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**"Enfin, die werkt zal eten, en daarom maar vol ijver door" Brouwers  
Fabriek van Aarden Vaatwerk 1901-1905**

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## Summary and conclusion

The current research is based on the copying books of the W.C. Brouwer's pottery factory between 1901 and 1905. The starting point for this thesis was to gain new insights into the development of the W.C. Brouwers pottery factory during the first four years of operation, using these copying books. Until now these books have never been thoroughly studied. The main question to be answered was how the commercial success of this endeavor could be explained. The foundation for the art vision that Brouwer wished to convey with his work, was determined in the years preceding the establishment of the factory. After his education as a drawing teacher, he joined the studio of his brother-in-law J.A. Loebèr. There he found himself in vanguard of developments in modern applied

arts, in which the ideas of the English Arts and Crafts movement played a major role. Under the supervision of Loebèr, Brouwer developed his skills as a craftsman in wood and metal. The search for his own form of expression for the ideals of renewal led him to ceramics. During the subsequent period in which Brouwer worked at the Gouda pottery factory, Goedewaagen, he learned the important aspects of the potter's craft and started to create his own designs. These developments made Brouwer one of the first Dutch art potters to put into practice the main ideal of the Arts and Crafts movement, the return to handicrafts.

After a lecture he gave about his pottery at the Architectura et Amicitiae society in Amsterdam in 1899, interest in his work grew, in particular in the innovative 'sgraffito' pottery he had designed. The designs for this form of decoration strongly resembled the style of his woodcuts. In a sense they were a translation of these woodcuts into clay. In 1901 after a few difficult years, and with the help of contacts and friends, Brouwer succeeded in borrowing money to set up his own pottery in Zoeterwoude, near Leiden. On business level, he was assisted by the manufacturer David van Oordt, who acted as a kind of mentor and was constantly looking over his shoulder.

Goedewaagen assisted him how to approach his new desires and as to where he could source the raw materials he needed. In the first six months Brouwer struggled to get used to his new oven and his main goal was to earn enough money to keep his business afloat. In this period he focused on the production of food packaging materials including jars for jam and confectionery factories and molds for a biscuit factory. He also produced objects designed by others. Only part of what came out of the oven during the first months was suitable for sale, so it was too early for Brouwer to conclude supply agreements with shops. He selected the best objects for exhibitions of applied arts and managed to supply a few art dealers. Just as he thought that he gained full control of his oven, a fire broke out, shutting down his factory for several months in April 1902.

As an artist-craftsman, Brouwer remained faithful to the ideals he had in mind: traditionally produced pottery that everybody could afford. He refused to make objects that could not be made on a potter's wheel, although he sometimes deviated from this on special request. For Brouwer being a manufacturer meant that he was involved in all aspects of the production process, which hindered the growth of his factory. In addition to designing and decorating new models, he also had to arrange large stocks of peat to fuel the furnaces, packaging for his products and transport to end users. Through Jong Hollands Huis, a new gallery and workshop for modern arts and crafts in Breda, for which he was asked to design utility graphics, he sold small craft copper works as an alternative source of income, in addition to pottery and prints. Brouwer also promoted the plaiting and weaving works made by his wife and sister, and generated interest in these objects from sale rooms of modern crafts.

Due to the growth of the models in his collection he produced an illustrated price list to make it easier for dealers and private individuals to make their choice. In this way misunderstandings could be prevented and the logistics would run considerably smoother. Brouwer's initial reluctance to take this step lay in fear that his products would be counterfeited, a problem that was not solved until the 1912 Copyright Act. He eventually proceeded and made blueprints of the main models, which were supplied to the main traders. In 1905 this system was replaced by a booklet containing photo prints that covered an even larger part of the range. This led to the first official catalogue a few years later.

Several ornamental and utility designs in his range were inspired by objects he saw in museums or were made after designs were sent to him by his customers. His own household also inspired him to design new utensils. A major business breakthrough was the success of the spell plates, which were in great demand in all levels of society. The order of 1,000 plates by a carbonated water producer who wanted to distribute the plates as a promotional object, brought a large financial gain and made the plates the most popular trademark of the factory.

Exhibitions of applied arts played a vital role in his success. Although the 1902 international arts and crafts exhibition in Turin did not bring the expected influx of orders from abroad, the many awards received by Dutch exhibitors generated enormous publicity for the factory in the media. Brouwer benefited greatly from these advertising opportunities because award-winning products, that everyone had heard of, sold well. He received invitations to participate in many national and international art and applied art exhibitions that followed in the slipstream of Turin. Since many exhibitions followed each other in quick succession, overlapped or even took place simultaneously, it was a huge challenge for Brouwer to make sure that he was able to be represented in each one of them. He successfully achieved this because he was represented by other exhibitors or dealers who in return earned money from the sale of his pottery. Abroad, he looked for suitable shops and art dealerships where his work could be sold. He also became acquainted with his competitors through exhibitions and discovered that his methods of decoration were being imitated by others. He called companies, such as Amstelhoek and De Wekker, which threatened his livelihood, as the real competitors because they deliberately got into his business. Others, including Jacobus Lob of the De Distel ceramics factory, he regarded more as colleagues who earned an honest living with their own designs and decorations.

