

**“Monstrous creatures and diverse strange things”:  
The Curious Art of Jan van Kessel the Elder (1626-1679)**

by

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*For my parents*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>xx</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> <b>INTRODUCTION: A CURIOUS PAINTER OF STRANGE THINGS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> <b>FASHIONING FLOWERS AND FAME IN ANTWERP</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> <b>CURIOSITIES ON COPPER: VAN KESSEL'S SIMULATED INSECTS</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b> <b><i>THE FOUR PARTS OF THE WORLD</i>: PICTURES OF/AS COLLECTIONS</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b> <b>MEANING IN MATERIALS: CABINETS WITHOUT DRAWERS AND PAINTED TAPESTRIES</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>EPILOGUE</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>FIGURES</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>626</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.1	Jacob de Formentrou (and others), <i>A Cabinet of Pictures</i> , 1659? Oil on canvas, 75 x 112 cm. London, Royal Collection.	225
1.2	De Formentrou, <i>A Cabinet of Pictures</i> , 1659? Detail of fig. 1.1.	226
1.3	Anonymous Flemish, <i>Cognoscenti in a Room Hung with Pictures</i> , c.1620. Oil on panel, 95.9 x 123.5 cm. London, National Gallery of Art.	227
1.4	Anonymous Flemish, <i>Cognoscenti in a Room Hung with Pictures</i> , c.1620. Detail of fig. 1.3.	228
1.5	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Snakes and caterpillars forming name of the artist</i> , 1657. Oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm. London, Johnny van Haefen, Ltd., 2008 [cat. 75].	229
1.6	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Asia from The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666, no. 2, <i>Archangel</i> . Detail of fig. 1.14.	230
1.7	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Festoons of Seashells</i> , 1656. Oil on copper, 40 x 56 cm. Paris, Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt [cat. 105].	231
1.8	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Cannibals</i> , c.1660. Oil on copper, 21 x 30 cm. La Rochelle, Le Musée du Nouveau Monde [cat. 257]	232
1.9	Robert Hooke, <i>Of a Flea</i> , 1665. Fold-out engraving in Hooke, <i>Micrographia</i> (observation LIII), 34 x 44 cm. Bethesda, Maryland, National Library of Medicine.	233
1.10	Alexander Voet after Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Jan van Kessel</i> . Engraving in Cornelis de Bie, <i>Het gulden cabinet</i> (1661-1662), p. 411.	234
1.11	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Allegory of Europe</i> , 1665. Oil on copper, 48 x 36.8 cm. Belgium, Private Collection [cat. 140]	235

1.12	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Allegory of Europe</i> , 1665. Detail of fig. 1.11.	236
1.13	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Europe</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> , 1664. Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates), Munich, Alte Pinakothek [cat. 136].	237
1.14	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Asia</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> , 1664-1666. Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates), Munich, Alte Pinakothek [cat. 137].	238
1.15	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Africa</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> , 1664-1666. Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates), Munich, Alte Pinakothek [cat. 138].	239
1.16	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>America</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> , 1666. Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates), Munich, Alte Pinakothek [cat. 139].	240
2.1	Isaac Claesz van Swanenburg, <i>Self-Portrait</i> , 1568. Oil on panel, 94 x 72 cm. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal.	241
2.2	Gerard van Honthorst, <i>Portrait of an Artist</i> , 1655. Oil on canvas, 93.5 x 90.3 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.	242
2.3	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Roses, orange blossom, jasmine in a glass vase with a caterpillar, dragonfly and butterflies</i> , 1661. Oil on copper, 40 x 31 cm. London, Phillips, December 10, 1996, lot 65 [cat. 16].	243
2.4	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Garland of irises, parrot tulips, roses, surrounding a stone niche inset with a Vanitas scene</i> , 1649, oil on canvas, 107 x 84.2 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 5, 2007, lot 134 [cat. 22].	244
2.5	Peter Paul Rubens and Osais Beert, <i>Pausias and Glycera</i> , c. 1612/15. Oil on canvas, 203.2 x 194.3 cm. Sarasota, Florida, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.	245
2.6	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Allegory of Air</i> , 1660s. Oil on copper, 72 x 91 cm. Flint, Michigan, Flint Institute of Arts [cat. 115].	246
2.7	Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, <i>Madonna and Child in a Garland of Flowers</i> , 1621. Oil on canvas, transferred from panel, 83.5 x 63 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre.	247

2.8	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Allegory of the Four Elements</i> , 1664. Oil on copper, 28.5 x 28cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage [cat. 107].	248
2.9	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Allegory of the Four Elements</i> , c. 1664. Oil on copper, 28 x 28cm. Strasbourg, Musée des Beaux-Arts [cat. 108].	249
2.10	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Still-Life of Shells and Flowers in a Marble Niche, Surrounded by Flowers, Butterflies and other Insects</i> , 1670. Oil on canvas, 47 x 62 cm. West Yorkshire, Property of the Winn Family, on loan to the National Trust, Nostell Priory [cat. 106].	250
2.11	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Swag of Shells</i> , 1654. Oil on copper, 31 x 43 cm. United Kingdom, Collection of Lt. Col. R.C. Althusen [cat. 104].	251
2.12	Jan van Kessel and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Allegory of Asia</i> , 1667. Oil on copper, 49 x 37.5 cm. Milan, Castello Sforzesco [cat. 141].	252
2.13	Jan van Kessel and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Allegory of America</i> , c.1667. Oil on copper, 47.5 x 36 cm. Milan, Castello Sforzesco [cat. 142].	253
2.14	Richard Collier after Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, <i>Anthony van Leyen</i> . Engraving in Cornelis de Bie, <i>Het gulden cabinet</i> (1661-1662), p. 9.	254
2.15	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Roses, Tulips, Narcissi, Peonies, with a Sprig of Cherries in a Roemer on a stone Pedestal</i> , c. 1652. Oil on copper, 77.5 x 59 cm. Phillips, London, December 14, 1999, lot 78 [cat. 5].	255
2.16	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Irises, Peonies, Narcissi, a Tulip, in a blue and white porcelain Vase with ormolu mounts on a pedestal</i> , 1652. Oil on copper, 77 x 59 cm. Sotheby's, London December 5, 2007, lot 24 [cat. 6].	256
2.17	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Flowers in a glass vase</i> , c. 1652. Oil on copper, 75.6 x 67.5 cm. Washington D.C., Private Collection [cat. 7].	257
2.18	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Flowers in a porcelain vase</i> , 1652. Oil on copper, 75.6 x 67.5 cm. Washington D.C., Private Collection [cat. 8].	258
3.1	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Insects and Reptiles</i> , 1657. Oil on copper, 39 x 56 cm. Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum [cat. 74].	259
3.2	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Insects and Reptiles</i> , 1658. Oil on copper, 39 x 53 cm (central plate), 14 x 19 cm (peripheral plates). Upperville, Virginia, Oak Spring Garden Library, Collection of Mrs. Rachel Mellon [cat. 82].	260
3.3	Van Kessel, <i>Insects and Reptiles</i> , 1658. Detail of fig. 3.2.	261



3.4	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Europe from The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664. Detail of fig. 1.13.	262
3.5	Jan Brueghel the Elder, <i>A Mouse with a Rose</i> , 1605. Oil on copper, 7.2 x 10.2 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana.	263
3.6	Joris Hoefnagel, <i>Four Elements, Animalia Rationalia et Insecta (Ignis): Plate LXXV</i> , c.1575-80. Watercolor and gouache, with oval border in gold, on vellum, 14 x 18 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.	264
3.7	Joris Hoefnagel, <i>Four Elements, Animalia Rationalia et Insecta (Ignis): Plate LIII</i> , c.1575-80. Watercolor and gouache, with oval border in gold, on vellum, 14 x 18 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.	265
3.8	Joris Hoefnagel, <i>Miniature with red beetle</i> , 1597. Watercolor and gouache on parchment, 20 x 32 cm. Sibiu, Brukenthal Museum.	266
3.9	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Insects and fruit</i> , c. 1660-65. Oil on copper, 11 x 15.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum [cat. 89].	267
3.10	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Study of Butterfly and Insects</i> , c.1655-60. Oil on copper, 11 x 14.8 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art [cat. 88].	268
3.11	Levinus Vincent, Engraving from <i>Wondertooneel der Natuur, ofte een Korte Beschrijvinge zo van Bloedelooze, Zwemmende, Vliegende, Kruip-ende, en Viervoetige Geklaauwde Eijerleggende Dieren...bevat in de Kabinetten van Levinus Vincent</i> , 1715, vol. 2, p. 293.	269
3.12	Van Kessel, <i>Insects and Reptiles</i> , 1658. Detail of fig. 3.2.	270
3.13	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Creatures of the Night</i> , c.1660. Oil on copper, 18.4 x 24.8 cm. London, Johnny van Haeften, Ltd., 2011 [cat. 248].	271
3.14	Hieronymous Bosch, <i>The Garden of Earthly Delights</i> , c.1500. Oil on panel, 220 x 195 cm (central panel), 220 x 97 (wings). Madrid, Museo del Prado.	272
3.15	Bosch, <i>The Garden of Earthly Delights</i> , c.1500. Detail of fig. 3.14.	273
3.16	Van Kessel, <i>Insects and Reptiles</i> , 1658. Detail of fig. 3.2	274
3.17	Van Kessel, <i>Insects and Reptiles</i> , 1657. Detail of fig. 3.1.	275
3.18	Joris Hoefnagel, <i>Four Elements, Animalia Rationalia et Insecta (Ignis): Plate XLIV</i> , c.1575-80. Watercolor and gouache, with oval border in gold, on vellum, 14 x 18 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.	276

- 3.19 Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies and Insects*, c.1656. Oil on panel, 27.5 x 36.5 cm. Delft, Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof [cat. 67]. 277
- 3.20 Robert Hooke, *Of the Eyes and Head of a Grey drone-Fly*, 1665. 278  
Fold-out engraving in Hooke, *Micrographia* (observation XXXIX).  
Bethesda, Maryland, National Library of Medicine.
- 3.21 Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Still Life with Insects and Amphibians*, 1662. 279  
Oil on canvas, 51 x 68.5 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum.
- 3.22 Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Asia* from *The Four Parts of the World* 280  
(Munich), 1664-1666, no. 12, *Mecca*. Detail of fig. 1.14.
- 3.23 Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Snakes, butterflies, lizards, and small insects, with a thistle in the moss on a tree*, 1664. Oil on canvas, 69.6 x 53.5 cm. 281  
Private collection.
- 3.24 Gonzales Coques with other artists, *Interior with Figures in the Middle of a Picture Gallery*, 1667-1672; 1706. Oil on canvas, 176 x 211 cm. 282  
The Hague, Mauritshuis (Prins Willem V Galerie).
- 3.25 Coques, *Interior with Figures in the Middle of a Picture Gallery*, 283  
1667-1672; 1706. Detail of fig. 3.24.
- 3.26 Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Butterflies in a tree, with a snake below*, 284  
1672. Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 55 cm. London, Collection of H. Terry-Engell.
- 3.27 Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Insects, Butterflies, and a Grasshopper*, 1664. 285  
Black chalk, watercolor, and gouache on parchment, 10.8 x 24.1 cm.  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art [cat. 101].
- 3.28 Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Insects, Butterflies, and a Dragonfly*, 1662. 286  
Black chalk, watercolor, and gouache on parchment, 10.8 x 24.1 cm.  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art [cat. 100].
- 3.29 Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies, moths, green grasshopper and other insects*, 1660s. Oil on copper, 9.4 x 23.3 cm. London, Christie's, 287  
July 9, 1999 lot 2 [cat. 329].
- 3.30 Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies, moths, blue dragonfly, beetles*, 288  
1660s. Oil on copper, 9.4 x 23.3 cm. London, Christie's, July 9, 1999  
lot 2 [cat. 330].
- 3.31 Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies & insects*, 1656. Oil on panel, 289  
26.5 x 37 cm. Private collection [cat. 66].

3.32	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Three Butterflies, a Beetle and other Insects, with a Cutting of Ragwort</i> , early 1650s? Oil on copper, 9 x 13 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum [cat. 54].	290
3.33	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Butterflies and Insects</i> , 1661. Oil on copper, 19 x 29 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum [cat. 96].	291
3.34	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Butterflies and Insects</i> , 1661. Oil on copper, 19 x 29 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum [cat. 97].	292
3.35	Albertus Seba, Engraving (Tab. XXXVI) from Seba, <i>Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata descriptio Naaukeurige beschryving van het schatryke kabinet der voornaamste seldzaamheden der natuur</i> , vol. 3, 1759.	293
3.36	Albertus Seba, Engraving (Tab. XXXVII) from <i>Locupletissimi rerum naturalium</i> .	294
3.37	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>America</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> , (Munich), 1666. Detail of fig. 1.16.	295
3.38	<i>Schatzkammer rarer und neuer Curiositäten</i> , title page, 1686.	296
3.39	<i>Schatzkammer rarer und neuer Curiositäten</i> , engraving preceding the title page, 1686.	297
4.1	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Los Animales / The Four Part of the World</i> , 1660. Oil on copper, 17 x 23 cm (individual plates). Madrid, Museo del Prado [cat. 135].	298
4.2	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Asia</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-66, no. 10, <i>Angola</i> . Detail of fig. 1.14.	299
4.3	Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, <i>Head of Medusa</i> , c. 1617/1618. Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 118 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.	300
4.4	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Kunstkammer with Venus at her Toilette</i> , 1659. Oil on copper, 67 x 91 cm. Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle [cat. 129].	301
4.5	Frans Snyders, <i>The Fox and the Heron</i> , c.1630-1640. Oil on canvas, 121 x 238 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum.	302
4.6	Frans Snyders, <i>Cock Fight</i> , c.1620-1640. Oil on canvas, 98 x 133 cm. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.	303
4.7	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>America</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1666. Detail of fig. 1.16.	304

4.8	Georg Marcgraf, <i>Tapuya woman</i> , engraving, from the <i>Historia Naturalis Brasiliae</i> , 1648.	305
4.9	Theodor de Bry, engraving from <i>Grands Voyages: America</i> , volume 3, 1593.	306
4.10	Jan Brueghel the Elder, <i>The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark</i> , 1613. Oil on panel, 54.5 x 83 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.	307
4.11	Peter Paul Rubens, <i>Daniel in the Lion's Den</i> , c.1614/1616. Oil on canvas, 268 x 374.7 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.	308
4.12	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Africa</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666, no. 9, <i>Tripoli</i> . Detail of fig. 1.15.	309
4.13	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>The Ark of Noah</i> , 1650s. Oil on panel, 28.6 x 37.1 cm. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten [cat. 242].	310
4.14	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Africa</i> from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666, no. 4, <i>Algiers</i> (verso). Detail of fig. 1.15.	311
4.15	Van Kessel, <i>Los Animales / The Four Part of the World</i> (Madrid), 1660, no. 13, <i>London</i> (verso). Detail of fig. 4.1.	312
4.16	Van Kessel, <i>Los Animales / The Four Part of the World</i> (Madrid), 1660, no. 19, <i>Antwerp</i> (verso). Detail of fig. 4.1.	313
4.17	Van Kessel, <i>Los Animales / The Four Part of the World</i> (Madrid), 1660, no. 20, <i>Copenhagen</i> (verso). Detail of fig. 4.1.	314
4.18	Van Kessel, <i>Los Animales / The Four Part of the World</i> (Madrid), 1660, no. 39, <i>Aden</i> (verso). Detail of fig. 4.1	315
4.19	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>The Fable of the Fox and the Heron</i> , c.1660. Oil on copper, 19 x 25 cm. London, Johnny van Haefen, Ltd., 2010 [cat. 229].	316
4.20	Jan van Kessel the Elder, <i>Kunstkamer with a Woman before a Mirror: Allegory of Sight</i> , c.1660. Oil on copper, 62 x 82 cm. London, Christie's, April 22, 2005, lot 87 [cat. 132].	317
4.21	Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, <i>Sight</i> , 1617. Oil on panel, 65 x 109 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado.	318
4.22	Giuseppe Arcimboldo, <i>Water</i> from the <i>Four Elements</i> , 1566. Oil on panel,	319

	66.5 x 50.5 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.	
4.23	Giuseppe Arcimboldo, <i>Fire from the Four Elements</i> , 1566. Oil on panel, 66.5 x 51 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.	320
4.24	Giuseppe Arcimboldo, <i>Earth from the Four Elements</i> , 1566? Oil on panel, 70.2 x 48.7 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.	321
4.25	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>America from The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1666, no. 15, <i>Havana</i> . Detail of fig. 1.16.	322
4.26	Peter Paul Rubens, <i>Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt</i> , c. 1615-1616. Oil on panel, 248 x 32 cm. Munich, Alte Pinakothek.	323
5.1	Anonymous Antwerp (paintings possibly by Frans Francken the Younger), <i>Cabinet</i> , c.1650. <i>Softwood, whitewood and oak, veneered with ebony, letterwood, bone and tortoiseshell on a red ground, decorated with paintings in oils, mounts of silver, iron, and brass</i> , h. 160 cm., w. 108 cm., d. 50 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.	324
5.2	Abraham Ortelius, <i>Theatrum Orbis Terrarum</i> (frontispiece), 1570. Engraving, 37 x 23 cm.	325
5.3	Peter Paul Rubens, <i>The Four Continents</i> (also known as <i>The Four Rivers of Paradise</i> ), c.1615. Oil on canvas, 208 x 283 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.	326
5.4	Frans Francken the Younger, <i>The Story of the Prodigal Son</i> , 1600-1620. Oil on panel, 61 x 85 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.	327
5.5	Willem Jansz. Blaeu, <i>Africae nova description</i> , c.1630. Engraving, 41 x 55.5 cm. Universiteit van Amsterdam, Bijzondere Collecties.	328
5.6	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Africa</i> , from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666. Detail of fig. 1.15.	329
5.7	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Asia</i> , from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666. Detail of fig. 1.14.	330
5.8	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Africa</i> , from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666. Detail of fig. 1.15.	331
5.9	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Europe</i> , from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666. Detail of fig. 1.13.	332
5.10	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Asia</i> , from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i>	333

	(Munich), 1664-1666. Detail of fig. 1.14.	
5.11	Van Kessel and Quellinus, <i>Africa</i> , from <i>The Four Parts of the World</i> (Munich), 1664-1666. Detail of fig. 1.15.	334
5.12	Anonymous Amsterdam? <i>Dollhouse of Petronella De la Court</i> ( <i>Kunstkamer</i> ), c.1670-1690. Oak, walnut, olivewood, rosewood, ivory, silver, ebony, copper, and other materials, 206 x 189 x 79 cm. Utrecht, Centraal Museum.	335
5.13	<i>Dollhouse of Petronella De la Court</i> , c.1670-1690. Detail of fig. 5.12.	336
5.14	Wenzel Jamnitzer, <i>Writing box with cast insects and other creatures</i> , c. 1560-1570. Silver, 23 x 10 x 6 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.	337
5.15	Attributed to Bernard Palissy, <i>Oval Basin</i> , c.1550. Lead-glazed earthenware, 47 x 37 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.	338
5.16	Anonymous Dutch or Flemish?, manufactured in England, <i>Cabinet</i> , 1690-1700. Walnut, fruitwood, and oak with ivory and bone veneers and painted drawer fronts. Washington, Smithsonian Institution Castle Collection.	339
5.17	Anonymous, <i>Cabinet</i> , 1690-1700. Interior detail of fig. 5.16.	340
5.18	Anonymous, <i>Cabinet</i> , 1690-1700. Interior detail of fig. 5.16.	341
5.19	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, <i>Queen Maria, Abducted from Catania, Embarking on a Trireme</i> , 1663. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 146].	342
5.20	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, <i>Moncada Named Barón de Cervelló</i> , 1663. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 147].	343
5.21	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, <i>King Martin Entrusts Moncada with Regency of the Kingdom</i> , 1663. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 148].	344
5.22	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, <i>Moncada Receives the Insignia associated with the office of Keeper of the Great Seals of the Kingdom of Sicily</i> , 1663. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 149].	345
5.23	Jan van Kessel the Elder and Luigi Gentile, <i>Moncada in Discussion with the King</i> , 1663. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 150].	346

- 5.24 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Queen Bianca of Sicily grants Don Antonio Moncada power to convene the States General*, 1663. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 151]. 347
- 5.25 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Don Antonio Moncada offering to protect the kingdom of Queen Bianca of Sicily against the rebels*, 1663-1664. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 152]. 348
- 5.26 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada escorting the Queen to the galley that will take her to Syracuse*, 1663-1664. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 153]. 349
- 5.27 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada before the Queen, receiving compensation for his royal services*, 1663-1664. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 154]. 350
- 5.28 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *The submission of the Sicilian rebels to Antonio Moncada in 1411*, 1663. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza [cat. 155]. 351
- 5.29 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *The presentation of the Captain General's Baton to Antonio Moncada*, 1664. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza [cat. 156]. 352
- 5.30 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada arriving with troops at the citadel, Cabrera marching on the palace to surprise the Queen*, 1664. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 157]. 353
- 5.31 Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada chasing the rebels, who attacked Queen Bianca of Sicily in her palace*, 1664. Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection [cat. 158]. 354
- 5.32 Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp (designers), woven in the workshop of Albert Auwercx, *King Martin entrusts Moncada with regency of the kingdom from History of the House of Moncada*, c. 1699. Wool and silk, 406 x 680 cm. Paris, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie. 355

## LIST OF APPENDICES

<b>APPENDIX A</b>	Cornelis de Bie, <i>Het gulden cabinet</i>	357
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	Jacob Campo Weyerman, <i>De levens-beschryvingen</i>	360
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	Working Cataloge of Works by Jan van Kessel the Elder	362



## ABSTRACT

The Antwerp artist Jan van Kessel the Elder (1626-1679) was esteemed throughout Europe for producing finely-wrought, miniature paintings on copper that depict a broad range of flora and fauna, exotic places, and objects of natural and human artistry. Rather than a transparent window onto the natural world, Van Kessel's pictures avowedly play and toy with nature, bending it in a variety of ways that bring into focus its artifice and hidden aspects. His compositions contributed to the fashioning of his professional identity and created a visual discourse about early modern strategies and techniques for investigating and representing nature. The 'natural' world presented in Van Kessel's art was ambitiously crafted from the art history of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Antwerp and informed by the local cross-fertilization of media, materials, and artisanal knowledge. Through a combination of wit, technical virtuosity, self-referentiality, and allusions to art-historical lineage, Van Kessel's paintings encourage viewers to simultaneously think about art, in terms of collecting, connoisseurship, citation, and media, and think anew about nature.

This study uses Van Kessel's art as a distinctive lens through which to examine the relationship between craft, curiosity, and the pursuit of natural knowledge in the early modern period. Each chapter situates Van Kessel within a particular context where art and natural history intersected in late seventeenth-century Antwerp. Taken together, these investigations reveal how his production responded to a unique convergence of

circumstances in that city which included the growth of a popular, commercial strand of natural history, a thriving culture of art collecting and connoisseurship focused on local artists, and a burgeoning luxury industry. The dissertation argues that Van Kessel's material and conceptual interventions into the representation of nature, such as his innovative, painted "cabinets without drawers" and witty signatures formed from insects and snakes, enabled him to redefine the scope of natural historical illustration and negotiate the value and status of the small-format cabinet picture.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: A CURIOUS PAINTER OF STRANGE THINGS

In a collaboratively produced gallery painting dating from the 1650s and now located in the Royal Collection, London, is a selection of works by many of Antwerp's most esteemed painters from the second half of the seventeenth century (fig. 1.1).<sup>1</sup> This virtual calling card of local artistic talent depicts more than two dozen signed or monogrammed paintings that have been attributed to such masters as Jan Davidsz de Heem, Pieter Boel, and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, two portraits of Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck are displayed prominently next to the entrance

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<sup>1</sup> This painting contains the signatures of Jacob de Formentrou and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger. Additionally, it has been suggested that the figures were painted by Gonzales Coques. The date inscribed on the mantel has been generally interpreted as 1659; however, in an unpublished email located in the Royal Collection's files on this painting, Fred Meijer suggests that the date may in fact read 1653. For further discussion of this work, see Christopher Brown, *The Later Flemish Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (London: Royal Collection Enterprises, 2007), 111-115, and Ariane van Suchtelen and Ben van Beneden, eds., *Room for Art in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2009), 104-106, 132-133.

<sup>2</sup> For the complete list of works and artists that have been identified, see Van Suchtelen and Van Beneden, *Room for Art*, 132-133. Although the multiplicity of authorship represented in such gallery paintings is often subject to debate, it is widely assumed that the individual works in the Royal Collection painting are by multiple hands. Based on an early essay which incorrectly dated the London composition to 1683, it was assumed for many years that this was the painting given as a gift in that same year to the attorney Jan van Baveghem by members of Antwerp's Guild of St. Luke. While this identification has been discounted due to the discovery of at least two dates in the 1650s appearing within the composition, recent technical examination supports the conclusion that multiple artists contributed to the painted gallery. The variety of monograms and styles represented in the individual pictured paintings, along with differences in their craqueleur patterns, suggest that they were not executed by a single hand. Moreover, as Zirka Filipczak has argued convincingly in regard to similar gallery paintings, a multiplicity of hands is also indicated by the lack of extant prototypes that correspond to the pictured works, since it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for a single artist to create so many compositions replicating the work of numerous, diverse masters. She further suggests that this type of collaborative gallery painting provided artists with a more informal opportunity to invent new compositions. See Lionel Cust and F. Jos. van den Branden, "Notes on Pictures in the Royal Collection – XXXII," *The Burlington Magazine* 27 (July 1915): 150-158, and Zirka Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 156.

of the gallery, as if to suggest that the tradition of artistic excellence in Antwerp established by these illustrious masters was being carried forth by the next generation.

The “gallery painting” genre, as it has come to be known, originated in Antwerp in the early decades of the seventeenth century. The Royal Collection painting is representative of a distinct subset of this genre that emerged after 1650 and was characterized by a strong emphasis on local painters and autographed works that could be distinguished and identified by connoisseurs.<sup>3</sup> Not intended as a pictorial inventory of an actual collection or as an abstract allegory, as were earlier examples of the genre, this composite work functioned instead as a carefully crafted advertisement of the current talent and venerated legacy of the Antwerp school of painting.<sup>4</sup>

One painting in particular stands out in this fictive ensemble. Hanging conspicuously over the gallery entrance is a curious picture of various insects, flowers, a mouse, a two-headed, serpent-like animal known as an *amphisbaena*,<sup>5</sup> and two hairy creatures that resonate strongly with early modern illustrated accounts of the mandrake, a plant containing hallucinogenic powers and a tuberous root that is sometimes said to

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<sup>3</sup> Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, 153-158.

<sup>4</sup> Willem van Haecht’s *Picture Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest*, 1628 (Antwerp, Rubenshuis) is one of few examples of a gallery painting that functions as a pictorial inventory of a real collection. On the identification of individual pictures represented in that work, see Julius Held, “*Artis Pictoriae Amator*: An Antwerp Patron and his Collection,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 50 (1957): 53-84. For examples of gallery paintings that doubled as allegories of ignorance (symbolized by donkey-headed iconoclast figures smashing artworks) or the art of painting (represented by statues of Minerva and other symbols of virtue), see Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, 68.

<sup>5</sup> The *amphisbaena* was a legendary creature purportedly spawned by the blood that dripped from the Gorgon Medusa’s severed head. It was first described by the Roman poet Lucan in his *Pharsalia* and was illustrated in medieval bestiaries and encyclopedias. On the pictorial evolution of this creature over time, see Peter Mason, *Before Disenchantment: Images of Exotic Animals and Plants in the Early Modern World* (London, Reaktion, 2009), 166-169.

resemble the human figure. (fig. 1.2).<sup>6</sup> Several elements of this painting are recognizable citations from earlier artworks. For instance, the *amphisbaena* can be found in prior paintings by Rubens and Frans Francken the Younger, while the placement of tiny creatures against a blank, neutral backdrop recalls compositions by Joris Hoefnagel and Jan Brueghel the Elder made over half a century before.<sup>7</sup>

The pictured painting is particularly striking in regard to its large scale and prominent display among a wall of easel paintings. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century images of comparable subject matter—*naturalia* and strange or marginalized creatures—were typically executed on a much smaller scale in graphic media or watercolor on vellum and parchment.<sup>8</sup> One such example is featured in a gallery painting from around 1620 (fig. 1.3), in which the elegantly-dressed gentleman in yellow at the far left holds in his palm a small-scale picture depicting snails and insects against a blank, neutral ground that is displayed in a frame with a sliding lid (fig. 1.4).<sup>9</sup> The picture held by the man dressed in yellow is physically segregated and clearly distinguished from the easel paintings hanging on the walls. Not only is it much smaller relative to the artworks that surround it, but it is also located in a corner of the room that contains a tabletop display

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<sup>6</sup> On the early modern significance and representation of the mandrake plant, see Joy Kenseth, *The Age of the Marvelous* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 1991), 359-360. There is an abundance of anthropomorphic illustrations of mandrake plants from the medieval and early modern periods. An example of one such image that bears a strong resemblance to the figures depicted in the Royal Collection painting appears in Georg Öllinger and Samuel Quiccheberg, *Magnarum medicinarum herbariae et zoographiae imagines* (Nuremberg, 1553), fol. 594.

<sup>7</sup> The *amphisbaena* in the pictured painting is very similar to those portrayed in *The Head of Medusa* by Rubens and Frans Snyders, 1617-18 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) and *A Cabinet of a Collector* by Frans Francken the Younger, c.1617 (London, Royal Collection). Comparative works by Hoefnagel and Brueghel are discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>8</sup> I am thinking here especially of works by Joris Hoefnagel and Balthasar van der Ast.

<sup>9</sup> Upon inspection of this painting, I was unable to determine the medium of the picture with the sliding lid. At this time, I have not been able to locate any examples of similarly-framed works.

of diverse miniature objects and “curiosities,” including coins, sea shells, medals, and other small-scale pictures, as well as magnifying lenses and scientific instruments.

Although these objects share the same space as the larger oil paintings, their distinct and subservient manner of display clearly defines them as a category apart from painting and other forms of fine art.

By contrast, the picture of bizarre *naturalia* depicted in the Royal Collection composition is represented as a large-scale easel painting that competes with monumental works by Antwerp’s foremost painters. Its prominent central location above an elaborately-sculpted doorframe, as well as its juxtaposition with paintings that feature the entire range of pictorial genres and most esteemed artists of the period, allude to its contemporary status as a work of great prestige and align it with, rather than distance it from, Antwerp’s illustrious artistic legacy.

The monumental scale and privileged display of this painting-within-a-painting raise vital questions about the production and contemporary estimation of its creator, the Antwerp artist Jan van Kessel the Elder (1626-1679).<sup>10</sup> Why, for example, would the work of an artist who was renowned throughout Europe for creating palm-sized cabinet paintings of all varieties of “Monstrous creatures and diverse strange things”<sup>11</sup> be

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<sup>10</sup> As mentioned in note 2, it is difficult to determine the authorship of the individual paintings portrayed in the Royal Collection picture. On the one hand, the brushwork in this “Van Kessel” is much looser and sketchier than comparable extant paintings, opening up the possibility that it was executed by another artist. On the other hand, the pictured painting includes several motifs that appear in other works by Van Kessel (such as the mouse, dragonfly, and individual flowers), but, to my knowledge, these never occur together in the same composition. Moreover, as far as I am aware, the only other works by Van Kessel to include the hairy mandrake figures post-date the Royal Collection picture by several years. These include the centerpiece of *Europe* from his Munich version of *The Four Parts of the World* (figs. 1.13-1.16) and an *Allegory of Sight* (cat. 133), both dated 1664. Following Filipczak’s argument, as discussed in note 2, the lack of prototypes for both the composition and its individual motifs raises doubts about the possibility that anyone other than Van Kessel could have painted this work.

<sup>11</sup> “Wanschappen Schepsels en verscheyden vremde dinghen...” Cornelis de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet van de edel vry schilderconst* (Antwerp, 1661-1662; reprint, Soest: Davaco, 1971), 10.

represented here as equivalent in scale and status to large and over life-sized paintings of heroic battles and grandiose mythological and religious narratives? What was the status of natural history in late seventeenth-century Antwerp? What comparison is being made between Van Kessel's meticulously-detailed, miniature aesthetic and the bold brushwork of Rubens and Van Dyck? What kinds of reactions would connoisseurs, such as those pictured in the London painting, have had to the content and aesthetic of Van Kessel's paintings? Finally, what does Van Kessel's art suggest about the use and display of objects and the kinds of activities that took place in early modern collections? In this dissertation, I seek to address these and other questions about Van Kessel's artistic enterprise, by which I mean the making, marketing, and consumption of his art.

In the third quarter of the seventeenth century, Van Kessel produced upwards of 300 finely-wrought, miniature paintings on copper. These works feature a broad spectrum of strange and wondrous creatures and objects, including insects and snakes that pay homage to the artist by spelling out his name with their bodies (fig. 1.5), fantastic beasts engaging in violent combat (fig. 1.6), collections of exotic shells arranged to form grotesque heads (fig. 1.7), and bloodthirsty cannibals who voraciously devour human remains (fig. 1.8). Additionally, many of Van Kessel's compositions ambitiously recast motifs and compositional elements from the earlier work of Antwerp masters including Joris Hoefnagel, his grandfather, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Rubens, and Frans Snyders. As an heir to the venerated Brueghel dynasty of painters, Van Kessel was keenly aware of the long lineage of artistic traditions, themes, techniques, and strategies in his native city. In his work, he took every opportunity to refer to this art-historical lineage and encourage viewers to simultaneously think about art and think anew about nature.

Van Kessel's production provides a critical lens through which to examine the association between art, nature, and curiosity in the early modern period. This study explores how Van Kessel's art exemplified and provoked curiosity by bending nature and bringing it into sight through a combination of wit, technical virtuosity, and allusions to art-historical lineage. This investigation raises crucial questions about the ways in which late seventeenth-century representations of the natural world, across multiple categories of media, opened up new possibilities for thinking about art, nature, and the relationship between them.

Until now, discussion of Van Kessel's painstakingly-detailed, precious artworks has focused mainly on their natural historical content, pictorial sources, and accuracy (in the sense of transparency or transcription). Shifting the attention from the content of these pictures to questions of how, why, and for whom they were made allows us to engage with them in ways that open up, rather than limit, their rich interpretive possibilities. The issues that are central to Van Kessel's oeuvre, such as the pictorial representation of the natural world, curiosity, citation and pastiche, the manipulation and significance of materials, and the history of collecting, are not new to scholarship about early modern European visual culture, but they are often explored separately. By examining these issues through the prism of a single artist who was prolific and greatly admired, I aim to bring into focus the ways in which they intersected, while also illuminating the marginalized genre of the small-format cabinet picture and the equally overlooked practice of painting on copper.

### **Collaboration, Craft, and Connoisseurship in Composite Paintings**



The Antwerp gallery painting genre provides the perfect touchstone for discussing the essential character and seventeenth-century status of Van Kessel's art. Framing his works in the context of a gallery painting, as opposed to considering them as pictorial equivalents of specimen collections—an approach which has been taken often in past scholarship, is critical to understanding his place within the Antwerp art world as well as the many ways in which that particular environment was instrumental in shaping his oeuvre. The interrelated concepts of collaborative artistry, crafted artifice, and connoisseurship, which are thrown into relief in Antwerp gallery paintings, are equally fundamental to the pictorial model that epitomizes Van Kessel's art.

Close visual analysis of the aforementioned painting in the Royal Collection reveals a host of contemporary circumstances that project a framework for situating Van Kessel and his art that is very different from those which have been used to characterize him in the past. The local emphasis on collaboration that is underscored by the aggregate composition of the gallery painting was also central to Van Kessel's production. Many of his works were painted in collaboration with Antwerp counterparts, including several of the artists whose work is represented in the Royal Collection composition, such as Quellinus and Peter Neefs the Younger.

The joint production of the gallery painting, which consisted of discrete contributions by multiple artists, illuminates a combinatory mode of painting that is analogous to the way in which Van Kessel put his pictures together. In both cases, deceptively "natural" collections are formed from the crafted manipulation of an aggregate of independent parts. It is well established that the majority of Antwerp gallery paintings contain both fact and fiction, and do not accurately reflect the contents or

organization of real collections. Although they may appear collection-like in their emulation of certain aspects of early modern picture galleries, they are very rarely exact replicas. This provides a useful analogy for Van Kessel's composite pictures, which similarly do not and were not intended to transcribe actual specimen collections, even if they may simulate their variety, patterns of organization, and ability to incite curiosity.

Close visual analysis and contemporary written accounts of Van Kessel's pictures of flora, fauna, and exotica indicate that his pictorial vision of nature was carefully crafted through manipulations of scale, media, and materials, as well as the calculated mobilization of elements from prior artworks and subsequent reinsertion of them into novel contexts. Van Kessel did not recycle past art indiscriminately, as scholars who have written him off as a simple *pasticheur* suggest, but instead selectively and inventively recombined and transformed motifs and entire compositions. The end result was a corpus of works in which could be traced a 'natural' history of art in Antwerp. At the crux of my dissertation is the contention that Van Kessel's work does not simply represent art about nature, or even art about art, as did contemporary gallery paintings, but rather can be characterized more appropriately as art about "art about nature."

The visual comparison presented in the Royal Collection picture gallery between Van Kessel's pictures of strange and curious *naturalia* and more monumental (in terms of size and subject matter) easel paintings underscores the intersection at the level of pictorial praxis between early modern artists and naturalists. Close inspection of Van Kessel's representations of the natural world reveals a high degree of artifice, indicating that crafted manipulations were as critical to the pursuit of natural knowledge as they were to the making of art. As we shall see, many of Van Kessel's characteristic working

methods, such as his alteration of scale and perspective and aggregative construction of compositions, mirrored the pictorial practices of contemporary naturalists, who likewise sought creative ways to make visible what nature could not.

The revolutionary publication of Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* in 1665 provides a case in point of this intersection in praxis. Hooke's illustrations presented the newly discovered world of microscopic vision in an accessible way by depicting common objects and insects as they would appear under the lens of a microscope.<sup>12</sup> Hooke, who was originally trained as a portrait painter before assuming the role of curator of experiments at London's Royal Society, produced illustrations that exhibited a high degree of artifice. Hooke's fold-out engraving of a flea, with its hyper-realism, compositely-constructed perspective, and grossly-enlarged scale, resonates strongly with the manipulated and mediated insects that are a staple of Van Kessel's oeuvre (fig. 1.9).

Hooke's example and the following investigation of Van Kessel's art illuminate how the representation of nature by late seventeenth-century artists as well as naturalists did not transcribe or provide a transparent window on to the natural world, but rather "vexed" it, by toying with it, making it appear strange, and stimulating viewers to think anew about it. Van Kessel's art demonstrates Francis Bacon's claim that "...the nature of things betrays itself more readily under the vexations of art than in its natural freedom."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Janice Neri's thoughtful essay on the illustrations in Hooke's *Micrographia* contends that these images presented early modern viewers with a glimpse into a hidden world of wonders that was ultimately controlled by Hooke's inventive manipulation of what he saw through the lens of the microscope. Thus, even so-called "scientific" illustrations were always mediated by those who created them. Neri, "Between Observation and Image: Representations of Insects in Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*," in *The Art of Natural History: Illustrated Treatises and Botanical Paintings, 1400-1850*, ed. Amy R.W. Meyers and Therese O'Malley, 83-107 (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*. Collected and edited by James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, vol. 4 (London: Longman, 1857-1874), 29. Svetlana Alpers has argued that Bacon's claim is key to understanding the relationship between the craft of seventeenth-century

Through selective artifice and the recombination of a fixed corpus of motifs, Van Kessel was able to define the scope of the natural world on his own terms. Because he blatantly exposed the fiction and composite character of his pictures, their reception by contemporaries was not predicated on their “accurate” transcription of nature, but rather on a vastly different set of criteria that had much to do with the local emphasis on connoisseurship. Although Van Kessel has been marginalized in modern histories of Netherlandish art, the privileged representation of his pictures in multiple seventeenth-century gallery paintings indicates their early modern status as highly-regarded pictorial demonstrations of artistic skill and virtuosity that belonged to an elite culture of collecting.<sup>14</sup>

Van Kessel’s mobilization of diverse motifs and representational strategies, and re-insertion of these into novel contexts had profound consequences on the contemporary reception and consumption of his works. The abundance of references to past art enabled him to situate his work within a revered lineage of Antwerp painters. The visible relationship of Van Kessel’s pictures to works by venerated masters such as Rubens and Brueghel added to their authority and value. His pictures, virtual mosaics of art-historical citations, engaged a special category of connoisseur, the *liefhebber van schildereyen*, or “lover of paintings,” who sought upward social mobility through the emulation of noble

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Netherlandish art and the contemporary perception of the natural world. See especially, Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 99-109, and Alpers, *The Vexations of Art: Velazquez and Others* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Another example of a contemporary gallery painting containing a work by (or in the manner of) Van Kessel is illustrated in fig. 3.24 and discussed in Van Suchtelen and Van Beneden, *Room for Art*, 111-112, 120, 136-137.

collecting practices and demonstration of a keen connoisseurial eye.<sup>15</sup> The broad-ranging collection of motifs in Van Kessel's compositions offered *liefhebbers* the opportunity to test and display their connoisseurial skills. These composite pictures invited early modern viewers to recognize their artifice and encouraged them to look more closely in order to identify and engage with their numerous components. In this way, Van Kessel's pictures functioned similarly to Antwerp gallery paintings. As Elizabeth Honig has argued convincingly, the primary cultural value of the Antwerp picture gallery type derived from its emphasis on and invitation for connoisseurship, in that the beholder was compelled to identify individual pictures and distinguish the hands of different artists.<sup>16</sup> These paintings, she asserts, "beg to be visually dissected and unraveled."<sup>17</sup> Van Kessel's art epitomizes this concept by going a step further than the gallery picture and reducing its multiple, framed paintings to the individual motifs of which they are composed. In light of this, I would venture to say that Van Kessel's pictures presented an even greater challenge to connoisseurs.

### **Art for Discerning Connoisseurs and the Choicest *Kunstkabinetten*: Van Kessel's Early Modern Reception**

In many ways, Van Kessel presents an enigmatic figure. The only known portrait of him is an engraving that accompanies the encomium to the artist written by Cornelis de Bie and published in *Het gulden cabinet van de edel vry schilder-const* (The Golden

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<sup>15</sup> The emergence of the *liefhebber* as a distinct category of collector in Antwerp is discussed in Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, 51-53.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Honig, "The Beholder as Work of Art: A Study in the Location of Value in Seventeenth-Century Flemish Painting," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 47 (1995): 253-297.

<sup>17</sup> Honig, "The Beholder as Work of Art," 284.

Cabinet of the Noble Liberal Art of Painting) between 1661 and 1662 (fig. 1.10).<sup>18</sup>

However, a second painting, an *Allegory of Europe* produced by Van Kessel in collaboration with Erasmus Quellinus, contains what is probably Van Kessel's self-portrait, represented as a nearly obscured three-quarter likeness sketched on a miniature copper plate (figs. 1.11, 1.12).<sup>19</sup> Until very recently, the Jan van Kessel who is the subject of this dissertation was confused with a second painter of the same name who worked in Antwerp during the same period and specialized in still-life subjects, causing a significant portion of our Van Kessel's former oeuvre to be reattributed. Finally, while for the majority of his life Van Kessel held a privileged status in Antwerp as both an exceptionally talented painter and a prosperous captain of one of the city's civic guard companies, he died destitute.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the fact that our knowledge about Van Kessel's biography and professional career contains many gaps, what we do know corresponds closely with how he figured himself in his art, as evidenced by the union of his visage and signature medium in the aforementioned copperplate self-portrait. The abundance of local art-historical citations and propensity for collaboration featured in his artworks reflect the fact that although his finished paintings were sent far afield, to Madrid, Paris, and Vienna, and frequently portray distant lands and exotic specimens, Van Kessel remained in Antwerp for his entire career. Additionally, a number of pictorial sources, such as the

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<sup>18</sup> Cornelis de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet van de edel vry schilderconst* (Antwerp, 1661-1662; reprint, Soest: Davaco, 1971), 409-411. For a complete transcription and English translation of De Bie's encomium to Van Kessel, see Appendix A.

<sup>19</sup> This painting will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>20</sup> Van den Branden reports that Van Kessel's prosperity quickly diminished following the death of his wife, Maria van Apshoven, in 1678. Within months, his debts mounted and he became gravely ill before passing away on April 17, 1679. F. Jos. van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool* (Antwerp: Buschmann, 1883), 1101.

embellished display of his work in the Royal Collection gallery painting, corroborate early modern textual sources that describe Van Kessel as one of the leading painters in Antwerp during the second half of the seventeenth century and reveal that his art was collected and greatly admired by nobility, wealthy merchants, and skilled artisans throughout Europe.

Nearly all of the major compendia of Netherlandish artists' biographies composed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries pay homage to Van Kessel's art, particularly his versatility and wide range of subject matter, as well as his ability to paint vividly life-like, yet scrupulously-detailed flora and fauna on a miniature scale. The first of these sources is the previously mentioned *Het gulden cabinet van de edel vry schilder-const*, published in Antwerp by the *rederijker* and poet, Cornelis de Bie. De Bie's compilation of biographical information, eulogizing poems, and engraved portraits of primarily Antwerp artists includes an extended ode to Van Kessel and his artistry.<sup>21</sup> This passage provides not so much a biography as a detailed description of the kinds of virtuosity exhibited in Van Kessel's painting and an explanation of how and why his pictures were valued by his contemporaries. As such, De Bie's text serves as one of the most important sources of information about the seventeenth-century reception of Van Kessel's art.

That De Bie's laudatory text begins with a comparison of the skills and talent of Van Kessel to those of his illustrious grandfather, Jan Brueghel the Elder, only reinforces the flattering comparison made by the Royal Collection picture gallery between Van Kessel and artists such as Rubens and Van Dyck:

Brueghel knew, so bizarre and wittily, to take the measure of  
Nature's perfection, through extraordinary secrets,  
On which many a bold wit has set his sights

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<sup>21</sup> De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 409-411.

To achieve all the preciousness and flawlessness of the work,  
That he brought forth from the art of painting  
Especially in the small figures, fruit, and flowers:  
Van Kessel follows him so precisely, meticulously and preciously  
So sharply, yet loosely in miniature through the touches of his brush.<sup>22</sup>

De Bie characterizes Van Kessel as not merely following in Brueghel's hallowed footsteps, but rather as matching his predecessor's artistic abilities and keen powers of observation. The fact that De Bie makes no mention of the familial ties between the two painters also gives precedence to Van Kessel's artistic accomplishments and contemporary estimation. Irrespective of his blood relation to one of Antwerp's greatest masters, Van Kessel made his mark on the Antwerp art world and was a powerful presence in his own right, according to De Bie.

Several decades later, De Bie's comparison between Van Kessel and Brueghel was taken up a notch by Jacob Campo Weyerman, who, in his compendium of the lives of Netherlandish artists published between 1729 and 1769, asserted that Van Kessel's art rivaled and could even be mistaken for that of Brueghel by veteran connoisseurs:

He was as universal a painter as *Velvet Breugel*, and we have seen the four Elements painted by him, and so skillfully painted, that more than one Connoisseur would have mistaken it for *Breugel's* paintbrush; and if they had not been painted by that artful hand, at least they could have been hung beside [them] in the choicest art cabinets.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "Wist Breugel soo bisaert, en gheestich af te meten/ Natuers volmaeckte deught, door onghemeyn secreten,/ Daer menich cloeck vernuft op slaet sijn oogh-ghemerck/ Om al de edelheyt en suyverheyt van t'werck./ Die uyt de Schilder-const door hem is voorts ghecomen/ Besonder in de cleyn figuren, fruyt, en bloemen:/ Van Kessel volght hem naer soo suyver, net en eel/ Soo scherp, en los in't cleyn door t'toetsen van Pinseel," De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 409.

<sup>23</sup> "Hy was al ommers zo een algemeen Schilder als den Fluuweelen Breugel, en wy hebben de vier Elementen gezien by hem geschildert, en zo konstiglijk geschildert, dat meer als een Konstkenner die zou hebben gegroet voor Breugels konstpenseel; en indien ze al niet by die konstrijke hand waaren gepenseelt, ten minsten konden zy er benevens worden opgehangen in de keurlijkste Konstkabinetten." Jacob Campo Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen der Nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen*, vol. 2 (The Hague, 1729), 209. For a complete transcription and English translation of Weyerman's account of Van Kessel's art and career, see Appendix B.



Even more than De Bie's encomium, this passage by Weyerman provides a textual analog to the Royal Collection gallery painting, particularly in its claim that Van Kessel's pictures were interchangeable with those of Antwerp's most prominent painters and rightfully belonged hanging next to them in the most selective collections.

In comparing Van Kessel to Brueghel, both De Bie and Weyerman stress the broad scope of these artists' pictorial subjects and skills. De Bie's account of Van Kessel underscores the painter's pictorial command of the natural world, as exemplified by the wide range of familiar and unfamiliar subjects represented in his art. As De Bie notes, although Van Kessel began his career as a flower painter, he went on to master a virtual menagerie of creatures:

In exotic beasts as [in] featherless animals  
Winged creatures small and large that swirl among the clouds  
Shell-encrusted sea creatures that glide under the water  
And footless creatures that criss-cross the dry land  
Our van Kessel knows how to bring forth  
Monstrous creatures and diverse strange things as if from life  
In [works] where nothing at all (however small) appears  
Except through his art alone to resemble life completely.<sup>24</sup>

De Bie's emphasis on pictorial variety recalls Karel van Mander's appeal to painters in his *Schilder-boeck* (1604) about the importance of mastering the full range of *verscheydenheden*, the categories of descriptive subjects and skills found in art.<sup>25</sup> De Bie privileges Van Kessel's capacity to emulate nature's variety and breadth in his art, in terms of both his subject matter and pictorial praxis. The diverse spectrum of subjects

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<sup>24</sup> "Jn beesten sonderlingh als onghapluynde dieren/ Ghevoghelt cleyn en groot die by de wolcken swieren/ Geschelpte zee-ghedroch dat onder t'water glijdt/ En t'voetloos ghecruyp dat t'drooghe fandt door snijdt/ Wanschappen Schepsels en verscheyden vremde dinghen/ Weet ons van Kessel al het leven voorts te bringhen./ Daer niet (hoe cleyn dat is) in't minsten in en blijckt/ Oft door sijn Konst alleen aen't leven heel ghelijckt." De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 410.

<sup>25</sup> Van Mander cites Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* as the supreme model of the universal command of *verscheydenheden* in his biography of the artist. Karel van Mander, *Het schilder-boeck* (Haarlem, 1604; reprint, Utrecht: Davaco, 1969), fols. 199r-203r.

represented in Van Kessel's oeuvre is complemented by his virtuoso range of brushwork, which consists of scrupulously-detailed, minute strokes, yet still manages to exhibit vibrancy and fluidity. In sum, De Bie's extensive description of the minute scale, finely-wrought workmanship, and precious, jewel-like surfaces of Van Kessel's pictures, coupled with his articulation of the strangeness and grotesqueness of his diverse subjects, throws into relief the capacity of Van Kessel's works to reveal certain aspects of nature that could only be made visible and comprehensible through pictorial artifice.

A revised, second edition of *Het gulden cabinet* dating from 1675, but never published, provides further insight into the contemporary reception of Van Kessel's art, and also articulates his development of a novel pictorial type.<sup>26</sup> The much later date of this edition, just four years before Van Kessel's death, enables it to function as a bookend to De Bie's publication of 1661-62. In the later version, De Bie reassesses Van Kessel's corpus and success after his last known dated work was painted. De Bie focuses primarily on Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World*, the culmination of his oeuvre and the ultimate example of the composite picture type that characterizes his production (1.13-1.16).<sup>27</sup> Therefore, while the earlier version of *Het gulden cabinet* touches upon the wide range of discrete pictorial subjects that comprise Van Kessel's oeuvre, such as flowers, fish, birds, and "monstrous creatures," the 1675 amended account is devoted to a single composition in which all of these independent subjects are brought together.

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<sup>26</sup> Cornelis de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet oft Schat Kamer van de Edele vry Schilder Konst. Tweede Druck verbeterd ende vermeerdert met nieuwe figuren en andere sin rijcke plaeten Bijgevoeght Eenige oude affdrucksels van beroemde schilders en andere voortreffelijcke persooen [...]* *Studio et Labore Cornelij De Bie Lijrani Anno 1675*, unpublished manuscript, no. 14648 (Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België).

<sup>27</sup> This series, which exists in two versions, is discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Four.

*The Four Parts of the World*, a series of four composite pictures representing the four then-known continents, contains all of the major subjects and motifs featured in Van Kessel's vast oeuvre, therefore providing a pictorial summation of his artistic enterprise. In De Bie's account of these four paintings, which together consist of 68 individual copper plates, he laments that his pen can hardly do justice to the conglomeration of flora, fauna, and exotic peoples and objects that are represented. De Bie stresses the variety and breadth of depicted motifs and posits *The Four Parts of the World* as the culmination of Van Kessel's invention of a composite type of picture that is comprised of multiple and discrete smaller parts. Beginning with his early flower and insect paintings, in which compositeness is located in the recombination of motifs from diverse sources within a single composition, Van Kessel's production gradually moves towards an increasingly conglomerate type of picture that eventually, as exemplified by *The Four Parts of the World*, consisted of numerous discretely-bounded miniature paintings.

De Bie's encomia of 1661-62 and 1675 laid the groundwork for subsequent early modern accounts of Van Kessel's art and career, such as those written by Arnold Houbraken and Weyerman. Houbraken, in his *Groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (*Great Theater of Netherlandish Artists*), first published in 1718-1721, essentially summarizes De Bie's description of Van Kessel's curious and diverse subject matter and devotes equal attention to his beginnings as a flower painter and relationship to Jan Brueghel.<sup>28</sup> Weyerman likewise reiterates many of De Bie's comments about Van Kessel's breadth of pictorial subjects and finely-wrought aesthetic, but he also provides unique insight into the artist's working methods, patrons, and

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<sup>28</sup> Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, vol. 2, Amsterdam, 1718-1721; second edition, The Hague, 1753; facsimile edition of the 1753 edition (Amsterdam: Israël, 1976), 139-140.

individual works due to the first-hand knowledge he acquired as the pupil of Van Kessel's son, Ferdinand (1648-1696), who was also a painter.<sup>29</sup>

The combined information provided by these early modern textual sources reiterates and expands upon the pictorial account of Van Kessel's art as presented in the Royal Collection picture gallery discussed earlier. Together, they provide a useful counterpoint to the vastly different way in which modern scholarship has framed Van Kessel and his art.

### **Van Kessel in Modern Scholarship**

Contrary to De Bie's and Weyerman's focus on how Van Kessel's works were made, and period inventories and sales records that make special mention of these pictures' materials, miniature scale, and fine workmanship, modern accounts have limited our understanding of Van Kessel's inventive and complex artistry by focusing almost exclusively on his pictorial sources and influences. This "source-hunting" approach has come at the expense of in-depth analysis of the artist's working methods, materials, techniques, collaborative practices, and clientele.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, while Van Kessel's mastery of a broad spectrum of pictorial subjects and skills was encouraged and praised by his contemporaries, his modern image has been shaped more by the segregation of these categories than by the notion of their

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<sup>29</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 208-210.

<sup>30</sup> Two characteristic examples of this approach are Ulla Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä. 1626-1679: Die Vier Erdeteile* (Munich: Alte Pinakothek, 1973), and Dante Martins Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents' by Jan van Kessel 'the Elder': A Seventeenth Century View of the Fauna in the Four Corners of the Earth* (Petrópolis: Index, 2002).

unity. The academic hierarchy of pictorial genres which has informed modern histories of early modern Netherlandish art is neither Netherlandish nor was its establishment contemporary with Van Kessel's career; yet, its classification and division of artists and artworks according to subject matter alone has contributed to Van Kessel falling through the cracks, so to speak.<sup>31</sup> Van Kessel's versatility, lauded as one of his defining traits in the seventeenth century, has been his undoing in the modern age. Because his extensive corpus does not fit neatly into a single genre, art historians have tended to either treat it piecemeal, by isolating discrete subjects, such as flowers, fish, or insects, or relegate it to the margins of art by classifying it as "scientific illustration." Neither of these is a satisfactory approach. The first overlooks important connections and areas of overlap between different subjects in Van Kessel oeuvre and fails to account for their union in composite works like *The Four Parts of the World*, while the second minimizes his inventive artistry by defining his art as the transcription, as opposed to description and transformation, of the natural world.

The seminal study in the meager corpus of art-historical scholarship on Van Kessel is Ulla Krempel's exhibition catalogue of 1973, which accompanied a small focus

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<sup>31</sup> The formulation of pictorial genres as we know them today, as well as their hierarchical ranking, was codified by the French Royal Academy of Painting in the late seventeenth century. For an excellent explanation and discussion of the Netherlandish concept of *verscheydenheden*, as articulated by Van Mander, see Walter Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander's Schilder-Boeck* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), especially pp. 5-6, 25, 29. For thoughtful analysis of how the French academic model of pictorial kinds was at odds with the one proposed by native Netherlandish art theory, see Lisa DeBoer, "Martial Arts: Military Themes and Images in Dutch Art of the Golden Age" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1996), especially Chapter 1. Incongruities between the French and Netherlandish conception and valuation of still-life painting in particular are discussed in Andrea Gasten, "Dutch Still Life Painting: Judgements and Appreciation," in *Still-Life in the Age of Rembrandt*, ed. Eddy de Jongh and Titian van Leeuwen, et al. (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1982), 13-25, and Celeste Brusati, *Artifice and Illusion: The Art and Writing of Samuel van Hoogstraten* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), especially 237-239.

presentation of *The Four Parts of the World* in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich.<sup>32</sup>

Krempel's methodical account of the various sources from which Van Kessel borrowed motifs, including paintings, prints, natural historical treatises, illustrated travel accounts, and cosmographies, while useful, fails to address the ways in which Van Kessel culled, transformed, and manipulated this visual material in his own paintings. As a result, it casts the artist as a pastiche painter whose works were more derivative than inventive. Considering Van Kessel's pictures in terms of sources and influences, rather than as creative and novel artworks in their own right, is inherently limiting. Furthermore, Krempel's emphasis on determining whether or not particular details in Van Kessel's pictures are "accurate," and her attribution of what she views as "mistakes" to a lack of knowledge on the part of the painter, incorrectly assume that his primary goal was to transcribe nature.<sup>33</sup> The criteria which Krempel employs for judging and interpreting Van Kessel's paintings bear little resemblance to the critical perspectives articulated in early modern accounts of his art.

Like Krempel, Norbert Schneider also concentrated his analysis of Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World* on what he sees as discrepancies between the paintings and the pictorial sources and models from which they purportedly draw.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to Krempel, who ascribes such divergences to Van Kessel's uncritical deployment of citations, Schneider attributes them to a lack of knowledge or skill. By insinuating a one-to-one correspondence between Van Kessel's pictures and "natural" or

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<sup>32</sup> Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*

<sup>33</sup> Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 6-7.

<sup>34</sup> Norbert Schneider, *The Art of the Still Life: Still Life Painting in the Early Modern Period* (Cologne: Taschen, 1990), 163-165.

“eyewitness” models, such scholarship has set the tone for subsequent studies, by art historians as well as scholars in other disciplines, which interpret these paintings at face value.<sup>35</sup> The plethora of fauna represented in his paintings has attracted the attention of biologists and zoologists, most of whom take these images to be accurate records of the early modern natural world and deploy them as illustrations for scientific studies about topics that range from vampire bats<sup>36</sup> to exotic seashells.<sup>37</sup> Due to the prevalence of insect paintings in his oeuvre, entomologists have also been called upon frequently to identify and comment on the individual specimens portrayed in these works. Van Kessel has even been likened to an amateur zoologist or entomologist due to his “acuity for depicting animals.”<sup>38</sup> In spite of Van Kessel’s overt mediation of nature through the lens of art, there remains a tendency among modern viewers to ignore the high degree of artifice in his paintings.

The emphasis on the more literal content of Van Kessel’s paintings, as opposed to the construction of meaning within these works and their production, marketing, and consumption, has also contributed to the practice of segregating his oeuvre according to pictorial categories. Discrete studies of Van Kessel’s flower paintings or his images of fish on seashores and riverbanks, for example, obfuscate more comprehensive consideration of the full scope of Van Kessel’s art and conceal the linkages between

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<sup>35</sup> The ornithologist Dante Martins Teixeira, for example, has written an extensive catalogue that dissects Van Kessel’s Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World* motif by motif, comparing painted specimens to real animals or “eyewitness” accounts and noting the painter’s “zoological errors.” See Teixeira, *The ‘Allegory of the Continents’ by Jan van Kessel ‘the Elder’*.

<sup>36</sup> K. Bhatnagar, “Jan van Kessel’s Seventeenth-Century Painting ‘America’ Depicts Bats,” *Bat Research News* 30 (1989) 35.

<sup>37</sup> W.S.S. van Benthem Jutting, “Ornamental Shell Festoons of the Oostkerk at Middelburg,” *Beaufortia* 15 (1968): 15-20.

<sup>38</sup> Marie-Louise Hairs, *Les peintres Flamands de fleurs au XVIIe siècle* (Paris; Elsevier, 1955; reprint, Brussels: Editions d’art, 1985), 288.

subjects that make it so complex.<sup>39</sup> Until now, the modern image of Van Kessel has been mainly predicated on these isolated studies of a single area of his oeuvre and individual entries in exhibition catalogues, the latter of which typically discuss his works under the limiting and misleading rubric of still life.<sup>40</sup> Such narrow accounts can hardly do justice to curious compositions such as the work pictured in the Royal Collection gallery painting or Van Kessel's witty, animated insect signature (fig. 1.5).

Van Kessel's most frequently discussed work, the Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World*, has been employed by scholars in a variety of disciplines in order to illustrate topics ranging from collections in early modern Italy to seventeenth-century Dutch cartography.<sup>41</sup> Recent articles on these paintings by Karl Schütz and Andreas Gormans have provided thoughtful interpretations that illuminate their material and conceptual complexity.<sup>42</sup> However, treating this series in isolation from the rest of Van Kessel's oeuvre is not only deceiving but also limiting, since it is essentially a conglomerate of the many individual pictures by Van Kessel that preceded it. It is for this reason that I have situated my analysis of *The Four Parts of the World*, in the final two

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Hairs, *Les peintres Flamands de fleurs*, and Sabine Craft-Giepmans, "Vissen op het droge: visstilleven aan de waterkant door Jan van Kessel I," in *Standplaats RKD/Standplaats Academie* (Delft: Museum Het Prinsenhof, 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Van Kessel's paintings are featured in multiple exhibition catalogues on still-life painting, including: Ingvar Bergström, *Still Lifes of the Golden Age: Northern European Paintings from the Heinz Family Collection*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989), Wilfried Seipel et. al., *Das Flämische Stilleben 1550-1680* (Luca: Lingen, 2002), and Jochen Sander, *Die Magie der Dinge: Stillebenmalerei 1500-1800* (Frankfurt: Städel Museum, 2008).

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 44-46, and Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, 163-165.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Schütz, "Europa und die vier Erdteile bei Jan van Kessel," in *Europa im 17. Jahrhundert : ein politischer Mythos und seine Bilder*, ed. Klaus Bussmann (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 289-302; Andreas Gormans, "Ein Eurozentrischer Blick auf die Welt, die Lust an der Malerei und die Macht der Erinnerung: Die Erdteilbilder Jan Van Kessels in der Alten Pinakothek, Munich," in *Das Bild Als Autorität. Die Normierende Kraft des Bildes*, ed. F. Büttner and G. Wimböck (Münster: Lit, 2004), 363-400.



chapters, within a broader discussion and more comprehensive interrogation of Van Kessel's art. A better understanding of this cycle is crucial to assessing the larger production of Van Kessel and the perceived value of his work in the early modern period.

It is important to note here that a major challenge in defining the scope of Van Kessel's extant oeuvre is the existence of numerous signed copies of his works, often by inferior hands, as well as the fact that he shared his name with at least two other artists from the same time period and city who painted similar subjects.<sup>43</sup> One of these was his son, Jan the Younger, who specialized in portraiture, but who was also praised for his pictures of fruit and flowers. A second painter from Antwerp, also named Jan van Kessel, was admitted to the Guild of St. Luke in the same year as the artist we now know as Jan van Kessel the Elder (the subject of this dissertation).<sup>44</sup> Until Fred Meijer's recent discovery of this artist, whom he refers to as the "other Van Kessel," a considerable number of indoor and outdoor still lifes, most of which feature fruit or game, were misattributed to Jan van Kessel the Elder.<sup>45</sup> The "other Van Kessel" was probably born in Antwerp around 1620 and was apprenticed to Simon de Vos in 1634-35.<sup>46</sup> Meijer has determined that shortly after achieving the rank of master in the Antwerp guild, this Van Kessel moved to Amsterdam, where the still-life painter Jan Baptist Walvis and Gerrit

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<sup>43</sup> There is also the Dutch landscape painter, Jan van Kessel (1641-1680), whose compositions recall the work of Jacob van Ruisdael and who is the subject of the following monograph: Alice I. Davies, *Jan van Kessel 1641-1680* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> In this dissertation, Jan van Kessel refers to Jan van Kessel the Elder, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>45</sup> Fred G. Meijer and Adriaan van der Willigen, *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters Working in Oils, 1525-1725* (Leiden: Primavera Press in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD), 2003), 122.

<sup>46</sup> P. Rombouts and T. van Lerijs, *De Liggeren en andere historische archieven der Antwerpsche Sint Lucasgilde*, vol. 2 (Antwerp, 1872; reprint, Amsterdam, Israël, 1961), 65.

Cornelisz. were recorded as his assistants in 1649.<sup>47</sup> His dated works fall between the years 1650 and 1661. As Meijer notes, it is not very difficult to distinguish the work of the “other Van Kessel” from the paintings of Jan van Kessel the Elder due to marked differences in style, coloring, brushwork, and signature.<sup>48</sup> Even though much of the confusion about the identity of these three Jan van Kessels has been cleared up in recent years, sorting out their respective oeuvres remains a daunting task and a catalogue raisonné of Jan van Kessel the Elder’s oeuvre has not yet been realized.<sup>49</sup>

### Summary of Chapters

The progression of chapters in this dissertation is significant in that it parallels to some extent the development of Van Kessel’s own artistic process. As alluded to in my discussion of *The Four Parts of the World*, many of the combinatory pictures created at the apex of Van Kessel’s career were formed from an aggregate of motifs that had previously served as the primary subjects of discrete, smaller works. For instance, elements of the floral still lifes and garlands that characterize his earliest production carry over into his insect paintings and innovative ‘frame pictures’ (an example of which is the *Allegory of Europe* discussed previously), which in turn serve as the main components of larger, aggregate works such as *The Four Parts of the World*.

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<sup>47</sup> Meijer and Van der Willigen, *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters*, 122.

<sup>48</sup> In general, his fruit and game still lifes are much more loosely painted, lacking the precision and attention to detail found in works by Jan van Kessel the Elder. Moreover, the “other Van Kessel” consistently signed his works *J.v. kesseL*, with a small loop on the “k,” in place of Van Kessel the Elder’s upper slash. Meijer and Van der Willigen, *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters*, 122.

