Still Life: A Comparison of Pieter Claesz and Jean-Siméon Chardin

Danielle Rebecca Ezor
Advised by Margaret Carroll

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the
Prerequisite for Honors
in Art History

April 2013

© Danielle Rebecca Ezor
## Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 3

I. Haarlem: Setting the Scene ............................................................................................................. 7

II. Paris: Setting the Scene ............................................................................................................... 27

III. Still Life in Theory, the Evolution of the Dutch Still life, and Pieter Claesz as a Still Life Painter ...................................................................................................................................... 48

IV. Still Life in Art Theory, Still Life in France, the Dutch and Flemish Influence, and the Life, Work, and Reception of Chardin ........................................................................................................... 78

V. A Comparison of Claesz and Chardin ......................................................................................... 110

Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 134

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................................... 138

Figures ............................................................................................................................................... 142
Introduction

Still life, from the Dutch term *stilleven*, refers to *stil* meaning the absence of motion or animation and *leven* meaning model.¹ This genre of art takes as its subject inanimate objects like fruits, flowers, and game. The still-life genre has been around since ancient times with the most famous story involving still life recalled by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia* (Natural History, c. 77-79 CE). Zeuxis in a competition for the title of best painter with Parrhasius painted a still life of grapes so convincingly that some birds tried to peck at them. Zeuxis lost the competition as Parrhasius painted a curtain that Zeuxis tried to pull back to reveal the painting, not realizing the curtain was in the painting.² Without Pliny’s record of Zeuxis’ illusory still life and other accounts of ancient still life painting by Roman historians such as Vitruvius in his *De Architectura libri decem* (The Ten Books on Architecture, c. 15 BCE) and Philostratus in his *Lives of the Sophists* (c. 231-237 CE), the modern genre of still life may not have emerged as it did and when it did in early modern Europe.³

In early modern Europe, the genre of still life was born in the sixteenth century and began to truly flourish in the early years of the seventeenth century. The Dutch painter, Karl van Mander, offered advice on still-life painting in his *Schilderboeck* (1604), although at this time the term “still life” had not yet been coined.⁴ At the end of the seventeenth century, still life, or *nature morte* in French, appeared as a single unified genre in André Félibien’s *Conférences de l’Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* (Conferences of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, 1669) published in France and in Samuel van Hoogstraten’s *Inleyding tot de hoge schoole der Schilderkuns; anders de zichtbaere werelt* (Introduction to the elevated school of painting, or the visible world, 1678), published in the Northern Netherlands, in which the term for still life is *stilleven*.⁵ Even though still life arose as a genre in the period, still life was the
least theorized and least academically discussed of the genres of art in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although Claesz and Chardin painted this little discussed and lowly genre, both were successful and hailed as talented painters in their own times.

Claesz was famed for his monochromatic breakfast still lifes, which depict a meager meal, in Haarlem in the 1630s and early 1640s. His works from this period illustrate his passionate interest in simple objects and in the formal qualities of painting such as light, texture, paint, and composition. Chardin, who painted highly popular still lifes in Paris from the late 1720s to his death in the 1770s, shows the same predilection for simple objects and interest in formal qualities in his still-life paintings. The works of Chardin’s later period from the late 1750s through the 1760s, which generally depict a simple meal or a meager display of food, exhibit these interests and relate thematically to Claesz’s breakfast pieces in their simple depictions of food. Chardin’s works show clear references to the still life conventions from the seventeenth-century Netherlands, and thus I will compare and discuss the works of these two still-life artists.

The art historian Norman Bryson notes that a great artist can make one see what a genre really is, why it is important, and what it is for, and credits Chardin with doing this for still life through his familiar subject matter, simple compositions, and loose brushstrokes. Claesz, however, began painting still lifes in this vein over a century before Chardin, although Claesz stopped painting like this in his late life, likely due to changes in the still-life market. Chardin, on the other hand, was able to continue in this style until he could no longer paint, allowing him to take his developments even further. Furthermore, Claesz and Chardin provide a commentary on the genre by reacting to the still-life paintings of their predecessors through their works. These two artists create a relatable subject matter for their viewers, focusing on formal qualities
of painting, and using innovative brushstrokes. In doing so, they bringing artistry to a genre generally considered to be little more than pure craft.\textsuperscript{13} The works of these supremely talented still-life artists reveal the genre’s value to an artist, enabling him to create a more beautiful nature through painting than the one meticulously observed and copied. Claesz and Chardin show us that this genre contains true artistry and should not be ignored.

The first chapter discusses the social history of seventeenth-century Haarlem. It focuses on the economy, social class, material consumption, gastronomy, and societal concerns regarding luxury. Similarly, the second chapter examines the social history of eighteenth-century Paris, focusing on many of the same concerns in Parisian society and their effects of Chardin. Chapter three looks at the artistic milieu of seventeenth-century Haarlem and the prominent art theory on still life in the Netherlands. It then considers the evolution of Dutch still life and the life, work, and reception of Claesz. Likewise, the fourth chapter examines the artistic milieu of eighteenth-century Paris and the influential art theory of the time. Next, it discusses still life in Paris before Chardin and the influences of Dutch art in Paris. Lastly, chapter four looks at Chardin’s life, the progression of his works, and the general reception of his paintings during his own lifetime. The last chapter synthesizes the previous four chapters in a comparison of these two artists, using three works by Claesz and three works by Chardin to demonstrate how these artists provided a commentary on still life and elevated the genre above mere imitation by reacting to their predecessors and using familiar subject matter and formal techniques.
Notes to Introduction

3 Koslow, *Frans Snyders*, 45.
5 Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 53-54.
I.

Haarlem: Setting the Scene

One must examine the broad social context in which Pieter Claesz painted his still lifes and how this affected his work in order to understand his paintings. The seventeenth century in the Netherlands, known as the Dutch Golden Age, was a unique phenomenon in Europe. The Dutch Golden Age, during which Claesz painted his still lifes, was a time of great economic prosperity for the general population, which had never before been seen in Europe.\(^1\) This chapter will review this unique social context and its implications for Claesz’s works. First, I will look at population growth and the economy, focusing on the agricultural, fishing, production, and trade sectors that led the Netherlands to economic success. Then I will focus on class structure in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. The middle class became the leading social class within the Dutch Golden Age, whereas elsewhere in Europe, the aristocracy still dominated the social sphere.\(^2\) Next, I will look at material consumption and the transition to a society of conspicuous consumption, in which the new wealthy middle class could afford luxuries previously unavailable to them.\(^3\) Then I will discuss the Dutch diet and prescriptions for healthy eating in the Netherlands. Theories about healthy eating influenced the standard Dutch meal that Claesz so often depicts. I will subsequently examine the social attitudes towards luxury and the new culture of material consumption. Finally I will consider some specific implications of the social context of the Dutch Golden Age for Claesz’s paintings.

Population Growth and the Economy

The Dutch Golden Age witnessed a period of rapid population growth and urbanization. Between 1500 and 1650, the Dutch population almost doubled in size, increasing from about
950,000 to about 1,900,000 people. Population growth was focused in urban centers, as the urban population grew faster than the rural population. In Holland, 59% of the population lived in cities by 1622. The population was primarily industrial, and trade cities grew though the 1650s, stimulating the non-agricultural economy, because there were more people in urban centers to take on jobs in production, trade, and finance. In less than fifty years, Haarlem itself grew from 18,000 in 1572 during the siege of Haarlem by the Spanish, to 40,000 people in 1620.

In tandem with this population growth and urbanization, the Dutch economy expanded rapidly. The economy saw unequaled growth compared to other European markets, which were in a state of crisis. This was particularly astounding as the Netherlands consisted of fewer than two million people and had almost no natural resources. Dutch wealth came from shipping and the monopolization of the Baltic grain trade after the closure of the port of Antwerp. This allowed the Dutch to import and export grain and focus their agricultural and fishing industries on more prosperous commodities. Dutch dominance in the grain trade allowed them to expand their trade into exotic and luxury items, moving into the Mediterranean and the Asian markets in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Trade also allowed the Dutch to capitalize on items such as beer and linen, by importing low quality or unprocessed goods and making high profits on the finished product. Brought on by domination of the Baltic grain trade, expansion in the agricultural, fishing, production, and trading sectors allowed the Dutch Republic to become the wealthiest country Europe had ever seen.

Agriculture thrived due to modernized and commercialized agrarian practices. Significant amounts of land were also reclaimed from swamps in the first half of the seventeenth century, with about 100,000 hectares of land reclaimed between 1590 and 1650 in Holland, providing more arable land. Because the Dutch gave up the labor and land-intensive practice of grain
production, their agricultural sectors could focus on more profitable commodities, such as livestock husbandry, dairy, tobacco, fruits, and vegetables. The most important of these agricultural pursuits was dairy production, for which Holland became famous. Cheese and butter were extremely valuable, and production and trade in these products garnered fame and wealth for the Netherlands. There was even a seventeenth-century saying which noted cheese’s importance to Holland’s people and economy: “kaas Hollands broos, kaas Hollands rijkdom.” Cheese was indeed Holland’s bread, as almost all Dutchmen consumed cheese, with great national and local pride. In addition, butter and cheese were espoused as nutritious, encouraging people to buy the Netherlands’ most prized agricultural product.

Even more crucial than cheese in the Dutch economy was herring, with the Dutch controlling the European herring trade. Dutch fleets caught about half of the yearly European herring catch. The Dutch were able to monopolize this market by outfitting their fishing vessels specifically for the herring catch. These boats were designed with the ability to preserve the herring on board, eliminating the need to return to land before shipping out each haul. Furthermore, armed warships escorted Dutch herring vessels so that they could fish safely in deep-sea waters, allowing the Dutch access to waters, into which other countries could not afford to venture. Because of its popularity in the Dutch diet and its value as a major trading item, herring was a vital commodity for the Dutch economy.

The clothing and beer industries were also important sectors of the Dutch economy, particularly in Haarlem. By dyeing and finishing raw cloth imported from England, Haarlem’s textile industry made a 47% profit. The beer industry in Haarlem also flourished throughout the seventeenth century, growing from ten breweries in the fifteenth century to over fifty by 1650.
The production of Haarlem brews peaked between 1620 and 1650 with a total of three-hundred to four-hundred and fifty barrels per brew per year, with more brews per year and more barrels per brew than any other period in history.\textsuperscript{21} Popularity of Haarlem’s brews also grew because Haarlem beer was considered to be of the highest quality and was exported to other cities around the Netherlands, even those with brewing industries of their own.\textsuperscript{22} Like cheese and herring, beer was a staple in the Dutch diet and an important part of Haarlem’s economy.\textsuperscript{23}

The most important sector of the Dutch economy was shipping and trade. Due to their superior shipbuilding and efficiency, the Dutch offered the best shipping prices. This caused them to dominate the world maritime trade, including trade in and out of the Netherlands, the Baltic nations, England, Western Europe, the East and West Indies, and in times of peace with the Spaniards, in the Mediterranean and with the Levant as well.\textsuperscript{24} The Dutch led the shipping market in transporting both mass-produced and luxury goods.\textsuperscript{25} As the top traders in the world, the Dutch brought levels of wealth to Holland that were previously unheard of in Europe.\textsuperscript{26}

The Baltic shipping route was considered their “mother trade,” as it was the main avenue of their grain imports and herring exports.\textsuperscript{27} The Dutch began not only importing grain into the Netherlands, but also transporting it to all areas of Europe. Holland was known as the “grain-bin” of Europe, despite growing no grain of its own. As grain was the foundation of the European diet in the seventeenth century, the Dutch prospered from their monopolization of the grain trade.\textsuperscript{28}

The Dutch also profited from the trade in luxury items, such as spices, citrus fruits, sugar, fine china, and wine. This last product, which features in Dutch still lifes of all luxury levels, was also central to Dutch trade. Dutch wine-dealing connected producers and consumers from around the world.\textsuperscript{29} As with grain, the Dutch did not produce wine, which came from France, Spain,
Italy, and Germany. Rather Dutch traders turned a profit by distributing it throughout the world. Dominating this trade gave the Dutch easy access to wine, another essential beverage to the seventeenth-century Dutch diet, albeit a more costly beverage than beer.

Dutch still-life artists proudly depicted these products, cheese, herring, beer, linen, grain, wine, and other imported luxury items—the staples of their economy. The Laid Table by Haarlem still-life painter, Nicolaes Gillis, demonstrates this (figure 1). Gillis depicts a table piled with foodstuffs: fruits, wine, bread, cheese, and nuts. The painting features two large cheeses stacked in the center behind some lemons and a roll of white bread. On the left of the cheeses stands two glasses of wine and some fruits and nuts. On the right another goblet of wine and some berries in a Chinese porcelain bowl. Each of these items represents a commodity the Dutch traded in, and their presence in this work would have instilled a sense of pride in the Dutchmen who recognized these items as the source their wealth.

Pieter Claesz’s Breakfast Piece (1636) highlights the specific aspects of Dutch trade most important to Haarlem (figure 2). It depicts three essential products from Haarlem: beer, herring, and linen, along with bread, which represents the “mother trade”—grain. This painting represents the lifeblood of the Haarlem economy with subtle undertones of national and local pride.

Social Class in Seventeenth-Century Haarlem

As a result of urbanization and economic growth, Dutch society changed from an agrarian and aristocratic society to an urban, bourgeois society during the Dutch Golden age. The urban middle class population became dominant, and wealth became the most important criterion for determining social status in urban centers in the Netherlands. As a result of this,
the class system in the Netherlands was not pyramidal, as was usual in Europe, but rather it had an ovoid structure, with a few aristocrats at the top, a few poor at the bottom, and an enormous and swelling middle class, the *brede middestand.*\(^{36}\)

Aristocrats were few and far between, with only twelve aristocratic families left in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century and only seven in the eighteenth century. By the start of the seventeenth century, Dutch aristocrats owned less than 10% of arable land.\(^{37}\) Furthermore, there were few mechanisms by which a new family could be ennobled, and aristocratic families adhered to exclusive marriage policies, further shrinking their population and influence. Hence, Dutch aristocratic presence and power was limited.\(^{38}\) Similarly, the poor numbered very few, consisting mostly of migrant and unskilled or seasonal workers,\(^{39}\) with farmers even moving out of poverty and into some wealth by owning their own land and profiting from Dutch agricultural prosperity.\(^{40}\)

The majority in Dutch society, the broad middle class, consisted of a great range of people, including skilled artisans, guild members, producers, such as millers and brewers, petty professionals, such as notaries, clerics, and apothecaries, traders, merchants, and even the wealthiest financial magnates. Naturally there were vast differences in education, wealth, and societal behavior within the middle class, but in general they were well fed, well housed, and literate.\(^{41}\) The most influential subgroup in the middle class was the regent class, which consisted of those holding an official city-government position. Because the defining aspect of this group was based on holding office, one did not automatically remain a regent until death nor was there any assurance that one’s progeny would also be members of the regent class, although many within the regent class only married other regents.\(^{42}\) The regent class also did not necessarily consist of the wealthiest members of the middle class, which were the merchant elites.\(^{43}\) These
merchant elites derived their wealth from trade, with the greatest profits found in trade with the Dutch East Indies and West Indies. While there were levels of elite within the broad middle class, social advancement within the brede middestand was based on wealth, and thus it was fairly easy to advance socially. This middle class group controlled the major part of nation’s wealth and consisted of those who prospered from the economic success of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

Material Consumption in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Culture

Dutch consumption was traditionally thought to be inconspicuous consumption, but this is probably only because conspicuous consumption was associated primarily with courtly life in seventeenth-century Europe. There is however strong evidence of Dutch material consumption, especially because the middle class had the economic means to purchase luxury goods that were only available to the elite elsewhere in Europe. The Dutch were in a unique position in that they had an immense amount of wealth with little land in which to funnel it. Thus the swelling middle class focused their newfound wealth on their homes, creating a national market for luxury items. Estate inventories reveal how the wealthiest of the burghers decorated their homes. There are fewer records of the holdings of the less wealthy within the brede middestand, but enough to compose a general picture of what their homes looked like as well. While their houses were less lavish than those of the wealthiest, they still enjoyed material comfort.

One of the wealthiest of homes for which there exists a record of the estate was the Bartoletti house, which was owned by the director of the Dutch West India Company, one of the biggest trading companies in the Netherlands. The interior was decorated with leather and oak, Turkish rugs, and ebony framed mirrors. There were musical instruments, full-length drapes,
armchairs, and the finest tableware, as well as paintings in every room. There were even seven paintings hanging in the maid’s room.\textsuperscript{49}

One can view an example of these luxurious interiors in the painting \textit{Leisure Time in an Elegant Setting} (ca. 1663-65) by Pieter de Hooch (figure 3). The floors are laid marble, and a Turkish rug covers the table. A beautiful cabinet made of multiple woods stands against the walls, which are clad with leather panels. A large history painting, one of the most expensive types of paintings,\textsuperscript{50} hangs over the cabinet. Another painting hangs on the far left, and another one can just be made out over the doorway in the next room. This piece depicts some of the more luxurious objects found in the wealthiest homes—a testament to material consumption in the upper levels of the \textit{brede middestand}.

The house of a less wealthy man, such as a guild member, petty tradesmen, or notary, would have been less opulent but still comfortable. These homes would often contain two beds, a few tables, some wardrobes, heavy drapes, lace curtains, Delftware, candlesticks, and linens. The kitchens of these homes were especially well equipped, with iron and maybe even some copper pots and pans. The most expensive items would have been the bed-warming pans and kettles. These homes also had a variety of cutlery, the cost of which varied depending on the material. For example, pewter tableware was cheap while silver cutlery cost significantly more. Standard \textit{roemers}, hollow glasses with colored prunts that feature in still lifes, cost about a dozen for a guilder and were a staple in many homes. In all, the home furnishings would probably have had a total value of about one thousand guilders.\textsuperscript{51}

In addition to home furnishings, pictures, either prints or paintings, were very common in middle class homes, so much so that many foreign travelers, such as John Evelyn (1818), Peter Mundy (1907), Jean de Parival (1651), and William Aglionby (1671), commented on this fact,\textsuperscript{52}
all in the vein of the well noted remark by Evelyn: “pictures are very common here, there being scarce an ordinary tradesman whose house is not decorated with them.”

Paintings and prints varied greatly in price but at the time were considered craft objects meant to decorate the home. For this reason, most households owned pictures of some sort. For example, Jan de Vries has estimated that there were over three million paintings hanging in Dutch homes by the 1660s. Recall that whole Dutch population, not just in the province of Holland, at this time was a little less than two million people, demonstrating that paintings were incredibly popular as home decorations.

In *Mother Lacing her Bodice* (ca. 1659), De Hooch paints a modest interior similar to the one described above (figure 4). This interior still boasts three paintings, but they are much smaller than those in *Leisure Time in an Elegant Setting* (figure 3). Two of these paintings seem to be landscapes, and the other may be a genre scene, which would have all been on the less expensive spectrum of paintings that the large histories in *Leisure Time*. A brass bed-warming pan hangs on the wall, and a simple candlestick and water jug stand on the side table. There are no wall hangings, and the cloth on the table to the right is most likely simple white linen, a stark contrast to the leather panels and Turkish rugs of *Leisure Time*. This painting does depict a bed, as expected, and a ladder-back chair in the background, although this one is simpler than the ornately carved back of the upholstered chair in *Leisure Time*. This interior, while plainer than the previous one, still contains items showing the wealth and material consumption of the *brede middestand*.

While works of art depict typical Dutch interiors, civic lotteries also attest to the items that the Dutch *brede middestand* desired. Lotteries were held as civic occasions to raise money for charitable enterprises, where people could buy tickets for the chance to win a variety of
prizes. Typical prizes included candlesticks, mirrors, goblets, plates, ewers, paintings, and other household items. These lotteries were very popular, as many people would buy many lottery tickets and would even trade their goods, such as livestock, cheese, or even paintings, for lottery tickets if they lacked the money. These lotteries further suggest that the Dutch participated in a society of material consumption.  

*Dutch Diet and Healthy Eating*

In the Dutch Golden Age, physicians and household guides recommended modest meals, consisting mostly of cheese, bread, butter, fish, meat, vegetables, and beer. Generally, Dutchmen of all levels of wealth followed guidelines for these simple meals, which were then featured in Dutch “breakfast” still-life paintings.

Johan van Beverwyck, a well-respected, seventeenth-century, Dutch doctor, wrote a manual on healthy eating entitled *Schat der Gesontheyt* (Treasure of Good Health, 1636), which became the standard for health in the Dutch home at this time. In his book, Beverwyck related a wholesome diet and lifestyle for longevity, health, and morality. Beverwyck suggested eating local foods, such as cheese, dairy, beer, herring, and locally grown fruits and vegetables. Furthermore, he discouraged eating imported, “strange” foods, such as “sausage from Bologna” or imported spices like mace and nutmeg. The doctor noted that local foods were less expensive to buy and thus offered less temptation. Beverwyck’s principal message was one of moderation in diet.

Another standard Dutch book on food and cooking for the *brede middestand*, *De Verstandige Kok of Zorgvuldige Huyshouder* (The Wise Cook or the Painstaking Householder, 1668) by Petrus Neijland, also endorsed a simple and balanced diet focused on wholesomeness
and health. The *Verstandige Huyshouder* advocated for a simple diet, with fresh meat once a week, a lot of cheese and bread, nourishing stews, fresh vegetables, and salads, all of which could be found locally.\(^{63}\) The *Verstandige Huyshouder* advocated drinking beer, even supplying instructions to its readers on how to make home brews.\(^{64}\) Also like *Schat der Gesontheyt*, imported foods, particularly exotic spices like mace and cinnamon, were considered unhealthy and discouraged from the diet.\(^{65}\) The *Verstandige Huyshoder* promoted a balanced meal, avoiding both abstinence and excess.

Although the literature generally advocated a balanced, simple meal, sumptuous meals were still consumed by the middle classes. Feasts were often held in celebration of important events or in concert with guild traditions. Most often, these feasts consisted of carved red meats and wine drunk out of elaborate, ritual vessels. The specific fare however was often dictated by the occasion, as various societies and guilds had long-standing traditions regarding the food consumed. For example, the goldsmith’s guild in Dordrecht feasted on ham pasties, suckling pig, calf’s head, sweet pies, and wine from Cyprus or Burgundy. These banquets were important social events, and the traditions were upheld even though prominent doctors, household cookery books, and even the clergy discouraged these extravagant meals.\(^{66}\)

Nevertheless, the daily food consumption of the *brede middestand* seems to have followed the general guidelines of van Beverwyck and the *Verstandige Huyshoder*. The average wage earner in the Netherlands with a family of four probably bought a single loaf of bread a day for the family and then supplemented this with vegetables, fish, and dairy products, which were often cheaper than bread. Even low class workers could afford fresh and cured meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, butter, eggs, and cheese. Many middle class families invested in an ox or a pig in the fall, keeping the meat for the winter. Fresh fruits and vegetables were cheap and
commonplace in Dutch markets, and dried fruits were often used for cooking. Even some more exotic fruits, such as melons, oranges, and grapes became common and relatively inexpensive by 1660. Beer was the preferred beverage for both children and adults, and it was very cheap at only half a stuiver for a tankard (where twenty stuivers make a guilder). Wine was more expensive, but also consumed widely in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. Members of the brede middestand, no matter the difference in their wealth, sat down to a very similar breakfast, the one espoused by doctors and household manuals, across the country: bread, butter, cheese, fish, pasties, and beer or some similar beverage.

These simple meals are precisely those depicted in genre and still-life paintings from the time. This can be seen in Prayer Before the Meal (1660) by Jan Steen, which portrays a small family sitting down to a meager meal (figure 5). On the table lies a loaf of bread on top of half a wheel of cheese. Some cured meat rests on a pewter plate on top of a barrel. Claesz’s Breakfast Piece (1636) also demonstrates a typical Dutch meal, with a loaf of bread, a herring, and a glass of beer (figure 2).

Social Anxieties about Luxury

As a result of a thriving economy and a rise in material consumption, complex attitudes towards luxury surfaced in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. The absence of cultural traditions within the Netherlands for the expenditure of their surplus of wealth caused the ethical conversation on luxury to remain relevant throughout the Dutch Golden Age. The church was the primary moral authority at the time, but Dutch humanists, such as Jacob Cats, also provided the Dutch population with a discourse on ethics. These principal sources for moral guidance
encouraged the Dutch population to maintain a balance between materialism and sobriety. With affluence, came anxieties about the expenditure of this wealth.

Officially, church doctrine stated that wealth brought more evil into the world than good and led to avarice and other vices. Thus believers should refrain from frivolous spending and try to actively balance their wealth with sobriety and charity. Many affluent members of Dutch society assuaged their anxieties about their wealth by using their money or business enterprises for charitable ventures. For example, one could donate money to the church or to charities or come to altruistic business agreements, such as lending to the church or to charitable causes at very low rates for extended periods of time. Louis de Geer, a devout Calvinist and successful businessman, accumulated massive amounts of wealth but donated enormous sums to charitable causes throughout his life. In his will, he even instructed his heirs to “fear God and keep his commandments and think of the poor and oppressed; then you shall enjoy God’s blessings.” Furthermore, de Geer implored his children to be generous, assuring them that God would reward them for their altruism.