Brouwer's unbridled efforts to constantly look for new sales opportunities played a decisive role in his success. He found new sources of income with sales to bookshops in places where tourists bought postcards and souvenirs. In addition, furniture and interior design stores bought pottery to decorate their furniture and sometimes sold it as well. Surprisingly enough, the classic sales rooms for modern applied art played a subordinate role. Not much of his pottery was sold at Arts and Crafts

and Die Haghe in The Hague and 't Binnenhuis in Amsterdam only came into play after the bankruptcy of Amstelhoek. The animosity between Brouwer and Amstelhoek was the reason that Brouwer initially completely ignored 't Binnenhuis. After Amstelhoek went under in 1903, he dared to interest 't Binnenhuis in his products, something that he had not been able to do until then. It is striking that also at 't Binnenhuis, especially spell plates with which Brouwer was successful everywhere, caught on so well. In 1905 a third of his income came from the sale of these items. To his shock and frustration, his personal friend Johan Lambeek took over the ceramics department of the bankrupt Amstelhoek. To make things worse Lambeek only informed Brouwer after he had acquired some technical knowledge about pottery from him personally.

The failure of Jong Hollands Huis in Breda was a sign that interest in modern applied art outside the Randstad was limited. Entrepreneurs who focused specifically on this quickly found themselves in trouble. At Onder den Sint Maarten in Haarlem, the sale of products made by Brouwer came to a complete standstill in 1905, as did sales at home furnishings and furniture warehouse P. Pronk in Hilversum, which was also a dealer in modern applied art. Sales of his earthenware at the art dealership of N. Fokker and the furniture factory and applied art dealer J.A. Huizinga in Groningen also came to a halt. However, sales at general department stores with a wider range such as Reinders in Utrecht and gallantry stores such as Boerboom in Zwolle and Deventer, remained stable.

Beginning in 1902, Brouwer started designing relief tiles for walls after various architects showed interest in this. They convinced Brouwer of the great business opportunities that the production of building ceramics could offer him. Due to the unsuitability of the oven, Brouwer was unable to meet these requests. Among other things, the huge sales of spell plates made the conversion of the factory into a public limited company, financially possible in mid-1905. Due to the discovery of a previously unstudied collection of letters in the archive of the Peace Palace in The Hague, it was decided to add another passage to the thesis about Brouwer's involvement in this project, because this was of significant importance in connection with the development of Brouwer's artistry.

As part of the expansion that followed, Brouwer was able to build a second and larger oven, which paved the way for the production of monumental garden and building ware. Following the order of a couple of terracotta lions by architect Albert Otten, Brouwer landed a significant commission for the decoration of the Peace Palace in The Hague. This offered him the opportunity to establish his name as a factory of terracotta building ware, and he took up this challenge with the same enthusiasm with which he previously managed to drive his pottery to success. Even now he sought as much publicity as possible and literally brought the architectural world to The Hague to view his work. This

eventually earned him a number of follow-on assignments. The construction industry was reluctant to use terracotta as an alternative to natural stone because of the perceived risks of rapid weathering and pollution as a result of gypsum efflorescence. It is largely due to co-architect J.A.G. van der Steur that Brouwer was given the opportunity to prove the durability of his product. This laid the foundations for the definitive shift of the emphasis from production of ornamental and utility pottery to terracotta building sculptures.

The research of the copying books revealed which factors were important for the success of Brouwer's pottery. The letters that he wrote to people and companies that played an important role in the New Art movement around 1900 yielded a wealth of new information about contacts between artists, the importance of applied arts exhibitions and the spread of the New Art in the Netherlands. The countless stories about largely unknown persons and companies that came to light mean that this research provides a wealth of new data for local history and also from an economic-historical point of view. The organization behind the success has become clearly visible through this research. What is striking is that entrepreneurship was apparently in Brouwer's genes. From the start, the success of his company was based on intensive use of his network. The belief in his own abilities with which he coped with setbacks and the constant focus on achieving his goals were particularly prominent. Brouwer was primarily driven by improving and distributing his product and not by financial gain. In addition to the creative process of constant renewal of his oeuvre, he tirelessly searched for new application possibilities and opportunities to sell his work.