<sup>49</sup> A catalogue raisonné of Van Kessel’s oeuvre was apparently attempted by Klaus Ertz, who, in 2007 released an order form detailing a two-volume work to be published in German. As far as I am aware, this project is no longer active.

As the trajectory of chapters in this study suggests, Van Kessel's production does not have a strictly linear development, but a tendency to cycle back to earlier motifs and themes. His additive process required him to constantly revisit and revise earlier subjects, so that not only his compositions, but also their constituent parts, grow increasingly more complex. Works like Van Kessel's *Allegory of Europe* and *Four Parts of the World* represent a marked increase in the complexity of his compositions over the course of the late 1650s and 1660s that was due in large part to their ever more combinatory construction. A similar progression is evident on other levels of his production. Within individual pictures and among their smallest common denominators, that is to say the discrete units (individual flowers, bugs, etc.) of which they are comprised, there are increasingly complicated pictorial skills and combinations of motifs in evidence. Van Kessel's pattern of production reiterates something fundamental about the art itself, which is that painting is not ultimately about copying from nature, but rather about creating nature artificially.

Each of the following four chapters situates Van Kessel within a particular context where art and natural history intersected in late seventeenth-century Antwerp. Taken together, these investigations reveal how his production responded to a unique convergence of circumstances in that city which included the emergence of a popular, commercial strand of natural history, a thriving culture of art collecting and connoisseurship focused on local artists, and the cross-fertilization of media and materials brought about by a burgeoning luxury industry.

Chapter Two looks at how Antwerp's artistic environment and art-historical legacy informed how Van Kessel refashioned nature in his pictures. In particular, it

examines how factors such as the pervasiveness of collaborative artistry, the proliferation of Brueghelian subjects and aesthetics, and the rise of the *liefhebber* as a new category of collector-connoisseur profoundly shaped the production and consumption of Van Kessel's flower paintings. The category of flower painting characterized his early training and output, and established the foundation for his subsequent oeuvre. Van Kessel's floral bouquets and garlands provide a touchstone for discussing the kinds and degrees of artifice, as well as the technical virtuosity, that come into play in his remaking of nature. Furthermore, they put into relief the ways in which early modern artists competed with nature's artistry, as articulated by contemporary textual and pictorial sources.

Chapter Three builds on this discussion of the interface between natural and human artistry by exploring Van Kessel's insect pictures, one of the cornerstones of his vast oeuvre. Like flowers, and perhaps even more so, insects were considered exemplary works of nature's art that had the potential to be refashioned in and by human art. This chapter interrogates questions about the methods and materials employed in, as well as the motivations for, Van Kessel's insect works and also examines how these pictures exemplify the early modern culture and aesthetics of curiosity. Drawing upon recent scholarship on the multivalent meaning and deployment of curiosity in the seventeenth century, as well as entomological images by artists, including Joris Hoefnagel and Otto Marseus van Schrieck, and naturalists, such as Jan Swammerdam and Robert Hooke, I locate areas of shared pictorial praxis. In doing so, I also propose ways in which the form, materials, and function of works produced by these practitioners embodied and provoked curiosity in early modern beholders.

The centerpiece of Chapter Four is Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World*, discussed earlier. The extensive copying and repetition of pictorial sources featured in this cycle are reconsidered in the context of the early modern collection. My suggestion that "the collection" provides a metaphor for this combinatory type of picture, which characterized Van Kessel's production, corresponds to seventeenth-century discussions about *pastiche* and recuperates its positive connotation. The notion of a picture *as* a collection, as opposed to simply a representation of one, is discussed in regard to the process of making aggregate paintings, as well as their appeal to contemporary connoisseurs.

Finally, Chapter Five focuses on how crossovers between local artisanal practices, luxury industries, and art production profoundly affected the content and materials of Van Kessel's paintings. Concentrating specifically on the unusual framing and compartmentalized organization in Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World* and composite insect works, as well as his emulation of tapestry borders in *The House of Moncada* series, I re-evaluate this type of composite painting and interrogate his pictorial recasting of the format, stylistic elements, and materials of a wide range of luxury objects, including ebony cabinets, tapestries, and illuminated and limned miniatures. In doing so, I examine how Van Kessel's engagement with diverse material practices, such as the production of *kunstkasten*, precious metal- and stonework, and the creation of sumptuous textiles, motivated his invention of novel and innovative pictorial types that redefined the status and value of the small-format cabinet painting.

I would like to acknowledge here that the vastness of Van Kessel's oeuvre prevents me from discussing all, or even the majority, of his works in this dissertation. In

light of this, I have carefully selected a number of paintings which serve as touchstones for addressing the issues discussed above and are exemplary of significant patterns and sub-genres within his oeuvre. In addition, based on the enormous database of works by, attributed to, or following Van Kessel which I created during the course of my research, I have compiled a detailed catalogue of nearly 300 works and included it as an appendix. While this is by no means a comprehensive checklist, and was necessarily curtailed by my access to artworks and quality reproductions, as well as the aforementioned problems of connoisseurship, it highlights Van Kessel's full range of pictorial subjects and especially focuses on the visual specificity of his large output and the consistently high quality of his work. It is my hope that this provisional catalogue can serve others as both a useful research tool and as a basis for further exploration of Van Kessel's curious art.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FASHIONING FLOWERS AND FAME IN ANTWERP

The engraved portrait of Van Kessel that accompanies Cornelis de Bie's encomium to the artist in *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-62) offers the perfect pictorial complement to the text (fig. 1.10).<sup>50</sup> Designed by one of Van Kessel's chief collaborators, Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, it illustrates several key aspects of Van Kessel's art that are addressed in De Bie's manuscript, particularly his ability to refashion nature's art (flowers, in this case) through the artifice of his painting. Flower painting, the subject in which Van Kessel trained and specialized early in his career, is the focus of both his portrait and De Bie's narrative. In the former, Van Kessel is portrayed holding a single rose in his right hand and standing in front of a window, through which can be seen a rosebush in full bloom. The three-quarter length and slightly turned profile view recall similarly posed portraits and self-portraits of early modern artists holding the tools of their craft (figs. 2.1-2.2). Yet, instead of holding a paintbrush, pen, or maulstick, Van Kessel is pictured with a rosebud in his hand, and rather than standing in front of an easel displaying his fine workmanship, he appears before a flowering bush.

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<sup>50</sup> De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 411. This portrait of Van Kessel, including the accompanying caption, first appeared in Jan Meyssen's *Images de divers hommes d'esprit sublime*, published in Antwerp in 1649. De Bie's publication of 1661-62, which expands and elaborates upon Meyssen's manuscript, includes several engraved portraits designed by Erasmus Quellinus, who worked closely with Van Kessel throughout his artistic career.

The substitution of a blooming flower for a brush, and the presence of a rose bush where one might instead expect to see a painting of a bouquet set upon an easel, offer a visual commentary on the relationship between nature's and human artistry. By picturing the artist's tools as interchangeable with the natural subjects that they portray, Van Kessel's portrait suggests that painting is not about copying nature, but rather creating it artificially. By this same token, the emphasis on the single rosebud, in contrast to the full rosebush in the background, underscores a vital point about the artificial and additive manner in which flower paintings were made. In painting, as in real life, bouquets are constructed bloom by bloom to create artificial yet pleasing collections of flowers. This combinatory process is not only evident in Van Kessel's flower paintings, but is fundamental to his entire artistic production. Finally, by portraying Van Kessel's command of nature (in the form of flowers), this image brings to the forefront the paradigm of human artistry competing with, and ultimately surpassing, that of nature.

De Bie's encomium, which was published just as Van Kessel's artistic career was approaching its apex, parallels the progression of Van Kessel's production by first articulating the character of his flower paintings and then building towards his pictures of "Monstrous creatures and diverse strange things."<sup>51</sup> Both De Bie's text and the engraved portrait that it faces put into relief the fundamental role that flower painting played in Van Kessel's artistic progression. When Van Kessel registered with the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke in 1644-45, he was identified as a "*blomschilder*" (flower painter).<sup>52</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>51</sup> De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 410.

<sup>52</sup> Rombouts and Van Lierus, *De Liggeren*, vol. 2, 162. As noted in Chapter One, Fred Meijer pointed out the distinction between the two painters named Jan van Kessel who were admitted to the Guild of St. Luke in the same fiscal year. Jan van Kessel the Elder is clearly the painter who is listed as a "*blomschilder*" and the son of a master (this refers to his father, Hieronymus). The "other Van Kessel," by contrast, paid the full guild admittance fee and appears to be the same artist who was apprenticed to Simon de Vos in 1634-



it was probably due to Van Kessel's aptitude for this subject that the house he purchased across from the Sint Joriskerkhof in 1655, shortly after his marriage to Maria van Apshoven, was named *De Witte en de Roode Roos* (The White and the Red Rose).<sup>53</sup>

Taking Van Kessel's floral bouquets and garlands as its main point of departure, this chapter articulates the varieties and degrees of artifice displayed in these pictures and examines how their production and patronage were informed by local circumstances. The focus in seventeenth-century Antwerp on artistic collaboration, connoisseurship, and the dissemination of Brueghelian aesthetics and motifs had a significant impact on Van Kessel's approach to flower painting and prompted him to ambitiously recast this subject in innovative ways. Furthermore, as we shall see later in this study, the pictorial strategies and knowledge which Van Kessel developed in his early flower pieces carried over into his subsequent paintings of insects, diverse larger creatures, and combinatory allegorical series.

### **The Art of Flowers in the Seventeenth Century**

Van Kessel's painted flowers figure prominently in De Bie's deceptively simple, yet revealing, homage to the artist. The way in which De Bie characterizes flower painting in his text helps to illuminate the status of this pictorial category in the seventeenth century. Most important in this regard is De Bie's assertion that Van Kessel's

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1635. Meijer's conclusion explains away the problem of how an 8-year old Van Kessel could have been apprenticed to De Vos. The "other Van Kessel" was, perhaps mistakenly as Meijer suggests, the only artist of the two to be recorded in the guild's income sheets, where he is identified as a pupil of De Vos. Meijer and Van der Willigen, *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters*, 122.

<sup>53</sup> Van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, 1101.

exceptional artistry is grounded in and authorized by the artistry that is already inherent in nature, such as its variety, vibrancy, and abundance:

That the eyes can take their power no further  
Than that which they behold in this work with pleasure.  
Where Art and mind prevail  
And demonstrate the power of Kessel's great intellect

The luminosity of his paint can reveal  
What knowledge resides in this Master  
So that someone need only cast his gaze upon his pictures  
Wherein the flowers painted by him,

Pictures that are so able to express life and Nature  
(unless Art deceives) that one should want to pluck them,  
So witty, sweet and tender stands each flower by the others  
Colorfully rendered and bearing van Kessel's fame.

The delightful abundance that is to be found therein  
Has given me so much material and reason to discover,  
That I confess I am unable to describe the artfulness  
of the Brush, which fame enough has spread.  
Exceeding all the arts that ever came forth from Pictura  
The quickness in miniature that our Van Kessel knows how to achieve  
would put life itself to shame  
So precious as anyone has ever done in artful paintings.<sup>54</sup>

Reiterating the portrait of Van Kessel that faces his text, De Bie stresses the painter's ability to refashion flowers, exemplars of nature's artistry, in his own art by making them appear even more vivid and life-like than the real thing. The powerful illusion of Van Kessel's painted blooms is underscored by De Bie's employment of multiple senses to

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<sup>54</sup> "Dat d'ooghen verder niet haer crachten connen draghen/ Als t'gen sy in dit werck aenschouwen met behagen./ Waer van de Konst en gheest behouden d'overhandt/ En wijsen uyt de kracht van Kessels groot verstandt/ Den weerschijn van sijn verf can opentlijck bethoonen/ Wat wetenschappen dat in desen Meester wonen/ Soo jemandt het ghesicht maer op sijn belden staet/ Waer in den blommen aert van hem gheschildert staet./ Die t'leven en Natuer soo weten uyt te drucken/ (Ten waer dat Const bedrieght) men sou hun willen plucken./ Soo gheestich, soet en mals staet elcke bloem by bloem/ Coleurich uyt ghevoert en draeght van Kessels roem./ Het costlijck ghenoech dat daer in wordt ghevonden/ Heeft aen my soo veel stof en reden toe ghefonden./ Dat ick my niet bequaem en ken, om d'edelheyte/ Te schrijven van t'Pinseel, die Faem ghenoch verbreyt./ Kipt alle Konsten uyt die van Pictuer oyt quamen/ De snelheyte in het cleyn sou t'leven schier beschamen/ Die ons van Kessel weet te brenghen voor den dach/ Soo eel als jemandt oyt in Konst-schildrijen fach." De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 409-410.

describe them. In noting that these flowers appear so life-like that “one shall want to pluck them,” De Bie alludes to their softness, diverse colors, preciousness, and sweet fragrance.

Furthermore, by stating that “the art and mind prevail” in Van Kessel’s paintings, De Bie suggests that his pictured flowers are not merely copies of ones found in nature, but rather represent something distinct from and even more compelling than natural specimens due to the addition of artistic imagination. Focusing on Van Kessel’s pictorial skills, mind, and intellect, De Bie draws attention to several ways in which he achieved juxtapositions and effects that nature could not. Van Kessel’s miniature aesthetic, favored use of smooth and lustrous copper supports, and finely-wrought virtuoso brushwork were undoubtedly vital to achieving the kinds of pictorial effects described by and marveled at by De Bie. Painting on luminous copper plates allowed Van Kessel to create flowers with brilliant, jewel-like tones. The smoothness of the metal surface enabled him to portray the tenderness and velvety texture of each petal, while also making possible the depiction of minute details and effects such as translucency. Van Kessel’s ability to paint quickly on such a small scale and create the illusion of vivid life-likeness with pigments on a two-dimensional surface represent ways in which the art of painting, and especially the medium of oil painting, compete with and surpass nature’s artistry. It is one thing to create abundant, varied, and colorful flowers, but even more of an achievement to create, through art, an illusion of them that is so powerful that one could potentially mistake it for the real thing.

De Bie points out that it was Van Kessel’s flower paintings that initially established his fame. Decades later, Jacob Campo Weyerman also associated Van

Kessel's fame, both locally and abroad, with his pictures of flowers in particular.

Weyerman begins his account of Van Kessel by noting that “He has painted many works for the King of Spain, for the Governors of the Spanish Netherlands, and for other great Personages, and prosperous Merchants.”<sup>55</sup> This is followed by a lengthy description of “three *kapitaale* (great) pictures” by Van Kessel belonging to an English nobleman, the General of Carlile.<sup>56</sup> According to Weyerman, these monumental paintings rivaled one of the greatest flower painters of Van Kessel's time, Jan Davidsz. de Heem:

The three Pictures, measuring approximately six feet in length and five in height, were painted with Marias Milkthistles, with Poppies and Flowers, three-colored Amaranthus, common Thistles, and with many sorts of wild herbs, and plants sown by Nature, adorned with Butterflies, Caterpillars, Grasshoppers, Spiders and many other creeping little Animals, all so delightfully and so exceptionally painted, that the Pictures by *Jan David de Heem* would not have stood much of a chance, if one had come to compare the precision of these extraordinarily beautiful Pictures.<sup>57</sup>

Flower bouquets as well as floral garlands encircling a central religious scene, secular portrait or vignette comprised the overwhelming majority of Van Kessel's oeuvre until the mid-1650s, when he turned to insects, animals, and other subjects (figs. 2.3, 2.4). As noted by Weyerman, Van Kessel's painted bouquets were collected in abundance by elite and noble patrons both locally in Antwerp and abroad. These bouquets were closely related to Van Kessel's paintings of flower garlands, which in turn stimulated his

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<sup>55</sup> “Hy heeft veele stukken geschildert voor den Koning van Spanje, voor de Gouverneurs der Spaansche Nederlanden, en voor andere groote Persoonaaigien, en vermoogende Koopluyden.” Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 209.

<sup>56</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 209.

<sup>57</sup> “Die drie Konststukken, beslaande ontrent ses voeten in de lengte en vyf in de hoogte, waaren beschildert met Marias Melkdistels, met Heulbladen en Bloemen, drie koleurige Amaranthus, gemeene Distels, en met veelerley soorten van wilde Kruyden, en door de Natuur gezaayde Gewassen, gestoffeert met Vlindertjes, Ruspen, Sprinkhaanen, Spinnkoppen, en meer andere kruypende Diertjes, alles zo heerlijk en zo uytvoeriglijk geschildert, dat er de Konsttafereelen van Jan David de Heem niet veel voordeel op zouden hebben bevochten, by aldien men die naauwkeuriglijk by die overschoone Schilderyen had komen te vergelijken.” Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 209.

invention of an innovative pictorial type. Van Kessel can be credited with transforming the Antwerp “Madonna in a Garland” genre—which originated as floral wreaths surrounding Marian imagery—into garlands and illusionistic frames that featured not just flowers, but the entire range of his signature motifs, from strange creatures and exotica to weapons, armor and scientific and musical instruments (fig. 1.11).

Van Kessel’s early training as a flower painter, before moving on to animals and other subjects, reflects the career trajectory followed by many of his predecessors and contemporaries in Antwerp. Joris Hoefnagel, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Jacques de Gheyn, and Roelandt Savery all tried their hand at flower painting early in their careers, as did Van Kessel’s Dutch counterpart, Otto Marseus van Schrieck, with whom many comparisons can be made. Although it became a profitable specialization for many of these artists, flower painting also offered an opportunity to experiment with various pictorial effects, such as spatial illusions and the use of color.<sup>58</sup> Apparently for De Gheyn, floral subjects served as a medium for perfecting his use of pigments and honing his ability to describe the variety and order found in nature.<sup>59</sup>

Flower painting is justified as a valuable and productive pictorial category for painters in Karel van Mander’s chapter, “On the Distribution and Interaction of Colors,” in his *Den Grondt der edel vry schilder-const* (Foundations of the Noble Free Art of Painting).<sup>60</sup> Van Mander’s assertion that the flowers found in nature provide the ideal example for aspiring painters to learn how to properly distribute pigments probably served as the impetus for De Gheyn’s creation of preparatory pigment charts for his own

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<sup>58</sup> Paul Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Van Mander, *Het schilder-boeck*, fols. 294 r-v; Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 91.

<sup>60</sup> Van Mander, *Het schilder-boeck*, fol. 45v.

painted bouquets. Additionally, Van Mander recounts Pliny the Elder's tale of Glycera and Pausias, the latter of whom is considered the first flower painter, in order to explicate the process of making "art that imitates nature's art."<sup>61</sup>

Pliny's legend describes how the ancient painter Pausias fell in love with Glycera, the inventor of the floral wreath, and painted a famous picture of her at her craft known as the *Stephanoplocos*. Walter Melion has suggested that Van Mander recast Pliny's love story as a paradigm of the competition between natural and human artistry by showing how its principal characters seek to imitate *natuerlijk malen* (natural painting).<sup>62</sup> Both Glycera's fashioning of multiple, diverse blooms into wreaths and Pausias's subsequent portrayal of her weaving these floral wreaths emulate nature's capacity for assembling an abundance of distinct, yet complementary colors. According to Van Mander, both artists surpass nature's artifice in their own creations. Glycera's wreaths, which were noteworthy for their display of unprecedented color combinations, far exceed the variety and distribution of color in nature's flower fields. Yet, Pausias ultimately surpasses Glycera's and nature's artistry by painting the flowers that are refashioned in Glycera's wreaths as well as the very act of her transforming them through her art.<sup>63</sup> Van Mander's retelling of this tale is significant to the status of seventeenth-century flower painting because it underscores the value that artifice adds to both human and natural creations. Glycera's woven wreaths and Pausias's painted flowers can be seen as models of art's capacity to create things that nature cannot.

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<sup>61</sup> Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 90; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham, vol. 9, book 35 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), 353.

<sup>62</sup> Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 89-90.

<sup>63</sup> Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 90.

Van Mander's resurrection of Pliny's story is reflected in paintings by contemporary Netherlandish artists, including Rubens and Rembrandt.<sup>64</sup> A collaborative painting from around 1615 by Rubens and the Antwerp still-life specialist, Osais Beert, showcases the multiple kinds of artistry that Van Mander articulates in his text (fig. 2.5). First there is nature's artistry, represented by the superabundance of flowers pictured in the vase and basket at Glycera's side, as well as strewn across the foreground of the composition. These blooms display the dispersion of diverse yet harmonizing colors that Van Mander describes as being inherent to nature's flower fields. Then there is the artistry of Glycera, depicted in the floral wreath which she clutches in her hands. The wreath, with its tightly interlaced blooms, contains an even greater and more varied dispersion of color than the bouquets displayed around it and does so on a much smaller scale, drawing attention to Glycera's artifice. Next, there is the artistry of Pausias, the first flower painter, who seems to be directing Glycera's gaze to the image which he holds with his right hand. The content of this image is not clear, but it could be a painted bouquet, or perhaps even the legendary *Stephanoplocos*, in which case it represents the painter's ability to depict in his art both nature (flowers) and nature refashioned through artifice (floral wreaths). Finally, the collaborative artistry of the painting's authors is on display and adds yet another layer of artifice to this work. While Pausias's painting suggests a competition between him and Glycera, Rubens and Beert cooperatively create

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<sup>64</sup> In addition to more literal representations of Pliny's story, Stephanie Dickey has suggested convincingly that Rembrandt's 1641 Dresden portrait of his wife Saskia, conventionally interpreted as an allusion to the classical nymph Flora, is actually a representation of the couple's status as a kind of modern-day Pausias and Glycera. Dickey presented this theory in her unpublished lecture, "Rembrandt and Saskia as Pausias and Glycera: Artistic Identity and the Female Gaze," at the 2008 Renaissance Society of America conference in Chicago. She builds on this argument in a more recent article, "Saskia as Glycera: Rembrandt's Emulation of an Antique Prototype," in *Aemulatio. Imitation, Emulation and Invention in Netherlandish Art from 1500 to 1800. Essays in Honor of Eric Jan Sluijter*, ed. Anton Boschloo, Jacquelyn Coutré, Stephanie Dickey and Nicolette Sluijter-Seijffert, 233-247 (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011).

an even grander display of artifice, and perhaps allude to the contemporary development of the collaborative Madonna in a Flower Garland genre in Antwerp.

The compelling artifice of painted flowers that is central to the story of Pausias and Glycera and was reiterated by Van Mander and De Bie resonates with Cardinal Federico Borromeo's description of the flower paintings which he commissioned from Jan Brueghel the Elder in the early decades of the seventeenth century. The Milanese cardinal viewed Brueghel's floral still lifes and garlands as embodiments of the Christian optimism that was fundamental to the didactic and devotional aims of the Counter-Reformation. Just as De Bie comments on the deceptively life-like quality of Van Kessel's painted blooms, Borromeo stresses the capacity of Brueghel's bouquets to evoke the sensory experience of flowers in nature, from their smell and soft touch, to their varied and vibrant colors. Borromeo also points out the advantage of human over natural artifice, noting that fictive blooms are superior in their ability to endure and maintain their variety despite the ephemerality of nature and the changing seasons:

...[when I am in my study and] it is hot, flowers are pleasing to me, and some fruit on tables. And I have enjoyed most of all having the fruits of spring, and the flowers of it, and still in the summer—according to the diversities of the weather—[I have enjoyed] having various vases in the room, and varying those according to opportunity, and according to my pleasure. Then when winter encumbers and restricts everything with ice, I have enjoyed from sight—and even imagined odor, if not real—fake flowers...expressed in painting...and in these flowers I have wanted to see the variety of colors, not fleeting, as some of the flowers that are found [in nature], but stable and very enduring.<sup>65</sup>

Borromeo acknowledges painting's privileged ability to manipulate nature and produce circumstances and visual effects that can only be created in art. This aspect of painting is

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<sup>65</sup> Federico Borromeo, *Pro suis studiis*, (Milan: Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS G310inf., no. 8, 1628) fols. 254v-255r. Translated in Pamela M. Jones, "Federico Borromeo as a Patron of Landscapes and Still Lifes: Christian Optimism in Italy ca. 1600," *The Art Bulletin* 70, no. 2 (June 1988): 269.



central to the tale of Pausias and Glycera, and was ostensibly realized by later flower painters such as Brueghel and Van Kessel.

### **Picturing Nature *Naer het leven***

Central to Van Mander's characterization of flower painting as a medium through which painters could perfect their emulation of *natuerlijk malen* are the concepts of *naer het leven* (to or from the life) and *uyt den gheest* (from the mind or memory).<sup>66</sup> In his account of the life and career of Jacques de Gheyn, Van Mander asserts that De Gheyn's experimentation with flower painting was vital to his realization of the vital importance of working both *naer het leven* and *uyt den gheest*.<sup>67</sup> Van Mander's characterization of these concepts as two sides of the same coin, rather than working in opposition to one another, underscores an important distinction between seventeenth-century and modern definitions of *naer het leven*.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> In the Oxford English Dictionary, 'from (or after) the life' is defined as "drawn, painted, etc. from the living model, rather than copied or imagined," while 'to the life' is defined as "with lifelike representation of or resemblance to the original (said esp. of a drawing or painting)." The Dutch vernacular, *naer het leven*, is translated literally as 'to the life,' which corresponds with how this term was employed in seventeenth-century Netherlandish writing and artistic practice. "life." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Third Edition, September 2009. *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. December 16, 2011. <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>> This distinction was noted previously in Claudia Swan, "Ad vivum, naer het leven, from the life: Considerations on a Mode of Representation." *Word & Image* 11 (1995): 354, note 8.

<sup>67</sup> Karel van Mander, *Het schilder-boeck* (Haarlem, 1604; reprint Utrecht: Davaco, 1969), fols. 294 r-v.

<sup>68</sup> Alpers and Melion have interpreted the phrase in Van Mander's sense, as referring to both a practice and a quality of pictures that appear vividly present: Alpers, *Art of Describing*, 40-41; Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, especially pp. 63-66. For further discussion of the seventeenth-century use of *naer het leven* (and its relationship to *uyt den gheest*) in writing and in practice, see Swan, "Ad vivum, naer het leven." Additionally, in her forthcoming doctoral dissertation on the drawings of Abraham Bloemaert, Caroline Fowler (Princeton University, 2012) provides insightful analysis of both of these terms and their application to seventeenth-century art theory and drawing practice.

Modern scholars tend to translate the Dutch vernacular *naer het leven* as ‘from the life’ or ‘after the life,’ meaning drawn or painted from a model (usually living), as opposed to copied or invented.<sup>69</sup> Although this view rightly acknowledges that images made *naer het leven* bear witness to what they represent, it misleadingly stresses the object of representation over pictorial practice. If a picture is categorized as having been made *naer het leven*, it is usually assumed that it must therefore represent a narrow range of pictorial subjects that includes aspects of the natural world, natural specimens, and human models. The thinking goes that because subjects such as flowers, birds, and insects exist in the real world, they can be represented mimetically and thus are distinguished from fantastic subjects like witches and monsters, which originate in the artist’s imagination and are pictured *uyt den gheest*.<sup>70</sup>

This modern interpretation of *naer het leven* becomes problematic when we turn to seventeenth-century writings and pictorial practice, in which the *naer het leven* implies that once observed and recorded, the pictorial record and observation are interchangeable. As Walter Melion has pointed out, the seventeenth-century use of *naer het leven* was not dictated by the object of imitation, but rather referred to the cognitive process involved in the act of representation, namely the fact that seeing and picturing occurred simultaneously and within the same physical space.<sup>71</sup> Not only aspects of nature, but also,

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<sup>69</sup> This definition is articulated or implied in the work of Peter Parshall and Claudia Swan, among others. See Parshall, “Imago Contrafacta: Images and Facts in the Northern Renaissance.” *Art History* 16 (1993): 554-579; Swan, “Ad vivum, *naer het leven*,” Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Holland: Jacques de Gheyn II (1565-1629)* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), especially the Introduction.

<sup>70</sup> This is illustrated by the sharp division made by Claudia Swan between De Gheyn’s images of nature (which she classifies as having been made *naer het leven*) and his images of witches and other preternatural beings (for her, examples of *uyt den gheest*). See Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft*.

<sup>71</sup> Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 63-65.

and often, works of art were imitated *naer het leven*. Drawings could be made after statues and after other drawings, paintings could be produced after engravings and vice versa, sculptures could be created after drawings, and so forth. In each case, the pictorial (or sculptural) record acquired the status of an eyewitness account, so that any image or artwork made after it was described as being drawn, painted, or sculpted *naer het leven*.

When we compare the seventeenth-century practice of working *naer het leven* to the definition of ‘to the life’ (the literal translation of the Dutch vernacular), meaning made after a work of art in a lifelike manner, it becomes clear how a flower painting made after drawn and painted models of individual blooms can still be described as being done *naer het leven*. Moreover, this definition makes evident how working *naer het leven* complemented, rather than opposed, the process of working *uyt den gheest* in the early modern period. The latter practice invokes not sight, nor exclusively the imagination, but memory, as an internal faculty that recruits stored images formed from prior observation or repeated description of a prototype.<sup>72</sup> Seeing, picturing, and recalling images are all part of the same working process. As implied by Van Mander’s mention of both *naer het leven* and *uyt den gheest* in his account of De Gheyn’s flower paintings, these pictorial modes are equally important to and operate simultaneously in the representation of the natural world.

The pictorial practice of Van Kessel and Jan Brueghel the Younger, with whom he trained, demonstrates in a concrete way how working *naer het leven* was understood

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<sup>72</sup> Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, 63-65. In his life of Adam Elsheimer, Van Mander describes in detail how the painter became “an art-full worker” capable of creating “ingenious inventions” through developing a mental database of images: “...he sits in churches or elsewhere gazing continually at the works of clever masters and impresses everything firmly in his memory.” Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, trans. Hessel Miedema, vol. 1 (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1994), 442.

by seventeenth-century artists. The uncle of Van Kessel, Jan Brueghel the Younger established a career by producing copies of paintings by his father, Jan Brueghel the Elder, also known as “Velvet Brueghel” due to the fluid brushwork, and rich, gem-like colors that typify his paintings. Copying extant compositions was a common method of training young pupils, and Van Kessel became familiar with the repertoire of pictorial themes and motifs of the Brueghels by making copies of his uncle’s works. In a journal entry dated 1646, Jan the Younger wrote that he had sold two copies that Van Kessel had made after one his small flower garland paintings.<sup>73</sup> Reiterating the point made earlier about *naer het leven*’s reference to both live and painted models, several letters written from Jan Brueghel the Younger to his cousin, the art dealer Chrisostomo van Immerseel, describe works that are clearly copies of prior paintings as having been made *naer het leven*.

In 1631, for example, Jan the Younger wrote that he had depicted everything in the world *naer het leven* in a series of the Five Senses, and that he would take this same approach in the copies that were to follow.<sup>74</sup> A year later, he wrote to Immerseel again, this time regarding another copy of the Five Senses made *naer het leven* and intended for a “groot liefhebber” (art enthusiast and connoisseur) in Holland.<sup>75</sup> In both cases, the younger Brueghel deploys the term *naer het leven* to describe copies which he (and presumably his workshop assistants or pupils) had made after paintings that were themselves copies of his father’s compositions. In the case of these copies after copies,

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<sup>73</sup> “Een Copyken, cleyn Cransken met twee Copykens van Jan van Kessel.” Jean Denucé, *Brieven en documenten betreffend Jan Breugel I en II* (Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1934), 157.

<sup>74</sup> “Wat belanct de Vyf sinnen, hebbe die met lust onder handen om alles naert leven te doen, als ooc het subject playsant is om al wat ter werelt is daer in te connen maken.” Denucé, *Brieven en Documenten*, 71.

<sup>75</sup> “...alles met groote pacientie naert leven gedaen hebbe, soo dat de selfde, voor een groot liefhebber in Hollant noch eens moet maken...” Denucé, *Brieven en Documenten*, 80-81.

the resulting artworks were even further removed from an eye-witness account of nature, yet they are still described as having been done *naer het leven*. These accounts of artworks indicate that the seventeenth-century notion of working after life placed observation and the pictorial record on par with one another.

Moreover, Brueghel's repeated use of *naer het leven* in his descriptions of pictures designated for prestigious clients suggests that this term's claim to the artist's firsthand knowledge of the original work of art held great value for collectors and connoisseurs. Van Kessel undoubtedly realized this and capitalized on it, because copying and citing individual elements and entire compositions from prior paintings eventually became a cornerstone of his oeuvre. Copying, citation, and collaboration were all part of an equation in which nature was made richer, more diverse, and more "curious" through crafted manipulation. In his flower paintings, as in his pictures of other natural subjects, nature is not merely transcribed, but is emulated, rivaled, and surpassed through artifice.

Technical examination of Brueghel's flower paintings corroborates the extent to which artifice mediated his representation of nature and offer a glimpse into the origins of Van Kessel's working methods. In a letter dating from 1606, Brueghel informed his patron, Borromeo, "I have been to Brussels in order to depict from nature some flowers that are not found in Antwerp."<sup>76</sup> However, despite this insinuation of an eyewitness account, close examination of his paintings demonstrate that Brueghel's floral bouquets portray flowers made from extant studies as well as from live models, accounting for the fact that meticulously detailed and recognizable flowers are not depicted to size with

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<sup>76</sup> Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art, Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 82.

respect to one another.<sup>77</sup> Underdrawings and *pentimenti* have also been discovered in many of these paintings.<sup>78</sup> It is likely that Brueghel relied on a repertoire of sketches and preliminary studies as well as botanical prints and artificial flowers, composing his pictures in an additive manner as he worked. This would explain the frequent repetition of individual blooms and motifs throughout Brueghel's flower oeuvre.<sup>79</sup> Like many flower still-life painters of his time, Brueghel often depicted bouquets that could not have existed in reality due to inconsistencies in the life cycles of the blooms represented. Painting *en plein air* was the exception rather than the rule in the seventeenth century; thus, despite the modern obsession with the alleged naturalism of Netherlandish flower still lifes, the majority of these pictures were likely created entirely in the artists' studio.<sup>80</sup> Paul Taylor has argued convincingly that these types of paintings were made and valued for their experimentation with very unnatural pictorial effects, such as spatial illusions and unusual uses of color.<sup>81</sup>

Written and visual evidence indicate that Van Kessel also painted flowers *naer het leven*, in the seventeenth-century sense of the term. In addition to producing copies of flower garlands painted by his uncle in the early stages of his career, Van Kessel purportedly continued working from drawn and painted studies of natural specimens even once he was already established as a master. Weyerman reports that Van Kessel made an

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<sup>77</sup> Beatrijs Brenninkmeyer-De Rooij, "Zeldzame bloemen, 'Fatta tutti del naturel' door Jan Brueghel I," *Oud Holland* 104 (1990), 218-248.

<sup>78</sup> Beatrijs Brenninkmeijer-de Rooij, *Roots of 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Flower Painting, Miniatures, Plant Books, Paintings* (Leiden: Primavera Press, 1996), 61.

<sup>79</sup> Brenninkmeijer-de Rooij, *Roots of 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Flower Painting*, 70.

<sup>80</sup> Brenninkmeijer-de Rooij, *Roots of 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Flower Painting*, 70.

<sup>81</sup> Taylor, *Dutch Flower Painting*, 1995.

entire corpus of models that were made after and equivalent to live prototypes. According to Weyerman, both Van Kessel and his son Ferdinand could simply draw upon this repertoire of ready-made counterfeits whenever they wished to depict a particular creature or object:

Continuously he worked from life, and when the Season prevented him from doing so, then he used Models that he himself had drawn, modeled, and for the most part had painted exhaustively. His Son *Ferdinand van Kessel*, who died in Breda, had an entire room covered with these Models, which he also used masterfully, and with such ease, that he only had to think of something, to directly be able to have it, of course copied naturally from life.<sup>82</sup>

Van Kessel's "natural" subjects were therefore not culled exclusively from observation, but rather from a gallery of extant images created by himself and his predecessors. The real artistry in this process was therefore located in both the selection of extant motifs and the ways in which they were carefully recombined and transformed in his paintings through the manipulation of materials (like copper), finely-wrought brushwork, miniaturization, and the addition of meticulous and compelling details.

### **The Ties that Bind: Van Kessel and the Brueghel Dynasty**

The extent to which Van Kessel's art was shaped by his relationship to the Brueghel dynasty was unquestionably great, and any assessment of his career would be incomplete without a discussion of his artistic lineage. Nearly every aspect of Van Kessel's paintings, from their subject matter, scale, and brushwork, to their marketing

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<sup>82</sup> "Doorgaans gebruykte hy het leeven, en als het Saisoen hem dat weygerde, dan bediende hy zich van die Modellen die hy zelfs naar het leeven getêkent, gemodelt, en voor het grootste gedeelte uytvoeriglijk had opgeschildert. Zijn Zoon Ferdinand van Kessel, die overlêden is tot Breda, had een geheel vertrek behangen met die Modellen, van dewelke hy zich ook meesterlijk wist te bedienen, en dat zo maklijk, dat hy maar op iets behoefde te denken, om dat aanstonds te kunnen hebben, natuurlijk gekonterfyt naar het leeven." Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 210.

and consumption, was informed by his exploitation of the Brueghel brand name, situating his art in a genealogy of artists who also vied with nature's artistry. As mentioned in the previous chapter, early in Van Kessel's career, De Bie praised his art as a redux of the art of Velvet Brueghel. The opening lines of the passage dedicated to Van Kessel in *Het gulden cabinet* are a summation of Brueghel's art, describing how its preciousness, flawless brushwork, and miniature figures, fruits, and flowers are equally captivating in the paintings made by his grandson.<sup>83</sup>

Fittingly, it was art that established the connection between Van Kessel and the Brueghel empire. His father, Hieronymus van Kessel, had been a successful painter of animals in his own right. During his twenties, the elder Van Kessel worked abroad extensively, becoming one of the favored painters of Archduke Maximilian of Austria, who, in a letter dated to 1616, recommended him highly to his brother, Archduke Albert, Governor of the Southern Netherlands.<sup>84</sup> Following this, Hieronymus van Kessel became a master in the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke and was employed by Velvet Brueghel as a staffage painter of animals and birds. Brueghel approved of the elder Van Kessel so much that he encouraged him to marry his eldest daughter, Paschasia. The couple had five children, the eldest of whom, Jan, was born on April 5, 1626. Although autographed works by the elder Van Kessel are scarce, it appears that he adopted the very detailed, meticulous manner and brilliant colors similar of his father-in-law.<sup>85</sup> He evidently did not stay in Antwerp long enough to train his talented son, however. After taking on only a

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<sup>83</sup> De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 409.

<sup>84</sup> Van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, 1097.

<sup>85</sup> Van den Branden mentions only two works by Hieronymus van Kessel. The first is a group of colorful birds in a tree painted in a landscape by Velvet Brueghel, and the second, a painting on canvas in Dresden depicting fruit and lobsters with a sliced ham, signed *J. van Kessel f. anno 1634*. Van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, 1098.



handful of pupils over the next decade, Hieronymous van Kessel purportedly paid 12 gulden to Antwerp's Guild of St. Luke in 1636 in order to publicly auction his paintings on the Meir before leaving Antwerp.<sup>86</sup> His whereabouts after this date are not known. Fortunately, his son's development as a painter was left in good hands, given the extraordinary number of talented painters in his family circle. As the grandson of Velvet Brueghel and the nephew of both Jan Brueghel the Younger and David Teniers the Younger, Jan van Kessel was primed to capitalize on his family ties in order to position himself within what was one of the most prominent and enduring artistic dynasties in seventeenth-century Antwerp.

The Bruegel-Brueghel enterprise, established by Pieter Bruegel the Elder in the sixteenth century, was associated with a name and an aesthetic that were valued by both local and foreign collectors, due to the widespread dissemination of Pieter the Elder's and Jan the Elder's compositions and motifs via prints, copies, and the patronage of foreign nobility.<sup>87</sup> The novel products of Velvet Brueghel, a savvy entrepreneur and marketer of a wide range of pictorial types which he integrated into a "modern menu of genres," were transformed into commodities, by his many pupils and followers, which included his son, Jan the Younger, and son-in-law, David Teniers.<sup>88</sup> By the seventeenth century, a significant portion of the Antwerp art market consisted of works that capitalized and expanded on the success of Velvet Brueghel. The propagation of Brueghel compositions and motifs provided a virtual library of images for artists, who, like Van Kessel, recycled

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<sup>86</sup> Van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, 1098.

<sup>87</sup> On copying practices within the Bruegel-Brueghel workshop, see Peter van den Brink, *De Firma Brueghel*. (Ghent: Ludion, 2001).

<sup>88</sup> Leopoldine Prosperetti, *Landscape and Philosophy in the Art of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625)* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 67.

compositions and reused motifs. As heir to an artistic empire, Van Kessel was faced with both the blessing and the curse of selectively borrowing from aspects of his predecessors' work while also attempting to forge his own trademark style.

Like Jan Brueghel the Younger before him, Van Kessel consciously aligned himself with an aesthetic and a brand that would increase the marketability and value of his paintings. De Bie's and Weyerman's remarks about Van Kessel's ability to rival Velvet Brueghel indicate that he benefitted greatly from capitalizing on his predecessor's fame and extending his legacy. Although there is very little evidence about the structure or members of Van Kessel's workshop, it seems clear that two of his 13 children, Ferdinand (1648-1696) and Jan the Younger (1654-1708), trained in their father's studio. Weyerman's account of his experience as Ferdinand's pupil mentions that the son frequently worked from studies and models made by his father, a claim that is substantiated by the extensive overlap of subjects and compositions in their respective oeuvres.<sup>89</sup> In spite of that fact that Ferdinand's relatively awkward brushwork distinguishes his work from that of the elder Van Kessel, his adoption of a similarly miniature aesthetic and tendency to borrow from his father's repertoire of subjects and compositions contributed to furthering the Brueghel legacy and promoting a distinct category of art well into the late seventeenth century.

Van Kessel went about capitalizing on this artistic tradition differently than his uncle, Jan Brueghel the Younger, who established a niche in the market by almost exclusively producing copies of well-known compositions by his father. Van Kessel, by contrast, departed from this practice as his artistic career matured. His works which

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<sup>89</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 210. On the career of Ferdinand, see Van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, 1102-1104. On Jan the Younger's career, see 1104-1105, and Meijer and Van der Willigen, *Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters*, 124.

imitate closely compositions by Jan Brueghel the Elder, such as an allegory of *Air* dated to around 1660, tend to have been painted at the beginning of his career, suggesting that Van Kessel either wanted, or perhaps needed, to contribute something new to his predecessor's subject matter in order to distinguish himself (fig. 2.6).<sup>90</sup>

By the third quarter of the seventeenth century, when Van Kessel was active as an artist, the market was already saturated with small copper paintings depicting the allegorical series and paradise landscapes associated with the Brueghel enterprise. Subjects such as the Four Elements were immensely popular, as alluded to by the art dealer Guillaume Forchondt, who commented in 1667 that, "We could sell more paintings if only we had more of the *Four Elements*...."<sup>91</sup> Even though this theme was treated repeatedly by Van Kessel in the 1650s and early 1660s, his works increasingly exhibit innovative content and format, leading to the development of novel pictorial types that are distinct from anything produced by his forerunners.

Larry Silver has noted that Jan Brueghel the Elder introduced "product innovation" by turning printed sources into precious virtuoso paintings on copper that were intended for an elite audience and eventually led to the invention and development of new pictorial genres, such as the flower still life.<sup>92</sup> Seemingly in response to this, Van Kessel also exploited subjects that had not yet entered fully into the medium of oil painting or been utilized in independent easel paintings, such as insects, shells, and certain exotic and hybrid creatures.

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<sup>90</sup> The Flint painting clearly derives from Jan Brueghel I's, *Allegory of Air*, 1611, oil on panel, 46 x 83 cm., Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, inv. nr. A 77, of which several copies exist.

<sup>91</sup> Correspondence cited in S. Speth-Holterhoff, *Les Peintres flamands de cabinets d'amateurs au XVIIe siècle* (Brussels: Elsevier, 1957), 46.

<sup>92</sup> Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 205, 216.

In addition to expanding his pictorial repertoire beyond the subject matter found in Velvet Brueghel's paintings, Van Kessel also experimented with novel ways of composing, framing, displaying, and marketing his works on copper, reflecting his artistic ambition and active agency in emulating his grandfather's aesthetic. Producing painted series, either as decoration for the facades of opulent *kunstkasten* (art cabinets made from a wide range of precious materials) or as cohesive groupings displayed in compartmentalized frames, became a staple of Van Kessel's output, particularly after 1660. Additionally, his invention of new pictorial types, such as the garland of signature, Brueghelian-inspired motifs in the *Allegory of Europe*, discussed earlier, enabled him to create a niche that was cognizant of his lineage, but also ambitiously expanded its scope.

### **Inverting Iconographic Order in Flower Garlands, Frames, and Niches**

Van Kessel's painted floral garlands, along with bouquets, comprised the majority of his production in the first half of the 1650s. These works figured prominently in his training at the Brueghel workshop, and served a foundational role in his artistic career. The association of flower painting with the oeuvre of Jan Brueghel the Elder underscored the biological connection between Brueghel and Van Kessel and helped to establish the latter's fame in Antwerp. The collaborative origins of this genre of painting also enabled the young Van Kessel to forge important partnerships with some of Antwerp's leading masters. Additionally, Van Kessel's early flower paintings laid the groundwork for the highly innovative painted garlands and frames that he developed in the next decade.

Van Kessel's earliest known signed and dated painting was, in fact, a flower garland surrounding a *vanitas* scene presumably painted by another artist (fig. 2.4). This and other comparable works from his early production follow closely the precedent set by Daniel Seghers, who in turn, was influenced by Jan Brueghel the Elder, the genre's founder. Brueghel, in collaboration with Rubens and Hendrick van Balen, who painted the figural interiors, began producing what David Freedberg aptly named the "Madonna in a Flower Garland" picture type in 1608.<sup>93</sup> These images, many of which were intended for Brueghel's patron, Cardinal Federico Borromeo, possessed a ritual and spiritual value and initially only contained images of the Madonna and Child, as opposed to other types of interior scenes.<sup>94</sup> However, as the century progressed, a broader variety of religious and also secular subjects were included. Van Kessel's subsequent specialization in this genre is significant for two main reasons. First, it made a strong allusion to his artistic genealogy by pointing back to Brueghel's invention of the genre, and second, its collaborative character prompted him to establish professional partnerships with other Antwerp painters that were revisited throughout his career. Additionally, the trope of the painted flower garland recalls Pliny's story of Pausias and Glycera, adding to its artistic value and underscoring its associations with the theme of refashioning nature through painterly artifice.

Painting cooperatively was a cornerstone of artistic practice in Antwerp beginning in the sixteenth century. Elizabeth Honig, whose scholarship has shed new light on the

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<sup>93</sup> On the development and proliferation of the Madonna in a Garland pictorial type, see David Freedberg, "The Origins and Rise of the Flemish Madonnas in Flower Garlands: Decoration and Devotion." *Münchener Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst* 3 (1981): 115-150. For thoughtful discussion of how such paintings re-cast both devotional imagery and still-life painting, see Susan Merriam, "Icons after Iconoclasm: The Flemish Garland Picture, 1608-170" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2002), and *Seventeenth-Century Flemish Garland Paintings: Still Life and the Devotional Image* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).

<sup>94</sup> See Freedberg, "Flemish Madonnas."

frequency and status of collaboration among Antwerp painters, asserts that by the seventeenth century, collaboration was no longer driven by pragmatism, but instead had become “a definitive mode of artistic activity.”<sup>95</sup> The majority of sixteenth-century collaborative paintings involved two mediocre artists, each of whom relied on the other’s specialized skill set in order to execute a cohesive composition.<sup>96</sup> For example, a landscape painter would join with a figure painter so that the latter could insert staffage. It was not until the early seventeenth century that collaborative works by Antwerp’s top-tier artists, including Rubens and Brueghel, were produced regularly and in great numbers.

Honig’s archival research reveals that the oeuvres of Jan Brueghel and Daniel Seghers contained at least forty percent collaborative paintings.<sup>97</sup> In these high-end collaborations, painters of equivalent or nearly-equivalent rank and skill work together not to fill in the gaps in their partner’s work, but rather to engage in a pictorial “conversation,” to borrow Honig’s term, that stimulated and showcased the creativity of both artists.<sup>98</sup> In the case of Rubens and Brueghel, for example, both artists were more than competent in painting animals, figures, and landscape elements; thus their partnership did not result from a deficiency in one or the other’s abilities, but rather their combined talents permitted them to explore novel hybrid subjects—such as the Madonna

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<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 177.

<sup>96</sup> Elizabeth Honig, “Paradise Regained: Rubens, Jan Brueghel, and the Sociability of Visual Thought,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 56 (2006): 272.

<sup>97</sup> Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 177. Jan Brueghel the Elder’s extensive collaboration with Rubens, in particular, is discussed at length in Anne T. Woollett and Ariane van Suchtelen, *Rubens & Brueghel: A Working Friendship* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006).

<sup>98</sup> See Honig, “Paradise Regained,” especially 279-280.

in a Flower Garland—and sometimes broaden the range of pictorial effects, while simultaneously increasing the price and connoisseurial value of the work.<sup>99</sup> A similar result can be seen in the aforementioned *Allegory of Europe* in a stone niche, painted by Van Kessel and Quellinus, in which the combination of Quellinus's illusionistic sculptural elements and Van Kessel's meticulously-painted miniature objects creates a virtual feast for the eyes (fig. 1.11).

Collaborative compositions were valued from both an economic and aesthetic standpoint, since the presence of multiple hands in a single painting not only increased the work's monetary value, but also its appeal to *liefhebbers*, who took pleasure in the challenge of identifying different artists' hands and appreciated the bargain of purchasing the work of two (or more) masters for the price of one, so to speak. *Liefhebbers* represented a new category of membership in Antwerp's Guild of St. Luke that was established around 1620 and comprised of well-to-do burghers who sought to emulate the collecting practices and connoisseurship of aristocrats.<sup>100</sup> These individuals were especially attuned to the local art scene, and therefore appreciated the emphasis on the Antwerp school of painting that was fostered by collaboration.<sup>101</sup>

Van Kessel avidly pursued a wide variety of collaborative projects throughout his career. His main collaborators on flower garlands, Erasmus Quellinus and David Teniers, were also involved in some of his most successful later works, such as his series of *The*

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<sup>100</sup> Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, 51.

<sup>101</sup> On the social networks and collecting practices of Antwerp *liefhebbers*, see Bert Timmermans, "The Seventeenth-Century Antwerp Elite and Status Honour: The Presentation of Self and the Manipulation of Social Perception," in *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Jan L. De Jong, Toon van Houdt, and Zoran Kwak (Leiden: Brill, 2002), and Timmermans, *Patronen van Patronage in het Zeventiende-Eeuwse Antwerpen: Een Elite als Actor Binnen een Kunstwereld* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008).

*Four Parts of the World* and *The House of Moncada*.<sup>102</sup> The primary category of collaborative paintings in Van Kessel's oeuvre includes works like *Europe*, in which Van Kessel partnered with one other artist. Van Kessel rarely painted human figures, with the exception perhaps of peripheral details in some of his garlands and borders, such as the series of portraits represented in his *Allegory of Europe*. Teniers and Quellinus were most often responsible for painting the figures located inside his surrounds or in his fictive gallery paintings. In addition to these two artists, Van Kessel collaborated with lesser-known local painters including Nicolaes van Veerendael, Abraham Willemsens, and Peter Neefs.<sup>103</sup> Van Kessel's *House of Moncada* series required him to collaborate with no less than four other Antwerp painters, although not all in the same composition: Willem van Herp, Louis Cousin (also known as Louis Primo, il Gentile), Adam Frans van der Meulen, and David Teniers. A second category of collaboration represented in Van Kessel's oeuvre is characterized by his participation in large projects involving multiple painters, such as the Royal Collection gallery painting discussed in the previous chapter.

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<sup>102</sup> *The House of Moncada* series is discussed in depth in Chapter Five.

<sup>103</sup> Nicolaes van Veerendael's collaboration with Van Kessel, on a "festoon of flowers and some small animals" in which the flowers were painted by Van Veerendael and the tiny creatures by Van Kessel, is mentioned in the inventory of an Antwerp collection. See Erik Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen uit De Zeventiende Eeuw*, vol. 11 (Brussels: Palais der Academiën, 1984), 167. Willemsens was likely responsible for painting the figures in *A Kunstkamer with Venus at her Toilette*, 1659, Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle (fig. 4.4). In addition to Van Kessel's signature and monogram in this painting, the signature "AB (linked) FECIT" appears on the bottom drawing just above the scroll in the lower right corner. In an article discussing a close variant of the Karlsruhe painting (Christie's London, Old Master Pictures, Friday 13 December, 1991, lot 156 as "School of Antwerp; cat. 130), Gregory Martin proposes a collaboration between Van Kessel and Abraham Willemsens. The latter was a genre painter whose contribution of the staffage in two paintings by Van Kessel is documented in payment records from 1658. In Willemsens' signed paintings, the signature appears as "AB (linked) Willemsens," suggesting that the monogrammed drawing pictured within the Karlsruhe paintings may also refer to this artist. See Gregory Martin, "The Maître aux Béguins: A proposal identification," *Apollo* (February 1991): 113, and "Abraham Willemsens, (again): More news of attributions in Flemish painting," 97-99. A possible collaboration between Van Kessel and the Antwerp painter Pieter Neefs is recorded in the sale of a collection of paintings in Leiden in 1736: "Een heerlyk Bloem-Stuk door J Kessel met een Sinnebeelt in coleuren door Neefken." Gerard Hoet, *Catalogus of naamlyst van schildereyen, met derzelver pryzen: zedert een lange reeks zoo In Holland als op andere plaatzen in het openbaar verkogt.*, vol. 1 (The Hague, 1752; reprint, Soest: Davaco, 1976), 465.



In those collaborative works in which Van Kessel painted the garland or niche surrounding a religious, allegorical, or mythological subject, it is often assumed that his contribution was executed after the internal, “primary” image and was intended purely as secondary decoration. This is disputed by a close examination of several works of this type, however, in which Van Kessel’s exquisitely rendered objects and *naturalia* take visual precedence. In his *Allegory of Europe* painted with Quellinus, for example, it is not the latter’s rather awkward central personification of the continent that captivates our attention, but Van Kessel’s concatenation of miniature flowers, precious objects, exotica, and symbolic allusions (fig. 1.11). Instead of merely framing the central scene, Van Kessel’s garland repeatedly encroaches upon and threatens to obscure it. Moreover, Van Kessel’s manipulation and animation of conventional still-life motifs like flowers, books, and opulent vessels galvanizes the viewer’s attention to such a degree that it is his, as opposed to Quellinus’s, contributions that dominate the picture. By literally framing another artist’s work and therefore obligating the beholder to compare the two, Van Kessel offered up a challenge. When viewed apart, his miniature paintings of curious creatures and finely-wrought objects may have seemed trivial and decorative in comparison to monumental works depicting weightier religious, allegorical, and historical subjects; however, the juxtaposition of the two in these garlands underscores Van Kessel’s creativity and virtuoso brushwork and presents him as a worthy rival.

These visual observations are borne out by seventeenth-century descriptions of painted flower garlands which suggest that a hierarchical relationship between exterior and interior imagery did exist, but it contradicted the academic hierarchy of genres that is often imposed on seventeenth-century Netherlandish art by modern scholarship. Rather

than privileging the central figural and narrative scenes, which feature religious, historical, and mythological subjects, these floral garlands instead draw the viewer's attention to the still-life elements that frame them. Among the paintings which received the highest praise from Federico Borromeo in his *Musaeum Bibliothecae Ambrosiana*, a virtual walking tour of the treasures of his public art collection published in 1625, was a *Madonna and Child in a Garland of Flowers* painted jointly by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens (fig. 2.7):

It is a garland of so many flowers and so various that one can well call it an arch of triumph. On the flowers perch some small birds and the flowers themselves have an uncommon peculiar aspect, since the artist was not content to use local flowers. We shall not speak of the figures enclosed within the garland, because as a minor light, it is overwhelmed by the surrounding splendor.<sup>104</sup>

Contrary to the traditional role of garlands as adornment for sacred statues, the Cardinal's response demonstrates how, when painted, "The garland collaboration has the perverse ability to invert iconographic order and to elevate adornment until it is valued beyond the priceless icon it encircles."<sup>105</sup> The seventeenth-century currency of the story of Pausias and Glycera, as related by Van Mander, may have provided additional stimulus for Borromeo's and Brueghel's joint development of the *Madonna in a Flower Garland* genre. Not only did this legend provide an established precedent for the trope of the painted flower garland; it also legitimated the merging of (and rivalry between) painted and natural artifice.

Brueghel's Marian flower garlands undoubtedly set the stage for Van Kessel's production of paintings of this type. Van Kessel adopted his grandfather's virtuoso

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<sup>104</sup> For a translation and discussion of Borromeo's description of these works in the *Musaeum*, see Arlene Quint, *Cardinal Federico Borromeo as a Patron and a Critic of the Arts and his Musaeum of 1625* (New York: Garland, 1986), 237-39.

<sup>105</sup> Honig, "Paradise Regained," 280.

brushwork and meticulous, miniature aesthetic, creating garlands that were likewise admired for their ability to surpass the images which they contained. Yet, despite starting out as primarily a flower garland painter, emulating and even directly copying works by his grandfather and uncle, Van Kessel soon differentiated his product by modifying the garland genre to incorporate his preferred motifs, namely birds, fish, insects, precious and exotic objects and military implements. The sheer abundance and breadth of creatures and objects depicted in Van Kessel's garlands far exceed that of works painted by his predecessors such that his compositions draw even more attention away from the framed image to the frame itself. At the same time, the conspicuous allusions to prior art made in Antwerp, such as the suits of armor that recall ones which appear in many works by Brueghel and the unmistakable Brueghelian flowers, transform the garland into an object that is not merely decorative, but rather presents the viewer with a microcosm of Antwerp artistic lineage in a single picture.

Van Kessel's innovations in this genre include not only content, but also format. In addition to painting garlands that encased a central image, like those of Velvet Brueghel, Van Kessel also explored the stone niche format that was favored by Daniel Seghers. Garlands such as those in St. Petersburg (fig. 2.8) and Strasbourg (fig. 2.9) feature elements of both types. In each of these paintings, which contain motifs that are grouped according to their association with Air, Water, Fire, and Earth and probably belonged to a series of the Four Elements, the center of the niche remains empty.<sup>106</sup> It is possible that Van Kessel's apparently unique frame pictures functioned like cartouches

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<sup>106</sup> The Strasbourg and St. Petersburg paintings have nearly identical dimensions (28 x 28 cm.), both are painted on copper, and both are signed. The painting in St. Petersburg is also dated 1664. A third painting, also of the same dimensions, signed, and dated 1664, contains a winged Cupid in the center almost exactly replicates the St. Petersburg garland (cat. 109).

intended for later customization if and when a particular occasion called for it. However, the fact that these and other empty niche paintings are signed and dated prominently by Van Kessel, as if completed, indicates that perhaps a central scene was never intended and that his initially collaborative “frames” ultimately acquired a status as the sole subject of the painting.

This hypothesis is borne out by two compositions in which Van Kessel inverts the conventional flower garland surround, instead making his virtuoso portrayal of shells and insects the focal point of the niche (figs. 2.10, 2.11). Even when Van Kessel’s meticulously detailed surrounds did enclose a central scene, they were never subservient. Based on the existence of paintings featuring empty niches, it is likely that Van Kessel painted the garland before, rather than after, the addition of the interior scene by another artist.

### **Van Kessel’s *Allegory of Europe* as a Portrait of Antwerp Partnerships, Patronage and Prestige**

The *Allegory of Europe*, from a series of the Four Continents painted by Van Kessel and Quellinus, represents the culmination of Van Kessel’s inventive and self-reflexive garland type (fig. 1.11).<sup>107</sup> As mentioned previously, this composition contains what appears to be a self-portrait of the artist on a copper plate amidst a concatenation of motifs that exemplify the vast range of his painted oeuvre. *Europe*, along with its counterparts *Asia* (fig. 2.12) and *America* (fig. 2.13), represents a popular pictorial theme

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<sup>107</sup> For further discussion of this painting, see Alain Tapié, *Les Vanités dans la Peinture au XVIIe Siècle: Méditations sur la Richesse, le Dénuement et la Rédemption* (Caen: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1990), 220, and Seipel et al., *Das Flämische Stilleben*, 344.

that originated in Antwerp in the late sixteenth century.<sup>108</sup> The figure of the personified continent replaces the Marian imagery that typically filled the center of the floral garlands that brought Van Kessel much success early in his career. The standard wreath of flowers is mostly replaced by emblems of Catholicism, including the papal bull of Pope Alexander VII, crucifix, Bible, and Eucharist, as well as several of Van Kessel's trademark motifs, such as musical instruments, suits of armor, ornate vessels, seashells, and insects. These motifs form an elaborate framework around a stone niche containing a *grisaille* female figure that has been identified by some scholars as *Ecclesia* and appears in other allegories of Europe by Van Kessel.<sup>109</sup>

By contrast to the substitution of flowers for artist's implements in the engraved portrait of Van Kessel that is reprinted in Cornelis de Bie's *Het gulden cabinet*, the ornate garland depicted in *Europe* does almost the exact opposite, replacing all but a few lone blooms with artist's tools and motifs that refer to the diverse range of subjects represented in the painter's oeuvre. In spite of this reversal, this work's unmistakable allusion to the painted flower garland genre likewise poses a comparison between nature's and human artifice.

Beyond its allegorical allusions to Europe's religious, political, and military power, the *Allegory of Europe* is highly self-referential and contains several pictorial

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<sup>108</sup> The paintings of *Asia* and *America* are now located in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan. For literature on these two works, see Bert W. Meijer and Guido Jansen, *Repertory of Dutch and Flemish Paintings in Italian Public Collections*, vol. 1 (Florence: Centro Di, 2001), 246, nos. 429 and 430. The emergence of allegories of the continents as a pictorial theme in Antwerp will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

<sup>109</sup> This figure is identified as *Europa* in De Bruyn, *Erasmus II Quellinus (1607-1678), de schilderijen met catalogue raisonné* (Freren: Luca, 1988), 330, and *Das Flämische Stilleben*, 344. The same figure is referred to as *Ecclesia* in Claus Grimm, *Stilleben: Die niederlandischen und deutschen Meister* (Belser: Stuttgart/Zurich, 1988), 46, and as the Virgin Mary in Tapié, *Les Vanités*, 220. The *grisaille* figure bears a strong likeness to the female figures depicted in the central panel of *Europe* in Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich, Alte Pinakothek) and *Allegory of Europe set inside a Kunstammer* (Sotheby's New York, January 30, 1997, lot 16; cat. 143).

allusions to the contemporary production and estimation of Van Kessel's art. A selection of artists' tools, including paintbrushes, a hammer, and a chisel is paired with a series of portraits, each representing a different medium and referencing Van Kessel's collaborators, patrons, and devotees (fig. 1.12). Van Kessel's self-portrait identifies him with his preferred medium, copper. His likeness is represented as if sketched in brown oil paint on a thin copper plate. The medium, as well as the sketchy style of brushwork, immediately recall Van Kessel's practice of sketching in oil directly on some of the versos of the miniature copper plates that served as supports for his paintings.<sup>110</sup> This portrait, which resembles Van Kessel's engraved likeness in *Het gulden cabinet*, also illustrates his frequent employment of self-referential devices in his paintings, such as inserting his own compositions into gallery pictures or, as we shall see in the next chapter, creating ambitious signatures out of the staple motifs from his oeuvre.

Just behind and to the left of Van Kessel's copperplate self-portrait is a sculpted marble bust that appears to represent his collaborator, Quellinus.<sup>111</sup> The facial features in the sculpted portrait bear a close likeness to the engraved portrait of Quellinus in *Het gulden cabinet*. Quellinus collaborated with Van Kessel on numerous occasions, typically as a figure painter, and his involvement in this series of the continents is indicated by his partial signature in the painting of *Asia*. Quellinus's portrayal of similar *grisaille* personifications elsewhere in Van Kessel's oeuvre may have been inspired by the work of his brother, Artus Quellinus, a successful sculptor who was especially renowned for

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<sup>110</sup> At least 10 of the small, peripheral copper plates in Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* in Munich, and 7 plates in a second version of this series in Madrid (Museo del Prado) contain oil sketches executed directly on the versos of the plates. These will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

<sup>111</sup> The identification of the stone bust as a portrait of Quellinus was first suggested by De Bruyn in his monograph on the artist. See De Bruyn, *Erasmus II Quellinus*, 214.

his marble figural decoration, and offers a possible explanation as to why his likeness is represented as if carved in stone.

Below the two portraits of the paintings' authors is another likeness that portrays a figure who played a vital role in Van Kessel's artistic enterprise. A replica of the title page of De Bie's *Het gulden cabinet* is pictured facing a miniature copy of the engraved portrait (also contained in De Bie's original manuscript) of Anthony van Leyen, a prominent Antwerp alderman and *liefhebber* who sponsored the publication of De Bie's book and to whom it was dedicated. (fig. 2.14). Although in the actual manuscript, Van Leyen's portrait appears several pages after the title page, their pairing in this context make the reference to De Bie's text unmistakable. Van Leyen was a well-respected art collector and *Maecenas* whose conspicuous portrayal by Van Kessel in this painting points to his role as Van Kessel's supporter and possible patron.<sup>112</sup> The prominence of Van Leyen's portrait and the book that he sponsored suggests that he may have commissioned this painting, as well as the other three works from Van Kessel's series of the continents.

Van Leyen represents the category of patron who was most likely to own artworks by Van Kessel in seventeenth-century Antwerp. Descriptions of "*blommencransen*" (flower wreaths or garlands) and "*blompots*" (pots or vases of flowers) appear in multiple seventeenth-century inventories of esteemed local collectors.<sup>113</sup> Among these were several artisans (painters, a sculptor, and a silversmith)

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<sup>112</sup> Van Leyen apparently lent Van Kessel a substantial sum of money, as Van den Branden reports that shortly before his death, Van Kessel still owed Van Leyen 600 gulden. Van den Branden, *Geschiedenis Der Antwerpsche Schilderschool*, 1101.

<sup>113</sup> See Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 4, 429; vol. 6, 343; vol. 8, 318; vol. 11, 168, 396 and 550.

and merchants, as well as individuals holding prestigious civic and noble titles. The subject matter of the interior cartouches in many of Van Kessel's floral wreaths, which included images of Madonnas, saints, the Eucharist, and the Holy Family, especially appealed to Antwerp's predominantly Catholic population. In paying tribute pictorially in *Europe* to such an esteemed benefactor and prominent figure in the Antwerp art world as Van Leyen, Van Kessel makes an important claim about the value and status of his art.

Van Kessel's juxtaposition of Van Leyen's portrait with De Bie's title page from *Het gulden cabinet* draws further attention to the contemporary praise of his art. Published just four years before the date of this painting, the image of De Bie's manuscript would have reminded viewers of the substantial praise bestowed upon Van Kessel by De Bie. This is further emphasized by the framing of the entire composition by the elaborate garland, itself a pictorial ode to Van Kessel's artistic virtuosity and impressive range of pictorial subjects and skills.

If Van Leyen's portrait signifies Antwerp art patronage, then the portrait drawn in pencil or chalk on blue paper just below it may represent the important role played by Van Kessel's patrons abroad. I am unable to identify the man depicted, but the specificity of his hair, facial features, and collar indicate that this too is a portrait of a particular individual. Based on the figure's cropped hairstyle and old-fashioned, aristocratic type of collar, and given the popularity of Van Kessel's art with Spanish patrons, it is possible that this portrait represents one of the artist's numerous aristocratic or noble Spanish patrons, many of whom lived and worked in Antwerp.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Although the sketchiness and bust-length view of the figure depicted on blue paper makes it difficult to definitively make out certain details, his clothing appears to reflect the stiff, traditional, aristocratic style typical of contemporary Spanish fashion. In place of a ruff, it looks as though he may be wearing a *golila*, the wide, flat, saucer-like collar which gained popularity during the reign of Philip IV. Marieke de Winkel



As was the case in Antwerp, flower painting was the genre that established Van Kessel's popularity among Spanish clients, whose patronage would figure prominently throughout his entire career. A number of Van Kessel's floral bouquets are recorded in the 1675 inventory of the Spanish nobleman, Antonio Mesía de Tovar, Conde de Molina, who possessed one of the most important collections of northern European paintings in Madrid.<sup>115</sup> Elite Spanish clients, many of whom held prominent military and political roles and worked abroad in Flanders under Philip IV, favored Flemish artists, particularly works on copper. Typical of this trend is the collection of Don Miguel de Salamanca, who served as political and military advisor to Cardinal-Infante Don Ferdinand in Flanders. When an inventory of his art collection was drawn up in 1655, it contained works by primarily Flemish artists which he had acquired during his time in Flanders.<sup>116</sup> Among these were 106 Flemish paintings on copper in ebony frames, flower paintings by Daniel Seghers, and animal paintings by Frans Snyders.<sup>117</sup>

Seghers worked for many elite Spanish patrons and it has been suggested that he may have played a role in facilitating the commission of a series of at least eight monumental flower still lifes on copper painted by Van Kessel that was first discovered

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notes that although the characteristically conservative Spanish style of dress was influential in The Netherlands, its influence waned after the 1620s, when looser, French fashions surpassed it in popularity. De Winkel does not discuss the situation in Antwerp, where Spanish sovereignty continued through the late seventeenth century. Presumably, Spanish styles may have exerted more influence in Antwerp and for a longer period; however, the marked difference in the hairstyle and dress of this figure compared to those pictured in the portraits above it, suggest that he was not local. On contemporary Spanish fashion, see Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 77, 80-81, 126.

<sup>115</sup> Marcus B. Burke, Peter Cherry, and Maria L. Gilbert, *Collections of Paintings in Madrid, 1601-1755, Documents for the History of Collecting*, vol. 1 (Los Angeles: Provenance Index of the Getty Information Institute, 1997), 662-665.

<sup>116</sup> Burke et al., *Collections of Paintings in Madrid*, vol. 1, 535-538.

<sup>117</sup> Burke et al., *Collections of Paintings in Madrid*, vol. 1, 535-538.

in a Spanish collection (figs. 2.15-2.18).<sup>118</sup> As mentioned previously, Van Kessel's flower garland type clearly recalls Seghers precedent, and there is mention in an Antwerp inventory of Van Kessel copying a work by Seghers.<sup>119</sup> All of the paintings in the series are signed and no less than five are dated 1652. In their composition and format, the floral still lifes recall works by Seghers and it is noted that he painted a similar set of pendants for the Escorial monastery around 1630.<sup>120</sup> The large scale, number, and highly ornate design of these bouquets are exceptional in Van Kessel's flower still life oeuvre, indicating that they represent a special commission for an aristocratic patron or perhaps even the "Spanish King" alluded to by Weyerman, which would have been Philip IV at the time this series was painted. At least one floral garland by Van Kessel can be traced back to the eighteenth-century collection of the Palacio Real in Madrid.<sup>121</sup> Van Kessel's son, Jan the Younger, evidently benefitted from his father's established prestige as a flower painter among Spain's most elite collectors. He received accolades primarily for his work as a portrait painter at the royal court in Madrid, but he was also admired there for his paintings of fruit and flowers.<sup>122</sup> Taking Van Kessel's extensive and elite Spanish

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<sup>118</sup> The series was intact in the collection of the Marquis de las Nieves in 1935. For further discussion of these works, see: Julio Cavestany, *Floreros y bodegones en la pintura española : catalogo ilustrado de la exposicion* (Madrid: Sociedad Española de Amigos del Arte, 1940) 80, cat. 135, no. 34; Bergström, *Still Lifes of the Golden Age*, 112-114, and Peter C. Sutton and Marjorie Wieseman, *The Age of Rubens* (New York: Abrams, 1993), 512.

<sup>119</sup> The inventory includes "een stuck schilderije van Zegers representerende een Venus," followed by "een copie naer ditto Venus gemaect door Van Kessel." Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 489.

<sup>120</sup> Sutton, *Age of Rubens*, 512.

<sup>121</sup> The 1794 inventory of the Palacio Real in Madrid includes a garland by Van Kessel surrounding a cartouche depicting Ceres: "Cinco quartas de alto y tres y media de ancho guirnalda con flores y en el medio una medalla con Tierra que varias ninfas y genios la presentan sus frutos = Juan Vanquese" (sic)." Cavestany, *Floreros y bodegones*, 144.

<sup>122</sup> Jan the Younger was highly praised by the "Spanish Vasari," Antonio Palomino, who, in his compendium of artists' biographies (3 vols. 1715-1724), remarked that "I do not doubt that many portraits by Van Kessel will be taken in time as Van Dyck's." Antonio Palomino, *Lives of the Eminent Painters and*

client base into account, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the figure depicted on a blue ground in the *Allegory of Europe* might represent one of these prestigious individuals.

Van Kessel's production of this series of miniature portraits as well as his conspicuous reference to De Bie's text have been previously overlooked as minor details relative to the concatenation of more "allegorical" objects that dominate the *Allegory of Europe*. I propose, however, that these details are critical to fully understanding the multivalent significance of the composition and also convey a pointed message about the status of Van Kessel's art in the seventeenth century. As we have seen, the painting complements De Bie's encomium to Van Kessel by visually reiterating the succession of pictorial criteria, including finely-wrought brushwork, a miniature scale, vividly life-like flowers, and a diversity of subjects, for which Van Kessel's art is praised. In my opinion, the *Allegory of Europe* serves above all as a visual claim about the value and prestige of Van Kessel's art, locating him and his artistic ambition within Antwerp's revered art-historical lineage.

The painting's juxtaposition of *Het gulden cabinet* with several portraits illustrating the Van Kessel and members of his professional network also underscores the significance of Antwerp's artistic environment and traditions to his artistic enterprise. Although Van Kessel's works were exported throughout Europe to the Dutch Republic, Germany, Austria, Spain, and France, they responded to and often thematized local

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*Sculptors*, translated by Nina Ayala Mallory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 367. He won the honorary title of *Pintor ad honorem* in 1683 and was appointed court painter by King Carlos II in 1686. In a confusing, undocumented passage, Sánchez Cantón notes that not only Jan the Younger, but also Jan the Elder worked at the Spanish court: "...it was not only his merits but also those of his father and uncle, who served as captains under the Kings of Spain, and the others were even court painters..." However, there is no additional evidence that the elder Van Kessel ever worked outside of Antwerp and the author fails to cite his source for this information. Francisco Javier Sánchez Cantón, *Los pintores de cámara de los Reyes de España* (Madrid: Hauser y Menet, 1916), 104.

artistic practices and lineages, as well as social codes of collecting that were particular to Antwerp. As discussed, among the site-specific factors that shaped Van Kessel's art were a high incidence of collaborative art-making, a demand for works by local artists, a burgeoning market for cabinet-sized paintings of novel, secular genres, a strong professional consciousness among artists, and a circle of knowledgeable and munificent collector-connoisseurs who supported painting on intellectual grounds and considered collecting to be a gentlemanly activity.<sup>123</sup>

Many of these same factors have been cited as stimuli for the emergence of the gallery painting genre in Antwerp in the seventeenth century, pointing to the inextricable connection between that local pictorial type and Van Kessel's production. Van Kessel's ambitious garland paintings have much in common with the gallery pictures discussed earlier. Like those painted collections, which have been characterized as "art about art" due to their visualization of the production and reception of contemporary works of art in Antwerp, Van Kessel's pictures of the "natural world" were, as we shall see, equally self-conscious of the artistic environment in which they originated.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, 54.

<sup>124</sup> Filipczak coined the phrase "art about art" in order to characterize the Antwerp gallery painting genre. See Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CURIOSITIES ON COPPER: VAN KESSEL'S SIMULATED INSECTS

The inscription just below Van Kessel's engraved portrait in *Het gulden cabinet* reads as follows: "Ioannes van Kessel. Born in the city of Antwerp in the year 1626. painter highly renowned in flowers, little animals, etc. which are greatly esteemed for their Curiosity."<sup>125</sup> When this same portrait was republished for a second time, in an English version of 1694, the inscription was altered slightly, transposing the quality of curiosity from the subject of Van Kessel's art to the artist himself: "...a curious Painter of Flowers and little insects, etc., which are much esteemed."<sup>126</sup> In addition, the title of the latter publication, *The true effigies of the most eminent painters and other famous artists that have flourished in Europe, curiously engraven on copper-plates...*, incorporates curiosity in yet another way, to describe the finely-wrought manner in which Van Kessel's portrait was executed. The use of curiosity to qualify the artist, his subject

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<sup>125</sup> "Ioannes van Kessel. Né dans la Ville d'Anvers en l'an 1626. peintre très renommé en fleurs, petites animaux, etc. lesquelles sont fort estimez pour leur Curieusité." De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 411.

<sup>126</sup> Sebastiano Resta, *The true effigies of the most eminent painters and other famous artists that have flourished in Europe, curiously engraven on copper-plates, together with an account of the time when they lived, the most remarkable passages of their lives, and most considerable works* (London: s.n., 1694), 95. This was the first compendium of the lives of Netherlandish artists to be published in English. The plates are mostly reprints of two major works, Dominicus Lampsonius's *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae inferioris effigies* (1572), and Meyssen's *Images de divers hommes* (1649). Although it is often ascribed to Padre Sebastiano Resta (1635-1714), *The true effigies* was originally published without Resta's text, which was not appended to the compendium of engravings until 1739.

matter, and a manner of working that was associated with his oeuvre underscores the multivalent meaning of this term in the early modern period, when it functioned simultaneously as an adjective, concept, and thing.<sup>127</sup>

It has been said that, “how and where an artist signs his work is never—especially in the seventeenth century—unpremeditated. The signature is testimony to, in a manner that is always significant, the relationship between the creator and his creation.”<sup>128</sup> Van Kessel’s cleverly devised signature composed of animated spiders, caterpillars, snakes, and silkworms (fig. 1.5), which I will return to later in this chapter, underscores the duality of curiosity as a concept applicable to both people and things, as well as brings into focus the crucial role of the artist in “vexing” nature to reveal it.<sup>129</sup> Van Kessel bends nature to make art, but in bending it, he reveals, distends, and brings into view hidden aspects of various creatures. The insects and snakes become particularly active and self-revealing only when they become players in the artist’s signature.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> In the past two decades, there has been an abundance of scholarship on the diverse meanings and uses of curiosity in early modern art, science, and literature. See, for example: Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*, Translated by Elizabeth Wiles-Portier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Lorraine Daston, “Curiosity in Early Modern Science,” *Word and Image* 11 (1995): 391-404; Neil Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998); Michael T. Bravo, “Precision and Curiosity in Scientific Travel: James Rennell and the Orientalist Geography of the New Imperial Age (1760-1830),” in *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, ed. Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (New York: Reaktion, 1999), 162-183; Barbara Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Peter Harrison, “Curiosity, Forbidden Knowledge, and the Reformation of Natural Philosophy,” *Isis* 92:2 (2001): 265-290; Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Kenny, *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>128</sup> Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 33.

<sup>129</sup> Here I am referring to the Baconian sense of “vexing,” as articulated in note 13.

<sup>130</sup> Some intriguing observations about Van Kessel’s insect signature and its visualization of the artist’s mastery over nature’s creatures are discussed in Douglas Hildebrecht, “Otto Marseus van Schrieck

By visually couching his artistic identity and skill in the representation of specimens, Van Kessel alludes to the changing scope of curiosity in the late seventeenth century, when the term was employed to describe both objects of inquiry and the keenly observant, witty, and knowledgeable individuals who acquired them and helped shape their meaning.<sup>131</sup> In privileging the artist's capacity to toy with nature, as well as the viewer's ability to recognize and appreciate this manipulation, Van Kessel's signature represents a departure from earlier associations of curiosity with naiveté, transparency and earnestness.<sup>132</sup> The insect signature underscores the fact that Van Kessel's art is not an unmediated or comprehensive window onto the natural world, but rather embodies and provokes curiosity through a combination of wit, technical virtuosity, self-referentiality, and pointed allusions to lineage (both art historical and, in reference to the Brueghel dynasty, biological). Van Kessel's fantastic and, to the best of my knowledge, unique conflation of artistic identity and subject matter in his signature also validates Janice Neri's recent claim that, although insects were no longer novel subjects by the second half of the seventeenth century, they played a key role in shaping approaches to observing and representing the natural world and provided artists with "rich material around which professional identities could be constructed and imagined."<sup>133</sup>

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(1619/20-1678) and the Nature Piece: Art, Science, Religion, and the Seventeenth-Century Pursuit of Natural Knowledge" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2004), 170.

<sup>131</sup> The *Dictionnaire Universel* (1690), for example, equates curiosity with a learned milieu concerned with establishing prestige, and defines a *curieux* as someone who desires to see, collect, and understand marvels of art and nature, precious objects and rarities, and secret, novel things: Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 63-64.

<sup>132</sup> On the etymological evolution of the term 'curiosity' in Europe over the course of the seventeenth century, see Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, especially 57-77.

<sup>133</sup> Janice Neri, *The Insect and the Image: Visualizing Nature in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 101.

During the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a marked shift in European attitudes toward the concept of curiosity. While it previously held negative connotations and was considered a vice, the term ‘curious’ and its many cognates were increasingly associated with virtuous, positive qualities.<sup>134</sup> The Latin root *cura*, connoting painstaking care, diligent observation, and attention to detail, formed the basis for multiple meanings of curiosity that emerged in the seventeenth century.<sup>135</sup> Van Kessel’s art illuminates the link between curiosity and cultures of collecting and scientific inquiry in early modern Europe and throws into relief the ways in which curiosity applied to a particular category of objects as well as the specific kind of person who collected them.

On the one hand, curiosity indicated a desire to acquire knowledge and things. The growing interest in and fascination with insects by naturalists, artists, and collectors in the late seventeenth century epitomizes the contemporary definition of curiosity as the desire to see, understand, possess, exchange, and display objects of natural and human artistry.<sup>136</sup> Earlier in the century, definitions of curiosity placed greater emphasis on its connotation of careful and precise empirical investigation, and often referred to the practices of scientists, engineers, architects, and astronomers.<sup>137</sup> By the end of the

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<sup>134</sup>For further reading on changing attitudes toward curiosity in early modern Europe, see Harrison, “Curiosity, Forbidden Knowledge, and the Reformation of Natural Philosophy,” Kenny, *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany*, and, in relation to science in particular, Daston, “Curiosity in Early Modern Science.”

<sup>135</sup> On the Latin root *cura*, and its relationship to early modern meanings of ‘curiosity,’ see Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 14, 75-80, 83-85, 112-113, 129, Bravo, “Precision and Curiosity,” 164, and Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing*, 30-31, 37.

<sup>136</sup> Pomian cites this definition of curiosity to describe Van Kessel’s painting of *Venus at her Toilette* (Karlsruhe, Kunsthalle; fig. 4.4), asserting that this image embodies the desire of the *curieux* to assemble rare objects in the space of the collection. Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities*, 53.

<sup>137</sup> Bravo, “Precision and Curiosity,” 164.



century, however, curiosity was considered a gentlemanly virtue that was associated with the collectors and connoisseurs who regularly visited picture galleries, cabinets of curiosities, and the salons of England's Royal Society.<sup>138</sup> This meaning of curiosity encompassed broader categories and frameworks of knowledge, such as connoisseurship and wit, which were inextricably linked to practices of viewing and displaying art, as well as objects of natural history, global exploration and trade, and scientific discovery.

On the other hand, curiosity applied to the objects and collectibles that were desired by these so-called *curieux*.<sup>139</sup> The term 'curious' was used qualitatively to describe things that were considered rare, strange, singular, amusing, precious, novel, small, intricate, and finely-crafted.<sup>140</sup> Insects fit these criteria perfectly, as did so many of the imported and exportable goods that passed through seventeenth-century Antwerp, then a locus for global commercial activity and exploration.

The early modern association of curiosity with fineness and impeccable workmanship, as well as "...the small, the intricate, and above all the hidden," resonates with the types of objects that were collected and displayed in early modern galleries and cabinets.<sup>141</sup> 'Curiosities,' including insects, shells, gemstones, coins, and miniature works of art, were objects of inquiry as well as acquisition. As noted by Lorraine Daston, the display of art and *naturalia* side by side in early modern curiosity cabinets and collections underscored the excellent workmanship that was intrinsic to both:

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<sup>138</sup> Bravo, "Precision and Curiosity," 164.

<sup>139</sup> On the seventeenth-century definition of "*curieux*," see note 132.

<sup>140</sup> Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 34, 134-138; Daston, "Curiosity in Early Modern Science," 396-397.

<sup>141</sup> Daston, "Curiosity in Early Modern Science," 397.

It is no accident that the cabinets of curiosities favored mannerist art, above all anamorphic and *trompe l'oeil* paintings, and displayed these works promiscuously next to bits of landscape marble, branching trees of coral, seashells, and other 'works' of nature. What curious art and curious nature shared, was exquisite workmanship, echoing the root sense of 'curiosity' (from the Latin *cura*) as painstaking, even excessive care or artistry.<sup>142</sup>

In its early modern sense, curiosity serves as a hinge between art and nature, and people and objects. This is epitomized in Van Kessel's insect pictures, which feature the marvels of nature's craft painted by human hands in an extremely fine manner on a miniature scale. Through their artifice, wit, and innovative treatment of natural subjects, Van Kessel's paintings provided his contemporaries with a lens through which to consider and engage with new observational techniques and approaches to representing the natural world.

Of the many zoological subjects represented in Van Kessel's vast corpus, his insect pictures most clearly illustrate how the aesthetics and psychology of curiosity operate in his art. They simultaneously make the familiar appear strange, through the "vexations" of art, and bring the exotic and fantastic into sight. Van Kessel's insect works, which include oil paintings as well as watercolor and gouache drawings, comprise roughly a quarter of his known oeuvre (fig. 3.1). Like the flower paintings discussed in the previous chapter, Van Kessel's insect pictures throw into relief how nature's art could be refashioned in and by human art. Their frequent juxtaposition of striking naturalism and fantastic monstrosity challenges the anachronistic dichotomy between naturalism and observation on the one hand and artifice and imagination on the other. Early modern praise of Van Kessel's pictures reveals that their appeal was based both on the appearance of having been observed from life and their fantastic strangeness. De Bie,

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<sup>142</sup> Daston, "Curiosity in Early Modern Science," 398.

writing at the peak of Van Kessel's insect-painting phase, addresses this seeming paradox in the closing lines of his encomium:

Our van Kessel knows how to bring forth  
Monstrous creatures and diverse strange things as if from life  
In [works] where nothing at all (however small) appears  
Except through his art alone to resemble life completely.<sup>143</sup>

Through the artifice of his painting, Van Kessel made insects stranger, more

“monstrous,” precious, and above all, curious to early modern viewers.

Moreover, Van Kessel's insect pictures mirror the paradoxical status of the very creatures they depict. Since antiquity, insects were hailed as models of nature's artistry and exquisite craftsmanship, yet simultaneously disdained for their small size, strange anatomies, and ambiguous habitat.<sup>144</sup> As objects of both curiosity and repulsion that vacillated between miniature marvels and monstrosities, insects had much in common with Van Kessel's pictures. Like the entomological subjects they portray, Van Kessel's insect works exhibit finely-wrought craftsmanship on a minute scale, yet are also strange

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<sup>143</sup> “Wanschappen Schepsels en verscheyden vremde dinghen/ Weet ons van Kessel al het leven voorts te bringhen./ Daer niet (hoe cleyn dat is) in't minsten in en blijckt/ Oft door sijn Konst alleen aen't leven heel ghelijckt.” De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 410.

<sup>144</sup> The tension between admiration and repulsion for insects is evidenced in classical texts as well as medieval encyclopedias and bestiaries. In Pliny's *Natural History*, for example, individual species are segregated into books according to their natural habitat: land animals, marine animals, birds, and so forth. Although insects are granted their own book, subsequent to all other species, it is unclear with which earthly realm they are associated: Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 3, book 11. A similar ambiguity occurs in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, an encyclopedia of universal knowledge compiled at the end of the sixth century. While Isidore also classifies animals according to environment—land, water, and sky—it is unclear where insects fall within this framework or to which element they correspond. Some types of insects are grouped with rodents and other pests, such as the cricket and the ant, while the Spanish fly and the millipede are included in the section on snakes: John Henderson, *The Medieval World of Isidore of Seville: Truth from Words* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 150. Medieval bestiaries, by contrast, underscored an allegorical interpretation of animals, often juxtaposing real species with imagined ones. The increased focus in bestiaries on the pictorial representation of insects and the infusion of wit and play set the stage for the vernacular encyclopedias that flourished in the beginning of the thirteenth century, such as Jacob van Maerlant's *Van der Naturen Bloeme*, a natural history that freely translated Thomas of Cantimpré's *De natura rerum into Dutch*. In van Maerlant's volume, detailed illustrations of real and fantastic creatures are accompanied by playful verse, and exegetical concerns give way to the invocation of unadulterated pleasure and wonder.

and repulsive. Insects were the ideal subject for a painter like Van Kessel, who sought to challenge and compete with nature's artifice in his own work.

In this chapter, I employ curiosity, as it was understood in early modern Europe, as a framework for reconsidering Van Kessel's insect pictures as innovative works of artifice that invited a range of viewers and viewing experiences.<sup>145</sup> Through close analysis of the multivalent meanings and uses of curiosity in the early modern era, as well as the works themselves, I interrogate how these pictures were manufactured, marketed, consumed, and displayed. In doing so, I explore how Van Kessel devised creative pictorial means of vying with nature's artistry. Furthermore, my examination of entomological images made by both artists and naturalists illuminates how the strategies and techniques employed by each in the observation and representation of insects relied on and informed one another in the seventeenth century. A multiplicity of approaches to looking at and studying art and nature intersect in these images, making them ideal case studies for examining the interrelated concerns of artists, artisans, naturalists, collectors, and connoisseurs.

### **Signed with Snakes and Spiders: Locating Curiosity in Van Kessel's Art**

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<sup>145</sup> Until now, the scant literature on Van Kessel's insect works has tended towards the interpretation of their meticulous detail and (mostly) identifiable subjects as evidence of a documentary impulse, and likens the artist to a proto-entomologist. See for example, catalogue entries in *Das Flämische Stilleben*, 94, and Ellinoor Bergvelt and Renée Kistemaker, et al., *De Wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst-en rariteitenverzamelingen, 1585-1735* (Amsterdam: Amsterdams Historisch Museum, 1992), 47-48, in which Van Kessel's insect pictures are described as "nature studies" and the author begins with detailed identification of all the pictured species. Alternatively, Van Kessel's insect paintings are frequently discussed under the rubric of still life as moralizing images that, as Fred Meijer puts it, "praise the variety of God's Creation," harkening back to Hoefnagel's miniatures bearing didactic inscriptions: Fred G. Meijer, *The Collection of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Paintings Bequeathed by Daisy Linda Ward: Catalogue of the Collection of Paintings* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2003), 230. Both of these classifications fail to account for the pictorial complexities and acknowledgment of artistic precedents and traditions in Van Kessel's insect works.

The critical role that insects play as both a subject of and metaphor for Van Kessel's art is illustrated in his witty insect signature, which appears at least three times in his oeuvre. It first occurs in a series of seventeen copper plates featuring insects, flowers, reptiles, and fantastic creatures dating from 1657 (fig. 1.5). A second version of the signature appears in a nearly identical series dated one year later (figs. 3.2, 3.3). Finally, a third example of this signature, which merges aspects of both earlier examples, is pictured conspicuously as a painting-within-a-painting in the foreground of the fictive *kunstkammer* that serves as the centerpiece for *Europe* from Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World* in Munich (fig. 3.4).

Curiosity is articulated in both the content and pictorial techniques displayed in Van Kessel's insect signature. As a signifier of strange, rare, and small things, curiosity applies to the writhing snakes, caterpillars, and silkworms that twist and turn in highly artificial poses in order to form the artist's name with their intertwined bodies. In the seventeenth century, knowledge about the mysterious anatomies of such creatures was just becoming available; therefore, the pictorial representation of them in such a highly detailed manner would undoubtedly have provoked curiosity among viewers of these paintings.<sup>146</sup>

The origin of 'curiosity' in the Latin *cura* resonates with the finely-crafted and painstakingly rendered details featured in Van Kessel's insect pictures. Close inspection of his animated signature reveals how Van Kessel created subtle highlights on the scales of snakes as well as on the glossy bodies of caterpillars by carefully scratching into the white ground layer (fig. 1.5). Additionally, his application of multiple layers of washes

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<sup>146</sup> Entomological knowledge flourished in the seventeenth century, particularly in the Netherlands, in large part due to technological advancements such as the microscope. These developments will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

produced effects such as translucent reptilian skin and scaly carapaces coated with a glistening sheen of moisture. Van Kessel's brushstrokes are so tiny and precise that even the individual hairs on the velvety backs of the caterpillars become visible. Scrutinizing Van Kessel's insect paintings in this way provides a striking reminder of the awe-inspiring skill that was required to create such captivating details on a miniature scale.

Given Van Kessel's apparent mass production of insect paintings on copper, evidenced by the large quantity of works of this type in his oeuvre, one wonders how he was able to maintain such a high level of quality. Van Kessel's ability to paint finely and vividly on a small scale was greatly admired by his contemporaries, according to both De Bie and Weyerman.<sup>147</sup> This particular skill was also singled out by Pliny in the opening to his book on insects in the *Natural History*. In that volume, Pliny praises the exquisite craftsmanship exhibited by nature in her smallest creatures, which show "...a craftsmanship on the part of Nature that is more remarkable than in any other case...in these minute nothings what method, what power, what labyrinthine perfection is displayed!"<sup>148</sup>

The link between curiosity, smallness, and hidden, secret things is also relevant to Van Kessel's insect signature, because this image privileges a particular kind of picturing and viewing associated with the advent of new technologies of vision such as the microscope. Microscopy profoundly changed how objects and animals that were too small to be seen in full by the naked eye, such as insects, were understood and described.

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<sup>147</sup> See De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 409-410 and Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 209-210.

<sup>148</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 3, book 11, 433.

In this way, microscopic viewing revealed entirely new worlds to beholders, making nature's once hidden secrets suddenly accessible.

In a similar vein, Van Kessel's insect works mediated nature for the early modern beholder and invited him or her to see the ordinary in new, extraordinary, and surprising ways.<sup>149</sup> What Van Kessel's discovers and reveals, through magnification and other forms of manipulation, is that nature, on its most minute level, is artful. In his insect signature, Van Kessel employs a host of pictorial strategies that mirror microscopic vision and vex and make visible the mechanisms of nature. He portrays creatures against a blank, neutral background so that even the tiniest of details are brought into focus. The vacant background also allows him to describe specimens without locating them in a continuous spatial plane. Without the restriction of having to depict creatures in relative scale to one another, Van Kessel is free to manipulate their size and position as necessary in order to reveal their intricate structures. Additionally, he uses his animated name as a vehicle for depicting insects from multiple angles, thereby making more of their anatomical features visible to the beholder. Representing these animals as active and mobile, rather than static, allows Van Kessel to describe them more fully. As we shall see, many of the techniques employed by naturalists also proved useful to Van Kessel's description of insects.

Although the strikingly naturalistic appearance of Van Kessel's painted insects, as well as the fact that many of his works of this type simulate the organization of

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<sup>149</sup> This is in line with Janice Neri's argument, articulated in her most recent study of the early modern pictorial representation of insects, that the pursuit of knowledge about the insect world in early modern Europe was negotiated through the making of images. See Neri, *The Insect and the Image*, xi-xiii.

contemporary entomological collections,<sup>150</sup> have prompted the modern interpretation of these pictures as accurately transcribed studies,<sup>151</sup> closer examination of the pictorial techniques discussed above exposes their painted fiction. In his animated signature, Van Kessel overtly draws attention to this by creating a point of tension between the insect signature and the curious scene in the upper right corner. Just above Van Kessel's name is a diaphanous caterpillar nest, which is in the process of rupturing and spewing forth fledgling reinforcements eager to join the posing creatures below. In the context of the painting, this detail recalls the real and illusionistically painted curtains that were frequently incorporated in pictures from this period. This is especially true of the version of Van Kessel's signature that appears as a pictured painting inside an art collection. The painted caterpillar nest in this work provides a visual parallel to the green velvet curtain that is draped over another one of Van Kessel's paintings of odd creatures in the left-hand corner of the *kunstkammer*.

On the one hand, the meticulously detailed and manipulated creatures in the signature display pictorial techniques used in the practice of scientific investigation, such as the magnification of minute details and the portrayal of the same creature from multiple angles. On the other hand, the intrusion of the curtain-like structure reminds the beholder that those creatures are the result of painted artifice. The tension between the two areas is indicative of that which characterizes Van Kessel's insect compositions.

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<sup>150</sup> On the display of insects in early modern entomological collections, see Arthur MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment: Collectors and Collections from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 140, and Eric Jorink, *Het 'Boeck der Natuere': Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods schepping 1575-1715* (Leiden: Primavera Press, 2007), particularly Chapter 5.

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, the following exhibition catalogue entries for insect paintings by Van Kessel: Seipel et al., *Das Flämische Stilleben*, 94, 98-99, cat. 29; Bergvelt and Kistemaker, et al., *De Wereld binnen handbereik*, 47-48, 50; Sam Segal, *Flowers and Nature; Netherlandish Flower Painting of Four Centuries* (The Hague: SDU Publishers, 1990) 208-209, cat. 47.



Their startling life-likeness is constantly competing with their conspicuous artistry. The depiction of Van Kessel's insect signature in *Europe* as an ornately framed easel painting in a gallery filled with artworks and an elegantly dressed connoisseur make a powerful statement about the artifice and crafted manipulation of his insect pictures.

### **Miniature Marvels: Hoefnagel, Van Kessel, and Courtly Curiosity**

Painted with meticulous brushstrokes and painstaking detail on postcard-sized copper plates, Van Kessel's insect paintings represent a discrete genre that he is credited with developing in the 1650s.<sup>152</sup> Although Van Kessel did not invent this pictorial type entirely by himself, he was without a doubt its' most prolific practitioner and was responsible for transforming it significantly. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, Van Kessel's Antwerp predecessor, Joris Hoefnagel, produced watercolor and gouache miniatures of entomological subjects on parchment and vellum, a technique that was later practiced by the Dutch still-life painter, Balthasar van der Ast. Van Kessel's translation of the description of insects into a novel medium was undoubtedly inspired by a tiny painting produced by his grandfather, Jan Brueghel the Elder, for Federico Borromeo. Although Brueghel's *Mouse with a Rose* of 1605 was painted in oil on copper, Borromeo mistakenly described it as a work of gouache on vellum (fig. 3.5).<sup>153</sup> The Cardinal's misidentification of medium and materials speaks to the compelling illusion of small format cabinet pictures painted on copper supports and their ability to emulate a variety of precious objects, such as illuminated and limned miniatures.

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<sup>152</sup> The earliest dated examples which I am aware of are from 1653. See cat. 57, 58, 60-63.

<sup>153</sup> Marco Rossi and Alessandro Rovetta, *La Pinactoecca Ambrosiana* (Milan: Electa, 1998), 133.

Although they were produced over a half century later, Van Kessel's insect works strongly recall pictures produced at the Habsburg courts of Prague and Vienna around 1600 by artists like Brueghel and Hoefnagel. Despite differences in their respective media, Van Kessel's and Hoefnagel's insect pictures exhibit a similar aesthetic and share many pictorial techniques. These points of comparison are evident in Hoefnagel's illustrations of insects in the illuminated manuscript, *Mira calligraphiae monumenta*, the series of copper engravings he produced with his son in *Archetypa studiaque patris Georgii Hoefnagelii*, and especially in *Ignis*, one of four volumes comprising Hoefnagel's *Four Elements*, a manuscript featuring 277 miniatures painted in watercolor and gouache on vellum between 1575 and 1582 (fig. 3.6).<sup>154</sup> The focus of *Ignis* was insects, and like Van Kessel's insect pictures, Hoefnagel's delicate miniatures reveal several aesthetic qualities associated with the early modern notion of curiosity, namely finely-wrought workmanship on a miniature scale and witty, illusionistic artistry. Hoefnagel's employment of meticulous detail, manipulations of space and scale, jewel-like colors, and playful effects such as the illusion of a flower piercing the page on which it is portrayed contribute to the preciousness of his images by promoting the illusion of precious objects and materials. At the same time, the consistency of the gold, ovoid frames from one page to the next suggests that these creatures are being magnified under a lens. This intrusive detail creates tension between the painted artifice on the page and the illusion of real specimens, much like the detail of the painted curtain in Van Kessel's

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<sup>154</sup> For thoughtful discussion of artistry and illusionism in Hoefnagel's images of insects, see Janice Neri, "From Insect to Icon: Joris Hoefnagel and the 'Screened Objects' of the Natural World," in *Ways of Knowing: Ten Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Mary Lindemann (Boston: Brill, 2004). Discussion and an illustrated catalogue of the *Archetypa* are found in Thea Vigneau-Wilberg, *Archetypa Studiaque Patris Georgii Hoefnagelii: Natur, Dichtung und Wissenschaft in der Kunst um 1600* (Munich: Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, 1994). For a comprehensive study of Hoefnagel's *Four Elements*, see Marjorie Lee Hendrix, "Joris Hoefnagel and the Four Elements: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Nature Painting" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1984).

insect signatures. Hoefnagel's pictorial treatment of insects and valorization of them as an independent subject worthy of representation informed how Van Kessel approached the representation of these creatures in his own art. He ultimately went beyond Hoefnagel's esteem of insects by recuperating them from manuscripts and graphic media and recasting them as a legitimate subject of easel (and oil) painting.

The association of curiosity with diligence, scrupulous care, precision, and fineness, qualities that are lauded in De Bie's and Weyerman's accounts of Van Kessel's paintings, is also evident in seventeenth-century descriptions of artworks produced in the northern and southern Netherlands. In these sources, the adjective "*curieus*" is frequently used to characterize objects that feature meticulous brushwork, microscopic detail, and fine craftsmanship. In addition to recording their subject matter, and sometimes the name of their maker if he or she was prominent enough, descriptions in contemporary inventories and sales records include such qualifications as "*curieus getekent*" (curiously drawn) or "*curieus geschildert*" (curiously painted).<sup>155</sup> Highly-detailed landscapes and paintings of flora and fauna stand out as types of pictures that were frequently noted for their curiosity. A pair of paintings by Otto Marseus van Schrieck, painted "*na 't leven*," are described as "*zeer curieus*" and "*heel curieus*" (exceptionally curious) in an auction catalogue from 1684.<sup>156</sup>

The fact that images of the natural world, such as landscapes, flower still lifes, and animal paintings, were often described as "curious," in regards to the manner in

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<sup>155</sup> An examination of the numerous auction catalogues from the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century assembled by Gerard Hoet reveals a consistent tendency to qualify particularly fine works, such as those painted on copper. For example, "Een zeer Curieus Perspectieff op Coper," (a very curious perspective on copper), Hoet, *Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schildereyen*, vol. 1, 464, and "Een curieus landscap op een kopere plaet van Huysmans," (a curious landscape on a copper plate by Huysmans), Hoet, vol. 1, 33.

<sup>156</sup> Hoet, *Catalogus of Naamlyst van Schildereyen, met derselver Pryzen*, vol. 1, 2.

which they were crafted, underscores the critical connection in this period between the artist's handiwork and the intricate workmanship found in nature.<sup>157</sup> This relationship had extra resonance for the insect pictures made by Hoefnagel and Van Kessel, because these works exhibited the diligence and skill of both the artist and nature by representing in a finely-wrought manner creatures which were had long been considered exemplars of nature's consummate artifice. As noted earlier, Pliny, in his *Natural History*, identifies insects as models of intricate workmanship and "labyrinthine perfection," characteristics which artists were encouraged to emulate in their own creations.

Miniaturization went hand in hand with curiosity because it was a formal characteristic that likewise fell under the rubric of early modern curiosity and was in vogue among the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century elite.<sup>158</sup> As we have seen, both De Bie, in his praise of Van Kessel's paintings, and Pliny, in his exaltation of nature's crafting of insects, laud not only the ability to produce something that is finely-crafted, but also the aptitude to do so on the smallest possible scale. This special category of praise had a long tradition in the history of art, as evidenced by Giorgio Vasari's and Karel van Mander's valorization of artists who produced works in miniature. On more than one occasion, Vasari marveled at the Italian miniaturist Giulio Clovio's capacity to depict "figures no larger than very small ants,"<sup>159</sup> while Van Mander, in his account of

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<sup>157</sup> Daston, "Curiosity in Early Modern Science," 398.

<sup>158</sup> Daston, "Curiosity in Early Modern Science," 398.

<sup>159</sup> Cited in Hendrix, "Joris Hoefnagel and the Four Elements," 223-224. The inventory of Clovio's estate also contained several miniature paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

the Dutch painter Lucas de Heere, singled out De Heere's mother, Anna Smijters, for her astonishing depiction of a windmill equivalent to the size of half of a kernel of corn.<sup>160</sup>

Vasari's comparison of painted figures to ants is significant in that it reflects a common tendency throughout history to conflate the curiosity elicited by small, precious objects with that produced by the smallness and intricacy of insects. Predating both Vasari and Van Mander, the Ferrarese humanist Angelo Decembrio (c.1415-after 1465) articulated this parallel in a dialogue about the depiction of insects in ancient art:

...one often finds such small insects carved on gems—a spider in combat with a fly, or a bee with a drone, or an ant with a gnat—shown just as accurately as if they were real insects held in a drop of amber....When Nature gives us such lessons in representation as this, it is only right that men should be capable of such work. ...What painter ever depicted the minute cavity of a flea's or gnat's mouth as the elder Pliny when he describes the wonderful skill shown by Nature in insects? ...For these diminutive things go beyond the capacity of our human senses and strain the eyes. Medium-sized objects on the other hand, by natural habit we easily despise.<sup>161</sup>

Two things stand out in Decembrio's passage that are particularly relevant to the way in which Hoefnagel and Van Kessel treated insects in their art. The first is Decembrio's praise of miniaturization in nature and his appeal to artists to emulate this in their work. This resonates with the contemporary notion that smallness and intricacy represented the paramount achievement of both the nature's and human artistry. The second is Decembrio's reference to the ancient practice of depicting insects on gemstones. This practice offers a useful parallel for thinking about the transformation of insects into precious objects in the art of Hoefnagel and Van Kessel. The combination of painting in miniature subjects that are themselves models of exemplary, miniscule craftsmanship,

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<sup>160</sup> Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck*, fol. 255r.

<sup>161</sup> Michael Baxandall, "A Dialogue on Art from the Court of Leonello d'Este: Angelo Decembrio's *De Politia Litteraria Pars LXVII*," *JWCI* 26 (1963): 304-306.

while also incorporating or producing the illusion of precious materials is a crucial aspect of each artist's insect oeuvre. Moreover, the gold, ovoid frames in each of Hoefnagel's images in *Ignis* exhibit a distinctly gem-like quality in their shape and delicate, precious appearance. This may also be an allusion to the artist's family ties to occupations in which the crafting of precious stones and metals was central, since his father was a jeweler and his grandfather a goldsmith.

The relationship between preciousness and miniaturization is also evident in the proliferation of small-scale luxury objects, such as illuminated and limned miniatures, in early modern courts. In the late sixteenth century, portrait miniatures were frequently presented as gifts to esteemed courtiers at the court of Queen Elizabeth I, where they were appreciated for the intimacy and secrecy conveyed by their small size.<sup>162</sup> Vasari, commenting on the *studiolo* of Francesco I de' Medici which contained many cabinet-size paintings on copper by Clovio as well as miniatures by Hoefnagel, pointed out that such small-scale works were not displayed publicly, but rather were considered to be very personal and were "almost all in the hands of great lords and personages...their friends, or ladies loved by them who kept them in little cases."<sup>163</sup>

Even though Van Kessel made a point in his gallery paintings of comparing his works to monumental easel paintings, he still clearly relied on the undeniable relationship between his small-scale insect paintings and the treasured courtly miniatures of the

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<sup>162</sup> On the practice of exchanging portrait miniatures at the Elizabethan court, see Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), especially chapter 3, and Jessen Kelly, "The Material Efficacy of the Elizabethan Jewelled Miniature: A Gellian Experiment," in *Art's Agency and Art History*, ed. Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007), 114-135.

<sup>163</sup> Cited in Christine Göttler, "Affectionate Gifts: Rubens's Small Curiosities on Metallic Supports," in *Munuscula Amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Context in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen (Turnhout; Brepols, 2006), 54.

previous century as a way of reminding his elite clients of his artistic pedigree and the status and value of his art. Despite working nearly a century later than court artists like Hoefnagel and Jan Brueghel, Van Kessel exploited the courtly aesthetic and its association with miniature luxury objects in order to appeal to his elite clientele, who either were or sought to emulate nobility and would have delighted in his insect paintings' visual references to luxury goods. Based on sales records and inventories of seventeenth-century collections, we can deduce that the original owners of Van Kessel's insect paintings were well-to-do, if not actual nobility.<sup>164</sup> The wide dispersion of Van Kessel's insect paintings throughout modern European collections also suggests an elite, international audience.

Van Kessel's exploitation of the courtly associations of working on a miniature scale is most apparent in his insect paintings, which not only depict minute, mysterious creatures, but also can be held and studied in the palm of one's hand. The depiction of these tiny animals, about which little had been known prior to the seventeenth century, also resonates with the contemporary equation between miniature things and hidden, secret knowledge. Through his recuperation and inventive adaptation of the pictorial effects and strategies featured in works by artists who had worked at the Habsburg courts of Prague and Vienna, Van Kessel appealed to the demand from his noble and pseudo-aristocratic clients for the brand of witty illusionism that was central to an earlier generation of court art. As Paula Findlen and other have noted, illusions, playfulness, and

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<sup>164</sup> See, for example, Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 168, 550; Duverger, *Nieuwe Gegevens Betreffende de Kunsthandel van Matthijs Musson en Maria Fourmenois te Antwerpen Tussen 1633 en 1681* (Ghent: s.n., 1969), 111; Jean Denucé, *Kunstuitvoer in de 17e Eeuw te Antwerpen: De Firma Forchoudt* (Antwerp: De Sikkell, 1931), 148, 180.

spectacle played an integral role in early modern scientific (and artistic) culture.<sup>165</sup> Witty jokes and tricks, such as Van Kessel's clever incorporation of insects into his signature, were linked closely with curiosity, scientific experimentation and the production and acquisition of knowledge.<sup>166</sup> Central to Hoefnagel's portrayal of insects in the *Four Elements*, and later adopted by Van Kessel in his own insect works, is a tendency to play with the blank space of the page (or plate, in the latter's case). For example, Hoefnagel's illustration of dragonflies in *Ignis* blurs the line between art and reality by juxtaposing painted bodies with real wings glued to the page (fig. 3.7). Additionally, his insects appear three-dimensional due to his careful modeling, creation of shadows, elimination of background elements, and manipulation of space and scale.

A significant way in which Van Kessel's insect works ambitiously emulate and push even further Hoefnagel's insect miniatures is their manipulation of compositional space. In many cases, Hoefnagel's miniatures still cling to a symmetrical, orderly orientation of insects, producing a methodical, studied image (fig. 3.8).<sup>167</sup> On the contrary, the organization of Van Kessel's compositions, although equally contrived, is more animated and presents the illusion of being arbitrary and 'natural.' In works by both artists, insects are represented at evenly-spaced intervals against a neutral ground and are isolated from one another by the absence of contact or overlap. In Van Kessel's insect pictures, however, spatial relationships between individual creatures is made more

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<sup>165</sup> Paula Findlen, "Jokes of Nature and Jokes of Knowledge: The Playfulness of Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43:2 (1990): 306.

<sup>166</sup> Findlen, "Jokes of Nature," 309.

<sup>167</sup> This is especially true of the series of engravings in the *Archetypa*.



ambiguous by discrepancies in their relative scale and angle of observation, both of which make it appear as though multiple spatial planes coincide within the same work.

As demonstrated by an example in the Rijksmuseum, the lack of spatial cues causes the surface of the copper plate to dissolve into a multidimensional space that confronts the beholder with competing perspectives (fig. 3.9). The insects on the perimeter of the copper plate occupy one spatial plane, while the central butterflies, moth, caterpillar, and gooseberries inhabit a second one. Commenting on a nearly identical composition by Van Kessel in the National Gallery, Washington, that may have originally been part of the same series as the Rijksmuseum painting (fig. 3.10), Arthur Wheelock observed that the peripheral insects, which cast individual shadows and are depicted in the same relative scale, simulate the effect of looking down at an early modern entomological collection, in which evenly-spaced, preserved specimens were pinned to a flat tray or drawer for examination (fig. 3.11).<sup>168</sup> In both pictures, the fact that these insects are posed in a static manner and depicted as if seen from above enhances this effect. This mode of representation contrasts with the depiction of the creatures at the center of the composition, which are mostly depicted in profile. Their interaction with the sprig of gooseberries makes them appear more active and dynamic, and unites them in a coherent grouping. The central insects are also portrayed on a slightly smaller scale than their peripheral counterparts, and do not cast any shadows. The twig on which they alight does cast a shadow, however, which creates the illusion of deeply receding space in the center of the composition. In this area only, the viewer is compelled to look not at the surface of the plate, but rather into the illusory distance beyond it. In sum, while on one hand the peripheral space of the plate simulates an entomological collection and compels

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<sup>168</sup> Wheelock, *Flemish Paintings*, 120-122. MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment*, 140.

the viewer to assume the role of studying preserved specimens, on the other hand, the illusion of receding space at the center produced the effect of looking at live insects, either in nature or a vivarium.

Hoefnagel's capacity for pictorial illusionism was somewhat restricted by the humanist context and medium of his works. Many of his miniatures, such as those in the *Four Elements*, were bound together in manuscripts and framed by moralizing Latin epigrams that shattered the illusionism of the page. His use of primarily watercolor and gouache on parchment or vellum surfaces also prevented his miniatures from becoming fully disengaged from the context of late medieval manuscript marginalia and the graphic illustrations that accompanied natural history treatises. Hoefnagel's works also remained closely linked to the style, techniques, and subject matter associated with the tradition of Flemish manuscript illumination. By contrast, Van Kessel explored a more diverse range of subjects, including flora and fauna that were not exclusively local, nor necessarily relevant to humanist messages. Most importantly, the lack of text and elimination of any esoteric framework in Van Kessel's insect pictures, coupled with his use of oil paint on copper supports, enabled the artist to achieve a broader range and greater complexity of pictorial effects than his predecessor.

### **Copper as Canvas**

The illusionistic pictorial effects found in Van Kessel's insect paintings are enhanced by his use of copper plates as supports, a practice closely associated with courtly patronage and royal *kunstkammers*, and celebrated by seventeenth-century art

theorists and *liefhebbers*.<sup>169</sup> Van Kessel's representation of his self-portrait on a copper plate, in the previously discussed *Allegory of Europe*, symbolizes the extent to which he was associated with and admired for his virtuoso transformation of copper plates into precious works of art. Like the formal properties discussed above, Van Kessel's use of copper established a strong connection between his art and an earlier courtly aesthetic that was proliferated throughout northern and central Europe around 1600 through the work of artists such as Jan Brueghel, Paul Bril, Hans Rottenhammer, and Hendrick van Balen. Brueghel painted many of his paradise landscapes and floral still lifes on copper supports and his adoption of this medium must have informed Van Kessel's development as one of the most prolific seventeenth-century specialists in painting on copper. However, to a much greater extent than his grandfather, Van Kessel exploited the material properties of copper in a way that complemented and became inseparable from his subject matter. This is especially true of his insect paintings, in which Nature's smallest and most intricately crafted creatures are rendered with exceptionally fine brushstrokes, a feat which could only be achieved by painting on smooth, non-porous supports like copper.

The emergence of copper as a popular support for oil painting in northern and southern Europe around 1600 has been explored in recent years from an economic, aesthetic and socio-historical standpoint.<sup>170</sup> Contrary to the long-held assumption that copper plates were very costly, it now appears that they were abundant in the period in

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<sup>169</sup> Edgar Peters Bowron, "A Brief History of European Oil Paintings on Copper, 1560-1775," in Komanecky et al., *Copper as Canvas*, 9-30.

<sup>170</sup> See, for example: Michael Komanecky, "Antwerp Artists and the Practice of Painting on Copper," in *Painting Techniques, History, Materials, and Studio Practice*, ed. Ashok Roy and Perry Smith, 136-139 (Dublin: The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1998); Komanecky et al. *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Göttler, "Affectionate Gifts."

which painting on copper reached its apex and were probably not much more expensive than oak panels.<sup>171</sup> The reduced cost and increased availability of copper plates can be attributed to technological advancements in the mining and manufacture of copper, as well as its increasing employment in printmaking and the manufacture of utilitarian objects.<sup>172</sup> In the first half of the seventeenth century, Antwerp became one of the leading centers of the international copper trade; therefore, its concurrent establishment as a locus for printmaking and painting on copper is not surprising.<sup>173</sup>

As a support for paintings, copper plates had many advantages over panels or canvases in that they were typically small in size and relatively stable, making them portable enough to endure the hazards of long-distance travel over sea or land.<sup>174</sup> Their portability not only made it possible to export paintings on copper from Antwerp to faraway places such as Spain and Italy, both of which were among the chief European

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<sup>171</sup> Jørgen Wadum, "Antwerp Copper Plates," in Komanecky et al., *Copper as Canvas*, 97; Komanecky, "Antwerp Artists," 136.

<sup>172</sup> Bowron, "A Brief History of European Oil Paintings on Copper," 9-10.

<sup>173</sup> Komanecky, "Antwerp Artists," 136.

<sup>174</sup> Wadum, "Peter Stas: An Antwerp Coppersmith and His Marks (1587-1610)," in *Painting Techniques, History, Materials, and Studio Practice*, 140. Copper is inherently stable as a surface for painting, contradicting the common misconception that copper supports are highly fragile. The stability of a painting on copper has more to do with the application and adhesion of the medium to the copper surface than the material itself. Different methods for preparing copper plates appear in the early modern literature. Pacheco, for instance, admonished painters to apply a thin layer of lead white with the fingers, as opposed to a brush. The application of garlic to aid the adherence of paint was reported by Roger de Piles. Roughening the plate in preparation for applying paint is also mentioned in the modern literature. See Johannes van der Graaf, "Development of Oil-Paint and the Use of Metal-Plates as a Support," in *Conservation of Paintings and the Graphic Arts* (London: International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, 1972), 139-152; Zahira Veliz, *Artists' Techniques in Golden Age Spain: Six Treatises in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 69; Komanecky, "Antwerp Artists," 138; Isabel Horovitz, "Fourteen March 2002: To Those Who Like Their Pictures in Pristine Condition: Techniques and Conservation of Paintings on Copper," *The Picture Restorer* (2002): 16-19. For their very helpful discussion of the technical aspects of painting on copper, and issues related to the preservation of such pictures, I would like to thank Melanie Gifford and Isabel Horovitz.

importers of Flemish paintings on copper, but also facilitated collaboration among artists, since this allowed them to be transported from one workshop to another quite easily.

The aesthetic properties of copper likewise made it an appealing support for painters, particularly those who worked in a fine manner. The smooth surface of copper plates permitted a more fluid application of paint and enabled artists to portray even the most miniscule of details, undoubtedly an asset to an artist who specialized in the depiction of insects. Painting on such a small scale allowed painters like Brueghel and Van Kessel to showcase their artistic virtuosity. Following Van Mander's esteem for "*neerstichcheyt*," a term used to encompass the diligence, speed, detail, and precision required in order to produce small, fine paintings,<sup>175</sup> De Bie expressed his admiration for Van Kessel's capacity to paint with brushstrokes that were "flawless," "neat," and "sharp;" yet, at the same time, loose and quick, despite being executed on a miniature scale.<sup>176</sup>

Small-scale paintings on copper have been linked to early modern rituals of gift-giving, dedication, and devotion, and such works were often presented as offers of friendship and diplomacy.<sup>177</sup> Cabinet-size devotional paintings on copper were especially popular in seventeenth-century Rome, where they were collected by Italian and Spanish cardinals who were interested in fostering private forms of spirituality through the use of

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<sup>175</sup> Göttler, "Affectionate Gifts," 54.

<sup>176</sup> De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 409.

<sup>177</sup> For examples and discussion of the connection between painting on copper and sociability, see Göttler, "Affectionate Gifts."

art.<sup>178</sup> Copper's capacity for producing minute details, vibrant colors, and the illusion of other precious materials appealed to the senses and helped stimulate aesthetic and religious delight in the beholder; thus, it is not surprising that painting on copper flourished during the Counter-Reformation, particularly in areas with predominantly Catholic populations.<sup>179</sup>

Within Van Kessel's insect oeuvre, the use of copper plates relates directly to the way in which these works were originally displayed. As mentioned previously, many of Van Kessel's miniature paintings on copper were inserted into the facades of *kunstkasten*. From the correspondence and accounts of art dealers affiliated with the Forchondt and Musson firms, we learn that many of Van Kessel's works of this type were exported in large batches, ostensibly for incorporation into these cabinets.<sup>180</sup> This is especially true of his insect pictures, which, with few exceptions, do not appear in the seventeenth-century inventories of Antwerp collections. In fact, aside from one painting of "snails, little animals, and flowers," almost all of the paintings identified as being by Van Kessel in these inventories are flower still lifes, garlands, or coastal scenes with fish.<sup>181</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that the majority of Van Kessel's insect paintings were not framed or sold individually, but rather were intended for the facades of cabinets, a phenomenon which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

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<sup>178</sup> Miniature devotional paintings on copper, known as "coperkens" were mass produced in Rome during the seventeenth century, and were extremely popular among that city's Spanish inhabitants: Göttler, "Affectionate Gifts," 53.

<sup>179</sup> Bowron, "European Oil Paintings on Copper," 16, and Göttler, "Affectionate Gifts."53.

<sup>180</sup> See, for instance, Duverger, *Nieuwe Gegevens*, 117, 122, 124.

<sup>181</sup> "...eene andere schilderijken van Van Kessel waeroppe geschildert staet eenige eenige [sic] Carecolen, Beestiëns ende Blommekens genombreert." Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 550.

The serial format of Van Kessel's insect pictures in these cabinets helps to explain the frequent repetition of compositions and motifs in the painter's oeuvre, as well as the absence of a signature or date on many works of this type. To avoid redundancy, Van Kessel typically only signed one panel of a series.<sup>182</sup> Although today most of these small paintings on copper have been split up and dispersed among different collections, they originally formed large series that were inset into cabinets either for decoration, or perhaps to indicate the types of objects that were housed inside. Both of Van Kessel's animated insect signatures discussed at the beginning of this chapter originally belonged to large series containing a central copper plate that was surrounded by 16 smaller plates (fig. 3.2). The cabinet context of Van Kessel's insect paintings distinguishes them from earlier graphic illustrations or scientific studies of insects and instead locates them closer to the realm of luxury objects. In addition, his production of multiple sets and series, particularly in his corpus of insect paintings, continued the tradition of painted and printed allegorical sets and series popularized by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, Jan Brueghel, Hendrick Goltzius, and Hoefnagel, all of whom either worked at or were connected to the court of Rudolf II in Prague.

The fact that the majority of Van Kessel's insect works are painted on copper is also significant because it underscores the interconnectedness of metalworking and zoological investigation in the early modern era. Recent scholarship by Pamela Smith, among others, has argued convincingly that there existed a close relationship between early modern artisanal practices and the production of natural and scientific

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<sup>182</sup> It has been suggested that when such series were split up, dealers sometimes copied the date and Van Kessel's signature onto the constituent paintings. Meijer and Van der Willigen, *Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters*, 123-124.

knowledge.<sup>183</sup> Several scholars have pointed to a blurred boundary between animals and precious materials in art and science which reflects an inextricable connection between metalworking practices, such as assaying, smelting, and alchemy, and the skills required for an empirical approach to nature, such as precise measurement, expertise in data collection, and proficiency in technical writing.<sup>184</sup> Recipes for making metals, for example, appealed to both artisanal and natural historical knowledge by including detailed instructions for not only mixing substances, but also for how to capture and transform animals into precious materials.<sup>185</sup> The elements of artistry and craftsmanship involved in metalworking are further underscored by the role of assayers, who were responsible for authenticating the composition and value of metals. Fraud, in the form of debasement of metals by changing the proportions of alloys or the production of copper products by non-guild members, was a constant threat.<sup>186</sup> As a result, many copper plates used for painting bear a mark or monogram on their verso, attesting to their authentication. Assayers possessed the specialized knowledge, intuition, and skills to detect fraudulent copperplates, much like a *liefhebber* was able to discern a painting's legitimacy, authorship, and value by carefully scrutinizing it.

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<sup>183</sup> See, for example, Pamela Smith, "Making and Knowing in a Sixteenth-Century Goldsmith's Workshop," in *The Mindful Hand: Inquiry and Invention from The Late Renaissance to Early Industrialisation*, ed. Lissa Roberts, Simon Schaffer, and Peter Dear, 33-57 (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2007), Smith and Benjamin Schmidt, eds., *Making Knowledge in Early Modern Europe: Practices, Objects, and Texts 1400-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), Ursula Klein and E.C. Spary, eds., *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2010), and Eric Jorink and Bart Ramakers, eds., *Art and Science in the Early Modern Netherlands: Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 61* (2011).

<sup>184</sup> Klein and Spary, *Materials and Expertise*, 46; Christoph Bartels, "The Production of Silver, Copper, and Lead in the Harz Mountains from Late Medieval Times to the Onset of Industrialization," in *Materials and Expertise*, 87, 98.

<sup>185</sup> Klein and Spary, *Materials and Expertise*, 46.

<sup>186</sup> On the role of assayers in early modern Europe, see Bartels, "The Production of Silver, Copper, and Lead," 87. On their function in Antwerp in particular, see Wadum, "Peter Stas," 141.



## **“No Bats, Serpents, Wild Boar or Crocodiles”: Making and Marketing Monstrosity**

In addition to locating curiosity in the materials and formal appearance of Van Kessel’s insect pictures, De Bie’s encomium also underscores the “curious” nature of the artist’s diverse subject matter, which includes, among other peculiar things:

...exotic beasts as [in] featherless animals  
Winged creatures small and large that swirl among the clouds  
Shell-encrusted sea creatures that glide under the water  
And footless creatures that criss-cross the dry land.<sup>187</sup>

De Bie’s fascination with Van Kessel’s strange and tiny subjects, which frequently border on the bizarre and distinguish his repertoire from the more traditional menagerie portrayed by his grandfather, Jan Brueghel, and other Antwerp animal painters, resonates with Daston’s assertion that, “The early modern psychology of curiosity reinforced this preference for the novel and the bizarre, and also channeled it toward the small, the intricate, and above all, the hidden.”<sup>188</sup>

The wide variety of creatures represented in Van Kessel’s insect paintings ranged from ordinary ants and flies to magnificent jewel-toned butterflies, exotic lizards, and hideous, hybrid beasts. The “monstrosity” exhibited by these creatures covered an equally broad spectrum of categories. On the one hand, there were Van Kessel’s relatively faithful portrayal of animals that were considered monstrous or gruesome even in reality. The grotesque image of writhing snakes’ skin being ruptured by their own spawn, part of Van Kessel’s insect series containing 17 individual plates, for example,

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<sup>187</sup> “...beesten sonderlingh als onghеплуymde dieren/ Ghevoghelt cleyn en groot die by de wolcken swieren/ Geschelpte zee-ghedroch dat onder t’water glijdt/ En t’voetloos ghecruyp dat t’drooghe fandt door snijdt...” De Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), 410.

<sup>188</sup> Daston, “Curiosity in Early Modern Science,” 397.

does not require any embellishment from the artist in order to heighten what is already a horrific scene (fig. 3.12).<sup>189</sup> On the other hand, a key feature of these works is Van Kessel's ability to make even ordinary bugs seem extraordinary by virtue of his artistry. In such cases, the transformative powers of art supersede nature's ability to produce monstrosity. The mixture of both types of monstrosity in Van Kessel's art, and especially in his insect works, only enhances their curiosity.

Just a year after De Bie published *Het gulden cabinet*, in which he marveled at the monstrous and strange creatures in Van Kessel's paintings, the Paris-based art dealer, Jean-Michel Picart, requested an order of several animal paintings from his Antwerp-based counterpart, Matthijs Musson, which was to include "12 pieces by Van Kessel but no bats, serpents, wild boar, or crocodiles among them..."<sup>190</sup> In order to cater to the tastes of his Parisian clients, Picart rejected subjects that he deemed too gruesome, frightening, or potentially disturbing. Although Van Kessel's less conventional animal subjects were lauded by De Bie and others for their vivid lifelikeness and intriguing monstrosity, these were apparently not welcome in Paris. In requesting that Musson omit these particular subjects from his shipment, Picart was ostensibly referring to works like Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* in Munich, which portrays each of the animals

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<sup>189</sup> The process of giving birth to snakes which do not hatch from eggs but rather rupture their mother's skin, which Van Kessel may have seen pictured in *The Head of Medusa*, painted by Rubens and Frans Snyders in 1617-1618 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum), is associated with vipers and was described in the natural histories of Pliny and Gesner. See Susan Koslow, "The Science and Poetics of 'The Head of Medusa' by Rubens and Snyders," in *Shop Talk: Studies in Honor of Seymour Slive: Presented on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Seymour Slive, Cynthia P. Schneider, William W. Robinson and Alice I. Davies (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Art Museums, 1995), 148.

<sup>190</sup> "12 Stuckens van Van Kessel maer geen daer die vliermuijsen op staen, noch geen serpente, noch van die wilde verckens, noch van die kokrodiliën dan veul ghevoghelt ende eenighe van visschen ende den prys ghelijck ick voor dese hebbe betaelt ende eenighe van syn copypen can denselften." Eric Duverger, *Nieuwe Gegevens*, 1969, 231; Neil De Marchi and Hans van Miegroet, "Novelty and Fashion Circuits in the Mid-Seventeenth Century Antwerp-Paris Art Trade." *Journal of Medieval and EarlyModern Studies* 28:1 (1998): 225.

singled out by Picart and ironically sold for a tremendous sum of money in Antwerp, according to De Bie. Although he does not mention insects specifically, it is reasonable to assume that the hairy spiders, ominous giant beetles, and slithering lizards featured in Van Kessel's insect oeuvre were also included in the list of creatures which were considered too repugnant for certain audiences.

In the episode involving Picart, it seems that monstrosity in Van Kessel's paintings is located in the identity and symbolic associations of depicted creatures, as opposed to solely the manner in which they are portrayed. Animals such as bats, particularly the vampire variety which Van Kessel pictured repeatedly, were incorporated into vampire folklore upon their discovery in South America in the sixteenth century.<sup>191</sup> Even though vampire bats did not exist in Europe, they would have been well known to Van Kessel's clientele from travel reports of fauna observed in the New World, some of which contained horrifying descriptions of these never before seen monstrous creatures.<sup>192</sup> Van Kessel's inclusion of these animals in his paintings therefore visualized a long textual and oral tradition of ominous descriptions. In *Creatures of the Night*, a violent image of various rodents simultaneously attacking a vampire bat and its young and devouring an owl (fig. 3.13), Van Kessel combined two nocturnal creatures, bats and owls, which were associated with the supernatural of sorcery and the diabolical.<sup>193</sup> In this painting, the monstrosity lies primarily in the identities of the animals and what they

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<sup>191</sup> Daniel Cohen, *Encyclopedia of Monsters: Bigfoot, Chinese Wildman, Nessie, Sea Ape, Werewolf and many more....* (London: Michael O'Mara Books Ltd., 1989), 95-96; Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 76.

<sup>192</sup> Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 76.

<sup>193</sup> J.C. Cooper, *Symbolic and Mythological Animals* (London: Aquarian Press, 1992), 25-26.

symbolize, although the extremely violent and gruesome context into which Van Kessel inserted them admittedly enhances this effect.

In addition to depicting animals that already possessed monstrous and sinister associations in nature, Van Kessel also followed in the tradition of Hieronymus Bosch, Bruegel's contemporary best known for creating fantastic hybrids of animate and inanimate things (figs. 3.14, 3.15). Both Bosch and Van Kessel vied with nature as producers of monstrosities, inventing chimeras that were more hideous and outrageous than anything found in the natural world. Rather than imitating nature's creations, these painters practiced what Joseph Koerner has called "an art [that] imitated nature's own productivity."<sup>194</sup> Like Van Kessel, Bosch painted in a vivid, meticulously detailed, animated manner that conveyed the impression that the things which he represented were observed and belonged in nature.<sup>195</sup> Bosch's "exact fantasies with believable details"<sup>196</sup> were also popular among aristocratic collectors, stimulating curiosity and serving as engaging conversation pieces.<sup>197</sup>

Like Bosch, Van Kessel naturalized monstrous creatures, such as the anthropomorphic mandrake figures that appear in the Royal Collection gallery painting and the Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World*, or the hideous winged fantasy creature that appears in the centerpiece of both versions of his insect series comprised of seventeen individual paintings (figs. 3.1, 3.16). Van Kessel's ability to merge the fantastic with the natural is illustrated in a comparison of his treatment of this hybrid

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<sup>194</sup> Joseph Koerner, "Bosch's Equipment," in *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science*, edited by Lorraine Daston, 27-65 (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 57.

<sup>195</sup> Koerner, "Bosch's Equipment," 56.

<sup>196</sup> Koerner, "Bosch's Equipment," 56.

<sup>197</sup> Koerner, "Bosch's Equipment," 45.

creature with that of his predecessor, Hoefnagel, who portrayed a similar animal in one of the miniatures in *Ignis* (figs. 3.17, 3.18).<sup>198</sup>

Hoefnagel distinguishes this monstrous chimera from the more naturalistic praying mantis and moth beside it by depicting cast shadows under only the latter two insects. On the contrary, Van Kessel's rendition of the winged beast casts an unmistakable shadow in order to make it blend seamlessly with the collection of identifiable specimens that surrounds it. While the gold ring in Hoefnagel's image isolates and spotlights the chimera, the same figure is nearly obscured by the abundance of insects depicted in Van Kessel's painting. In regard to the latter picture, upon first glance, the viewer is deceived into thinking he or she is looking at a collection of the familiar; however, this illusion is shattered by the presence of this monstrous and bizarre creature.

Despite the life-like rendering of Van Kessel's monstrous chimera, and the fact that it is ensconced in a virtual collection of identifiable species of insects, we know that it derives from multiple earlier painted and printed precedents.<sup>199</sup> By reinserting this

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<sup>198</sup> This creature bears a striking resemblance to an anonymous woodcut dated 1542 that was probably originally published as part of a broadside featuring news about the devastating locust infestations that swept across central Europe and Italy during the mid-sixteenth century. Such highly idealized, monstrous creatures reflect the artistic license that was taken in order to emphasize their malevolence and destructiveness. Philip C. Ritterbush "Art and Science as Influences on the Early Development of Natural History Collections," *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 82 (1969): 563-564. The repetition and variation of these figures in paintings by Hoefnagel and Van Kessel underscores an important point about early modern pictorial representations of the natural world. In addition to, or often in place of, firsthand observation of flora and fauna, artists drew from a common bank of visual material that circulated throughout Europe; therefore, art about nature from this period frequently can be more accurately described as art about art about nature. By the late seventeenth century, when Van Kessel was active, an image of an animal might derive from an extended chain of visual sources that spanned different media and multiple centuries.

<sup>199</sup> In addition to Hoefnagel's example, a similar winged figure is also found in an engraving by Nicolaes de Bruyn in his *Volatilium Varii Generis Effigies*, a series of 13 prints depicting insects and birds dating from 1594. See F.W.H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts c.1450-1700* (Amsterdam: M. Hertzberger, 1949- ), 224-236.

motif into a new visual context and manipulating, rather than merely transcribing it, however, Van Kessel made it even more curious to early modern viewers. The creature's privileged, seemingly pivotal position in the middle of the entire ensemble of insects puts Van Kessel's artistry on par with nature's artistry and illuminates his engagement with a long lineage of artists, like Bosch, who vied with nature's artistry by making it more monstrous through the artifice of painting.

The collision of striking naturalism and fantasy in this and other insect works by Van Kessel challenges the rigid distinction made by some modern scholars between naturalism and observation on the one hand and artifice and the imagination on the other. The representation of the chimera at the very center of Van Kessel's painting provides a counterpoint to Claudia Swan's division of Jacques de Gheyn's production into 'scientific' images of nature (namely, images of insects, frogs, and flowers) and fantastic images of witches and other preternatural beings.<sup>200</sup> Swan's segregation of these interrelated images and attempt to determine "At what point does an image become scientific?" assume a literal definition of *naer het leven* as implying direct observation and *uyt den gheest* as encompassing the realm of the artistic imagination, or *fantasia*.<sup>201</sup> By contrast, Van Kessel's lifelike chimera, which belongs to a long chain of related images, illuminates the seventeenth-century definition of *naer het leven* as the practice of representing something (regardless of its status as real or fantastic) in a vivid way and after an original image. As the central motif in this assembly of insects and other creatures, Van Kessel's chimera draws attention to the role of artifice and the imagination in producing lifelike naturalism.

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<sup>200</sup> Swan, *Art, Science, and Witchcraft*.

<sup>201</sup> Swan, *Art, Science and Witchcraft*, 12.

A related dimension of Van Kessel's fashioning of monstrosity was his remarkable ability to defamiliarize even the most ordinary of creatures. Works like his insect signatures, which contort spiders, caterpillars, and snakes into highly artificial poses are but one example. In addition, many of the formal and material characteristics discussed earlier, such as his incorporation of polished copper plates, jewel-like colors, finely-wrought details, and illusionistic manipulation of space and scale, likewise transform common dragonflies, moths, ants, and beetles into miniature marvels. The practice of making ordinary insects appear strange was not unique to Van Kessel's paintings, but was also a feature of the entomological illustrations produced by his naturalist counterparts. In Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*, discussed earlier, a flea, a common house fly, and other insects morph into almost irre recognizable creatures as a result of Hooke's pictorial artifice. As we shall see, this intersection between the pictorial praxis of early modern artists and naturalists was not coincidental, but instead reflects their common endeavor of purposefully manipulating nature in order to make its workings visible and more comprehensible.

### **The Seventeenth-Century Status and Representation of Insects**

In his *Lof der schilder-konst* (1642), the Leiden painter Philips Angel defends painting's superiority to sculpture by citing its unrivaled ability to represent nature more comprehensively. Insects, in particular, are among the creatures which Angel identifies as being a subject of the art of painting:

We say that the art of painting is far more general because it is capable of imitating nature much more copiously, for in addition to depicting every kind of

creature like birds, fishes, worms, flies, spiders and caterpillars it can render every kind of metal and can distinguish between them, such as gold, silver, bronze, copper, pewter, lead and all the rest.<sup>202</sup>

Angel's singling out of insects, as opposed to larger and more conventional animal subjects, underscores their status as creatures that were privileged in art for their capacity to showcase finely-wrought, virtuoso workmanship. Their multiple layers of reference to artistry, wonders, and marvels made them unique subjects of painting and contributed to their appeal to connoisseurs.

Van Kessel capitalized on the inherent association between insects and crafted artistry, distinguishing these subjects from other animals in his oeuvre, such as fish or birds. Van Kessel's depiction of creatures that occupy the entire spectrum of the zoological world provides some revealing points of comparison that demonstrate major differences in the way that he approached the representation of insects. It has been noted that the precise detail of Van Kessel's insects, many of which can be identified by entomologists, is inconsistent with the more generic rendering, unrealistic coloring, and anatomical oddities of other creatures depicted in his oeuvre.<sup>203</sup>

Certainly, compared to the larger animals which populate his series of *The Four Parts of the World*, insects would have been much more accessible to Van Kessel, whether through firsthand observation or detailed studies made by others. In one of Van Kessel's study pieces depicting several kinds of butterflies, for example, the butterflies

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<sup>202</sup> Philips Angel, "Praise of Painting," trans. Michael Hoyle, *Simiolus* 24:2/3 (1996): 239.

<sup>203</sup> Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 95.



have been identified as species native to northern Europe, many of which are still commonly found in the Netherlands (fig. 3.19).<sup>204</sup>

Due to the small size and relative novelty of information about the anatomy of insects, it is also not surprising that Van Kessel would devote extra attention to rendering them more descriptively and comprehensively than larger, more familiar animals. Insects are the only animals in Van Kessel's oeuvre that are consistently portrayed in the absence of any context, such as a city- or landscape. The practice of depicting insects against a neutral ground was not new, as we have seen from Hoefnagel's earlier miniatures. Of the four volumes depicting different species of animals in Hoefnagel's *Four Elements, Ignis*, the volume featuring insects, stands out as the only one in which animals are not located in their natural habitat.<sup>205</sup> Hoefnagel, and later Van Kessel, presumably realized that in order to visually describe insects so that their intricate anatomies could be made fully visible, any context had to be eliminated due to the technical impossibility of rendering it at the same enlarged scale as the creatures themselves. The neutral ground and lack of anchoring elements in these paintings enhances the disparities in scale between individual creatures. In Van Kessel's insect paintings, scale is ultimately related to intelligibility, providing a different system of understanding in which visualizing both the diversity of species and the anatomical variety within individual creatures is paramount.

Van Kessel's differentiation between insects and other kinds of animals also reflects the changing status of insects in the mid-seventeenth century, as well as the

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<sup>204</sup> Bergvelt and Kistemaker, *De Wereld binnen handbereik*, 50. I would also like to thank staff members at the Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof in Delft for identifying many of the pictured butterfly species during my visit.

<sup>205</sup> For an illuminating discussion of Hoefnagel's distinction between insects and other species of animals in his *Four Elements*, see Lee Hendrix, "Of Hirsutes and Insects: Joris Hoefnagel and the Art of the Wondrous," *Word and Image* 11 (1995): 373-390.

increasing need for new representational strategies to make them more accessible. The perception of insects had oscillated between wonder and disgust since antiquity, as exemplified by Pliny's description of insects in his *Natural History*:

...we marvel at elephants' shoulders carrying castles and bulls' necks and the fierce tossings of their heads, at the rapacity of tigers and the manes of lions, whereas really Nature is to be found in her entirety nowhere more than in her smallest creations. I consequently beg my readers not to let their contempt for many of these creatures lead them also to condemn to scorn what I relate to them, since in the contemplation of Nature nothing can possibly be deemed superfluous.<sup>206</sup>

Pliny's valorization of insects as marvels of nature on the one hand, and subsequent appeal to readers who might condemn them on the other, illustrates their precarious position within the animal kingdom as well their paradoxical reception within society. The advent of new optical technologies in the early modern period, however, fueled widespread fascination with insects' peculiar and intricately crafted anatomies and seemingly boundless reproductive capacity, dramatically altering their status in the eyes of naturalists, artists, and collectors.

Exploration into insect life occurred in multiple spheres, and the work of naturalists, artists, and experimental *virtuosi* often intersected and led to mutual discoveries. The Dutch naturalist and watercolorist, Johannes Goedaert (1617-1668) recorded his observations of and experimentation with insects in his *Metamorphosis naturalis* (3 volumes, 1662, 1667, 1669), which included illustrations of the life cycles of beetles, flies, wasps, butterflies, and moths. Although Goedaert failed to devise a classification system for insects and still clung to the notion of spontaneous generation, his observations provided an important foundation for the work of Jan Swammerdam (1637-1680), the Dutch microscopist whose landmark discoveries about insect

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<sup>206</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 3, book 11, 435.

reproduction and metamorphosis helped to dispel the theory of spontaneous generation in insects.

Critical to Swammerdam's discoveries was the advent and development of optical technologies such as the microscope. Its invention in the Netherlands in the 1590s and perfection over the course of the seventeenth century by Anton van Leeuwenhoek and others transformed the study, collection, and description of insects. Both Godaert and Swammerdam observed and sketched insects from life in the 1650s and 1660s, and their findings, along with Hooke's engraved illustrations in the *Micrographia*, opened up new areas of collecting, in addition to supplying artists with novel subjects. Many collectors turned to artists to illustrate their entomological holdings.<sup>207</sup>

The growing popular interest in insects coincided with the accumulation of an increasingly esoteric body of knowledge about insect anatomy and reproduction. By the 1660s, the investigation of insects had advanced to such a degree that it required the development of new strategies of pictorial representation.<sup>208</sup> Naturalists, microscopists, and artists engaged in verbal and visual dialogues with one another in order to create an iconography and a visual language that was accessible to a broad audience. Artists and naturalists alike were faced with the challenging task of representing insects, whose minute anatomies required optical aids to observe and identify their various parts, in a way that made sense to viewers who might be unfamiliar with these new visual technologies. In other words, they had to find a way to merge the seen and the unseen,

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<sup>207</sup> Eric Jorink, "Between Emblematics and the 'Argument from the Design': The Representation of Insects in the Dutch Republic," 166. In *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature, and the Visual Arts*, eds. Karl A.E. Enenkel and Paul J. Smith (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 147-175; MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment*, 140.

<sup>208</sup> Domenico Bertoloni Meli, "The Representation of Insects in the Seventeenth Century: A Comparative Approach." *Annals of Science* 67: 3 (2010): 428.

drawing upon visual techniques and traditions that would have been legible to the early modern viewer in order to translate what they saw through the lens of microscope.

Even so-called ‘eyewitness’ images were, in reality, carefully crafted from a combination of models, written accounts, and the aggregate of images in the author’s visual memory. Robert Hooke’s engraving of the eye of a fly in his *Micrographia* is but an example of how manipulations of scale and medium shaped the universal image of insects for the early modern viewer (3.20). The hyper-realism, distorted scale, and composite perspective of Hooke’s fly draw attention to his early artistic training and recall many of the pictorial strategies that we have discussed relative to Van Kessel’s paintings. This underscores the shared motivations and methods of artistic and scientific pictorial praxis in the seventeenth century.

### **Experimental Artistry: “Nature Pieces” and Lens-like Paintings**

The growing interest in and fascination with insects by naturalists, artists, and collectors in the seventeenth century epitomizes another contemporary definition of curiosity, discussed earlier in this chapter, as the desire to see, understand, and possess rare, novel, and secret things found in nature. The production of new entomological knowledge due to empirical methods of investigation and the invention of optical devices and technologies united naturalists and artists in the common goal of fulfilling the widespread desire to see, comprehend, and collect nature’s smallest creatures.

As I have stressed throughout this chapter, Van Kessel’s insect works are not straightforward descriptions of specimens, but instead mediate between nature and the

viewer in order to make these creatures more accessible and curious at once. As we have seen, the intermediary role of Van Kessel's pictures closely relates to the form and function of early modern 'scientific illustrations,' such as those produced by Hooke and Godaert. Given their common aims and techniques, trying to pigeonhole Van Kessel's insect pictures as either 'scientific' studies or models of virtuoso artistry, as modern scholarship tends to do, is not very useful in identifying how and where art and science intersects in these works. A more fruitful alternative is to examine areas of overlap in the working methods, objectives, empirical approach, and model of picturing represented by Van Kessel's paintings and early modern experimental culture.<sup>209</sup>

The art and career of Van Kessel's Dutch contemporary, Otto Marseus van Schrieck, provide a comparative case study for examining the relationship of Van Kessel's insect pictures to contemporary experimental culture. Like Van Kessel, Marseus van Schrieck created pictures of flora and fauna that manipulate nature and mediate between it and the beholder. Both artists were actively engaged in defining the content and boundaries of the natural world for themselves and their audiences. Although they worked in different contexts and often toward different ends, their art shares many of the same fundamental characteristics.

First, there is considerable and striking overlap between the subject matter of the two painters. Like Van Kessel, Marseus van Schrieck gravitated towards nature's smallest and basest creatures. His oeuvre is dominated by frogs, toads, snakes, a wide range of insects, and other animals that occupied forest floors, marshes, and swamps (fig.

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<sup>209</sup> Svetlana Alpers noted the important connection between seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting and the practices and objectives of empirical sciences, both of which underscored the necessity of observing and describing (pictorially or otherwise) the natural world "with a sincere hand and a faithful eye," as proclaimed by Robert Hooke: Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, 72-73.

3.21). Based on the repetition of certain motifs in these artists' oeuvre, it has been suggested that they were familiar with each other's work and perhaps even crossed paths at some point.<sup>210</sup> In his illuminating study of Marseus van Schrieck's art and career, Douglas Hildebrecht notes that the fighting snake and lizard pictured in Van Kessel's view of *Mecca*, featured in both of his series of *The Four Parts of the World* (fig. 3.22),<sup>211</sup> are direct citations from a painting by Marseus that exists in multiple versions (fig. 3.23).<sup>212</sup> Additionally, there is at least one known example of reverse borrowing, in which Marseus van Schrieck apparently cited a picture by Van Kessel. Two paintings of butterflies alighting on tree branches, which appear as pictured compositions in the central panel of *Europe* from Van Kessel's *Four Parts of the World* in Munich (fig. 3.4), as well as in a gallery painting by Gonzales Coques and other artists (figs. 3.24, 3.25), bear a striking resemblance to the ensemble of butterflies in a painting by Marseus van Schrieck dated to 1672 (fig. 3.26).<sup>213</sup> This is the only known example in which Marseus represented butterflies in this manner, suggesting that he was familiar with either Van Kessel's paintings-within-paintings or their prototype, if one existed.<sup>214</sup>

Secondly, both Marseus van Schrieck and Van Kessel engaged with the newly emerging discipline of entomology, albeit in different ways. Marseus van Schrieck's

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<sup>210</sup> Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 167.

<sup>211</sup> In the Munich series (1664-1666), *Mecca* is labeled as number 12 in *Asia*. In a second version of this series, dated to 1660 and now only partly extant in Madrid (Museo del Prado), the exact same composition bears the inscription "ASIA," in white paint on the verso of the copperplate. Both series will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>212</sup> Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 167-168.

<sup>213</sup> For discussion of this gallery painting, see E. Reznicek, "Notities bij 'de Konstkamer' van Gonzales Coques," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 2 (1954): 43-46, and Van Suchtelen and Van Beneden, *Room for Art*, 111-112, 120, 136-137.

<sup>214</sup> Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 168, note 41.

paintings were deployed in the acquisition and dissemination of new knowledge about insects and responded to contemporary philosophical debates about insect generation. By contrast, Van Kessel's insect works were less concerned with such developments and instead reflect novel approaches to viewing, describing, and displaying these creatures in the seventeenth century.

Finally, Marseus van Schrieck's finely-wrought and illusionistic "nature pieces," to borrow a term used by Hildebrecht, function similarly to Van Kessel's insect works in that they too seduce the viewer into believing that they represent an unmediated view of the natural world at the same time that they deploy formal and compositional elements that "draw attention to the artfulness of the painter, the involvement of the beholder, and the kind of knowledge relevant to understanding the view of nature on display."<sup>215</sup> Thus, despite the fact that Marseus van Schrieck's nature pieces were produced in a different way and for a different purpose than Van Kessel's insect paintings, both categories of works conspicuously revealed the crafted manipulation that underlie their naturalistic facades.

Upon first glance, Marseus van Schrieck's large-scale, easel paintings of grotesque and often violent creatures portrayed in their natural habitats could not be more different from the precious, miniature insect works in Van Kessel's oeuvre, which typically contain a blank, neutral background and convey the fiction of a specimen collection, rather than a natural environment. The impeccable detail in Marseus van Schrieck's nature pieces, seen in the individually-rendered scales on the bodies of snakes and the tangibly rough skin of toads and frogs, as well as his attention to anatomical accuracy and demonstrated knowledge of the life cycles and behaviors characteristic of

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<sup>215</sup> Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 2.

the specimens which he portrayed reflect the artist's extensive study of preserved and living specimens collected in his personal gardens and vivaria in Amsterdam and Rome. The inventory of Marseus van Schrieck's Amsterdam home includes dozens of containers filled with preserved *doode beesjes* (small animals), including butterflies or butterfly wings.<sup>216</sup> Marseus's empirical approach is also described in a written account of his career by Arnold Houbraken, who reports that he kept live snakes in his studio and commanded them to pose for him with his maulstick.<sup>217</sup>

The accuracy and firsthand knowledge represented in Marseus van Schrieck's nature pieces are at odds with Van Kessel's insect works, which, although they portray many identifiable species, often contain morphological inaccuracies.<sup>218</sup> Marseus's art was also much more closely intertwined with contemporary scientific discoveries and philosophical debates.<sup>219</sup> Marseus van Schrieck is the only artist mentioned in Swammerdam's posthumously published *Bijbel der Natuur*, in which his detailed observations of caterpillars are used as evidence by Swammerdam to dispute the then still popular belief in spontaneous generation of insects.<sup>220</sup> The extensive and thorough description of Marseus van Schrieck's observations by Swammerdam indicates that the painter was regarded by prominent contemporary naturalists as possessing a high degree

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<sup>216</sup> Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 155-156, 515, appendix B.

<sup>217</sup> Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh*, vol. 1, 358.

<sup>218</sup> Bergvelt and Kistemaker, *De Wereld binnen handbereik*, 47.

<sup>219</sup> Thoughtful consideration of these aspects of the artist's oeuvre is found in Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," and Karin Leonhard, "Pictura's Fertile Field: Otto Marseus van Schrieck and the Genre of Sottobosco Painting," *Simiolus* 34:2 (2009/2010): 98-118.

<sup>220</sup> Jan Swammerdam, *The Book of Nature or, The History of Insects*, trans. Thomas Flloyd II (London, 1758), 69.



of entomological expertise and that his opinions and observations held considerable weight.<sup>221</sup>

In contrast to Marseus van Schrieck's close ties with contemporary naturalists, there is no evidence to suggest that Van Kessel was connected to naturalists or that his compositions were ever used by them to obtain information. Furthermore, we can deduce from the extensive repetition of motifs and the inconsistencies in relative scale in Van Kessel's insect pictures that he probably worked primarily from a limited repertoire of drawn, printed, and painted studies, rather than from the direct observation of specimens. Discrepancies in the depiction of cast shadows and the existence of multiple viewpoints within a single composition also indicate that Van Kessel's insect pictures are formed from an aggregate of diverse motifs portrayed from different vantage points and in various scales. Therefore, while Marseus van Schrieck's empirical approach to acquiring the skills and knowledge to represent insects took the form of persistent observation and examination of the creatures contained in his gardens and vivaria, Van Kessel's approach involved repeated observation and imitation of extant models and motifs, which authorized a different, but equally valid, kind of eyewitness account or *naer het leven* type of picturing.

An anecdote reported by Jacob Campo Weyerman along with close examination of Van Kessel's insect paintings provide insight into how these works were conceptualized and constructed. Weyerman, who would have had access to Van Kessel's workshop by virtue of the fact that that he studied with the painter's son, Ferdinand, reported that the younger Van Kessel inherited a large corpus of "*modellen*" (models or

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<sup>221</sup> Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 224.

studies) which his father had drawn, modeled, and painted.<sup>222</sup> Although not substantial in number, there are extant gouache studies executed on parchment and vellum by Van Kessel, and these works may represent the type of model to which Weyerman referred. Two such works, which may have been pendants (figs. 3.27, 3.28), appear to have been executed as preparatory studies for a pair of nearly identical compositions painted on copper (figs. 3.29, 3.30).

Copying and recycling of models is frequently observed in Van Kessel's painted oeuvre, where individual motifs are replicated, mixed, and matched in multiple pictures. This practice is exemplified by two nearly identical paintings on panel featuring butterflies and moths, both of which are signed, but only one of which is dated, to 1656 (figs. 3.19, 3.31). Both of these works have been identified by Fred Meijer as "study pieces" that served as models for Van Kessel's more complex compositions.<sup>223</sup> Several of the butterflies, moths, and beetles in these two works are exactly copied in a smaller painting on copper from a series in the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 3.32) as well as in a pair of pendants, also painted on copper, in the Fitzwilliam Museum (figs. 3.33, 3.34).

In each work, regardless of the variation in the size of the wood panel or copper plate, Van Kessel's repeated insect motifs remain uniform in scale, causing inconsistencies in relative scale within the individual works.<sup>224</sup> In the second of the

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<sup>222</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, 210.

<sup>223</sup> See W. Lauresseyns, "Jan Van Kessel De Oude," in *Bruegel: Een Dynastie Van Schilders* (Brussels: Paleis voor Schone Kunsten, 1980), 331, and Bergvelt and Kistemaker, *De Wereld binnen handbereik*, 50. Fred Meijer proposes that the Delft painting and its variant, also on panel and dated 1656, originally served as workshop models for Van Kessel's more complex compositions painted on copper. Meijer, *Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Paintings Bequeathed by Daisy Linda Ward*, 231.

<sup>224</sup> The sharp outlines of the insects in many of Van Kessel's painting on copper, almost as if these lines were incised, and the precision with which motifs are copied from one work to the next suggest that some form of mechanical transfer may have been used. In the sixteenth century, tracing or pouncing was a

Fitzwilliam pendants, for example, a long-horned beetle menacingly mounts a seashell while, at the same time, a dragonfly and Cockchafer beetle dwarf a sprig of flowers. Even though the creatures, shells, and flowers are rendered very naturalistically, the insects are depicted as if equivalent in size to blooms and shells that would be much larger in reality. Therefore, although often described by modern art historians as collections of individual specimen studies due to their deceptively life-like quality and meticulous rendering of morphological details,<sup>225</sup> Van Kessel's insect paintings are, in fact, highly contrived, additive compositions that are formed from an aggregate of prior drawn or painted models.

The dramatic variations in relative scale in Van Kessel's insect works can be attributed in part to the mechanical and pragmatic aspects of copying motifs. I would like to suggest, however, that repetition is not the only factor responsible for such visual inconsistencies. The fact that discrepancies in scale occur in Van Kessel's insect paintings, as opposed to his pictures of fish, birds, mammals, and other kinds of animals, indicates another layer of significance that is directly related to the advent of the microscope and its critical role in entomological investigation in the seventeenth century. Svetlana Alpers has linked the increasing importance of microscopic observation in seventeenth-century scientific investigation to the pictorial praxis of contemporary Netherlandish painting, noting the widespread effect that the microscope had on how images were created and processed visually:

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popular and efficient way to transfer motifs from drawn studies to painted compositions. It is possible that Van Kessel adopted a similar method in his workshop. For a discussion of different categories of repetition and transfer processes in the sixteenth century, see Arianne Faber Kolb, "Varieties of Repetition: 'Trend' Versus 'Brand' In Landscape Paintings by Joachim Patinir and His Workshop," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28:1 (1998): 167-200.

<sup>225</sup> Meijer, *Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Paintings Bequeathed by Daisy Linda Ward*, 229.

An immediate and devastating result of the possibility of bringing to men's eyes the minutest of living things (the organisms viewed in the microscopic lens), or the farthest and largest (the heavenly bodies viewed through the telescopic lens), was the calling into question of any fixed sense of scale and proportion. The related problem of how we perceive distance and estimate relative size still exercises students of perception. Whatever the solution might be, there is general conclusion that the eyes cannot by themselves estimate distance and size. To many it seemed a devastating dislocation of the previously understood measure of the world.<sup>226</sup>

This “dislocation” is epitomized by the ambiguous sense of scale and space in Van Kessel's insect paintings. His resurrection and transformation of a pictorial type that was made popular by artists such as Hoefnagel over a century earlier was undoubtedly informed by the advent of new optical technologies and novel approaches to viewing and thinking about insects, and these developments helped shape his innovative approach to representing entomological subjects.

Van Kessel's simulation of lens-like effects in his paintings privileged his art over nature, proving that art could go beyond the limitations of the natural world. Additionally, by linking his artworks to microscopic viewing, he authorized them as eyewitness accounts, despite the fact that they lacked the anatomical accuracy, firsthand knowledge of animal behavior, organizational structure of seventeenth-century taxonomic categories, and references to contemporary natural philosophical debates featured in Marseus van Schrieck's nature pieces.

At the time Van Kessel was producing his paintings, the complexity and inexhaustible detail of insect anatomy had only recently been made apparent by microscopic investigations. Microscopic viewing, in which the object of study is reduced to increasingly more miniscule constituent parts, made visible the formerly invisible ‘hidden’ and ‘secret’ inner workings of insects. Much like Hooke's illustration of the eye

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<sup>226</sup> Alpers, *Art of Describing*, 18.

of the house fly in his *Micrographia* (fig. 3.20), which combines multiple views in order to achieve a singular, legible description, Van Kessel's insect pictures also simulate a lens-like viewing experience that brings together multiple, disparate views of creatures. The result, seen in both Hooke's and Van Kessel's pictures, is a view of insect anatomy that is simultaneously more accessible, yet also stranger and more monstrous. The scrupulously precise and magnified detail and isolation of these insects on the page (or plate) makes their intricately crafted forms more visible, but also decontextualizes them to the point of making them appear unfamiliar, more visually compelling, and increasingly curious.

In Van Kessel's insect works, scale is manipulated in such a way that it simulates the "dislocation" of vision caused by the introduction of the microscope, thereby aligning artistry with experimental technologies and positing that both were superior to nature because they could create what nature could not. Under the microscope, or in Van Kessel's paintings, the ordinary became extraordinary. In the latter, minute details that are invisible to the naked eye, such as the individual hairs on a caterpillar or the subtle markings on a butterfly's wing, are revealed through masterly, miniature brushstrokes. In Van Kessel's *Study of Butterfly and Insects* in Washington, for example, technical analysis has revealed that the intricate white highlights on the butterfly's wings and those adjacent to the hairs of the caterpillar were produced by a succession of tiny lines scratched into a layer of transparent wash in order to expose the white ground layer underneath (fig. 3.10).<sup>227</sup> Their normally disdained bodies were transformed into wondrous objects of curiosity and consummate artifice. Hooke's fold-out engravings (fig. 1.9) and Van Kessel's insect paintings also belie the miniature scale of insects in reality

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<sup>227</sup> Wheelock, *Flemish Paintings*, 120.

by transforming these creatures into monstrous spectacles. This distortion of scale is underscored by Van Kessel's juxtaposition of insects with objects such as shells and flowers (fig. 3.34).

Although both Van Kessel and Marseus van Schrieck created works that appear highly naturalistic, their paintings also draw attention to their own fiction and role as mediators, as opposed to mirrors, of nature. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the many ways in which Van Kessel underscored the artifice of his insect paintings, by manipulating space, and scale, emulating the formal and material properties of luxury objects, and making references to prior works of art. Marseus van Schrieck likewise drew attention to the artificial construction of his nature pieces by arranging animals in impossible groupings, deploying theatrical light effects, and incorporating real examples of *naturalia* in the composition. Several of his paintings reveal evidence of a technique, which he probably invented himself, that involved pasting butterfly wings onto the canvas in order to leave an impression of their coloring.<sup>228</sup> Marseus van Schrieck also frequently added texture to his forest floors by dipping moss in paint and applying it to the surface of the painting in order to leave behind an illusionistic, tactile imprint.<sup>229</sup>

The differing reception of artworks by Marseus van Schrieck and Van Kessel in the early modern period illustrates that the conflation of art and nature was appreciated by some, but not all. On the one hand, it added value and curiosity, prompting admirers such as De Bie to marvel at Van Kessel's ability to rival and surpass nature. On the other hand, however, the conspicuous intersection of art and *naturalia* called into question a work's

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<sup>228</sup> Hildebrecht notes that Marseus van Schrieck was probably the first European artist to paste butterfly wings into easel paintings. As mentioned previously, Hoefnagel had already explored this technique on parchment and vellum miniatures. Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 5, 43, 137-139.

<sup>229</sup> Hildebrecht, "Otto Marseus van Schrieck," 137-138.

legitimacy and value. The painter Elias van den Broeck, who was originally from Antwerp but spent most of his career in Amsterdam, shared Marseus van Schrieck's fascination with insects, lizards, and snakes, and purportedly maintained a garden in which he could keep specimens as models for his paintings.<sup>230</sup> In his biography of the artist, Weyerman alleges that Van den Broeck was forced to leave Antwerp because he pasted real butterfly wings in his pictures instead of painting them, a technique that he undoubtedly borrowed from Marseus van Schrieck.<sup>231</sup> Weyerman's account suggests that Antwerp's predominantly Catholic population was perhaps less receptive to his "unmediated" view of nature than collectors in Amsterdam.<sup>232</sup>

The disparate cultures of natural history that developed in late seventeenth-century Antwerp and the Dutch Republic may have also played a role in the differing tastes of Van Kessel's and Marseus van Schrieck's clientele. The commercially-driven scientific environment of early modern Antwerp, which lacked a university, emphasized practical, empirical study, in contrast to the more intellectual milieu and competing academic centers in the Dutch Republic.<sup>233</sup> Geert Vanpaemel has argued that science in early modern Antwerp was a "sphere of metropolitan life," and that its utilitarian basis was aimed at the public, which included merchants, entrepreneurs and sailors and

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<sup>230</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, vol. 3, 212.

<sup>231</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, vol. 3, 211.

<sup>232</sup> Marseus van Schrieck was also active in Florence, but, as Leonhard points out, the theory of spontaneous generation was discredited there and in the Dutch Republic by the end of the seventeenth century. Leonhard, "Pictura's Fertile Field," 96-96. This was in contrast to Rome, where it was still accepted in intellectual and clerical circles. Therefore, it is possible that the general stance on this matter in Antwerp more closely mirrored that of its Catholic counterpart, Rome, than Florence or Amsterdam.

<sup>233</sup> Geert Vanpaemel. "Science for sale: the metropolitan stimulus for scientific achievements in sixteenth-century Antwerp," in: Patrick O'Brien, Derek Keene, Marjolein 't Hart, and Herman van der Wee, eds. *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 303.

recruited the assistance of artists and printers in order to “tailor it” to the market.<sup>234</sup> The brand of popular, and often recycled, natural history featured in Van Kessel’s pictures was ostensibly well-suited to this environment, whereas the nature pieces of Van Schrieck and Van den Broeck were more apt to engage naturalists, scholars, and other individuals who had a vested interest in cutting-edge scientific discoveries.

Other contemporary sources reveal that Marseus van Schrieck’s intense engagement with the scientific study of insects may have gone against the grain of popular taste in the Antwerp art market. Only one painting by Marseus van Schrieck appears in a seventeenth-century Antwerp inventory and its vague description, “een stuck schildereye...seer constich” (one painting...very artfully painted) does not tell us whether or not it was one his forest floors containing creatural violence or a more conventional flower still life from early in his career.<sup>235</sup> Recorded in the same inventory are a number of paintings by Van Kessel, including two small flower still lifes, a bird chorus, and a seashore with fish, but no paintings of insects or other creatures considered to be excessively hideous, according to Picart’s standards.<sup>236</sup>

### Curious Collections

In contrast to Marseus van Schrieck’s nature pieces, which stage animal fictions in illusionistically-rendered natural environments such as forest floors and marshes, the

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<sup>234</sup> Vanpaemel, “Science for sale,” 288.

<sup>235</sup> Denucé, *De Antwerpsche “Konstkamers,”: Inventarissen van Kunstverzamelingen te Antwerpen in de 16e en 17e Eeuwen* (Amsterdam: De Spiegel, 1932), 339.

<sup>236</sup> Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 2, 396.



neutral backgrounds and regularly spaced creatures in Van Kessel's insect works vividly recall the organizational format of contemporary entomological collections.<sup>237</sup> Not only are the latter lens-like in their portrayal of individual insects, but they also simulate the organization of preserved specimens pinned inside shallow drawers. What was the purpose of creating these virtual collections? I propose that the visual simulation of contemporary insect collections gave authority to Van Kessel's pictures, aligning them with the cabinets of curiosities created by early modern naturalists and *curieux*, a term used to describe an individual who collected *naturalia* and art.<sup>238</sup>

Van Kessel's decontextualization of insects by portraying them individually against a blank ground devoid of any reference to their natural habitat illustrates Janice Neri's definition of "specimen logic" as a visual strategy employed by early modern artists and naturalists that deliberately represented nature as a collection of objects.<sup>239</sup> Neri contends that by portraying insects as collectible objects, artists such as Hoefnagel and Van Kessel actively participated in negotiating the content and boundaries of the natural world. By portraying insects as precious, rare, and exotic objects befitting early modern collections, these artists played a key role in informing the contemporary status of insects as well as their own status as practitioners of a kind of craftsmanship that was valued for its precision and reliability. In the same way that Marseus van Schrieck's ties

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<sup>237</sup> In the seventeenth century, insect specimens were stored together in a single box, as opposed to the modern method of separating individual specimens from one another in "unit trays," which prevent other insects from being disturbed when a single specimen is handled or removed. The bottoms of early modern specimen boxes or drawers were typically made of cork, and oftentimes covered with a paper coating or a coat of light cream or white paint. I would like to thank Dr. Katrina Menard, entomologist and manager of collections at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History at the University of Oklahoma for providing me with this information.

<sup>238</sup> Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 1998, 63-64.

<sup>239</sup> Neri, *The Insect and the Image*, xii-xiii.

to naturalists and participation in the culture of seventeenth-century natural philosophy justified his nature pieces, the link between Van Kessel's insect paintings and cultures of collecting and curiosity likewise provided validation and implied reliable, firsthand knowledge and eyewitness observation. In addition, the visual relationship between Van Kessel's insect paintings and contemporary collections further distinguishes insects from the other animals depicted in his oeuvre, valorizing them as unique and wondrous creatures that require a distinctly different mode of picturing.

Van Kessel's insect pictures not only simulate the appearance of contemporary entomological collections, but also invite similar kinds of looking practices and visual skills. A case in point is the centerpiece of his series of 17 copperplates, discussed earlier (fig. 3.1). The equidistant placement of creatures and multiplicity of viewpoints suggests the possibility that this work required the beholder to walk around it, rather than stand directly in front of it.<sup>240</sup> When this work is displayed flat, like a specimen drawer, instead of hung on a wall, the disparate shadows, perspectives, and scales appear to come into focus and make more sense visually. Although there is equally strong evidence to support the latter mode of viewing, the fact that both options are possible, given the pictorial strategies which Van Kessel employed in the composition, indicates that one may not have necessarily superceded the other. Moreover, this picture throws into relief how the skills of looking at art and those of studying nature intersect in Van Kessel's insect works. One could imagine, for example, an artist, a naturalist, and a collector looking at this work, each taking away something different, yet also being drawn to it for similar reasons, such as its meticulous attention to detail, fine workmanship, juxtaposition of local and exotic specimens, and vivid effect of life-like creatures. In this sense, Van

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<sup>240</sup> I would like to thank Celeste Brusati for her suggestion of this alternative mode of viewing.

Kessel's simulated insect collection operates much like the gallery paintings discussed earlier, in that they had the potential to serve as a locus for looking at and discussing art.

Van Kessel's simulation of collections of curiosities is not limited to his insect pictures, but also extends to his paintings of shells. Often portrayed together in seventeenth-century Dutch still-life paintings, insects and shells shared many of the same qualities. These finely-wrought, miniature objects were considered to be exotic, precious, and 'curious.' One such virtual collection is Van Kessel's whimsical painted ensemble of shells arranged in the form of grotesque faces and vegetal motifs (fig. 1.7). The decorative arrangement of shells in this work has prompted several scholars to compare it with the elaborate, anthropomorphic patterns featured in the conchological cabinets of the renowned Dutch collector Albertus Seba (1665-1736) (figs. 3.35, 3.36).<sup>241</sup> Yet, Seba's collection of rare natural specimens was formed, and later illustrated in a printed catalogue, several decades after Van Kessel painted this work, and I know of no similar painted precedents.<sup>242</sup>

As is the case with his insect works, despite giving the illusion of a straightforward description of a real shell collection, Van Kessel's painted simulation was evidently constructed from a composite of observed, recalled, and imagined sources. The same grotesque shell faces appear as large masks hanging on the walls of the

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<sup>241</sup> Reinier Van 't Zelfde, "O seldsaem dierken dat so schoon paleys bewoonet!," in *Standplaats RKD/Standplaats Academie* (Zwolle, 2001), 60; MacGregor, *Curiosity and Enlightenment*, 136-139; Lauresseyns alternately locates the painting's inspiration in collections of exotic artifacts and 'primitive' folk art. See Laureyssens, "Jan van Kessel de Oude," 328.

<sup>242</sup> Seba's collection was illustrated in, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata descriptio Naaukeurige beschryving van het schatryke kabinet der voornaamste seldzaamheden der natuur*, Amsterdam 1734-1765, 4 vols. [The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek]. More contemporary to Van Kessel's shell painting are the shell festoons carved from limestone that adorn the brickwork façades of the Oostkerk in Middelburg, built between 1647 and 1667 and discussed in Jutting, "Ornamental Shell Festoons." The incorporation of shells in such sculptural decorations was apparently rare, and has been linked to Middelburg's status as a key location for both the Dutch East India Company and shell collectors and enthusiasts.

*kunstkamer* in America from Van Kessel's Munich *Four Parts of the World*, and given the popularity of similar exotic displays of "coquillage" throughout western Europe in this period, it is likely that Van Kessel's anthropomorphic shell displays were inspired by imported artifacts, local imitations, or illustrations found in travelogues (fig. 3.37).<sup>243</sup> In addition, the grotesque faces and ornamental patterns in Van Kessel's shell painting are reminiscent of the tradition of garden follies, particularly in sixteenth-century Italy, where shells were incorporated into designs for grottoes and fountains.<sup>244</sup>

Additionally, light reflects off Van Kessel's painted ensemble of shells from multiple directions, indicating a collection of individual studies, as opposed to the transcription of a single assemblage of shells, and enhancing the picture's three-dimensional, tactile effect. Playing on the common practice of fusing exotic shells with finely-wrought precious metals and stones in order to create luxury objects, Van Kessel's painting takes the meticulously-detailed ingredients of a still-life painting to another level by embellishing the vibrantly-colored shells with pearls, combining them in ornamental arrangements, and simulating the viewing experience of an opulent collection. Van Kessel's shell painting illustrates perfectly how his simulated collections of insects operate. We know it is not a description of an actual collection; yet, it creates the virtual experience of viewing one and prompts the beholder to assume the position of a *curieux*.

The idea of a virtual, painted collection with the potential to stimulate the viewer to see, act, and think like a collector also applies to Van Kessel's insect pictures. Van Kessel's propensity for mobilizing images and recombining them in novel and inventive ways promoted an audience of virtual collectors and connoisseurs who were invited to

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<sup>243</sup> Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 75.

<sup>244</sup> I am grateful to Megan Holmes and Patricia Simons for their comments on this connection.

identify and discover connections between the motifs that comprised his compositely constructed pictures. Like the Antwerp gallery painting genre which, as we have seen, catered to the knowledge and connoisseurship of *liefhedbers*, Van Kessel's simulated insect and shell collections assumed the viewership of *curieux*.

Prior to Van Kessel, Ulisse Aldrovandi and Thomas Moffet effectively created virtual entomological collections in print. In their respective compendia of insect descriptions, *De Animalibus Insectis* (1602) and *Theatrum Insectorum* (1634), Aldrovandi and Moffet employed different techniques of cutting and pasting images from a variety of prior sources in order to create collections on paper.<sup>245</sup> Janice Neri's comparative study of these two manuscripts examines how the ability of their authors, particularly Moffett, to take images from a variety of contexts and reinsert them into new ones prompted the establishment of "a virtual community of insect enthusiasts."<sup>246</sup>

In addition to entomological collections, both real and virtual, Van Kessel's insect pictures also emulate the form and function of early modern vernacular digests, miscellany, and other textual collections which popularized knowledge of art and nature. These printed collections of diverse knowledge and images, which were especially abundant in northern Europe, frequently made references to curiosity with titles like *Recueil curieux* (Collection of curiosities) or *Schätzkammer rarer und neuer Curiositäten* (Treasury of rare and novel curiosities).<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> On the relationship between these two texts and the pictorial strategies employed by their authors, see Neri, "Fantastic Observations: Images of Insects in Early Modern Europe," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2003), Chapter 2, and Neri, *The Insect and the Image*, Chapter 2.

<sup>246</sup> Neri, "Fantastic Observations," 3.

<sup>247</sup> Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 170.

Neil Kenny has noted that many of these early modern texts were presented as collections of diverse, fragmentary information, such as the *Schatzkammer rarer und neuer Curiositäten*, a compendium of recipes for cooking, techniques for completing household tasks, gardening advice, and scientific experiments, among other topics.<sup>248</sup> The fragmentary composition of the manuscript is alluded to on the titlepage (fig. 3.38) and accompanying engraving (fig. 3.39). The former employs multiple headings in various fonts and sizes, while the latter likewise depicts eight discrete fragments, or “*Curiositäten*” as they were then known, in order to allude to the various subjects addressed in the text. In regard to such texts, Kenny points out that the incorporation of curiosity into the title consistently indicated content that was not erudite or scientific, but rather popularizing, cursory, and perhaps even entertaining or satirical.<sup>249</sup> As in the German example mentioned above, the qualification of “curios” also signaled a fragmentary collection of discrete knowledge, as opposed to a systematic, comprehensive treatise.

Such “metaphorical collections,” as Kenny describes them,<sup>250</sup> are echoed in Van Kessel’s insect pictures. Like these printed miscellany and digests, Van Kessel’s paintings bring together diverse, popular fragments of natural knowledge intended for the delight and entertainment of non-naturalists. His paintings also give the illusion of a coherent ensemble, although they are in reality aggregative compositions. Moreover, like

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<sup>248</sup> John Chamberlayne, *Schatzkammer rarer und neuer Curiositäten in den aller-wunderbahresten Wirkungen der Natur und Kunst : darinnen allerhand seltzame und ungemeyne Geheimnisse, bewehrte Artzneyen, Wissenschaftten und Kunst-Stücke zu finden* (Hamburg: auff Gottfried Schultzens Kosten , 1686); Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 170-183.

<sup>249</sup> Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 183; Kenny, *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany*, 193-198.

<sup>250</sup> Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 170.

these manuscripts, which frequently explored curious objects of both nature and art, Van Kessel's insect works stimulate the viewer to make connections between the two. Finally, both the texts and Van Kessel's paintings invoke curiosity by anachronistically taking information and images out of their original contexts and recombining them in ways that made them appear novel and strange.<sup>251</sup>

Situating Van Kessel's insect pictures within the early modern culture of curiosity, which intersected the spheres of art, science, and collecting, reveals their multidimensional interpretive possibilities. Based on contemporary written accounts, as well as close observation of the pictures themselves, it is clear that the criteria for which Van Kessel's insect works were valued and esteemed in the early modern period were numerous and diverse, ranging from their material properties and connoisseurial appeal, to their simulation of novel visual technologies and resonance with popular collecting practices. Articulating the relationship between Van Kessel's insect works and different types of early modern collections also sets the stage for the next chapter, which looks at how the logic and organization of such collections informed Van Kessel's notion of what defined a picture and how it operated, and ultimately led him to invent a novel pictorial type.

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<sup>251</sup> Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 169-170.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *THE FOUR PARTS OF THE WORLD: PICTURES OF/AS COLLECTIONS*

As mentioned earlier, a second, unpublished edition of Cornelis de Bie's *Het gulden cabinet*, dated to 1675, is devoted to the description and praise of Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World*. Although Van Kessel made two nearly identical versions of this series, only the one that is now located in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich remains intact (figs. 1.13-1.16).<sup>252</sup> In many ways, this series, which was produced at the peak of Van Kessel's career between 1664 and 1666, provides a visual summation of his oeuvre, as it brings together all of the major motifs and subjects represented in his vast corpus.<sup>253</sup> Each of the four composite pictures in the series is formed from a central copper plate surrounded by 16 smaller, peripheral plates and set into a compartmentalized ebony frame on which the names of continents and cities are inscribed in gold paint. *Europe, Asia, Africa, and America*, the four continents then known, are represented in the central plates as *kunstkammer*-like spaces overflowing with paintings, statues, military implements, precious objects, musical and scientific instruments, animals, and figures

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<sup>252</sup> When referring to Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* in this chapter, I mean to include both the Munich and Madrid versions unless otherwise noted.

<sup>253</sup> The Munich series is dated on the central panels of *Europe* (1664 and 1665) and *America* (1666) and signed in all of the central panels except *Africa*. The central panel of *Europe*, identified as "Rome" on the ebony frame, bears two different dates. The first is located in the easel painting featuring Van Kessel's signature formed from animated caterpillars and snakes, which reads "FECIT 1664." The second appears as in an epitaph inscribed above the mantelpiece that reads as follows: "VAN VIER EN VROUW. AL EVEN SCHON. ANNO 1665."



dressed in exotic costumes. Meanwhile, the peripheral plates depict individual cities, monuments, and geographic landmarks in conjunction with allegedly native flora and fauna that frequently borders on the bizarre.<sup>254</sup>

The tension between near and far, and familiar and exotic, discussed earlier in relation to Van Kessel's insect works,<sup>255</sup> is also a key feature of the four paintings in his Munich series.<sup>256</sup> In the sixteen panoramic views surrounding the central personification of the continent, distant cities and landscapes form a nearly continuous backdrop for superimposed still-life vignettes of animals that meticulously describe their physical, as well as emotional, characteristics. In Van Kessel's Munich cycle, as in his carefully-crafted, composite insect pictures, magnification and juxtaposition make familiar creatures appear strange while bringing closer into sight things that are distant and exotic. Viewing these pictures requires a constant back-and-forth between scrutinizing objects of *naturalia* and *artificialia* in the central collections and looking through to the distant, peripheral landscapes that allude to their global origins.

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<sup>254</sup> In some instances, the species of depicted animals are not native inhabitants of the geographic locations with which they are associated. Additionally, not all of the peripheral plates are paired with the appropriate continent. Athens and Spitzbergen are included in *Asia*, for example. Such discrepancies, at least to modern eyes, have been attributed to either Van Kessel's lack of geographical and natural historical knowledge, or to his presumed overriding pursuit of "fantastic exoticism" at the expense of "documentary exoticism" and "ethnographic accuracy." See Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 6-7, Schneider, *The Art of the Still Life*, 163-165, and Gormans, "Ein Eurozentrischer Blick auf die Welt," 384-389. A simpler explanation may be that the peripheral plates were reassembled in a different orientation at some point after their original framing. Alternatively, as Teixeira has suggested, such "mistakes" may reflect early modern historical, political, or cosmographic agendas that modern viewers are not aware of. For example, he notes that in some cases, these 'errors' recall elements of centuries-old legends about the discovery and symbolic associations of certain animals. See Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 35-36, 55-56.

<sup>255</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>256</sup> For a thoughtful discussion of the visual tension in Van Kessel's Munich series, see Gerhard Langemeyer, "Die Nähe und die Ferne," in *Stilleben in Europa* (Münster: Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe, 1980), 20-43.

The abundance of painstakingly described, miniature motifs packed into these four compositions is overwhelming even today, and one can only imagine the effect that this series would have had on a seventeenth-century beholder. De Bie, in the 1675 version of *Het Gulden Cabinet*, conveys a sense of the awe-inspiring impact of Van Kessel's massive virtual collection of diverse and curious fauna from all reaches of the globe when he reports that the written word can hardly do justice to his personal confrontation with this series in Antwerp:

This Joannes van Kessel, born in the city of Antwerp and captain of the civic guard company there, is so skilled in the art of painting as exemplified by his wondrous pictures of birds, four-footed and creeping animals on a small scale, that not even nature has endowed these same beasts with greater perfection in life than that which he has discovered and brought forth as if from life with his brush in his painting. Indeed, what is more, the beauty that this ingenious Van Kessel reveals in [these creatures] through his meticulousness, precision, and his acute powers of observation is difficult to describe in writing; and it is no less difficult for beholders to believe that such monstrous creatures could emerge from nature. And thus, everything that such people as Pliny and other naturalists have written about these creatures can naturally and truthfully be seen in his paintings. This is attested to in a certain [group of] four exceptional pictures representing the four parts of the world: Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, put together in such a way that he embellished each part of the world not only with the principal capitals of the kingdoms that are located there, such as the kingdom of Spain represented by the capital of Madrid; England by the city of London; France by the city of Paris; Turkey [by] Constantinople; Italy [by] Rome; Germany [by] Vienna and so forth; but the most wonderful of all, and that which is most remarkable is that each Empire is supplied with and depicts the singularity of its flora and fauna, from the feathered to the four-footed beasts. And everything is so truthfully wrought, especially the Indies and Barbary regions, both in the south as well as the northern zones, within these descriptions of the ways of life according not only to the true faith but also the errant beliefs of different sects, that my pen would wander in an endless labyrinth, if it sought to describe bit by bit the entirety of the aforementioned four wonderful paintings, which I have seen many times, and which also due to their exceptional curiosity and exceeding artistry sold for around 4,000 gulden....<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Cornelis de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet oft schat kamer van de Edele vry Schilder Konst. Tweede Druck verbeteret ende vermeerderet...1675*. My translation is based on Van den Branden's transcription of the original Dutch in *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, 1099-1100, also included here as Appendix C. I am grateful to Celeste Brusati for helping me to put into context and make sense of De Bie's often confusing language and run-on sentences. Note that the final line of Van den Branden's transcription,

Using Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* as a touchstone, this chapter explores his mobilization of motifs, techniques, traditions, and themes from Antwerp's early modern history of art and subsequent recombination and recasting of them in novel and innovative contexts. It examines how these practices enabled Van Kessel to position himself within a long tradition of artistic accomplishments and to literally and figuratively reframe past art in his combinatory pictures. To this end, it demands a reconsideration of the modern labels of "pastiche" and "eclectic" that have been applied to Van Kessel's art,<sup>258</sup> proposing instead that the aggregate construction of his pictures warrants alternative characterizations and analogies, such as early modern collections, gallery paintings, and art cabinets, all of which exhibited provocative juxtapositions of art and *naturalia* that invited and helped to develop a discriminating viewer.

### **The Collection as a Pictorial Model**

De Bie's emphasis on the composite character of *The Four Parts of the World*, namely its assembly of a tremendous range of flora, fauna, and peoples from all corners of the earth, underscores the formal and functional relationships between this series and early modern collections on multiple levels. Its compilation of vast quantities of visual material, taxonomic transgression of categories of art and nature, and capacity for enabling the beholder to demonstrate a wide range of knowledge and skills recall several

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beginning with "die oock om de vuytnemende curieusheyt en overgroote const vercocht sijn ontrent vier dusedt gulden....," is cut off in the original manuscript, which simply trails off with "die ook om de..." It appears as if De Bie's text originally continued onto the subsequent page, which looks like it was cut out of the manuscript, presumably at some point after it was transcribed by Van den Branden.

<sup>258</sup> See, for example, *Das Flämische Stilleben 1550-1680*, 94, Bergström, *Still Lifes of the Golden Age*, 112, and Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 6-7.

aspects of contemporary collections. Taking the collection as a paradigm for the mode of picturing and viewing that typifies Van Kessel's paintings makes it possible to explore the combinatory mode of his art in a way that goes beyond the identification of sources.

The first and perhaps most obvious relationship between picture and collection is Van Kessel's emulation of the process of collecting through the compilation and reuse of a vast corpus of visual material. Casting Van Kessel in the role of a collector is useful in examining his working process. In order to construct pictures as complex as those described by De Bie, Van Kessel must have maintained a tremendous corpus of pictorial models. Instead of focusing solely on the identification of his sources as past scholars have done, however, I am more interested in examining how they were utilized by Van Kessel in his artistic enterprise. By what means and where did he access this visual material? How did he process it? These are just a few of the questions which I will interrogate in order to shed light on how his composite pictures were conceptualized and constructed.

A second point of comparison between the early modern collection and Van Kessel's pictures is their aggregative structure. By recombining and transforming a broad range of seemingly eclectic material, Van Kessel, much like the early modern collector, created comprehensible visual programs even within composite works such as *The Four Parts of the World*. Pictorial modes, themes, and motifs are brought together in novel ways, stimulating new connections and producing unexpected visual effects.

A final way in which Van Kessel's paintings emulate contemporary collections is their appeal to the early modern *liefhebber*. Just as collections and gallery paintings permitted art lovers to test and demonstrate their connoisseurial skills, so too did works

like the *Four Parts of the World*, which confronted viewers with a pictorial puzzle of sorts. Such aggregative, complex pictures not only demonstrated Van Kessel's knowledge of Antwerp's rich art history, but also challenged beholders to test their own mettle by identifying artists, recognizing individual works, and perhaps even deciphering the cryptic texts which Van Kessel inserted into a large number of his works.<sup>259</sup> By presenting viewers with a kaleidoscopic view of observed, recalled, and imagined knowledge of the natural world, *The Four Parts of the World* served as a unique lens through which to contemplate the diverse and sometimes competing approaches to picturing nature in the early modern period.

As we shall see, Van Kessel exploited the composite model of a picture in order to recast visual material in novel, inventive, and stimulating ways, and ultimately position himself and his art within a lineage of celebrated images. While this combinatory mode also reveals itself in Van Kessel's earliest flower paintings, insect works, and inventive garlands and illusionistic frames, it reached its peak in his creation of his Munich and Madrid series of *The Four Parts of the World*, both of which function as pictorial summaries of his vast oeuvre. In these works, the beholder is confronted with a kaleidoscopic lens through which to look at, contemplate, and delight in the history of images of the natural world in early modern Antwerp. These aggregate works are illustrative of my characterization of Van Kessel's art as art about "art about nature."

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<sup>259</sup> In the panel of *Europe* from the Munich series, for example, there are several puzzling inscriptions such as a list describing debts owed to various individuals as well as what appear to be the stages of (female) life. The complete text reads as follows: "RECENINGE / VOOR DEN BACKER 60g / DEN BROUWER 150 gul / AEN WYN 80 gul / VOOR KINDERBET ONCOST / VROU WASTER VRVROU PASTOR / IA IA Hr PASTOORS / MEMMEN VROU WARSTERS / EN VRUVROUWEN / PRYSEN KINDER MAKEN / EN BRUYLOFT / HOUWEN

## *The Four Parts of the World, Times Two*

Van Kessel's Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World* is the only serial composition in his oeuvre that remains intact with its original frames, making it the most crucial case study of his composite picture type.<sup>260</sup> In order to discuss this complex and multifaceted work, it is necessary first to address its relationship to a second, nearly identical version. Only 39 of the original 68 copper plates remain from the almost identical, but slightly larger version of this series in the Museo del Prado in Madrid (fig. 4.1).<sup>261</sup> However, according to a description of the Prado paintings from an inventory of the collection of King Carlos IV of Spain (1748-1819), the Madrid series originally shared the same format as that in Munich:

Sixty-eight paintings, on copper plates, which form *The Four Parts of the World*, the four principal parts on copper plates three-quarters wide, and two-and-a-half quarters long; and the others, which number sixteen, represent *Beasts, Birds, Fish and other products that each of them produces*; one-third in width and one-fourth in length, an original by J.V. Kessel, Flemish artist.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> The Mellon insect series (fig. 3.2), although it has remained together, does not retain an original frame and the works are now displayed separately.

<sup>261</sup> The Munich peripheral plates measure 14.5 x 21 cm., and are slightly smaller than the dimensions of those in the Prado, which measure 17 x 23 cm. For a comprehensive account of the Prado series, see Matías Díaz Padrón, *Catálogo de Pinturas: Escuela Flamenco Siglo XVII*, vol. 1 (Madrid, Museo del Prado, 1975), 169-170, and Lauresseyns, "Jan van Kessel de Oude," 319.

<sup>262</sup> "Sesenta y ocho cuadros, en lamina, que component *Las Cuatro partes del Mundo*, expresadas las cuatro partes principals en laminas de tres cuartas de largo, y dos cuartas y media de caída; y las restantes, que en cada parte son diez y seis, representan *Fieras, Aves, Peces y otras cosas que produce cada una de ellas*; de tercia de largo y cuarta de caída, originales de J. V. Kessel, autor flamenco." Julián Zarco Cuevas, *Cuadros reunidos por Carlos IV siendo principe en su Casa de campo de El Escorial* (Madrid: Religión y Cultura, 1934), 21. The inventory records artworks that were located in the Casita del Principé, a residence on the grounds of the Escorial that was built for Carlos IV by his father, Carlos III, between 1771 and 1775. All of these works were bought prior to 1788, when Carlos IV succeeded his father as king, providing a terminus ante quem for the entrance of the Prado series into the Spanish royal collection. While most of these works were purchased by Carlos IV, 46 works were passed down to him from his father, suggesting the possibility that Van Kessel's series was acquired by the Spanish monarchy at an earlier date. However, I have yet to locate this series in the inventories of any principal or secondary royal palaces.

Two of the plates in the Madrid series are signed, and one of these is also dated 1660, indicating that it predated the Munich series but not excluding the possibility that their production overlapped.<sup>263</sup> Of the existing plates in Madrid, all but three compositions are exactly repeated in the Munich series.<sup>264</sup> Based on these striking similarities and the close proximity in the dates of the two series, it is probable that they were worked on simultaneously in Van Kessel's workshop.

Due to their identical subject matter and format, it is difficult to distinguish the two series in seventeenth-century written descriptions, complicating the task of sorting out their respective provenances. The first reference to the series occurs in De Bie's 1675 version of *Het gulden cabinet*, in which the author mentions that he saw the four paintings on multiple occasions. This indicates that he probably encountered them in Antwerp, where a series of the four parts of the world painted by Van Kessel with figures added by Quellinus was recorded in the inventory of the collection of the Antwerp silversmith, Jan Gillis, in 1682.<sup>265</sup> Although Quellinus's signature is absent from both the Munich and Madrid series, Krempel points out that this is not unusual, citing other examples of collaborative works in which Quellinus's participation is revealed only in

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<sup>263</sup> Of the extant copper plates in the Madrid series, only nos. 36 (unidentified) and 38 (identified by Díaz Padrón as Cairo, but replicated in the Munich version as Mecca) are signed. No. 36 is also dated, 1660. Until 1971, when one plate was allegedly stolen, there were 40 plates in the Prado series. The missing plate (formerly Madrid no. 30) is identical to Capo de Geel (*Africa*, no. 8) in the Munich series.

<sup>264</sup> The exceptions are: (1) No. 3, depicting a nocturnal landscape with a luminous full moon, horses, sheep, flying fish, seals, and a multicolored dodo bird, the latter of which may have derived from an illustration in Pieter van den Broecke's *Voyages* of 1614. See Teixeira, 97. It is not clear with which city this image was intended to correspond, although a northern European location has been suggested. (2) No. 17, depicting a turkey and rooster squabbling. The two main animals are repeated in the Munich version of Mexico, however the rest of the scene, including the other birds, landscape, and cityscape in the background are different. (3) No. 36, signed and dated, depicting a shore with various fish and squids. This composition contains similar motifs to several panels in *Europe* in the Munich series. It should also be noted that no. 4 in Madrid contains a few slightly different motifs from the Munich version of Algiers (*Africa*, no. 4), but otherwise repeats this composition.

<sup>265</sup> This inventory and Gillis's collection are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

related, written documents and not in the paintings themselves.<sup>266</sup> Quellinus frequently painted the figures in Van Kessel's paintings and those depicted in the Munich series appear similar to figure types in his paintings of historical and religious subjects. Moreover, the 1679 inventory of Quellinus's house records a work entitled "*De Vier Deelen van de Werelt ende de Zee*" (The Four Parts of the World and the Sea), providing further evidence of his collaboration on at least one of the two versions.<sup>267</sup> Unfortunately, because the central plates from the Madrid series are missing, it is impossible to determine Quellinus's participation in that version.

Van den Branden identified the series described by De Bie as the one now located in Munich, and all subsequent scholars have followed his assumption, despite the fact that the Munich cycle can only be traced back as far as 1716, when it was referred to in a written description of the Dusseldorfer Galerie, a collection which was later transferred to Mannheim and eventually to Munich.<sup>268</sup> Despite the lack of documentary evidence, I concur with Van den Branden's hypothesis for several reasons. First, the series which De Bie viewed repeatedly in Antwerp was ostensibly the same one that is recorded in Gillis's local collection just a few years later. De Bie's mention of only one series indicates that the second one probably went abroad following its production. Secondly, given Van Kessel's extensive Spanish patronage and ties to the royal court, as well as the fact that the Prado series can be traced back to at least the reign of Carlos IV, it seems likely that

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<sup>266</sup> Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10.

<sup>267</sup> Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 10, 348.

<sup>268</sup> Van den Branden, *Geschiedenis der Antwerpsche schilderschool*, 1100; Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 9.



this version was originally intended for a Spanish client.<sup>269</sup> Also recall that in his biography of Van Kessel, Jacob Campo Weyerman, noted that he “...painted many works for the King of Spain....”<sup>270</sup> In addition, an independent *Allegory of Europe* by Van Kessel, with dimensions that make it a plausible centerpiece for the extant peripheral plates in the Prado, features prominent portraits of a young Carlos II and the then current governor of the Spanish Netherlands, providing yet another indication that the Madrid series was originally intended for a noble Spanish patron.<sup>271</sup>

Finally, the monumental size, allegorical theme of the four parts of the world, and exorbitant cost—4,000 gulden according to De Bie—further substantiate the theory that the Prado series was originally commissioned for a royal patron. If this were the case, the Munich series, which must have been produced either during or slightly after the production of that in Madrid, may represent a second version which Gillis, an avid art collector as well as a prominent artisan, commissioned for himself. This would have allowed Van Kessel to refer to the Madrid pictures as models when painting the Munich set.

### **Art about “Art about Nature”: Van Kessel’s Use of Pictorial Sources**

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<sup>269</sup> The majority of paintings in the collection of Carlos IV were purchased during his reign, with the exception of approximately 45 works which he inherited from his father. At this time, I have been unable to locate any record of the Van Kessel paintings in earlier royal inventories, including those of Carlos II, who would have become king during the period in which Van Kessel painted both his Madrid and Munich series.

<sup>270</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, vol. 2, 209.

<sup>271</sup> *Allegory of Europe set in a kunstkammer*, oil on copper, 49,5 x 68,6 cm. Sotheby's New York, Important Old Master Paintings, Thursday, 30 January, 1997, Lot 16]. The painting is signed *I.V.Kessel.fecit A° 1670*. Although dated 1670, it is possible that the central plate was painted subsequent to the smaller, peripheral plates, one of which is dated 1660, as mentioned earlier. For further discussion of this work, see James A. Welu, *The Collector's Cabinet: Flemish Paintings from New England Collections* (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1983), 82-85.

De Bie's assertion that Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* contained such an overwhelming abundance of visual material that it caused his pen to "wander in an endless labyrinth" draws attention to the tremendous effort that must have gone into assembling, organizing, and recombining such a diverse range of motifs and visual citations. In order to construct such a complex series with a multitude of individual components, Van Kessel must have relied on an enormous corpus of painted, drawn, and printed models, as well as a wide range of organizational and artistic skills. As De Bie suggests, when he asserts that the pictorial skills and subjects featured in Van Kessel's paintings enable him to better represent the variety and wonder of fauna than nature itself, Van Kessel's images of the "natural" world do not ultimately reveal the artist's extensive knowledge of nature, but rather his broad command of a long lineage of images. The library of images stored in Van Kessel's workshop as well as in his mind ultimately enabled him to create a vision of nature that was more perfect than its reality. Processing nature through his knowledge and recollection of past art enabled Van Kessel to assume the role of a collector who, through the compilation and reuse of a vast corpus of visual material, brought together motifs, subjects, and artistic traditions in novel ways, stimulating new connections and producing unexpected pictorial effects.

Since the publication of Krempel's 1973 exhibition catalogue on the Munich series, however, art-historical scholarship has been largely preoccupied with the identification and iconographic interpretation of the individual motifs represented in *The Four Parts of the World*, rather than how and why it represents them.<sup>272</sup> Krempel's exhaustive account of Van Kessel's extensive citation of earlier visual material

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<sup>272</sup> See Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, Lauresseyns, "Jan Van Kessel De Oude"; Schneider, *The Art of the Still Life*, chapter 12; Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents.'*

encompassing a wide range of media prompted the widespread conclusion that Van Kessel was an unoriginal pastiche painter whose artworks are more derivative than inventive. As a result, scholars have tended to consider *The Four Parts of the World* more in terms of sources and influences than as creative compositions in their own right. Additionally, scholars who have identified “ethnographic mistakes,” morphological inaccuracies, and other so-called discrepancies between Van Kessel’s paintings and his presumed graphic sources attribute such divergences to the artist’s lack of knowledge or skill, ignoring the possibility that artistic motivations may have played a role.<sup>273</sup>

Although Krempel’s and Teixeira’s methodical accounts of the numerous individual motifs and entire compositions cited in Van Kessel’s *The Four Parts of the World* rightly acknowledge the breadth and diversity of visual material from which the artist drew, their emphasis on pointing out what they perceive to be one-to-one correlations between elements of Van Kessel’s pictures and primarily sixteenth-century printed sources obscures the complex web of images with which the painter engaged when constructing his compositions.<sup>274</sup> In the absence of visual analysis or critical comparison, Krempel and Teixeira merely identify illustrated travel accounts, natural history tracts, cosmographies, and maps as the definitive precedents for the fauna and cityscapes that populate the peripheral panels in the Munich series.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> See, for example, Schneider, who contends that “Inaccuracies show that “although the painter was obviously concerned with the empiricist idea of *experimentum* (which still meant 'experience' at the time) in the various details, his art was still dominated by his love of the extraordinary and the exotic....” Schneider, *The Art of the Still Life*, 65.

<sup>274</sup> See especially, Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10-17, and Teixeira, *The ‘Allegory of the Continents’*, 95-136.

<sup>275</sup> Among these purported sources are Conrad Gesner’s *Historia Animalium* (1551, Zurich), Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmographia* (1552, Basel), Georg Braun’s and Franz Hogenberg’s *Civitates orbis terrarum* (Cologne, 1572), André Thevet’s *La Cosmographie Universelle* (Paris, 1575), Theodor de Bry’s *Grands*

In addition to printed images, many of the animals represented in *The Four Parts of the World*, as well as other works by Van Kessel, have been compared to creatures found in paintings by such Antwerp predecessors as Rubens, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Frans Snyder, and Paul de Vos, among others.<sup>276</sup> These citations take two forms. In some cases, Van Kessel copies individual motifs from paintings by other artists. For example, the snakes in his panoramic view of *Angola* (fig. 4.2) directly reference the appearance and specific poses of the violent, writhing creatures in the *Head of Medusa* by Rubens and Frans Snyders (fig. 4.3).<sup>277</sup> In other works, such as *A Kunstkamer with Venus at her Toilette* (fig. 4.4), Van Kessel alternatively inserts entire compositions (often with subtle alterations) into his paintings. One of Snyders' multiple renditions of the *Fable of the Fox and the Heron* (fig. 4.5) as well as his *Cock Fight* (fig. 4.6) are both illustrated in Van Kessel's fictive picture gallery.

Van Kessel's citation of previous works of art has surprisingly provoked minimal interest from art historians, most of whom either ignore these references completely, or, like Krempel, simply posit them as a foil to the artist's citation of more "scientific" zoological tracts and travel accounts. Within a single composition, Van Kessel frequently combines exotic animals and fable characters from works by seventeenth-century

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*Voyages* (1590-1643), Jan Huyghen van Linschoten's *Itinerario* (Amsterdam, 1596), Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Ornithologiae* (1599-1637) and *Historia serpentum et draconum* (1640), Charles de l'Écluse's *Exoticorum libri decem* (1605), Joannes Nieremberg's *Historia Naturae* (1635, Antwerp), Pieter van den Broecke's *Journal of Voyages* (1634), John Jonston's *Historia Naturalis* (1649), Francisco Hernandez, *Nova Plantarum Animalium et Mineralium Mexicanorum Historia* (1651), Guilherme Piso's *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* (Amsterdam, 1658), and Johannes Nieuhoff's *Het Gesantschap der Neerlantsche Oostindische Compagnie* (Amsterdam, 1665).

<sup>276</sup> Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10-17.

<sup>277</sup> The sale of Rubens' painting in Antwerp in 1648 may have provided Van Kessel and other local painters with an opportunity to copy the various creatures in the foreground, including the snakes and the fire salamander, which is replicated in Van Kessel's *Insects and Reptiles* (Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum; fig. 3.1). Woollett and Van Suchtelen, *Rubens & Brueghel: A Working Friendship*, 184.

Antwerp artists with creatures that harken back to illustrations from much earlier natural histories. Therefore, scholars who linger over minute divergences between Van Kessel's painted motifs and prior artworks and illustrated texts are missing the point of his art, and especially of *The Four Parts of the World*, which is that these images coexist and interact, despite their disparate origins.<sup>278</sup>

To neatly separate Van Kessel's pictorial sources into "scientific illustrations" or works of art makes the issue of visual origins appear to be much more straightforward than it is in reality. Most, if not all, of the artists whose compositions or selected motifs are referenced in Van Kessel's works were familiar with the aforementioned corpus of natural history treatises and travel accounts that circulated in print throughout Europe by the seventeenth century. This shared pool of visual material complicates scholarship that seeks to provide an explanatory key to Van Kessel's paintings by identifying a singular, definitive source for each individual motif. There is no evidence to suggest that Van Kessel was a humanist, like Rubens, with an extensive library in his possession, or a painter-naturalist like Otto Marseus van Schrieck, who collected and studied the specimens that populated his paintings. Rather, based on Van Kessel's close association with the Brueghel workshop as well as accounts such as Weyerman's that describe his vast corpus of studies, it is more likely that a compendium of images—seen, studied, copied, and recalled—served as the basis for his combinatory pictures.

A case in point of the potential pitfalls of the source-seeking approach adopted by Krempel, Teixeira, and others is the Amerindian figures that are depicted in the central panel of *America* in the Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World* (fig. 1.16).

Teixeira identifies the model for the nude female figure carrying a human foot (fig. 4.7)

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<sup>278</sup> Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10, and Schütz, "Europa und die vier Erdteile," 297.

as the woodcut image of a Tapuya woman in Willem Piso's and Georg Marcgraf's *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* (fig. 4.8).<sup>279</sup> On the contrary, Rebecca Parker Brien suggests that Van Kessel's rendition of Amerindians in *America* was influenced by a series of life-size "ethnographic portraits" painted by the Dutch artist Albert Eckhout during his voyage to Brazil as part of an entourage of artists and natural historians that accompanied Prince Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen.<sup>280</sup> Svetlana Alpers likewise attributes Van Kessel's figures to Eckhout's precedents, claiming that Van Kessel "cannibalized" these earlier paintings by picturing the Tapuya man and woman not as fleshy figures, but as animated marble statues that adopt classical poses inside the confines of an imaginary, princely *wunderkammer*.<sup>281</sup>

It is not clear, however, where or how Van Kessel could have gained access to Eckhout's paintings, since there is no evidence that the series ever travelled to Antwerp. Further complicating the attempt to determine the origins of Van Kessel's Amerindians is that fact that Eckhout's paintings were no less embedded in an extensive and complex lineage of cannibal imagery than Van Kessel's. Brien notes similarities between Eckhout's savage representations of Amerindians and the illustrations of cannibals found in Theodoor De Bry's *Grands Voyages*, which in turn relied heavily on the earlier graphic woodcut illustrations of cannibalism among the Tupinamba of Brazil, made after Hans Staden's epic voyage, and on the frontispiece of the volume entitled *America* in Jan

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<sup>279</sup>Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 126.

<sup>280</sup> Brien uses Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* to help make a case for her hypothesis that Eckhout's cycle of Amerindians were intended to be displayed in a princely gallery and viewed from below. Rebecca Parker Brien, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 182-183.

<sup>281</sup> Alpers compares the slender pose and athletic physique of Van Kessel's Tapuya man, or "noble savage" as she describes him, to that of Michelangelo's *David*. Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, 163.

Blaeu's *Atlas Maior*.<sup>282</sup> Van Kessel's apparent acknowledgement of these sources, and of Eckhout's citation of them, is visualized in a gruesome painting-within-the-painting featuring demonic Amerindians beheading and severing the limbs of individuals before a raging fire (fig. 1.16). In addition to referencing Eckhout's paintings and De Bry's widely disseminated copperplate engravings of cannibalistic practices (fig. 4.9), this pictured painting replicates a miniature painting on copper by Van Kessel himself (fig. 1.8). The portrayal of this interconnected web of images as the centerpiece of *America* demonstrates how Van Kessel's re-appropriation of a broad range of visual material in his pictures was neither linear nor straightforward, and often involved multiple, diverse sources and media that spanned decades, and sometimes even centuries.

Living and working in Antwerp for his entire career provided Van Kessel with access to a wide range of printed and painted images of the natural world. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Antwerp was one of the leading printing centers in Europe and home to the famed Plantin Press. Woodcuts, engravings, books, and maps of all kinds were readily available to local painters, who frequently consulted and collected them. Many of the monumental texts associated with Van Kessel's *Four Parts of the World* were translated into multiple languages and existed in several editions, providing diverse artists with a common body of accessible illustrations. As mentioned previously, Rubens owned numerous illustrated works by Aldrovandi and Gesner; yet, he was only one among many Antwerp artists who referenced monumental natural history treatises in their own work. Predecessors including Joris Hoefnagel had already begun mining these

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<sup>282</sup> Brienens, *Visions of Savage Paradise*, 78, 124. The collection of voyages illustrated by the Frankfurt publishers De Bry between 1590 and 1634 was itself a combinatory endeavor that borrowed extensively from previously published illustrated travelogues. A thoughtful, recent account of the De Bry enterprise is found in Michiel van Groesen, *The Representation of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590-1634)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

sources for inspiration decades earlier. Lee Hendrix notes that, “artists seem not to have perceived Gesner’s treatise as a representation of the natural world, but as nature herself. In these terms, mimesis meant the imitation of natural history illustration.”<sup>283</sup> As “scientific illustrations” like Gesner’s and Aldrovandi’s were adapted and absorbed into works of art, a different natural history emerged, one that was increasingly shaped by the study of images rather than the observation of nature. It is within this visual culture of natural history that Van Kessel’s pictures were created.

Access to and knowledge of the kinds of monumental printed texts associated with Van Kessel’s *Four Parts of the World* was also facilitated by the close ties between members of Antwerp’s humanist community and local artists. Hoefnagel and Rubens, for example, forged strong friendships with Abraham Ortelius, Otto van Veen, and Balthasar Moretus. Such relationships exposed artists to classical texts, allegorical print series, encyclopedias, maps and emblem books. Elizabeth McGrath, in her study of the development of the Four Continents as a distinct pictorial theme in Antwerp, notes how this subject grew out of a humanist context that included illustrations of antiquities, allegorical worldviews, and symbolic images of Habsburg supremacy.<sup>284</sup> Such sources found their way into the medium of painting by the beginning of the seventeenth century and subsequently lost many of their symbolic and didactic associations. As with representations of nature, images of geography in the early modern period derived from an extensive, shared bank of visual material that was continuously recycled and transformed by artists to suit their individual skills and audiences.

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<sup>283</sup> Hendrix, “Joris Hoefnagel and the *Four Elements*,” 66.

<sup>284</sup> Elizabeth McGrath, “Humansim, Allegorical Invention, and the Personification of the Continents,” in *Concept, Design, and Execution in Flemish Painting (1550-1700)*, edited by Hans Vlieghe (Turnhout, 2000).



As McGrath points out, the relationship between these mostly printed, allegorical or symbolic sources and seventeenth-century easel paintings is not a simple one-to-one correlation. Flemish animal painters, for example, did not copy their sources faithfully, but rather used them as touchstones and went beyond them, making improvements and adding new contexts in order to create their own innovative contributions to natural history. With each transformation, the images moved further away from the relatively crude and static illustrations in works like Gesner's *Historia Animalium*, establishing a long chain of printed and painted successors. In between the publication of Gesner's encyclopedia in 1551 and the oil paintings of animals executed by Rubens and Jan Brueghel were several visual intermediaries in a variety of media.

Sixteenth-century Antwerp printmakers such as Adrian Collaert, Hans Bol, Marcus Gheeraerts, and Abraham de Bruyn produced animal illustrations for moralizing texts that were popular among local humanists. Gheeraerts' etched images of animated creatures which accompanied for a Flemish translation of Aesop's fables, and Collaert's engravings of animals divided taxonomically into quadrupeds, birds, and fish looked back to Gesner's templates, but also forward to the illuminated miniatures and watercolors of Hoefnagel. Although the organization of Hoefnagel's *Four Elements* into four books representing each of the elements (Fire, Air, Water, Earth) as well as its inclusion of classical proverbs adhered to the symbolic and allegorical associations of animal imagery in ancient and medieval cosmologies and natural history manuscripts, his illuminated creatures were, as we have seen, innovative in many ways. Hendrix notes that, "Hoefnagel seems to have set out to create his own encyclopedia, which would

incorporate Gesner's findings and exceed them."<sup>285</sup> As discussed in Chapter Three, the connection between Hoefnagel's and Van Kessel's paintings underscores the role of other artworks as substitutes for direct observation in Van Kessel's working process. Although iconographic precedents for many of the flora, fauna, and exotica in Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* can be identified in the aforementioned printed books and maps, the "artistic lineage" of such motifs, to borrow a phrase coined by Arianne Faber Kolb, is equally if not more important to understanding Van Kessel's art.

In her insightful analysis of Jan Brueghel the Elder's painting of *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*, Kolb explores the multitude of visual precedents for Brueghel's paradise landscapes, noting the "chain of replication" that links many of Brueghel's paintings to earlier works by other artists (fig. 4.10).<sup>286</sup> For example, although Brueghel's lions in this work ostensibly reference those in Rubens's painting of *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, Rubens's representations of lions reflect both his observation of live specimens as well as a broad network of visual material that includes ancient sculptures and drawings after Stradanus's designs for hunting tapestries (fig. 4.11).<sup>287</sup> In light of this, rather than identifying a sole source for Brueghel's lions, Kolb posits that they, along with the many other borrowed motifs in this composition, create a "micro-history of art" that would

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<sup>285</sup> Hendrix, "Joris Hoefnagel and the *Four Elements*," 69.

<sup>286</sup> Arianne Faber Kolb, "Cataloguing Nature in Art: Jan Brueghel the Elder's Paradise Landscapes" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 2000), 35.

<sup>287</sup> In 1618, when Rubens traded this and 8 other paintings to Sir Dudley Carleton in exchange for more than 100 ancient Roman busts and statues, Rubens described this canvas as: "Daniel among many lions, taken from life. Original, entirely by my hand." The Moroccan species of lions Rubens used as his models were kept in the royal menagerie at Brussels. The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. has in its collection a study for the lion facing the viewer, standing to Daniel's right. Weyerman reported that Rubens had live lions brought to his studio so that he could study them from life. Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, vol. 1, 287-289. Rosand meanwhile contends that while Rubens's drawings document his study of live lions, they were also guided by his study of sculptural ones and his own drawings after tapestry designs. David Rosand, "Rubens's Munich Lion Hunt: Its Sources and Significance," *The Art Bulletin* 51 (1969): 34-35.

have appealed to artists, collectors, and connoisseurs who delighted in making connections to earlier images and objects.<sup>288</sup> By the time Van Kessel was active as a painter, roughly half a century after his grandfather, Jan Brueghel, the legacy of his works was even more complex, encompassing a concatenation of artistic sources and influences that spanned an entire century.

### **Putting the Parts Together: Assembling *The Four Parts of the World***

While catalogues such as Krempel's and Teixeira's have made significant contributions to the daunting task of identifying the profusion of visual citations in Van Kessel's *Four Parts of the World* cycles, questions about how the artist assembled and organized this material are more difficult to answer. Information about the procedures and personnel of Van Kessel's workshop is sparse at best. Aside from what can be gleaned from Weyerman's brief biographical sketch of Van Kessel, as well as the more substantial body of knowledge about the workshop practices of other members of the Brueghel dynasty such as Jan the Elder and Jan the Younger, it is Van Kessel's pictures that provide the clearest record of his combinatorial approach to making and looking at art.

Weyerman noted that Van Kessel maintained a large repertoire of studies done from life as well as models that he had drawn or painted himself.<sup>289</sup> This practice mirrors what we know about the working methods of the Brueghel circle of painters, who, as we have seen, incorporated copying as an integral part of their workshop practice. Copying in the Brueghel workshop began at the top and extended downwards to assistants and

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<sup>288</sup> Kolb, "Cataloguing Nature in Art," 56.

<sup>289</sup> Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, vol. 2, 210.

even trainees. Numerous assistants and guest workers, including Van Kessel's own father, Hieronymus, played a role in the production of copies of works by the elder Brueghel. Furthermore, copying evidently served as a training tool in the Brueghel workshop for young pupils like Jan van Kessel, who made copies of flower garlands painted by Jan Brueghel the Younger. The extensive repetition of motifs throughout the oeuvres of the Brueghels, Van Kessel, and many other Flemish animal painters indicates that pictorial elements circulated frequently between workshops, by means of exchanging sketchbooks and studies or by exchanging the assistants themselves.<sup>290</sup>

Based on what is known about the practices of the Brueghel workshop, it can be assumed that Van Kessel operated similarly. Trained by his uncle, Jan Brueghel the Younger, Van Kessel would have had access to the Brueghel's extensive collection of sketches, models and preliminary studies. By the time Van Kessel was active as an artist, encyclopedic paintings of fauna like Jan Brueghel the Elder's *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* had largely replaced sixteenth-century natural history catalogues as reference works to be emulated (fig. 4.10). In preparation for this work, Brueghel made drawings and oil sketches after animals in the archducal collections as well as those featured in paintings by Rubens. These studies resulted in the production of a large repertoire of motifs that were reused and recombined extensively in different contexts. For instance, Brueghel's citation in this work of the lion, leopards, and dapple-gray horse from Rubens's *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, *The Leopards*, and *Equestrian Portrait of the Archduke Albert* provided templates for future copies of the entire composition as well as

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<sup>290</sup> Kolb, "Varieties of Repetition," 177.

its individual motifs.<sup>291</sup> This can be seen in Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World*, where, for example, the crouching lion on the right-hand side of the peripheral plate representing Tripoli (fig. 4.12) bears a striking resemblance to the frontal lion in Brueghel's painting, which in turn, references the lion located second from the right in Rubens's *Daniel in the Lion's Den* (fig. 4.11). Since Rubens's painting had been acquired by Sir Dudley Carleton in 1618 and presented to King Charles I of England between c.1625 and 1632, Van Kessel's only access to this work must have come from observing related studies and drawings (by Brueghel and possibly Rubens),<sup>292</sup> and presumably Brueghel's painting, if it was in fact made for the Archducal collection in Brussels as Kolb suggests.<sup>293</sup> Brueghel's *Entry of the Animals* had a seemingly endless legacy, as it was filtered down through multiple artists and various permutations. It served as a reference point for his son, Jan the Younger, who took over his father's studio in 1625 and made a successful career out of copying many of his most famous works, including this one. Van Kessel's *The Ark of Noah*, painted early in the artist's career, also clearly references Velvet Brueghel's composition (fig. 4.13).

Brueghel produced an exact replica of *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*, presumably by tracing and transferring the original.<sup>294</sup> Mechanical methods of copying, such as tracing and pouncing cartoons in order to transfer motifs or entire compositions from one work to another, provided an effective and economical way of making

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<sup>291</sup> Rubens's *The Leopards and Equestrian Portrait of the Archduke Albert* are now lost, existing only in copies. Kolb, *Jan Brueghel the Elder: The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), 65.

<sup>292</sup> A drawing of one of the lions in *Daniel in the Lion's Den* (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.) suggests that additional studies may have been produced by Rubens or other artists.

<sup>293</sup> Kolb, *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*, 72.

<sup>294</sup> Kolb, *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*, 77.

copies.<sup>295</sup> When transferring individual motifs, as opposed to whole compositions, this method often resulted in discrepancies in scale, however, due to incongruities between the size of the cartoon and that of the composition into which the motif was integrated. The heavily incised outlines found in Van Kessel's depiction of animals in the peripheral plates of *The Four Parts of the World* and especially his insect paintings suggest that he may have employed some sort of mechanical transfer process in order to recycle motifs from one composition to another. It is common to find repeated motifs in his oeuvre of varying sizes, as I have discussed in relation to his insect works.

The mechanical copying techniques and repetitive use of motifs and models indicated by many of Van Kessel's paintings represent common workshop strategies for maximizing productivity.<sup>296</sup> Van Kessel's extensive production of upwards of 300 miniature works on copper includes numerous copies and variations of his own works, reflecting an increased demand for his paintings from cabinet makers as well as elite collectors at home and abroad. It also indicates that he must have had a very systematic workshop. A work as complex as *The Four Parts of the World* would have required multiple levels of production, from assembling and selecting motifs and mapping out and sketching the preliminary verso images, to painting the panels and devising the framing sequence. Moreover, many of the pictorial motifs found in this series were later redistributed in variants or copies of the individual panels, suggesting that Van Kessel employed multiple assistants, including his sons, Ferdinand and Jan the Younger. Ferdinand in particular appears to have followed in the footsteps of Jan Brueghel the

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<sup>295</sup> Kolb, "Varieties of Repetition," 167-200, 187.

<sup>296</sup> Carmen Bambach, *Drawing and Painting in the Italian Renaissance Workshop: Theory and Practice, 1300-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 127-137.

Younger, in that he too made a career out of producing works that either copied or recast works by his father, including a series of *The Four Parts of the World* which was commissioned for the King of Poland.<sup>297</sup>

In creating *The Four Parts of the World*, where so many of the motifs are fragments adapted from other pictures, Van Kessel undoubtedly followed a highly calculated and meticulous plan. The existence of preliminary oil sketches on the versos of several of the peripheral copper plates in both the Munich and Madrid series provides some clues about how Van Kessel might have constructed these composite works.<sup>298</sup> In seven out of the ten panels containing sketches in the Munich series, the verso image depicts animals that do not appear on the opposite, painted side of the panel, but instead relate to an entirely different panel—and often continent—altogether. For example, the verso of the panel representing *Algiers* reveals sketches for two of the lions featured in Tripoli (fig. 4.14). Contrary to Van Kessel's sequential dating of *Europe* (1664 and 1665) and *America* (1666), this suggests that the peripheral panels of all four compositions may have been worked on simultaneously, rather than consecutively.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> In 1689, the younger Van Kessel painted a series of the four continents as copies after the Munich series for King Johann Sobieski of Poland. All except *Europe* were destroyed in a fire in the Polish Royal Collection, although multiple copies exist. See *Das Flämische Stilleben 1550-1680*, 94.

<sup>298</sup> The existence of “*vorzeichnungen*” on the versos of at least 10 of the peripheral plates from the Munich series is noted in Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10-17, and Konrad Renger, *Flämische Malerei des Barock -Alte Pinakothek* (Munich: Alte Pinakothek, 2002), 234. Additionally, a gallery guide located in the museum's curatorial archive that was produced by Alexandra Blaha and Lutz Fichtner in 1998 refers to the existence of “*pinselvorzeichnungen*.” Although I have seen black and white images of these sketches, I have not yet had the opportunity to study them firsthand. Fortunately, I was able to study the Prado series in greater depth. Seven of the peripheral plate versos in the Madrid series contain oil sketches that are significantly more detailed than those in the Munich series. For granting me access to these works and graciously assisting me with my examination and analysis of them, I am profoundly grateful to Dr. Teresa Posada Kubissa, Curator of Flemish Painting and Northern Schools (to 1700) at the Prado.

<sup>299</sup> Teixeira has suggested that the dated compositions may not accurately reflect their date of creation due to the fact that some of the motifs believed to have derived from textual sources would, according to Van Kessel's dating, pre-date their publication. Teixeira specifically cites the Buddha and pagoda in the central panel of *Asia* (which have been attributed to Johannes Nieuhoff's *Het Gesantschap der Neerlantsche Oostindische Compagnie*, not published until 1665) and the fauna in the panel of *Paris* in *Europe* (which

The discrepancy between images on the versos and rectos of copper plates in the Munich series also holds true for the Madrid series. The Prado verso sketches are significantly more detailed, however, particularly in the four plates that appear to contain sketches of the now absent central plates (figs. 4.15-4.18).<sup>300</sup> These highly developed compositions contain many more human figures, especially exotic and savage ones, than the central panels of the Munich series, indicating that even if the peripheral plates may have been nearly identical, the central scenes differed considerably from one series to the other.

Because the Prado plates no longer retain their original frames, we must rely on the Munich series in order to reconstruct how they were originally put together. In the Munich version, each of the copperplate versos that bears a preliminary sketch also contains the name of the city that is depicted on the front of that panel, the corresponding number painted on the ebony frame, and the name of the continent with which it is associated.<sup>301</sup> As I will discuss further in the next chapter, the frames are assumed to be original, based on seventeenth-century descriptions of both *The Four Parts of the World*

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Teixeira attributes to fables by Jean de la Fontaine that were not published until 1668). See Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 95-97. Although I find Teixeira's method of creating a chronology for Van Kessel's paintings that is based on printed sources which the artist may or may not have looked at to be problematic, I concur with his suggestion that the Munich series may have been constructed over a longer period of time than the dates in the paintings suggest.

<sup>300</sup> The multiplicity of inscriptions, in different scripts and types of paint, on these versos indicate that they were labeled multiple times, presumably by different owners. The copperplate versos in the Prado series contain two primary scripts, one consisting of white painted block letters and the other of brown painted block letters. There are also traces of a cursive script in brown paint. The verso copperplates in the Munich series likewise contain multiple scripts, including a brown cursive script and a cruder block-letter script that alternates between white and brown and appears similar in style and scale to the brown block-letter script employed in the Prado series. The overlapping of scripts and the fact that they are oriented in different directions on the same verso suggest that they were labeled numerous times. This is also indicated by the discrepancy between continent names on some of the plates in the Madrid series, for instance the inscription of both "ASIA" and "EUROPE" on the same verso, but in different scripts.

<sup>301</sup> For example, "ALGIRS. AFRIC; L'Afrique No. 4 Alger." According to the transcription by Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 15, London is an exception in that the verso of this panel reads only "No. 9 Londres," with no mention of a continent.



and other similarly subdivided works by Van Kessel. Therefore, the correspondence between the inscriptions on the copperplate versos and the ebony frames indicates that these plates probably retain their original orientation within the series.<sup>302</sup>

With the exception of *Europe*, all of the paintings in Van Kessel's Munich series are numbered in a clock-wise direction, beginning with 1 in the upper left-hand corner, and ending with 16. By contrast, in *Europe*, the first peripheral panel is located in the upper right-hand corner of the frame and the subsequent panels are numbered in a counter-clockwise direction.<sup>303</sup> As stated previously, the numbers labeled on the frames correspond with the (lower) numbers that appear on some of the versos. A second numbering system, found on six out of the ten versos containing sketches, appears to correspond not with the individual continent, but rather with the series as a whole, making it possible to determine the position of the individual plate within the complete, 68-plate scheme of the series. If one virtually flips over each of the four paintings so that the versos are facing up and numbers the peripheral panels from 1 to 64 while maintaining a counter-clockwise orientation for all four panels, the higher, verso numbers correspond to the appropriate city.<sup>304</sup>

The role of these oil sketches, which appear to have been painted directly onto the unprepared versos of the copperplates, was presumably to provide a pictorial blueprint

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<sup>302</sup> The fact that only a small number of the Munich plates contain inscriptions leaves open the possibility that other plates could have been reorganized over time. This may explain the incorrect pairing of certain cities and continents.

<sup>303</sup> Teixeira suggests that *Europe's* opposing orientation may reflect the tradition of right vs. left (dexter vs. sinister) symbolism and bear symbolic significance by privileging the West and Christianity. Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 9.

<sup>304</sup> Albeit with one slight deviation. In order to get all of the numbers to correspond with the appropriate city, the sequence has to jump from no. 32 (Calcutta) in *Asia* to no. 34 (Mozambique) in *Africa*, so that final panel in the sequence (C. Abopagode en Ceylon) is numbered 65, not 64. After testing various configurations of the numerical sequence, I have still not been able to determine the reason for this discrepancy.

for Van Kessel and (possibly) his assistants. To create order out of the mass array of images which he had collected as models in his studio, Van Kessel had to first map them out visually. The compartmentalized frame, a format which Van Kessel employed in multiple works, offered an ideal grid-like structure that allowed the artist to distill and organize the large quantity of pictorial material which he had collected. Painting on a miniature scale on palm-sized, copper surfaces allowed limited room for error, however, and Van Kessel's preliminary sketches would have enabled the artist to test various arrangements of motifs before committing to them on the front of the panel.

Although this hypothetical motivation seems straightforward enough, preliminary sketches of this kind on the versos of copper plates are exceptional, as far as I have been able to determine. Because copperplates were not particularly scarce or expensive, it was rare for artists to reuse printing plates for paintings; when this was done, it was typically by another artist at a later date. For example, an etching and drypoint of *Abraham Entertaining the Angels* by Rembrandt appears on a copper plate that features on its verso an oil painting of a river landscape with travelers done by a follower of the Flemish artist Peeter Gysels 20-30 years later.<sup>305</sup> A handful of other examples in which an oil painting appears on the verso of an etching or engraving plate—or in one case, on top of the engraved plate itself—are known; however, in most cases, the copperplates on which paintings were executed do not meet the quality standards of those used for printmaking.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1997.85.1.a and b. This case is puzzling, given that the etching plate was not reworked and still had value as such, given Rembrandt's reputation and the number of plates in circulation at the time. For further discussion, see Komanecky et al., *Copper as Canvas*, 339-42.

<sup>306</sup> Komanecky identifies the following examples: a *View of the Zuiderzee* by an imitator of Jan van Goyen on the verso of an etching plate by Gerard Ter Borch (Philadelphia Museum of Art); *The Sleeping Couple*

With the exception of Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World*, I know of no other examples where a painter used the verso of a copperplate to make sketches that were then used as the basis for a painting on the recto by the same hand. In this particular case, using the verso of one copperplate to create sketches that were preliminary to the painting that appeared on the recto of another would have been necessary so that the verso model could be studied while simultaneously painting the recto panel. For a project as large and complex as the Munich and Madrid series—which involved the assembly of so many recycled motifs—mechanical methods of transfer were likely not amenable to every single motif, making preliminary sketches and the meticulous mapping of surface area essential.

### **Rethinking Pastiche**

As I have argued, Van Kessel's excavation, reanimation, and recasting of prior art through the bold appropriation of the techniques, materials, and subject matter of his predecessors and peers allowed him to position himself within a long tradition of artistic accomplishments. These kind of retrospective inclinations have, in the past, been associated with Rubens, whose historical project extends from the art of antiquity to seventeenth-century Antwerp and covers a large range of geographical locales. While Van Kessel's art is not as far-reaching as his predecessor's in terms of chronology and geography, these artists' respective approaches to picture-making exhibit a number of shared concerns.

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by Jan Steen on the verso of an engraving plate (London, Harold Samuel Collection, Corporation of London); *Archangel Raphael Returning with the Fish*, attributed to Adam Elsheimer, painted over an engraving (London, National Gallery of Art). Komanecky, "Antwerp Artists," 137. Additional cases in which a painter reused a copper printing plate are discussed in Komanecky et al., *Copper as Canvas*, 342.

Rubens's paintings frequently present viewers with a fusion of Italian Renaissance, northern European, and antique artistic ideals, effectively rehearsing the past pictorially. In a similar vein, Van Kessel's composite pictures, epitomized by *The Four Parts of the World*, adopt a comparable appropriative impulse in their recollection of the artistic traditions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Antwerp. Yet, while Rubens's composite approach to animal painting, which involved the absorption of diverse image-making traditions, has been acknowledged and lauded as a reflection of "the range of his aesthetic experience and breadth of art-historical knowledge,"<sup>307</sup> Van Kessel's combinatory pictures have been cast by modern scholars as largely imitative and eclectic miniature "pastiche, which were inspired by life-size works by contemporary Antwerp masters...."<sup>308</sup> The creative potential of Van Kessel's composite works has been obscured by the assumed incompatibility of originality and repetition. Even Rubens's art has not been completely immune to this modern bias. In her discussion of Rubens's mythological works, which draw upon various antique literary and visual sources, Aneta Georgievska-Shine laments the fact that this area of the artist's oeuvre is frequently "reduced to 'source-hunting' for the literary and visual motifs that he takes into his possession, changes, and re-casts in novel and original ways."<sup>309</sup> The same can certainly be said of Van Kessel's art, which, as I have demonstrated, has been approached by art historians almost exclusively in terms of "source-hunting."

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<sup>307</sup> Rosand, "Rubens's Munich Lion Hunt," 33.

<sup>308</sup> Bergström, *Still Lifes of the Golden Age: Northern European Paintings from the Heinz Family Collection*, 112.

<sup>309</sup> Aneta Georgievska-Shine, *Rubens and the Archaeology of Myth 1610-1620: Visual and Poetic Memory* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2009), 9.

In recent years, a number of art historians have begun to look more closely at the early modern function and understanding of artists' reuse and repetition of individual motifs and compositions.<sup>310</sup> This has prompted a much-needed reconsideration of not only the production, but also the reception and value of copies and various modes of imitation by contemporaries. Maria Loh's important work on early modern concepts of originality, particularly as it applied to seventeenth-century Italian and Netherlandish art, provides a useful lens through which to reconsider Van Kessel's aggregate pictures. Loh contends that in the early modern period, originality "resided in the way something was presented and the way that mode of presentation pushed the viewer to see things in different and unanticipated ways."<sup>311</sup> When the term *pasticcio* was introduced by Roger de Piles in the late seventeenth century, it was not associated with indiscriminate eclecticism or fraudulent "stealing," as it often is in modern terms, but rather represented a combinatory practice that inspired creativity, innovation, and harmony:

Paintings that are neither Originals, nor Copies, are called Pastiches, from the Italian *pastici*, which means pastries, because as the different things that flavor a dish are mixed together in order to produce a single taste [*un seul gout*], so, too,

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<sup>310</sup>See Maria Loh, "New and Improved: Repetition as Originality in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Theory and Practice," *Art Bulletin* 86, no. 3 (2004): 477-504, and "Originals, Reproductions, and a 'Particular Taste' for Pastiche in the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Painting," in *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe, 1450-1750* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 234-266; Angela Ho, "An Invitation to Compare: Frans van Mieris's Cloth Shop in the Context of Early Modern Art Collecting," *Renaissance Studies* 23:5 (2009): 694-717, and "Rethinking Repetition: Constructing Value in Dutch Genre Painting 1650s to 1670s" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2007); Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006); Anna Tummers, "The Fingerprint of an Old Master: On Connoisseurship of Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth-Century Paintings" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2009); Larry Goedde, "Naturalism as Convention: Subject, Style, and Artistic Self-Consciousness in Dutch Landscape," in *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*, ed. Wayne Franits (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 129-143; Neil De Marchi and Hans van Miegroet, "Pricing Invention: 'Originals', 'Copies' and Their Relative Value in Seventeenth Century Netherlandish Art Markets," in *Economics of the Arts, Selected Essays*, ed. Victor Ginzburgh and Pierre-Michel Menger (Amsterdam, 1996), 27-70; Elizabeth Cropper, *The Domenichino Affair: Novelty, Imitation, and Theft in Seventeenth-Century Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>311</sup> Loh, "New and Improved," 491.

all of the imitations that compose a pastiche aim to make one truth appear [*une verité*].<sup>312</sup>

De Piles's conflation of a painted pastiche with an edible confection underscores the crucial digestive component of this combinatory practice. G.W. Pigman, in an important essay on varieties of imitation in Renaissance literature, notes that although it borrowed from a variety of sources, pastiche, or "transformative imitation" as he calls it, was not merely eclectic, but rather required thorough digestion of models in order to fully process them and transform them into something novel.<sup>313</sup>

Another important point made by Loh, and echoed in Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World*, is the way in which De Piles's digestive metaphor underscores the mutual role of the artist, the work of art, and the beholder in negotiating originality.<sup>314</sup> Just as taste is ultimately a factor of the producer, consumer, and food in question, the classification of a painting as a pastiche is never the sole responsibility of the creator. This point enables us to consider Van Kessel's reframing, recombination, and transformation of past pictorial traditional and motifs from the perspective of his audience. What effects did his combinatory pictorial mode have on these viewers? Undoubtedly, the reinsertion of prior images into novel and innovative contexts would have stimulated viewers to observe more closely and reconsider images with which they may have already been familiar. Seeing these images in a different framework and interpreting them for a second time "...required the viewer to engage in some mental

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<sup>312</sup> As cited in Loh, "New and Improved," 498.

<sup>313</sup> G.W. Pigman, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance." *Renaissance Quarterly* 33:1 (Spring 1980): 7-9, 32.

<sup>314</sup> Loh, "New and Improved," 477.

acrobatics,” contends Loh, and “look past the immediate picture and initial similarity and realize the *paragone* that arose from the confrontation between the two.”<sup>315</sup>

In the case of Van Kessel’s *The Four Parts of the World*, the *paragone* that emerges is two-fold. First, the combinatory mode of these paintings encourages the beholder to draw comparisons and recognize transformations between Van Kessel’s paintings and past images. By incorporating motifs that were familiar to his audience, a practice that was widespread among seventeenth-century Netherlandish painters, Van Kessel encouraged viewers to more actively engage with and participate in his pictures.<sup>316</sup> These recognizable visual anchors provided beholders with common frameworks within which to discuss artworks. Secondly, the representation in paint of creatures and objects found in the natural world invites the viewer to consider how the individual elements of nature can, through art, be combined in ways that can not be found in nature itself. De Bie’s account of Van Kessel’s series stresses the “meticulousness,” “precision,” “life-likeness,” and “strangeness” of his depicted creatures, noting early modern beholders’ sense of doubt that such things could even exist in nature.

Loh’s work and other recent studies of how different categories of artistic imitation were received in early modern Europe deal primarily with figural images, such as history and genre paintings. The imitation of multiple figural models in order to create an ideal, composite image of the human body brings to mind the myth of the ancient

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<sup>315</sup> Loh, “New and Improved,” 491, 496. This follows Franciscus Junius’s observation that “artists who surpass all others are those who diligently pursue the old art with a new argument, thereby bestowing their paintings with the pleasurable enjoyment of dissimilar similarity” (“...die Konstenaers spannen, mijnes dunckens, de kroone boven d’andere, de welke d’oude Konst ontrent een nieuw argument naerstighlick oeffenen, om haere Schildereyen door dit middle met het aengenaeme vermaeck van eene ongelijke gelijkheyt behendighlick te vervullen.”) Junius, *De schilder-konst der Oude* (Middelburg, 1641), 29.

<sup>316</sup> On the repetition and viewer awareness of “natural” motifs in Dutch landscape painting, see Goedde, “Naturalism as Convention,” 133.

painter Zeuxis, who, in his quest to portray the most beautiful woman, selected and recombined the most perfect features from several models.<sup>317</sup> The high incidence of repetition and pastiche in Netherlandish images of the natural world has not yet been adequately addressed, however.<sup>318</sup> Given that Van Kessel's models are instead images of flora and fauna, what "ideal" vision of nature did his similarly combinatory creative process seek to produce? What *paragone* emerged from his confrontation with prior images of the natural world? De Bie, in his description of *The Four Parts of the World*, offers an answer to this question when he asserts that Van Kessel is so skilled in the art of painting that not even nature can create such perfection and variety in creatures as he can produce with his paintbrush.

Thus far, we have seen how pastiche, as defined in seventeenth-century terms, mobilizes the productive and creative potential of Van Kessel's art. This need not only apply to its subject matter, however, but also to the manner in which it was made. Angela Ho's recent work on the function and value of repetition in seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting asserts that notions of originality were associated with pictorial themes and subjects as well as technical and stylistic innovations.<sup>319</sup> Ho argues that in a market that was characterized by recurring trademark motifs, painters were forced to distinguish their style by these means. In a similar vein, Van Kessel's pictorial mosaics of motifs frequently employ alterations in scale and brushwork in order to comment on and make claims about the images that they reference. As I will demonstrate, his transformation of

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<sup>317</sup> The story of Zeuxis was first relayed by Pliny the Elder. See Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, book 35, 309. For further reading on the Zeuxis myth, see Elizabeth C. Mansfield, *Too Beautiful to Picture: Zeuxis, Myth, and Mimesis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>318</sup> An exception is Goedde, "Naturalism as Convention," although this study focuses more on the symbolic implications of the repetition of certain motifs.

<sup>319</sup> See Ho, "An Invitation to Compare," and "Rethinking Repetition."



themes and motifs relied heavily on his formal and material translation of these elements through the manipulation of color, scale, paint facture, and context.

The economic implications of early modern pastiche must also be considered in relation to Van Kessel's combinatory pictorial mode. Successful copies or pastiches of well-known originals were highly valuable from both an economic and connoisseurial point of view. Good copies enhanced the status and fame of masters and preserved lost originals. For devoted *liefhebbers*, well-executed copies also provided opportunities for discussion, demonstration of knowledge, and the (virtual) acquisition of famous compositions that might be out of their price range. Aggregative pictures like Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* only augmented the increased value derived from the imitation of prior artworks due to the fact that they contain within them not only a copy of a single work, but rather multiple copies of multiple works by various artists.

In addition to the aforementioned aesthetic and economic motivations for producing pastiche paintings, the combinatory mode that was essential to Van Kessel's earliest flower and works and culminated in his series of *The Four Parts of the World* can also be examined against the backdrop of a more widespread composite mentality in the seventeenth century that is not only reflected in art, but also other types of objects and texts. As discussed in the previous chapter, the mixing and matching of diverse images and types of information occurred frequently in digests and popular literature such as almanacs and books of "curiosities." The composite character of these publications likewise characterized geographic production in the Low Countries, including travel narratives, maps, and cosmographies. Benjamin Schmidt contends that the pastiche-like character of early modern geography led to an increasing focus on the conflation and

decontextualization of disparate cultures and locations.<sup>320</sup> Schmidt argues that the reuse and recombination of multiple sources and authors caused geographic objects and texts to become increasingly anonymous, generic, and eclectic.

In spite of their similar mode of construction, however, it is important to underscore that this combinatory impulse had different consequences for Van Kessel's pictures, mainly because they were not intended to instruct or inform in the same way that maps were. *The Four Parts of the World* does not claim to represent the world accurately, nor does it serve as an encyclopedic account of nature's flora and fauna. Rather, as I have argued, as a collection of images it presents the beholder with a micro-history of art about nature that encourages close looking and conversation. Contrary to a map, where, as Schmidt points out, the authorship of individual images is effaced, Van Kessel's *Four Parts of the World* does not attempt to conceal its multiple sources. Thus, while the aggregate construction of Van Kessel's pictures is undoubtedly related to the character of cartographic publications, it is important to distinguish between compositeness that conceals, and that which, in the manner of a true early modern pastiche, deceives knowingly and assumes the beholder's awareness of the original sources and their authors.

### **Animating, Transforming and Poking Fun at Past Art**

Keeping the early modern concept of pastiche as something creative and productive in mind, I would now like to consider the specific ways in which

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<sup>320</sup> Benjamin Schmidt, "Inventing Exoticism: The Project of Dutch Geography and the Marketing of the World circa 1700." In *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science and Art in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Paula Findlen and Pamela H. Smith (London: Routledge, 2000), 357-361.

transformative imitation occurred in Van Kessel's composite pictures. Having already established the sources from which Van Kessel borrowed and his methods for organizing and recombining them, I will look at the significance of the individual artists whom he chose to cite, consider the particular pairings, deletions, and alterations in his reuse of prior artworks, and interrogate how shifts in style, form, and context reveal (or conceal) aspects of the natural world differently. In a variety of ways, including animating depicted creatures through color and expressiveness, making adjustments to the scale and paint facture of pictures-within-pictures, and staging thought-provoking juxtapositions, Van Kessel transformed pictorial motifs in innovative and surprising ways. Regardless of the method, his intention remained consistent. Van Kessel's pictures position him within the context of Antwerp's rich art history by making, what would have been to the contemporary viewer, obvious allusions to prominent artists and images, while simultaneously promoting his comprehensive knowledge and mastery of that lineage.

Van Kessel's pictures frequently employ alterations in scale and paint facture in order to make claims for the relationships between his works and the images that they reference. Rubens' and Snyder's massive hunts and visceral combat scenes, for example, are literally brought down to size when inserted into Van Kessel's painted picture galleries, a transformation that is illustrated in two versions of *A Kunstkammer with Venus at her Toilette*. In the Karlsruhe version discussed earlier, Snyder's *The Fox and the Heron* and *Cock Fight* are visually equated in scale with one of Van Kessel's insect pictures, which, based on similar examples would in reality be only a fraction of their size (fig. 4.4).

In addition to depicting Snyder's paintings within his own compositions, Van Kessel also adapted his predecessor's highly successful works to his own miniature aesthetic, as illustrated by his production of at least two independent works on copper that clearly reference Snyder's *The Fox and the Heron* (fig. 4.19).<sup>321</sup> Van Kessel's double-edged imitation of Snyder's composition, both as a picture-within-a-picture and an independent easel painting, poses an intriguing question to the early modern *liefhebber* who was likely familiar with all three works: does the work depicted in the Karlsruhe gallery painting represent Van Kessel channeling Snyder, or Van Kessel channeling Van Kessel channeling Snyder? There is no right or wrong answer, of course, and I contend that it was the artist's intention to evoke all of these inter-pictorial relationships in the mind of the viewer.

Described by one art historian as "Snyders à Lilliput," Van Kessel transformed paintings that were once reserved for the massive walls of royal hunting lodges and made them amenable to the cabinet collections of Antwerp's aspiring elite.<sup>322</sup> In a second version of the Karlsruhe painting, Snyder's fable paintings are replaced by a slight variant of Rubens's monumental *Boar Hunt*, which is juxtaposed with finely-wrought flower still lifes and miniature, precious objects like seashells and jewels, all of which

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<sup>321</sup> Both of these works are signed, but only one (cat. 228) is dated (1661).

<sup>322</sup> Albert P. de Mirimonde, *Catalogue du musée Baron Martin à Gray* (Gray: Musée Baron Martin, 1959), 90. Snyder received multiple, important commissions from Spanish nobles and aristocrats in the 1630s and 40s, including Philip IV, who ordered him to paint 60 large-scale animal scenes to cover the walls of his hunting lodge outside of Madrid, known as the Torre de la Parada. Philip also commissioned Aesopic fables from Snyder to decorate the Buen Retiro palace in Madrid. For more on these commissions, see Susan Koslow, *Frans Snyder: The Noble Estate, Seventeenth-Century Still-Life and Animal Painting in the Southern Netherlands* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1995).

allude to Van Kessel's signature subjects and aesthetic (fig. 4.20).<sup>323</sup> Rubens's over-life sized hunt is not only dramatically reduced in size to match the scale of Van Kessel's art, but it also undergoes a complete aesthetic transformation, morphing from an image of visceral violence, augmented by its thick, bold impasto, into a jewel-like, polished cabinet picture.

The manipulation of the scale of pictured paintings in works by Van Kessel can admittedly be traced back to Jan Brueghel, who grossly enlarged the scale of a copy of his and Rubens's collaborative painting of the *Madonna and Child in a Garland of Flowers* in their Prado allegory of *Sight* in order to showcase his own artistry above all other depicted works (fig. 4.21). A comparison of the presumed prototypes for the floral garland and two other pictured paintings, Rubens's *Bacchanal* and *Tiger, Lion, and Leopard Hunt* reveals that the dimensions of all three pictured compositions have been dramatically skewed in order to make the garland painting overshadow the other works, despite the fact that both of Rubens's paintings were in reality much larger.<sup>324</sup>

However, Van Kessel, in adopting his grandfather's strategy, goes a step further by not merely adjusting the scales of two paintings of the same type, but also altering

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<sup>323</sup> This painting (Christie's London, 7 July 2004, lot 29) contains a picture nearly identical to Rubens's *Boar Hunt* (250 x 320 cm., Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseilles, no. 103) except for the two female figures in the upper right-hand corner of Rubens' painting, which are absent from Van Kessel's rendition. Although Balis suggests that Van Kessel must have copied a now lost *modello*, the fact that throughout his oeuvre, Van Kessel includes pictured paintings which are similar, yet not exact copies of known compositions, suggests that, in fact, such prototypes never existed. This leads me to conclude that Van Kessel, like Rubens, exercised artistic license in his citations of past artworks, making adjustments and changes as he saw fit. Arnout Balis, *Landscapes and Hunting Scenes*, Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard, part 18, vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1986), 116.

<sup>324</sup> Rubens's *Bacchanal* (Moscow, Pushkin Museum) measures 91 x 107 cm. His *Tiger, Lion, and Leopard Hunt* exists in multiple versions, none of which the copy in *Sight* replicates exactly; however, the presumed original (Rennes, Musée Beaux-Arts) measures 256 x 324 cm., a second version (Rome, Palazzo Corsini) measures 119 x 152 cm., and a third version believed to be a *modello* measures 99 x 125 cm. By comparison, the *Madonna and Child in a Garland of Flowers* (Paris, Louvre) on which the painting in *Sight* is presumed to be based measures only 83.5 x 65 cm.

works from an entirely different category—the miniature paintings on copper for which he was most celebrated. In this way, Van Kessel cleverly plays with established pictorial conventions and viewer expectations for gallery paintings. While the miniature, presumably copper, framed study of flowers in the foreground of Brueghel's *Sight* remains true to scale relative to all of the other paintings that surround it, Van Kessel's pictured insect painting in the Karlsruhe gallery no longer resembles the miniature prototypes from which it derived, but rather is presented as a large-scale composition that rivals the canvases depicted around it. Thus, while Brueghel enlarged his artworks in order to underscore their presence within the picture gallery, Van Kessel translated his paintings into an entirely different medium, turning copper into canvas right before the beholder's eyes.

The insect paintings featured in the Karlsruhe gallery draws attention to another characteristic element of Van Kessel's citation strategy. In addition to representing compositions by other artists in his works, Van Kessel also cites his own art. The central plates of the Munich version of *The Four Parts of the World* underscore his art in the form of pictures-within pictures. In each of the four central panels, paintings that either directly reference or represent pastiches of other works in Van Kessel's oeuvre are framed and displayed, inset into wall niches, draped with curtains and carpets, garnished with ribbons tied in bows, and even hawked by a well-dressed connoisseur in *Europe*. In almost every case, however, Van Kessel's paintings—of insects, butterflies, monstrous mandrakes, and demonic cannibals—are not portrayed as they are in reality, but rather are blown up to monumental proportions.

What was the logic and meaning behind Van Kessel's consistent practice of miniaturizing monumental easel paintings while magnifying his own small-scale works? The pragmatic explanation is that enlarging Van Kessel's miniature paintings permitted beholders to identify his signature style and subject matter, both of which risked being overlooked if his pictures were depicted to scale. The frequent depiction of magnifying lenses and eyeglasses in Antwerp gallery paintings suggests that such optical aids were often utilized in order to study miniature paintings like those produced by Van Kessel.<sup>325</sup> Magnifying his pictured works in large-scale *kunstkammer* paintings performed this practice virtually, allowing the beholder to see in greater detail the curious content and virtuoso brushwork of Van Kessel's art. Such close observation was especially crucial to local *liefhebbers* who delighted in the challenge of identifying the array of artists, techniques, and subjects featured in gallery paintings.

Van Kessel's simultaneous miniaturization and magnification of paintings also recalls the concept of experimental artistry discussed in the previous chapter. Positing the picture as a kind of experiment that demonstrates mediated and manipulated vision, as Alpers has suggested, reveals an important relationship between Van Kessel's play with scale in both his insect works and his gallery paintings. The extensive manipulation of scale *within* his insect paintings can be seen as a microcosm of the magnification *of* his insect compositions in the context of painted galleries such as those features in *The Four Parts of the World* and the Karlsruhe composition.

Another important function of Van Kessel's magnification of his artworks is his desire to position himself within Antwerp's rich art historical lineage. Repeatedly throughout his career Van Kessel underscored his artistic talent and virtuosity by aligning

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<sup>325</sup> See, for example, figs. 1.3 and 4.21.

himself with the most esteemed painters in Antwerp, both past and present. Within his painted collections, Van Kessel's pictures of small, strange, and exotic creature are juxtaposed and compete with recognizable citations from monumental animal paintings by Rubens, Snyders, Paul de Vos, Pieter Boel, and Jan Fyt, as well as copies of portraits that depict famous artists and political and religious leaders. Van Kessel's magnification and placement of his pictured works in central positions, his embellishment of them with accessories such as curtains and bows, and his depiction of collectors admiring them, set his works apart from all of the other paintings pictured in the *kunstkamer*. He asserted his knowledge and mastery of the art of the past as well as his contributions as one of the leading innovators in creating the art of the present. By taking past art and playing with it, shrinking it in scale, and bending its media, brushwork, and materials to suit the polished surfaces, meticulous brushstrokes, and miniature aesthetic, Van Kessel created an artistic enterprise that was extremely appealing to contemporary *liefhebbers* and collectors, as well as fellow artists and artisans.

In addition to his manipulation of past art through the insertion of pictures-within-pictures, Van Kessel's transformative process also involved the animation of individually borrowed motifs. The introduction of color and context played an important role in his recasting of motifs, something which Krempel and other scholars fail to address in their identification of various graphic images as models for *The Four Parts of the World*. Van Kessel's Amerindian figures in the central panel of *America* illustrate the painter's dramatic transformation of the awkward bulky figures in the crude woodcuts and paintings made by Marcgraf and Eckhout following their voyage to Brazil (fig 3.38).



In Van Kessel's imaginary *wunderkammer*, the boundary between the collector and the collected objects is blurred. A raucous party of dancing figures is depicted entering the gallery through an open doorway that serves as a threshold between exhibited objects and peoples and the allegedly "natural" land from which they were assembled. The juxtaposition of these vibrant, fleshy figures and the stone statuettes which frame them foreshadows their entry into the space of the collection, where inevitable and dramatic transformations take place. The band of figures just outside the threshold and to the right peer nervously into the gallery and hesitate to enter, while inside the space of the collection, there is a palpable tension between animate and inanimate, and between flesh and stone. The stone Tapuya figures meet each other's gazes across the threshold as they survey the newcomers to their world. They and the mischievous-looking grotesque gargoyle busts that occupy their niches share knowing smiles and smirks. Their elegantly posed and elongated bodies, in addition to the pedestals on which they stand, the niches which they inhabit, and the framed oil paintings and exotic shell masks which surround them situate the Amerindians within a decidedly European context of collecting and display. Although Van Kessel's figures undoubtedly owe a certain debt to the drawings and paintings of the Tapuya by his predecessors, his own animation of those relatively static and descriptive images—essentially turning flesh into stone and back—creates an entirely new context within which these "collectibles" can be interpreted.

Van Kessel's transformation of the Tapuya figures also hints at the levity and wit that permeates many of the images assembled in *The Four Parts of the World*. The focus of past scholarship on the relationship between Van Kessel's depicted motifs and their

alleged art-historical and natural sources has obscured the playfulness and humor that underlies the paintings in both the Munich and Madrid series. His animation of painted fauna relied heavily on the display of wit, which was defined in the early modern period as “the faculty that seeks out and finds hidden resemblances between things.”<sup>326</sup> This notion of putting together and making connections between diverse visual material was an integral part of the pictorial representation of natural history in the early modern period, and was fundamental to Van Kessel’s recasting of images in *The Four Parts of the World*.

The witty and comical aspects of Van Kessel’s paintings of fauna are inextricably linked to prior artistic trends and social ideals, as well as the tastes of his contemporary clientele. The practice of incorporating humor in images in order to facilitate the transmission of natural historical knowledge was commonplace at the Habsburg courts of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. Hoefnagel and his Italian counterpart, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, both of whom served as court artists in Vienna and Prague, created ludic pictorial types that combined natural elements in an artificial manner.

In Chapter Three, I discussed how Hoefnagel’s witty illusionism grew out of the expectations of the court culture in which he produced his art. The same can be said for Arcimboldo, who, between 1563 and 1566, created two series of composite heads formed from flora and fauna that represented the *Four Seasons* and the *Four Elements* (figs. 4.22-4.24) and were presented to Emperor Maximilian II in Vienna. These combinatory *capricci*, as they have been called, share an affinity with Van Kessel’s *The Four Parts of*

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<sup>326</sup> Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, “Metaphysical Poetry and the Poetic of Correspondence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 14 (April 1953): 223.

*the World* in that both can be characterized as visual collections that recombine individual elements of nature in ways that cannot be replicated in nature itself.<sup>327</sup>

The interpretation of Arcimboldo's *capricci* varied greatly among the artist's contemporaries and continues to be a subject of debate among modern scholars. Many have characterized Arcimboldo's composite heads as playful witticisms, while some have identified within these paintings complex allegorical allusions to imperial power.<sup>328</sup> Still others have compared the breadth and variety represented in his combinatory pictures to the structuring principles of early modern museums and cosmological schemata.<sup>329</sup> Arcimboldo's painted conceits have also served as touchstones for the perennial debate about the role of invention and the artistic imagination, most notably in Gregorio Comanini's *Il Figino overo del fine della Pittura* of 1591. Furthermore, recent archival research by Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann reveals that Arcimboldo was actively "participating directly in the dissemination of knowledge about natural history" and that many of his models used for the construction of the composite heads were also sought by naturalists such as Aldrovandi.<sup>330</sup> The range of modern interpretations of Arcimboldo's composite heads, which are simultaneously instructive and whimsical, serious and

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<sup>327</sup> In this instance, I am using the term *capriccio* to mean an original or "bizarre" artistic invention made up of diverse components that can be recombined at will. Maiorini and Doyle-Anderson note that in addition to using this term to refer to the artworks themselves, Comanini also applied it to the inventive imagination within which these compositions originated. For further discussion of early modern *capricci*, see Gregorio Comanini, *The Figino, or, On the Purpose of Painting: Art Theory in the Late Renaissance*, trans. Giancarlo Maiorini and Ann Doyle-Anderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 121, Maiorini, *The Portrait of Eccentricity: Arcimboldo and the Mannerist Grotesque* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 110, and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Arcimboldo: Visual Jokes, Natural History, and Still-Life Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>328</sup> See especially, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "The Allegories and Their Meaning," 89-110, and Pietro Falchetta, "Anthology of Sixteenth-Century Texts," 143-196, in *The Arcimboldo Effect: Transformations of the Face from the 16th to the 20th Century*, ed. Pontus Hultén (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987).

<sup>329</sup> See Sven Alfons, "The Museum as Image of the World," in *The Arcimboldo Effect*, 67-88.

<sup>330</sup> Kaufman, *Visual Jokes*, 123-124.

jesting, descriptive and illusionistic, underscores the early modern taste for “serious jokes.” In pictorial conceits such as these, laughter functions to persuade and engage contemplation in viewers. Esoteric jokes, whether verbal or visual, were popular within sixteenth-century court culture as a means of presenting knowledge.<sup>331</sup> The significance of games and humor in courtly life is elaborated on in Baldassare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* (1528), which discusses at length the comportment of the ideal Renaissance courtier and was translated into many languages and remained influential for a long time.

Despite the fact that Arcimboldo and Hoefnagel worked in a court setting nearly a century earlier than Van Kessel, the pictorial strategies they employed and the tastes and mindset of the audience for which they worked can still be linked to the latter’s art.

Although discussed in the context of life at court, Castiglione’s association of humor and wit with the ideal Renaissance gentleman was not lost on the aspiring elite, who sought to emulate the customs and trends of nobility. *The Book of the Courtier* was disseminated widely and its impact had a trickle-down effect on these individual in particular. The noble and aristocratic patrons for whom Van Kessel worked undoubtedly appreciated the courtly aesthetic of his animal paintings, namely their humorous narratives, miniature size, polished copper surfaces, jewel-like colors, and display of *trompe l’oeil* illusionsim. At the same time, these qualities would also have been appealing to his elite Antwerp clientele, for whom the emulation of noble collecting practices was paramount.

Borrowing stylistic and compositional elements from the art of his courtly predecessors, while largely dispensing with their humanist content and overtones, allowed Van Kessel

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<sup>331</sup> On Renaissance “serious jokes” in relation to Arcimboldo’s composit heads, see Kaufmann, “The Allegories and their Meaning,” 94-96 and Kaufmann, “Arcimboldo’s Serious Jokes: ‘Mysterious but Long Meaning,’” in *The Verbal and the Visual: Essays in Honor of William Sebastian Heckscher*, ed. Karl-Ludwig Selig and Elizabeth Sears. (New York: Ithaca Press, 1990), 59-86.

to repackaged printed natural historical knowledge as luxurious objects that catered to the nobility and aspiring nobility which comprised the lion's share of his audience.

A number of vignettes extracted from Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* demonstrate how his pictorial acknowledgement of past art was not expressed with deference, but rather with levity and unabashed self-confidence. As mentioned earlier, the coiled and writhing snakes depicted in Van Kessel's view of Angola undoubtedly refer to those featured in Rubens's horrifying *Head of Medusa*, a painting which Van Kessel may have seen firsthand when it was sold in Antwerp in 1648 (figs. 4.2, 4.3). Van Kessel's fascination with Rubens's serpents is evident from his careful replication of their poses, as well as the frequency with which these motifs are referenced elsewhere in his oeuvre. At least two years before the presumed date of his two views of Angola, Van Kessel seemingly experimented with Rubens's reptilian motifs, setting them against a blank white ground and, for the most part, posing them separately (fig. 3.12).

Van Kessel's Angola snakes appear in a setting that is dramatically different from those in the Mellon series, however. If the neutral background and distinct, individual forms in the Mellon series are to be read as a sort of study or test piece, then Van Kessel's Angola landscape represents the extent to which the artist's reuse and recombination of motifs was truly transformational. Although they share many of the same motifs, Rubens's painting of the grotesque Medusa, which evidently caused Constantijn Huygens to become so shaken after viewing it that he rejected the work in his

journal as being too terrifying, conveys an effect that is dramatically different from the one evoked by Van Kessel's painting.<sup>332</sup>

The scene painted by Rubens, in collaboration with Snyders, is both gory and horrific. Medusa's severed head is portrayed in the most graphic detail. The ghastly pallor of the skin and lips, combined with the blood-rimmed eyeballs and nostrils, and askance pupils, produce a frightening visage, while the weaving and knotted bodies of slithering snakes pouring out from the scalp and flesh is truly repulsive.<sup>333</sup> The artists' emphasis on gore and horror, aspects which are evoked to a much lesser degree by Caravaggio's rendition of the same subject, is clearly deliberate and suggests that there was a taste and demand for such pictorial effects. Despite Huygens's personal distaste for Rubens's picture, his description of it alludes to the fact that an artwork's ability to evoke horror was admired and even considered beautiful in the first quarter of the seventeenth century:

Come on, you all who measure beauty to the extent of the horror it evokes: Let us assume that someone willing to sing about murder and manslaughter with the same harmonious voice as that he would use for joyful things, fibs, and jokes, then I would request him to please me both through his subjects and through his performance.<sup>334</sup>

By contrast, Van Kessel's insertion of Rubens's snakes into his representation of Angola produces a totally different effect. Whereas Rubens's snakes contribute to the

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<sup>332</sup> Susan Koslow has argued that the painting which Huygens viewed in the home of the Amsterdam collector Nicolas Sohier and later commented upon in his diary must have been a replica of the work now in Vienna. See Koslow, "The Science and Poetics of 'the Head of Medusa'" 147.

<sup>333</sup> Koslow notes that the behavior of the intertwined pair of snakes against the rocky cliff at to the right of Medusa's head is consistent with that of mating vipers. Koslow also points out that the process of giving birth to snakes which do not hatch from eggs but rather rupture their mother's skin is also characteristic of vipers and is described by both Pliny and Gesner. See Koslow, *Frans Snyders*, 1995, 148.

<sup>334</sup> Translated in Jan Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst* (Amsterdam: Van Oorschot, 1979), 163-164.

narration of a classical myth set in an imaginary, truncated landscape, Van Kessel utilizes elements of the landscape to naturalize these creatures as much as possible. Ships sail by, a cityscape replete with a church tower(?) looms across the water, birds fly overhead undisturbed, and several strange, yet almost comical creatures interact in the distance.

The cartoonish facial features and animated interaction of the other fantasy creatures, many of which derived from templates in the illustrated texts discussed earlier, obliterate the sense of horror that permeates Rubens's painting. The pair of intertwined, presumably mating, snakes borrowed from *The Head of Medusa* are juxtaposed in Van Kessel's picture with an amusing frog which crouches on its hind legs with its hands clasped tightly, as if praying for his life to be spared from the ravenous serpents that tower over him. Meanwhile, four of his amphibious friends cower in fear underneath a rocky ledge that has been ambushed by another pair of threatening-looking snakes. The frogs' fate may not be as bleak as it seems, however. If one looks closely at the far right of the panel, a fifth frog appears to have triumphed over a now limp and lifeless snake which he clasps victoriously between his arms.

Despite the obvious visual references to Rubens's famous painting—including the mythical, two-headed *amphisbaena* in the left foreground, Van Kessel's pictorial ode to Angola is not an eclectic hodge-podge, but rather a cleverly designed and cohesive composition—a true pastiche, in De Piles's terms. Humorous and ironic vignettes, exotic and fantastic creatures, and a naturalistically rendered landscape that recalls the formal features of period maps are blend together seamlessly with art-historical knowledge, inspiring equal parts delight and curiosity in the beholder.

The staging of productive juxtapositions between individual motifs represents yet another way in which Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* stimulates curiosity in viewers and encourages them to recruit art-historical knowledge and connoisseurial skills. In contrast to several humorous scenes, such as the praying frog described earlier and other vignettes in which animals joke, laugh, and play with each other, as well as tender moments, such as mothers nursing or nuzzling their young, Van Kessel's Munich and Madrid series also depict numerous violent conflicts between creatures. Similarity and dissimilarity, attraction and repulsion, and sympathy and antipathy are paramount in *The Four Parts of the World*.

The pictorialization of the passions, particularly violence, in Flemish animal paintings had an established tradition and figured prominently in hunt scenes and game pieces.<sup>335</sup> Many art historians interpret the proliferation and juxtaposition of passions in such works as having didactic significance, for example reading Rubens's depiction of violence in hunting scenes as a challenge to his Neo-Stoic patrons to check their emotions.<sup>336</sup> Van Kessel, by contrast, did not work in the same humanist vein that Rubens and Snyder did, and we cannot blithely attribute moralizing meaning to his portrayal of conflicts and camaraderie in *The Four Parts of the World*. A closer look at one of many examples of animal violence in the Munich series reveals some of the ways in which new meaning was generated by Van Kessel's recombination of pictorial elements and

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<sup>335</sup> On the representation of the passions in Rubens's hunt scenes, see Suzanne Walker, "Composing the Passions in Rubens's Hunting Scenes," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek: The Passions in the Arts of the Early Modern Netherlands* 60 (2010): 109-124. For discussion of the philosophical significance of Dutch and Flemish game pieces and trophies, see Sarah Cohen, "Life and Death in the Northern European Game Piece," in *Early Modern Zoology: The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts*, ed. K.A.E. Enenkel and P. J. Smith, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 603-639.

<sup>336</sup> Walker, "Composing the Passions."



reinsertion of them into novel contexts, where not only their formal properties, but also the kinds of emotions that they conveyed were altered or projected differently.

One of many examples of creatural conflict in the Munich series occurs in Van Kessel's view of *Havana*, which portrays the gruesome aftermath of a skirmish between a hippopotamus and a crocodile (fig. 4.25). In this scene, a hippopotamus stands over the mutilated, bloody crocodile which he has just killed, while simultaneously threatening two crocodilian onlookers. Scattered on the ground are multiple bones, including what perplexingly appears to be a human skull. Teixeira's scientifically-driven account of the original sources for the individual elements in the Munich series equates Van Kessel's *Havana* with antique and sixteenth-century compendia of natural historical knowledge. He illustrates *Havana* opposite a colorless woodcut of an isolated crocodile, taken from Conrad Gesner's *Historiae Animalium* of 1551, and also claims that Van Kessel's painting is an allusion to the pretended killing of crocodiles by hippopotamuses described by Pliny and Gesner.<sup>337</sup>

Although I acknowledge that some early modern viewers may very well have made such connections, I disagree with Teixeira's insinuation that meaning in Van Kessel's painting was so one-dimensional and conjured up exclusively natural historical associations. Given Van Kessel's consistent engagement with a local history of images, I contend that the exotic context, gruesome violence, and especially the multiplicity of sources referenced in Van Kessel's view of *Havana* has far more in common with

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<sup>337</sup> Teixeira, *The 'Allegory of the Continents'*, 76, 114.

Rubens's *Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt*, painted in 1615-1616, than it does with Gesner's crude and isolated illustration or Pliny's textual description (fig. 4.26).<sup>338</sup>

Rubens's knowledge of the extensive symbolic, emblematic, and natural history of the hippopotamus, including its relationship to the crocodile, and his ability to process this information pictorially is well documented,<sup>339</sup> and undoubtedly evoked an extensive web of visual associations for early modern viewers familiar with the Munich work or its numerous painted and printed reproductions.<sup>340</sup> It is not so much the resemblance of the two painter's depicted animals (in fact, Van Kessel's crocodile bears little resemblance to the one featured in Rubens's hunt scene) as their composite method of construction and mutual emphasis on heightened drama, violence, chaos, and the exotic that connects their respective works. I argue that upon seeing Van Kessel's image of Havana, an early modern beholder would immediately register this art-historical relationship between the hippopotamus and crocodile, even before he or she thought about the independent natural historical associations of these two creatures.

The emphasis on animal violence in Van Kessel's view of Havana creates an indelible link with the tradition of dramatic hunts established by Rubens's oeuvre. In these works, Rubens created realistic pictures of exotic locales by recasting Old World animals which were familiar to his audience and adding drama through the portrayal of

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<sup>338</sup> Discussion of Rubens's composition can be found in Balis, *Landscapes and Hunting Scenes*, 72-74, 118-123.

<sup>339</sup> See, for example, Balis, "Hippopotamus Rubenii: Een Hoofdstukje uit de Geschiedenis van de Zoölogie," in *Feestbundel bij de Opening van het Kolveniershof en het Rubenianum* (Antwerp: Rubenianum, 1981), 127-142, and *Landscapes and Hunting Scenes*, 72-74.

<sup>340</sup> Several literal painted copies of Rubens's work exist, and the composition is also reproduced in a gallery painting by Hieronymous Francken II (Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België, Inv. 5863). An etching and related drawing of this work by Pieter Soutman also exist.

their character and emotions.<sup>341</sup> Rubens's painting, commissioned by Maximilian I, Elector of Bavaria, is representative of the genre of the courtly hunt, which glorified aristocratic activities.<sup>342</sup> It depicts the savage hunt of a hippopotamus by wild-eyed, ruthless figures in sumptuous, exotic dress. In addition to alluding to hunting's status as a privileged activity enjoyed by nobility, Rubens's painting also underscores the triumph of man over beast. The hippopotamus and crocodile, although they lash back valiantly, are outnumbered and overwhelmed. In this scene, the violence is primarily directed at these two animals, which fight back merely in defense.

On the contrary, Van Kessel's Havana contains no figures, and the conflict occurs between the crocodiles and the hippo, rather than against human antagonists. Moreover, the element of the exotic is situated in the landscape and its fauna, which occupy the majority of the picture plane, as opposed to the human figures in Rubens's hunt. Van Kessel "naturalizes" a foreign place by identifying it as an actual location (on the frame), situating the conflict within a believable panoramic view, and eliminating the intruding human figures that dominate Rubens's composition. Even though it is completely contrived, Van Kessel's view of Havana claims an eyewitness account and "familiarizes" the foreign. By reinserting elements of Rubens's composition and drama into a novel context, Van Kessel recast the source and significance of violence and exoticism. Through this, I argue that he encouraged the beholder to make the kinds of critical comparisons which I have described and created a rich nexus of associations with which he or she could engage.

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<sup>341</sup> Balis, *Landscapes and Hunting Scenes*, 58.

<sup>342</sup> Balis, *Landscapes and Hunting Scenes*, 67.

## Alternative Analogies for Van Kessel's Combinatory Pictures

As I have argued, the combinatory mode of Van Kessel's pictures, which culminated in his creation of two series of *The Four Parts of the World*, served many functions, from encouraging viewers to demonstrate and test their art-historical knowledge to complicating the contemporary understanding of nature and geography. This inventive type of picture stimulated curiosity and delight as well as encouraged conversation and contemplation among beholders. It did so by creating dynamic juxtapositions, stressing inter-pictorial relationships between disparate images, and challenging the beholder to actively participate in the generation of meaning. The form and function of these composite pictures in many ways mirrors that of early modern collections, including collections of diverse objects and representations of real or imagined collections in Antwerp gallery paintings. The following description of how such gallery paintings operated summarizes perfectly the way that Van Kessel's aggregate works engaged the beholder:

We can...expect to find concealed erudite, moralizing or amusing inter-pictorial connections in the artist's disposition and juxtaposition of the paintings in the room, not least because it was undoubtedly part of the function of such works to encourage viewers of both sexes and with diverse intellectual, religious and social interests to search for and discover such relationships.<sup>343</sup>

Thinking about Van Kessel's paintings in terms of early modern notions of pastiche as well as the construction, content, and function of contemporary collections reveals the complexity and multivalent meaning of works like *The Four Parts of the World*, therefore providing an important corrective of modern scholarship's limiting view. Although

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<sup>343</sup>Fiona Healy, "Vive L'esprit. Sculpture as the Bearer of Meaning in Willem van Haecht's Art Cabinet of Cornelis Van Der Gheest," in *Munuscula Amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Context in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. Katlijne van der Stighelen, vol. 2 (Turnhout; Brepols, 2006), 425.

positing the collection as an analogy for Van Kessel's series has never before been articulated fully, it is difficult to ignore the fact that each of the central plates depicts an early modern *kunst-* or *wunderkammer*. Even though he does not discuss Van Kessel's Munich series in these terms, it is not a coincidence that Schneider's chapter which focuses on these paintings is entitled, "Museums, Wonder Chambers and Natural History Collections."<sup>344</sup> Findlen likewise acknowledges a relationship between Van Kessel's centerpiece of *Europe* from the Munich series and seventeenth-century Italian collections, although her connection is directed more at what the painting represents than its construction or how it operates.<sup>345</sup> While both Schneider's and Findlen's cursory discussion of *The Four Parts of the World* focuses primarily on Van Kessel's description of collections, they open up the possibility of interrogating other aspects of this association.

Setting up an analogy between Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* and early modern collections implicates the creator, the pictures themselves, and the beholder, much like De Piles's seventeenth-century definition of pastiche. The process by which Van Kessel assembled and processed a plethora of diverse images enables us to cast him in the role of collector. Furthermore, his subsequent recombination and transformation of this enormous corpus of visual material, and its insertion into new contexts, recalls the collector's task of creating legible visual programs in which diverse objects and images are brought together in innovative ways that generate new associations and understanding. Finally, one must consider the effect that Van Kessel's pictorial puzzles had on his audience of elite and knowledgeable connoisseurs. In front of composite

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<sup>344</sup> Schneider, *The Art of the Still Life*, chapter 12.

<sup>345</sup> Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature*, 45-46.

works such as *The Four Parts of the World*, we can imagine artists, artisans, patrons, collectors, *liefhebbers*, and connoisseurs conversing with one another “through the medium of painting.”<sup>346</sup>

Having addressed Van Kessel’s assembly and conceptualization of *The Four Parts of the World* earlier in this chapter, I would like to turn my attention now to the ways in which this series, as the epitome of the model of picture that typifies his oeuvre, would have engaged early modern viewers. As I have noted, many of the individual motifs and pictured artworks that appear in Van Kessel’s Munich series are excerpted from or based on actual works, either by other artists or Van Kessel himself. Within this series, it is therefore possible to trace the history of Flemish (and particularly Antwerp) animal painting through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the peripheral panels and details in the central panels evoke paintings by Rubens, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Roelandt Savery, Gillis Hondecoeter, Joris van Son, Paul de Vos, Frans Snyders, Pieter Boel, Otto Marseus van Schrieck, and Albert Eckhout, the majority of framed pictures in the central panels reference Van Kessel’s own paintings, including his witty signature composed of snakes and insects that appears as the centerpiece in *Europe*. The inherently hierarchical structure of the ebony frames in the Munich series underscores Van Kessel’s knowledge and self-proclaimed command of the history of art in Antwerp. His pictured paintings occur in the larger, central plates, while citations from other painters dominate the smaller, peripheral pictures.

Van Kessel’s series of *The Four Parts of the World* represents the ultimate opportunity for the beholder’s display of connoisseurial knowledge. Its combinatory construction confronted viewers with a connoisseurial challenge. The paintings prompted

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<sup>346</sup> Loh, “A ‘Particular Taste’ for Pastiche,” 251.

the beholder to identify the multiplicity of hands involved in their execution (Van Kessel's, Quellinus's, and possibly those of his sons, and other assistants), as well as the repetitive motifs found throughout Van Kessel's vast oeuvre and individual works by both himself and other artists. As Elizabeth Honig has noted, aggregative works such as collaborative paintings and picture galleries provided collectors and connoisseurs with a prime opportunity to demonstrate and converse about their cultivated knowledge about art and, by extension, their status.<sup>347</sup> These types of paintings "provided a visual test for connoisseurs and measured (and shaped) the beholder's social value."<sup>348</sup> I would argue that this demonstration of knowledge and taste extended to Van Kessel himself, who, as the creator of these pictures, not only demonstrates, but also flaunts his art-historical savvy.

A final and crucial aspect of the collection analogy that I am proposing takes into account the unusual format of Van Kessel's series. Although most scholarship has stopped short of looking beyond the pictorial content of *The Four Parts of the World*, the formal resemblance of the compartmentalized, ebony frames inset with copper plates to the luxurious *kunstkasten* which were produced in large numbers in seventeenth-century Antwerp is unmistakable. This intriguing visual correspondence will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Five. Suffice it to say, however, that Van Kessel's creation of a virtual collection of images that is presented in the guise of a collection (or "curiosity") cabinet provides further impetus for considering *The Four Parts of the World* in terms of the spaces, content, organization, functions, and logic of early modern collections.

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<sup>347</sup> Honig, "The Beholder as Work of Art."

<sup>348</sup> Honig, "The Beholder as Work of Art," 285.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**MEANING IN MATERIALS: CABINETS WITHOUT DRAWERS AND  
PAINTED TAPESTRIES**

An important aspect of Van Kessel's oeuvre that has been largely overlooked in modern scholarship is his paintings' simulation of the format, stylistic properties, and materials of a wide range of media, particularly luxury objects such as *kunstkasten*, illuminated and limned miniatures, and tapestries.<sup>349</sup> These media crossovers enabled Van Kessel to make certain claims about the status of his art as well as redefine and negotiate the scope of the small-format cabinet picture. In this chapter, I consider the intriguing materiality of Van Kessel's paintings in relation to the historical dimension of materials and material practices in early modern Antwerp. While the previous chapter focused primarily on Van Kessel's reuse and recombination of pictorial motifs and themes, this chapter examines his material transformation of small-format cabinet paintings through allusions to luxury objects and the manipulation of physical properties such as scale, format, framing, and materials. I examine how Van Kessel effectively created novel types of paintings out of other media and categories of art.

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<sup>349</sup> An exception is Gormans, "Ein Eurozentrischer Blick," in which the author thoughtfully discusses the subdivided format of Van Kessel's pictures and acknowledges formal and organizational similarities between these paintings and *kunstkasten*, maps, and scientific diagrams from the early modern period. Ultimately, however, Gormans focuses on conceptual rather than material relationships between Van Kessel's pictures and these other media.



Focusing primarily on three major projects in Van Kessel's oeuvre, his series of *The Four Parts of the World*, composite insect series, and the *House of Moncada* series, I explore how Van Kessel's pictorial techniques and strategies were profoundly shaped by local artisanal practices. By attending to and shedding new light on the often overlooked materiality of Van Kessel's paintings, this chapter reveals how Van Kessel's engagement with a visual vocabulary that cut across multiple media and materials in seventeenth-century Antwerp motivated his invention of novel pictorial types and subjects.

### **Re-framing *The Four Parts of the World***

Although the formal and material relationship between Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* in Munich and contemporary *kunstkasten* has been mentioned in passing by previous scholars, its significance has not been explored until now (figs. 1.13-1.16).<sup>350</sup> The compartmentalized framing format and incorporation of aesthetically and economically valuable materials from diverse regions of the globe in Van Kessel's painted series immediately evoke the luxurious *kunstkasten* that were produced in great numbers in Antwerp and exported throughout Europe during the seventeenth century (fig. 5.1).<sup>351</sup> Many of these opulent cabinets were constructed from costly, exotic ebony, and their façades were divided by framework into multiple, recessed compartments. The

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<sup>350</sup> This formal resemblance between ebony Antwerp cabinets and Van Kessel's Munich series has been noted in Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10, Greindl, *Les Peintres Flamands de Nature Morte* (1956), 128, Gormans, "Ein Eurozentrischer Blick," 373, and Schütz, "Europa und die Vier Erdteile," 292.

<sup>351</sup> For a comprehensive account of the materials, manufacture, and marketing of *kunstkasten*, see Ria Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1991), Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast. Kunsthistorische Aspecten* (Brussels: Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, 1993), and Reinier Baarsen, *17th-Century Cabinets* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000).

surfaces of the cabinets were further embellished with tortoiseshell, precious stones, metalwork, glass mirrors, and miniature oil paintings on copper panels.<sup>352</sup> Much like Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World*, such cabinets brought together artworks, natural curiosities, and lavish, exotic materials for the careful scrutiny and delight of the beholder.

I propose that Van Kessel's invention of the distinctive pictorial type featured in *The Four Parts of the World* represents a conscious exploitation of the materiality of the *kunstkast* in order to create a fundamentally different, inverted type of object that privileges small-format paintings over the furniture in which they were traditionally and subordinately embedded. During the third quarter of the seventeenth century, Van Kessel produced upwards of 300 oil paintings on miniature copper plates, a significant number of which were intended for the decoration of cabinets. However, in contrast to the mass-produced, often anonymous paintings that decorate and are subservient to the wooden façades of most *kunstkasten*, Van Kessel's Madrid and Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World* feature meticulously painted jewel-like pictures that showcase his fine workmanship and virtuoso artistry. These innovative works elevate the status and value of Van Kessel's miniature paintings by literally extracting them from the context of luxury furniture and effectively transforming them into costly, composite easel paintings that were admired in their own right and displayed on the walls of the most esteemed art collections in Antwerp and abroad. Moreover, as objects that both portray treasures from different parts of the world and are themselves composed of materials that originated in

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<sup>352</sup> Oil paintings in cabinets are recorded from 1627 on, but they appear in gallery paintings as early as the *Allegory of Sight* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens (fig. 4.21). Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 47-48.

those places, Van Kessel's series of the continents would have held special meaning for his elite audience of artisans, merchants, connoisseurs, and foreign dignitaries.<sup>353</sup>

In his unpublished 1675 edition of *Het gulden cabinet*, Cornelis de Bie describes the awe-inspiring effect produced by the abundance of finely-wrought and scrupulously detailed miniature motifs that cover every inch of the luminous copper surfaces of Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World*. Taken together with De Bie's revelation of the cost of Van Kessel's series, approximately 10 to 15 times the annual income of a skilled craftsman, and attribution of this sum to the paintings' "exceptional curiosity" and "exceeding artistry," this indicates that not only Van Kessel's subject matter, but also his finely-wrought manner of painting and incorporation of materials prized for their exotic origins and aesthetic properties contributed to the series' monetary value and prestige. Moreover, De Bie's comment that he viewed the series on multiple occasions suggests that it was displayed locally and was accessible to Antwerp's growing population of *liefhebbers*, who sought elevated social status and prestige through the emulation of aristocratic practices of collecting and discussing art. De Bie's description makes clear that Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* was regarded by seventeenth-century viewers as a pictorial demonstration of artistic skill and virtuosity that belonged to an elite culture of collecting.

Van Kessel's representation of The Four Parts of the World, a distinct pictorial theme that emerged within Antwerp's humanist milieu around 1570, in the format of

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<sup>353</sup>For further reading on how early modern objects, such as artworks, natural specimens, luxury goods, and rarities, served as active 'messengers' of meaning for collectors, virtuosi, and scholars, see Sven Dupré and Christoph Lüthy, *Silent Messengers: The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011).

luxurious cabinets was innovative in many respects.<sup>354</sup> Initially, this theme was restricted to graphic media, such as allegorical print series, printed books, and Habsburg pageantry props. Although it migrated to oil painting by the early seventeenth century, it still retained many of the literary and humanist conventions of printed images. For example, there remained a tendency to depict the personified continents as a unified grouping in a hierarchical orientation, as in the frontispiece of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (fig. 5.2) and Rubens's *The Four Continents* (fig. 5.3).<sup>355</sup> Van Kessel's series, by contrast, emphasizes the continents' distance (both geographically and culturally) from one another by physically segregating the four corners of the globe in four discrete compositions.

The implications of Van Kessel's translation of a subject that was rooted in the medium of print into oil paint, ebony, and copper cannot be underestimated. While the compartmentalized format featured in *The Four Parts of the World* was utilized in a variety of media in early modern Antwerp, including altarpieces, furniture, maps, and prints, Van Kessel's employment of this organizational scheme in oil paintings was novel, and fundamentally different. In religious and printed images, subdivided frames, whether real or illusionistic, provided a means of organizing information and narratives in a visual format. The Antwerp painter Frans Francken the Younger made several paintings of biblical subjects in which subdivided *grisaille* vignettes form an illusionistic

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<sup>354</sup> On the development of *The Four Parts of the World* as a pictorial subject in early modern Antwerp, see McGrath, "Humanism, Allegorical Invention, and the Personification of the Continents."

<sup>355</sup> Despite the 1689 description of a second (studio?) version of this painting in the Roman collection of Queen Christina of Sweden as "... fiume ed donne fatte per simbolo delle quarto parti del mondo..." Elizabeth McGrath has disputed this interpretation of Rubens's composition, arguing that it does not portray the four continents, but rather the four rivers of antiquity: the Nile, the Tigris, the Ganges, and the Euphrates. See McGrath, "River-Gods, Sources, and the Mystery of the Nile: Rubens's the Four Rivers in Vienna," in *Die Malerei Antwerpens: Gattungen, Meister, Wirkungen*, ed. Karl Schütz, Ekkehard Mai, and Hans Vlieghe (Cologne, 1994), 74.

frame in order to distinguish the central parable from the peripheral narrative (fig. 5.4), and seventeenth-century Netherlandish country and continent maps frequently framed a central topographic view with bird's-eye views of cities and idealized portraits of native inhabitants (fig. 5.5). In spite of this parallel, I do not find the analogy made by several scholars between such maps and *The Four Parts of the World* to be wholly convincing.<sup>356</sup> The association of descriptive immediacy, scientific documentation, and erudite ideas with graphic media meant that maps and other printed images of the continents conveyed meaning differently to early modern viewers than did Van Kessel's cabinet-like paintings. As I will show, his pictures' simulation of *objets d'art*, by virtue of their description and integration of costly, precious, and symbolically significant materials, added a novel and important layer of meaning to an established pictorial theme

### **Painting (for) the Cabinet**

What was the impetus for taking two well-established, local traditions—cabinet making and small-format painting—which had emerged distinct from one another but had come together in the production of luxurious *kunstkasten*, and creating a new kind of picture that posed a *paragone* between them? Van Kessel's participation in the decoration of *kunstkasten* certainly would have provided the means and motivation for his

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<sup>356</sup> The resemblance of Van Kessel's Munich series to contemporary maps has been acknowledged in Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10, cat. Münster 1980, 24, Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, 163-165, Gormans, "Ein Eurozentrischer Blick," 374-375, and Schütz, "Europa und die Vier Erdteile," 292-295. I acknowledge that this comparison is valid in some respects, particularly with regard to the composite pictorial construction of Van Kessel's Munich series. As discussed previously, the latter are not cohesive narratives, but rather are constructed from an aggregate of diverse and anachronistic images from multiple sources. Similarly, the mixing and matching of novel and dated motifs in maps was common due to the tension between the assimilation of new knowledge and adherence to visual conventions. However, I would argue that the similarities end here, and that the shared material properties between Van Kessel's pictures and *kunstkasten* make the latter a more compelling comparison.

development of the novel pictorial type featured in *The Four Parts of the World*.

Although probably not directly involved with the construction of cabinets, which were produced separately by ebony workers, Van Kessel would have been familiar with the various contexts and audiences for these objects, because he received numerous commissions from art dealers for sets of pictures intended specifically for the embellishment of *kunstkasten*.<sup>357</sup> The splitting up of Van Kessel's small-format paintings in museums and private collections obscures the fact that many of these works were originally produced and displayed as series.<sup>358</sup> Additionally, his success in this category of painting connected him to a broad and diverse network of dealers and artisans involved in the production of cabinets. Van Kessel's knowledge of the materials and marketing strategies employed in cabinet production equipped him to invent a pictorial type that prompted a reconsideration of the traditionally low value and status of small-format cabinet paintings.

The majority of artists who produced paintings for *kunstkasten* were anonymous and received minimal compensation from the art dealers who recruited them and supplied them with panels.<sup>359</sup> These painters were more concerned with the quantity, as opposed to

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<sup>357</sup> Detailed correspondence between the Paris-based art dealer, Jean-Michel Picart, and his Antwerp-based colleague, Matthijs Musson, documents numerous orders for small paintings on copper that were intended to decorate opulent cabinets. Van Kessel was among a short list of painters whose works were regularly sought by Picart because he was confident in their ability to appeal to the Parisian market. See De Marchi and Van Miegroet, "Novelty and Fashion Circuits."

<sup>358</sup> Some of these large sets exist today as pendants or partial series. Their existence helps to explain the frequent repetition of compositions and motifs in Van Kessel's oeuvre, as well as the absence of his signature on many works. To avoid redundancy, Van Kessel typically only signed one panel of a series. Meijer notes that when such series were split up, dealers may have copied the date and Van Kessel's signature onto all of the paintings in the set. Meijer and Van der Willigen, *A Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters*, 123-124.

<sup>359</sup> Baarsen, *17th-Century Cabinets*, 25.

the quality of the paintings that they produced.<sup>360</sup> The contribution of miniature paintings for cabinets by such prominent artists as Van Kessel, Quellinus, Frans Francken the Younger, and Adriaan van Stalbeem was much rarer. These artists painted high-quality works for cabinets and typically received substantially more money than their anonymous counterparts.<sup>361</sup> Still, the relatively low standard of quality associated with most paintings on cabinets may have proven a difficult bias to dispel, even for an artist of Van Kessel's stature, and small-format cabinet pictures were far less lucrative than large-scale easel paintings. The records of the Forchondt firm of art dealers, which played a major role in the production and exportation of Antwerp *kunstkasten* in the seventeenth century, indicate that Van Kessel's miniature paintings of fish, insects, and birds on copper typically only sold for six to twelve guilders, while his larger paintings on canvas could sell for eight times that price.<sup>362</sup> With this in mind, it is easy to see why Van Kessel was motivated to create a composite type of picture comprised of multiple, discretely-bounded smaller paintings that could provide within a single frame a visual summation of the entire range of pictorial subjects and skills represented in his vast oeuvre.

Further motivation to create a type of painting that was not intended for a cabinet, but rather emulated and surpassed it in value and status came from the growing demand for luxury goods in seventeenth-century Antwerp. Following the economic decline caused by the blockade of the Scheldt River in 1585, Antwerp's export economy was reconfigured in such a way that merchants and manufacturers increasingly focused their

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<sup>360</sup> As a rule, painters were allowed no more than two weeks to complete an entire set of paintings for a cabinet: Baarsen, *17th-Century Cabinets*, 25.

<sup>361</sup> Quellinus, for example, was responsible for 3/5 the total cost of a cabinet due to his paintings alone, compared to the more typical percentage of 1/5 or 1/6. Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 200.

<sup>362</sup> See Denucé, *Kunstuitvoer in de 17e Eeuw te Antwerpen*, especially pp. 112, 117, 122, 125.

attention on luxury goods with high-end prices in order to compensate for the loss of other significant markets.<sup>363</sup> In evoking luxurious *kunstkasten* in his *Four Parts of the World*, Van Kessel established a pictorial type that equaled, and even surpassed these objects in cost and status. In addition to the incorporation of ebony and copper, the union of 68 paintings that described the unlimited variety of nature's creatures and materials would have undoubtedly elicited tremendous appeal from connoisseurs. Van Kessel's composite pictures offered *liefhebbers* a miniature painting collection of the highest quality that could be enjoyed apart from the confines of a cabinet.

Although Van Kessel employed his innovative cabinet-like picture format in multiple works, the Munich series is the only known intact and framed example, therefore providing the most comprehensive case study of this pictorial type. While it was once suggested that the similar dimensions of the peripheral copper plates in Van Kessel's Munich series and those which adorned many Antwerp *kunstkasten* indicate that the former were originally intended as decoration for the latter, the physical evidence refutes this.<sup>364</sup> The format of the Munich (and originally Madrid) series and multiple descriptions of similarly compartmentalized pictures in Van Kessel's oeuvre point to his invention of an alternative context for displaying small-scale cabinet paintings. Additionally, the ebony frames from Van Kessel's series in Munich have been deemed original, a conclusion that is borne out by their incorporation of inscribed numbers and city names that correspond to the peripheral panels. The frames do not display any

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<sup>363</sup> Bert De Munck, "Construction and Reproduction: The Training and Skills of Antwerp Cabinetmakers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *In Learning on the Shop Floor: Historical Perspectives on Apprenticeship*, ed. Bert de Munck, Steven L. Kaplan, and Hugo Soly (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 86.

<sup>364</sup> Greindl, *Les Peintres Flamands de Nature Morte* (1956), 128.



physical evidence of ever having been attached to a piece of furniture, and De Bie's account of 1675 explicitly refers to the series as consisting of four discrete pictures.<sup>365</sup> In the case of *The Four Parts of the World*, Van Kessel seems to have produced miniature paintings on copper not for the embellishment of a cabinet, but rather in emulation of the materials and opulence of one.

### **A World of Materials in a Cabinet without Drawers**

Although the formal resemblance between Van Kessel's Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World* and the ebony *kunstkasten* produced in Antwerp has been noted by several art historians, the fact that his paintings simulate a type of object that functions primarily as a showcase for diverse materials and the techniques used to transform them bears further consideration. The value of these elaborately constructed cabinets derived both from their incorporation of costly materials and their collaborative method of production, which united specialists from a broad range of disciplines, including ebony workers, silversmiths, coppersmiths, turners, inlayers, locksmiths, painters, engravers, glassmakers, and artisans skilled in embossing, embroidery and *pietra dure* work.<sup>366</sup> Van Kessel's representation of a wide range of materials and emphasis on the workmanship required to transform them into works of art and other luxury objects in *The Four Parts of the World* are particularly relevant to the material aspects of *kunstkasten*. In this series,

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<sup>365</sup> The conclusion that the Munich frames were never incorporated into a cabinet is stated in Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 10. Although I have not yet been able to study the versos of these frames firsthand, I agree with Krempel's assessment based on the monumental size of each of the frames, which would have required the support of a grossly oversized cabinet. Additionally, De Bie's explicit reference to 'four important pictures' in the 1675 edition of *Het gulden cabinet* indicates that they were displayed then, as now, as individual pictures, rather than as part of a piece of furniture.

<sup>366</sup> Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 255.

Van Kessel privileges painting's illusionistic capacity to imitate and transform a broad spectrum of materials. The specific combination of oil paint and copper enables him to render the colors and reflective surfaces of materials such as gold, silver, bronze, silk, pigments, coral, seashells, and feathers, as well as the woven tapestries, ornate arms and armor, opulent vessels, and artworks which they helped to create and the unlimited variety of flora and fauna observed in nature. The allusion of Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* to Antwerp *kunstkasten* therefore stages a rivalry between these two distinct types of objects. While both assemble diverse, precious materials and highlight the fine workmanship that turns such materials into luxury objects, Van Kessel's pictures, through the medium of oil paint, go even further than cabinets in the display of transformative artistry. Moreover, by grounding this visual compendium of materials in the theme of the Four Parts of the World, Van Kessel draws attention to the global circulation of materials in addition to their physical properties and uses.

As an international hub for the production and trade of luxury goods in the seventeenth century, Antwerp was rich in raw materials and artisanal knowledge. Major industries such as luxury furniture, fashion, diamonds, glass, and textiles relied heavily on the importation of costly, exotic materials from around the globe as well as practitioners possessing the specialized knowledge required to work such materials. Antwerp *kunstkasten* represented a particularly diverse geographic range in terms of both their production and consumption. Ebony, one of the most frequently used and costly types of wood employed in the production of *kunstkasten*, was imported primarily through Spanish ports from the island of Santo Domingo in the West Indies or from

Southeast Asia via the Dutch East India Company (VOC).<sup>367</sup> The materials used to embellish cabinets, such as Venetian glass, ivory from West Africa, and tortoiseshell from the East Indies, were also imported. The *kunstkast* itself was an imported art form, as the first ebony cabinets were probably produced in Augsburg.<sup>368</sup> The consumption of these cabinets also spanned the globe, resulting in the association of distinct styles and materials with specific geographic markets. Small or medium cabinets containing tortoise-shell inlay were popular in Paris, marble panels were preferred in Spain, and Dutch clients favored exotic materials such as Japanese lacquerwork, made available through Amsterdam's extensive trade routes.<sup>369</sup> The global nature of Antwerp *kunstkasten* was not only reflected in the materials out of which they were constructed, but also, in some cases, by the images they depicted. In addition to traditional religious and mythological subjects, Ria Fabri notes that an increasing number of cabinets produced in the second half of the seventeenth century displayed strange animals, exotic peoples, and sensationalized scenes of violence derived from illustrated travelogues.<sup>370</sup> Van Kessel may have found a precedent for his series of *The Four Parts of the World* in such examples.

The global origins and circulation of the materials featured in *kunstkasten* resonates with Van Kessel's Munich series, in which actual and portrayed materials are

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<sup>367</sup> Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 39; Baarsen, *17th-Century Cabinets*, 24.

<sup>368</sup> Sven Dupré, "Trading Luxury Glass, Picturing Collections and Consuming Objects of Knowledge in Early Seventeenth-Century Antwerp," *Intellectual History Review* 20:1 (2010): 71.

<sup>369</sup> Baarsen, *17th-Century Cabinets*, 30-43.

<sup>370</sup> Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 102, and Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast. Kunsthistorische Aspecten*, 175-182. For an example of a *kunstkast* featuring individuals dressed in exotic costume in the context of *The Four Parts of the World*, see Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, fig. 46.

displayed within the framework of the continents. The foreign nobles and local artists, artisans, merchants, and *liefhebbers* who comprised Van Kessel's clientele would have been aware of and presumably interested in the geographic connections between specific materials. The depiction of strands of pearls, which were abundant in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, and blood coral, found off the North African coast, in *Africa* (fig. 5.6), and silk in *Asia* (fig. 5.7), are just a few examples of how Van Kessel's paintings posit associations between precious materials and the four parts of the world then known. Van Kessel's representation of materials and the precious objects which they created was not intended as a visual encyclopedia, however. As with his portrayal of individual cities as settings for flora and fauna, inconsistencies abound, such as the depiction of a cup made from a chambered nautilus shell, probably acquired from the waters around Indonesia, in *Africa*. Still, the incorporation of continents and individual cities as a backdrop for the display of precious materials still makes a very suggestive allusion to the expansive networks which they traversed. Exotic animals, Ming porcelain, ivory, pearls, nautilus shells, precious gemstones, all of which are pictured in Van Kessel's centerpieces of the continents, were not only traded throughout Europe, but also were exchanged as gifts.<sup>371</sup>

In addition to their acknowledgement of the global scope of materials, the central panels in Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* also confront the beholder with a visual compendium of precious and exotic materials that underscores their diverse uses in art. This resonates with early modern collections, in which materials often provided an

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<sup>371</sup> On gift exchange networks between royal courts, see Almudena Pérez de Tudela and Annemarie Jordan Gschwend, "Luxury Goods for Royal Collectors: Exotica, Princely Gifts and Rare Animals Exchanged Between the Iberian Courts and Central Europe in the Renaissance (1560-1612)," in *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien: Exotica. Portugals Entdeckungen im Spiegel Fürstlicher Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Renaissance*, vol. 3 (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2001), 1-127, and Almudena Pérez de Tudela and Annemarie Jordan Gschwend, "Renaissance Menageries: Exotic Animals and Pets at the Habsburg Courts in Iberia and Central Europe," in *Early Modern Zoology*, ed. K.A.E. Enekel and P. J. Smith, vol. 2, 419-447.

organizational framework for the display and interpretation of objects. These organizational principles relied heavily upon Pliny the Elder's hierarchical classification and description of the physical properties and historical uses of materials in his *Natural History*.<sup>372</sup> Even into the seventeenth century, Pliny was considered the authority on the meanings and uses of materials; therefore, it is not surprising that multiple references to him appear in Van Kessel's Munich series. A statue of Pliny appears in the background of *Africa* (fig. 5.8),<sup>373</sup> and the inscription 'PLINIUS' on the book in the left foreground of *Europe* ostensibly refers to his *Natural History* (fig 5.9).<sup>374</sup> Furthermore, in his description of Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World*, De Bie praises his artistry and underscores the historical dimension of the materials pictured and incorporated in Van Kessel's paintings by claiming that 'everything' Pliny wrote about the unlimited variety observed in nature could be seen in these paintings.

The broad spectrum of materials represented in the Munich series visualizes the range of substances described and marveled at in Pliny's volume. The blood coral pictured in *Africa* would have undoubtedly held special significance for the early modern viewer, given Pliny's description: 'The most valued coral is the reddest and most branchy....'<sup>375</sup> Pliny also devotes a significant section of the book on insects to the

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<sup>372</sup>The last several books of Pliny's *Natural History*, which discuss the properties and uses of specific metals and stones became a central ordering system for early modern collectors. Samuel Quiccheberg's 1565 *Inscriptiones vel tituli theatri amplissimi* provides the collector with a handbook on how to form and organize a collection that reflects Pliny's grouping together of particular materials based on their physical properties. Subsequently, Samuel van Hoogstraten likewise drew upon Pliny's discussion of different types of materials used in painting—oil, encaustic, etc.—in Book 9 of his *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichtbaere werelt*, published in 1672.

<sup>373</sup> Krempel, *Jan Van Kessel D.Ä.*, 14; Schneider, *The Art of the Still Life*, 163.

<sup>374</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*.

<sup>375</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 8, book 32, chp. 11, 479.

description of the silkworm and the sumptuous material that it produced.<sup>376</sup> The luxuriousness of silk as well as its curious method of production is highlighted in the lower right of *Asia*, where Van Kessel depicts a raw material (silk) alongside its transformative agent (silkworms) and end products (the woven carpet and the costly and luxurious garments worn by the adjacent man and woman) (fig. 5.10). This vignette would have been especially intriguing to early modern viewers, as it illustrates the complex life cycle of the silk worm, described in detail by Pliny, but not scientifically documented until the publication of Marcello Malpighi's study of this creature in 1669.<sup>377</sup>

Seventeenth-century visual and verbal accounts of collections indicate that, contrary to collections in the Dutch Republic which tended to display imported *naturalia* and materials as they were, Antwerp collections placed a greater emphasis on the novel luxury goods that were created from these exotic objects and substances.<sup>378</sup> This practice is emphasized in each of the central panels of Van Kessel's Munich series, which juxtapose base materials with the opulent objects into which they were incorporated and allude to the correlation made by Pliny between materials and their uses and transformation in art. In his accounts of gold, silver, copper, bronze, and precious stones, Pliny consistently discusses the various ways in which these materials were employed in making works of art. In a similar vein, Van Kessel's juxtaposition of silk with woven

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<sup>376</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 3, book 11, chp. 25- 27, 477-481.

<sup>377</sup> I am grateful to Eric Jorink for bringing Malpighi's history of the silkworm, published in his *Dissertatio Epistolica De Bombyce* of 1669, to my attention.

<sup>378</sup> Dupré, "Trading Luxury Glass," 55, 77. Although much work still remains to be done on the different character of collections in the Dutch Republic compared to those in Antwerp, recent scholarship on cultures of collecting and scientific inquiry in the southern Netherlands have addressed this issue. The contrast between Antwerp's metropolitan scale, urban network, and emphasis on utilitarian, commercial, 'object-based' knowledge aimed at entrepreneurs, merchants, travelers, and *liefhebbers* on the one hand, and the academic-based and more independent scientific centers of Amsterdam and Leiden on the other, has been noted in Dupré, "Trading Luxury Glass," and Vanpaemel, "Science for sale."

rugs and opulent garments, or his portrayal of the exotic shells and metallic vessels that anticipate the gold-footed nautilus cup on the tabletop in *Africa*, visually represent the transformative process of turning precious raw materials into skillfully-crafted luxury objects, a defining trait of many seventeenth-century Antwerp industries. Moreover, these pictured material transformations underscore the metamorphosis of raw pigments into crafted paintings.

Aside from the wealth of materials portrayed in the *The Four Parts of the World*, their incorporation of ebony and copper is also paramount to the way in which they convey value and prestige. Ebony, prized for its rich color, durability, and high polish, was a rare and highly coveted material due to its origin in tropical regions of the world. Beginning in the early years of its importation to Europe, attempts to imitate ebony with cheaper, more readily available substances were commonplace.<sup>379</sup> Ebony was also a very difficult wood to work with to its relative hardness; thus, the skill required to manipulate it contributed to its high cost and status among connoisseurs. Ebony's prestige as a material is alluded to by the inclusion of four ebony chairs in a gift presented by the Dutch States-General to the Sultan of Turkey in 1612.<sup>380</sup> Van Kessel's framing of his series of *The four parts of the world* with worked ebony calls attention to the exotic origins of this material as well as its privileged status as a substance that could only be transformed through exceptional craftsmanship. Additionally, the simulation of cabinets by frames unites two distinct crafts, as Antwerp ebony workers were divided into two

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<sup>379</sup> Baarsen, "Herman Doomer, ebony worker in Amsterdam," *The Burlington Magazine* 138 (1996): 741; Baarsen, *17th-Century Cabinets*, 25; Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 39-40.

<sup>380</sup> Baarsen, "Herman Doomer," 741.

separate groups after 1620: cabinet-makers, who belonged to their own guild, and frame-makers, who joined the guild of St. Luke.<sup>381</sup>

Pliny's dedication of an entire book of his *Natural History* to the properties and uses of copper and its alloys signifies its importance and value beginning in antiquity.<sup>382</sup> According to Pliny, copper was the next most useful metal after gold and silver and it accrued additional prestige because of its use as currency.<sup>383</sup> Most importantly, Pliny emphasizes copper's amenity to art. Unlike gold, he notes, lines can be drawn in copper, and it can be formed into statues honoring great heroes and dignitaries that subsequently bring fame to their makers.<sup>384</sup> As discussed in Chapter Three, in the seventeenth century, copper continued to be valued for by art theorists, collectors, and connoisseurs. Although it was not as expensive as exotic materials such as ebony, copper was highly valued for its unique aesthetic properties and central role in both painting and printmaking.<sup>385</sup> The aesthetic properties of copper made it an appealing support for painters like Van Kessel who worked in a fine manner and exploited the illusionistic potential of oil paint. For knowledgeable *liefhebbers*, paintings on copper also presented the challenge of distinguishing individual hands, since this medium afforded artists the opportunity to either conceal their brushwork or experiment with uncharacteristic techniques.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Baarsen, *17<sup>th</sup>-Century Cabinets*, 24-25.

<sup>382</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, book 34.

<sup>383</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, book 34, chapter 1, 127.

<sup>384</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, book 33, chapters 19, 49, and vol. 9, book 34, chapter 19.

<sup>385</sup> Komanecky, "Antwerp Artists," 136; Wadum, "Antwerp Copper Plates," 97.

<sup>386</sup> Isabel Horowitz, "The materials and techniques of European paintings on copper supports," in *Copper as Canvas: Two Centuries of Masterpiece Paintings on Copper, 1575-1775*, Michael Komanecky, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 82-83.



Additionally, the miniscule detail, delicate brushwork, jewel-like colors, and gleaming, polished surfaces of oil paintings on copper evoked the appearance of costly and highly prized illuminated and limned miniatures, a characteristic that would have added to the multidimensional material appeal of Van Kessel's series of the continents.

### **Displaying Materials and Material Knowledge**

The range of materials and material knowledge featured in Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* was undoubtedly augmented by its seventeenth-century context of display, a *kunstkammer*-like space that belonged to a skilled artisan renowned for making the kinds of luxury objects represented in and simulated by Van Kessel's paintings.

According to the 1682 inventory of the possessions of Jan Gillis, the Antwerp silversmith, jeweler, and prolific art collector who was the most likely original owner of the Munich series,<sup>387</sup> *The Four Parts of the World* was not displayed in an isolated room as it is today in the Alte Pinakothek, but rather occupied a space containing a vast and diverse collection of objects that included oil paintings by leading Dutch and Flemish

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<sup>387</sup> On Gillis's professional career and collecting activities, see P. Huvenne and I. Kockelbergh, *Antwerps huiszilver uit de 17e en 18e eeuw* (Antwerp: Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 1988), 22, 44, and Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 145. My conclusion that the version of Van Kessel's series described by De Bie in 1675 and presently located in Munich is based on the following evidence. De Bie's remark that he viewed the paintings several times suggests that he saw them in Antwerp, where they would have been accessible in Gillis's collection. De Bie's mention of only one series indicates that a second one may have been sent abroad following its production. Furthermore, given Van Kessel's extensive patronage by Spanish dignitaries and nobles, including, according to Weyerman, "...many works for the King of Spain..." and the fact that the Prado series can be traced back to the Spanish royal family through at least the reign of Carlos IV, it is, in my opinion, very probable that the Madrid version of *The Four Parts of the World* was originally commissioned by a member of or close to the Spanish royal family. Additionally, the allegorical theme of *The Four Parts of the World* had a long history of associations with power and royalty and the then Spanish monarch, Philip IV, had a penchant for Flemish animal painters. The costly materials and monumental scale of Van Kessel's series also indicate a royal commission. If this assumption is correct, then the Munich series may represent a second version which Gillis either commissioned for himself or perhaps even helped Van Kessel to create.

masters, antique sculptures, high-end furniture, and exotica, as well as cabinets and *objets d'art* that featured Gillis's signature precious stone- and metalwork.<sup>388</sup> While it was relatively common for Antwerp silversmiths to supply silver décor such as vegetal and architectural ornament for cabinets, Gillis became renowned throughout Europe for embellishing *kunstkasten* with finely-wrought agate inlay-work.<sup>389</sup> He also dealt in and collected gemstones and cameos, making him a veritable connoisseur of all varieties of precious materials. Close analysis of the inventory of *De Spiegel*, Gillis's house and workshop on the Grote Markt, reveals that Van Kessel's paintings were inextricably linked to the materials and artisanal knowledge displayed in Gillis's collection; therefore, I contend that *The Four Parts of the World* and its original viewing environment must be considered as one in order to comprehend the full range of associations implicit in Van Kessel's series.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> The inventory of Gillis's collection includes "Vier Deelen van de Werelt door denselven [Van Kessel] ende gestoffeert van Quellinus den Ouden," in the same room as works by Dürer, Rubens, and Brueghel. Inventory of the possessions of Jan Gillis, Silversmith, drawn up after his death on 10 November 1681 in his residence 'De Spiegel' on the Grote Markt next to the Pand (Antwerp Stadsarchief, 2045 (1680-1690), fols. 1-17, notary A. Herreyns, 28-30 July 1682). An incomplete extract of this inventory appears in Jean Denucé, *De Antwerpsche "Konstkamers": Inventarissen van Kunstverzamelingen te Antwerpen in de 16e en 17e Eeuwen* (Amsterdam: De Spiegel, 1932), 307-310. A more complete transcription appears in Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 166-173. My translations are based on Duverger's transcription, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>389</sup> Baarsen, *17<sup>th</sup>-Century Cabinets*, 25. Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 145. Gillis's renown reached far beyond Antwerp, apparently, as his craftsmanship can be found on cabinets that were exported abroad. A writing cabinet embellished with agate and carnelian, dated 1663 and bearing Gillis's signature, is recorded in an eighteenth-century account of artworks in the collection of the Palacio Real in Madrid: "...un escritorio en una de ellas, guarnecido de piedras duras grabadas, como son comerinas, ágatas, diaspros y otras de grande y pecqueño tamaño, que, si bien son invenciones modernas o copias del antiguo, por lo bien hechas, y por el número de ellas, es una estimable colección. El autor de dicha obra está firmado en esta forma: *Joanne Gillis Antwerpiensis fecit, & invenit anno 1663.*" Antonio Ponz, *Viaje de España, seguido de los dos tomos del viaje fuera de España* (Madrid: Editorial Aguilar, 1947), 537.

<sup>390</sup> The shop owned by the Antwerp merchant Cornelis de Wael, who sold ebony and mirrors—the two most important materials used in *kunstkast* production—was called *den Veneetsen Spiegel* (the Venetian Mirror). Fabri, *De 17de-Eeuwse Antwerpse Kunstkast: Typologische en Historische Aspecten*, 163; Dupré, "Trading Luxury Glass," 71. This name ostensibly refers to the glass and glass-making knowledge that was imported to Antwerp from Venice and employed in the production of 'perspectives,' mirrored recesses that

Seeing Van Kessel's cabinet-like pictures displayed inside *De Spiegel* must have had special significance for Gillis and enthusiastic *liefhebbers* like him, who could appreciate the many references to artworks, precious materials, and the skills and knowledge required to produce them. A half-finished cabinet garnished with agate and other precious stones, which Gillis must have been in the process of working on at the time of his death, is included in the inventory of *De Spiegel*.<sup>391</sup> Given Gillis's possession of multiple paintings by Van Kessel, including at least one other work that exhibited the same cabinet-without-drawers format as *The four parts of the world*, it is highly plausible that Van Kessel invented this novel pictorial type for or in conjunction with Gillis.<sup>392</sup> Gillis lived just over a kilometer away from Van Kessel, and given their mutual involvement with the *kunstkasten* industry, their paths presumably would have crossed frequently.<sup>393</sup>

Gillis's professional activities were closely intertwined with his collecting pursuits. His overlapping roles as silversmith, jeweler, *pietra dure* specialist, merchant, and collector enabled him to engage with luxurious materials on multiple levels. The inventory of *De Spiegel* reveals that the objects that he crafted and those he collected

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were built into *kunstkasten* in order to produce optical illusions. On these devices, see Fabri 1998 and 1999. That the name of Gillis's house/shop also refers to a mirror raises the possibility that his involvement in the manufacture of cabinets may have extended beyond agate inlay-work.

<sup>391</sup> Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 169-170.

<sup>392</sup> Recorded just below *The four parts of the world* in the 1682 inventory is 'een groot stuck van Van Kessel synde in midden eenigh Fruijt[?] in sesthiene verdeelt' (a large piece by Van Kessel [with] some fruit[?] in the middle [and] divided in sixteen parts). Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 167. According to the same inventory, Gillis also owned '(...) een van Verendael synde een Feston van Blommen ende eenige Beestiens van Van Kessel.' (... a van Verendael [of] a festoon of flowers and some small animals by Van Kessel). Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, 168.

<sup>393</sup> Van Kessel's house, *De Witte end de Rode Roos*, was located 'across from the Sint Joriskerkhof, in the middle of present-day Gerardstraat.' Van den Branden 1883, 1101. Gillis's house was located on the Grote Markt, near the Pand. Duverger 1984, 168.

were not entirely segregated, but rather frequently intersected. Included in the same context as paintings by Albrecht Dürer, Quentin Metsys, Peter Paul Rubens, and Anthony van Dyck, is the unfinished cabinet mentioned previously. Allusions to Gillis's artisanal activities permeate his entire collection. Even his taste in paintings reflects the materials and skills required by his profession. As an artisan who was accustomed to transforming precious materials into intricately-worked luxury objects, Gillis was attracted to painters who worked in a finely-wrought manner, as well as those who favored supports that contained or emulated precious substances. His collection included works by the *fijnschilder* Gerrit Dou, as well as Jan Brueghel, Paul Bril, and Hans Rottenhammer, artists renowned for painting in meticulous detail on smooth, lustrous copper plates.<sup>394</sup>

Gillis also owned several pictures carved in low relief in ivory and palm wood.<sup>395</sup> In addition to paintings, the great room of his house contained objects made from a variety of media that were embellished with precious metals and gemstones, work which may have been done by Gillis himself given his specialization. Inside a large case was “an agate shell with a foot garnished in gold,”<sup>396</sup> an object which Van Kessel possibly alluded to in his depiction of a gold-footed nautilus shell in the central panel of *Africa* from the Munich series (fig. 5.11).<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 166-168.

<sup>395</sup> Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 169.

<sup>396</sup> “...een agathe schelpe met eenen voet gegarnisseert met gout,” Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 169.

<sup>397</sup> Although previously it was thought that the nautilus cup pictured in *Africa* must refer to an actual object crafted by Gillis himself, it has been noted more recently that the depicted cup is typical of a type that was produced in the Netherlands from the late sixteenth century until the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Therefore, given the much later date of Van Kessel's painting, it is more likely that the cup either alludes to either an object which Gillis acquired and displayed in his collection, or represented a more generic reference to the type of decoration for which he was renowned. See CJHM Tax, “Jan Van Kessel en een Delftse Nautilusbeker,” *Antiek* 27 (1993): 307-12.

According to the inventory, several busts and *tronies* of Roman emperors were also decorated with agate, silver, and gold.<sup>398</sup> In the same room as these works, a *buffet* displayed a crystal cross garnished with silver and enameled, an ebony altarpiece containing silver figures and decorated with garnets, and a set of 16 miniature, sequentially-numbered paintings on agate that were further embellished with cut agate and displayed in gilt copper frames.<sup>399</sup> This last group of paintings, which depicted birds and other small animals, presents an intriguing parallel to *The Four Parts of the World*, which was displayed in the same room. The agate paintings recall the copper surfaces, miniature scale, serial organization, and animal subjects found in Van Kessel's series. The relationship of the agate series to Van Kessel's paintings is unclear; however, their display together must have created a breathtaking concatenation of precious materials and virtuoso craftsmanship.

The embellished, hybrid objects described above highlight the type of work Gillis was renowned for and mirror those objects that are distinguished in the inventory of *De Spiegel* as being located 'in the shop.'<sup>400</sup> This suggests that Gillis's completed works were displayed in the same space as the objects from his collection. This viewing context would have been particularly significant to dealers and potential clients. Juxtaposing the products of his skilled hand with objects that were acquired by virtue of his keen connoisseurial eye enabled Gillis to make a compelling statement about his cultivated

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<sup>398</sup> Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 169-170.

<sup>399</sup> Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 170-171.

<sup>400</sup> As in the main rooms of the house, Gillis's designated workplace contained numerous hybrid objects that combined painting and sculpture with precious metals and stones. These included silver vessels, gold busts, a reliquary, and a portrait. The majority of these were numbered, possibly signifying an organizational system for works ordered or commissioned. Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen*, vol. 11, 171-172.

taste, art-historical knowledge, and wealth. Additionally, this type of display would have emphasized his participation in and alignment with a tightly-knit network of prominent artists and artisans in Antwerp. As Sven Dupré has noted, luxury objects were not only enmeshed within networks of trade and collecting, but they also stimulated “the building of a community based on shared knowledge.”<sup>401</sup> The hybridity of materials, media, and disciplines featured in Gillis’s collection, and echoed in Van Kessel’s *The Four Parts of the World*, advertised each one’s ability to navigate successfully a complex network of diverse artists, artisans, and clients.

The display of Van Kessel’s series of the continents in Gillis’s collection would have conjured up a myriad of associations for contemporary viewers. In many ways, the contents and organization of the collection establish a formal and conceptual framework within which to interpret the paintings. Both the artworks exhibited in Gillis’s collection and those which are cited in Van Kessel’s compositions feature local artists, with few exceptions. Thus, both the collection space and *The Four Parts of the World* present a micro-history of art in Antwerp, reflecting the overwhelming demand from collectors and *liefhebbers* for works by local artists.<sup>402</sup> Furthermore, the interplay of Gillis’s skills and creations with the pictures’ cabinet-like formats, the display of precious materials from diverse global origins both inside the collection and within Van Kessel’s paintings, and the pictorial and literal juxtaposition of luxury objects with the materials from which they

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<sup>401</sup> Dupré, “Trading Luxury Glass,” 77.

<sup>402</sup> Inventories of Antwerp art collections from the seventeenth century reveal a predominantly local repertoire of painters, indicating a strong sense of civic pride. As Elizabeth Honig has noted, “Almost no painter whose career had not been at least in some way associated with Antwerp was collected there.” Honig, *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp*, 191.

were created established a unique context within which to view and contemplate *The Four Parts of the World*.

Although no visual record of Gillis's collection exists, a very pertinent display can be found in the *kunstkamer* in the Utrecht Centraal Museum dollhouse, commissioned by Petronella de la Court as a miniature replica of her art collection between 1670 and 1690 (fig. 5.12).<sup>403</sup> Hanging on the wall above the mantelpiece is an exquisite micro-carved object consisting of a central depiction of the Last Judgment surrounded by 20 ivory reliefs of scenes from the Passion and encased in a subdivided amber frame (fig. 5.13). This object, which belongs to a category of virtuoso micro-carvings that were esteemed and incorporated into early modern art cabinets and collections as miniature wonders of human artistry, vividly recalls the format and incorporation of precious materials found in Van Kessel's Munich series.<sup>404</sup> The micro-carving's display amidst oil paintings by eminent artists, ceilings and floors constructed from precious woods and copper panels, furniture and *objets d'art* made from amber, ivory, and silver, and cabinets filled with *naturalia* recalls the concatenation of artworks and luxurious materials featured throughout Gillis's residence. Additionally, its prominent, elevated placement above pieces of furniture and among multiple easel paintings in ornate, auricular frames, suggest the prestige and extraordinary value that a series of pictures such as Van Kessel's *The Four Parts of the World* would have

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<sup>403</sup> The literature on Dutch dollhouses is extensive. Discussion of the dollhouse commissioned by Petronella de la Court can be found in: I.H. van Eeghen, "Het poppenhuis van Petronella de la Court, huisvrouw van Adam Oortmans," *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 47 (1960): 159-167, Jet Pijzel-Dommisse, *Het poppenhuis van Petronella de la Court* (Utrecht; Antwerp: Veen/Reflex, 1987), Shirley Glubok, "The Dollhouse of Petronella de la Court," *Antiques*, 137.2, (Feb. 1990): 488-501, and Pijzel-Dommisse, *Het Hollandse Pronkpoppenhuis: Interieur en huishouden in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Amsterdam: Waanders; Rijksmuseum, 2000).

<sup>404</sup> For further discussion of this type of object, see Frits Scholten, "A Prayer Nut in a Silver Housing by 'Adam Dirckz,'" *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 59 (2011), 322-47.

commanded in the seventeenth century. Finally, the placement of the framed carving within an opulent dollhouse, which functioned as a showcase of fine workmanship and materials and was itself considered an ‘art cabinet’ in the seventeenth century, underscores the inextricable link between cabinets and this type of virtuoso micro-object.

### Curiosity in and on the cabinet

Seventeenth-century inventories and sales records reveal that Van Kessel employed the distinctive cabinet-without-drawers framing featured in the Munich (and originally Madrid) series on multiple occasions. As mentioned earlier, a second composite picture comprised of a central panel surrounded by 16 parts was recorded in Gillis’s inventory along with *The Four Parts of the World*. Additionally, two entries from the records of the Forchondt firm confirm the existence of other works of this type. The first object, described as ‘1 piece with little animals by Van Kessel with 17 pieces in a frame,’ was part of a shipment of artworks sent to from Antwerp to Vienna in May 1676.<sup>405</sup> The second, ‘...a piece with little animals by Jan van Kessel, being 17 pieces fixed in a frame that sold together,’ was recorded as part of a 1671 sale of 24 paintings to the Prince of Liechtenstein.<sup>406</sup> Taken together, these references suggest that Van Kessel’s novel pictorial type became a signature feature of his oeuvre and was popular with local as well as foreign segments of his elite audience.

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<sup>405</sup> ‘1 stuck met beestiens van Van Kessel met 17 stuckxkens in een lyst.’ Denucé, *Kunstuitvoer in de 17e Eeuw te Antwerpen*, 148.

<sup>406</sup> This entry is confusing in that it appears in a list of works which are identified as having being sold to the Prince, but it also alludes to an additional patron: ‘Naer datom nogh den Prins Carel van Lichtensteyn vercocht dese naervolgende scilderyen als volght bestaende in 24 stucken. ...1 Vercocht aen monsr. Duciato een stuck met beestiens van Jan van Kessel, te weten 17 stuckxkens in een raem ingemaect dat vercocht te seamen.’ Denucé, *Kunstuitvoer in de 17e Eeuw te Antwerpen*, 180.



The two compartmentalized pictures depicting ‘*beestiens*’ (small animals) in the Forchondt records possibly allude to the two series introduced in Chapter Three, which represent insects, flowers, and reptiles on one large and 16 smaller copper plates. As with Van Kessel’s *The Four Parts of the World*, only one of these two series remains intact. The first version, which was purportedly split up and sold as individual or small groups of plates in the early twentieth century, is dated 1657.<sup>407</sup> The subsequent version dating from 1658, which I will refer to as the Mellon series hereafter, retains all 17 plates, but these are now displayed in discrete, modern frames (fig. 3.2).<sup>408</sup> The central panels of these series are virtually identical, and the dated panels contains variations of the witty insect signature, consisting of Van Kessel’s name spelled out by the contorted bodies of

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<sup>407</sup> The larger, central plate of this series is now located in Bonn (Rheinisches Landesmuseum), while the smaller, peripheral plates have been dispersed in museums and private collections throughout Europe and the United States. The date, 1657, appears on the plate containing Van Kessel’s animated insect signature. According to P. de Boer, related in a letter dated 11 May, 1970 from Philip C. Ritterbush of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. to Beverly Carter, Secretary of the Paul Mellon Collection, this series was displayed in its entirety in the exhibition, “Helsche en Fluwelen Brueghel,” held at the Kunsthandel P. de Boer in Amsterdam from February 10 – March 26, 1934, after which time the paintings were disassembled and sold individually. This letter is located in the archives of the Oak Spring Garden Library, Upperville, Virginia. The dated plate containing Van Kessel’s signature was in the collection of Johnny van Haeften Gallery, London, in 2008, where it was for sale along with a “companion” painting of the same dimensions that depicted a sprig of redcurrants with an elephant hawk moth, a magpie moth, and various other insects. Although some of the motifs in the latter painting are pictured in the Mellon series, this work does not exactly replicate any of the individual plates from the Mellon version. See Johnny van Haeften, *Catalogue of Old Master Paintings* (London: Johnny van Haeften, Ltd., 2007), no. 22.

<sup>408</sup> Wheelock gives the date as 1653, in contrast to all other literature, which lists it as 1658. Due to slippage of the frames into which the copper panels are affixed (with glue?), I was unable to see the last number clearly enough to determine whether it is an 8 or a 3. These 17 paintings are displayed together in a subdivided frame in an undated photograph in the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD) (Van Kessel, box 384) which is mistakenly labeled “J. van Kessel en atelier.” A comparison of the individual plates in the photographed series with those in the now disassembled series located in the collection of Mrs. Rachel Mellon, Oak Spring Garden Library, Upperville, Virginia, indicates that this is, in fact, the same series. The peripheral plates of the Mellon series are organized in a slightly different sequence in a photograph published in *The Connoisseur* (vol. 137, April 1956, no. 553, p.198) just prior to the series’s acquisition by its present owner. For literature on the Mellon series, see: Sam Segal, *Flowers and Nature; Netherlandish Flower Painting of Four Centuries* (The Hague: SDU Publishers, 1990), 209; Luca Tongiorgi Tomasi, *An Oak Spring Flora* (Upperville, Virginia; Oak Spring Garden Library, 1998), 104-106; *Das Flämische Stilleben*, 94, 98, 102; Meijer and Van der Willigen, *Dictionary of Dutch and Flemish Still-Life Painters*, 123-134; Wheelock, *Flemish Paintings*, 122.

caterpillars and snakes, that also appears as a framed easel painting in the centerpiece of *Europe* from the Munich series of *The Four Parts of the World*.

The subdivided format, neutral background, and regularly spaced creatures in these works give the impression of a seventeenth-century specimen drawer or cabinet, in which preserved insects in particular were pinned to a flat surface for closer study. Yet, as in his series of the continents, Van Kessel's simulation of the cabinet format in the Mellon series does not equate the two objects, but rather privileges his illusionistic oil paintings over actual curiosity cabinets containing real specimens. As noted previously, the small format, stylistic and material properties of Van Kessel's insect works evoked the precious illuminated and limned miniatures that were part of a sixteenth-century courtly aesthetic. As single paintings, Van Kessel's insect pictures were already jewel-like and sumptuous. Taken together, as part of a larger composite picture, these works became even more spectacular in their display of lustrous, polished surfaces, gem-like colors, and exquisite brushwork.

The lack of context and meticulous, miniature rendering of the "monstrous creatures and diverse strange things" described in De Bie's passage praising Van Kessel's art dissolve the painted surfaces of the copper plates and produce virtual collection that is more curious and captivating than any entomological collection produced by nature. In describing Van Kessel's artistry in the 1675 edition of *Het gulden cabinet*, De Bie posits a rivalry between art and nature in which Van Kessel ultimately comes out on top. Not even nature, he says, can compete with the variety and vivid life-likeness of the creatures that Van Kessel creates with his paintbrush. In fact, notes De Bie, the beauty and

strangeness of Van Kessel's painted animals was so compelling that it was difficult to describe in writing and left viewers wondering how nature could ever match it.

Out of all the animals portrayed in Van Kessel's corpus, his pictures of insects provide the most powerful example of the illusionistic capacity of oil paint and copper, and it is these works which he displays prominently as grossly enlarged pictures-within-pictures throughout the central panels of *The Four Parts of the World* in Munich (fig. 3.4).<sup>409</sup> The miniature scale of insects enhanced the precious quality of his already jewel-like small, scale paintings, as did their intricate anatomies, which were only recently beginning to be explored due to advancements in visual technologies. Although Van Kessel also produced pictures of insects on panel, vellum, and parchment, it is in his works on copper that the full spectrum of illusionistic possibilities is realized. The smooth surface of copper enabled him to paint even the tiniest hairs and antennae, while its brilliant luster augmented the vibrant colors of butterfly wings. In his insect works, Van Kessel exploited the material properties of copper in ways that complemented and became inseparable from his tiny, intricate subjects

As discussed in Chapter Three, the status of insects was, since antiquity, inextricably connected to models of finely-wrought craftsmanship and the production of precious objects. We have already seen how Pliny's valorization of the silkworm as an insect capable of producing a luxurious material was translated into pictorial terms in Van Kessel's series of *The Four Parts of the World*. As animals that were themselves exemplars of finely-wrought craftsmanship and were also able to produce precious

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<sup>409</sup> Pictured paintings of insects are noticeably absent in the central panel of *Africa*, although a small number of grasshoppers, beetles, and other insects appear in the foreground of the fictive collection.

materials, it was only natural that the representation of insects in art would also emphasize fine, valuable materials.

There was a long tradition in early modern Europe of exploring and representing creatural knowledge, especially of insects, in precious materials. One such example is the sixteenth-century goldsmith, Wenzel Jamnitzer, who rose to prominence by earning commissions from the Habsburg imperial court and other distinguished patrons for his opulent vessels and *objets d'art* which embellished precious metals with life casts of lizards, insects, and plants.<sup>410</sup> Jamnitzer's method of "nature casting," which substituted lizards, insects, and other creatures for the wax models traditionally employed in the lost wax method of casting, resulted in the production of objects such as a writing box from 1560-70 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna that is embellished with miniature animals and plants cast from life (fig. 5.14). A contemporary of Jamnitzer's who practiced a similarly transformative kind of artistry that incorporated life casts of animals into elaborate, highly-prized vessels, was the French ceramicist and natural historian, Bernard Palissy (fig. 5.15).<sup>411</sup> The ability of artisans such as Jamnitzer and Palissy to materially transform base creatures into valuable works of art sought by illustrious and noble patrons throughout Europe provides a parallel to Van Kessel's insect paintings on copper, which likewise exhibit transformative artistry by turning diminutive, strange, and monstrous creatures into precious art objects.

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<sup>410</sup> On Jamnitzer's work, see: Smith, "Making and Knowing," and Frits Scholten, "Gegoten beestjes – Wenzel Jamnitzer," *Kunstschrift* 52 (2008): 28-33.

<sup>411</sup> On Palissy's ceramic methods, see Hanna Rose Shell, "Ceramic Nature," in *Materials and Expertise*, 50-70, and Shell, "Casting Life, Recasting Experience: Bernard Palissy's Occupation between Maker and Nature," *Configurations* 12.1 (2004): 1-40.

Van Kessel's appeal to the beholder to compare his cabinet-like insect paintings with actual cabinets containing real specimens may have been realized literally. In proposing that the individual plates in the Mellon series may have originally been intended to decorate the façade of a cabinet of curiosities in anticipation of the real specimens stored inside, Arthur Wheelock suggests that this presumed cabinet was imitated by a late seventeenth-century marquetry cabinet featuring veneer surfaces on which are painted many of the same motifs that appear in Van Kessel's Mellon composition (figs. 5.16-5.18).<sup>412</sup> While the Forchondt records, which clearly describe multiple paintings contained within a frame, contradict Wheelock's hypothesis, the striking similarities in the painted motifs and their relationship to one another in this 'knock-off' cabinet strongly suggest that it looked to Van Kessel's two nearly identical composite insect series as its model. If, as one scholar has suggested, this cabinet was produced abroad, that means that Van Kessel's two series must have been widely known.<sup>413</sup> This indicates that even though Van Kessel's insect works originated in the context of cabinets, his framed, composite insect paintings acquired independent prestige and value, ultimately (and ironically) serving as the model for a cabinet.

Van Kessel's invention of the cabinet-without-drawers picture type demonstrates how his engagement with diverse material practices helped shape his painted oeuvre. By taking a compartmentalized pictorial format, which was traditionally used in altarpieces, maps, prints, and furniture, and transforming it into a distinctive kind of painting that

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<sup>412</sup> Wheelock, *Flemish Paintings*, 120, 122. This cabinet is discussed in Philip C. Ritterbush, "Art and Science as Influences on the Early Development of Natural History Collections," *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 82 (1969): 561-78.

<sup>413</sup> It has been noted that the dimensions of the cabinet are more regular in inches, the standard unit of measurement in England at the time, than in pieds or pouces, the standard units on the Continent. This would suggest England as the probable place of manufacture. Ritterbush 1969, 574.

encompassed and surpassed the status and value of these media and the materials and skills required to create them, Van Kessel privileged the status of painting over other categories of media. In the case of his cabinet pictures, this *paragone* was staged between cabinet paintings and *kunstkasten*. The following example illustrates how Van Kessel made a similar claim about the dynamic dialogue between painting and tapestries, in which both types of objects competitively demonstrate how far their media can be pushed.

### **Painting Spanish Tapestries in a Flemish Framework**

In addition to Van Kessel's involvement in the manufacture of *kunstkasten*, he also figured prominently in the production of sumptuous tapestries, and contributed to the design of multiple series made for noble Spanish patrons.<sup>414</sup> Van Kessel's strategy of literally and figuratively reframing conventional subjects and motifs was not limited to his cabinet-like pictures, but also extended to several works in which he simulated the medium of tapestry. As with *The Four Parts of the World*, in which his intersection with different media and luxury industries inspired the invention of a novel pictorial type, Van Kessel's involvement in tapestry production likewise stimulated his development of a kind of composition that merged conventional iconography with an innovative format. Furthermore, as with his painted cabinets-without-drawers, in which Van Kessel's initial emulation of another art form led him to create a novel type of object that rivaled, and

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<sup>414</sup> Van Kessel's commissions for tapestry designs are discussed in Guy Delmarcel, Margarita García Calvo, and Koenraad Brosens. "Spanish Family Pride in Flemish Wool and Silk: The Moncada Family and its Baroque Tapestry Collection," in *Tapestry in the Baroque: New Aspects of Production and Patronage*, ed. Thomas P. Campbell and Elizabeth A.H. Cleland (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 284-315.

surpassed it, Van Kessel's tapestry design commissions ultimately became separate entities from the media to which they were once closely linked, becoming works of art that were valued and admired in their own right.

The relationship between oil paintings and tapestries in the seventeenth century was a competitive one. Even though tapestries had, since the Middle Ages, been commissioned primarily for noble residences and were more expensive than paintings, the changing status of painting, from a manual to a liberal art, and its appeal to aristocratic collectors in the early modern period pitted these two media against one another in a variety of ways.<sup>415</sup> Not only did easel paintings compete with tapestries on the walls of royal residences, but they also began to replace them, particularly in the warmer months of the year, when the insulating function of tapestries was not as essential. The pragmatic function of tapestries as large-scale furnishings also caused them to be judged by different criteria, such as surface area, labor, and raw materials, as much as subject matter and quality of execution.<sup>416</sup> In addition, the illusionistic capabilities of oil paint posed a challenge that could not be met by woven tapestries. The ability of oil paint to transform base pigments into natural wonders and precious objects and materials was unrivaled, even though seventeenth-century tapestries tried vainly to emulate their verisimilitude. Highly skilled painters such as Rubens responded to the challenge posed by the medium of oil paint by trying to incorporate its properties as much as possible and

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<sup>415</sup> The rivalry between painting and tapestry in the seventeenth century is discussed in Thomas P. Campbell, ed., *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendor* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), 327-331.

<sup>416</sup> These discrepancies in evaluatory criteria were noted by Rubens, who, during negotiations for his purchase of Sir Dudley Carleton's antique sculpture collection in exchange for several paintings and a set of tapestries, wrote: "one evaluates pictures differently from tapestries. The latter are purchased by measure, while the former are valued according to their excellence, their subject, and number of figures." Cited in Campbell, *Tapestry in the Baroque*, 329.

executing preliminary sketches and cartoons in oil, as opposed to other media.<sup>417</sup>

Particularly in the borders of seventeenth-century Flemish tapestries, there was a concerted effort to imitate or give the illusion of diverse objects, such as architectural elements, flower and fruit, finely-wrought cartouches, and gilded and carved wood frames, prompting one scholar to assert that by the end of the century, tapestries were regarded merely as “woven paintings.”<sup>418</sup> This rivalry between media, and the related anxiety which it must have produced among artists and artisans, was even pictorially embedded in tapestries produced in Brussels in this period, which contained woven inscriptions championing tapestry as a liberal art.<sup>419</sup>

Van Kessel’s involvement in the design of several important tapestry cycles occurred exactly at the height of this debate about the aesthetic attributes of tapestry and painting. During the period in which he was occupied with the production of the Munich and Madrid series of *The Four Parts of the World*, Van Kessel collaborated on a series of 20 paintings on copper that were commissioned as designs for a set of tapestries commemorating a noble Spanish-Sicilian family, the Moncadas (figs. 5.19-5.31).<sup>420</sup>

Drawing from his early specialization as a painter of flower garlands, Van Kessel devised the inventive borders of the *History of the House of Moncada* series. As we have already seen, although the “Madonna in a garland” genre was already well-established in

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<sup>417</sup> Campbell, *Tapestry in the Baroque*, 330.

<sup>418</sup> Guy Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, trans. Alastair Weir (New York: Abrams, 2000), 15-16.

<sup>419</sup> Campbell, *Tapestry in the Baroque*, 329.

<sup>420</sup> Only six of the tapestries in this cycle were ultimately woven. For informative discussion of the painted series, see Ivan Gaskell, *Seventeenth-Century Dutch and Flemish Painting: The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers for Sotheby’s Publications, 1990), 524-531, and José Manuel Pita Andrade and Maria del Mar Borobia Guerrero, *Old Masters: Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum* (Madrid: Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, 1992). The Moncada tapestry series is discussed, and partially illustrated, in Delmarcel, “Spanish Family Pride,” and Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, 250.



Antwerp by the time Van Kessel began his artistic career, he transformed this conventional framing device into an elaborate calling card for his artistic skills and virtuosity. In addition to flowers, the illusionistic frames in the painted and woven versions of the Moncada series showcase the full spectrum of signature motifs in Van Kessel's oeuvre, including martial implements, military trophies, birds, and aquatic creatures. Like his *Four Parts of the World*, which contain many of the same motifs, the Moncada borders offer up a complete menu of his artistic capabilities. When the six tapestries that were ultimately woven were sold along with the twenty paintings in 1870, Van Kessel's borders, rather than the interior scenes, were singled out as the focal point of the compositions: "...the wide margins, which are formed from emblems of war, sometimes of flowers or fruits, and sometimes fish and marine animals, display a vigor and a verisimilitude which nothing can approach" (fig. 5.32).<sup>421</sup> This remark not only privileges the illusionism of oil painting over the woven tapestries, but also elevates the status of Van Kessel's borders above that of the central narrative images. Even though Van Kessel's illusionistic frames flank central narratives painted by the Antwerp artists David Teniers the Younger, Willem van Herp, Louis Cousin (known as Luigi Primo, il Gentile), and Adam Frans van der Meulen, his surrounds are not subservient, but rather compete and engage in dialogue with the interior scenes.

Between 1662 and 1663, Luis Guillén Moncada, who held major political appointments throughout Spain and Italy and was granted the Order of the Golden Fleece, paid for the "preparation of some plates on which David Teniers will paint for a tapestry [series] of the History of the House of His Excellency at the time of Don Antonio

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<sup>421</sup> Alphonse Wauters, *Les Tapisseries Bruxelloises* (Brussels, 1878), 339.

Moncada.”<sup>422</sup> Luis Guillén was deeply invested in the glorification of his family through art patronage. During his lifetime, he commissioned 68 portraits of his ancestors as well as a family chronicle, which was published in 1657 and served as the model for the interior scenes of the *History of the House of Moncada* paintings.<sup>423</sup> The copper paintings, which depict the valorous deeds of Luis Guillén’s ancestors—Guillén Ramon II de Moncada (d. 1398) and his brother, Antonio de Moncada (d.1413)—were completed during his lifetime; however, the tapestries were not woven until much later. In 1699, his son commissioned cartoons for twelve tapestries that were to be woven by the Auwercx workshop in Brussels.

This commission states explicitly that the tapestries should exactly reproduce the borders, coats of arms, and inscriptions in the paintings, indicating the significance and success of Van Kessel’s contributions.<sup>424</sup> Like the paintings, each tapestry has a distinct border that was designed to complement the scene which it surrounds. Military events are bordered by armor and trophies, while episodes that take place at sea are framed by fish and other aquatic creatures.<sup>425</sup> The emphasis on retaining Van Kessel’s painted frames and making them a centerpiece of the woven tapestries should not be understated, as it was highly unusual for seventeenth-century Flemish tapestry series to distinguish their

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<sup>422</sup> Delmarcel, “Spanish Family Pride,” 286. Luis Guillén Moncada was living in Madrid at this time and it is suggested that the commission was negotiated through David Teniers III (1638-85), the son of David Teniers II, who lived in Madrid during this same period and later became a renowned painter of tapestry cartoons.

<sup>423</sup> This chronicle, *Ritratti della Prosapia, et heroi Moncadi nella Sicilia*, was written by Father Giovanni Agostino della Lengueglia and published in Valencia. See Delmarcel, “Spanish Family Pride,” 286. The manuscript’s narrative pictorial program, and relationship to the paintings is discussed in Gaskell, *Seventeenth-Century Dutch and Flemish Painting: The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection*, 529-530.

<sup>424</sup> Delmarcel, “Spanish Family Pride,” 288.

<sup>425</sup> Delmarcel, “Spanish Family Pride,” 294.

constituent compositions with differentiated borders.<sup>426</sup> By contrast, in most series of this type, a single border template was repeated on each tapestry in the set. The admiration for Van Kessel's inventive frames is also signified by the fact that although the interior scenes, painted after illustrations in the published chronicle of the Moncada family history, were reduced or altered in some cases when they were translated from oil paint and copper to woven wool and silk, the prized borders of the painted series were reproduced in their entirety in the woven version.<sup>427</sup> Van Kessel's contribution apparently impressed Luis Guillén so much that two years later, he commissioned the artist to produce paintings in conjunction with a second series of 24 armorial tapestries that featured the Moncada coat of arms and collar of the Golden Fleece.<sup>428</sup>

The legacy of Van Kessel's finely-wrought, painted frames can also be found in his own corpus, where they resurface as independent compositions. Van Kessel's inventive garlands which featured the full spectrum of creatures and object depicted in his vast oeuvre were painted primarily in the mid-to-late 1660s, the same period in which he was working on his tapestry commissions. Van Kessel's signature frames transformed the conventional Flemish flower garland genre into a novel pictorial type that inverted the hierarchy of the enclosed scene and its surrounding frame such that the frame surpassed the central image or negated it entirely. Several of Van Kessel's paintings of this type are signed and dated prominently, yet they lack an interior image, indicating that, like his painted tapestries his initially collaborative frames had become independent, esteemed compositions in their own right.

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<sup>426</sup> Delmarcel, "Spanish Family Pride," 294.

<sup>427</sup> Delmarcel, "Spanish Family Pride," 294.

<sup>428</sup> Delmarcel, "Spanish Family Pride," 299-300.

The fact that the painted compositions and the tapestries in the *House of Moncada* series are oriented in the same direction, rather than reversed, convincingly suggests that they were created as independent paintings as opposed to simply models.<sup>429</sup> Although Luis Guillén Moncada initially commissioned the paintings to precede the tapestries, the relationship between the painted and woven sets can hardly be considered that of preparatory prototype and refined final product. The large format of the copper plates, as well as their high degree of finish, meticulous detail, and prominent display of the artists' signatures and date, indicate that these paintings were conceived early on as artworks to be admired in their own right, and that they were meant to be complementary rather than secondary to the tapestries. The paintings from this series should be seen not as templates made solely for the sake of the tapestries, but rather as products of the artistic inventiveness inspired by the cross-fertilization of and competition between different media.

The acknowledgement by multiple scholars that the paintings and tapestries in royal residences were often “hung together in a relationship that has more to do with accumulation and complementarity than with substitution,” resonates with the multi-media Moncada series, which was commissioned by a family who ostensibly sought to display not only their noble lineage, but also their wealth in a broad spectrum of opulent materials.<sup>430</sup> The accumulation of commemorative luxury objects in more than one medium would have only enhanced the Moncada family's status and prestige. The representation and reiteration of historical events and dynastic associations in both oil

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<sup>429</sup> Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry*, 250.

<sup>430</sup> Miguel Falomir, “Artists Responses to the Emergence of Markets for Paintings in Spain, c.1600,” in *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Europe, 1450-1750*, ed. Neil De Marchi and Hans J. van Miegroet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 137. See also, Campbell, *Tapestry in the Baroque*, 327.

paint on copper and wool and silk would have produced a cacophony of precious materials that visually and materially underscored the extent of the Moncada's power and prestige.

The simultaneous viewing of copper paintings and woven tapestries depicting the same subjects also would have undoubtedly prompted the beholder to compare the two types of media and consider the material transformation enacted by each one. The cropping of scenes necessitated by the tapestry format would have been obvious in this context, for example, as would the unsurpassed illusionistic effects that could only be produced by painting in oil on copper. In this sense, Van Kessel's paintings in the *House of Moncada* series serve as a more fully-formed expression of the transformative artistry which he alluded to in the vignette of silkworms and luxurious textiles in *Asia* from the Munich *Four Parts of the World* (fig. 5.10). In that scene, Van Kessel illustrated painting's ability to compete and engage in dialogue with the material transformation performed by the silk worm. Silk worms are also present in Van Kessel's witty insect signatures, which underscore the artist's role as a mechanic of metamorphosis and a producer of images that both exemplify and provoke curiosity, and they are featured as the main subject of at least one other painting in his insect oeuvre.<sup>431</sup> While the silk worm garnered the praise of Pliny for its ability to create the precious raw material used in the manufacture of sumptuous garments, carpets, and tapestries, oil paint took this notion of metamorphosis through craft a step further, by making possible the illusionistic description of the silk worm, the fine threads of raw silk, and the diverse reflective surfaces and textures of the multitude of goods it produced. Only painting had the power to transform two-dimensional surfaces into spun silk, satin, and brocade.

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<sup>431</sup> The latter work is illustrated in cat. no. 56.

## Conclusion

As these few examples have illustrated, throughout Van Kessel's oeuvre, material practices consistently served as the medium through which he processed the natural world and negotiated the status and value of his miniature cabinet paintings. By engaging with a visual vocabulary that cut across different media and materials in Antwerp, Van Kessel was able to inventively transform traditional pictorial subjects and themes and challenge the expectations of his knowledgeable audience. His invention of novel pictorial types calls attention to the shared community of material knowledge in seventeenth-century Antwerp, in which artists and artisans of all specializations lived and worked in close proximity, giving rise to a material culture that was characterized by collaboration, cross-fertilization, and the *gesamtkunstwerk*.

The materiality of *kunstkasten*, tapestries, and precious miniatures provided Van Kessel with a framework for elevating and making claims about the value and status of the small-format paintings on copper that were the mainstay of his oeuvre. In *The Four Parts of the World* and Mellon series, his translation of the form and function of the cabinet, exemplified by his employment and representation of diverse precious materials and union of the skills and knowledge required in multiple disciplines such as oil painting, cabinet and frame making, and ebony work, into a kind of meta-picture that achieved far greater value and status than the sum of its parts redefined the cabinet painting as a precious, independent art object worthy of being displayed next to monumental easel paintings. In a similar vein, Van Kessel's painted tapestry designs challenged and ultimately outdid the verisimilitude much larger tapestries for which they

were originally made. The illusionistic capabilities of Van Kessel pictures, made possible by their miniature size and material composition, made them uniquely suited to the representation of nature's unlimited and global range. They could create things and achieve effects that other media, and nature, ultimately could not.

## EPILOGUE

The modern display of Van Kessel's pictures, particularly the small-format paintings on copper that comprise the majority of his oeuvre, could not be more at odds with their seventeenth-century presentation. As indicated by period inventories and contemporary gallery paintings, Van Kessel's works once hung prominently on the walls of prestigious art collections in Antwerp and abroad, where they shared space with compositions by Dürer, Rubens, and Van Dyck. By contrast, today many of his pictures are not even on view in museums, but rather reside in the deep recesses of storage vaults or inside boxes and drawers. Even when they are on display, Van Kessel's miniature paintings are often exhibited in ways that marginalize them in relation to larger easel paintings. In the course of my research for this dissertation, I observed paintings by Van Kessel that were displayed inside plexi-glass vitrines amidst coins, badges, and other miscellaneous small objects and exhibited in print rooms among works on paper. Both scenarios undermine the valorization of Van Kessel's art in seventeenth-century texts and contemporary gallery pictures (figs. 1.1, 3.24), recalling instead the sharp division between art and 'curios' portrayed in the much earlier picture gallery from c.1620 discussed at the beginning of this study (fig. 1.3).

The singular display of Van Kessel's small-format cabinet pictures in modern collections also contributes to the frequency with which they are overlooked. With the exception of a few examples, such as *The Four Parts of the World* in Munich and Madrid, most of Van Kessel's large-scale serial works have been disassembled and split up among collections across the United States and Europe. Seeing only one, or at most a



small cluster, of Van Kessel's miniature paintings in the same space does not begin to reproduce the experience of being confronted at once by over a dozen of these precious, jewel-like paintings. In most cases, we can only imagine, based on the Munich series, what a complete set of these pictures would have looked like and the powerful viewing experience it must have afforded to seventeenth-century beholders.

The disjuncture between early modern written and pictorial accounts of Van Kessel's paintings on one hand and their modern interpretation and display on the other was in large part the motivation for this study. Unsatisfied with modern accounts which narrowly characterize Van Kessel's pictures as scientific studies and overlook their pictorial virtuosity and inventiveness, I began this project by questioning what kinds of criteria constituted the high esteem of his artworks in the seventeenth century. The combination of my first-hand examination of many of Van Kessel's pictures and critical interrogation of aspects of their manufacture, marketing, collecting, and display allowed me to open up their interpretive possibilities and shed new light on their early modern status as objects of exceptional workmanship, connoisseurial value, and curiosity. In my quest to narrow the gap between the seventeenth-century and modern estimations of Van Kessel's pictures, I was prompted to take a much closer look at his finely-wrought, startlingly lifelike, and unexpectedly witty and amusing pictures of strange, monstrous, and exquisitely-crafted things. It is my hope that this study will inspire others to do the same.

## **FIGURES**



Fig. 1.1. Jacob de Formentrou (and others), *A Cabinet of Pictures*, 1659?  
Oil on canvas, 75 x 112 cm.  
London, Royal Collection.



Fig. 1.2. De Formentrou, *A Cabinet of Pictures*, 1659?  
Detail of fig. 1.1.



Fig. 1.3. Anonymous Flemish, *Cognoscenti in a Room Hung with Pictures*, c.1620.  
Oil on panel, 95.9 x 123.5 cm.  
London, National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 1.4. Anonymous Flemish, *Cognoscenti in a Room Hung with Pictures*, c.1620.  
Detail of fig. 1.3.





Fig. 1.5. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Snakes and caterpillars forming name of the artist*, 1657.

Oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm.

London, Johnny van Haefen, Ltd., 2008.



Fig. 1.6. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Asia from The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666, no. 2, *Archangel*.  
Detail of fig. 1.14.





Fig. 1.7. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Festoons of Seashells*, 1656.  
Oil on copper, 40 x 56 cm.  
Paris, Fondation Custodia, Collection Frits Lugt.

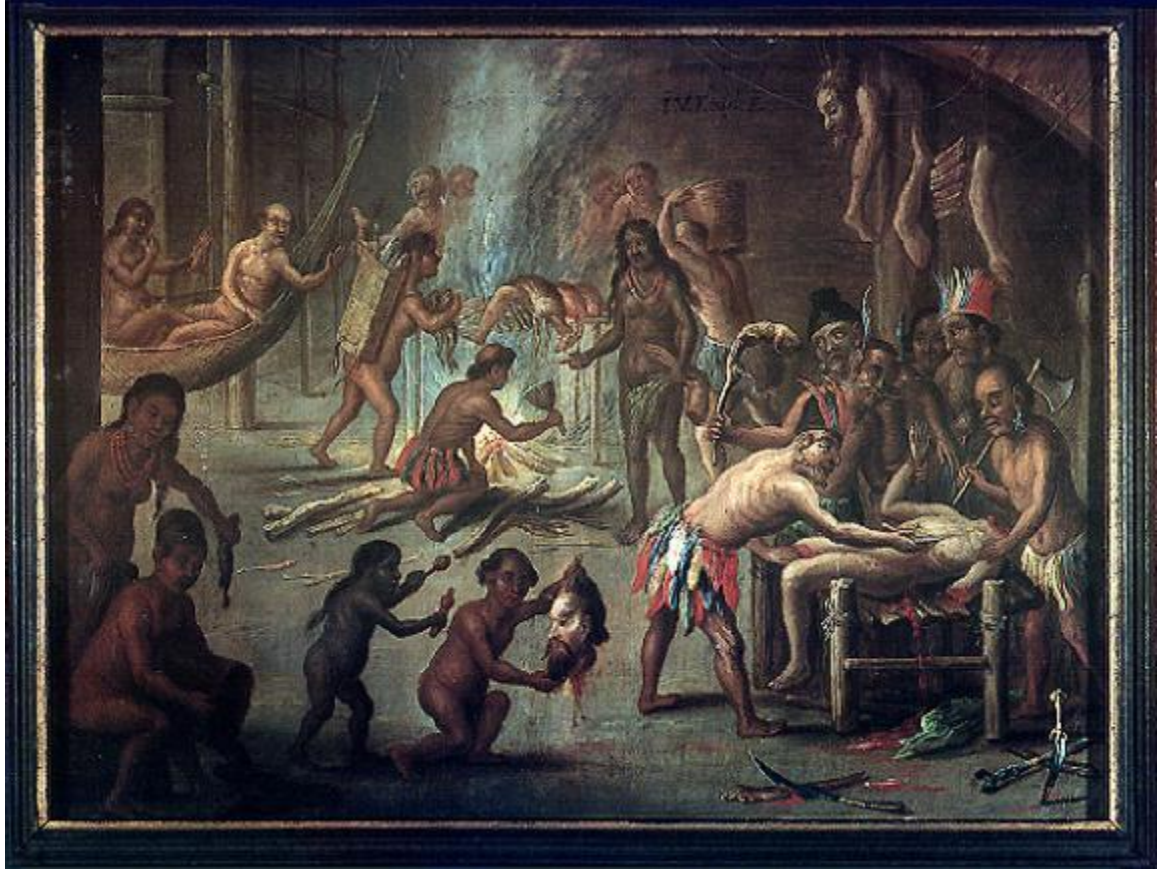


Fig. 1.8. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Cannibals*, c.1660.  
Oil on copper, 21 x 30 cm.  
La Rochelle, Le Musée du Nouveau Monde.

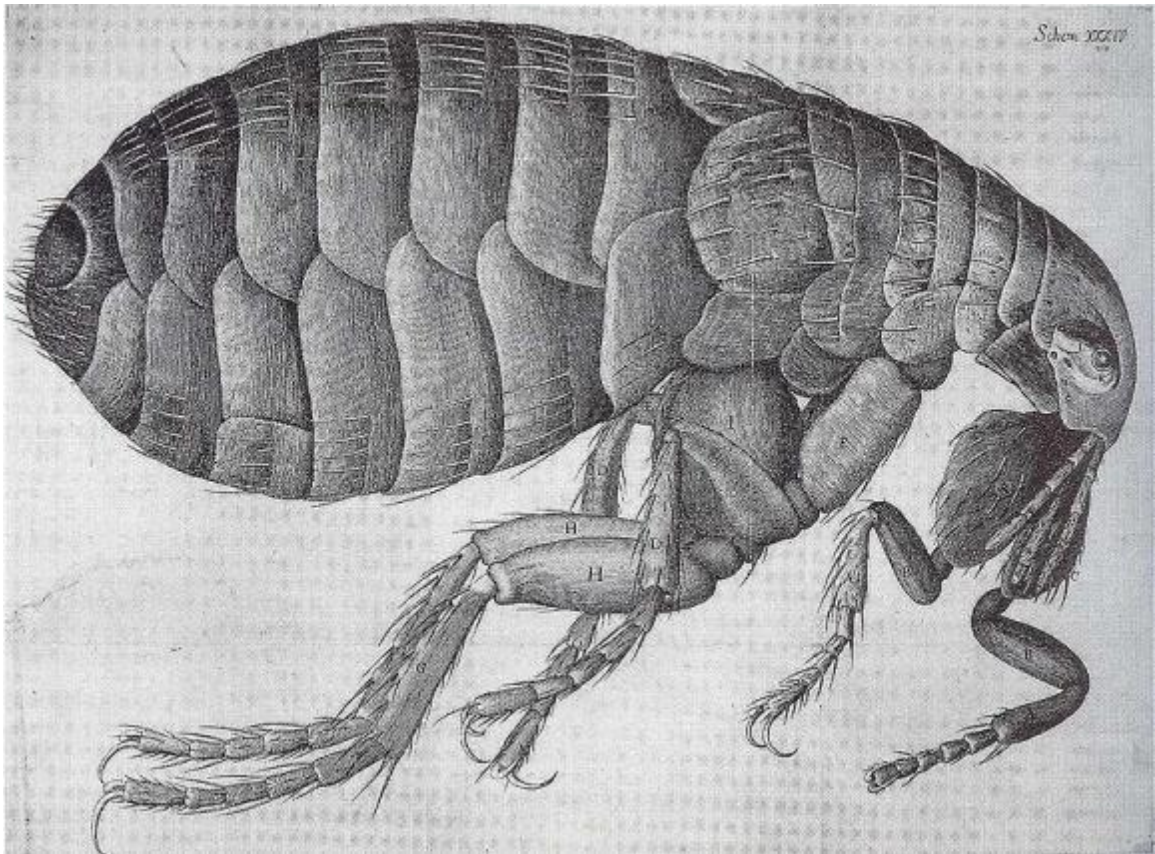


Fig. 1.9. Robert Hooke, *Of a Flea*, 1665.  
Fold-out engraving in Hooke, *Micrographia* (observation LIII), 34 x 44 cm.  
Bethesda, Maryland, National Library of Medicine.



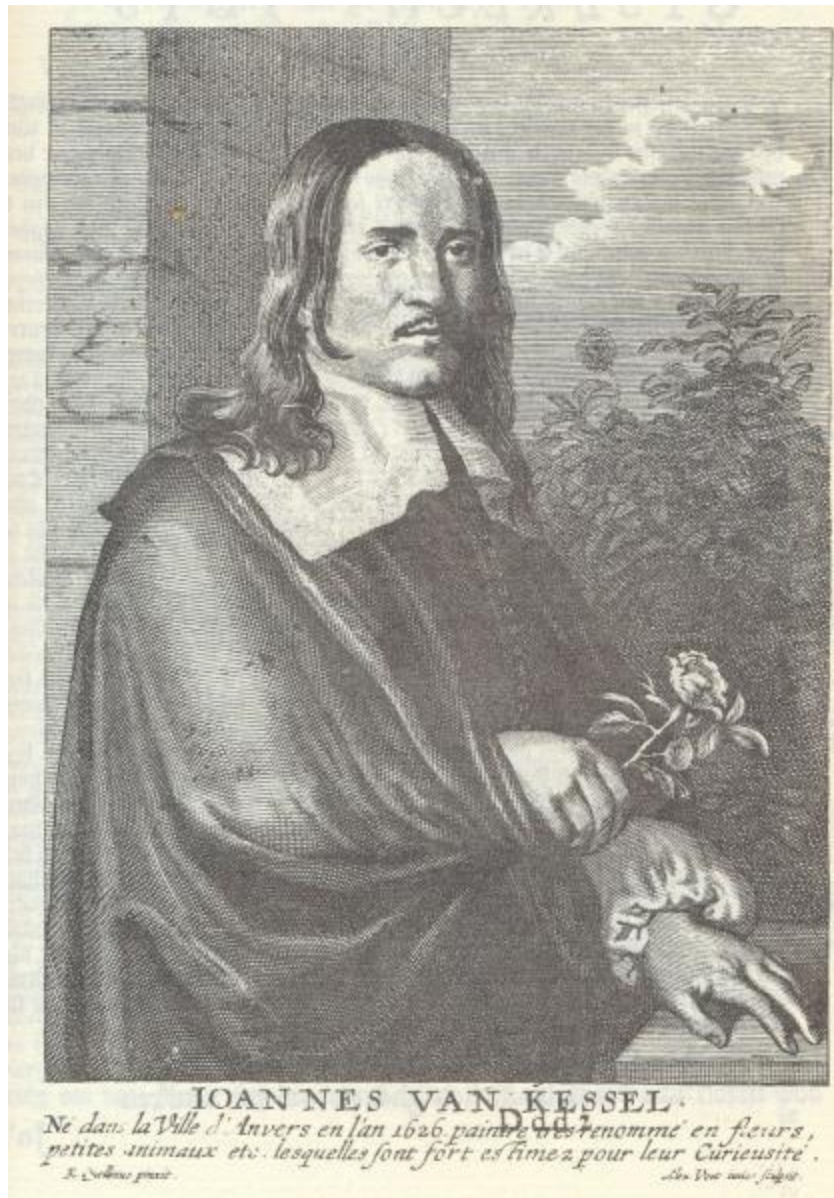


Fig. 1.10. Alexander Voet after Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, *Jan van Kessel*.  
Engraving in Cornelis de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), p. 411.



Fig. 1.11. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger,  
*Allegory of Europe*, 1665.  
Oil on copper, 48 x 36.8 cm.  
Belgium, Private Collection.



Fig. 1.12. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Allegory of Europe*, 1665.  
Detail of fig. 1.11.



Fig. 1.13. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, *Europe* from *The Four Parts of the World*, 1664.

Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates).  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek.





Fig. 1.14. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, *Asia*  
from *The Four Parts of the World*, 1664-1666.  
Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates).  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek.





Fig. 1.15. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, *Africa* from *The Four Parts of the World*, 1664-1666.  
Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates).  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek.



Fig. 1.16. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, *America* from *The Four Parts of the World*, 1666.

Oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates).  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek.



Fig. 2.1. Isaac Claesz van Swanenburg, *Self-Portrait*, 1568.  
Oil on panel, 94 x 72 cm.  
Leiden, Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal.



Fig. 2.2. Gerard van Honthorst, *Portrait of an Artist*, 1655.  
Oil on canvas, 93.5 x 90.3 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.





Fig. 2.3. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Roses, orange blossom, jasmine in a glass vase with a caterpillar, dragonfly and butterflies*, 1661.

Oil on copper, 40 x 31 cm.

London, Phillips, December 10, 1996, lot 65.



Fig. 2.4. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Garland of irises, parrot tulips, roses, surrounding a stone niche inset with a Vanitas scene*, 1649.  
Oil on canvas, 107 x 84.2 cm.  
London, Sotheby's, July 5, 2007, lot 134.



Fig. 2.5. Peter Paul Rubens and Osais Beert, *Pausias and Glycera*, c. 1612/15.  
Oil on canvas, 203.2 x 194.3 cm.  
Sarasota, Florida, The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.



Fig. 2.6. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Allegory of Air*, 1660s.  
Oil on copper, 72 x 91 cm.  
Flint, Michigan, Flint Institute of Arts.





Fig. 2.7. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Madonna and Child in a Garland of Flowers*, 1621.  
Oil on canvas, transferred from panel, 83.5 x 63 cm.  
Paris, Musée du Louvre.



Fig. 2.8. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Allegory of the Four Elements*, 1664.  
Oil on copper, 28.5 x 28cm.  
St. Petersburg, Hermitage.



Fig. 2.9. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Allegory of the Four Elements*, c. 1664.  
Oil on copper, 28 x 28cm.  
Strasbourg, Musée des Beaux-Arts.





Fig. 2.10. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Still-Life of Shells and Flowers in a Marble Niche, Surrounded by Flowers, Butterflies and other Insects*, 1670.

Oil on canvas, 47 x 62 cm.

West Yorkshire, Property of the Winn Family, on loan to the National Trust, Nostell Priory.



Fig. 2.11. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Swag of Shells*, 1654.  
Oil on copper, 31 x 43 cm. United Kingdom, Collection of Lt. Col. R.C. Althusen.



Fig. 2.12. Jan van Kessel and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger,  
*Allegory of Asia*, 1667.  
Oil on copper, 49 x 37.5 cm.  
Milan, Castello Sforzesco.





Fig. 2.13. Jan van Kessel and Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, *Allegory of America*,  
c.1667.  
Oil on copper, 47.5 x 36 cm.  
Milan, Castello Sforzesco.



ANTHOINE VAN LEYEN  
Grand amateur des arts peintures etc.  
Admirez pas icy la grace exterieur.  
C'est l'ame de sçavoir qui luy donne l'...

Fig. 2.14. Richard Collier after Erasmus Quellinus the Younger, *Anthony van Leyen*.  
Engraving in Cornelis de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet* (1661-1662), p. 9.





Fig. 2.15. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Roses, Tulips, Narcissi, Peonies, with a Sprig of Cherries in a Roemer on a stone Pedestal*, c. 1652.  
Oil on copper, 77.5 x 59 cm. Phillips, London, December 14, 1999, lot 78.



Fig. 2.16. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Irises, Peonies, Narcissi, a Tulip, in a blue and white porcelain Vase with ormolu mounts on a pedestal*, 1652.  
Oil on copper, 77 x 59 cm. Sotheby's, London December 5, 2007, lot 24.



Fig. 2.17. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Flowers in a glass vase*, c. 1652.  
Oil on copper, 75.6 x 67.5 cm.  
Washington D.C., Private Collection.



Fig. 2.18. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Flowers in a porcelain vase*, 1652.  
Oil on copper, 75.6 x 67.5 cm.  
Washington D.C., Private Collection.





Fig. 3.1. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Insects and Reptiles*, 1657.  
Oil on copper, 39 x 56 cm. Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum.



Fig. 3.2. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Insects and Reptiles*, 1658.  
Oil on copper, 39 x 53 cm (central plate), 14 x 19 cm (peripheral plates).  
Upperville, Virginia, Oak Spring Garden Library, Collection of Mrs. Rachel Mellon.



Fig. 3.3. Van Kessel, *Insects and Reptiles*, 1658. Detail of fig. 3.2.



Fig. 3.4. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Europe* from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664.  
Detail of fig. 1.13.





Fig. 3.5. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *A Mouse with a Rose*, 1605. Oil on copper, 7.2 x 10.2 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana.

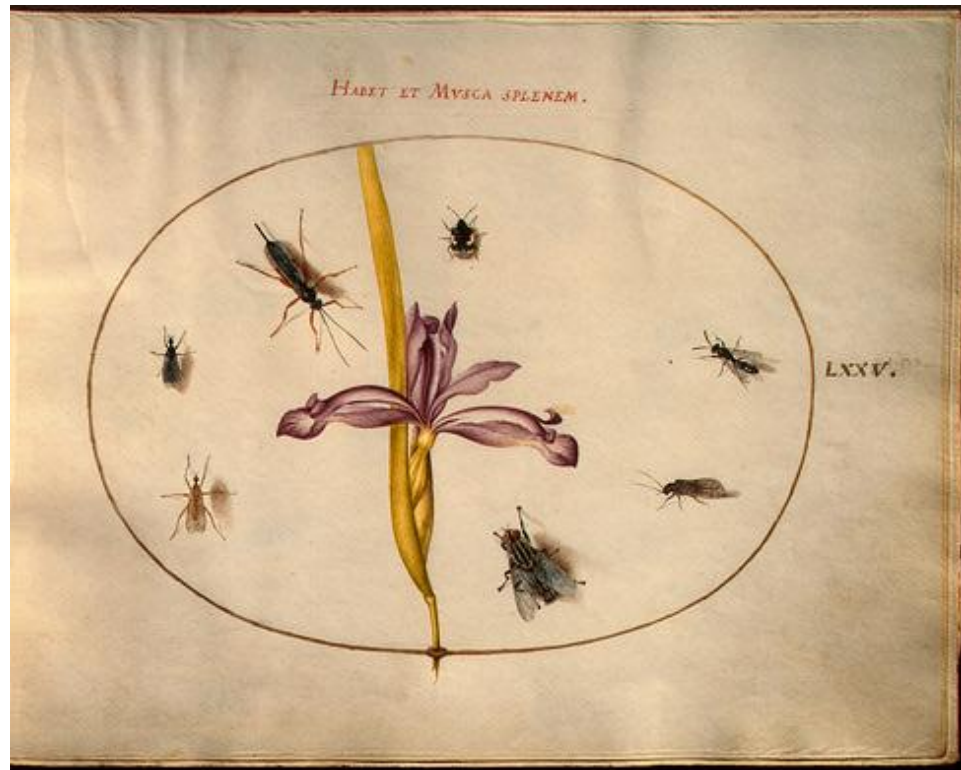


Fig. 3.6. Joris Hoefnagel, *Four Elements, Animalia Rationalia et Insecta (Ignis)*: Plate LXXV, c.1575-80. Watercolor and gouache, with oval border in gold, on vellum, 14 x 18 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.

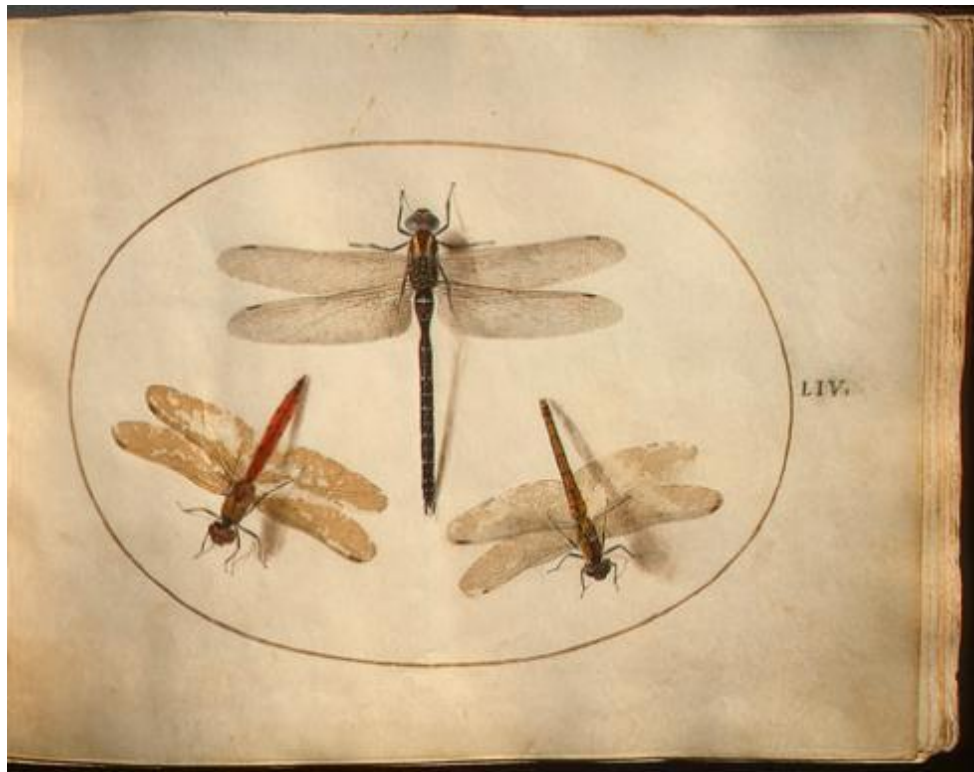


Fig. 3.7. Joris Hoefnagel, *Four Elements, Animalia Rationalia et Insecta (Ignis)*: Plate *LIII*, c.1575-80.

Watercolor and gouache, with oval border in gold, on vellum, 14 x 18 cm.  
Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.

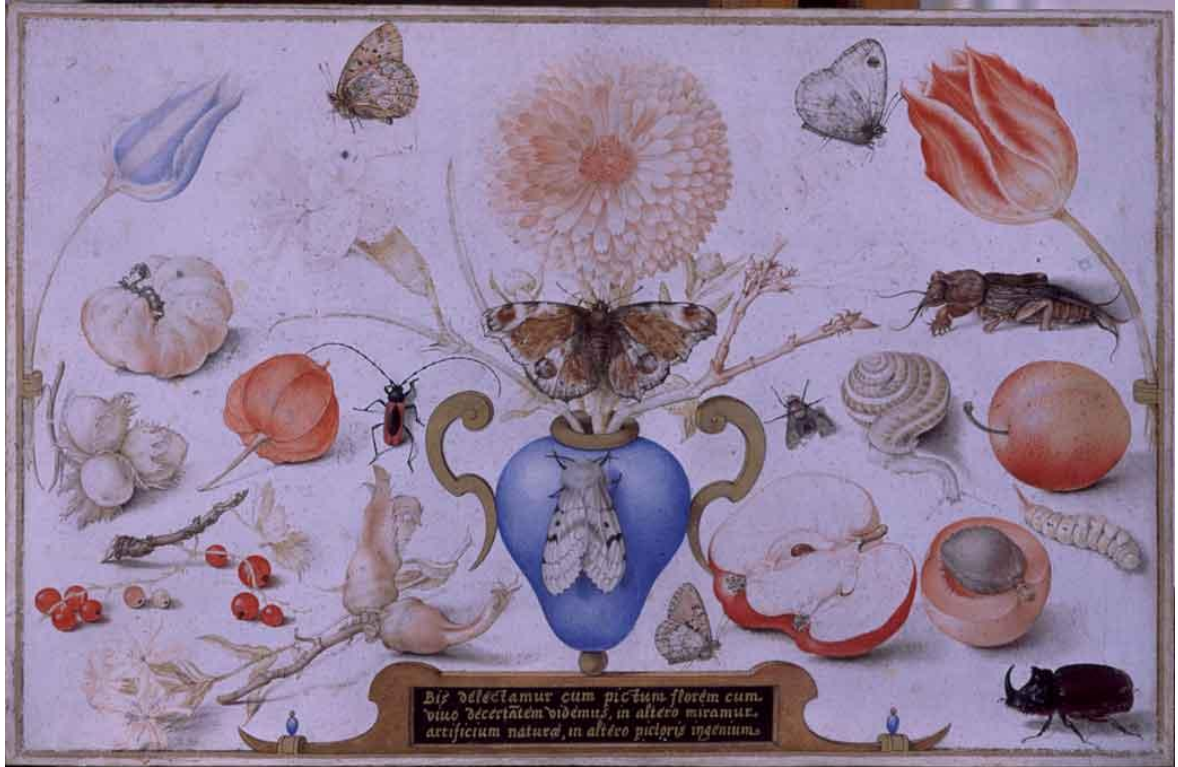


Fig. 3.8. Joris Hoefnagel, *Miniature with red beetle*, 1597.  
Watercolor and gouache on parchment, 20 x 32 cm.  
Sibiu, Brukenthal Museum.





Fig. 3.9. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies and Insects*, c. 1660.  
Oil on copper, 11 x 15.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



Fig. 3.10. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Study of Butterfly and Insects*, c.1655. Oil on copper, 11 x 14.8 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.

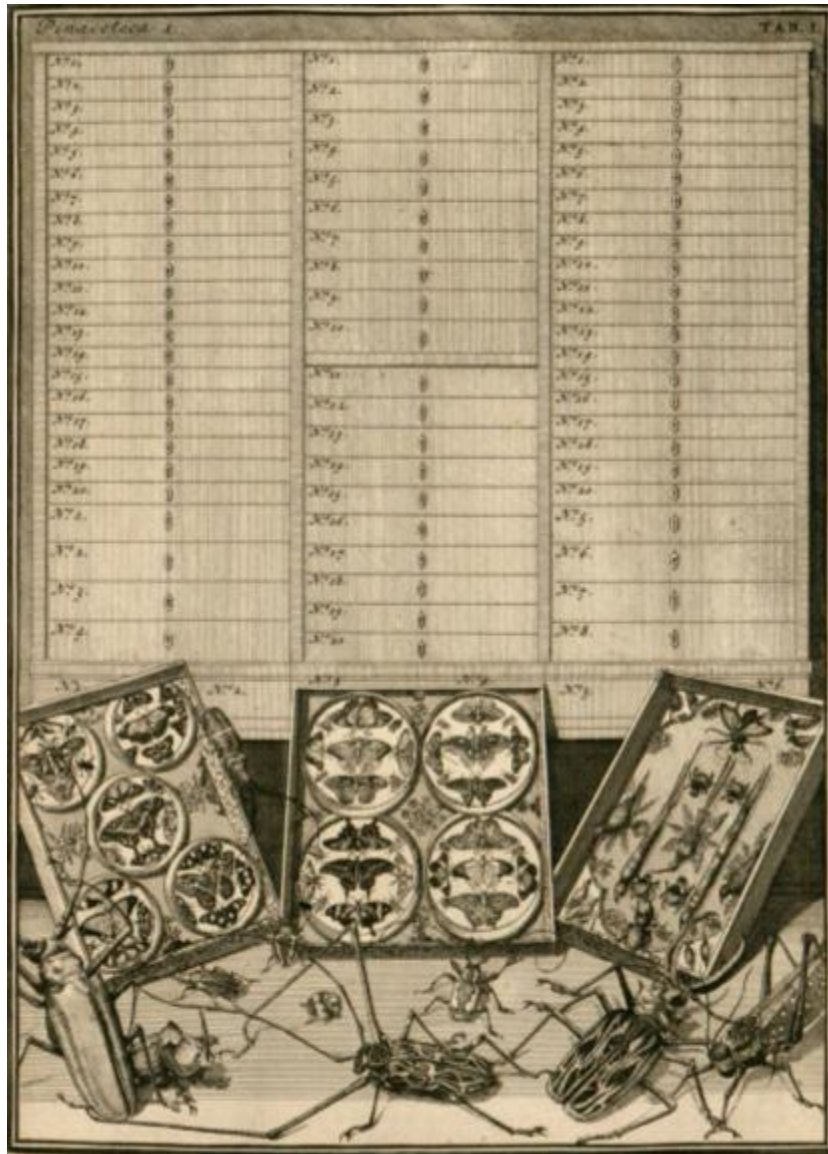


Fig. 3.11. Levinus Vincent, Engraving from *Wondertooneel der Natuur, ofte een Korte Beschrijvinge zo van Bloedeloze, Zwemmende, Vliegende, Kruip-ende, en Viervoetige Geklaauwde Eijerleggende Dieren...bevat in de Kabinetten van Levinus Vincent*, 1715, vol. 2, p. 293.





Fig. 3.12. Van Kessel, *Insects and Reptiles*, 1658. Detail of fig. 3.2.





Fig. 3.13. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Creatures of the Night*, c.1660.  
Oil on copper, 18.4 x 24.8 cm. London, Johnny van Haeften, Ltd., 2011.



Fig. 3.14. Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c.1500.  
Oil on panel, 220 x 195 cm (central panel), 220 x 97 (wings).  
Madrid, Museo del Prado.



Fig. 3.15. Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c.1500. Detail of fig. 3.14.



Fig. 3.16. Van Kessel, *Insects and Reptiles*, 1658. Detail of fig. 3.2.





Fig. 3.17. Van Kessel, *Insects and Reptiles*, 1657. Detail of fig. 3.1.

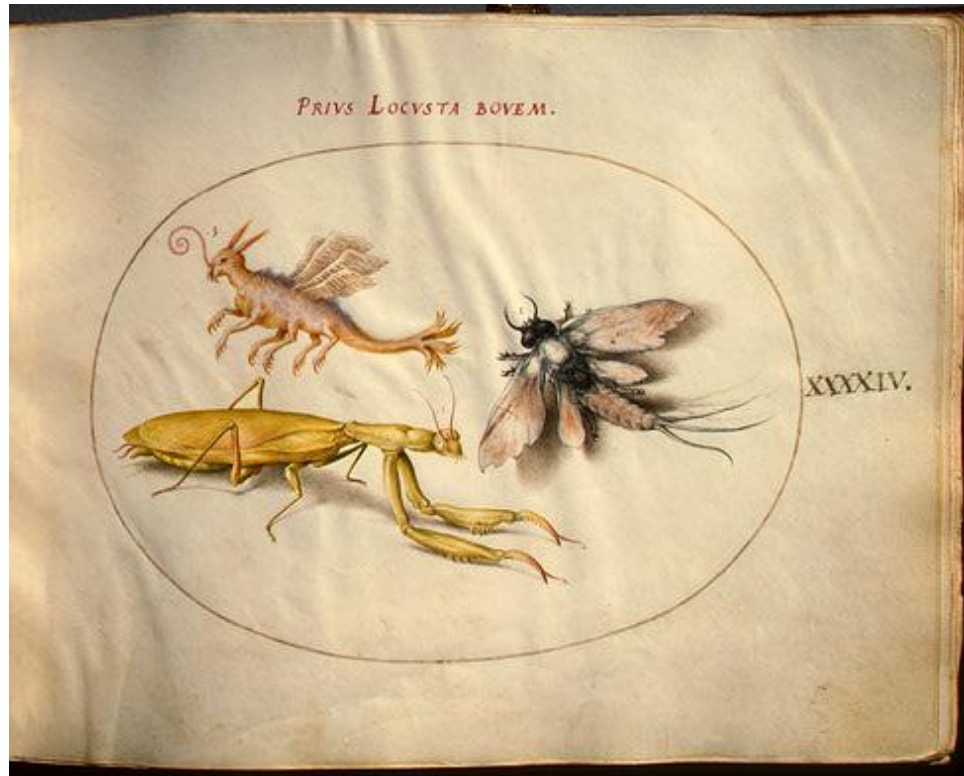


Fig. 3.18. Joris Hoefnagel, *Four Elements, Animalia Rationalia et Insecta (Ignis): Plate XLIV*, c.1575-80.  
Watercolor and gouache, with oval border in gold, on vellum, 14 x 18 cm.  
Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 3.19. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies and Insects*, c.1656.  
Oil on panel, 27.5 x 36.5 cm.  
Delft, Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof.

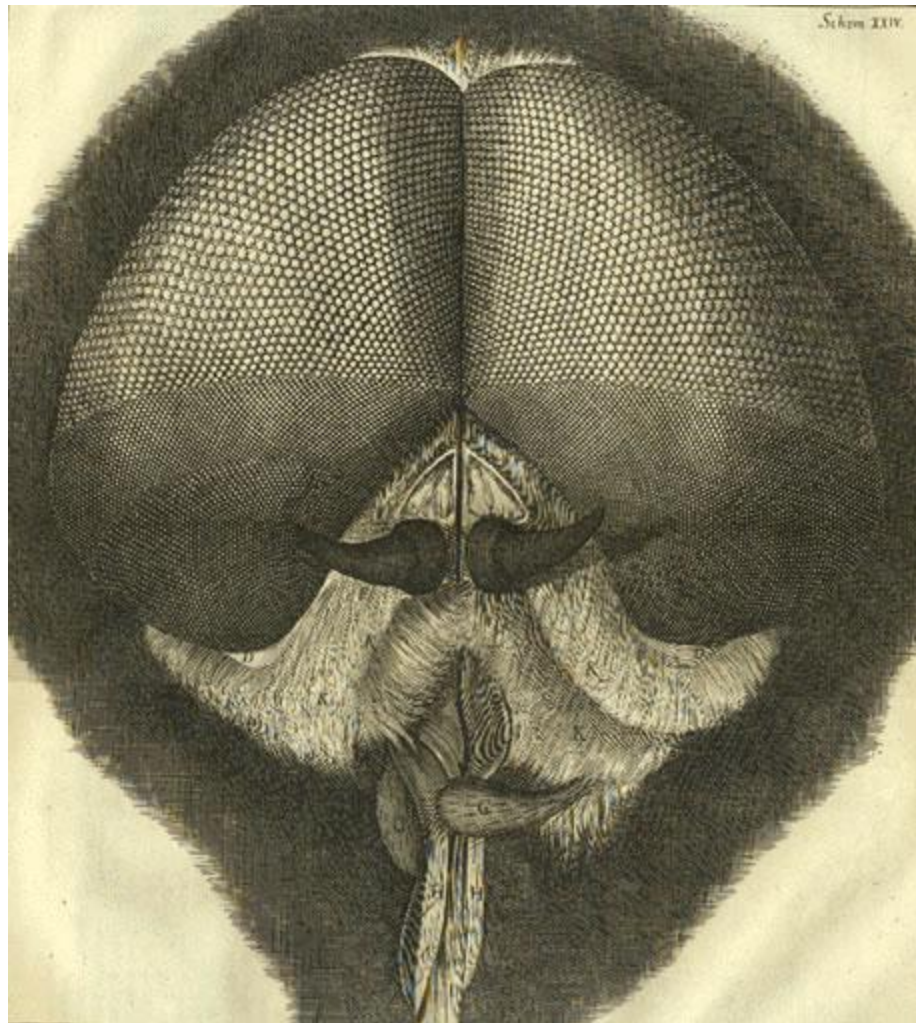


Fig. 3.20. Robert Hooke, *Of the Eyes and Head of a Grey drone-Fly*, 1665.  
Fold-out engraving in Hooke, *Micrographia* (observation XXXIX).  
Bethesda, Maryland, National Library of Medicine.



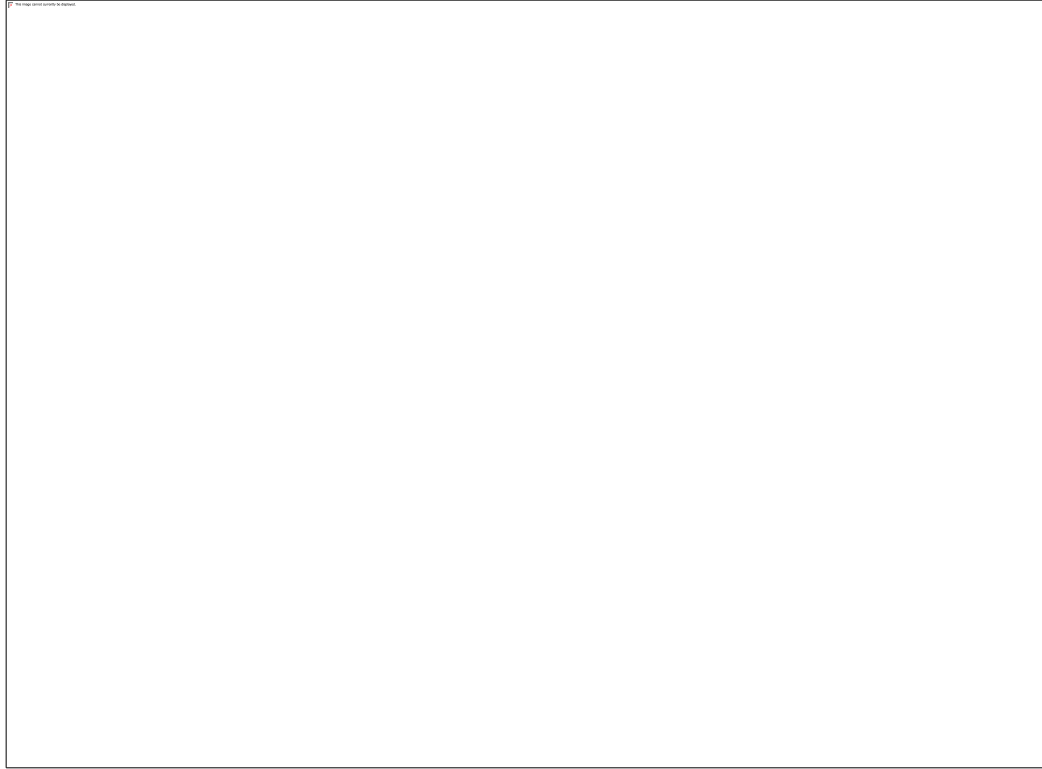


Fig. 3.21. Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Still Life with Insects and Amphibians*, 1662.  
Oil on canvas, 51 x 68.5 cm.  
Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum.



Fig. 3.22. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Asia* from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666, no. 12, *Mecca*.  
Detail of fig. 1.14.



Fig. 3.23. Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Snakes, butterflies, lizards, and small insects, with a thistle in the moss on a tree*, 1664.  
Oil on canvas, 69.6 x 53.5 cm.  
Private collection.



Fig. 3.24. Gonzales Coques with other artists, *Interior with Figures in the Middle of a Picture Gallery*, 1667-1672; 1706.

Oil on canvas, 176 x 211 cm.

The Hague, Mauritshuis (Prins Willem V Galerie).



Fig. 3.25. Coques, *Interior with Figures in the Middle of a Picture Gallery*, 1667-1672;  
1706.  
Detail of fig. 3.24.



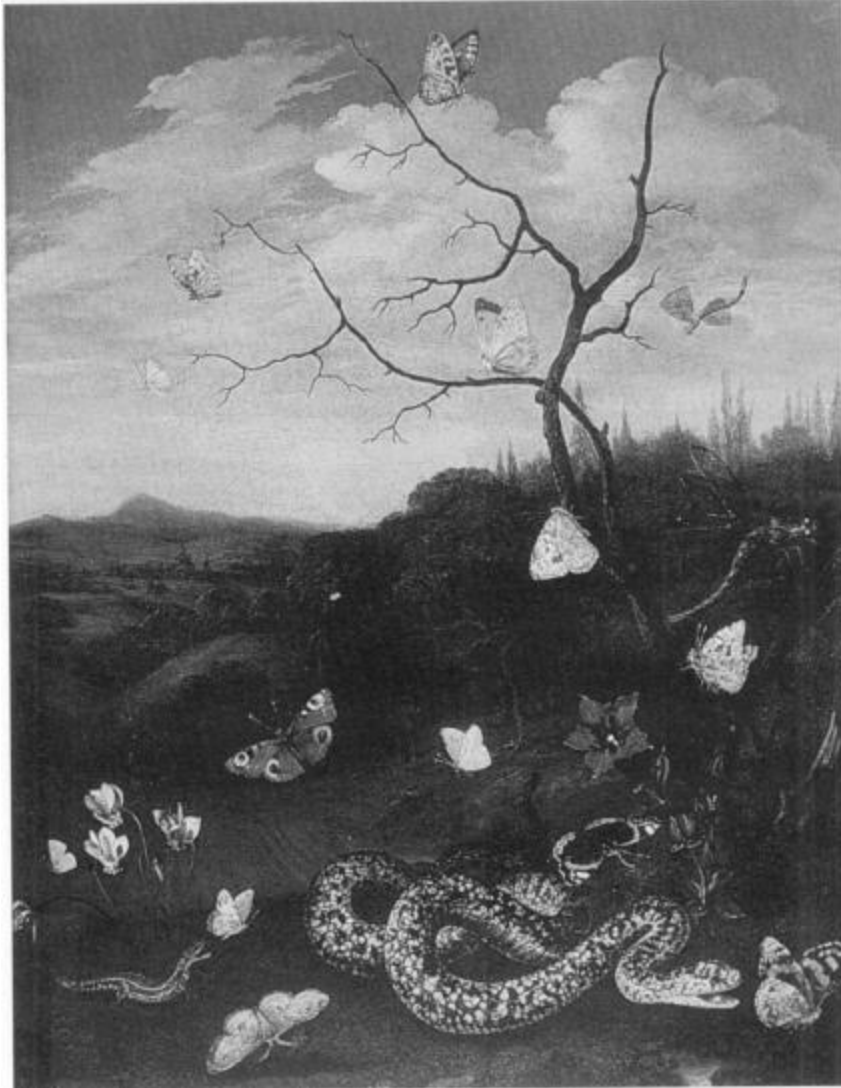


Fig. 3.26. Otto Marseus van Schrieck, *Butterflies in a tree, with a snake below*, 1672.  
Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 55 cm.  
London, Collection of H. Terry-Engell.



Fig. 3.27. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Insects, Butterflies, and a Grasshopper*, 1664.  
Black chalk, watercolor, and gouache on parchment, 10.8 x 24.1 cm.  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Fig. 3.28. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Insects, Butterflies, and a Dragonfly*, 1662.  
Black chalk, watercolor, and gouache on parchment, 10.8 x 24.1 cm.  
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.





Fig. 3.29. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies, moths, green grasshopper and other insects*, 1660s.

Oil on copper, 9.4 x 23.3 cm.

London, Christie's, July 9, 1999 lot 2.



Fig. 3.30. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies, moths, blue dragonfly, beetles*, 1660s.  
Oil on copper, 9.4 x 23.3 cm.  
London, Christie's, July 9, 1999 lot 2.

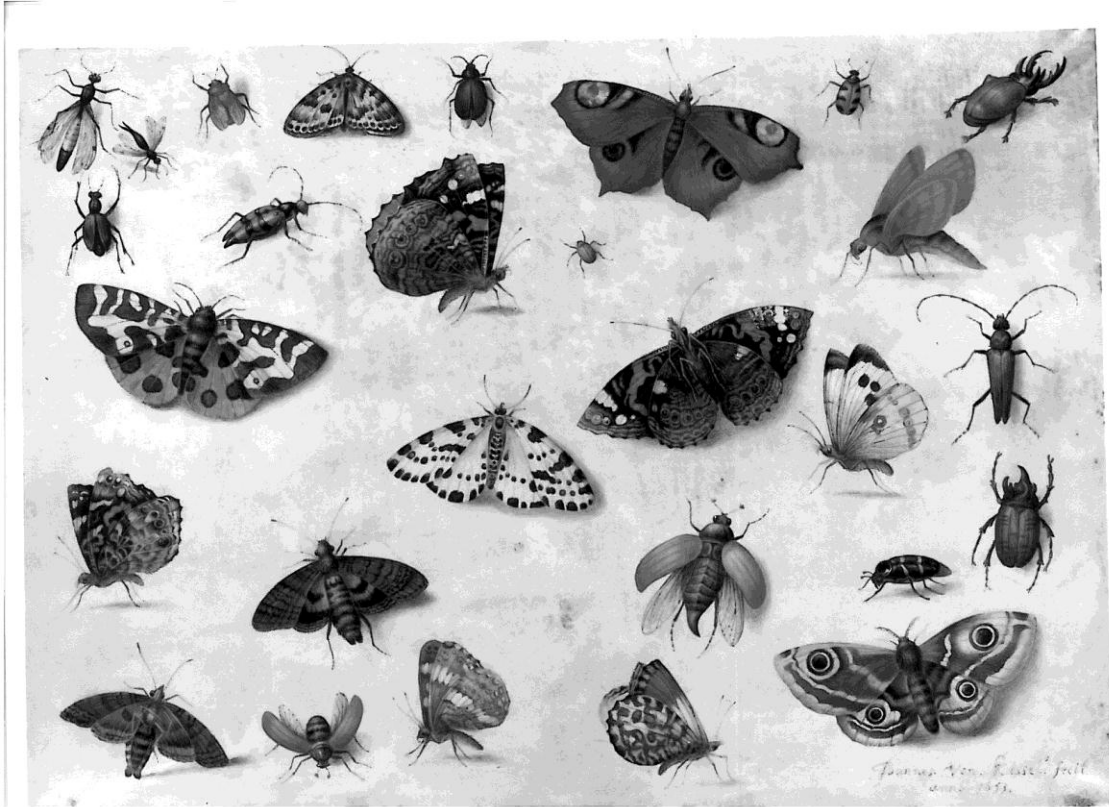


Fig. 3.31. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies & insects*, 1656.  
Oil on panel, 26.5 x 37 cm.  
Private collection.



Fig. 3.32. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Three Butterflies, a Beetle and other Insects, with a Cutting of Ragwort*, early 1650s?  
Oil on copper, 9 x 13 cm.  
Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.



Fig. 3.33. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies and Insects*, 1661.  
Oil on copper, 19 x 29 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum.





3.34. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Butterflies and Insects*, 1661.  
Oil on copper, 19 x 29 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum.



3.35. Albertus Seba, Engraving (Tab. XXXVI) from Seba, *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium thesauri accurata descriptio Naaukeurige beschryving van het schatryke kabinet der voornaamste seldzaamheden der natuur*, vol. 3, 1759.



Fig. 3.36. Albertus Seba, Engraving (Tab. XXXVII) from *Locupletissimi rerum naturalium*.





Fig. 3.37. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *America* from *The Four Parts of the World*, (Munich), 1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.16.



Fig. 3.38. *Schatzkammer rarer und neuer Curiositäten*, title page, 1686.



Fig. 3.39. *Schatzkammer rarer und neuer Curiositäten*, engraving preceding the title page, 1686.





Fig. 4.1. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Los Animales / The Four Part of the World*, 1660.  
Oil on copper, 17 x 23 cm (individual plates).  
Madrid, Museo del Prado.



Fig. 4.2. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Asia* from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-66, no. 10, *Angola*.  
Detail of fig. 1.14.



Fig. 4.3. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Head of Medusa*, c. 1617/1618.  
Oil on canvas, 68.5 x 118 cm.  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.





Fig. 4.4. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Kunstkammer with Venus at her Toilette*, 1659.  
Oil on copper, 67 x 91 cm.  
Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle.



Fig. 4.5. Frans Snyders, *The Fox and the Heron*, c.1630-1640.  
Oil on canvas, 121 x 238 cm.  
Stockholm, Nationalmuseum.





Fig. 4.6. Frans Snyders, *Cock Fight*, c.1620-1640.  
Oil on canvas, 98 x 133 cm.  
Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.



Fig. 4.7. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *America* from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.16.



Fig. 4.8. Georg Marcgraf, *Tapuya woman*, engraving, from the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, 1648.



Fig. 4.9. Theodor de Bry, engraving from *Grands Voyages: America*, volume 3, 1593.





Fig. 4.10. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *The Entry of the Animals into Noah's Ark*, 1613.  
Oil on panel, 54.5 x 83 cm.  
Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.



Fig. 4.11. Peter Paul Rubens, *Daniel in the Lion's Den*, c.1614/1616.  
Oil on canvas, 268 x 374.7 cm.  
Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.



Fig. 4.12. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Africa* from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666, no. 9, *Tripoli*.  
Detail of fig. 1.15.





Fig. 4.13. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *The Ark of Noah*, 1650s.  
Oil on panel, 28.6 x 37.1 cm.  
Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.





Fig. 4.14. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Africa* from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666, no. 4, *Algers* (verso).  
Detail of fig. 1.15.

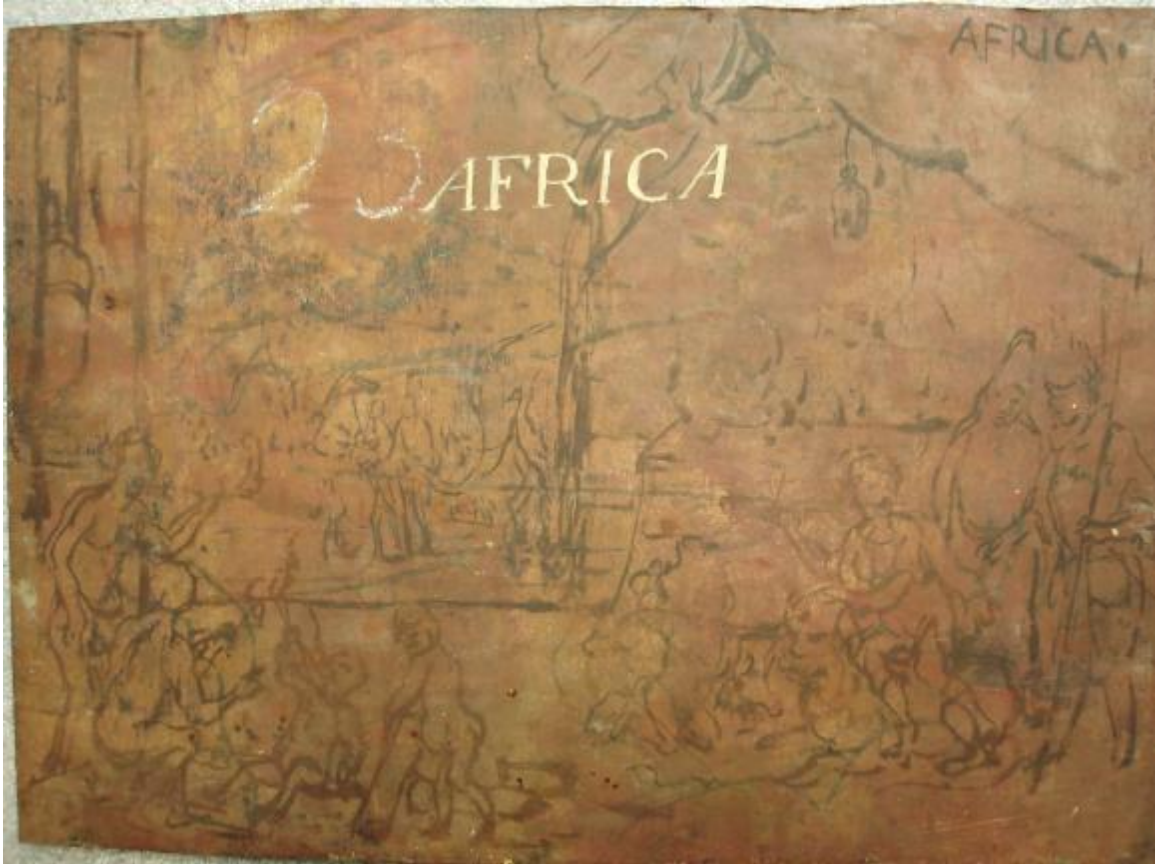


Fig. 4.15. Van Kessel, *Los Animales / The Four Part of the World* (Madrid), 1660, no. 13, *London* (verso).  
Detail of fig. 4.1.