Anxieties however arose from the concern, particularly in larger cities, that religion, and thus the moral code associated with it, could become a mere duty—a matter of habit as opposed to a true belief. If this were true, the affluent would be less inclined to maintain a balance between material consumption and sobriety and could slip into habits of avarice. This prompted Dutch ministers at the time to preach against the unconcerned businessman. For example, in 1655, Simonides, the Hague predikant (Calvinist minister) criticized the affluent businessmen for whom religion had become a duty: “When he goes home from Church, does he take God’s Holy Book with him to ponder the sermon. No. Instead he picks up the day’s gazette and busies himself with the calculations of interest and the liquidations of debts.”
The church however was not the only source advocating for a balance between materialism and abstemiousness. Cats’ emblem books, such as his *Emblemata* (1618), which were generally well read throughout the mid-seventeenth century, recognized the struggle people faced in maintaining a harmony between consumption and temperance and encouraged people to choose virtue over vice. Another Dutch humanist anthology of proverbs, *Gedachten op Gelt* (Thoughts on Money), provided the public with quick sayings about the immorality of excessive wealth:

*Money is set so high in price
Makes villains pious and idiots wise
Because men honor rich young sires
Money is by fools desired.*

Continuing in this vein, Jan Krul associated excessive spending with pride and folly in his *Wereld-hatende notzaakelyke* (On the Necessity of Unworldiness, 1627). Krul claimed that money caused people to betray their loyalties and to become corrupt individuals.

Still-life paintings of the era often reflected these anxieties about the surplus of wealth and the vices to which it could lead. For example, Claesz’s *Still Life with Stoneware Jug, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread* (1642), reveals these anxieties (figure 37). This somber painting depicts an intimate and silent meal consisting of modest, yet still pleasurable food items: a refreshing glass of wine, crisp white bread, and an oily fish. It exudes an atmosphere of tranquil order, but the calm familiarity of this painting depends on its abstemious conditions and the absence of wealth.

*Vanitas* still lifes also addressed these anxieties about luxury and morality. They served as reminders of man’s mortality, encouraging the viewer to lead a moral life by warning against vice. These still lifes often depicted *memento mori* (reminders of death) and luxurious items as
symbolic reminders of the evil that they can cause.\textsuperscript{84} In his early period, Claesz experimented with the \textit{vanitas} still life, an example of which is his \textit{Vanitas Still Life with Violin and Glass Ball} (c. 1628, figure 43). This \textit{vanitas} depicts some haphazardly strewn writing materials, a clay lamp, an inverted \textit{roemer}, a skull stacked on top of some books, and a violin placed along a slant. A timepiece sits as a reminder of man’s limited time on earth in front of a glass ball, in which Claesz’s image is reflected, as if to say he is aware of his mortality but hopes that his artwork will outlive him.\textsuperscript{85}

On the other hand, the \textit{pronkstilleven}, or ornate still lifes, highlighted luxurious pleasures such as taste, touch, and possession.\textsuperscript{86} Willem Kalf’s \textit{Drinking Horn with Lobster on a Table} (1653) portrays an ornately decorated drinking horn with a fine Venetian glass behind it and a large red lobster in front of the vessel (figure 6). A Turkish rug scrunches underneath the plated lobster. Furthermore, a lemon and roemer of wine stand to the left of the lobster. Kalf’s \textit{Drinking Horn} features luxurious consumption and the visual and savory pleasures associated with it.

\textit{Impact of Social Circumstances on Claesz’s Work}

After examining the broad social circumstances in which Claesz painted his still lifes, it is important to note how these social circumstances would have affected his work. To start, we have noted that the economic wealth and the prominence of the middle class led to a strong art market. The middle class could for the first time in history buy art, and they did so in vast quantities.\textsuperscript{87} Furthermore, the middle-class demand for art in Calvinist Holland prompted the need for familiar, secular subjects, namely genre, landscape, seascape, and still life paintings.\textsuperscript{88} The market for still life spiraled during the Dutch Golden Age.\textsuperscript{89} When economic prosperity peaked in Holland, so did the number of still-life paintings in collections (if Delft and
Amsterdam are good models for the rest of Holland) furthering the conclusion that middle-class spending caused high demand for still life in the seventeenth-century.\textsuperscript{90} This trend certainly affected Claesz’s success as a still-life painter.

The increase in demand for still life in the second quarter of the seventeenth century could have influenced Claesz’s transition into the tonal period. Brown pigments dry faster than most other pigments, speeding up the painting process. By painting in primarily these brown tones, Claesz sped up production becoming able to satisfy the growing market. This transition to small, sober, simple, and speedily executed images could also be an indication of the small dip in the Dutch market in the 1630s and 1640s. The drop in prices of paintings could have spurred artists such as Claesz to create more paintings in shorter amounts of time, and thus search for a faster method—the tonal manner.\textsuperscript{91}

Dutch trading and production affected Claesz’s choice of subject matter for his breakfast still lifes. The Dutch took pride in their trading supremacy and national products, such as cheese, herring, beer, grain, and linen. Viewing a still life featuring these distinctly Dutch items would have instilled a sense of both national and local pride. Still lifes featuring these subjects sold well, especially to those who were involved in these industries.\textsuperscript{92} Hence, Dutch trading and production likely affected Claesz’s choice of subject matter.

Claesz’s choice of such modest subject matter could have also been influenced by society’s anxieties towards luxurious consumption. As many reconciled their moral beliefs with their luxurious expenditures through charitable donations, one could have appeased one’s anxieties about buying a painting, an inherently luxurious object, by purchasing a still life depicting a humble meal, such as Claesz’s \textit{Breakfast Piece} (1636, figure 2).\textsuperscript{93} Claesz’s still lifes represent the virtuous abstention promulgated by those who oppose extravagant spending,
whereas still lifes by some of his contemporaries, such as Willem Kalf depict the pleasures of luxury. Furthermore, prominent physicians and household books on health encouraged a balance between abstention and opulence in diet. One should eat modest, yet pleasurable, meals as opposed to overly exotic and luxurious ones.

In summary, the Dutch Golden Age witnessed a period of societal transformation. This era saw unprecedented wealth spread across the general population. This immense wealth led to a swelling middle class, and as the *brede middestand* became wealthier, Dutch society transitioned to an age of material consumption, particularly within the home. The Dutch diet, one espoused by physicians and household guides, was one of modesty, consisting mainly of Dutch products such as cheese, bread, and beer. During the Dutch Golden Age, moralists and preachers became concerned with material consumption and the immense wealth of Dutch citizens. The effects that Dutch Golden Age society had on Claesz however is more important than the fact that society went through all of these changes. As discussed, this social context had clear influences on Claesz’s work, from technique to subject matter and style.
Chapter I Notes

2 Ibid., 43.
6 Ibid., 19-20.
16 Ibid., 34.
23 Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*, 50-54.
25 Ibid., 39.
26 Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*, 1.
30 Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*, 86.
31 Ibid., 88.
32 Ibid., 52.
33 Ibid., 30.
34 Ibid., 43.
35 Ibid., 47.
37 North, *Art and Commerce*, 43.
40 North, *Art and Commerce*, 45.
42 Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 125.
43 Ibid., 341.
44 Ibid., 344-348.
49 Ibid., 313-314
50 Ibid., 319
51 Ibid. 315-317
58 Ibid., 158-159.
59 Ibid., 174.
60 Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*, 25.
64 Ibid., 199.
65 Ibid., 165.
66 Ibid., 177-180.
67 Ibid., 166-171.
68 Ibid., 171.
71 Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 100.
73 Schama, *An Embarrassment of Riches*, 326.
Ibid., 334-336.
76 Schama, *An Embarrassment of Riches*, 335.
78 Schama, *An Embarrassment of Riches*, 331.
81 *Gedachten op Gelt* (no author, no date). In Schama, *An Embarrassment of Riches*, 331-332.
82 Schama, *An Embarrassment of Riches*, 332.
84 Ibid., 115-116.
86 Ibid., 123.
87 Ibid., 134.
88 Ibid., 134.
92 Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*, 16.
94 Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 112.
95 Ibid., 158-159, 418-419.
97 Schama, *An Embarrassment of Riches*, 174
100 Ibid., 321.
II.

Paris: Setting the Scene

To understand Chardin’s paintings, one must first look at the context in which he painted his still lifes, as the changing society in which Chardin lived certainly affected his works. First, I will look at economic growth in France and Paris during the Enlightenment, focusing on urbanization, production, and the rise of material consumption. Subsequently, I will study the changing social hierarchy in Paris, as a result of the booming economy. The redistribution of wealth through the bourgeoisie stimulated the desire to advance socially and blurred class lines.¹ Next I will consider the luxury debate between the economists and *philosophes*, academics of the Enlightenment period, who considered material consumption and luxury goods necessary to the French economy, and their critics who denounced ostentatious consumption and espoused simplicity. Then, I will look at corresponding differences in attitude towards diet and cuisine, which became a hot topic of the Enlightenment with a trend amongst prominent chefs and academics towards simplicity and away from the grandiose recipes and buffets of the aristocracy.² Lastly, I will consider the implications of these social changes in Chardin’s still-life paintings of food and kitchen implements.

*Urbanization, Production, and Consumption*

The French economy grew rapidly in the eighteenth-century, fuelled by urbanization, production, and trade. With this growth came wealth and a new culture of material consumption, especially in Paris, the center of French commerce. Material consumption sparked more production, creating a cycle that led to commercialized Paris as never seen before.
Between 1700 and 1789, the total number of people living in a city of more than 2,000 inhabitants in France rose from 1.8 million to 2.8 million. Whereas urban growth was slow in the first few decades, the period from 1740 to 1789 was one of rapid urbanization. Countrywide, the rate of urbanization in this period was around 15-20%, with one in five people living in a city of more than 2,000 inhabitants by the end of the eighteenth century. Paris doubled in size during the eighteenth century; its population increasing from about 400,000-500,000 in 1700 to 800,000-900,000 at the time of the revolution in 1789. This was an increase from the previous century, when Paris grew by only about 25-33%. Unfortunately, fiscal privileges given to cities made it difficult to conduct an accurate census without any popular uprising. The general trend of rapid urbanization in eighteenth-century France however is apparent.

Parallel to rapid urbanization, the mid-eighteenth century observed a period of economic growth and prosperity. Manufacturing in France rose from 5% of the nation’s GDP in 1700 to 13% in 1780. Furthermore, colonial commerce expanded by 500-600% between 1730 and 1780, despite France’s numerous international wars. Paris, even though it was not a port city like most metropolises that controlled commerce, was at the center of this newfound growth in production and commerce during the eighteenth century. The financiers, banks, trading companies, warehouses, and economic firms were all located in Paris.

Luxury consumption played a major role in the French marketplace, and estate inventories detail this consumption in Paris. Furthermore, these estate inventories indicate that material consumption increased among all social classes, though those without estates are unrepresented in this data set. Domestic interiors are the clearest example of this, although they represent mostly the well-to-do. Furniture and storage change; instead of using chests, armoires became more common as a means of both storing and displaying expensive wares. Rooms
became specialized within homes, as did the furniture within those rooms. Card tables, writing tables, clocks, and dressing tables appear in Parisian homes for the first time. There was also a major change within kitchens. Stoves, ovens, and fireplaces with several hearths all became common, allowing for a revolution in cooking practices. The consumption of paintings is also reflected in the rise in home decoration. With the growing fashion for displaying expensive wares and furniture came the increase in displaying decorative items.

To examine consumption at all levels of society, one has to look toward subsistence consumption, something that no one can live without, rather than luxury consumption. Food is a prime example of this, as everyone must eat to live. It is well established that those in cities eat fairly well, especially when compared to their peers in the countryside. While the poor certainly did not eat as well as the wealthy, two Parisian practices allowed them to still eat satisfactorily. The first was the *tables d’hôte*, places where many people could gather around one table for a set meal at a fairly low price. This was the main option for many of the city’s poor, and for those who did not have kitchens of their own. For the poor who did buy their own unprepared food, a trickle-down effect took hold in Paris. Certain people, called hucksters, acquired leftover food, such as fruits, vegetables, salt, and eggs, from the tables of the wealthy and sold them to the poor at extremely reduced prices. *Tables d’hôte* and hucksters provided food to the Parisian poor that their peers in the countryside could not afford.

The middle class also ate well in the eighteenth century. Meat consumption increased as compared to the previous century, as evident in the fact that more households owned utensils designed specifically for cooking and eating meat. Middle class homes had casserole dishes, egg bowls, sugar bowls, teapots, and coffee makers, indicating these were regularly consumed in these households whereas in the century before they were primarily consumed only in the
wealthiest aristocratic homes.\textsuperscript{17} One can look specifically to coffee as an example of this. Coffee was exotic, as it was imported from the East Indies, and a symbol of modernity and commerce. It also had associations with the aristocracy, as only they were wealthy enough in the seventeenth century to afford coffee and the sugar that went in it. As imported products, coffee and sugar were expensive in the seventeenth century. By the eighteenth century however, most middle class homes could afford coffee and the sugar with which to drink it.\textsuperscript{18} Other items imported from the East Indies became more common amongst the middle class as well, such as tealeaves and porcelain teapots. After 1730, many home had complete tea services or coffee services, which indicate that not only tea and coffee, as imported foodstuffs were commonplace, but also that imported porcelain had become a household item.\textsuperscript{19}

Eighteenth-century France saw significant increases in urbanization, production, and consumption. All three were interconnected as urbanization spurred production and consumption, which in turn caused more people to move to urban centers. Consumption in particular reached new heights at this time and was widespread amongst all social classes in Paris and throughout all levels of consumption, indicating a societal change towards consumer culture.

\textit{Social Class in Eighteenth-Century Paris}

With the redistribution of wealth resulting from economic growth came a change in social structure in eighteenth-century Paris. As the middle class became wealthier, many began to cross over the archaic boundary between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, whose newfound wealth created a desire to advance socially.\textsuperscript{20} In Enlightenment Paris, a new phenomenon arose of social mobility among members of the bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{21}
The bourgeoisie of the Enlightenment consisted of merchants, financiers, doctors, lawyers, notaries, shopkeepers, craftsmen, and most urban dwellers. The annual incomes of these people varied markedly, but the bourgeoisie were unified by the universal attempt to rid themselves of social markers and to appear as wealthier and of a higher social class than they actually were. This was mostly done through material consumption, as noted previously, with changes in fashion and in domestic interiors. Many members of the bourgeoisie even went beyond trying to appear of a higher social status, and successfully bought titles of nobility, although they were certainly a different type of nobility than those who were born into the position.

The definition of nobility was evolving by the eighteenth century, and not all nobles were equals, neither in status nor in wealth. In fact, there were three main groups of nobles, defined by the differences between their status and wealth: the high nobles, the provincial nobles, and the newly ennobled. The high nobles were the oldest and wealthiest of the nobility, generally marked by their “pure blood” aristocratic ancestry, tracing back hundreds of years. The provincial nobility and the country gentlemen, came from the tradition of noble birth, but were not necessarily as wealthy as the high nobles. Their role in their individual communities granted them superiority, as the locals expected them to manage their estates well in order to maintain employment and to stimulate the movement of goods within their localities. The last class of nobles, the “parliamentary bourgeoisie,” was the group of nobles who were previously members of the bourgeoisie who transcended class boundaries and became ennobled. The parliamentary bourgeoisie consisted of prosperous members of the Third Estate who chose to invest their wealth in social advancement, a living testament to the phenomenon of social mobility.
The Luxury Debate in Paris

As Paris moved towards a consumer society in the eighteenth century, debates about luxury surfaced. Early eighteenth-century economists and *philosophes* considered luxury to be a harmless side effect of prosperity and a necessary stimulus for economic growth. By the mid-eighteenth century, the viewpoint shifted, and anxieties about luxury resurfaced. Academics in the 1750s began to see luxury as immoral and harmful to society.29

Proponents of Luxury

The early eighteenth-century writers characterized luxury as not only a harmless consequence of but also as a necessary stimulus for economic growth. The French philosopher Pierre Bayle launched this trend in France in the first decade of the eighteenth-century by debunking the historical myth that luxury was an ancient vice, one that ultimately lead to the demise of the Roman Empire.30 Bayle acknowledged that ancient writers like Livy and Plutarch claimed that luxury caused men to weaken and ultimately lose their virtue and manliness.31 These ancient authorities maintained that self-restraint made city-states like Sparta and Athens great. Bayle countered that frugality had been in fact a social necessity, not a deliberate rejection of luxury by ancient Spartans and Athenians. Furthermore, Bayle claimed that the opulent consumption of the Roman Empire was unrelated to its degeneracy and collapse, as was previously believed.32 Bayle’s argument reversed the dominant historical viewpoint that luxury was a vice, opening the way for later eighteenth-century economists and philosophers to defend luxury without any moral reservations.

The French economists, Pierre Boisguilbert, Richard Cantillon, and Jean-François Melon all claimed that luxury was necessary to fuel the economy, recognizing that it was stimulated by
demand, not just supply. Melon, for example, asserts in his *Essai politique sur le commerce* (A Political Essay on Commerce, 1734) that, in addition to fostering economic growth, luxury strengthens the state by encouraging industry and combating sloth. Melon’s essay was reprinted often in the eighteenth century and widely read and reviewed within French academic circles.

Voltaire follows Melon with his *Defense du mondain, ou L’apologie du luxe* (Defense of the Worldly Man, or the Apology for Luxury, 1736). His *Defense* postulates that without luxury an economy will stagnate. Hence, there must be luxury. Moreover, luxury incites the wealthy to spend, which in turn creates work for the poor, thus reducing inequality.

In 1740, *The Fable of the Bees*, by Bernard Mandeville, was translated into French and published in Paris, supporting the proponents of luxury. Mandeville told a tale of the vices and virtues of a beehive. The moral of his story is that the sumptuousness of a few keeps thousands of the poor alive. Ultimately, Mandeville divorces the ethics from what he views as a purely economic issue.

A pictorial example of the luxury that these scholars advocated can be seen in *Madame de Ventador with Portraits of Louis XIV and His Heirs* (1715-1720), formally attributed to Nicolas de Largillière, one of Chardin’s contemporaries (figure 7). This painting depicts a sumptuously decorated interior, with expensive gilding, large paintings, and sculptures. The sitters of the painting wear fine clothing made of expensive cloths such as velvets and satins. Of particular interest is the bowl overflowing with fruits next to what is most likely a vase imported from China. In depicting imported objects, which would have required a French trading company to reach France, art works, the commissioning of which employed artists, and fine clothing, which would require many women to make along with fuelling the French trade in fabric, the painting gives credence to the idea that spending on luxury fuelled the economy.
Opponents of Luxury

Moral anxieties regarding luxury resurfaced in the early 1750s, a time when the consumption of luxury items in Paris was unprecedented in both quantity and quality. Refuting Mandeville’s argument, his own countryman, David Hume, advocated for moderated luxury for many, rather than opulence for a few in his *Essay on Luxury*, translated into French in 1752. Hume’s argument raises the question of how “luxury” is defined. Is it bounty or is it opulence? Hume concluded that luxury as bounty is appropriate while luxury as opulence is immoral and harmful. Denis Diderot came to a similar conclusion in his article on luxury for the *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772). He contrasted “ostentatious luxury” with “pragmatic luxury,” the former being the immoral luxury of the very wealthy and the latter being associated with the appropriate restrained luxuries associated with production and the bourgeoisie. The economy needed small luxuries to thrive, but society could do without licentious opulence.

The strongest opponent of luxury was Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau’s philosophy focuses on the “noble savage.” Man is naturally good, but civilization, society, luxury, and material consumption corrupt man. Rousseau’s first two discourses, published in 1750 and 1755, provide many arguments against the proponents of luxury. In response to Melon’s theory that luxury strengthens the state, Rousseau claimed that while luxury may make a state rich, wealth is not necessarily the basis of power. Rousseau also disagreed with Melon’s conclusions that luxury improves morality in a society. In Rousseau’s opinion, luxury only furthers man’s descent into idleness and vanity. In response to Voltaire and Mandeville, Rousseau said that “luxury may be necessary to give bread to the poor, but if there were no luxury, there would be no poor.” Rousseau even went so far as to advocate for sumptuary laws returning to peasant-
like prudence, and in doing so, refused to divorce the economics of the luxury debate from the ethics.\textsuperscript{44} Rousseau’s arguments against luxury took hold in Paris, as more scholars showed hesitation to defend luxury and recognized the ethical problems associated with conspicuous consumption.\textsuperscript{45}

One can observe a depiction of Rousseauian prudence in Jean-Baptiste Greuze’s much-praised \textit{The Village Bride}, which featured in the 1761 Salon (figure 8). Greuze’s painting depicts the patriarch of a rural family giving his daughter’s dowry to the bridegroom. There are no sumptuously decorated walls and no fancy clothing. Even the bride wears a simple white linen dress, a symbol of pragmatic luxury for which Diderot advocated. The only food visible is a few loaves of bread in the upper right corner, which in fact demonstrate just how well the father has taken care of his family. What is evident in this painting is a moral family with modest, but sufficient means whose modest luxurious consumption—a white linen dress and enough food—are symbols of acceptable, productive luxury. The household is plain, but clean and orderly, a sign of virtue. The mother hen and her chicks indicate the bride’s future, highlighting the importance of family. The bride’s physical connection with her mother reinforces this sentiment. \textit{The Village Bride} shows a rustic and honorable family, so popular with the bourgeois crowds at the Salon, even if this idea of the peasantry was not in accordance with reality.\textsuperscript{46}

\textit{Parisian Gastronomy}

As a part of the luxury debate, discussions of gastronomy, the art of cooking and eating, also became widespread amongst eighteenth-century Parisians. Concerns about food preparation and digestion spread out of the kitchen and into the lives of the everyday man.\textsuperscript{47} Having an interest in food was simply a part of being involved in Parisian society of the eighteenth
As the luxury debate was hotly argued, so was the debate about cuisine. A surge of cookbooks printed at this time along with published opinions on dining by respected Enlightenment philosophers, such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau, is clear evidence of this newfound interest in food. Between 1700 and 1789, over 150 cookbooks and other works on gastronomy were published in France with over 87% of these published in Paris. Three dominant movements developed in eighteenth-century cuisine: one for the upper classes, one for the bourgeoisie, and a rustic diet espoused by Rousseau. Lastly, the modern restaurant developed in Paris in the 1760s, revolutionizing cuisine and food.

The general gastronomic trend of the eighteenth century, which promoted simplicity over luxury, sharply contrasted aristocratic cuisine, often called “la cuisine ancienne” and described as “rococo,” a term used to describe the artistic tastes of the overly sumptuous aristocracy at the time. La cuisine ancienne provided over-the-top dishes to the aristocrats of the seventeenth century. This style of cooking involved keeping a stock of sauces and garnishes to layer on top of main ingredients to create new flavors. These dishes were then sumptuously presented in the forms of coats of arms or swords or piled in high overflowing heaps to entertain guests, an example of which can be seen in one of Chardin’s early still lifes, The Buffet (1728, figure 9). This painting depicts a grand sideboard with fruits stacked on top of each other in an elaborate pyramid on an ornate fruits stand. A plate of oysters (with a knife jutting out in a subtle nod to Dutch still life) and a partially peeled orange sit to the side of the fruits. Glasses of wine, decanters, and a silver ewer decorate the countertop. A copper bin for cooling wine sits on the floor next to a dog sniffing at the display above. These luxurious items—imported foods in sumptuous displays and wares made from expensive materials—are similar to what one would find at an aristocratic table.
In the movement towards simplicity, Parisian cooks and philosophes developed, discussed, and defended three new cuisines: *la nouvelle cuisine*, *la cuisine bourgeoise*, and a rustic cuisine championed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. While all three ideas involved correlations between diet and health, the first was specifically intended for the upper and upper-middle classes and the second for the middle class. Rousseau’s recommendations, like most of his work, focused on a return to a simpler way of life. Towards the end of the century, these social discussions of health and eating eventually led to the creation of restaurants as places of public refreshment.

*La nouvelle cuisine* was introduced to the public in the late 1730’s by chefs such as François Marin, who had worked in various aristocratic households. In his introduction to *Les Dons des Comus ou l’art de la cuisine* (The Gifts of the Feast or the Art of Cooking, 1739), his new cuisine is compared to *la cuisine ancienne*. Naturally, the authors of the introduction conclude that *la nouvelle cuisine* is superior to the old cuisine, as it offers as broad a range of dishes as did the old cuisine, but is simpler, and healthier.⁵³ As Marin remarks, *La nouvelle cuisine* proposes lighter fare that is easier to digest, a highly favorable quality in eighteenth-century Paris.⁵⁴ This new style strived for elegance not complexity.

This characterization of *la nouvelle cuisine* as uncomplicated, however, is deceptive. In appearance, the dishes of *la nouvelle cuisine* were presented in a simple manner, especially compared to the over-the-top arrangements of the aristocratic dishes of the previous age. The time and money involved in preparing this cuisine, on the other hand, was just as costly as *la cuisine ancienne*. *La nouvelle cuisine* required making many *boullions*, broths made from cuts of meat that took hours to prepare. This necessitated expensive cooking materials and a large kitchen staff, most likely led by a male chef.⁵⁵ For example, one beef dish, *filet de boeuf à la*  

---
glace, when completed, appeared as cold, sliced beef with no garnishes or adornments, almost like cold cuts today. The cooking however would have taken six to eight hours, as braising the beef and creating a bouillon were slow processes. This recipe also involved a whole filet of beef, which was expensive at the time. Anyone who did not make this dish could have easily been fooled into thinking it was simple.

Chardin painted a still life entitled The Kitchen Table (c. 1755) depicting what seems to be a table of ingredients for la nouvelle cuisine (figure 10). On the left is a large slab of ribs, similar to one needed to prepare filet de boeuf à la glace. The large copper kettle in the back would have been used to make the many boullions necessary for this style of cuisine. There are also a game bird and a mortar and pestle, needed to grind imported spices, on the counter’s ledge. Just as in la nouvelle cuisine, this painting’s presentation is simple and modest, but the actual content, the meat, the copper kettle, and the inferred spices, would have been quite expensive.

La nouvelle cuisine also had its detractors, such as the anonymous writer known as le pâtissier anglois, the English pastry-chef, who argued that because of this new cuisine, food, not conversation, became the primary focus at a dinner party, and that cooking was now treated as a science or an art as opposed to just cooking. To this, proponents of la nouvelle cuisine responded espousing all of the new health benefits, following the treatises of Dr. George Cheyne, a British physician whose writings on diet and health became popular in Paris in the 1700s. The doctor advocated a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy and wine, but only fruits and vegetables grown in season. Meat was to be eaten in moderation, and dark meats, such as beef, mutton, duck, and goat, even less, as Cheyne’s general rule was the lighter in color the
These dishes were aimed at being easier to digest, and thus healthier than those of *la cuisine ancienne*.

While *la nouvelle cuisine* appeared fresh and tasteful, it was neither cheap nor easy to cook. For this reason, *la cuisine bourgeoise* emerged as a thrifty alternative to *la nouvelle cuisine* through François Menon’s cookbook *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* (The Bourgeois Cook, 1746). This cookbook was specifically meant for households with women in the kitchen, namely bourgeois households with only a few kitchen maids. Inserted into this book were practical ideas for the frugal cook, such as which dishes one can use leftovers from the current meal being prepared. Chardin also painted a scene from a typical kitchen practicing *la cuisine bourgeoise*. His 1735 painting, *The Kitchen Maid* (figure 11), shows a lone maid sitting in the kitchen peeling turnips, a more economical item than the beef from *The Kitchen Table* (figure 10) with which to cook. A large pumpkin rests on the floor next to the kitchen maid as though the pumpkin was the next food item for her to prepare. To the maid’s left, a cleaver sticks out of a cutting block, but meat is notably absent from the meal that the kitchen maid is currently preparing.

Menon’s cookbook was one of the first written primarily for the middle class. *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* broadened social opportunities for the bourgeoisie by bringing upper class cooking into their homes. For example, a sliced beef dish from *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*, comparable to *filet de boeuf à la glace*, directs the cook to take some brisket “left over from the night before” and slice it thinly. Then simmer the beef for half an hour with parsley, scallions, capers, anchovies, garlic, salt, and pepper, all of which were fairly inexpensive to get. The recipe creates a similar dish to *filet de boeuf à la glace*, but uses left-overs and simple seasoning in addition to only needing to cook for half an hour instead of six to eight. This recipe was more economical in both its materials and the time spent making it. Interestingly, many very wealthy
household libraries contained Menon’s book at the time, as an interest in bourgeois cooking became popular amongst the extremely rich.\textsuperscript{64}

As gastronomic discussions became more popular in Parisian cultures, Enlightenment philosophers began to champion their own ideas regarding food. One of the more vocal and more extreme philosophies of the time was that of Rousseau, which emerged in the 1750s and 60s. Rousseau, the Enlightenment philosopher who promoted a return to country simplicity, took Cheyne’s ideas regarding health and diet but went a step further. He related man’s love of fine cuisine to man’s enslavement by artifice, which he consistently fought against throughout all of his writings. Rousseau advocated a return to the natural state of man and living in accordance with nature. For diet, this meant only eating what can easily be obtained and prepared, such as local and seasonal fruits and vegetables, eggs, bread, and dairy products— what he considered a peasant’s diet. Anything that required cooking before eating, particularly meat, was to be avoided.\textsuperscript{65} These idealistic “peasant” meals however were far from the reality experienced by the French peasantry at the time, who could realistically only afford dark breads, and maybe some local fruits and vegetables.\textsuperscript{66}

Rousseau campaigned for these dietary ideas in two of his books, \textit{Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse} (1761) and \textit{Emile} (1762). In the first, Rousseau described the holistic Swiss peasant meals that his protagonist Julie took part in. These meals consisted of fruits, vegetables, bread, eggs, and milk, just what Rousseau advocates. Julie is considered a virtuous person because of her consumption.\textsuperscript{67} In \textit{Emile}, Rousseau’s guide to child rearing told as the story of raising a young boy named Emile, Rousseau similarly advocated his rustic diet, but in a more direct way. Rousseau advises his readers to use country women as their nurses, as they eat more vegetables and less meat, which is a more favorable diet to one rich in meats, because it is more natural.\textsuperscript{68}
As proof of this, Rousseau cites a child’s indifference to meat. A child is still untouched by the ills of modern civilization, and thus their tastes are the closest to what people should be eating. The first food a child tastes is milk, and then plain fruits, vegetables, and herbs, what Rousseau calls “the feasts of primitive man.” Children only like meats after becoming accustomed to meat on their plates. Rousseau warns against changing a child’s natural preferences for fruits and vegetables over meat.

To illustrate this, Rousseau tells the story of Emile’s chance to compare two meals: one at an aristocratic home and the other at a farmer’s table. Emile’s tutor tells him that first they will attend a dinner at the home of wealthy people. There will be many guests and servants, dainty china and fancy dishes. At the second dinner, the farmer will serve bread and wine from his own harvest, along with milk, fruits, and vegetables. Emile will dine with the farmer and his family at their own table. After the two meals, the tutor asks Emile which he enjoyed more, and naturally, Rousseau’s Emile notes that he enjoys a simple rustic meal more than the artifice of the aristocratic experience.

A depiction of Emile’s favored meal can be seen in The Simple Meal (1787) by Henri Horace Roland de la Porte (figure 12). In the center left of the painting stand two tall glasses of milk. On their right are some apples, a wicker basket full of bread, and a cube of cheese. At the foot of the milk glasses are two pretzels. Rousseau would gladly have sat down to this spread, as it included fruit, milk, bread, and cheese, everything he deemed necessary for a good meal.

As this was a written philosophy and not a cookbook, one must question where a Parisian might find this Rousseauian meal. The most likely place to eat as Rousseau advocates in Paris was in the newly formed restaurants of the 1760s. The word restaurant is derived from the word “restore,” and before restaurants were places public eating, as we know of them today, a
restaurant was a broth meant to revitalize the body. The first restaurants, which called themselves maisons de santé (health houses), opened as places to restore one’s health by eating a traditional restaurant. They also served a variety of “healthful” foods, such as eggs, butter, milk, cheese, fruits, and vegetables. These additional menu items recall the idyllic countryside repasts from Rousseau’s Julie and Emile.74

Restaurants as places to restore health were ever popular in Paris due to the fashionable illness called “weakness of chest,” a general fatigue brought upon by intellectual stimulation and emotional pursuits. Being “weak of chest” would have symbolized one’s intellect and morality. It also meant that one had “nervous sympathy,” a sign of having good taste in food and being generally sensitive. These were all admirable traits in public society in Paris during the mid-eighteenth century. Restaurants allowed those who were “weak of chest” (or those who wanted to appear “weak of chest”) to show their moralizing ailment in a public setting, causing restaurants to become popular with the bourgeoisie and Parisian aristocrats.75

An example of these popular restaurants can be seen in the print The Beautiful Restauratrice (figure 13) created by Louis Berther for Les Contemporaines (1780-1788), a book of love stories about Parisians by Nicolas-Edme Restif de la Bretonne. The print shows young men and women socializing in a Parisian restaurant. The only food visible however is a small almost undetectable bowl, most likely of a restaurant, and a more apparent basket of pears on the table. This basket of pears recalls the stack of fruit in Chardin’s The Buffet (figure 9).

Chardin’s still lifes of food form the 1760s also depict a typical Roussian meal, as one would find in a Parisian restaurant. For example, his Pears, Walnuts, and a Glass (1768), depicts three pears, a walnut, a knife, and simple glass of red wine (figure 14). These pears and walnuts, both locally grown and ripe at the same time as Rousseau advocated for, serve as a restorative,
healthful snack. Likewise, the glass of wine would have been a refreshing beverage to be had with this little meal.

Implications of Social Circumstances on Chardin’s Work

After examining the broad social circumstances in which Chardin painted, it is important to discuss the implications of these social conditions. The increase in production and material consumption led to many of the implements in Chardin’s still lifes to appear in middle class homes, such as the copper kettle and mortar and pestle in The Kitchen Table (figure 10). Chardin, himself a middle class man, although not one of great means, could reasonably have had these items in his kitchen. The newfound wealth of the bourgeoisie also allowed them to purchase works of art, creating a specific market for artworks intended for the middle class.

The luxury debate affected Chardin’s works, particularly in size and subject matter. In the early eighteenth century, when philosophes and economists condoned luxury, Chardin’s works were larger and depicted grander still lifes. One only has to look to Chardin’s The Buffet (1728) to see this (figure 9). This large piece, at 76 inches by 51 inches, depicts a sumptuous pyramid of fruit set on top of a silver, serving tray. In later years when Enlightenment scholars began to denounce luxury as immoral, Chardin’s pieces become smaller and had a more modest subject. This can be seen in Pears, Walnuts, and a Glass (1768), which depicts three pears, some cracked walnuts, and a simple glass of wine (figure 14). At only 13 inches by 16 inches, this work is also significantly smaller than Chardin’s 1728 The Buffet. These two works also reflect the discussions of gastronomy over the decades. The Buffet shows an aristocratic display while Pears, Walnuts, and a Glass depict a Rousseauian meal that could possibly be seen in the new restaurants of 1760s Paris. While these are just two examples, they are indicators of the
transformations in Chardin’s still lifes of the 1720s and 30s and his later still lifes from 1755-1770, which will be examined in more depth in later discussions of Chardin’s works.

Enlightenment Paris was a period of transformation. Money, as opposed to noble birth, became more important in social culture. At the same time, heightened production led to a thriving economy in which many became wealthy very quickly. Moreover, this increase in production led to a consumer culture, which furthered urbanization and the important of Paris within France. Luxury consumption was hotly contested within Paris, and the discussion of gastronomy and cuisine became an important topic of debate. What is even more important than the fact that these changes occurred was that members of Parisian society widely discussed these topics. Chardin, as a respected artist living in the Louvre and personal friend of philosophes such as Diderot, would have certainly been included in these discussions, and as such, these debates and societal changes likely affected his artwork.
Chapter II Notes


4 Note that countrywide, the rate of urbanization in the period from 1700-1789 was around 15-20%, with one in five people living in a city of more than 2,000 inhabitants by the end of the eighteenth century in France. Ibid., 177.

5 Ibid., 177-179.

6 Ibid., 644.

7 Because of this, population statistics are often debated. For an interesting debate regarding population counts and figures, see Bernard Lepetit’s 1992 article “Urbanization in Eighteenth-Century France: A Comment” in The Journal of Interdisciplinary History. Ibid., 177.


9 Shovlin, The Political Economy of Virtue, 15.

10 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 142-143.

11 Ibid., 555.

12 Ibid., 555-558.

13 Ibid., 635-637.

14 Ibid., 612.


16 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 616-618.

17 Ibid., 617-618.

18 Ibid., 627-628.

19 Ibid., 632-633.


21 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 406-411


24 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 402-405.

25 Ibid., 403-404.

26 Ibid., 404.

27 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 405.

28 Ibid., 411.

29 Shovlin, 5-6


31 Ibid., 18.

32 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 564.


38 Ibid., 566-569.

39 Ibid., 568.

40 Ibid., 573.


43 Quoted in Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 573.


51 Ibid., 618.


53 Ibid., 157.

54 Ibid., 160-162.

55 Ibid., 172-173.

56 Ibid., 174.

57 Ibid., 163.

58 Ibid., 165-171.

59 Ibid., 178.


62 Quoted in Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 261-262


64 Ibid., 212.


66 Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 42.

67 Ibid., 53-54.

69 Ibid., 115-118.

70 Ibid., 116.

71 Ibid., 118.

72 Ibid., 153-55.


75 Ibid., 34-38.

76 Roche, *Enlightenment France*, 557.


78 Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 16.
III.

Still Life in Theory, the Evolution of the Dutch Still life, and Pieter Claesz as a Still Life Painter

Still life is the least theorized of all genres in critical discussion, both historically and today, emerging relatively late as an accepted specialty in the history of modern European painting. For this reason, I will begin looking at the Haarlem artistic milieu, specifically the Guild of St. Luke and the rise of art dealers, before discussing still life in art theory from the Dutch Golden Age. Next, I will consider the development of the still life genre from its origins in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Antwerp to its presence in the Northern Netherlands in the seventeenth century. While examining the development of still life, I will focus on the origins of still life depicting food, specifically looking at the evolution of the breakfast still life, Pieter Claesz’s specialty, in Antwerp and Haarlem, and Frans Snyder’s influence on these still lifes. Lastly, I will study the life and work of Pieter Claesz, considering his biography, the progress of his art, and the reception of his work in Haarlem in his own lifetime.

Haarlem Artistic Milieu

As one might assume from the previous discussion of material consumption, the Dutch art market witnessed a boom in the seventeenth century. The Dutch people considered works of art as craft items. Paintings acted as furnishings in a home, albeit with a more ornamental than useful function, and were bought and sold as such. At this time, even the lower middle class became wealthy enough (and works of art became cheap enough) to decorate their homes, and so the art market boomed due to the increase in demand for home decoration.

This expanding Dutch artistic milieu centered in the province of Holland—Haarlem being one of the major art centers within this province. Many aspiring artists, including those
from elsewhere in the Netherlands and abroad, such as Flanders and the Brabant, migrated to Haarlem for their artistic education. In Haarlem, the Guild of St. Luke, which included painters, art dealers, engravers, glass writers, sculptors, architects, surveyors, tinkers, potters, and many other craftsmen, regulated the art world, from education to sales, as in other cities in the Netherlands.

The Guild of St. Luke oversaw each apprentice’s education with individual guild masters, which generally followed a similar pattern. Masters in the guild offered apprenticeships to young pupils. The student generally spent the first year learning how to draw and working for the master by grinding pigments or preparing painting surfaces. In the second year, the apprentice started to paint, first from plaster models and then from his master’s works. When both the master and Guild of St. Luke were satisfied with the apprentice’s work, he would become a journeyman. As a journeyman, a young painter could sell his own works and work towards becoming a master in the guild, often working in studios belonging to other masters in order to supplement his training. Ultimately, the journeyman would present a masterwork to the Guild of St. Luke to become a master in the guild.

In addition to overseeing training, the Guild of St. Luke was responsible for the success of all of its members. For this reason, the guild monopolized the art market by requiring all those producing works of art in Haarlem to join. Guild leaders would go on a city walk once a year to ensure that no one was creating artwork without their knowledge. The Haarlem guild was particularly strict with their regulation of artists in Haarlem. The guild also limited the amount of foreign artwork introduced into the Haarlem art market to keep down competition. Art dealers also had to be masters within the Guild of St. Luke and thus were subject to the guild’s regulations. Furthermore, the guild organized exhibitions, art auctions, and lotteries, and
provided social services to its members. It is important to note that although painters did not comprise of the majority of guild members in Haarlem (of which there were 58 out of 278 total members in 1634), the painters dominated the social hierarchy within the Guild of St. Luke, and thus the administration of the guild.

While the sale of artwork was overseen by the guild, artists sold their paintings in a variety of ways. Some works were commissioned, mostly by civic organizations or private individuals, but the majority of painters had no regular commissions either from public institutions or private bodies. Hence most works of art at the time were produced for the open market and sold in an artist’s studio, guild-organized exhibitions, or by art dealers.

Art dealers had discovered a new, profitable profession. By the 1630s, there was, for the first time, enough art being sold that one could make a very good living as a dealer. Dealers were divided into three groups. The lowest on the social scale were second-hand dealers. These people, mostly women, bought cheap works from estate auctions and sold them for a profit. These works were inexpensive, rarely more than a guilder or two, and these second-hand dealers could work outside of the guild system. The next group of dealers included craftsmen and business people who dealt in art on the side, also outside of guild supervision. These people often traded their goods or services rendered for works of art they owned. Art functioned as a form of currency at time and was often bartered with or used to settle debts.

The last group of dealers, the official and formal group of art dealers, worked inside the guild system as guild members. These dealers, often failed artists themselves, acquired more valuable works of art through estate sales, art auctions, employing copyists, or by arrangements with painters. Although artists could sell directly out of their studios, many chose to make arrangements with dealers because dealers knew the art market much better than the artists did,
and some dealers offered flat rate contracts, an insured regular income. An artist would be paid so much per day or month to produce works of art for a dealer. Many dealers dealt in Flemish and Italian works as well as imported art from other cities within the Netherlands. The need for these professional art dealers arose when buyers began to look for connoisseurs and guidance, as more attention was placed on authenticity and originality. Dealers also found works of art from other cities or countries for their customers that were suited their clients’ preferences. Dealing in works of art became a very profitable business for a guild-certified art dealer.

The Dutch art market, which was centered in the province of Holland of which Haarlem was a prominent artistic center, flourished during the first half of the seventeenth-century. Because the Guild of St. Luke carefully regulated artists and the market, Haarlem artists made a good living. In the mid-seventeenth century, talented artists who had successful careers could easily amass fortunes of 15,000-20,000 guilders by the end of their lifetime and own a house worth roughly 2000 guilders. Even less successful painters could still afford a house of 800-1500 guilders with personal affects costing about the same amount. There was such great demand for and supply of works of art that dealing in art became a profitable business venture by the early seventeenth-century. The Dutch artistic milieu of the first half of the seventeenth-century provided a flourishing and profitable enterprise for its artists.

Still Life in Art Theory in the Netherlands

Art theory came to the Netherlands at the beginning of the Dutch Golden Age. At first, scant attention was paid to still life, although it does receive brief but disparaging mentions in Karl van Mander’s Schilderboek (1604), one of the earliest and arguably most influential text on art theory from the Dutch Golden Age. After van Mander, still life was barely mentioned until
the late seventeenth century when French and Italian publications caused theorists to turn against
the genre. 29

Van Mander’s Schilderboek (1604) was divided into three sections, recounting the lives
of famous artists: the ancients, the Italian artists, and the Dutch artists. 30 Van Mander, a Haarlem
painter, offered a poem preceding the lives of the artists “Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const”
(“The foundations of the noble, liberal art of painting”), which gives advice to painters and offers
a general theory of art. Van Mander ranked the genres, with history painting at the highest level
and rest of the genres, such as portraiture, seascape, still life, and landscape, in the low
subjects. 31 The Haarlem writer did not disparage those who practiced the low subjects, noting
that “if [your perfection] is not figures and histories, so may it comprise animals, kitchens, fruit,
flowers, landscapes, masonry, perspectives, rooms, grotesques, night-scenes, fire, portraits after
life, sea-scenes, and ships, or the painting of such things.” 32 History paintings, however, are
simply more encompassing, and a history painter ideally needed to master almost all of the
various painting specialties. Thus history painting transcends all other genres by incorporating
them into one more elaborate and mentally engaging painting. 33 According to van Mander, the
direct imitation of nature, as seen in the lower genres, requires less skill and creativity. 34

Nevertheless, van Mander recognized the importance of mastering these subjects,
including still life, as training for history paintings but considered these still-life subjects to be trivial in an artist’s oeuvre. This can be seen in van Mander’s later discussion of the Dutch
artists, such as Jacques de Gheyn. Now, de Gheyn is known and praised for his flower paintings,
which van Mander does discuss and praise him for, but van Mander noted that de Gheyn actually enjoyed figure painting much more. Van Mander made it clear that de Gheyn’s history paintings were his best works and that his flower paintings were just studies for his later histories. Van
Mander echoes his theory of the hierarchy of genres throughout his discussion of the artists as well as in his introductory poem. Following van Mander, there were few Dutch writings on art historical theory until the late seventeenth century, but there were other documented indications of the general attitude towards still life and the hierarchy of genres. The Leiden painter, Philips Angel, published his *Lof der Schilderkonst* (Praise of Paintings, 1642) based on a speech given to the painters of Leiden on St. Luke’s day in 1641. Angel listed the knowledge and skills a good painter should have and then went on to rank all subjects equally, mentioning genre scenes, mythological scenes, landscapes, and seascapes. While Angel never mentioned still life directly, one can assume that it can be added to Angel’s list of subjects, as he ranked all subjects equally. Furthermore, the same year in Leiden, the town chronicler, Jan Orlers, published an extended edition of his town history, *Beschryvinge der stadt Leyden* (Description of the City of Leiden, 1642), which recorded all of the Leiden painters without any reference to a hierarchy of genre. While it seems that Angel and Orlers were defending the lower subject matters, for which Holland is best known, such as genre, still life, and landscape, they were more likely just unaware of any established hierarchy within the painting genres.

The Flemish notary, Cornelis de Bie, who wrote a poem chronicling the lives of painters, could also have been simply indifferent to a hierarchy of genres. In his *Gulden cabinet vande edele vry schilderconst* (Golden cabinet of the noble, liberal art of painting, 1661), de Bie came to the conclusion that not every painter will succeed at every genre. For example, a talented history painter may be a terrible flower painter, and a famed flower painter may be a terrible landscape artist. Ultimately, de Bie decided that all genres should be treated equally as paintings of different genres can hardly be accurately compared to each other.
Later in the century, Italian and French art theory was introduced to the Netherlands. A bookseller and publisher from Zeeland, Willem Goeree, published his *Inleydingh tot de practijck al-gemeene schild-const* (Introduction to the practice of universal art of painting) (1670), which gives an account of painting focusing almost entirely on history paintings. This book, which derives most of its content from Leonardo da Vinci’s treatise on painting, barely mentions still life, except for the Ancient Greek story of Zeuxis’ famed grapes, which were so lifelike, birds came to peck at them. Like van Mander, Goeree considered all other painting genres as subordinate to history painting and thought that a good history painter should master all of the lower genres. Thus Goeree turned away from the leveling out of the hierarchy seen in the previous few decades.  

Samuel van Hoogstraten, a student of Rembrandt and a painter of history paintings, architectural images, portraits, and still lifes, continued in this tradition with his *Inleyding tot de hoge schoole der Schilderkuns; anders de zichtbaere werelt* (Introduction to the elevated school of painting, or the visible world, 1678). Van Hoogstraten most certainly lifted some of his ideas regarding the different painting genres from the Frenchman André Félibien, who developed a hierarchy of genres for the *Académie royale* in his *Historiographe des bâtiments du Roy* (History of the King’s Buildings, 1669). In his book, van Hoogstraten separates the genres into three levels, following Aristotle’s idea of the soul, which has three distinct natures: the vegetative soul (what grows but is not sentient,) the animalistic soul (that which moves and feels sensation) and lastly, the rational soul (that which thinks.)  

Thus the first level, the lowest level, which is associated with the vegetative soul, encompasses all of still life, including flower pieces, banquet pieces, breakfast pieces, and *vanitas*. The second level, that which is associated with the animal soul and movement, consists of landscapes, fire scenes, portraits, genre scenes, seascapes, animal
paintings, and architectural paintings. These are the paintings that depict scenes that one can imagine moving through, or depictions of animals and emotions. The third, and uppermost level of painting, which is aligned with the rational soul, comprises of those paintings that depict momentous historical events, namely history paintings. Thus van Hoogstraten has gone one step further than van Mander by relegating still life to the lowest level of painting, below landscapes, genre scenes, and portraiture, which van Mander equated with still life. Furthermore, van Hoogstraten considered still-life artists to be “only common foot soldiers in the army of art.” He argued that the ancients only painted still life as exercises in color and composition, thus negating the historical merit behind still life. Van Hoogstraten even went to far as to lament the prominent position that still life had found in the collections of painting connoisseurs of the Dutch Golden Age, furthering his belief that still life occupies the lowest place within the hierarchy of painting genres.

Even so, van Hoogstraten acknowledged that all genres are worthy of being painted. He however thought that an artist’s skills were only fully utilized when depicting history paintings: “so much more knowledge as skill in art are required to depict a living animal rather than an inanimate thing so that art needs its greatest powers for the depiction of human actions.” Van Hoogstraten also noted that the art is more important than the subject and that paintings should be judged by merit or “nae de konst, die dar insteekt” (according to the art contained within). Thus sometimes a work on the lowest level by genre will outshine a work on a higher rung due to its artistic excellence. Nevertheless, van Hoogstraten limited this by saying that even the best still life paintings could never outdo a mediocre history painting, simply because of the subject matter. Thus even though all subjects deserve to be painted, the still-life genre warrants the least amount of attention.
The most influential text on art theory after van Mander in the Dutch Golden Age was the *Groot schilderboek* (1707) written by Gerard de Lairesse, also a painter, occasionally of large histories. For the most part, de Lairesse followed van Hoogstraten’s hierarchy of genres, but in his book, he devoted two chapters to still-life painting. De Lairesse recognized the popularity of still-life painting, noting that many still lifes were enjoyable to look at, but he put forth a critique of still-life painting and outlined some rules about still-life subject matter. First, de Lairesse only accepted five different still-life subject matters: flowers, fruit, objects made of precious metals, musical instruments, and hunting trophies. Certain “trifling” subjects, such as dead fish or vegetables, offered no merit and were not to be painted, as these things can be seen at the market if one really wishes to observe them. With this, de Lairesse completely eliminated some still lifes from the list of acceptable painting subjects. De Lairesse also renounced the idea that still life could contain any symbolic meaning and stated that Dutch still life artists just painted whatever was in front of them, without consideration. De Lairesse said of the famed still-life painter Willem Kalf that while he excelled in still-life painting, he was not smart and could not justify his choice of subject matter. According to de Lairesse, still life lacked intellect, which forced still life to the very bottom of painting genres.