Retaining customers turned out to be much more difficult than finding them. What is striking is the minor importance in the sale of Brouwer's pottery of leading sales rooms for modern crafts. Outside the Randstad, initiatives in this area gradually faded out, creating the impression that the already small market share of modern applied arts in the Netherlands shrank rather than grew. Given the number of sales locations that got into financial trouble around 1905, the public seemed to be looking for something new again. By 1905, the ideals of artisanal manufacture and other principles inspired by the English Arts and Crafts movement, such as function as a guideline for design, choice of materials and decoration, had apparently passed their peak.

His silver medal in Turin paved the way for participation in various arts and crafts exhibitions organized in the Netherlands and abroad. The flood of orders that resulted from the publicity around Turin brought into play another important factor in Brouwer's success: He sensed how the market and the growing role of advertising functioned. The publicity in newspapers and magazines played a central role in the notoriety surrounding his product. He used this to attract customers to his products and then advised them to do the same. Brouwer understood that an objective judgment

from an expert angle would ensure that his products would sell themselves. Pure entrepreneurship comes to the fore here; a real entrepreneur does everything to sell his product which reflects in creative thinking, flexibility and remaining focused on goals. It was unimportant to Brouwer where his products were sold, as long as they were sold.

Brouwer's courage and willingness to take risks were also important characteristics of successful entrepreneurship. When he was given the opportunity to provide a large amount of terracotta sculpture and construction hardware for the Peace Palace, he accepted this challenge regardless of the risks associated with such a large project, which could not be fully assessed in advance. The contractor's construction schedule forced him to always deliver on time, and he had to use hired labor to complete the job, and source additional furnace capacity outside his factory. Despite some setbacks Brouwer was always able to deal with the problems adequately and got the job done on time. This was of immense importance as it convinced the construction industry that he could handle projects of this scale under time pressure. As was also the case with his pottery, Brouwer once again proved himself to be the linchpin in a publicity campaign that immediately won him follow-up orders. Here, too, he managed to get his products to sell themselves.

An important part of this thesis is devoted to the numerous exhibitions of applied arts in which Brouwer participated during the years 1901-1905. Applied art took a more prominent position in general exhibitions of industry as a result of the good reviews that the Dutch participation in Turin in 1902 had received. Applied arts was hoisted up as an example of an industry in which the Netherlands regains a leading position in the world. The organizing committees took advantage of this by attracting participants and visitors with the participation of the award-winning artists, which would ensure a comprehensive exploitation. The arts and crafts exhibition in Copenhagen (1904) has been extensively researched by C.A. Burgers.<sup>1222</sup> As far as I know, this was not sufficiently the case for most other exhibitions. Research into Brouwer's participation in the important Holländische Kunstausstellung at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld, revealed that the archive of this exhibition is preserved in five files, containing approximately 600 letters, reports about the exhibition in newspapers and magazines, and price lists.<sup>1223</sup> This led to the question of what could be found in

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<sup>1222</sup> See: Burgers 1972.

<sup>1223</sup> The extensive archive of the Holländische Kunstausstellung in Krefeld is not easily accessible. Research into this archive will provide much more information about the exhibition in Krefeld, the artists involved, the selection of participating artists and the sales during the exhibition, for which unfortunately there is no opportunity within the scope of this research. Curator M. Holzhey was amazed at the extensive correspondence between Brouwer and director Friedrich Deneken that can be found in the Brouwer archive.

archives of the other exhibitions which were reviewed in this thesis. The importance of exhibitions of arts and crafts for the distribution of Brouwer's pottery, showed that such events were of great importance for both craftsmen and trade. The infrastructure of the trade in Dutch applied art from around 1900 has become much clearer as a result of this research. I would therefore like to advocate broad research into (inter)national exhibitions of arts and crafts that took place in the first decade of the 20th century. Perhaps Krefeld and the list of other exhibitions discussed in this thesis can be seen as a starting point.

Brouwer occupies a unique position within his generation of craftsmen. To my knowledge, there is no other example in the Dutch New Art landscape of a ceramist who, as factory director, literally kept both the artistic and business management in his own hands, and who was successful in doing so. This thesis confirmed the impression that his pottery was different in decoration methods, color and design from anything else in this field. It combined purely traditional starting points as a logical design arising from the function with which this handmade utility pottery had been manufactured for many years, with traditional decoration methods that showed something completely new in terms of design. He clung to the ideas as they had formed in him as a young man, with an emphatic pursuit of commercial success. However, his ideals were deeply ingrained and always remained more important than the growth of his business. He refused to sacrifice it for financial gain. He was an idealist in heart and soul who lived, above all, for the things he made. He held on to the sincere belief that the ideal of a better society was possible through disseminating art to the people.

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She too has a special interest in its contents because it relates to the earliest history of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum.