palladios und Scamozzis* (Oberhausen: Athena Verlag, 2003); A.D. Fraser Jenkins, 'Cosimo de' Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 162–70; F.W. Kent, *Lorenzo de' Medici & the Art of Magnificence* (Baltimore-London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics. Art, Architecture, Literature, Music,* ed. Stephen Jaeger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
28 Norbert Middelkoop, 'Een Amsterdammer in Hamburg en een Noord-Duitser in Amsterdam. Jürgen Ovens' portret van Dirck Kerckrinck', *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 97, no. 4 (2010): 163–69.
29 Anthony Grafton, 'Obelisks and Empires of the Mind', *The American Scholar* 71, no. 1 (2002): 123–27 and Michael Cole, 'Perpetual Exorcism in Sistine Rome', in *The Idol in the Age of Art. Objects, Devotions, and the Early Modern World,* ed. Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 57–76.
30 "Hy voornam 't heerlijck Raetspalais,/ Het Kapitool, zoo hoog en trots/ Te bouwen op de dorre rots". Joost van den Vondel, 'Bouw-zang', in *Olyf-krans der Vreede,* ed. Reyer Anslo (Amsterdam: Tymen Houthaak, 1649), 391.
31 Leonore Stapel, *Perspectieven van de stad. Over bronnen, populariteit en functie van het zeventiende-eeuwse stadsgezicht* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 2000).

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32 For an introduction to the concept of wonder as used in the medieval and early modern period, see *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750,* ed. Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park (New York: Zone Books, 1998). For current and past work on the concepts of 'wonder,' 'awe,' and 'overwhelming emotions' in early modern literary theory going beyond the Dutch context, see among other publications David Sedley's discussion of Montaigne in *Sublimity and Skepticism in Montaigne and Milton* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005); James I. Porter, *The Sublime in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2016); Deborah Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); James V. Mirollo, 'The Aesthetics of the Marvelous', in *Wonders, Marvels and Monsters in Early Modern Culture,* ed. Peter Platt (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999).

33 *The Seven Wonders of the World,* ed. Peter A. Clayton and Martin J. Price (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) and *The Seven Wonders of the World: A History of the Modern Imagination,* ed. by John and Elizabeth Romer (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1995).

34 https://www.tripadvisor.be/ShowUserReviews-g188590-d244447-r403716730-Royal_Palace_Amsterdam-Amsterdam_North_Holland_Province.html (consulted 15 February 2020).

35 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational,* trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1980).

36 Ralph Dekoninck and Annick Delfosse, '*Sacer Horror:* The Construction and Experience of the Sublime in the Jesuit Festivities of the Early Seventeenth-Century Southern Netherlands', in the special issue 'The Sublime and Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Art' of the *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art,* ed. Stijn Bussels and Bram Van Oostveldt, 2, no. 8 (2016), DOI: 10.5092/jhna.2016.8.2.9.

37 Stijn Bussels, 'Theories of the Sublime in the Dutch Golden Age: Franciscus Junius, Joost van den Vondel and Petrus Wittewrongel', *History of European Ideas* 7, no. 42 (2016): 882–92.

38 Constantijn Huygens, *Gedichten*, ed. by J.A. Worp (Groningen: Wolters, 1899) VI, 82–83 (our translation).

39 The three authors of this chapter were involved in the ERC starting grant project 'Elevated Minds: The Sublime in the Public Arts in Seventeenth-Century Paris and Amsterdam', where the reception of Longinus' *On the sublime* was related to expressions of wonder in poetry. Among others, the authors were involved as editors and contributors in two special issues: 'The Sublime and Seventeenth-Century Netherlandish Art' of the *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* (see previous note), as well as 'The Sublime in Early Modern Theories of Art, Architecture and the Theatre', ed. Stijn Bussels, Bram Van Oostveldt and Wieneke Jansen, 2, no. 42 (2016).

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See also: Wieneke Jansen, *Appropriating* Peri hypsous. *Interpretations and Creative Adaptations of Longinus' Treatise* On the Sublime *in Early Modern Dutch Scholarship* (Leiden: Unpublished PhD thesis, 2019).

40 On the rhetorical tradition of describing buildings or cities, see Christine Smith, *Architectural Principles in the Culture of Early Humanism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 150–74; Ulrich Schlegelmilch, *Descriptio Templi. Architektur und fest in det lateinischen Dichtung des konfessionellen Zeitalters* (Regensburg: Verlag Schnell und Steiner, 2003); Robert Eriksen, *The Building in the Text: Alberti to Shakespeare and Milton* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001);

41 Pedro Calderon de la Barca, *El nuevo palacio del Retiro* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1952) (see Enrica Cancelliere, 'El nuevo palacio del Retiro' de Calderon: el Barroco come 'analysis situs' del cosmos', *Inicio* 12 (2019): 33+60) and Madeleine de Scudéry, *La promenade de Versailles* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1669) (see Jörn Steigerwald, 'Les arts et l'amour galant. A propos de *La promenade de Versailles* de Madeleine de Scudéry', *Littératures classiques* 69 (2009), 51–63).

42 Research on the laudatory poem in the Dutch Republic is not extensive. For Huygens's country house poem, see Willemien de Vries, *The Country Estate Immortalized: Constantijn Huygens' Hofwijck* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990). Gregor Weber, *Der Lobtopos des 'lebenden' Bildes* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1991) starts from a long laudatory poem on painting by Jan Vos from 1654. Eddy Verbaan, *De woonplaats van de faam* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011) concentrates on the *laudes urbium* in the seventeenth-century Republic.

43 This research is primarily done in Laura Plezier's PhD project as part of the ERC starting grant 'Elevated Minds'.

44 Matheus Gansneb Tengnagel, 'Op het toekomende Raedhuis', in: *Verscheyde Nederduytsche gedichten* (Amsterdam: Lodewyck Spillebout, 1648), 225 and Vondel, *Inwydinge van 't stadthuis t'Amsterdam*.

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