*The Evolution of Still Life in the Netherlands*

The still life genre emerged in the Netherlands around 1600. The Dutch term “stilleven,” from which the English term “still life” is derived, did not however come about until fifty years later. This indicates still life has a variety of origins throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including religious and secular paintings. In the early years, developments in the still-life genre in Antwerp were closely followed by developments in Holland, as many Flemings
moved north after the closing of the Antwerp port. Dutch still life gained prominence after a few decades, but there was constant exchange between the Northern and Southern Netherlands as artists and their work travelled between them. The early breakfast still life developed in Antwerp and then moved to Haarlem, where Pieter Claesz modified it, with influences from Frans Snyders, creating the famed monochrome breakfast piece, the pinnacle of Dutch breakfast still life. Throughout the Northern and Southern Netherlands, the genre of still life experienced rich and intensive growth from 1600 to 1670.

The Origins of Netherlandish Still Life

The first still lifes evolved from fifteenth and sixteenth-century biblical scenes, which lost their importance in the Northern Netherlands by the late sixteenth century. Elements of the Eucharist, representations of the Virgin Mary, or other religiously symbolic items would be arranged in front of related biblical scenes to form still lifes in the foreground, an example of which can be seen in The Holy Family (ca. 1512-1513) by Joos van Cleve, an Antwerp native (figure 16). The lower portion of this piece consists of a narrow table with a simple still life: a glass of wine, a knife, a walnut, and a pewter plate with cherries, grapes, an apple, a pear, and a pomegranate. The wine represents the Eucharist, the blood of Christ. The “mystic grapes” symbolize Christ’s human nature, and the apple recalls original sin and the fall of man, while the cherries signify the fruits of heaven. All together, the story of Christ’s sacrifice to redeem man for original sin materializes, adding to the simple depiction of the Holy Family above the balustrade. Without the depiction of the Holy Family, however, this piece would become a fruit still life. As the biblical importance of these images began to wane, the still-life subject matter remained as independent paintings.
In the mid-sixteenth century, the biblical images became smaller elements in paintings, deferring to the presence of the still life, as can be seen in the works of Pieter Aertsen, who was born in Amsterdam but worked in Antwerp for most of his active career, and in the works of his nephew Joachim Beuckelaer, also an Antwerp painter. In addition to developing still life from biblical scenes, Aertsen and Beuckelaer painted images of laborers in which still life became prominent. The painters’ works provided an important step for still life painting. Aertsen and Beuckelaer were some of the first painters to fill the major part of the foreground with food and plates stacked in high arrangements while pushing the biblical or genre scenes into the distant background.

This can be observed in Aertsen’s *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary* (1553), which prominently displays baskets and plates of vegetables, meats, and cheese with even more vegetables and fruits on the table in the foreground (figure 17). Aertsen consigned the scene depicting Christ to the distant background, utilizing pastel tones to create an even greater distance between the food still life in the foreground and the religious scene in the background. Another example from Beuckelaer, *Kitchen Scene* (1566), shows this technique utilized in a genre scene (figure 18). In this painting, game, vegetables, bread, and jugs sit on a table in the foreground with a maid to the side and a kitchen scene in the distant background. These two examples illustrate still life’s emerging presence in the Netherlandish art scene, and Aertsen and Beuckelaer are often credited with inventing the genre of the food still life in Antwerp.

Frans Snyders

Frans Snyders was born in Antwerp in 1579 and started his apprenticeship with Pieter Brueghel the Younger at the age of fourteen, although his true mentor was Brueghel’s brother.
Jan Brueghel, a flower and animal painter. Snyders entered the Guild of St. Luke in Antwerp as a master in 1602, after which he took an extended trip to Italy. Returning in the summer of 1609, Snyders opened shop in Antwerp, becoming instantly famous for his paintings. A few years later, Snyders married into a prominent family of painters, providing him with even more opportunities to advance his career. By this time he was successful and extremely popular, solidifying his position as the foremost still-life painter by 1620.\textsuperscript{66}

Compared to his predecessors, Snyders had a more dramatic and dynamic style following in the baroque tradition. He preferred a lower viewpoint and maintained a sensitivity to color. Snyders varied his brushstrokes within his paintings, depicting some items in a very precise stroke-by-stroke manner, but painted other objects in a more painterly style, creating form with just a few quick, but well-placed strokes.\textsuperscript{67} The still lifes depicting food that Snyders was most famed for were his fruit paintings, his fish and fruit markets, and his larder pieces.\textsuperscript{68}

An early fruit still life of Snyders’, \textit{Still Life with Fruit, Wan-Li Porcelain, and Squirrel} (1616), exemplifies one of Snyders’ fruit still lifes while highlighting his general style (figure 20). This piece depicts a large basket, overflowing with fruits such as plums, apples, berries, peaches, and pears, on top of which sits a squirrel munching a nut. The basket sits on a dark grey table behind some figs and currants and to the left of the Wan-Li porcelain plate and cup of strawberries, behind which stand some wine glasses and a tall, ornate, gold platter brimming with grapes. The composition undulates rhythmically as certain items fade into the dark background and others come forward into the light. This painting also has a markedly lower viewpoint than the early breakfast pieces, although painted around the same time. The brushstrokes vary, as is expected with Snyders, but because of the material, copper, the strokes are generally more delicate and precise. Nevertheless, Snyders utilized just a few well-placed
strokes in a painterly manner when depicting many of the fruits, such as the apples, pears, plums, and peaches. In other items, such as the ornate platter and some of the leaves, Snyders used a more meticulous approach, building up these items with small individual strokes.

Snyders’ fish and fruit markets became some of his most influential and important works. Snyders’ St. Petersburg Fish Market (1620-30) exemplifies these market pieces and typifies his monumental style, which marked his paintings in the 1620s and 1630s (figure 21). At about seven by ten feet, this massive piece depicts a fish stall in the tradition of Aertsen and Beuckelaer. Snyder’s seafood stall even mirrors the stall-like display of Beuckelaer’s kitchen table with meats and vegetables in his Kitchen Scene (1566, figure 18). In Snyders’ piece, crabs, lobsters, eels, rays, oysters, and even some marine mammals are stacked high on display at a fish stall, overflowing to the ground. A harbor scene is visible in the distant background, and a man dumps a basket of eels into a large container on the right side. At the bottom left, a cat paws at the fish. As is typical of Snyders, the composition of this piece is dynamic, with all of the sea animals’ writhing bodies creating a lively motion to the canvas.

Snyders’ larder pieces were also some of his most famed works, often depicting game and other foodstuffs watched over by a dog and her pups. One such piece, Larder with Bitch and Her Pups (1635-1650), depicts the interior of a larder containing large game on the far left, including a hare and a deer both hanging from the ceiling, below which sits a plate of oysters (figure 22). In the central panel, the game birds are stacked in baskets with some large fruits, artichokes, and a bowl of strawberries. On the left stands a table set with a lobster on a large tray, a jug, a tall golden platter of vegetables, and a large basket of peaches, grapes, and apples. Below the table, a dog growls at the bitch guarding her pups, with one paw on a wheel of cheese. The viewpoint is fairly low, and the composition is divided into three panels, each energetically
composed. Snyders’ use of color in this piece should be noted, as he utilized pops of bright red, such as in the lobster, in the strawberries, and in some of the fruits and birds to unify the canvas. His brushwork is loose and painterly, as can be seen in the oysters, which Snyders painted with undulating strokes that show off his hand (figure 23).

Throughout his lifetime, Snyders remained immensely popular as a painter of both animals and still life in Antwerp and abroad. In Antwerp, many public commissions went to Snyders, and his work was often displayed publicly. His work was also popular abroad, as he had many foreign patrons and copies of his works were sent abroad. Snyders himself travelled widely. Just considering his travels to the Northern Netherlands, Snyders obtained ten passports between the years of 1635 and 1648 to travel to the Dutch Republic, although his specific destinations were not recorded. It is clear, however, that he appreciated Dutch painting and that Dutch painting was influenced by his work. As a prolific collector of paintings, Snyders obtained a still life by Willem Heda, a famed Haarlem still-life painter of the late breakfast piece. Hence, if Snyders did not travel to Haarlem directly, he was at least familiar with the Haarlem tradition of the late monochrome breakfast pieces, which his own still-life paintings certainly influenced. 

The Early Breakfast Piece

The first breakfast still lifes developed in the first years of the seventeenth century. The term “breakfast piece” or in Dutch “ontbijte,” which refers to the depiction of breakfast or a simple meal that can be eaten at any time of the day (in contrast to the “banketje,” which means “banquet piece” and generally implies a more elaborate subject) comes from seventeenth-century inventories in which still-life paintings were described by their subject matter.

These works depict various food items with eating and drinking utensils laid out on a table, generally against a
dark background. The painters of the early breakfast piece aimed for the greatest possible objectivity, using a high viewpoint so that each object could be seen both from above and from the front. Each item was painted in an additive manner within a simple composition, almost devoid of overlap and with equal importance given to each highly detailed item. These early breakfast pieces developed in Antwerp and Haarlem, almost simultaneously, although there is some evidence to indicate that they appeared in Antwerp first. Nevertheless, there were significant similarities and exchanges between the early breakfast pieces in Antwerp and Haarlem.

In Antwerp, the two most prominent painters of the early breakfast piece were Oasias Beert and Clara Peeters. Born in Antwerp in 1580 and entering into the Guild of St. Luke in Antwerp in 1596, Beert is considered one of the earliest masters of the Antwerp table still life. Although few signed paintings by Beert exist, his works demonstrate the typical characteristics of the early breakfast piece, as can be seen in his Still Life with Oysters and Sweets (c. 1610-1620) with its high vantage point and simple composition, structured around rounded bowls, platters, and glasses with little overlap (figure 44). This painting depicts a pewter plate of oysters, behind which two Venetian glasses stand on either side of a dish containing figs, almonds, raisins, and bread. In the center, a tazza holds sugarcoated almonds and candy sticks. On the bottom right of the composition, a Chinese porcelain bowl is full delicate pastries, and a wooden box of candied jelly and a dish of figs sit behind the porcelain bowl. A few expensive exotic shells are also littered across the table. Each of these items is meticulously painted in great detail with delicate, fine strokes against a dark background.

Clara Peeters, one of the few female painters of the time, was another early master of the breakfast piece. Another Antwerp native, Peeters worked in Antwerp throughout most of her
career but certainly travelled to the Northern Netherlands, as she was documented in Amsterdam around 1612 and in The Hague in 1617. Many of her early breakfast pieces date to 1611 or 1612 and are highly detailed depictions of foodstuffs, typical of the early breakfast still lifes. Peeters often portrayed more luxurious food items, such as deserts, precious metals, and fine vases, as can be seen in her *Table* (1611) in Madrid, which depicts a vase of flowers, a central bowl of dried fruits and nuts, a plate of pretzels, a fine glass goblet, and a golden chalice with another metal serving jar all sitting on a table against a dark background (figure 19). This piece has a high viewpoint, allowing the viewer to observe the food items from the top and the front. Peeters painted each item with fine detail, creating a sharp although slightly stiff painting. The evenly balanced composition focuses on horizontally placed items but provides some rhythm in the bouquet of flowers on the left.

In Haarlem, the three primary painters of the early breakfast still life were Nicolaes Gillis, Floris van Dijck, and Floris van Schooten. Although little is known about Gillis, his earliest work indicates that he may have been trained in Antwerp, moving to Haarlem by 1610. Only three of his paintings survive, but the earliest, dated to around 1601, depicts fruit, nuts, and wine—an enhanced version of the fruit still lifes associated with Antwerp. His two later paintings, both from Haarlem in the 1610s are true Haarlem breakfast pieces with the addition of other foodstuffs. One such piece, *The Laid Table* (1611), depicts a plate stacked with hard cheeses in the center, with bowls of fruit and nuts, multiple wine glasses, a fine silver jug, a pewter plate with a role on it (figure 1). A few other nuts and fruits lie scattered on the fine white tablecloth. As was standard, Gillis utilized a very high viewpoint, putting the objects on display, as though they were a part of a collection. The composition is simple, composed of horizontal bands with two crossing diagonals seen in the placement of nuts, fruits, and a knife on the table.
Gillis depicted each element in the additive manner, with minimal overlapping and equal attention paid to all items, which were painted with great detail and sharpness.\textsuperscript{90}

Gillis’s contemporary, Floris van Dijck, was born in Delft around 1575.\textsuperscript{91} He visited Italy in his youth, and entered the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke as a master painter in 1610, right around the time that Gillis began painting in Haarlem. Like Gillis, van Dijck has few extant paintings, only two of which are pure breakfast still lifes. These two, both dating to the early 1610s, show strong affinities with Gillis in their content, highly detailed nature, raised point of view, and composition. Van Dijck’s \textit{Still Life with Cheese} (c. 1615) depicts a central stack of three hard cheeses with a Chinese porcelain dish of olives, a roll, a pewter plate with half an apple, and a small \textit{roemer} sitting in front of the cheese (figure 45). To the left, a plate of grapes and a bowl of apples and nuts sit on a table covered with an orange-red tablecloth with a white damask central runner, similar to Gillis’ \textit{The Laid Table} (figure 1). To the right of the cheese, a jug, a pear, and a loaf of bread stand in front of a few wine glasses. As Gillis does, van Dijck arranges the objects as though they were on display and paints this work with a high vantage point, a dark background, and meticulous brushstrokes. This piece shows that there was a clear working relationship between the two masters, although it is unknown whether the nature of that relationship was one of a master and a pupil, one of colleagues, or one of competitors.\textsuperscript{92}

The third Haarlem breakfast still-life painter in the 1610s was Floris van Schooten, who settled in Haarlem around 1605.\textsuperscript{93} Van Schooten began painting breakfast still lifes in the mid 1610’s, following in the tradition of Gillis and van Dijck, particularly in his composition, additive nature, point of view, and subject matter.\textsuperscript{94} Van Dijck’s \textit{Still Life with Ham} (early seventeenth century) depicts a laid table, mostly covered with a white cloth (figure 46). On the right, as stack of three hard cheeses, very similar to those painted by Gillis and van Dijck, stand
against a dark background with some rolls of bread in front. In the center, a ham sits on a pewter plate with a saltcellar, a jug, and a glass of beer behind it. A thin slice of ham sits on the edge of the table along with a knife and two slices of bread. On the left are a whole loaf of bread and a plate of butter. Van Schooten arranged the items in three horizontal bands moving across the table, which is aligned with the bottom edge of the panel. There is little overlap and the vantage point is high. This piece illustrates van Schooten’s affinities with his Haarlem contemporaries.

The works of the early Haarlem breakfast still-life masters also show a great debt to the Beert and Peeters, particularly in their fastidious brushstrokes, highly detailed images, dark backgrounds, high point of view, and the additive nature of their compositions. The subject matter of the Haarlem artists however differed from their Antwerp peers. The Haarlem artists painted foodstuffs more associated with the Netherlands such cheese, bread, and butter along with some fruits and wines, as opposed to the delicate sweets of Beert and Peeters. Nevertheless, the early painters of the breakfast still life in Antwerp and in Haarlem paved the way for Claesz.  

*Pieter Claesz: Life, Work, and Reception*

Very little is known about the life of Pieter Claesz. He was born in 1596 or 1597 in Berchem, just outside Antwerp, but little else about his early life is known. He likely trained as a painter in Antwerp and possibly joined the Guild of St Luke there. His teacher is also unknown, as is whether or not he knew Osias Beert or Clara Peeters, but stylistic similarities hint that he was at least familiar with their works. As Claesz lived in and likely trained in Antwerp while Snyders painted still lifes, and as Snyders’ works were so often publically displayed, Claesz most likely was familiar with his work as well.
Claesz moved from Antwerp to Haarlem around 1621, first appearing on the register of Haarlem painters in 1634. The date of his initial entry into the Guild of St. Luke in Haarlem is unknown. By 1630, Claesz had become financially well off, standing surety for a hat maker at the time. Tides changed however; by 1643 he was behind on his rent, likely due to the brief economic recession in 1639 and the new trend towards luxurious still lifes as opposed to Claesz’s simpler specialty. Interestingly, Claesz never owned a home. His name rarely appeared on any documents, but he was probably Catholic as his second marriage to Trijntien Lourendsr occurred before the Catholic aldermen of Haarlem in 1635. Little is known about his social standing, although he was probably not a prominent member of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke because he was Catholic and thus could not hold a position within the guild. In general, Claesz seemed to have made a good living between 1625 and 1640. Over his lifetime, Claesz painted about two hundred and fifty signed and mostly dated works, with his period of productivity lasting from 1625 to 1650, peaking around 1640. Claesz painted little in the last decade of his life. Dying in Haarlem in 1661, Claesz passed without any significant wealth to his name, despite being one of the most important artists of the Dutch Golden Age.

Claesz’s work can be divided into three stylistic periods: his early experimental period, his monochrome period, for which he is most famous, and his late theatrical period. In his early period, Claesz experimented with his still-life painting, discovering where his talents lie. Claesz developed innovative ideas to incorporate into his still lifes, including a low vantage point, loose brushwork, muted colors, and compositional rhythm. He also tried his hand at more sumptuous and large-format banquet still-lifes and vanitas still lifes, such as *Vanitas Still Life with Violin and Glass Ball* (c.1638, figure 43). This piece depicts a table littered with used writing materials, a timepiece, and an overturned roemer. On the right a skull sits on top of a
stack of books, and a violin leans diagonally against the pile. A lamp stands behind the violin
next to a glass ball, which reflects the artist painting in his studio. The slanting diagonal of the
violin dominates the composition, and the spherical shapes of the glass ball and skull create a
compositional rhythm. Claesz has lowered the viewpoint from the high vantage point of his
predecessors as seen in Gillis’ *Laid Table* (figure 1). In this piece, Claesz moves towards the
tonal with the muted browns of the *roemer*, skull and tan violin. The table is a warm grey, as is
the background. Claesz however does include little pops of blue in the book, the timepiece, and
on a ribbon hanging from the violin.

Claesz’s breakfast pieces of the 1620s combined the tradition of the early breakfast piece
with Snyders’s low vantage point and cohesive compositions. Claesz simplified these paintings
to create his own style, which was to become the monochrome breakfast piece. Claesz’s
*Breakfast Piece with Large Roemer and Silver Saltcellar* (1628) depicts an uncovered table, with
a large roemer standing to the left, as a strong vertical element (figure 24). Three plates lie next
to the roemer, the front-most with a sliced roll on top, the next with a herring, and the last full of
capers. To the right of the fish stand a silver saltcellar, a crumpled napkin, a lemon, and a knife.
The palette consists of mostly earthen tones, with hints of olive green and yellow, particularly in
the lemon. A strong diagonal shadow, which is echoed by the height of the trajectory from the
roemer to the saltcellar, dominates the light background. Claesz’s brushstrokes are tight in the
individual objects, but show a loosening in the background. The composition also creates a sense
of depth by revealing the table’s corner, which was a fairly new development in breakfast still
life.

After 1620, the early breakfast piece developed into monochrome breakfast piece of the
1630s and 1640s in Haarlem, which represents the peak of the Dutch breakfast still life, with
Claesz leading the field in these transitions. His monochrome breakfast pieces focused on a cohesive arrangement of objects, moving away from the additive style of the Antwerp and Haarlem early breakfast painters and concentrating on the composition as a whole instead of each individual object. The diagonal became essential, eventually emphasizing just one main diagonal. The viewpoint was significantly lowered and the number of objects painted reduced to create simpler and more intimate paintings. In general, the backgrounds became light, as opposed to the dark backgrounds seen in earlier breakfast still lifes, with a general sense of natural light from a window falling over the scene. The overall palette was limited to the various brown and grey hues, leading to the “monochrome” or “tonal” label.107

The greatest example of Claesz’s monochrome breakfast still lifes is his Rotterdam Breakfast Piece (1636), which depicts simple objects, a grey-green cloth, a white napkin, a glass of amber beer, a knife, a chopped herring on a pewter plate, and a roll, all painted against a light grey and beige background (figure 2). The restrained palette displays marked tonality, with a variety of grey and brown hues and some green and yellow undertones in the tablecloth and background, which all together produce the monochrome effect and a sense of atmospheric vibrancy. The light streams down from the top left to the edge of the table on the bottom right, creating a diagonal, which echoes the varying heights of the objects in the painting. To balance this strong diagonal, the knife points diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. This piece also shows Claesz’s interest in light and texture in its reflection of light in the glass of beer and in the scales of the herring. Claesz brings out the crusty texture of the bread and the oily texture of the herring through his brushstrokes. His strokes are looser than his predecessors, as seen in his herring, which is painted with a few well place strokes and some selective highlights.
This modest still life exemplifies not only Claesz’s personal style, but also the quintessential monochrome breakfast still life of the Dutch Golden Age.\footnote{108}

Willem Claesz. Heda was Claesz’s contemporary, his competition, and the other famous monochrome still-life painter of the Dutch Golden Age. Little is known about Heda, but he arrived in Haarlem in the 1620s and was listed as a guild member in 1631.\footnote{109} Through the 1630s and 40s, Heda’s work followed Claesz’s advances in breakfast still-life paintings,\footnote{110} but Heda used more refined and controlled brushstrokes and often painted slightly more luxurious items such as Venetian glasses, meats, and various silver objects.\footnote{111} *Still Life with Silver Goblets* (1637) characterizes Heda’s monochrome breakfast still-life painting (figure 25). Like Claesz’s *Breakfast Piece* (figure 2), Heda’s refined painting depicts a simple green-grey tablecloth with a white napkin. An engraved silver goblet stands in front of a tipped Venetian glass, and a knife. Two pewter plates with mince pie and a silver spoon sit over the edges of the table, in front of a tall glass of beer and a silver saltcellar. This work has a strong tonal quality in its many brown and grey hues, producing the monochrome effect found in Claesz’s still lifes. The composition is calm, with one main diagonal, falling from the top left to the bottom right. Heda’s piece clearly follows Claesz’s tradition but with his own style in his depiction of more luxurious items and more refined brushstrokes.\footnote{112}

Claesz continued to paint his monochrome pieces until the mid 1640s, when his paintings shed their simplicity, becoming more luxurious, in keeping with the popular trend from Amsterdam. His palette regained some color accents and his brushwork became freer and lighter.\footnote{113} Claesz also made his paintings more theatrical,\footnote{114} increasing their size to cater to the wealthy buyers who began to demand progressively more opulent and larger works from him.\footnote{115} Claesz’s *Still Life with a Ham* (1647) exemplifies his late period, with its more luxurious subject
matter, crowded composition, and addition of color (figure 26). This piece depicts a standard table mostly covered with a white tablecloth. A ham sits on a pewter plate in the back right with a knife and an open jug. In front of the ham are some peaches with foliage and a white roll sitting on a pewter plate next to a roemer of wine with surrounding foliage. This piece is more complicated than one of Claesz’s monochrome still lifes, such as his Breakfast Piece (1636, figure 2) through the crowded table setting and the addition of the foliage. Claesz added pink and green hues, particularly in the peaches, ham, and foliage, in a step away from his tonal palette of the 1630s and 1640s. A diagonal still controls the composition, but the overflow of food on the table adds theatricality to Claesz’s composition.

Claesz’s late pieces differ from his famed monochrome period, most likely in an attempt to keep up with new popular styles in still-life painting marked by an abundance of items and an increase in the depiction of luxury items. This trend can be seen in works by Jan Davidsz. de Heem,116 such as A Richly Laid Table with Parrots (c. 1655), which depicts a table covered with a plate of oysters, ornate platters and ewers, and fruits, including melons lemons, grapes, and peaches, all set against a landscape with classical architectural features and partially covered by a dramatic slate grey drape (figure 47). On the bench below the table, a few large, exotic shells rest against the red-orange velvet of the tablecloth. A parrot perches on the top left, looking up towards another bird holding a cracker in its beak. A bright red, cooked lobster peeks out from behind the drapery. This work depicts an overabundance of luxurious foods, opulent wares, and exotic items such as the shells, the parrots, and lemons, all painted in a variety of bright hues. This new popular style of overabundant still life could not be more different from Claesz’s sober monochrome breakfast pieces.
In his own time, however, Claesz was immensely popular, as can be seen through some historical mentions of his name, by his presence in Haarlem inventories, and by the importance of those who owned his works during Claesz’s lifetime. The Haarlem chronicler Samuel Apzing noted Claesz’s importance to art in the city of Haarlem in his poem Beschrijvinge ende Lof der Stad Haarlem (Description and Praise of the City of Haarlem, 1628). Thus Claesz was well known in 1628, even before cementing his fame with his monochrome breakfast pieces. Claesz’s popularity is also evident through the sheer number of times his paintings were mentioned by name in estate inventories from seventeenth-century Haarlem. Claesz was mentioned by name a total of one hundred and twenty-one times. In comparison to other still life painters, this was very high. The next most mentioned still life painter was Roelof Koets, with twenty-nine mentions, then Heda with nineteen, van Schooten with twelve, van Dijck with four, and Gillis only once. Also recording the rooms in which Claesz’s paintings were located, the inventories indicated that the majority of his paintings hung in prominent places around the home, such as in the voorhuis (the entry room) or in side rooms.

The estate inventories also documented the assessed values of thirty-seven of the one hundred and twenty-one paintings mentioned, with the highest valued painting at sixty guilders. This piece hung in the voorhuis of Dirck Smuijser, one of the most important fabric merchants in Haarlem. Recall that most still life paintings at this time sold for three to four guilders, maybe six or seven if it was a considerably large item. Thus a sixty-guilder price tag indicates how famous and sought after Claesz’s work was. Smuijser’s inventory, which was drawn up in 1653, notably before Claesz’s death, also recorded two more paintings each with a value of thirty guilders, one hanging in the kitchen and another in the side room. Another influential Haarlem resident, Ijsbrant Schatter, had at least eight paintings by Claesz when his home was inventoried.
in 1684, two of which hung of the voorhuis, another in the kitchen, and another two in the primary living rooms. Schatter’s aunt, Geertruijt Olycan, also had a breakfast piece by Claesz hanging in her voorhuis when her home was inventoried in 1666, as did Schatter’s brother-in-law when his home was inventoried that same year. All three of these families were wealthy brewers and members of the ruling elite in Haarlem, indicating that Claesz’s work was popular within the most influential circles of Haarlem society.\textsuperscript{122}

More Haarlem inventories attested to Claesz’s fame within his hometown. The 1666 inventory of Hester Cluysaenes included five Claesz paintings, ranging in price from five to twelve guilders. Leendert Bardenis’s 1647 inventory, which was compiled before Claesz’s death, recorded nine signed paintings by Claesz ranging in valuation from eleven to twenty-four guilders. In comparison to records of Heda’s paintings, Claesz’s works were often valued at lower prices, but Claesz’s works appeared more often and in more prominent collections than Heda’s. Compared to van Schooten’s still lifes, which were valued around three guilders, Claesz’s paintings seemed quite expensive. As one last testament to Claesz’s success, the painter and art dealer Jan Miense Molenaer sold copies of Claesz’s paintings within his own lifetime. Claesz’s works were well received in Haarlem, as is evident by historical mentions of the artist, the occurrence and price of his works in notable collections and inventories, and the presence of copies of his paintings in art dealers’ shops.\textsuperscript{123}

Still life was the least theorized of all genres at this time, with art theoretical writings paying little attention to and even turning against still life in the Dutch Golden Age.\textsuperscript{124} Nevertheless, this period witnessed a flourishing of the genre and produced some of the greatest still life masters in history,\textsuperscript{125} possibly due to the booming art market in the Netherlands at this
time, which thrived under the careful watch of the Guild of St. Luke.\footnote{126} The development of the breakfast piece began in sixteenth-century Antwerp with biblical and secular paintings, which over the century began to highlight still life more prominently.\footnote{127} The breakfast piece moved from Antwerp to Haarlem,\footnote{128} and then underwent significant developments through the work of Pieter Claesz, who was greatly influenced by his predecessors in Antwerp and in Haarlem. Claesz’s still lifes become the monochrome breakfast piece in the 1630s, representing the peak of Dutch breakfast still life\footnote{129} and transforming Claesz into one of the most important artists of Dutch Golden Age.\footnote{130}
Chapter III Notes

8 Ibid., 62-63.
10 North, Art and Commerce, 62.
11 Ibid., 66-67.
12 Ibid., 70-71.
14 North, Art and Commerce, 71-72.
15 Ibid., 94.
16 Ibid., 71-72, 90.
17 Temminck, “Haarlem,” 24-25.
18 North, Art and Commerce, 82-90.
19 Ibid., 94.
20 Ibid., 92-93.
22 North, Art and Commerce, 93-94
24 North, Art and Commerce, 95.
27 Ibid., 76.
28 Ibid., 94.
30 Jansen, “'On the Lowest Level,’” 54.
31 Ibid., 51.
33 Melion, Shaping the Netherlandish Cannon, 6-9.
34 Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 51.
35 Ibid., 51-52.
36 Ibid., 52.
37 Ibid., 52-53.
38 Ibid., 53.
39 Ibid., 53-54.
40 Koslow, Frans Snyders, 32.
41 Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 53-54.
42 Samuel van Hoogstraten, Inleyding tot de hoge schoole der Schilderkuns; anders de zichtbaere werelt (Rotterdam: 1678). Quoted in Koslow, Frans Snyders, 32.
43 Koslow, Frans Snyders, 51.
44 Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 54.
45 Koslow, Frans Snyders, 50.
46 Van Hoogstraten, Inleyding tot de hoge schoole. Quoted in Koslow, Frans Snyders, 50.
47 Van Hoogstraten, Inleyding tot de hoge schoole. Quoted in Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 54.
48 Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 54.
49 Ibid., 54.
50 Koslow, Frans Snyders, 51-52.
51 Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 54.
52 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 3-4.
53 Koslow, Frans Snyders, 32.
54 Biesboer, “Pieter Claesz in Haarlem,” 11-12.
56 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 112.
57 Ibid., 41.
58 Ibid., 4-7.
59 Ibid., 10.
60 Ibid., 4-5.
61 Ibid., 17-22.
62 Koslow, Frans Snyders, 85.
63 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 17-19.
64 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 38.
65 Ibid., 17-22.
67 Ibid., 84-85.
68 Ibid., 31.
69 Ibid., 134.
70 Ibid., 57.
71 Ibid., 140-141.
Ibid., 153.
73 Ibid., 16-31.
74 Ibid., 98.
76 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 98.
77 Koslow, Frans Snyders, 85.
78 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 98.
79 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 87.
80 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 104.
81 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 115.
82 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 104-105.
83 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 115-118.
84 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 105-106.
85 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 120.
86 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 105-106.
87 Ibid., 100.
89 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 87.
90 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 100-102.
92 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 102.
94 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 135.
96 Ibid., 14-15.
97 Biesboer, “Pieter Claesz in Haarlem,” 15-16.
98 Ibid., 15-16.
99 Ibid., 24-25.
103 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 114.
104 Ibid., 118-122.
105 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 116-118.
108 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 122.
109 Ibid., 123-124.
111 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 127-129.
112 Ibid., 126-127.
113 Ibid., 122-123.
Biesboer, “Pieter Claesz in Haarlem,” 22.
Brunner-Bulst, “Pieter Claesz,” 57.
Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 122.
Biesboer, “Pieter Claesz in Haarlem,” 25.
Ibid., 16.
Ibid., 25.
Ibid., 25.
Schama, An Embarrassment of Riches, 318-319.
Jansen, “‘On the Lowest Level,’” 54-55.
Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 41.
North, Art and Commerce, 62-63.
Ibid., 4-5.
Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 87.
Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 112.
IV.

Still Life in Art Theory, Still Life in France, the Dutch and Flemish Influence, and the Life, Work, and Reception of Chardin

Since the seventeenth-century, still life has had a negative reputation as a genre that excludes and almost assaults the human form.¹ In France, it was historically relegated to the lowest level of painting genres. Even now, it is the least discussed and theorized of all genres, according to the still-life scholar, Norman Bryson.² First, I will focus on the artistic milieu in which Chardin painted, namely the Academy, the Salon, and the rise of art criticism. Then I will examine still life and art theory in France. Next I will look at the French still-life painters preceding Chardin, specifically those who depicted food. Then I will investigate the influence of Dutch and Flemish works of art on the French artistic scene by looking at the Dutch and Flemish artists who painted in Paris, and at the influx of Dutch and Flemish paintings on the Parisian art market in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lastly, I will examine Chardin’s individual artistic training, his entry into and his presence at the Académie Royale, the progression of his career, and the reception of his work during his own lifetime in Paris and abroad.

Parisian Artistic Millieu

The eighteenth-century art world in Paris witnessed the same widespread change as did the capitol as a whole. The Académie Royale, established in the seventeenth century, began to extend control over the Parisian artistic milieu in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Academy also established the first official public display of works of art from all genres, in the form of the Salon, held every other year, beginning in 1737. These Salons were free and open to the public, and members of all social classes attended. Because fine art was suddenly accessible
to a wide public, art critics started to write about these displays, forever revolutionizing the art world.

Established in 1648, the Academy became dominant in the last few decades of the 1600s. Even then, it had to distinguish itself from the old guild system it gradually uprooted and prove to the public that it was in fact a royal establishment, not just a glorified guild. To do this, the Academy dispensed with many old guild traditions and created new practices never before seen in a guild. For example, artists in the Academy were not allowed to have storefronts or even display their works in the windows of their studios. The religious associations of the Guild of St. Luke all but disappeared with the Academy. Ultimately, the Academy’s royal patronage and desired focus on gentlemanly intellect caused it to distance itself from the medieval and religious fraternity it overturned.³

The founding of the Académie Royale offered new opportunities for artists in society and a new level of public discourse about art never seen before in France. Royal patronage also allowed the Academy to establish new practices that guilds would never have been able to afford, further distinguishing the Academy from the guild system. The most obvious of these was the associated school of figure drawing taught exclusively by official professeurs of the Academy. The Academy also established monthly discussions on art and the history of art with its members, in clear attempts to elevate the Academy to an intellectual institution. The Grand prix, a trip to Italy to study art at the Academy’s sister institution in Rome, was founded for top students to continue their formal education. For those artists inducted into the Academy, their membership offered many privileges such as an annual pension and free lodging.⁴ Most significant of these privileges, and the one that was the most as odds with the other artists in
Europe, was the elevated social status artists received in Parisian society, especially as an individual artist moved up in the ranks of the Academy.\(^5\)

Becoming a full member of the *Académie Royale* however was not easy, and even once in the Academy, an artist had to contend with a rigid hierarchy. To be accepted, one had to present a *morceau de réception*, or a masterpiece, which would have then been judged and either accepted or denied by a committee of the principle painters within the Academy.\(^6\) After being accepted into the Academy, an artist could further elevate his position through various contests within the Academy. Of course, an artist’s preferred genre dictated how high up an artist could reach. The best positions were reserved only for history painters.\(^7\) Even so, painters of the lowest genre, still life, could achieve high positions.

The single most important custom the Academy introduced to the eighteenth-century Parisian public was the *Salon*, a free public exhibition of art. Although the *Salon* tradition began with the advent of the Academy in the seventeenth-century, the *Salon* was not established as a biannual tradition until 1737. From then on, the *Salon* was held every other year in the Louvre beginning in late August, on the King’s name day, and running for four to six weeks. The *Salon Carré* in the Louvre was packed floor to ceiling with paintings of all genres. One artist, Pietro Antonio Martini, documented this practice in his 1787 engraving, *Salon of 1787* (figure 15). The larger history paintings and portraits were hung high while the landscapes, genre paintings, and still lifes were crowded into the lower sections. People of all classes squeezed into the Salon to view the assortment of paintings.\(^8\) One author described the experience as “emerg[ing] through a stairwell like a trapdoor” due to the throngs of spectators.\(^9\) Many in Paris attended the *Salon*, regardless of social class, as it was the premiere form of entertainment of the season. As a testament to this, the Academy had to print more and more *Salon* guides each year until they
were printing them in the thousands. Furthermore, so many illegal pamphlets and guides to the *Salon* were printed and sold on the streets of Paris, so that creating illegal *Salon* guides became a small industry itself.¹⁰

Because of the public setting and popularity of the *Salon*, art criticism naturally evolved out of this biannual event. In 1747, Étienne de la Font de Saint-Yenne published what is considered the first true art critique in history, *Réflexions sur quelques causes de l’état présente de la peinture en France* (Reflections on Some Causes of the Present State of Painting in France). In his comprehensive review of the *Salon* of 1747, La Font criticized the frivolity of Rococo paintings and advocated for a return to more somber and classical history paintings.¹¹ La Font’s writings were extremely unpopular in the art world; artists had never been publically criticized in this way before. There were angry and even violent outbursts towards La Font in the art community because of his writings, eventually causing him to retire from public life. Many artists were so offended by art criticism that they withdrew from the *Salon* of 1749 to prevent public critiques of their work.¹² La Font’s essay marked a turning point in the history of art with the advent of art criticism, and art critics continued to publish their opinions through the turn of the century. Over the next few decades, more critiques of the *Salon* would be printed, and by most accounts these critiques were widely read—and by influential people.¹³ The most well known of these art critiques was the series of Salon critiques written by Diderot in the late 1750s and 1760s.¹⁴ Many artists who fought against critiques continued to attempt to suppress them, calling art critiques libelous and personally insulting to the artists who were given negative reviews. There were even pleas from artists for the state to censor criticism.¹⁵
Still Life in Art Theory in France

The hierarchy of genres dominated eighteenth-century art, causing subject matter to be an important feature by which a painting was judged. André Félibien introduced this concept, which was promptly accepted as official doctrine by the Académie Royale in the last half of the seventeenth century. At this point, still life took its position on the lowest rung on the hierarchy of genres, as the still-life painter was considered merely a craftsman and copyist without intellectual pursuit or means. Roger de Piles, another late seventeenth-century art theorist, continued Félibien’s deprecation of still life while challenging the Academy’s criteria for determining the success of a painting. These two art theorists were also the first French writers to publish biographies of Dutch and Flemish Golden Age artists, furthering the influence of those schools. The writings of Félibien and de Piles influenced Enlightenment art critics such as Étienne La Font de Saint-Yenne and Denis Diderot, who would draw on their predecessors’ ideas in their critiques.

Félibien was one of the earliest members of the Académie Royale, serving as the official historiographer at a time when the Académie first attempted to define its views on the rules of art. These discussions occurred at the conférences of 1667, led by the artist and lead academician, Charles Le Brun. Two years later, Félibien published the conclusions in his Conférences de l’Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (Conferences of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, 1669) and added a preface, Historiographe des bâtiments du Roy (History of the King’s Buildings) which outlines the hierarchy of genres. Félibien based this hierarchy on the relation between subject matter and man:

Thus the one who paints perfect landscapes stands above the one who represents only fruits, flowers or shells. The one who paints live animals is worthier than the one who represents only things dead and without motion. And as the figure of man is the most perfect work of God on Earth, it is
certain that the one who makes himself an imitator of God by painting human figures, is much more excellent than all of the others.24

History paintings have the top spot as they depict the most intellectually elevated subject and instruct the viewer in moral and ethical values. Furthermore the history painter was most closely aligned with God, 25 as the human body is God’s most perfect creation on earth and thus imitations of man, particularly those depictions that ennoble man, are the ultimate artistic achievement. Still life on the other hand was relegated to the lowest level of the hierarchy. In depicting inanimate objects without the presence of man, still life lacks man’s intellect and is thus of lesser value. Furthermore, painters of still life were considered little more than copyists and craftsmen, lacking in intellectual pursuit.26 This work by Félibien was the basis for the art theoretical writings by Samuel van Hoogstraten and Gerard de Lairesse in the Netherlands previously discussed.27

As Félibien’s Conférences were his notes on and additions to the Académie’s 1667 conférences, this hierarchy of genres was published as a quasi-official writing of the Académie.28 While the Académie officially considered still-life painting the lowest genre in art, large numbers of still-life painters were still accepted into the Académie.29 Nevertheless, Félibien’s hierarchy of genres would prevail as the dominant point of view throughout the eighteenth century.30

Roger de Piles, the next most important art theorist of the era, was an amateur art critic and theorist who generally attacked the rigidity of the Académie.31 His theory, which he outlined in his Cours de peinture par principes avec un balance de peintres (Discourse on the Fundamentals of Painting with a Comparison of Painters, 1708), focuses on the visual effects of painting, such as color, composition, drawing, and expression regardless of subject matter.32 Even so, de Piles defined painting on the intellectual order of the subject matter,33 believing that art should reflect the moral and religious nature of society and should educate mankind, which
history painting did very well, notably more so than still life, by depicting a noble and elevated subject matter. Thus according to de Piles, still life is again at the bottom of the heap. De Piles however did not even recognize still life as a genre worthy of painting, relegating it even farther down the scale of painting genres than the lowest rung of Félibien’s hierarchy.

Nevertheless, de Piles’ theory states that the formal qualities of a painting are more important than the subject matter, as de Piles believes that the formal qualities express a painting’s ideas and inspire passion in the viewer. De Piles is concerned with the unity and harmony of the whole canvas: composition, light, shade, and color. All parts of the painting should complement each other: “They must all agree together in the picture, and make but one harmonious whole.” Furthermore, a painter must achieve a believable imitation of nature but do so without copying nature directly: “A knowing painter ought not be a slave to nature, but a judge and judicious imitator of her.” De Piles advocates a natural, but not tediously imitative, approach to painting as a painting needs to persuade a viewer of a realistic image; the viewer’s eye can supply many of the details. Furthermore, in limiting the fastidious detail, a painting involves the spectator in creating illusion. For de Piles, the ultimate success of a painting relies on the single moment when it either succeeds in or fails at attracting the viewer.

The two most prominent eighteenth-century art critics and theorists, La Font and Diderot, echoed the hierarchy of genres created by Félibien in his writings. La Font, in his Réflexions sur quelques causes de l’état present de la peinture en France (Reflections on Some Causes of the Present State of Painting in France, 1747), noted that history painting occupied the highest level of paintings, as the only genre that does not just copy nature. Diderot continued in vein noting that still life was on the lowest level and the easiest genre to paint. Amidst his own praise of
Chardin’s still lifes in his *Salon* review of 1765, Diderot states, “the genre [still life] which Chardin paints is the easiest.”

While Diderot endorses Félibien’s hierarchy, he also uses many of de Piles’ theories on the formal qualities of painting in his critiques. In his review of the 1763 *Salon*, Diderot says “Chardin is so true, so true and so harmonious.” Four years later, Diderot again praises Chardin for the presence of an “incredible strength of color, a general harmony, a piquant and rue effect, beautiful masses, a magic of execution that makes one despair, and a mix of composition and arrangement” in his paintings. Diderot uses de Piles’ theory to critique the formal qualities of Chardin’s paintings. In the same year, Diderot also notes that “one stops in front of a Chardin as if by instinct,” using de Piles’ definition of a successful painting, one that attracts the viewer, to describe Chardin’s works.

Félibien and de Piles also mention the Dutch and Flemish painters in their treatises on art, furthering the influences of the Dutch and Flemish painting schools on French painting in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first biographies of the Flemish and Dutch Golden Age artists published in French were in Félibien’s *Entretiens* (1666-1668) and in de Piles’ *L’Abrégé de la vie des peintres* (Summary of the Lives of Painters, 1699). These biographies were limited, as Félibien only included four Dutch and Flemish artists while de Piles included fifteen, but in accordance with their views on the relative unimportance of still life, they both completely excluded Dutch and Flemish still-life artists. Nevertheless, the presence of any Dutch and Flemish artists in these publications legitimated and extended their influence on French art.
Still Life in France

French still life between the 1620s and the 1730s, when Chardin entered the scene, can be separated into two distinct eras following the reigns of Louis XIII (1610-1643) and Louis XIV (1643-1715). The earlier period, which lasted until 1661, through the regency of Louis XIV’s reign, focused on smaller compositions with limited subject matter, while the later period witnessed a transition to large-format, decorative still-life paintings.⁴⁹

French still life during the reign of Louis XIII was marked by simple and relatively small format paintings. Artists generally limited the number of objects depicted and arranged them into a simple, linear composition against a dark background. The primary focus was on realistically depicting an object, and paintings of flowers, fruits, and vegetables were popular and praised for their accurate depictions of these items.⁵⁰ Each object was painted individually with extreme precision and minute detail.⁵¹

The most important artists of this period to focus on still lifes of food were Louise Moillon, Jacques Linard, Sebastian Stoskopff, and Pieter van Boeckel. Moillon began painting small still lifes with shells, bowls of fruit, vegetables, and similar items around 1620. Around 1629, she also began to produce larger market scenes in the Flemish tradition but was mostly known for her small still lifes, which generally have rich colors and precise brushwork.⁵² One such example, her Still Life (Fruits and Vegetables) (1637), depicts a basket of peaches, plums, and cherries perched on a raised ledge, with a cluster of asparagus, artichokes, and a bowl of wild strawberries to the left, all set against a dark background (figure 27). The fruits pop against the dark background with their bright red, yellow, and orange coloring. Each item is meticulously depicted with extreme precision.⁵³ This painting shows similarities to Frans Snyder’s Still Life with Fruit, Wan-Li Porcelain, and Squirrel (1616, figure 20), which also
depicts baskets of fruits, piled high and adorned with foliage, and Chinese porcelain bowls filled with strawberries against a dark background. Furthermore, both works are highly detailed and fastidiously painted. Snyders’ piece, however, depicts a slightly more luxurious scene in its inclusion of the gold fruit stand and Venetian glasses.

Jacques Linard was one of Moillon’s contemporaries who began to paint small still lifes of shells, boxes, bowls of fruit, and similar items in 1620, around the same time as Moillon. Linard was known for his depictions of the five senses and four elements, being the first to combine them into one still life, such as The Five Senses (1648, figure 36). This work depicts a vase of flowers next to a wooden box with a Chinese bowl filled with fruit, a fig, and a painting on top of the box. In front of the box rest a money purse, a deck of cards, a music book, a pomegranate and a mirror in front of it. These items, set in a two-tiered composition against a dark background, are meticulously painted with fine detail. This work is similar to Clara Peeters’ Table (1611, figure 19) in its horizontal composition, dark background, and exquisite depiction of flowers. Linard’s work however has a lower horizon line and more tightly focused image.

Another contemporary of these two was Sebastian Stoskopff, an Alsatian painter trained in Hanau. Stoskopff lived and worked in Paris from 1622 to 1641. Although he ventured into large format market still lifes in the Flemish tradition like Moillon, Stoskopff was known for his smaller still lifes. One such piece is his Still Life with a Nautilus, Panther Shell, and Chip Wood Box (c. 1630), which depicts those items in a simple manner. The wood box, filled with candied fruit, sits on a ledge, dominating the right side of the painting, with the blue-grey nautilus and panther shells to its left, all set against a dark background. The composition is simply organized in a single horizontal band, and each item is painted with great detail, typifying the early French still life.
The last still-life painter of food from the reign of Louis XIII to be discussed is Peter van Boeckel, who in the early seventeenth century moved to Paris from Antwerp, where he had been in a student of Frans Snyders. Van Boeckel’s paintings followed in Snyder’s tradition and in the Flemish manner, illustrating the influence of Flemish art in Paris. His still lifes, while belonging to the era of Louis XIII, marked the movement towards the decorative, large-format still lifes that would become popular during the reign of Louis XIV. One of his works, *The Kitchen Table* (1651), exemplifies his Flemish origins, bringing the Flemish kitchen to Paris, and marks an intermediary step between the earlier and later periods (figure 29). In this piece, a sheep’s head and slabs of meat rest on a table. Two bowls are stacked to the left with asparagus, entrails, and another animal head sitting in them. On the right, more beef and entrails hang from the ceiling while a dog growls from the bottom right and a cat stalks the meat from the left. In its dark background and meticulously painted items, this piece clearly belongs to the French still life tradition during the reign of King Louis XIII. On the other hand, its subject matter and inclusion of the cat and dog are distinctly Flemish and evoke the kitchen scenes of Frans Snyders. Furthermore, this piece’s elegant composition, focused on intersecting diagonals, and its depiction of game indicates a movement towards the still lifes that would become popular during the reign of Louis XIV.

The simple, small-format still lifes of the early seventeenth century fell out of style after 1640 in Paris, and by the time Louis XIV began his reign around 1660, large, elaborate still lifes, mainly of flowers, fruit, and game, became the popular trend in the capital, influenced by the works of Peter van Boeckel, as discussed above, and by Willem Kalf, who painted elaborate and luxurious still lifes, although still small in size, before leaving Paris to return to the Netherlands in 1642. Other Dutch painters of the *pronkstilleven* (luxury still life) tradition, such as Jan Fyt
and Willem van Aelst, also painted in Paris in the mid-seventeenth century, bringing the Dutch and Flemish traditions to Paris. This later style developed out of a need for large format, decorative still lifes to adorn the walls of royal palaces, and noble town houses and country estates, as Louis XIV’s style, focusing on ornament and decoration, took hold amongst the nobility. This style extended into the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the three most prominent painters of food and game at this time were Nicolas de Largillière, Alexandre-François Desportes, and Jean-Baptiste Oudry.  

Largillière was a renowned French portraitist in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, who also occasionally painted still lifes of animals, fruits, and flowers. He trained in Antwerp, bringing the colorist Flemish style to Paris. He is also credited with being the first of the French still life painters to utilize more painterly brushstrokes. One example of his still life is *Red-Legged Partridge in a Niche* (1685), which has clear Dutch and Flemish influences (figure 30). This piece depicts a partridge hanging in front of a framing niche with a basket of grapes, some peaches, a pomegranate, and two other dead birds resting on the ledge below the partridge. In this piece, Largillière works to create textural illusion in the feathers of the birds and in the skins of the various fruits through color and paint application, but the finished surface remains smooth. The niche directly references Dutch and Flemish traditions, although the nature of the piece is ornamental, fitting in with the popular trend in Paris during this time even in its small format. This painting is similar to Willem van Aelst’s *Hunt Still Life with a Velvet Bag on a Marble Ledge* (c. 1665), which also depicts a game bird, hung by the leg (figure 48). Van Aelst’s piece however is more luxurious in its inclusion of other fine hunting items, such as the ultramarine, velvet hunting bag and horn, and the sumptuous marble countertop. Nevertheless, Largillière’s *Red-Legged Partridge*, as a hunting piece, illustrates an inherently noble scene.
Another prominent still life painter of food at this time was Desportes, a student of Nicasius Bernaerts who had moved to Paris in 1643 as a student of Frans Snyders. He was the official animal painter to Louis XIV, but he also painted sumptuous still lifes of game, flowers, fruits, and vegetables along with silver buffets and banquet still lifes for the aristocracy. One of Desportes’ still lifes, *Silver Tureen with Peaches* (c. 1740), exemplifies his ornate and detailed style (figure 31). This large painting portrays an ornate silver dish filled with peaches in the center, and two silver platters, which reflect the peaches, placed to the side and behind the central dish with another small silver dish in the front, all set on a maroon velvet-covered table. Two birds rest to the right side of the silver dish, balancing the orange peaches with their delicate blue feathers. Ornate golden ewers stand behind of the silver platters. These objects are inherently opulent, and Desportes captures the luxurious textures of the silver, gold, and velvet. Like Largillière’s piece, this painting is clearly decorative, but it is also a study in color and texture.

The last prominent painter of this era to be discussed is Oudry, who was arguably the second greatest still-life painter of the eighteenth century behind Chardin. Oudry was Largillière’s most renowned pupil and Chardin’s greatest rival. His works show his meticulous attention to detail and his interest in depicting color and texture. While Oudry often painted small images of a single game-piece, he perfected the outdoor hunting scene, which generally depicted hunting dogs, dead game, and a spread of food, which is a markedly noble subject as hunting was limited to the aristocracy at the time. These scenes were often set against an airy landscape reminiscent of the Rococo *fête champêtre*, a subject also popular amongst the nobility. Oudry’s *The Dead Wolf* (1721) exemplifies his outdoor hunting scene in its depiction of beautifully painted hounds guarding fruits and wine stacked in a classical architectural niche, with the dead
wolf from the hunt laying beneath the ledge, all set against an airy landscape (figure 32). The painting in this large piece is meticulous, and Oudry focuses on depicting the textures of the fruits and animals in this hunting scene, an inherently noble subject matter as only the aristocracy had the privilege of hunting. By setting his food still life in a niche, Oudry follows in the Flemish tradition of hunting scenes, such as Jan Fyt’s *Still Life in an Architectural Setting* (c. 1645, figure 49). Fyt, who spent some time in Paris in the mid-seventeenth century and was a student of Snyders, depicts an elaborate display of fruit framed by a classical arch with a display of game, including birds and deer, on the floor next to the hunting dogs. Oudry’s painting also perfectly exemplifies the large format, decorative still lifes depicting game and fruit, which were so popular in Paris during the early eighteenth century and which followed in the Flemish tradition.

The still-life tradition in France influenced Chardin’s still lifes. In his early works, Chardin followed the tradition of his direct predecessors, such as Oudry, as can be seen in a comparison of Oudry’s *The Dead Wolf* (1721, figure 32) and Chardin’s *The Buffet* (c. 1728, figure 9), which depicts a pyramid of fruit, such as peaches, plums, and apples, on a silver platter atop a buffet, surrounded by glasses of wine, a peeled orange, and a silver ewer. A dog, standing next to a copper wine cooler on the bottom left of the canvas, looks up at the stack of food on the buffet. Chardin has brought Oudry’s still life indoors and eliminated the hunting elements, although he still utilizes the architecture of the scene to frame the piece. The two works are even similar in height, although Chardin’s piece is half a wide as Oudry’s. Chardin’s piece however is more painterly in is brushwork, as is evident in the atmospheric nature of the background and in individual items, such as the fruits or the copper wine cooler. In Chardin’s later works, he took the small format and simple compositions of the early painters, but he focused on color and
texture, like the later painters, and loosened his brushstrokes in Largillière’s tradition. This can be seen in Chardin’s *Basket of Wild Strawberries* (1761), which focuses on a basket of wild strawberries (figure 35). This is a subject matter that both Moillon (1634, figure 51) and Stoskopff (c. 1620, figure 52) had previously tackled, albeit both of their compositions feature strawberries in Chinese porcelain bowls whereas Chardin’s strawberries are in a basket.

Chardin’s brushstrokes however are painterly; this piece is a study in color and texture, as can be seen in the reds and whites of the fruits and carnations, and in the fuzzy quality of the peach skin. This piece, which will be discussed further in the section on Chardin, exemplifies the influences of the French still-life tradition on Chardin’s works.

*The Dutch and Flemish Influence*  

The artistic influences surrounding Chardin were not only limited to the works of his French predecessors in still-life painting, but also extended to Dutch and Flemish art of the seventeenth century, which was immensely popular in Paris in the seventeenth century, before the reign of Louis XIV, and throughout the eighteenth century. These influences are not only evident in the discussions of Dutch and Flemish art in French art theory and in Dutch and Flemish artists who spent time or permanently moved to Paris in the seventeenth century as discussed previously, but they are also evident in the market for Dutch and Flemish paintings in Paris. This would ultimately have an effect on Chardin’s painting, and many of his contemporaries frequently referenced Dutch and Flemish artists when discussing Chardin’s works.

The market for Dutch and Flemish painting in Paris indicates not only the influence of Dutch and Flemish art but also the ample number of examples of these works in Paris for French
artists to view. The primary trade in Dutch and Flemish paintings in the seventeenth century was between two dealers, Jean-Michel Picart, who owned a gallery in Paris but was born in Antwerp, and Matthijs Musson, who was based in Antwerp. Musson would send paintings from his Antwerp gallery to Picart to be sold in Paris. Trade between these two continued for about thirty years but was most prolific between 1653 and 1665. Although Picart and Musson were the primary dealers in Dutch and Flemish art, they were by no means the only dealers in Paris and did experience some competition from others. For example, Picart mentioned in a letter to Musson that other dealers were selling large format still lifes, like the Snyders he was attempting to sell. Furthermore, Picart mentioned competition with a dealer named Valdor, who, as Picart noted, traded in Dutch still-life paintings. This competition reveals the popularity and presence of these Dutch and Flemish still lifes in Paris.77

From the 1730s and on, more Dutch and Flemish painters, including more obscure ones, were introduced into the French art market, expanding the canon of Dutch and Flemish art available to the French people.78 The Parisian art dealer Edme-François Gersaint (1744) praised Dutch and Flemish art for “its great union and liveliness of colors, its excellent chiaroscuro, its mellow brushwork, and its high but always fluent finish.” He further explained its rapid rise in and the extent of its popularity of Dutch and Flemish art: “their paintings are not as expensive and rare as Italian ones [and] nowadays adorn nearly all private cabinets.”79 Gersaint’s explanation indicates that many people would buy a Dutch or Flemish piece for their home, and in fact increasing number of middle and lower-middle class dealers, collectors, and painters became interested in Dutch art in the eighteenth century.80 Thus many Parisians, and certainly most painters, would have been aware of the foremost seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish artists, including still-life painters.81
Chardin would have been familiar with the more prominent Dutch and Flemish still life painters, and their works certainly inspired his own paintings. References to Dutch and Flemish works in Chardin’s own paintings occur throughout his life. Many of his contemporaries responded to these allusions, and referred to Dutch and Flemish painters when discussing his works. It is not surprising that the greatest still-life artist of the age would so identify with an artistic school famous for its still lifes.

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin: Life, Work, and Reception

Chardin was born on November 2, 1699 to a Parisian cabinetmaker, intent on having his son follow in his craft. Showing a talent for art from a young age, Chardin entered the studio of the painter Pierre-Jacques Cazes around 1712. In Cazes’ studio, Chardin was limited to drawing and painting only from Cazes’ works. Around 1720, Chardin began to study under Nöel-Nicolas Coypel, who introduced Chardin to the practice of painting from nature, allowing Chardin to flourish as a painter. In 1724, Chardin entered into the Academy of St. Luke. Even though Chardin would later regret the informality of his artistic education, which was very different from the standards of the Académie Royale, because it focused on craft as opposed to the humanities and the fine art of painting, Chardin’s alternative path arguably allowed him to focus on working directly from nature, as opposed to from studies and drawings, and to focus on the medium of paint, for which he would later become famous.

Chardin continued painting on his own until, as the story goes, he devised a ploy to gain the attention of the renowned artist Nicolas de Largillière. The anecdote tells of Chardin assembling some of his best paintings for Largillière to see without Largillière knowing who the artist was. This apparently worked, as Largillière claimed they must be the works of some great
“Flemish master.” Chardin then proclaimed it was he who had painted them, prompting Largillière to urge Chardin to present his works to the Académie. On September 25, 1728, Chardin was nominated to the Académie Royale presenting The Skate (1725-1726, figure 33) and The Buffet (1728, figure 9) as his master works. He was admitted the same day, as a painter of “animals and fruit.”

In February 1729, Chardin resigned from his position as a member of the Academy of St. Luke and forged ahead with his career as a member of the Académie Royale. In the beginning, Chardin was quite poor and had to supplement his income as an artist by working as a journeyman and a restorer in other studios. This experience however allowed Chardin to befriend some important artistic figures who would later help him in his career, such as Jan-Baptiste Van Loo, Charles-Nicholas Cochin, and Joseph Aved. It was Aved, a painter and sometimes art dealer who lived in Holland and dealt in Dutch Old Master paintings, who encouraged Chardin to branch out and begin painting figures, the first of which, Chardin produced in 1733.

Over the next two decades, Chardin remained loyal to the Académie and move to higher and higher offices over the years, always encouraged by his friend Cochin, the all-powerful secretary of the Académie. Although he was never able to attain a professorship, as he was only a painter of “animals and fruits,” in 1755 Chardin was elected the treasurer of the Académie. At this time, he also was appointed the task of hanging the paintings in the Académie’s annual Salon. In 1757, Chardin was granted apartments in the Louvre by royal decree, and in 1761, Chardin was appointed the task of arranging the paintings in the Salon, in addition to hanging them. In this position, Chardin gained some real power, as he could single-handedly decide which paintings deserved attention and thus central positions at the Salon and which did not and could be relegated to dark corners and less visible places. In this position, Chardin was also able
to guide the public to his conclusions on good taste through his placement of paintings, and most importantly, he forged a friendship with the art critic Denis Diderot by personally leading him through the *Salons*.

In the 1770’s, declining health and failing eyesight caused Chardin to stop painting in oils and to remove himself from his public life as an active member of the *Académie*. He resigned as treasurer in 1774 and gave up his position of arranging and hanging the paintings in the *Salon* that same year. Chardin never stopped exhibiting his work in the *Salon* however, showing a few pastels in the 1779 *Salon*. On December 6, 1779, Chardin passed away at the age of eighty, almost unnoticed by the artistic community.

Throughout his career, Chardin maintained his own personal style as a painter. This individual style focuses on composing from large masses, working with models directly, and painting quotidian objects and scenes from every-day life. Most notably, Chardin expressed his individual style in his paint handling, which, through a variety of techniques, displays his consciousness of the surface of the canvas as paint rather than illusion. Chardin’s artistic career is marked less by technical developments and more by his changing interest in subject matter. In his early career, Chardin focused solely on still-life painting. Around 1733, he turned towards figure painting, producing mostly genre scenes but also portraits. Chardin continued on this avenue until around 1752 when he began to show his still lifes again. It is important to note than Chardin never stopped painting still lifes in the 1730s and 40s, but rather he painted them less prolifically. By the late 1750s, Chardin painted mostly small-sized still life paintings of fruits and kitchen scenes. Finally, in his old age, Chardin turned to pastels as opposed to oil painting, and produced mostly pastel portraits in the last years of his life.
Chardin’s early career began with *The Skate* (1725-1726, figure 33) and *The Buffet* (1728, figure 9), both large-scale elaborate still-life paintings. *The Skate* depicts a kitchen still life with a large ray hanging from a hook in the center of the composition and its entrails spilled out onto the ledge. On the left of the painting, a cat, standing on a pile of oysters, hunches its back. In front of the skate rest more fish, and to the right stand copper pots, a terracotta jug, and a knife, all resting on a bundled piece of white cloth. The browns, reds, and whites of the fish, cat, and kitchen items dominate this image. *The Skate* nods to the Flemish tradition in echoing Frans Snyders’s *Fish Market* (1620-1630), which also depicts a hanging ray, dead fish, oysters, and a cat prowling at the scene (figure 21). Chardin however takes his scene indoors to the kitchen and simplifies the composition. *The Buffet*, which sumptuously depicts a tower of fruit surrounded by other kitchen implements standing on a ledge in front of a dog, echoes *The Dead Wolf* (1721, figure 32) by Chardin’s contemporary, Nicolas Oudry, as previously discussed. These two pieces, Chardin’s master works for entry into the Académie, show Chardin’s early interest in more elaborate and large-format still lifes in the vein of his Flemish and French predecessors.

Chardin however did not stick to just large format elaborate still lifes in his early period. He also painted smaller intimate pieces, and painted many of them, with an estimated quarter of his lifetime output painted before 1732. During this period, Chardin worked through some perspective and drawing issues to perfect his still life technique while broadening his repertoire by painting a variety of game, fruit, vegetables, kitchen utensils, and even some outdoor still-life scenes in the tradition of Oudry. Most of Chardin’s works from this period however are devoted to depicting ordinary domestic items in kitchen scenes with a quasi-monochromatic style.
In 1733, Chardin turned towards figure painting, mostly genre pieces, which would become some of his most beloved paintings. His transition to figure painting was prompted by an encounter with his friend Joseph Aved during which Chardin was astounded at the price offered to Aved for a portrait, which Aved turned down. Upon noticing Chardin’s bewilderment, Aved told him that there is a big difference between painting a person and painting a sausage. Cochin also noted that Chardin feared that the public would lose interest in his still lifes, but that he would have a more stable career if he turned to painting figures.

Calm domestic scenes that evoke elegant simplicity dominate Chardin’s subject matter in this period. His genre scenes show a clear attempt to copy the Dutch Masters, with whom he was acquainted through Aved and Aved’s collection of Dutch Master painting. When the annual Salons began in 1737, Chardin exhibited eight paintings. Seven were genre scenes, for which Chardin began to receive recognition. Success of these genre pieces is evident in the first engravings after Chardin, which appeared in 1738 and reproduced his genre scenes displayed at the Salons, such as Francois Bernard Lépicié’s print, Saying Grace (1744, figure 50) after Chardin’s 1740 painting Saying Grace. Chardin continued with these genre scenes for the next fifteen years.

Saying Grace (1740), a prime example of Chardin’s genre scenes, depicts a woman, possibly a mother or possibly a maid, placing dishes on a table where two young girls sit (figure 34). The interior of the home is humble, with plain walls and minimal decoration. The painting exudes a sense of quietness and tenderness in its depiction of the young girls, demonstrating Chardin’s talent for painting children. This piece exemplifies Chardin’s modest and charming genre scenes in its depiction of a humble middle class meal, and shows similarities to the genre scenes of the Dutch Golden Age, such as Pieter de Hooch’s A Woman Preparing Bread.
and Butter for a Boy (c. 1660-1663, figure 53). De Hooch’s painting depicts the interior of a Dutch household with a woman, likely a maid, preparing a humble meal—bread and butter—for a boy standing to her right. In Chardin’s piece however, the figure are larger, more centrally placed, and better lit, and he limits his interior scene to just the corner of one room, whereas in de Hooch’s painting, the figures are in shadow off to the right and there is a clear view into other rooms in the house and to the street outside.

Around 1752, Chardin began to paint and show still lifes more frequently again. In the early 1750s, Chardin painted still lifes of game but turned to fruits and kitchen scenes in the late 1750s, which he would continue to paint through the 1760s. This return to still life concurred with official recognition in the form of being granted living quarters in the Louvre by royal warrant and a royal pension in 1757. This success could have led him to concentrate more on still life. His return to still life however also coincided with the deaths of Desportes, Largilliére, and Oudry in 1743, 1746, and 1755 respectively, leaving Chardin without significant competition in still-life painting. Greuze also began to dominate genre painting in France at this time, effectively encouraging Chardin to return to still life painting.

At the Salons of the late 1750s and 1760s, Chardin exhibited his still lifes extensively. In 1759, Chardin displayed nine paintings, including seven still lifes, and a further six paintings in 1761, including Basket of Wild Strawberries (1761, figure 35). In the 1763 Salon, Chardin exhibited ten paintings, all still lifes. Chardin continued this tradition with the Salon of 1765, at which he displayed eight still lifes, and in the Salons of 1767 and 1769, the last Salon at which Chardin would present a broad collection of his oil paintings.

Chardin’s still lifes of this period are marked by the same simplicity and calm presence in his genre scenes. He minimized the lavish display of some of his earlier still lifes and instead
focused on depicting simple objects, in the vein of the early seventeenth-century, French, still-life artists, such as Louise Moillon and Sebastian Stotskopff.\textsuperscript{131} Chardin also simplified his compositions, often omitting the table or niche, in order to bring attention to light, shade, texture, color, and the quality of his brushstrokes.\textsuperscript{132}

Chardin’s \textit{Basket of Wild Strawberries} (1761) typifies his still-life paintings in his late period (figure 35). This work depicts a simple glass of water on the left side of the composition, two white carnations, a large wicker basket of wild strawberries in the center, and a peach and two cherries on the right, all of which rest on an unadorned ledge. This composition focuses tight around these objects, creating an intimate scene. Chardin mounds the strawberries high in a pyramid, rendering them as one large form, adding minimal, but well-placed, highlights to transform the mass of red into a basket full of strawberries. Close looking reveals that the carnations were painted through an impasto technique, applying thick daubs of paint, most likely with a palette knife. The peach is likewise beautifully rendered with its fuzzy, yet succulent texture. The glass of water highlights Chardin’s interest in light through its depiction of light streaming through the clear water and the reflection of the red strawberries on the glass. The forms tenderly interact with each other, as Chardin eliminates the conventional harsh outline. This painting emanates a sense of tranquility through Chardin’s movement away from the grand and lavish still lifes of his predecessors and his concentration on the delicate play of light, shade, texture, color, and brushstroke, exemplifying Chardin’s still lifes from his late period.

As Chardin grew old, his eyesight began to fail and his health declined, causing him to turn to pastels in the early 1770s, even though he had never before used this medium. With this new medium, Chardin began to produce pastel portraits, displaying three of them, along with one painting, at the 1771 \textit{Salon}.\textsuperscript{133} Chardin received mixed reviews regarding his pastel portraits but
never gave up on creating art, continuing to display pastel portraits throughout the decade until his death in 1779.\textsuperscript{134}

During his lifetime, Chardin was generally well received. Art critics, most often Diderot,\textsuperscript{135} nearly unanimously praised his works for almost forty years.\textsuperscript{136} There was general admiration for his individual technique, but even through all of this praise, he was constantly being brought down by his lowly subject matter.\textsuperscript{137} Critics however were not the only indicators of Chardin’s success, as collectors and commissions of his works and the success of his works at auction also speak to his popularity.

Many eighteenth-century critics praised Chardin, such as Mariette, La Font, Cochin, Haillet de Couronne, and Diderot,\textsuperscript{138} but the over arching theme of their praise was that he was a master but only in his genre—still life.\textsuperscript{139} Critics so loved his still lifes, that when Chardin began painting figures, La Font (1746) encouraged him to return to still life: “the public would be bitterly disappointed to find [Chardin] abandoning, or even neglecting, an original talent and an inventive brush.”\textsuperscript{140} He was certainly considered a preeminent painter and praised for his handling of the brush\textsuperscript{141} and his understanding of light and color.\textsuperscript{142} Nevertheless, critics continued to restrict him to his genre, still life,\textsuperscript{143} which the art historian Norman Bryson suspects was actually “supremely discerning condescension,” as though Chardin’s greatness was constrained and lessened by his choice of subject matter.\textsuperscript{144}

Chardin’s most ardent supporter however was Diderot, who reviewed the Salons from 1759 to 1775.\textsuperscript{145} Few painters received any recognition at all from Diderot,\textsuperscript{146} but Chardin received his unwavering support from 1763 onwards. In his first two Salon reviews in 1759 and 1761, Diderot’s evaluation of Chardin was reserved.\textsuperscript{147} Diderot did take note of Chardin’s paintings in 1759, mentioning their constant depiction of “nature and truth.”\textsuperscript{148} Diderot reiterated
this opinion in his 1761 review when he said that Chardin’s paintings were “so faithful to
nature,” but he also expressed apprehension, while simultaneously bringing up the issue of genre,
by stating that his paintings only concerned “basic, ordinary, and domestic nature.”

In 1763, Diderot began to heap lavish praise upon Chardin, most likely a result of
Chardin personally guiding Diderot through the Salon of 1763, acting in his capacity as the man
responsible for arranging and hanging the paintings. In this same year, Diderot began to
acclaim Chardin’s mastery of color and light, as though Chardin dipped his brush into the air and
spread light across the canvas: “a vapor has been floated across the canvas, or a light foam
sprayed over it.” Diderot also praised the visual effect that Chardin’s paintings have on the
eyes. He observed that one does not have to adjust one’s eyesight in order to view a Chardin
because Chardin painted as the eye actually sees. In the following years, Diderot expressed his
admiration for Chardin, noting his own continued praise of Chardin’s works in his review of
the 1769 Salon: “I like to repeat myself where praise is concerned.” Diderot would continue to
praise Chardin through the Salon of 1775, the last Salon that Diderot would critique.

The collectors of Chardin’s work and commissions he was granted also speak to his
popularity. In his own lifetime, Chardin’s works belonged to some of the most important art
connoisseurs of the time. Some of the most eminent French collectors made a point to own a
“Chardin,” particularly in his later life. Among these collectors were: Antoine de la Roque, a
personal friend of the famous painter Antoine Watteau; Ange Laurent de La Live de Jully, a
wealthy collector and amateur artist who focused on the Dutch Masters and contemporary
French painters; Charles Godefroy, a wealthy banker; and Abbé Trublet, a man of the church and
a renowned moralist. La Roque’s collection alone, which was sold after his death in 1745,
contained at least ten paintings by Chardin.\textsuperscript{159} Most impressively, King Louis XV commissioned Chardin to paint panels for his chateaux at Choisy in 1765 and again at Bellevue in 1767.\textsuperscript{160}

Chardin was also remarkably popular among his artistic peers. His works appear in the sales catalogues, inventories, and collections of many artists from his own time.\textsuperscript{161} These artists included Chardin’s friends: Jean Baptiste van Loo, Charles-Nicolas Cochin, and Joseph Aved. Aved not only owned Chardin paintings but also sold them from his gallery from time to time. Many other artists also collected Chardin’s works: the history painters, Guillarme Taravel and Jean Antoine Peters; and the miniaturist Jacques Charlier. Nicolas de Largilliére, the man who “discovered” Chardin, also owned one of Chardin’s works, a genre piece. The drawing master to the royal children, Jacques Augustin Silvestre, bought sixteen works from Chardin, including portraits, pastels, genre paintings, and still lifes. Various other painters, sculptors, and architects of the era also bought and collected works by Chardin.\textsuperscript{162}

The success of his works on the market and the price of his works further attest to Chardin’s popularity within the art world in his own age. Throughout his lifetime, Chardin’s still lifes sold fairly well.\textsuperscript{163} His paintings often fetched high prices at auction, although their prices did fluctuate with the state of the art market. He was also well paid for his commissions. For example, when he was commissioned by Louis XV to decorate the Chateau de Choisy in 1765, along with a number of other artists, only Joseph Vernet was paid more than Chardin.\textsuperscript{164}

The art world saw significant changes with the prominence of the rigid Academy and the newly established \textit{Salon}, allowing the public free, biannual access to art, leading to the development of art criticism and the public actively participating in art appreciation. At the time however, French art theorists generally placed still life on the lowest rung of the different
painting genres, considering still-life painters little more than copyists. Chardin’s still lifes broke through this hierarchy with the admiration and support of critics and collectors alike. Through the influences of his predecessors and the development of his own style, Chardin became the greatest still-life painter of eighteenth-century France, ultimately elevating the genre of still life out of its low position within the hierarchy of genres and into prominent place in the art world.
Chapter IV Notes

4 Ibid., 24-29.
6 Ibid., 3.
13 Ibid., 13.
14 Ibid., 9-10.
15 Ibid., 14-15.
22 Puttfarken, *Roger de Piles*, 1.
29 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 24.
30 Puttfarken, Roger de Piles, 126.
31 Ibid., 38.
32 Ibid., 126.
33 Ibid., 42-44.
34 Ibid., 130.
35 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 224.
36 Puttfarken, Roger de Piles, 40.
37 Ibid., 50.
38 De Piles, Cours de Peinture. Quoted in Puttfarken, Roger de Piles, 78.
39 Ibid, quoted in Puttfarken, Roger de Piles, 70.
40 Puttfarken, Roger de Piles, 85-91.
41 Ibid., 96.
42 Ibid., Roger de Piles, 127-129.
45 Denis Diderot, Salon of 1767. Quoted in Roland Michel, Chardin, 266.
46 Ibid., quoted in Roland Michel, Chardin, 266.
47 Altes, “Féli bien, de Piles,” 194-197.
48 Ibid., 209.
49 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 223-224.
50 Ibid., 229-234.
52 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 229.
53 Ibid., 237.
54 Ibid., 223.
55 Ibid., 226-230.
56 Ibid., 223.
57 Ibid., 229-235.
58 Ibid., 223-224.
59 Ibid., 236.
60 Weisberg and Talbot, Chardin and the Still-Life Tradition, 13.
61 Rosenberg, Chardin, 33.
63 Ever-Schifferer, Still Life, 223-224.
64 Ibid., 236-244.
65 Weisberg and Talbot, Chardin and the Still-Life Tradition, 16-18.
66 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 244.
67 Weisberg and Talbot, Chardin and the Still-Life Tradition, 18.
68 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 224.
69 Weisberg and Talbot, Chardin and the Still-Life Tradition, 18.
70 Ebert-Schifferer, Still Life, 223-224.

For a discussion of this still life, see the catalogue on Sebastian Stoskopff compiled by the Musée de l’Œuvre Notre-Dame and Suæmondt Ludvig Museum: Michèle Caroline Heck, *Sébastien Stoskopff: 1597-1567 Un maître de la nature morte* (Strasbourg: Musées de Strasbourg; Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux; Aix-la-Chapelle: Suæmondt Ludvig Museum, 1997), 132-133.

It is important to note that the French used the term “Flemish” as an all encompassing term for the Netherlands, both Southern and Northern, as opposed to referring to the Southern Netherlands as “Flemish” and Northern Netherlands as “Dutch,” as we do today (Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 34). For the purposes of clarity, I will use both “Flemish” and “Dutch” when discussing the influences of these artistic societies on the French artistic milieu of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.


Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 118.


Altes, “Félibien, de Piles,” 209.


Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 118-121.


Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 12.


Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 12.

Ibid., 23.


Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 17.

Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 12.

Ibid., 12.


Ibid. 16, 27.

Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 76.

Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 16.

Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 76-79.

102 Ibid., 28.
103 Ibid., 20-21.
104 Rosenberg, Chardin, 41-44.
106 Rosenberg, Chardin, 41-44.
107 Wildenstein, Chardin, 21.
110 Roland Michel, Chardin, 17.
111 Rosenberg, Chardin, 34.
112 Ibid., 41.
113 Roland Michel, Chardin, 147.
114 Ibid., 27.
115 Rosenberg, Chardin, 32.
116 Ibid., 41.
117 Wildenstein, Chardin, 16.
118 Rosenberg, Chardin, 55.
119 Ibid., 34-36.
120 Roland Michel, Chardin, 39-41. Note that in 1743 Chardin also tried his hand at portraiture, which Chardin rarely displayed and when he did they received very little attention. Wildenstein, Chardin, 10.
121 Ibid., 213.
122 Wildenstein, Chardin, 21.
123 Roland Michel, Chardin, 60-63.
124 Rosenberg, Chardin, 16.
125 Roland Michel, Chardin, 60-63.
126 Rosenberg, Chardin, 16-17.
127 Roland Michel, Chardin, 82.
128 Rosenberg, Chardin, 17.
129 Roland Michel, Chardin, 89-94.
130 Rosenberg, Chardin, 62.
131 Weisberg and Talbot, Chardin and the Still-Life Tradition, 11.
132 Wildenstein, Chardin, 21.
133 Roland Michel, Chardin, 94-97.
135 Rosenberg, Chardin, 83.
136 Roland Michel, Chardin, 11.
137 Wildenstein, Chardin, 22.
138 Rosenberg, Chardin, 88.
139 Ibid., 47.
140 La Font de St.-Yenne, 1746. Quoted in Wildenstein, Chardin, 25.
141 Rosenberg, Chardin, 83-84.
142 Roland Michel, Chardin, 114.
143 Wildenstein, Chardin, 20.


Ibid., 66.

Wildenstein, *Chardin*, 21


Diderot, *Salon of 1769*. Quoted in Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 266.


Roland Michel, *Chardin*, 67-68.

Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 84.


Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 84-85.


Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 83-86.

V.
A Comparison of Claesz and Chardin

In the absence of any truly developed theory of still life, Claesz and Chardin provide a commentary on still-life painting by reacting to the still-life paintings of their predecessors. In doing so, these two artists attempted to elevate the genre of still life by foregrounding artistry through brushstroke and subject matter, creating still lifes that are more than imitation of items on a table. Claesz began this with his modest breakfast pieces, but the popularity of luxury still lifes and his need to make a living prevented him from continuing in this direction after the mid 1640s. A century later, Chardin picked up the gauntlet and succeeded in distinguishing the genre of still life from mere imitation of nature; thus his works make one see what the still life genre really is and why it is important. The works of Claesz and Chardin show how still life can bring both creativity and skill into still life and create an intimate world for the viewer.

I will begin comparing the similarities in Claesz and Chardin’s stylistic development throughout their careers, focusing on three works by Claesz from his monochrome period and three of Chardin’s late still lifes. Next, I will compare their choices of subject and their bearing on the social histories of their respective societies. Then, I will compare and contrast the technical aspects of these paintings, focusing on the way each artist departs from the works of their predecessors, specifically with regard to composition and brushstroke. Lastly, I will directly compare and contrast the works of Claesz and Chardin.

Claesz’s early works, as discussed, came out of the early Haarlem breakfast piece with slight modifications, such as lower vantage points and simplified compositions. For example, Claesz’s *Breakfast Piece with Large Roemer and Silver Salcellar* (1628) depicts a simply laid table with a large roemer, pewter plates containing herring and bread, a peeled lemon, a silver
saltcellar, some nuts, and a scrunched up napkin (figure 24). Compared to Gillis’ *The Laid Table* (1611, figure 1), this mid-sized piece has a much simpler composition, dominated by the sharp diagonal of light falling from the top left towards the bottom right, although it is not yet fully simplified. Claesz’s *Breakfast Piece* has a lower horizon line than Gillis’ piece, indicating a different perspective for the viewer. *Breakfast Piece* also functions as a more cohesive image, with objects interacting with each other on the panel, as opposed to the staged, barely overlapping, individual items in Gillis’ *Laid Table*.

In addition to presenting the fiction of a meal, Claesz also shows his interest in depicting the studio experience in these early works. The artist at an easel is visible in the left-side reflection of the *roemer* in Claesz’s *Breakfast Piece* (figure 24). This scene repeats in the glass ball in Claesz’s *Vanitas Still Life with Violin and Glass Ball* (1628, figure 43), which even more clearly and sharply depicts the artist working at an easel in his studio.

As Claesz moved into his monochrome period, his works became smaller, more simplified, and tightly focused. Claesz’s *Still Life with a Stoneware Jug, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread* (1642, figure 37) illustrates this. This small panel depicts a small selection of quotidian objects painted in a variety of whites, beiges, browns and grays. A crisp roll of white bread sits on the corner of the table, which is partially covered by a neatly folded white linen sheet. A knife rests next to the bread, perched on the linen-covered corner of the table. A herring lies on a pewter plate in front of an earthenware jug. On the right side of the painting, a *roemer* full of wine echoes the bulbous shapes of the jug and bread. To the right of the *roemer* rests a walnut with the shell partially cracked. Thick daubs of impasto suggest the crusty texture of the bread and the exquisitely reflected light in the *roemer*, which implies an interior studio setting through the reflection of the windows. Claesz’s brushstrokes have loosened considerably,
particularly in the roll, *roemer*, and herring, which are all painted with more painterly strokes, especially when compared to the refined brushwork in his *Breakfast Piece* (1628, figure 24). This can be seen in the reflections in the *roemers*, which in the 1628 *Breakfast Piece* are detailed and fine enough to depict Claesz in the studio. In the *Still Life with a Stoneware Jug*, highlights in the *roemer* are blurred, and Claesz created them with thick brushstrokes in an almost impasto-like manner. The shiny scales of the fish are formed through the well-placed application of thick dots of paint. The composition presents the items in an almost frieze-like arrangement, with the receding angles of the knife and the table’s edge creating depth in this painting. Claesz continues to use a diagonal light source from the top left to the bottom right, but as compared to his 1628 *Breakfast Piece*, the light here is softer and more diffused. The contrast in scale between the *roemer* and the jug makes the *roemer* seem monumental. The monochrome palette allows the viewer to attend to Claesz’s subtle variations in in texture, light, and the material qualities of paint. Furthermore, Claesz lowers the horizon line and focuses tightly around the subject matter, creating a more intimate image for the viewer. With this, Claesz strikes perfect harmony between depicting the familiar and showing his interest in texture, light, and paint.4

*Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread* (1642) is the companion piece to the previous painting (figure 38). This work also depicts a small selection of objects painted in a monochrome palette of brown and grey hues. On the right, a broken crust sits atop the white linen. A herring with capers lies upon a pewter plate, in front of which precariously tilts a silver brandy bowl. On the left stands a large conical *roemer*, again a monumental motif in this small painting. The circular rim of the *roemer* echoes the pewter plate’s rim and the rim of the crust. A knife projects forward off the edge of the table and angles in towards the center of the canvas. Just behind the knife, a walnut, cracked in half, rests with
bits of its cracked shell surrounding it. In this piece as well, Claesz uses thick impasto to build up the flakey crust, the reflections in the roemer, and the scales of the herring. His brushstrokes vary, with loose and painterly strokes in the individual objects, and the smoother brushstrokes in the table, the background, and the wall. With this piece, Claesz seems conscious of paint as medium on the surface of the panel. This painting is also a study in light, particularly in the brandy bowl, which is tilted downward to catch the light streaming through the brandy and reflecting off the scalloped walls of the bowl. This composition has zoomed in on the scene, bringing the table closer to the viewer, with less depth than the previous painting, as the frame cuts off the table’s corner. Again, the objects are presented in a frieze-like manner, although the roemer stands tall over the rest of the objects on the table. The diagonal placement of the knife, directing the eye towards the fish, creates depth. Once again, Claesz finds the perfect balance between appealing to the viewer’s sense of familiarity with these objects and his interest in texture, light, and the material qualities of paint.\(^5\)

Comparing Claesz’s Still Life with a Stoneware Jug (1642, figure 37) to its companion piece, Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread (1642, figure 38), it is clear that these two were painted as a pair. When placed next to each other, these works could almost be a continuation of one another. The falling pattern of light is similar, as is the vantage point, although it is slightly higher in the Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl. The compositions are both simple, and the diagonal angles of the knives even match. The Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl, however, illustrates a more sumptuous item, the silver bandy bowl, which is more luxurious in both its material—silver—and in its specialized usage than the mundane stoneware jug in Still Life with Stoneware Jug.
Claesz’s *Still Life with Oysters* (1643) represents a shift towards the more complex (figure 39). This panel is vertically oriented, unlike the other two, and almost twice the size of the previous paintings. Like them, it depicts a small selection of every-day items, albeit slightly more luxurious items, painted in a monochrome palette of olives, greens, browns, and greys. A standing *roemer* of wine dominates the left third of the painting. In the center below the *roemer*, a pewter plate of oysters project forward over the ledge of the table. To its left, a knife, very similar to the one from the previous painting, sits on the table’s edge, pointing diagonally in towards the roll of bread creating an axial movement into depth. Pepper, rolled in a paper cone, is placed perpendicular to the knife, emphasizing the crossing diagonals in the composition. Behind the oysters and *roemer* stands an ornate silver saltcellar, bringing a greater element of luxury to this quotidian painting. To the right of the saltcellar, a roll of white bread with a chunk torn off and two oyster shells sit near the edge of the table. Furthermore, the subject matter has become more sumptuous with the silver saltcellar, the pepper, and the oysters.

Like the previous two panels, this work is a study in light, texture, and paint as physical medium. Two succulent shiny oysters, which are painted with just a few well-placed and painterly brushstrokes, are offset by the coarse textures of the salt and pepper, formed through little impasto highlights on the general masses, and the bread’s crunchy outer crust, also painted with thick daubs of paint. An even light floods the panel creating an airy, atmospheric effect. Claesz’s interest in reflected light can be seen in the reflections on the pewter plate, the saltcellar, and the *roemer*, the highlights on which suggest four-panel windows and the interior studio setting. As compared with the *roemer* in Claesz’s 1642 *Still Life with Stoneware Jug* (figure 37), the highlights on this *roemer* are brighter and more pronounced. The thickness of the paint varies throughout the painting, with the thinnest layers in the background, where the texture of the
panel and the under-paint is sometimes visible. Elsewhere, such as in the reflections on the roemer and saltcellar, the paint is thick and applied in large daubs with an impasto technique. In general, the brushstrokes are loose and fluid, as can be seen in the prunts on the roemer, the oysters, and the saltcellar, all of which are painted with a few well-placed loose strokes. When the viewer steps close to this painting, the viewer observes flowing, unrestrained brushstrokes, but when the viewer steps back, they form well-articulated objects. This effect can particularly be seen in the saltcellar, which from close up looks like just a few strokes of the brush, but from afar appears to be meticulously rendered. The composition has a strong diagonal moving with the flow of natural light, from the roemer to the roll, and emphasized by the diagonals of the saltcellar, which is crisscrossed by the diagonal created by the knife pointing from the bottom left corner to the piece of bread. The horizon line is somewhat lower than in the previous two paintings, and the composition is brought close to the viewer, with the corner of the table obscured by the edge of the panel and the melding of the table’s back edge and the background. Once again, Claesz has achieved a balanced harmony between accurate rendering of familiar objects and his interests in studying light, texture, and paint while increasing the complexity of his composition.

Around this time, Claesz stopped painting his famed monochrome breakfast still lifes and began painting larger, more decorative still lifes, likely in an attempt to keep up with the current trends in the art market. This can be seen in Claesz’s Still Life with Ham (1647), which depicts a more elaborate and luxurious subject matter in a more dramatic and crowded composition (figure 26).

Chardin’s works develop in a similar manner, from the larger and more luxurious to the restrained, although Chardin never returns to the luxurious as Claesz did. Chardin’s early works,
such as *The Buffet* (c. 1728, figure 9), are larger and more luxurious, and arise more directly from his predecessors. This work in particular relates to Jean-Baptiste Oudry’s *The Dead Wolf* (1721, figure 32), but Chardin has brought the scene indoors. *The Buffet*, although only half the size of Oudry’s, is still very large, at 76 by 51 inches. Chardin has also eliminated the hunting elements and the dead wolf, but in depicting an overabundance of fruit, the copper wine cooler, and other more luxurious items, Chardin’s piece still retains an air of sumptuous pleasures.

Movement towards greater simplicity can be seen in Chardin’s *The Kitchen Table* (1755, figure 10). This piece still depicts more expensive items, such as the copper kettle, the slab of ribs, and the game bird, but the scene has become more sober. What is depicted here is not the display of an overabundance of food, but rather Chardin has illustrated the meal in preparation. The piece is also significantly smaller and simpler than *The Buffet* (figure 9). The items, while there are many, are presented on a table with little depth and little adornment in a simple, pyramidal manner.

Chardin further simplifies his still lifes in the early 1760s. His *Glass of Water and Coffeepot* (1761), which illustrates a frugal table, exemplifies this simplification (figure 40). This work depicts a reddish-brown earthenware coffeepot standing in the center-right of the painting, with its handle jutting out towards the right. In front of the coffee pot, three heads of garlic rest on the edge of the table with some leaves and the garlic peal dangling off the ledge to the right side. In the center-left of the painting, a short glass of crystal clear water stands, echoing yet inverting the conical shape of the coffeepot. The composition has a pyramidal structure, simple and geometric. The depth of the painting is minimized by the exclusion of the corners of the table and the lack of any strong, diagonal element, such as the knife or table’s edge in Claeisz’s works. While this painting seems to be fairly monochromatic, the warm reddish-brown and orange
tones in the coffeepot appear on the ledge of the table and are incorporated into the background, contrasting against the cool green tones in the leaves, which are also present in the background. This work illustrates Chardin’s painterly style, as the glass, garlic heads, peals, and leaves are each suggested with only three or four thoughtful strokes. The coffeepot is an amalgamation of browns, reds, and oranges, stippled and brushed into harmonious accord. Likewise, the table and the background are suggested by thick and thin swirls of paint in which the viewer can get lost. It is true of this painting, what Diderot said of Chardin’s works in his 1763 *Salon* review: “draw near, everything becomes confused, flattens out, disappears, but step back and everything takes shape again, comes back to life.”

The painterly brushstrokes, when viewed close up, seem like nothing but paint on the canvas, but when the viewer steps back, these strokes morph into beautifully articulated objects. Like Claesz’s paintings, this piece is also a study in texture and light. Chardin contrasts the reflections of the clear, cold glass with the roughness of the garlic and the matte surface of the earthenware pot. In Claesz’s tradition, Chardin has incorporated his interests in paint’s materiality, texture, light, and reflections into a prosaic painting of simple and familiar objects.

Another of Chardin’s works from 1761, *Basket of Wild Strawberries* (figure 35), also shows this simplification. This work focuses on a geometric composition with a central pyramid of strawberries. Like *Glass of Water and Coffeepot* (figure 40), this work has also become brushier with varied thicknesses of paint, as seen in the thick impasto on the carnations and the thinner layers of paint in the background. With both of these 1761 works, Chardin has included the studio experience, as Claesz did, by evoking the studio in his subject matter. For example, the garlic and coffeepot would not generally be found on a dining table next to each other, but certainly could be presented as such in a studio space. Furthermore, his still lifes of the period all
seem to be set upon the same ledge with a similar source of lighting, also representative of the studio experience.

Chardin’s 1764 still lifes show an interest in even simpler and shallower compositions with a focus on compositional rhythm. Chardin’s *Still Life with Teapot, Grapes, Chestnuts, and a Pear* (17[64?]), which presents a simple meal of fruit and tea, exemplifies this (figure 41). A bulbous white teapot stands in the center-left, with its handle towards the viewer, and the spout just barely jutting backwards and to the right, creating a diagonal axis that leads the eye back into the shallow shelf on which it stands. A few chestnuts rest on the ledge to the left of the teapot and a mound of green grapes to the right, which creates an undulating rhythm by moving in and out of the foreground. One bunch of grapes has fallen off the ledge, dangling in the viewer’s space in a nod to the effect of the traditional Dutch lemon peel. Off to the right, a pear complements the teapot with its squat spherical body and stem leaning inwards to the left. Chardin presents these objects in an undulating frieze, limiting the depth of the painting by minimizing the diagonal elements and by blending the rear edge of the table into the background. This piece is once again a study in light, texture, and paint. Light reflects off the faience teapot, with hints of the grapes’ green tones and the chestnuts’ reddish-orange hues across the base. The hard glazed ceramic surface of the teapot contrasts with the soft fleshiness of the fruits. The bunch of grapes resolves into individual grapes through thoughtfully placed highlights, and the pear’s succulent body is made of just a few prudent green and red brushstrokes with some yellow impasto daubed on top to bring out the highlights and fleshy texture. Similarly, the chestnuts are composed of a few painterly brushstrokes. Chardin again makes the paint’s material qualities apparent to the viewer in this piece.
Chardin’s *Still Life with a White Mug* (c. 1764, figure 42) depicts two pears on the left, one tilted towards the left edge of the painting while the second, closer pear has fallen forwards, its stem pointing straight out at the viewer. Next to them, three apples sit clustered together on the ledge. A cylindrical white ceramic mug sits on right side of the table, with its handle pointed outward to the right on a diagonal axis. A knife slips in between the apples and the mug, with its black handle projecting forward off the ledge. The overturned pear and two apples create a diagonal that complements the diagonal of the knife and mug. The composition creates an undulating frieze as the fruits move in and out of the background. The objects are close to the viewer, with a lack of depth in the painting and a blurring between the back edge of the shelf and the wall behind. Chardin’s interest in texture appears in the differences between the unglazed surface of the ceramic mug and table and the shiny surfaces of the apple and pears. This work in particular also demonstrates Chardin’s interest in color and his use of much brighter colors than those used by Claesz. The apples’ bright, warm red pops, and hints of the red appear in the pears, shadows, mug, table, and background. The cool greens of the pears and apples are likewise repeated throughout the painting and contrast with the bright red tones. The brushstrokes are loose and painterly throughout the composition. The fruits are suggested by a few bold strokes of red, yellow and green. Chardin’s lively brushstrokes swirl to create the background and the table. The thickness of the paint varies throughout the work, with thin areas of worked brushstrokes that allow the texture of the canvas to come through and other areas consisting of the thick paint globs. This work, more so than any other discussed, makes the viewer conscious of the materiality of the paint on the surface. Close up, the objects are nothing but paint. From afar, their familiar and recognizable forms appear, but the viewer is never fully unaware of the painterly and material qualities of this work.
One of Chardin’s latest still lifes, *Pears Walnuts and a Glass* (1768, figure 14), illustrates the extremes that Chardin took his simplification of composition and interest in painterly strokes. This work depicts a simple glass of wine on the left with three pears on the right, one of which has fallen over so that the stem is not visible. A cracked walnut sits in front of the pears next to a knife, which protrudes over the ledge at a slight diagonal moving from bottom right of the canvas towards the pears in the center. The simple composition presents these items in a frieze-like manner with very little depth. The painting is tightly focused around the scene, bringing the subject matter closer to the viewer than in some of Chardin’s previous still lifes of the decade, such as *Basket of Wild Strawberries* (1761, figure 35). The brushstrokes in the piece are also some of Chardin’s loosest out of the works discussed. The pears and walnuts seem to consist of just a few thoughtfully placed strokes. Similarly, the wineglass is comprised of few strokes, creating a general blurred image. The ledge and the background are made of swirls of paint in which the viewer can get lost. With this piece, the viewer is certainly aware of the image as paint on the canvas. Chardin’s interest here seems to lie in the paint as opposed to the image.

The works of Claesz and Chardin developed in a similar manner over their lifetimes, moving from larger, more sumptuous pieces that related more directly to their predecessors before finding their niches in intimate paintings of food. At the end of his life, Claesz however turned back towards to the larger and more luxurious works in attempts to keep up with the popular trends in the still life market. Chardin, on the other hand, continued with his intimate still lifes until he could no longer paint, and brought these paintings to the extremes of loose brushwork and simplicity, as seen with his *Pears, Walnuts, and a Glass* (1768, figure 14).

Claesz and Chardin show similarities in their choice of subject matter, which both used to appeal to the emerging middle and upper-middle classes, their primary audiences, in their
respective societies. Displays of wealth in still life can exclude viewers who are not associated or cannot attain that level of wealth. Thus depictions of sumptuously decorated tables can possibly drive a wedge between the painting and those viewers who do not associate with that level of wealth by preventing them from relating to the subject matter. Claesz and Chardin step away from the luxurious tables and instead depict scenes of simple fare that are within the human reach of the middle to upper-middle classes. Although Claesz reintroduces elements of the luxurious, compared to his predecessors, such as Clara Peeters and Nicolaes Gillis, his works still evoke a simpler subject matter. This use of a simpler subject redefines the relationship between the paintings and their viewers by providing the viewer with subject matter they can relate to. In doing so, Claesz and Chardin invite the viewers to participate in their paintings.

Claesz’s target audience was the middle to upper-middle merchant classes of Haarlem, and he painted for these consumers. In his paintings, Claesz considers the sources of his primary viewers’ newfound wealth, the typical diet of this group, their material consumption, and social implications of luxury. Still Life with Stoneware Jug (figure 37) and Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl (figure 38) both depict herring, bread, and wine, which not only show the pride in the thriving Dutch economy but also are consistent with the proper diet as espoused by physicians at the time. The herring recalls the successful Dutch herring trade, a source of pride and money for the Dutch people. Furthermore, the leading physician at the time, Johan van Beverwyck (1636), advocated the consumption of fish in a regular diet. Bread, a dietary staple, also evokes the Dutch economy and their monopoly on the European grain trade. Wine, although not as widely consumed as beer, was considered to have many positive effects on health, including balancing the harmful effects of various other food items, including nuts, and Claesz’s paintings follow this in depicting walnuts and roemers of wine in close proximity in both his Still
Life with Stoneware Jug and Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl. Claesz’s Still Life with Oysters also conveys Dutch pride in trade, not only through its depiction of bread and oysters, which were perhaps more luxurious than herring but still a dietary staple, but also through its depiction of salt and pepper, both important trade items on the Dutch East and West Indies trading routes (figure 39). The depiction of oysters with salt and pepper follows the dietary convention of the time as well. The wet and slithery nature of oysters had to be balanced out by drying condiments such as salt and pepper. Claesz’s paintings depict subjects that not only recall the flourishing Dutch economy, but also correspond to actual meals that the viewers would have eaten.

Claesz also takes material consumption of his middle and upper-middle class viewers into consideration. For the most part, all the items in his paintings would have been easily attainable and most likely in the homes of his primary consumers. Roemers were inexpensive, as were knives and pewter plates. Silver on the other hands was generally more expensive, and thus the saltcellar and silver brandy bowl were luxury items. They would not however have been entirely out of reach of the middle and upper-middle class merchants, towards which Claesz’s paintings cater. In his restraint, Claesz takes the ambivalent social attitudes towards luxury in the seventeenth-century Netherlands into account. In general, paintings, as luxury item themselves, provide some element of the trappings of success to which his patrons aspire. Nevertheless, paintings in the seventeenth century were actually standard home décor and still-life paintings were fairly inexpensive and significantly less luxurious than large history paintings or portraits. The quotidian subject matter furthers the sense of familiarity for the viewer, and Claesz’s restraint refrains from alienating the viewer, allowing them to engage fully in his paintings.

Chardin’s primary audience was the burgeoning middle and upper-middle classes in eighteenth-century Paris, as the French monarchy and aristocracy largely ignored him and most
of his patrons came from the bourgeoisie and the middle-class artistic community. Chardin considered the prevailing attitudes towards gastronomy, consumption, and luxury in these groups in eighteenth-century Paris when choosing still life elements to depict. Chardin’s Glass of Water with a Coffeepot (figure 40), Still Life with a Teapot (figure 41), and Still Life with a White Mug (figure 42) all depict unprepared fruits and vegetables: garlic, grapes, pears, and apples. These items are consistent with the dietary recommendations made by Dr. George Cheyne and with Rousseau’s philosophies on healthy eating. Both of these men espoused a diet of fruits, vegetables, bread, and other meager foods. Rousseau specifically encouraged eating food that did not have to be prepared before being consumed, as this is what Rousseau’s “noble savage” would have eaten.

Chardin further considers the material consumption and the social attitudes towards luxury at this time. All of the material items in Chardin’s paintings, such as the ceramic coffeepot, water glass, porcelain teapot, mug and knife, also would have been found easily in middle-class Parisian homes, in addition to being present in the newly frequented cafes. While these items represent the rapidly increasing interest in material consumption, they are everyday items, not ostentatious or luxurious. Chardin’s restraint echoes the prevailing arguments against luxury, most often espoused by Rousseau, in Paris during the late 1750s and 1760s. Like Claesz’s modest works, Chardin’s humble paintings refrain from alienating the viewer by depicting quotidian objects, with which his primary audience would have been familiar.

Chardin’s subject matter also coincides with the rise of restaurants in Paris in the 1760s. These restaurants were the most likely places to eat one of the Rousseauian meals that Chardin depicts, and these new restaurants offered coffee and tea. Chardin depicts these beverages alongside the simple Rousseauian meals in his Glass of Water and Coffeepot (figure 40) and Still
Life with Teapot (figure 41), and further implies one of these warm beverages in the mug painted in Still Life with a White Mug (figure 42). Coffee and tea, which were often consumed in public, were also thought to be substitutes for food and to have many health benefits at the time as mental stimulants. The Encyclopédie (1751-1772) espoused coffee’s use as a laxative and diuretic, and coffee was also considered to have health benefits for the obese and those who suffered from migraines. This fits into the primary goal of these restaurants, which was to serve light and healthful snacks in lieu of large, heavy meals. The subject matter of these paintings reflects prevailing gastronomic practices in the mid-eighteenth century. Chardin depicts humble and familiar items to foster the connection between his paintings and his audience, allowing his viewers to engage with his still lifes as a full participant as opposed to voyeurs.

Claesz and Chardin also made similar changes in their styles of painting from their predecessors. Both came out of traditions that prized highly detailed works focused on accurate representation, and Claesz and Chardin reacted to these traditions by changing formal elements. They both took steps in a similar direction, focusing on composition and loose brushstrokes. Claesz and Chardin simplify their works and reduce their compositions to more intimate scenes. Furthermore, their arrangements look natural as opposed to staged. Both painters also work to create a sense of unity in their paintings, considering the painting as a singular image by creating rhythms in their compositions and treating objects and space equally. Most notably these painters dispense with the fastidious painting style of their predecessors in favor of a painterly style, which permits them to explore their growing interests in formal elements of painting. All together, these technical choices create a more comfortable image for the viewer, allowing the viewer to interact with their paintings.
Claesz achieves compositional simplicity through showing restraint in the number of objects he depicts and in his general forms. For example, in the still lifes by Claesz that have been examined, only five or six items are depicted in each painting. Furthermore, Claesz simplifies his compositions by arranging them in uncomplicated forms and creating clear patterns. Still Life with Stoneware Jug (figure 37) and Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl (figure 38) both exhibit a frieze-like composition with harmonious rhythms, such as the repeating bulbous shapes of the jug, roll and roemer in the first painting and the elliptical shapes of the roemer and the pewter plate in the second. This is a stark difference from the crowded tables and complicated compositions of the early breakfast piece, such as Nicolas Gillis’ The Laid Table (1611, figure 1). The Laid Table also has a high viewpoint, allowing the viewer to see the items from both the top and sides, as though the objects are on display. This contrasts Claesz’s works, which have lowered horizon lines to bring the scene to the viewer’s level.

Crossing diagonal elements govern the composition of Still Life with Oysters (figure 39), and while this differs from the two others I have discussed, the diagonals control and clarify the piece. Claesz also brings the picture plane closer to the viewer by lowering the viewpoint to a more natural angle for the viewer, as compared to his predecessors’ works such as Gillis’ Laid Table (1611, figure 1) and by limiting the depth of the canvas, particularly in the Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl and Still Life with Oysters, which both cut the edge of the table out of the painting. These compositional choices organize Claesz’s paintings in a natural and familiar manner for the viewer.

Chardin takes Claesz’s simplification to the next step by further limiting his compositional forms. Similar to Claesz’s paintings, the items in Chardin’s works are severely limited, restrained to just five or six objects. Chardin depicts his items in a shallow frieze-like,
manner, much like Claesz’s works, but with even less elaboration. The objects are simply there, in front of the viewer, with little arrangement. His *Still Life with a White Mug* exemplifies his simplicity (figure 42). The few and unremarkable objects sit unassumingly in a band across the picture plane, as though they were just left there for a moment. Chardin also uses repetition of form, such as the conical forms in his *Glass of Water and Coffeeepot* (figure 40) and the echoing rounded, squat forms of the teapot and pear in his *Still Life with a Teapot* (figure 41). Chardin exaggerates Claesz’s practice of bringing the picture plane close to the viewer by creating a shallow space. Instead of just cutting out the corner of the table, Chardin excludes the perpendicular edges entirely, implying very little depth in the works. Furthermore, Chardin avoids depth-creating diagonal elements by either using his diagonals to enter into the viewers’ space, as he does with the knife in *Still Life with a White Mug*, or minimizing the angle of his diagonals as with the handle of the coffeeepot in *Glass of Water with a Coffeeepot* and with the spout of the teapot in *Still Life with a Teapot*. In extending Claesz’s compositional techniques, Chardin’s compositional choices create an even more intimate scene for the viewer.

Both artists also arranged their still lifes to look simple instead of elaborately staged. Their compositions seem organic, as though the artists happened upon these scenes in their daily lives instead of arranging the items for the purposes of painting them. For Claesz, this is a far step from the collection-like display of objects in the works of the early painters of the Haarlem breakfast piece, such as Gillis’ *The Laid Table* (figure 1). Claesz achieves this through creating apparent disturbances in his arrangements. Claesz’s *Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl* exemplifies this with its tipped brandy bowl, crumpled tablecloth, bread crumbs, and broken pieces of walnut shell that have fallen off the nut (figure 38). The work in general conveys a
sense of adventitious placement, as though this setup occurred as a result of spontaneous actions instead of looking obviously staged by the artist, as Gillis’ piece does.

For Chardin too, his natural compositions exhibit a movement away from the display-like style of composing still life seen in his predecessors’ works, such as Moillon’s *Still Life (Fruits and Vegetables)* (figure 27) and Desportes’s *Silver Tureen with Peaches* (figure 31), which have an artificially staged quality to their compositions. As already noted, the items in Chardin’s *Still Life with a White Mug* seem to have been accidentally left on a ledge (figure 42). Similarly, the coffeepot, garlic, and water glass in his *Glass of Water and Coffeepot* also seem to be arranged through natural unassuming action, even though this scene must be staged as garlic and a coffeepot are unlikely to appear together (figure 40). The garlic heads look as though they have fallen over and rolled until they came to a stop on their own. The water glass and coffeepot also seem to have been left there by someone unaware anyone was looking. Although these items do not seem as though they would go together by happenstance, this scene is simply composed as opposed to artificially and elaborately staged. In creating these simple compositions, Claesz and Chardin have removed a visual barrier between the painting and the viewer, one that arises from unnatural staged compositions, and welcomed the viewer into the painting by creating a familiar and organic scene.

Claesz and Chardin also work to create a sense of unity in their paintings through their equal treatment of the canvas, their handling of objects as masses, and the rhythms they impart on their works. Again, this contrasts with the works of their seventeenth-century predecessors, whose paintings had an additive quality and looked as though each item was painted individually without consideration of the whole painting, such as in Gillis’ *The Laid Table* (figure 1). In Claesz’s works, this can particularly be seen in the recurring rhythmic forms he creates in his
compositions and in the overlapping of items in his works, such as in his *Still Life with Stoneware Jug* in which almost every item touches another visually on the surface of the canvas (figure 37). By overlapping these items, Claesz forces the objects to interact visually with each other in a unified composition.

Chardin exaggerates this unifying effect in his works by not only composing his works as a single unit through repeating forms and creating rhythms, as has already been discussed, but also by avoiding prioritizing any part of his canvas over any other part. Even the backgrounds of his paintings are full of worked over brushstrokes and flecks of color, indicating an equal interest in these areas of his canvas. His *Still Life with a White Mug* exemplifies this with its swirling brushy background full of red and green hues that are just as mesmerizing as the objects themselves (figure 42). Chardin also paints his items as masses, as opposed to individual bits, furthering the unifying factor that lends his works a sense of harmony. For example, the grapes in his *Still Life with Teapot* (figure 41) are painted as one large mass, with the individual grapes distinguished by flecks of highlight and bits of shadow, instead of painting each grape as an individual item, like the grapes in Snyder’s *Still Life with Fruit, Wan-Li Porcelain, and Squirrel* (1616, figure 20). By creating unified paintings through specific compositional choices and by avoiding prioritizing objects in the painting, Claesz and Chardin further incorporate the viewer into their paintings by reinforcing the sense of a natural, familiar image.

The most notable and perhaps most visually exciting change that both Claesz and Chardin enact in their paintings is their movement to painterly brushstrokes as opposed to some of their forerunners’ tight, highly detailed paintings, in which the brushstrokes are almost completely invisible. Claesz’s painterly style is particularly evident in specific items in his works, such as his *roemers*, his depiction of bread, and his herring and oysters. Claesz uses an
impasto technique to build up highlights and textures on these items. His brushstrokes are clearly visible, especially in the oysters of his Still Life with Oysters, which Claesz formed from a few thick brushy strokes (figure 39). Interestingly, this painterly style that Claesz used in his works is vastly different from not only his predecessors, such as Gillis and Peeters, but also from those Dutch still-life painters who came after him, such as Willem Kalf, whose paintings, such as the Drinking Horn with Lobster on a Table (1653), exhibit refined and detailed brushstrokes (figure 6).\(^4^4\) Claesz’s painterly brushstrokes reflect his interest in texture and light, as the items he seems most interested in depicting texture and light are also those that he paints in a painterly manner. For example, his depictions of herring show his interest in the reflective, scaly nature of the herring’s outer skin. Claesz captures his interests in texture and light through loose painting and impasto technique, as can be seen in Still Life with Stoneware Jug (figure 37) and Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl (figure 38). In his Still Life with Oysters, Claesz also captures the slithery, wet textures of the oysters through his loose, flowing brushstrokes. Claesz’s painterly style distinguishes his works from pure imitative transcription and provides an avenue for him to explore light and texture.

Chardin uses even more painterly and loose brushwork in his canvases than Claesz, to the point that his subject matter appears simultaneously as paint and as object. He builds up the forms on his canvas through visible applications of worked over paint, rather than with smooth, illusionistic strokes.\(^4^5\) His brushwork is oily and varies from heavy applications in an impasto manner to thin areas where the texture of the canvas is visible.\(^4^6\) Chardin’s brush laboriously worked and reworked his canvases until perfection was achieved, leaving evidence of his brushstrokes and impressive handling of paint that have impressed and fascinated his viewers in his day and now.\(^4^7\) Diderot was fascinated and mystified by Chardin’s brushwork: “Chardin’s
technique is quite individual. It is an uneven style in that close up one does not know what it is, and as one moves away, the subject reveals itself, eventually becoming nature herself. Sometimes it pleases as much close up as from a distance. The *Salon* critic has taken note of the incredible effect Chardin’s brushstrokes have on the viewer. As previously discussed, these brushstrokes can be seen in his *Still Life with a White Mug* (figure 42). Chardin uses brushy strokes to build up forms, alternating between thick and thin applications of paint, and using impasto techniques to create highlights in the fruits. Chardin’s brushstrokes seems to blur his images, as though he is attempting to capture peripheral vision, suggesting intimate familiarity without causing discord through intense illusion. Diderot considered this effect in his 1763 *Salon* review when he mentioned that one did not need to adjust one’s eyes when viewing Chardin’s paintings, but rather the one only needs the eyes one already has. Chardin uses his painterly brushstrokes to explore texture, light, and reflection in a similar manner to the way Claesz used his newfound freedom to explore these aspects of painting. This is particularly noticeable in the use of thick paint to suggest the fleshy texture of the pear in his *Still Life with Teapot* (figure 41), and in his use of impasto on the apples in his *Still Life with a White Mug* to create the waxy outer skin of the apples and the reflections of light on them. Chardin’s painterly style not only distinguished his still lifes from those that are pure imitations of nature, but also provides the viewer with familiarity and ease in looking at his paintings.

While there are many similarities between Claesz and Chardin’s works, there are also differences. Contrasting Claesz’s *Still Life with Stoneware Jug, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread* (1642, figure 37) with Chardin’s *Glass of Water and Coffeeepot* (1761, figure 40), the differences become apparent. Claesz’s horizon line, while low compared to his predecessors, is higher than Chardin’s. Furthermore, Claesz uses the corner of the table and the sharp diagonal of the knife to
create depth whereas Chardin has minimized receding diagonals to diminish a sense of depth.

Claesz’s still life is also painted on panel while Chardin’s is on canvas, possibly the reason behind the much looser brushstrokes in Chardin’s work. The differences in their painting can be specifically seen in their treatment of reflected light in the glasses, which varies markedly. The reflections in Claesz’s roemer clearly portray a four-paneled window. The light reflected in Chardin’s glass of water, however, is must less distinct and does not give any indication of where the scene takes place. Furthermore, Claesz’s still life is a more recognizable meal, while Chardin’s is clearly a studio setup.

Through their distinct differences from their predecessors, Claesz and Chardin provide a strikingly similar commentary on still life, even though they painted in two different countries and over a century apart. Their choice of subject reflected societal conventions, establishing a familiar link between their paintings and their primary audiences. Furthermore, their formal choices, such as composition, light, texture, and brushstroke, differentiate their still lifes from their predecessors. In responding so to their predecessors, both artists provided a commentary on still-life painting. Interestingly, their styles developed in a similar manner, although Claesz eventually returned to a more sumptuous still life while Chardin was able to continue with these intimate scenes until he could no longer paint.
3 I chose these six works of art to discuss not because they are the paragons of these artists’ periods that I wish to explore, although they are all fantastic examples, but because I was able to see all six of these works while writing and researching for my thesis.
5 Ibid., 66-67.
7 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 122.
9 Eiselonis, Still-Life Painting, 84.
10 Bergström, Dutch Still-Life Paintings, 122.
15 Ibid., 73-75.
17 Hochstrasser, “Feasting the Eye,” 77.
21 Schama, Embarrassment of Riches, 318-319.
22 Pierre Rosenberg, Chardin (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 84.
23 Roland Michel, Chardin, 63-65.
25 Schama, Embarrassment of Riches, 617-618.
26 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 551.


37 Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 91.

38 Ibid., 113.


41 Ibid., 91-92.

42 Eiselonis, *Still-Life Painting*, 84.


46 Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 38.

47 Ibid., 79-80.


50 Rosenberg, *Chardin*, 66.
Conclusion

The scholar, Norman Bryson, discusses still life in his essay entitled “Chardin and the Text of Still Life” (1989). In this essay, Bryson notes that traditionally the defining feature of the still-life genre is its exclusion of the human form. Still life thus has no bond with the human viewer. Fastidiously painted still lifes exacerbate this effect, further defamiliarizing the viewer from the painting. Nevertheless, Bryson argues that Chardin has found the perfect solution by creating using simple, familiar subject matter and avoiding “self-conscious” compositions. Chardin also rids his paintings of meticulous detail and tends to blur his forms—what Bryson argues is his greatest innovation—preventing the viewer from straining his or her eyes. For Bryson, Chardin saved still life from its negative reputation as a copyist’s art and brought true artistry back into the genre of still life.¹

While Bryson makes a strong case for Chardin, Claesz too worked against the negative reputation of still life as mere imitation of nature, and did so a century earlier. Claesz struggled against these constraints and began to break through them with his loosened brushwork, simplified compositions, and familiar subject matter in his monochrome breakfast pieces of the 1630s and early 1640s. His brushstrokes refrain from directly copying nature, showing that still-life painting can be more than mere imitation and become studies in light, texture, and paint. His reduced and unifying compositions provide the viewer with a comfortable and intimate space, and his familiar subject matter allows the viewer to relate to his paintings. All together, these techniques merge the picture plane with the viewer’s space, creating an aesthetically intimate space for the viewer to view and interact with the painting.² Claesz however turned away from this style in the mid-1640s, likely due to economic problems and the new still-life trends
developing in Amsterdam, which prized lavish compositions. Thus Claesz paved the way for Chardin to continue his advancements in the genre of still life.

Chardin followed in Claesz’s footsteps in contesting the dominant theory regarding still life through his paintings. In fact, Chardin intensified the formal techniques that Claesz used. Chardin’s brushstrokes became even looser and more apparent on the surfaces of his paintings, to the point where one is always conscious of the material quality of the paint on his canvas. While Chardin’s paintings, like Claesz’s works, reveal their subjects when the viewer moves away, Chardin’s brushwork is still visible from a distance. His playful and loose styles suggest an intimate familiarity by relaxing the viewers’ eyes as opposed to invoking the glaring discord created by the fastidious and almost manic attention to detail found in the works of Chardin’s predecessors. Through his brushstrokes, Chardin has shown how still life can be more than just pure imitation.

Chardin also heightened Claesz’s unifying and simplifying compositional techniques to work against the defamiliarization of the viewer with the painting. Chardin further unified his compositions by not prioritizing any part of his canvas over another and considering and spaces between objects just as important as the objects themselves. Chardin also simplified his compositions by eliminating the recessive table edge and the depth it creates. Thus he constructs an intimate scene on the picture plane for the viewer and then merges this picture plane with the viewer’s space. Similar to Claesz, his use of familiar subject matter further works to create a familiar image for the viewer and thus include the viewer in the painting.

Through their individual styles and choices of subject matter, Claesz and Chardin have worked to differentiate their works from purely imitative still lifes and, following Bryson’s writings, to humanize still life, by bringing the viewers into the painting and the genre into the
world of their primary audiences. Following in Claesz’s tradition, Chardin’s late still lifes ultimately reveal the remarkable qualities of the still-life genre that are so often forgotten: its relationship to man and its ability to create a more beautiful nature through paint than the one fastidiously observed and meticulously copied. In conclusion, the works of these supremely great still-life artists make one see what the still life can achieve and why the genre of still life should not be ignored.
Notes to Conclusion

5 Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 91-92.
6 Ibid. 91-92.
8 Ibid., 227.
Bibliography


Figure 1: Nicolaes Gillis, *The Laid Table*, 1611, oil on panel, 23.2 inches by 31 inches, Private Collection
Figure 2: Pieter Claesz, *Breakfast Piece*, 1636, oil on panel, 14 inches by 19 inches, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen
Figure 3: Pieter de Hooch, *Leisure Time in an Elegant Setting*, ca. 1663-65, oil on canvas, 23 inches by 27.25 inches, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Figure 4: Pieter de Hooch, *Mother Lacing Her Bodice*, ca. 1659, oil on canvas, 36 inches by 39.5 inches, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Berlin, Germany)
Figure 5: Jan Steen, *Prayer Before the Meal*, 1660, oil on panel, 20.25 inches by 17.5 inches, Sotheby's
Figure 6: Willem Kalf, *Drinking Horn with Lobster on a Table*, 1653, oil on canvas, 34 inches by 40 inches, National Gallery, London
Figure 7: Formerly Attributed to Nicolas de Largillière, *Madame de Ventadour with Portraits of Louis XIV and His Heir*, 1715-1720, oil on canvas, 50.25 inches by 63.5 inches, The Wallace Collection, London
Figure 8: Jean-Baptiste Greuze, *The Village Bride*, 1761, oil on canvas, 36.25 inches by 46 inches, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
Figure 9: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *The Buffet*, c. 1728, oil on canvas, 76 inches by 51 inches, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
Figure 10: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *The Kitchen Table*, c. 1755, oil on canvas, 15.5 inches by 18.75 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Figure 11: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *The Kitchen Maid*, 1735, oil on canvas, 18 inches by 14.75 inches, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Figure 12: Henri Horace Roland de la Porte, *The Simple Meal*, 1787, oil on canvas, 14.5 inches by 18 inches, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
Figure 13: Louis Berther, “The Beautiful Restauratrice,” illustration for Nicolas-Edme Restif de la Bretonne’s Les Contemporaines (1780-1788)
Figure 14: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Pears, Walnuts and a Glass*, 1768, oil on canvas, 13 inches by 16 inches, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
Figure 15: Pietro Antonio Martini, *Salon of 1787*, engraving, 1787
Figure 16: Joos van Cleve, *The Holy Family*, ca. 1512-1513, oil on panel, 16.75 inches by 12.5 inches, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Figure 17: Pieter Aertsen, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, 1553, oil on panel, 49.5 inches by 78.75 inches, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen
Figure 18: Joachim Beuckelaer, *Kitchen Scene*, 1566, oil on panel, 43 inches by 54.75 inches, Musée du Louvre
Figure 19: Clara Peeters, *Table*, 1611, oil on panel, 20.5 inches by 28.75 inches, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
Figure 20: Frans Snyders, *Still Life with Fruit, Wan-Li Porcelain, and Squirrel*, 1616, oil on copper, 22 inches by 33 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Figure 21: Frans Snyders, *Fish Market*, ca. 1620-1630, oil on canvas, 82.5 inches by 134.25 inches, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
Figure 22: Frans Snyders, *Larder with Bitch and Her Pups*, ca. 1635-1650, oil on canvas, 68.5 inches by 98.5 inches, Banque Paribas Belgique
Figure 23: detail of Frans Snyders, *Larder with Bitch and Her Pups*, see figure 22
Figure 24: Pieter Claesz, *Breakfast Piece with Large Roemer and Silver Saltcellar*, 1628, oil on panel, 18.75 inches by 29 inches, Private Collection
Figure 25: Willem Claesz. Heda, *Still Life with Silver Goblets*, 1637, oil on canvas, 17.25 inches by 21.5 inches, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France
Figure 26: Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Ham*, 1647, oil on panel, 15.75 inches by 24 inches, The Hermitage, St. Petersburg
Figure 27: Louise Moillon, *Still Life (Fruits and Vegetables)*, 1637, oil on canvas, 34.5 inches by 44 inches, Fondazione Thussen-Bornemisza Villa Favorita
Figure 28: Sebastian Stoskopff, *Still Life with a Nautilus, Panther Shell, and Chip Wood Box*, c. 1630, oil on canvas, 18.5 inches by 23.5 inches, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Figure 29: Peter van Boeckel, *Kitchen Table*, 1651, oil on canvas, 44.5 inches by 58.75 inches, Musée du Louvre
Figure 30: Nicolas de Largillière, *Red-Legged Partridge in a Niche*, 1685, oil on canvas, 28 inches by 23 inches, Le Petit Palais
Figure 31: Alexandre-François Desportes, *Silver Tureen with Peaches*, c. 1740, oil on canvas, 35.75 inches by 46 inches, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm
Figure 32: Jean-Baptiste Oudry, *The Dead Wolf*, 1721, oil on canvas, 76 inches by 102.5 inches, The Wallace Collection
Figure 33: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *The Skate*, 1725-1726, oil on canvas, 45 inches by 57.5 inches, Musée du Louvre
Figure 34: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Saying Grace*, 1740, oil on canvas, 19.5 inches by 15 inches, Musée du Louvre.
Figure 35: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Basket of Wild Strawberries*, 1761, 18 inches by 15 inches, Private Collection
Figure 36: Jacques Linard, *The Five Senses*, 1648, oil on canvas, 21.75 inches by 26.75 inches, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg
Figure 37: Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Stoneware Jug, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread*, 1642, oil on panel, 11.75 inches by 14 inches, MFA, Boston
Figure 38: Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Silver Brandy Bowl, Wine Glass, Herring, and Bread*, 1642, oil on panel, 11.75 inches by 14 inches, MFA, Boston
Figure 39: Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Oysters*, 1643, oil on panel, 24.5 inches by 19 inches, St. Louis Art Museum
Figure 40: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Glass of Water and Coffeepot*, c. 1761, oil on canvas, 12.75 inches by 16.25 inches, Carnegie Museum of Art
Figure 41: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Still Life with Teapot, Grapes, Chestnuts, and a Pear*, 17[64?], oil on canvas, 12.5 inches by 15.75 inches, MFA, Boston
Figure 42: Jean-Siméon Chardin, *Still Life with a White Mug*, c. 1764, oil on canvas, 13 inches by 16.25 inches, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
Figure 43: Pieter Claesz, *Vanitas Still Life with Violin and Glass Ball*, c. 1628, oil on panel, 14 inches by 23.25 inches, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg
Figure 44: Osias Beert the Elder, *Dishes with Oysters, Fruit and Wine*, c. 1620-1625, oil on panel, 20.75 inches by 29 inches, The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
Figure 45: Floris van Dijck, *Still Life with Cheese*, c. 1615, oil on panel, 32.5 inches by 43.75 inches, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Figure 46: Floris van Schooten, *Still Life with Ham*, early seventeenth century, oil on panel, 24.75 inches by 32.75 inches, Musée du Louvre
Figure 47: Jan Davidsz. de Heem, *A Richly Laid Table with Parrots*, c. 1655, oil on canvas, 59.25 inches by 45.75 inches, Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota
Figure 48: Willem van Aelst, *Hunt Still Life with a Velvet bag on a Marble Ledge*, c. 1665, oil on canvas, 26.5 inches by 21.25 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Figure 49: Jan Fyt, *Still Life in an Architectural Setting*, c. 1645, oil on canvas, 44.25 inches by 32.5 inches, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Figure 50: Francois Bernard Lépicié, *Saying Grace* (After Jean-Siméon Chardin), engraving, 12.75 inches by 10 inches
Figure 51: Louise Moillon, *Bowl of Strawberries with Gooseberries on a Branch*, 1634, oil on panel, 13.75 inches by 18.5 inches, Private Collection, France
Figure 52: Sebastian Stoskopff, *Bowl of Strawberries*, c. 1620, oil on panel, 8.25 inches by 14.25 inches, Musée de l’Œuvre Notre-Dame, Strasbourg
Figure 53: Pieter de Hooch, *A Woman Preparing Bread and Butter for a Boy*, c. 1660-1663, oil on canvas, 27 inches by 21 inches, The J. Paul Getty Museum