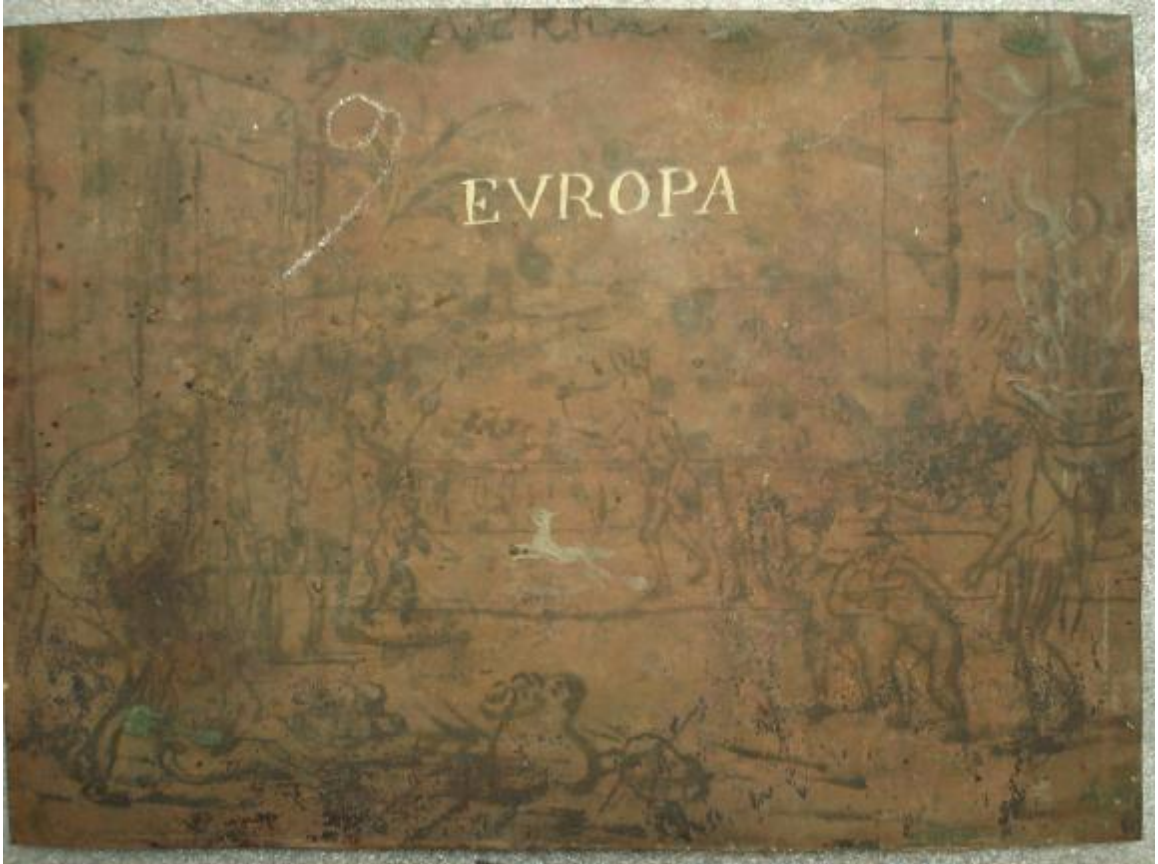


Fig. 4.16. Van Kessel, *Los Animales / The Four Part of the World* (Madrid), 1660, no. 19, *Antwerp* (verso).  
Detail of fig. 4.1.



Fig. 4.17. Van Kessel, *Los Animales / The Four Part of the World* (Madrid), 1660, no. 20, *Copenhagen* (verso).  
Detail of fig. 4.1.



Fig. 4.18. Van Kessel, *Los Animales / The Four Part of the World* (Madrid), 1660, no. 39, *Aden* (verso).  
Detail of fig. 4.1.





Fig. 4.19. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *The Fable of the Fox and the Heron*, c.1660.  
Oil on copper, 19 x 25 cm.  
London, Johnny van Haften, Ltd., 2010.



Fig. 4.20. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *Kunstkamer with a Woman before a Mirror: Allegory of Sight*, c.1660.

Oil on copper, 62 x 82 cm.

London, Christie's, April 22, 2005, lot 87.



Fig. 4.21. Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens, *Sight*, 1617.  
Oil on panel, 65 x 109 cm.  
Madrid, Museo del Prado.





Fig. 4.22. Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Water from the Four Elements*, 1566.  
Oil on panel, 66.5 x 50.5 cm.  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Fig. 4.23. Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Fire from the Four Elements*, 1566.  
Oil on panel, 66.5 x 51 cm.  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Fig. 4.24. Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Earth* from the *Four Elements*, 1566?  
Oil on panel, 70.2 x 48.7 cm.  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Fig. 4.25. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *America* from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1666, no. 15, *Havana*.  
Detail of fig. 1.16.





Fig. 4.26. Peter Paul Rubens, *Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt*, c. 1615-1616.  
Oil on panel, 248 x 32 cm.  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek.



Fig. 5.1. Anonymous Antwerp (paintings possibly by Frans Francken the Younger),  
*Cabinet*, c.1650.

*Softwood, whitewood and oak, veneered with ebony, letterwood, bone  
and tortoiseshell on a red ground, decorated with paintings in oils, mounts of silver, iron,  
and brass, h. 160 cm., w. 108 cm., d. 50 cm.*

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



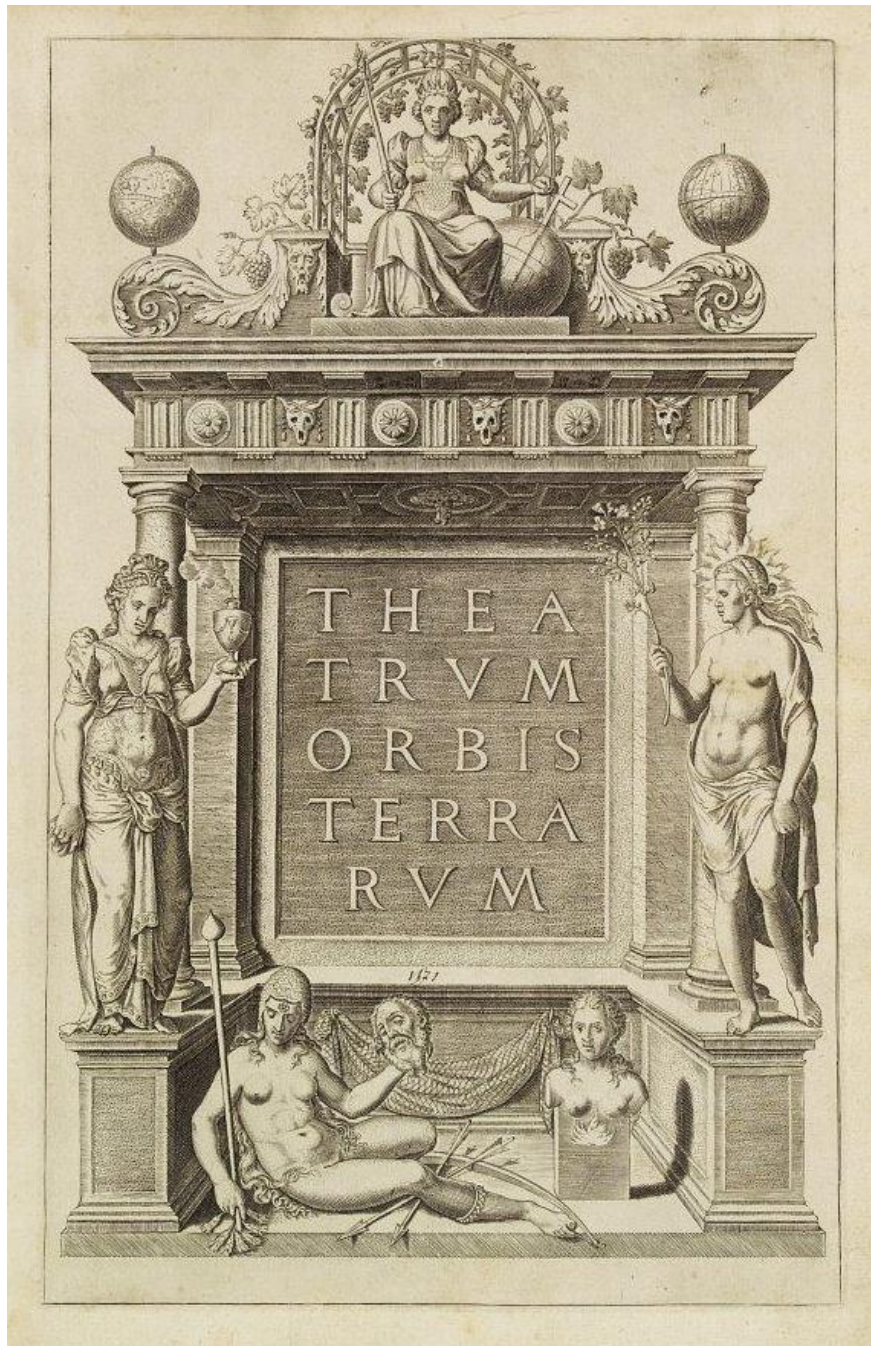


Fig. 5.2. Abraham Ortelius, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (frontispiece), 1570.  
Engraving, 37 x 23 cm.



Fig. 5.3. Peter Paul Rubens, *The Four Continents* (also known as *The Four Rivers of Paradise*), c.1615.  
Oil on canvas, 208 x 283 cm.  
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.





Fig. 5.4. Frans Francken the Younger, *The Story of the Prodigal Son*, 1600-1620.  
Oil on panel, 61 x 85 cm.  
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

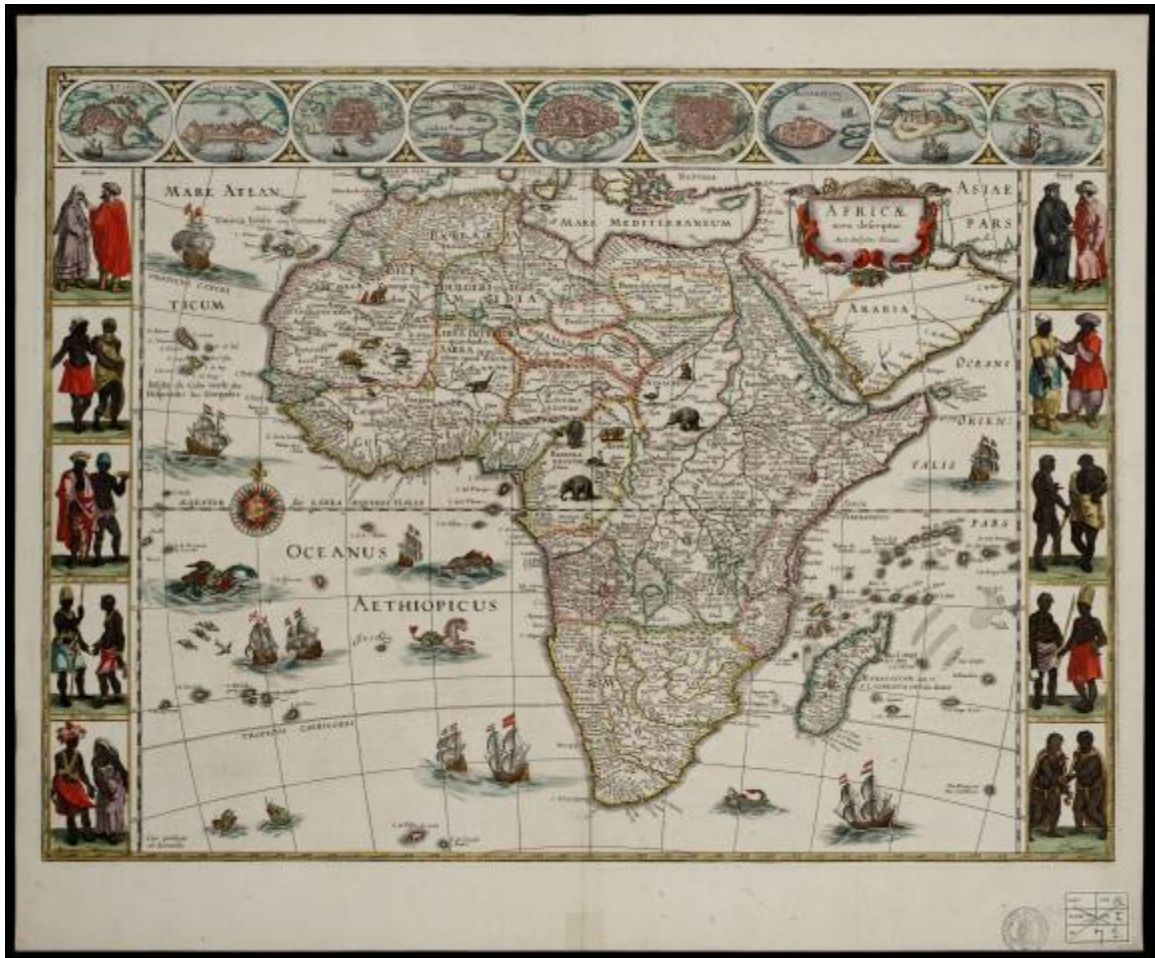


Fig. 5.5. Willem Jansz. Blaeu, *Africae nova description*, c.1630.  
Engraving, 41 x 55.5 cm.  
Universiteit van Amsterdam, Bijzondere Collecties.



Fig. 5.6. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Africa*, from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.15.





Fig. 5.7. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Asia*, from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.14.



Fig. 5.8. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Africa*, from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.15.



Fig. 5.9. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Europe*, from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.13.



Fig. 5.10. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Asia*, from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich), 1664-1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.14.



Fig. 5.11. Van Kessel and Quellinus, *Africa*, from *The Four Parts of the World* (Munich),  
1664-1666.  
Detail of fig. 1.15.





Fig. 5.12. Anonymous Amsterdam? *Dollhouse of Petronella De la Court (Kunstkamer)*,  
c.1670-1690.

Oak, walnut, olivewood, rosewood, ivory, silver, ebony, copper, and other materials,  
206 x 189 x 79 cm.

Utrecht, Centraal Museum.



Fig. 5.13. *Dollhouse of Petronella De la Court*, c.1670-1690.  
Detail of fig. 5.12.



Fig. 5.14. Wenzel Jamnitzer, *Writing box with cast insects and other creatures*,  
c. 1560-1570.

Silver, 23 x 10 x 6 cm.

Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.



Fig. 5.15. Attributed to Bernard Palissy, *Oval Basin*, c.1550.  
Lead-glazed earthenware, 47 x 37 cm.  
Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.





Fig. 5.16. Anonymous Dutch or Flemish?, manufactured in England, *Cabinet*,  
1690-1700.  
Walnut, fruitwood, and oak with ivory and bone veneers and painted drawer fronts.  
Washington, Smithsonian Institution Castle Collection.



Fig. 5.17. Anonymous, *Cabinet*, 1690-1700. Interior detail of fig. 5.16.

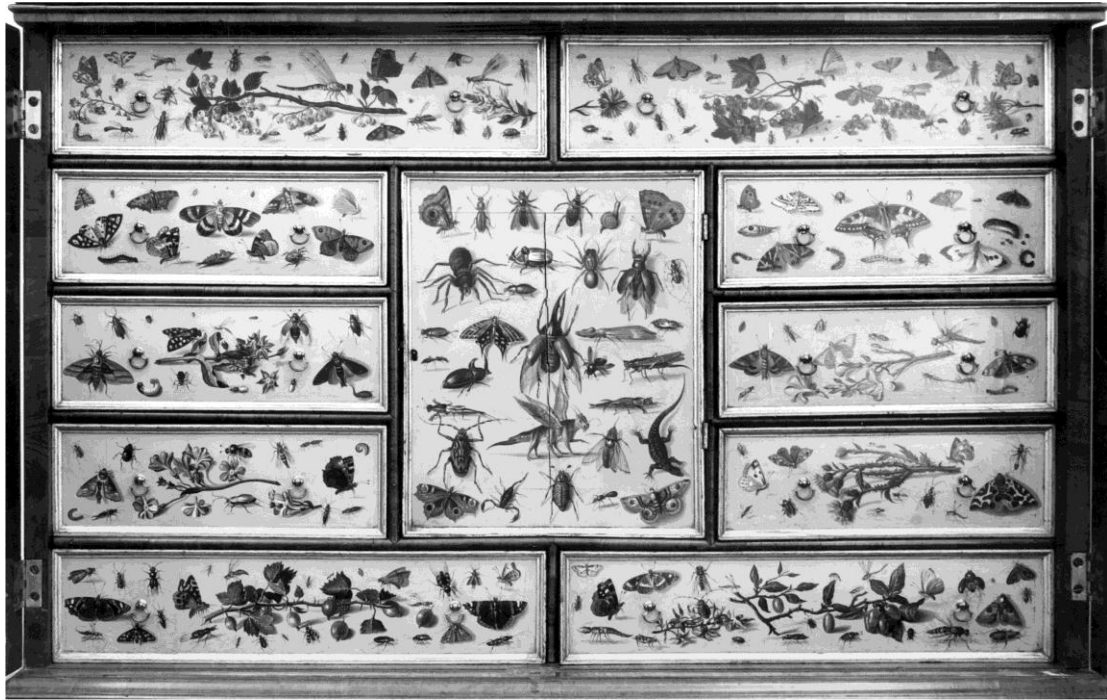


Fig. 5.18. Anonymous, *Cabinet*, 1690-1700. Interior detail of fig. 5.16.



Fig. 5.19. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, *Queen Maria, Abducted from Catania, Embarking on a Trireme*, 1663.

Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.

Private Collection.





Fig. 5.20. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, *Moncada Named Barón de Cervelló*, 1663.

Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.

Private Collection.



Fig. 5.21. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, *King Martin Entrusts Moncada with Regency of the Kingdom*, 1663.  
Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.



Fig. 5.22. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp, *Moncada Receives the Insignia associated with the office of Keeper of the Great Seals of the Kingdom of Sicily*, 1663.  
Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.



Fig. 5.23. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Luigi Gentile, *Moncada in Discussion with the King*, 1663.  
Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.





Fig. 5.24. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Queen Bianca of Sicily grants Don Antonio Moncada power to convene the States General*, 1663.  
Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.



Fig. 5.25. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Don Antonio Moncada offering to protect the kingdom of Queen Bianca of Sicily against the rebels*, 1663-1664.

Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.

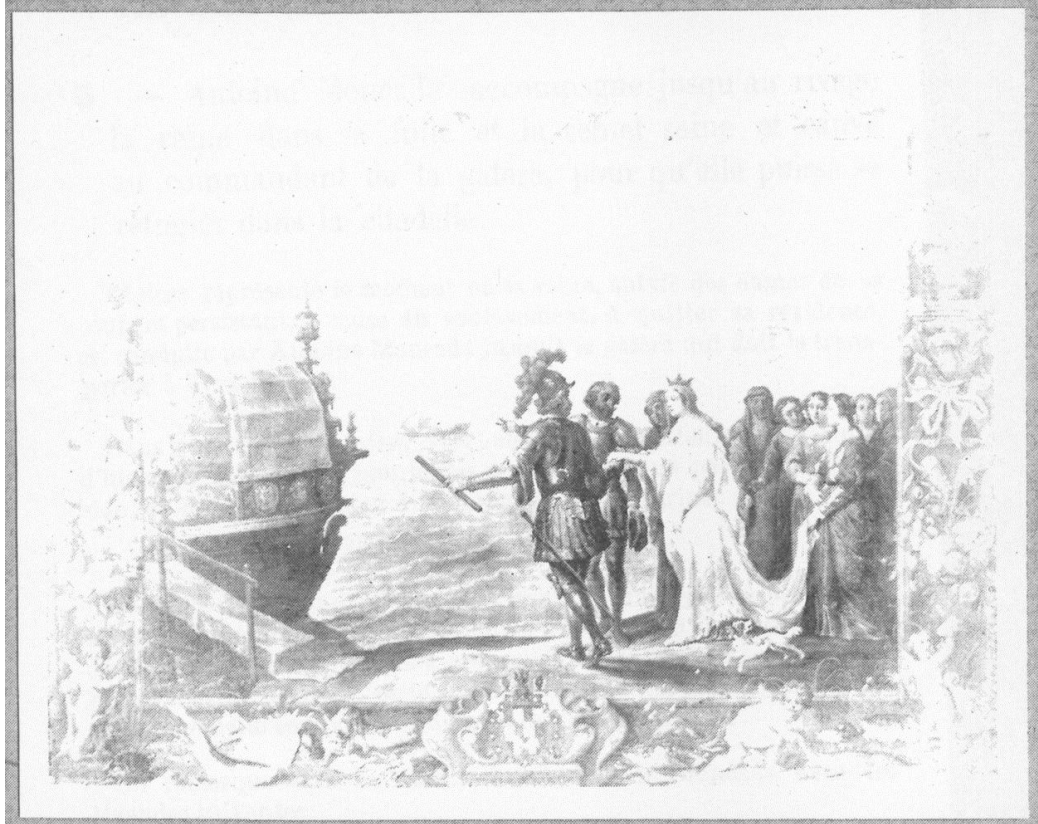


Fig. 5.26. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada escorting the Queen to the galley that will take her to Syracuse*, 1663-1664.

Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.

Private Collection.

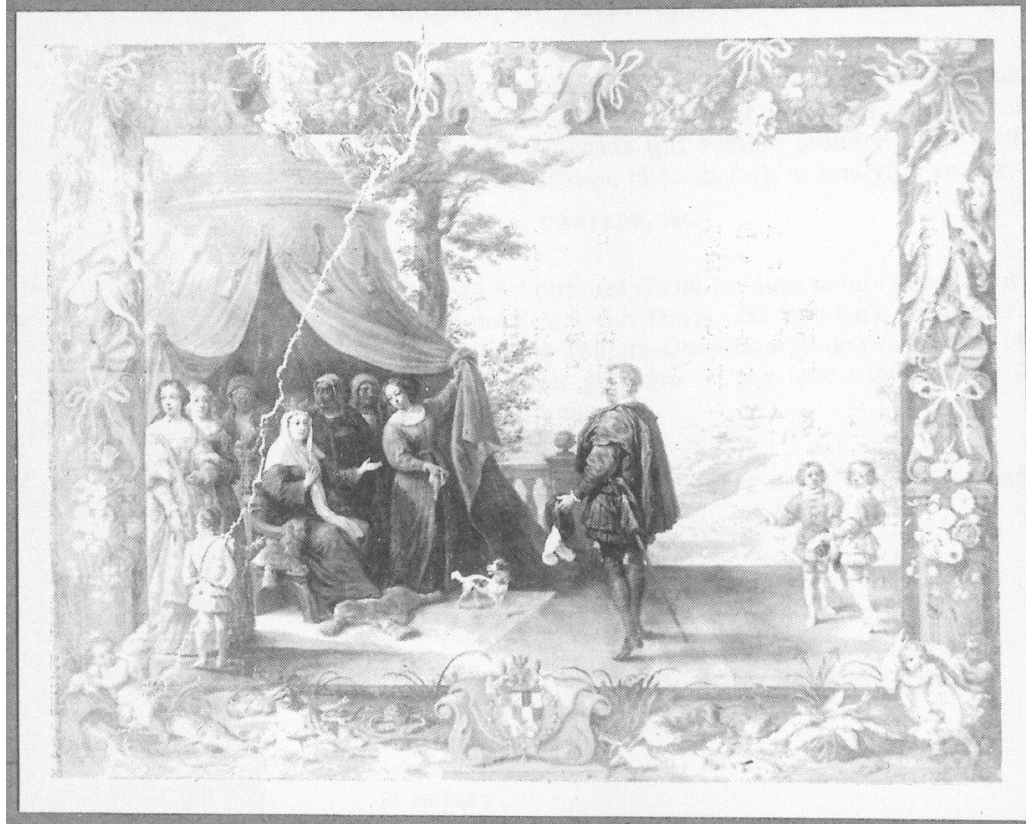


Fig. 5.27. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada before the Queen, receiving compensation for his royal services*, 1663-1664.  
Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.





Fig. 5.28. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *The submission of the Sicilian rebels to Antonio Moncada in 1411, 1663*.

Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.

Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.



Fig. 5.29. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *The presentation of the Captain General's Baton to Antonio Moncada*, 1664.

Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.

Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza.

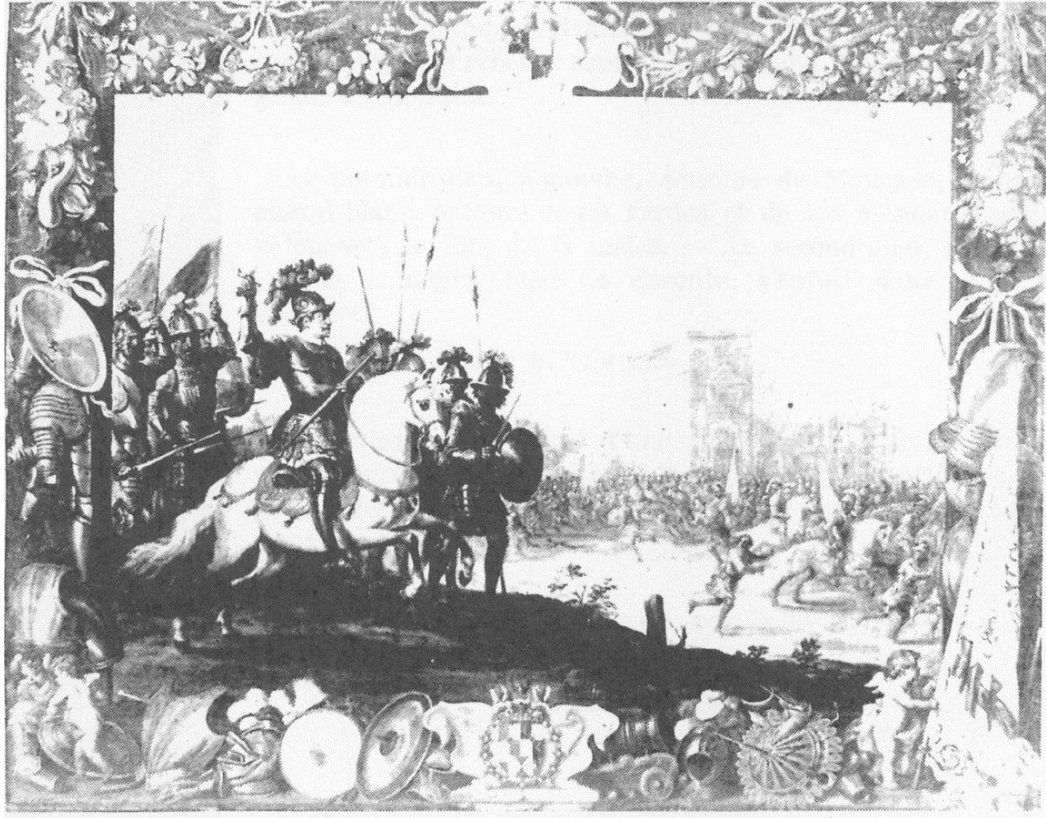


Fig. 5.30. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada arriving with troops at the citadel, Cabrera marching on the palace to surprise the Queen*, 1664.

Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.





Fig. 5.31. Jan van Kessel the Elder and David Teniers the Younger, *Antonio Moncada chasing the rebels, who attacked Queen Bianca of Sicily in her palace*, 1664.  
Oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.



Fig. 5.32. Jan van Kessel the Elder and Willem van Herp (designers), woven in the workshop of Albert Auwercx, *King Martin entrusts Moncada with regency of the kingdom* from *History of the House of Moncada*, c. 1699.

Wool and silk, 406 x 680 cm.

Paris, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A:

Cornelis de Bie, *Het gulden cabinet*, 1661-62, pp. 409-410

IOANNES VAN KESSEL

*Schilder van Antwerpen, oudt 35. Jaeren.*

Wist Breugel soo bisaert, en gheestich af te meten  
Natuers volmaeckte deught, door onghemeyn secreten,  
Daer menich cloeck vernuft op slaet sijn oogh-ghemerck  
Om al de edelheyt en suyverheyt van t'werck,  
Die uyt de Schilder-const door hem is voorts ghecomen  
Besonder in de cleyn figuren, fruyt, en bloemen:  
Van Kessel volght hem naer soo suyver, net en eel  
Soo scherp, en los in't cleyn door t'toetsen van Pinseel,

Dat d'ooghen verder niet haer crachten connen draghen  
Als t'gen sy in dit werck aenschouwen met behaghen.  
Waer van de Konst en gheest behouden d'overhandt  
En wijsen uyt de kracht van Kessels groot verstandt

Den weerschijn van sijn verf can opentlijck bethoonen  
Wat wetenschappen dat in desen Meester woonen  
Soo jemandt het ghesicht maer op sijn belden staet  
Waer in den blommen aert van hem gheschildert staet,

Die t'leven en Natuer soo weten uyt te drucken  
(Ten waer dat Const bedrieght) men sou hun willen plucken,  
Soo gheestich, soet en mals staet elcke bloem by bloem  
Coleurich uyt ghevoert en draeght van Kessels roem.

Het costlijck ghenoegh dat daer in wordt ghevonden  
Heeft aen my soo veel stof en reden toe ghefonden,  
Dat ick my niet bequaem en ken, om d'edelheyt  
Te schrijven van t'Pinseel, die Faem ghenoch verbreyt.  
Kipt alle Konsten uyt die van Pictuer oyt quamen  
De snelheyt in het cleyn sou t'leven schier beschamen  
Die ons van Kessel weet te brenghen voor den dach  
Soo eel als jemandt oyt in Konst-schildrijen fach.

In beesten sonderlingh als onghepluynde dieren  
Ghevoghelt cleyn en groot die by de wolcken swieren  
Geschelpte zee-ghedroch dat onder t'water glijdt  
En t'voetloos ghecruyp dat t'drooghe sandt door snijdt

Wanschappen Schepsels en verscheyden vremde dinghen  
Weet ons van Kessel al het leven voorts te bringhen,  
Daer niet (hoe cleyn dat is) in't minsten in en blijktt  
Oft door sijn Konst alleen aen't leven heel ghelijckt.



IOANNES VAN KESSEL

*Painter from Antwerp, 35 years old.*

Brueghel knew, so bizarre and wittily, to measure  
Nature's perfection, through extraordinary secrets,  
On which many a bold wit has set his sights  
To achieve all the preciousness and flawlessness of the work,  
That is brought forth in his painting  
Especially in the small figures, fruit, and flowers:  
Van Kessel follows him so precisely, meticulously and preciously  
So sharply, yet loosely in miniature through the touches of his brush,

That the eyes can take their power no further  
Than that which they behold in this work with pleasure.  
Where Art and mind prevail  
And demonstrate the power of Kessel's great intellect

The luminosity of his paint can reveal  
What knowledge resides in this Master  
So that someone need only cast his gaze upon his pictures  
Wherein the flowers painted by him,

Pictures that are so able to express life and Nature  
(unless Art deceives) that one should want to pluck them,  
So witty, sweet and tender stands each flower by the others  
Colorfully rendered and bearing van Kessel's fame.

The delightful abundance that is to be found therein  
Has given me so much material and reason to discover,  
That I confess I am unable to describe the artfulness  
of the Brush, which fame enough has spread.  
Exceeding all the arts that ever came forth from Pictura  
The quickness in miniature that our Van Kessel knows how to achieve  
would put life itself to shame  
So precious as anyone has ever done in artful paintings.

In exotic beasts as [in] featherless animals  
Winged creatures small and large that swirl among the clouds  
Shell-encrusted sea creatures that glide under the water  
And footless creatures that criss-cross the dry land

Our van Kessel knows how to bring forth  
Monstrous creatures and diverse strange things as if from life  
In [works] where nothing at all (however small) appears  
Except through his art alone to resemble life completely.

## APPENDIX B:

Jacob Campo Weyerman, *De levens-beschryvingen*, vol. 2, 1729, pp. 208-210

### JAN van KESSEL

Is geboren tot Antwerpen, in den jaare duyzent ses hondert ses en twintig. Die *Jan* is een groot Meester geweest in de manier van den *Fluuweelen Breugel*, dat is, in allerhande kleyne Dieren Vogels, Slangen, Hagedissen, Kruyden, Bloemen, en diergelyken, zo fix getê- kent, zo braaf gekoloreert, en zo meesterlijk getoetst, dat ze in veele deelen niet minder geacht worden by de doordringende Konstkenners, als de alom beruchte Tafereelen van dien voornoemden *Fluuweelen Konstschilder*. Hy heeft veele stukken geschildert voor den Koning van Spanje, voor de Gouverneurs der Spaansche Nederlanden, en voor andere groote Persoonaagien, en vermoogende Koopluyden. Het heugt ons dat we eenige jaaren gelêden op het Kasteel van Hinderschelf, tien Engelsche mijlen boven York, behoorende aan den Grave van Carlile, drie kapitaale Konststukken zagen van dien konstrijken *Jan van Kessel*, die uyt de beruchte verovering van Vigos overgebrogt en gekocht waaren by dat Lordschap. Die drie Konststukken, beslaande ontrent ses voeten in de lengte en vyf in de hoogte, waaren beschildert met Marias Melkdistels, met Heulbladen en Bloemen, drie koleurige Amaranthus, gemeene Distels, en met veelerley soorten van wilde Kruyden, en door de Natuur gezaayde Gewassen, gestoffeert met Vlindertjes, Ruspen, Sprinkhaanen, Spinnekoppen, en meer andere kruypende Diertjes, alles zo heerlijk en zo uytvoeriglijk geschildert, dat er de Konsttafereelen van *Jan David de Heem* niet veel voordeel op zouden hebben bevochten, by aldien men die nauwkeuriglijk by die overschoone Schilderyen had komen te vergelijken.

Hy was al ommers zo een algemeen Schilder als den *Fluuweelen Breugel*, en wy hebben de vier Elementen gezien by hem geschildert, en zo konstiglijk geschildert, dat meer als een Konstkenner die zou hebben gegroet voor *Breugels* konstpenseel; en indien ze al niet by die konstrijke hand waaren gepenseelt, ten minsten konden zy er benevens worden opgehangen in de keurlijkste Konstkabinetten. Het is onbeschrijflijk hoe heerlijk de viervoetige Dieren waaren getêkent en geschildert, hoe dun en doorschijnt hy de Visschen en de Zeeschelpen had behandelt, en hoe losjes dat de Vogels en de Vlindertjes waaren aangetoetst by het konstrijkpenseel van dien verdienstigen Konstschilder *Jan van Kessel*: ja de Harnassen, de Vaandels, de Keteltrommen, en de Standaarden, met een woord, alle die halsbreekende Krygswerktuygen, dewelke hy tot Brussel in het Arsenaal na het leeven had gekonterfyt, behoefden de wezendlijke Wapens niet te wijken in de schijnbaare Waarheyd. Doorgaans gebruykte hy het leeven, en als het Saisoen hem dat weygerde, dan bediende hy zich van die Modellen die hy zelfs naar het leeven getêkent, gemodelt, en voor het grootste gedeelte uytvoeriglijk had opgeschildert. Zijn Zoon *Ferdinand van Kessel*, die overlêden is tot Breda, had een geheel vertrek behangen met die Modellen, van dewelke hy zich ook meesterlijk wist te bedienen, en dat zo maklijk, dat hy maar op iets behoefde te denken, om dat aanstonds te kunnen hebben, natuurlijk gekonterfyt naar het leeven.

## JAN van KESSEL

Was born in Antwerp, in the year [one] thousand sixteen hundred twenty six. This *Jan* was a great Master in the manner of Velvet Breugel, that is to say, in all kinds of small Animals Birds, Snakes, Lizards, Herbs, Flowers, and such things, so truthfully portrayed, so faithfully colored, and so masterfully studied, that they in many cases are no less esteemed by the sharpest Connoisseurs, than those widely acclaimed Pictures of the aforementioned *Velvet Painter*. He has painted many works for the King of Spain, for the Governors of the Spanish Netherlands, and for other great Personages, and prosperous Merchants. We remember that some years ago at the Castle Hinderschelf, ten English miles above York, belonging to the General of Carlile, we saw three great pictures by the artful *Jan van Kessel*, that were from the notorious capture of Vigo transferred and bought by that Lordship. The three Pictures, measuring approximately six feet in length and five in height, were painted with Marias Milkthistles, with Poppies and Flowers, three-colored Amaranthus, common Thistles, and with many sorts of wild herbs, and plants sown by Nature, adorned with Butterflies, Caterpillars, Grasshoppers, Spiders and many other creeping little Animals, all so delightfully and so exceptionally painted, that the Pictures by *Jan David de Heem* would not have stood much of a chance, if one had come to compare the precision of these extraordinarily beautiful Pictures.

He was as universal a painter as *Velvet Breugel*, and we have seen the four Elements painted by him, and so skillfully painted, that more than one Connoisseur would have mistaken it for *Breugels* paintbrush; and if they had not been painted by that artful hand, at least they could have been hung beside [them] in the choicest art cabinets. It is indescribable how delightfully the four-footed Animals were drawn and painted, how thin and translucently he rendered the Fish and the Seashells, and how loosely that the Birds and the Butterflies were portrayed by the artful brush of this meritorious Painter *Jan van Kessel*: yes the Armor, the Flags, the Kettledrums, and the Standards, with one word, all the Military equipment, which he copied after life in the Arsenal in Brussels, required the essential Weapons not to yield in their appearance of truth. Continuously he worked from life, and when the Season prevented him from doing so, then he used Models that he himself had drawn, modelled and for the most part had painted exhaustively. His Son *Ferdinand van Kessel*, who died in Breda, had an entire room covered with these Models, which he also used masterfully, and with such ease, that he only had to think of something, to directly be able to have it, of course copied naturally from life.

**APPENDIX C:**  
**WORKING CATALOGUE OF WORKS BY JAN VAN KESSEL THE ELDER**

## FLOWER BOUQUETS



Cat. 1. Jan van Kessel I, *Vase of flowers*, 1650s, oil on panel, 29.8 x 21 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. PD.79-1973.



Cat. 2. Jan van Kessel I, *Vase of flowers*, 1650s, oil on copper, 27.3 x 34.2 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. PD.32-1975.



Cat. 3. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers in a porcelain vase*, 1652, oil on copper, 75.6 x 57.5 cm. Washington D.C., Collection of Mrs. H. John Heinz III.  
Signed and dated: *JvKessel fecit Ao 1652*.

Literature: Cavestany 1940, 80, cat. 135, no. 34; Bergström 1989, 112-114, Sutton 1993, 512.



Cat. 4. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers in a glass vase*, 1652, oil on copper, 75.6 x 57.5 cm. Washington D.C., Collection of Mrs. H. John Heinz III. Signed and dated: *JvKessel fecit*.

Literature: Cavestany 1940, 80, cat. 135, no. 34; Bergström 1989, 112-114, Sutton 1993, 512.





Cat. 5. Jan van Kessel I, *Roses, Tulips, Narcissi, Peonies, and a Sprig of Cherries in a Roemer on a stone Pedestal*, 1652, oil on copper, 77.5 x 59 cm. London, Phillips, December 14, 1999, lot 78. Signed.

Literature: Cavestany 1940, 80, cat. 135, no. 34; Bergström 1989, 112-114, Sutton 1993, 512.



Cat. 6. Jan van Kessel I, *Iris, Peonies, narcissi, and a tulip, in a porcelain vase with ormolu mounts on a pedestal, date, 1652, oil on copper, 77 x 59 cm.* London, Sotheby's, December 5, 2007, lot 24. Signed and dated: *J. V. Kessel fecit. Ao 1652.*

Literature: Cavestany 1940, 80, cat. 135, no. 34; Bergström 1989, 112-114, Sutton 1993, 512.



Cat. 7. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers in a glass vase, with a caterpillar and beetle on a ledge*, 1652, oil on copper, 77.5 x 60 cm. New York, Christie's, May 31, 1991, lot 86. Signed and dated: *J.V. Kessel fecit/anno 1652*.

Literature: Cavestany 1940, 80, cat. 135, no. 34; Bergström 1989, 112-114, Sutton 1993, 512.



Cat. 8. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers in a Chinese blue & white jardiniere with moths and insects on a ledge*, 1652, oil on copper, 77.5 x 60 cm. New York, Christie's, May 31, 1991, lot 87.

Literature: Cavestany 1940, 80, cat. 135, no. 34; Bergström 1989, 112-114, Sutton 1993, 512.



Cat. 9. Jan van Kessel I, *Roses, tulips, and an iris, in a glass vase on a stone plinth, with butterflies and insects, and an Ecce Homo on the reverse*, 1650-55, oil on copper, 29.2 x 24.1 cm. London, Christie's, July 8, 2008, lot 35.

Signed: *J. v kessel f.*



Cat. 10. Jan van Kessel I, *Glass vase of flowers on a white ground*, 1650s, oil on panel, 24 x 17.3 cm. London, Galerie Leger, 1989. Signed: *I.V. Kessel. Fecit.*

Literature: Hairs 1985, 296, 298; Greindl 1989, 179.



Cat. 11. Jan van Kessel I, *Roses, carnations, morning-glory, ants in a gold sculpted urn, with caterpillar and butterflies*, 1650s, oil on copper, 24.1 x 17.8 cm. London, Christie's, December 8, 2006, lot 106. Signed: *I.V. Kessel. Fecit.*





Cat. 12. Jan van Kessel I, *Glass vase of flowers, including tulips, on a dark ground*, 1650s, oil on ?, 24.2 x 16.8 cm, Galerie Leger, 1985. Signed: *I.V. Kessel....?*

Literature: Hairs 1985, 294-96.





Cat. 13. Jan van Kessel I, *Roses, Tulip, and other flowers in a glass vase*, 1650s, oil on panel, 23 x 16 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 8, 1992, lot 12. Signed.



Cat. 14. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers in a vase with butterflies, a moth, dragonfly and a caterpillar on a ledge*, 1650s, oil on panel, 23.8 x 19.7 cm.  
London, Christie's, July 4, 1997, lot 52. Signed.



Cat. 15. Jan van Kessel I, *Bouquet of flowers in a glass vase*, 1650s, oil on copper, 34 x 26 cm, Mainz, Landesmuseum.



Cat. 16. Jan van Kessel I, *Roses, orange blossom, jasmine in a glass vase with a caterpillar, dragonfly and butterflies*, 1661, oil on copper, 40 x 31 cm. London, Phillips, December 10, 1996, lot 65. Signed and dated.



Cat. 17. Jan van Kessel I, *Roses, tulips, narcissi, peonies, a white poppy, etc. surrounded by insects on stone ledge*, c.1661, oil on copper, 40 x 29.5 cm.  
London, Phillips, July, 4, 2000, lot 41.



Cat. 18. Jan van Kessel I, *Tulips, roses, hyacinths, cornflowers, in a glass vase with butterflies and a beetle on a ledge*, c.1660, oil on panel, 38.2 x 30.2 cm. Amsterdam, Christie's, November, 18, 1993, lot 132. Signed.



Cat. 19. Jan van Kessel I, *Vase of flowers*, c.1660, oil on panel, 32 x 22 cm.  
Tournai, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Signed: *JVKessel*.





Cat. 20. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers in a roemer with butterflies, a dragonfly and a beetle on a ledge*, 1660s, oil on panel (with additions on each side), 52.4 x 34.6 cm. London, Christie's, December 10, 2003, lot 12. Signed at lower right: *J.V. kessel*

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 327, no. 274.



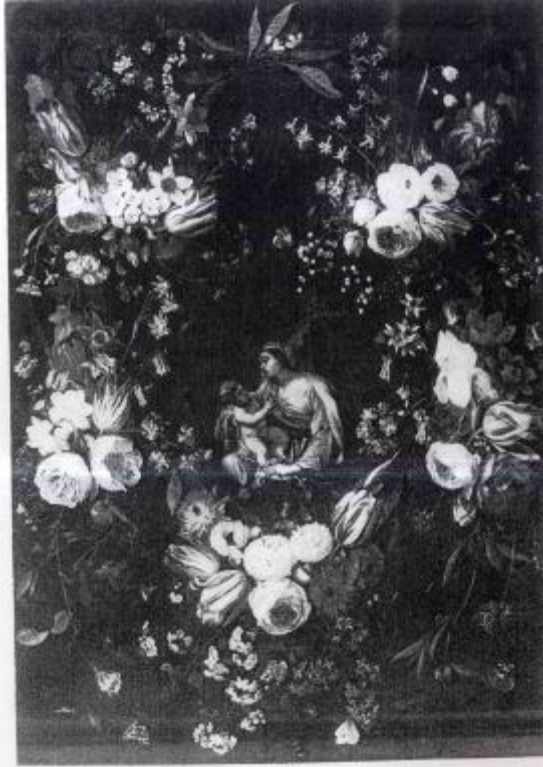


Cat. 21. Jan van Kessel I, *Roses in a glass vase with insects, butterflies, a bee, a dragonfly, and 2 bluetits*, 1669, oil on panel, 22.5 x 17.2 cm, London, Sotheby's, December 3, 2008, lot 22. Signed and dated lower right:  
*I.V. Kessel fecit, Ao, 1669.*

## FLOWER GARLANDS



Cat. 22. Jan van Kessel I, *Garland of irises, parrot tulips, roses, surrounding a stone niche inset with a Vanitas scene*, 1649, oil on canvas, 107 x 84.2 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 5, 2007, lot 134. Signed and dated:  
*j.v. kessel. fecit anno 1649*



Cat. 23. Jan van Kessel I, Floral garland with Mary and the Christ Child, 1654, oil on canvas, 119.5 x 84 cm. The Netherlands, Private Collection.

Signed and dated at lower right: *J.v.kessel fecit A° 1654*

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 324, no. 269.



Cat. 24. Jan van Kessel I, *Garland of roses, carnations, tulips, orange blossoms, narcissus, morning glory, and butterflies*, 1659, oil on canvas, 87 x 67 cm. New York, Christie's, January 10, 1990, lot 90. Signed and dated.



Cat. 25. Jan van Kessel I, *Cartouche with putti playing with a dog and adorned with swags of flowers*, 1650s, oil on canvas, 81 x 60 cm. London, Sotheby's, April 5, 1995, lot 85.



Cat. 26. Jan van Kessel I, *Flower garland surrounding Mary, Jesus, and John the Baptist*, 1650s, oil on canvas, 84 x 68 cm. Zurich, Galerie Koller, September 24, 2003, lot 3031. Signed.



Cat. 27. Jan van Kesse I, *Stone cartouche with flowers and butterflies, surrounding the Virgin and Child with infant Saint John the Baptist*, 1650s, oil on copper, 56.5 x 45.2 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 10, 2003, lot 123.





Cat. 28. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers and insects with a stone cartouche containing the Virgin and Child and the infant Saint John the Baptist*, 1650s, oil on copper, 85 x 68.2 cm. London, Sotheby's, December 17, 1998, lot 6.  
Signed.





Cat. 29. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers decorating a feigned cartouche with an image of the Annunciation*, 1650s, oil on copper, 52.7 x 40.3 cm. London, Christie's, December 10, 1993, lot 278. Signed.



Cat. 30. Jan van Kessel I, *Garland of tulips, roses, morning glory, iris, and clematis surrounding a sculpted stone cartouche with butterflies and insects*, 1650s, oil on panel, 64.4 x 48.3 cm. London, Christie's, July 7, 2006, lot 162. Signed lower left: *J.V. Kessel fecit*



Cat. 31. Jan van Kessel I, *Holy Family in a Garland*, 1650s, oil on panel, 64 x 50 cm. Amsterdam, Museum Amstelkring.



Cat. 32. Jan van Kessel I, *Holy Family in a Garland*, 1650s, oil on canvas,  
68.5 x 83 cm. Liège, Musée de l'Art Wallon.

Literature: Hairs 1985, 287, 291; Greindl 1989, 178.



Cat. 33. Jan van Kessel I, *Garland of flowers with a cartouche of the Holy Family*, 1650s, oil on canvas, 91 x 75 cm. Brussels, S.A. Servarts N.V., April 27, 1994, lot 689. 91 x 75 cm.





Cat. 34. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers decorating a stone relief of the Virgin and Child*, 1650s, oil on copper, 89.4 x 63.2 cm. Muncie, Indiana, Ball State Museum of Art.



Cat. 35. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers and insects surrounding a stone cartouche with the Madonna and Child*, 1650s, oil on panel, 120 x 91 cm.  
Aachen, Suermond-Ludwig Museum.



Cat. 36. Jan van Kessel I, *Mary and Child in a garland*, 1650s, oil on panel, 53.3 x 38.4 cm. New York, Sotheby's, May 22, 1992, lot 15. Signed.





Cat. 37. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *Temptation of St. Anthony in a garland*, 1650s, oil on panel, 39.5 x 52.5 cm. Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België.

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 327, no. 273; Hairs 1985, 288, 291.



Cat. 38. Jan van Kessel I, *Madonna and Child with St Idelphonsus in a Garland of Flowers*, 1650s, oil on canvas, 138 x 110 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage.

Literature: Gritsay 2008, 167, no. 223.



Cat. 39. Jan van Kessel I, *Swags of tulips and other flowers on a stone cartouche with insects and the Christ Child as Salvator Mundi*, 1650s, oil on panel, 40 x 28 cm. London, Christie's, December 8, 1995, lot 40. Signed.



Cat. 40. Jan van Kessel I, *Garland of flowers around a woman's portrait*, 1650s, oil on panel, 40 x 28 cm. Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Burgh.



Cat. 41. Jan van Kessel I, *The Eucharist: a gold chalice, host, 2 silver candelabras in a stone niche surrounded with grapes, corn, etc.*, 1660s, oil on panel, 37 x 27.3 cm. Amsterdam, Sotheby's, May 9, 2009, lot 26.



Cat. 42. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers and grapes encircling a reliquary containing the host, set within a stone niche*, 1660s, oil on copper, 75 x 105.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, April 18, 2000, lot 41. Signed.



Cat. 43. Attributed to Jan van Kessel I, *A garland of flowers and fruit surrounding a sculpted niche with a chalice and a host*, 1660s, oil on panel, 32 x 26.4 cm. Amsterdam, Christie's, May 17, 2004, lot 67. Inscribed?





Cat. 44. Jan van Kessel I, *A swag of roses, tulips, an anemone and other flowers with a butterfly on a feigned stone niche*, c.1660, oil on panel, 30.5 x 24.4 cm. London, Christie's, December 7, 2007, lot 142.





Cat. 45. Jan van Kessel I, *Garland of flowers with the Saint-Sacrament*, late 1660s, possibly 1669?, oil on canvas, 61 x 49 cm. London, Gallery Mitchell and son, 1989.

Literature: Hairs 1985, 293-94; Greindl 1989, 180.



Cat. 46. Jan van Kessel I, *Christ and St. John in a garland*, 1660s, oil on copper, 101 x 80 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado. Signed lower center:

*I.v.Kessel*

Literature: Díaz Padrón 1975, 169, no. 1552; Laureyssens 1980, 325, no. 270.



Cat. 47. Jan van Kessel I, *Decorative Still-Life Composition with a Garland of Flowers*, late 1660s, oil on copper, 14 x 20 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A570. Part of a set with cat. nos. 48, 49, and 250.

Literature: Hairs 1955, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Hairs 1965, 394; Hairs 1985, vol. 2, 36; Meijer 2003, 232-35.



Cat. 48. Jan van Kessel I, *Fruit bowl and insects on a ledge*, late 1660s, oil on copper, 14 x 20 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A572. Part of a set with cat. nos. 47, 49, and 250.

Literature: Meijer 2003, 232-35.



Cat. 49. Jan van Kessel I, *Fruit basket*, late 1660s, oil on copper, 14 x 20 cm, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A569. Part of a set with cat. nos. 47, 48, and 250.

Literature: Hairs 1955, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Hairs 1965, 394; Hairs 1985, vol. 2, 36; Meijer 2003, 232-35.



## INSECTS



Cat. 50. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects*, early 1650s, oil on copper, 8.9 x 12.7 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 506.



Cat. 51. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects*, early 1650s, oil on copper, 8.5 x 12.6 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 508.



Cat. 52. Jan van Kessel I, *Cockchafer, beetle, woodlice, and other insects, with a sprig of auricula*, early 1650s, oil on copper, 8.3 x 12.1 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A564.

Literature: Hairs 1955, 113, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Hairs 1965, 217, 394; Meijer 2003, 228.





Cat. 53. Jan van Kessel I, *Spiders & caterpillars with a sprig of gooseberry*, early 1650s, oil on copper, 9 x 14 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A565.

Literature: Hairs 1955, 113, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Hairs 1965, 217, 394; Meijer 2003, 228.



Cat. 54. Jan van Kessel I, *Three butterflies, a beetle, and other insects, with a cutting of ragwort*, early 1650s, oil on copper, 9 x 14 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A566.

Literature: Hairs 1955, 113, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Hairs 1965, 217, 394; Meijer 2003, 228.



Cat. 55. Jan van Kessel I, *Dragon-fly, two moths, a spider, and some beetles, with wild strawberries*, early 1650s, oil on copper, 9 x 13 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A567.

Literature: Hairs 1955, 113, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Hairs 1965, 217, 394; Meijer 2003, 228.



Cat. 56. Jan van Kessel I, *Transformation of a silkworm*, c.1660, oil on copper, 9.5 x 14.9 cm. Essen, Museum Folkwang. Signed on the verso in a different hand: *Brügel*, also with remnants of a seal.

Literature: Seipel 2002, 96-97, no. 28.





Cat. 57. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, moths, grasshopper, with a sprig of blue flowers*, 1653, oil on panel, 11.4 x 14 cm. Private Collection. Signed and dated lower right: *J. v. Kessel. Fecit Ao 1653.*

Literature: Greindl 1989, 125; Seipel 2002, 94-95, no. 27.



Cat. 58. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, moths, blue dragonfly, yellow and red gooseberries & currants*, 1653, oil on panel, 11.4 x 14 cm. Private Collection. Signed and dated lower right: *J. v. Kessel. Fecit Ao 1653.*

Literature: Greindl 1989, 126; Seipel 2002, 94-95, no. 27.



Cat. 59. Jan van Kessel I, *Dragonfly, butterfly, shells, purple flowers*, 1653?, oil on panel, 11.7 x 14 cm. Washington D.C., Private Collection. Signed lower left: *J. van kessel*.

Literature: Russell 1989, 208-209; Segal 1990, 208-209, cat. 47; Seipel 2002, 94, no. 27a.



Cat. 60. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterfly, moths, bee, other insects and sprig of flowers pointing right*, 1653, oil on panel, 11.7 x 14 cm, Private Collection.  
Signed and dated lower left: *J. van kessel f. 1653.*

Literature: Russell 1989, 209.





Cat. 61. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, insects and flowers*, 1653, oil on panel, 11.5 x 14 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 3, 1997, lot 14. Signed and dated lower right: *J van kessel fecit 1653*.



Cat. 62. Jan van Kessel I, *A dragonfly, a ladybird, a moth, butterflies, insects and a flower*, 1653, oil on copper, 11.5 x 14 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 3, 1997, lot 12. Signed and dated.



Cat. 63. Jan van Kessel I, *A grasshopper, a dragonfly, caterpillars, insects and a forget-me-not*, 1653, oil on copper, 11.5 x 13.8 cm, London, Sotheby's, July 3, 1997, lot 13. Signed and dated lower left: *J v kessel fecit 1653*.

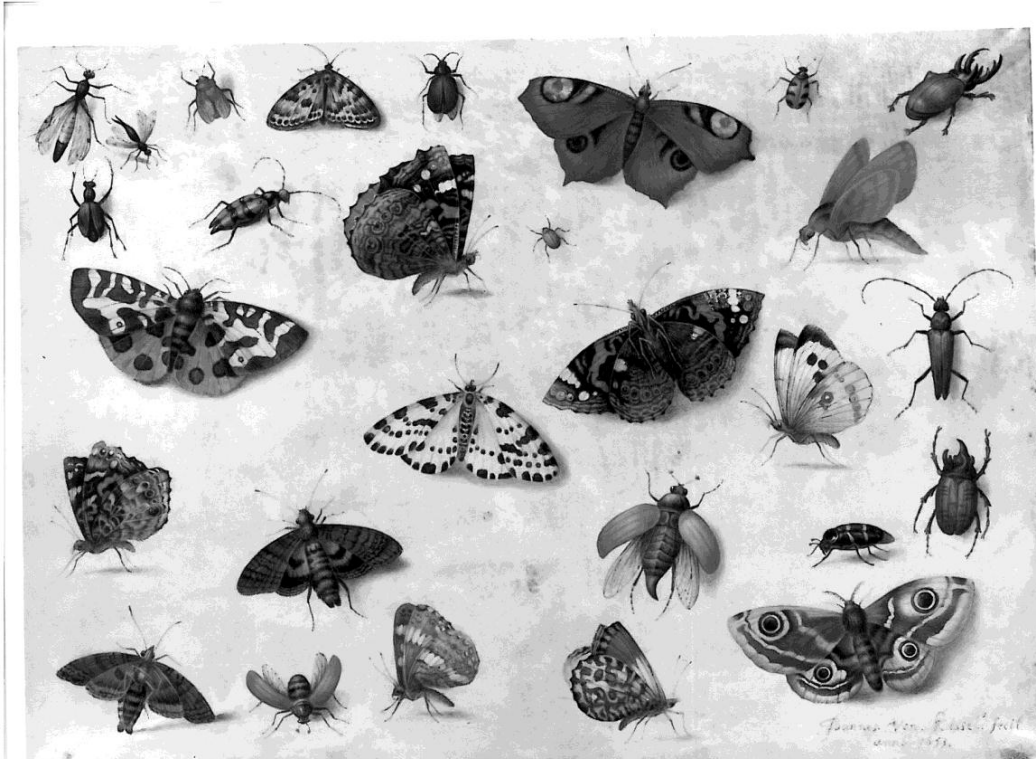


Cat. 64. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, moths, and insects, with sprays of thistle and borage*, 1654, oil on panel, 11.5 x 14.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 9, 2008, lot 14. Signed and dated lower left: *J.v.Kessel fecit Ao 1654*.





Cat. 65. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, moths, sprays of redcurrants and forget-me-nots*, 1654, oil on panel, 11.5 x 14.5 cm. Sotheby's, London, July 9, 2008, lot 14. Signed and dated lower left: *J.v.Kessel fecit Ao 1654*.



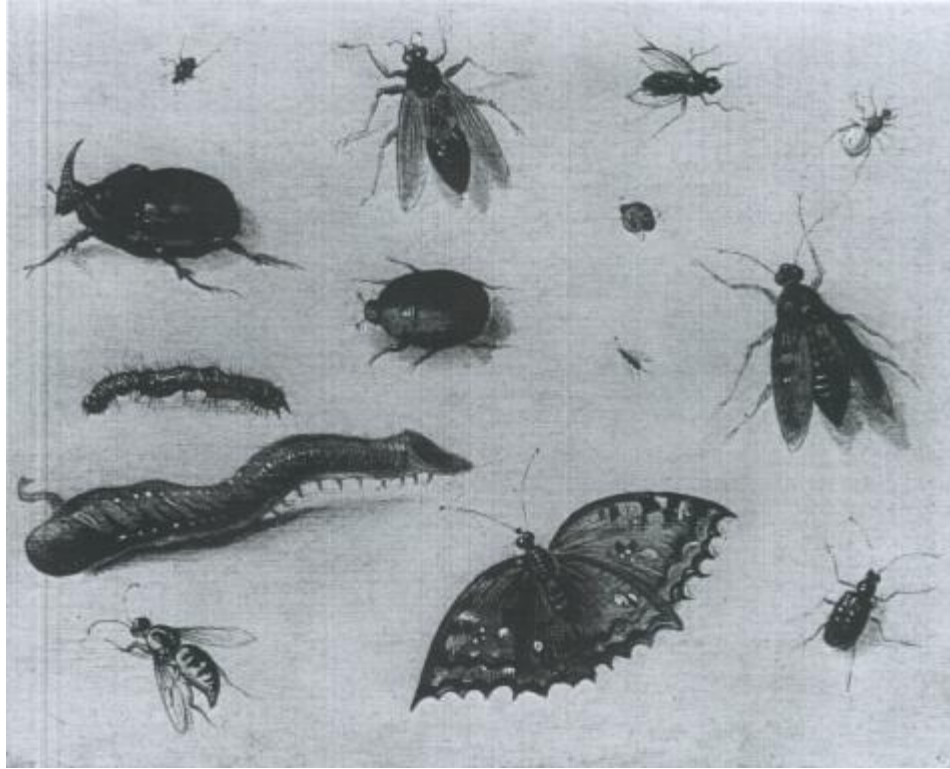
Cat. 66. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies and insects*, 1656, oil on panel, 26.5 x 37 cm. Private Collection. Signed and dated lower right: *Joannes van kessel fecit anno 1656.*

Literature: Meijer 2003, 231.



Cat. 67. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies and insects*, c.1656, oil on panel, 27.5 x 36.5 cm. Delft, Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof. Signed lower right: *J.v. Kessel fec.*

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 331, no. 281; Bergvelt and Kistemaker 1992, 50, cat. 70; Meijer 2003, 231.



Cat. 68. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects, butterfly, and other creatures*, 1650s, oil on panel, 13 x 16.5 cm. Paris, Collection Frits Lugt/Fondation Custodia.





Cat. 69. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, Insects, and a spray of gooseberries*, 1650s, oil on panel, 13.7 x 19.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, November 30, 1993, lot 5. Signed.



Cat. 70. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects (I) - Butterflies, Moths, other Insects*, 1650s, oil on copper, 16 x 12 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2011 (Johnny van Haeften).

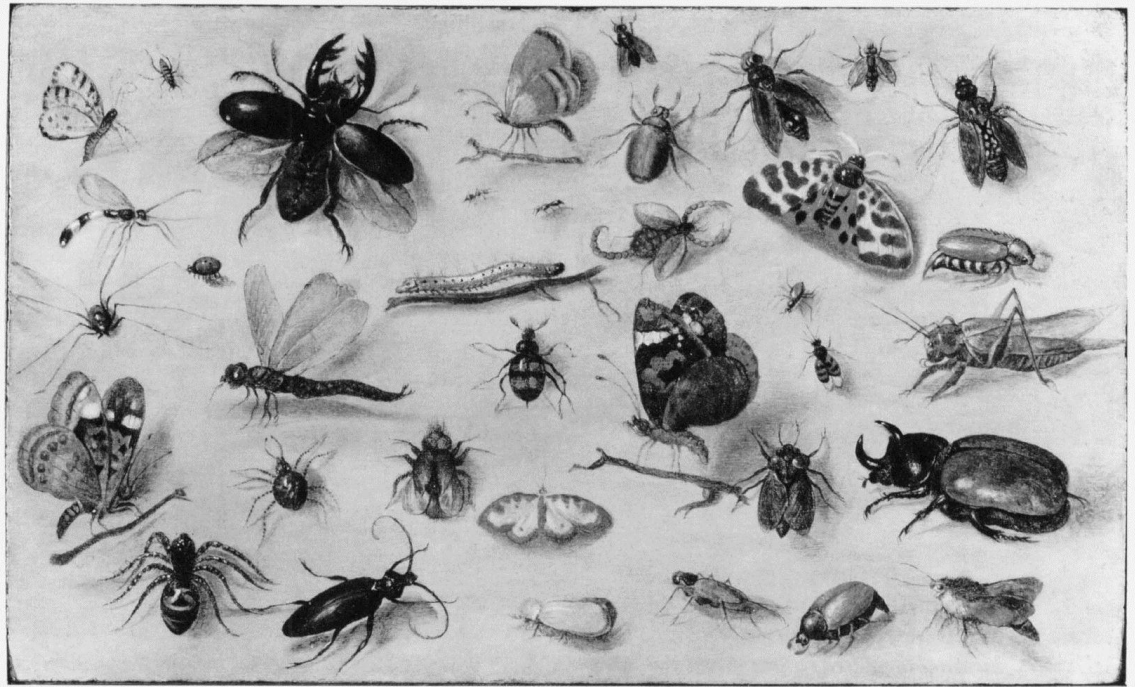


Cat. 71. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects (II) - Butterflies, Moths, other Insects*, 1650s, oil on copper, 16 x 12 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2011 (Johnny van Haeften).



Cat. 72. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, spiders, lizards, a beetle, an ant, a grasshopper and other insects*, 1650s, oil on copper, 38.5 x 55.5 cm. New York, Private Collection.

Literature: Seipel 2002, 67, 98, cat. 29c.



Cat. 73. Jan van Kessel I, *A Study of Butterflies, Moths, Spiders, and Insects*, 1650s-1660s, oil on panel, 18.3 x 30.5 cm. Houston, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation.

Literature: Kenseth 1991, 349-50.





Cat. 74. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects and reptiles*, 1657, oil on copper, 39.3 x 56.2 cm. Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum.

Literature: Seipel 2002, 98-99, cat. 29.



Cat. 75. Jan van Kessel I, *Snakes and caterpillars forming name of the artist*, 1657, oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2008 (Johnny van Haeften). Dated lower right: *Fecit anno 1657*.



Cat. 76. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, beetles, around a sprig of berries*, 1657, oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2008 (Johnny van Haeften). Dated: *Fecit anno 1657*.





Cat. 77. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects and peapods*, 1657?, oil on copper, 13.7 x 19.1 cm. San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum – Legion of Honor.



Cat. 78. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, insects, and thistle*, 1657?, oil on copper medium, 13.5 x 19.5 cm. Amsterdam, Sotheby's, May 6, 1997, lot 27.



Cat. 79. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, insects, yellow currants, red gooseberries*, 1657?, oil on copper, 13.5 x 19.5 cm. Amsterdam, Sotheby's, May 6, 1997, lot 27.



Cat. 80. Jan van Kessel I, *A sprig of flowers with butterflies, flies, beetles and a wasp*, 1657?, oil on copper, 14 x 19.4 cm. New York, Sotheby's, January 28, 2000, lot 115.





Cat. 81. Jan van Kessel I, *A sprig of gooseberries, a dragonfly, butterflies, beetles, spiders and a bee*, 1657?, oil on copper, 14 x 19.4 cm. New York, Sotheby's, January 28, 2000, lot 115.



Cat. 82. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects and reptiles*, 1658, oil on copper, 38.7 x 53 cm (central panel), 14 x 19 cm (peripheral panels). Upperville, Virginia, Oak Spring Garden Library, Collection of Rachel Mellon. Dated lower right in plate containing insect signature (not fully visible due to current framing).

Literature: *The Connoisseur* 1956 (April), 198-200; Ritterbush 1969, 573-75; Russell 1989, 209; Segal 1990, 209; Tomasi 1998, 104-106; Seipel 2002, 94, 98, 102, cat. 29b; Meijer and Van der Willigen 2003, 123-24; Meijer 2003, 229, fig. 41.1.; Wheelock 2005, 122.



Cat. 83. Jan van Kessel I, *A swallowtail, red admiral and other insects, harebell flowers and assorted shells*, 1659, oil on copper, 15.9 x 23.8 cm. London, Christie's, April 18, 1997, lot 93. Signed and dated upper left.



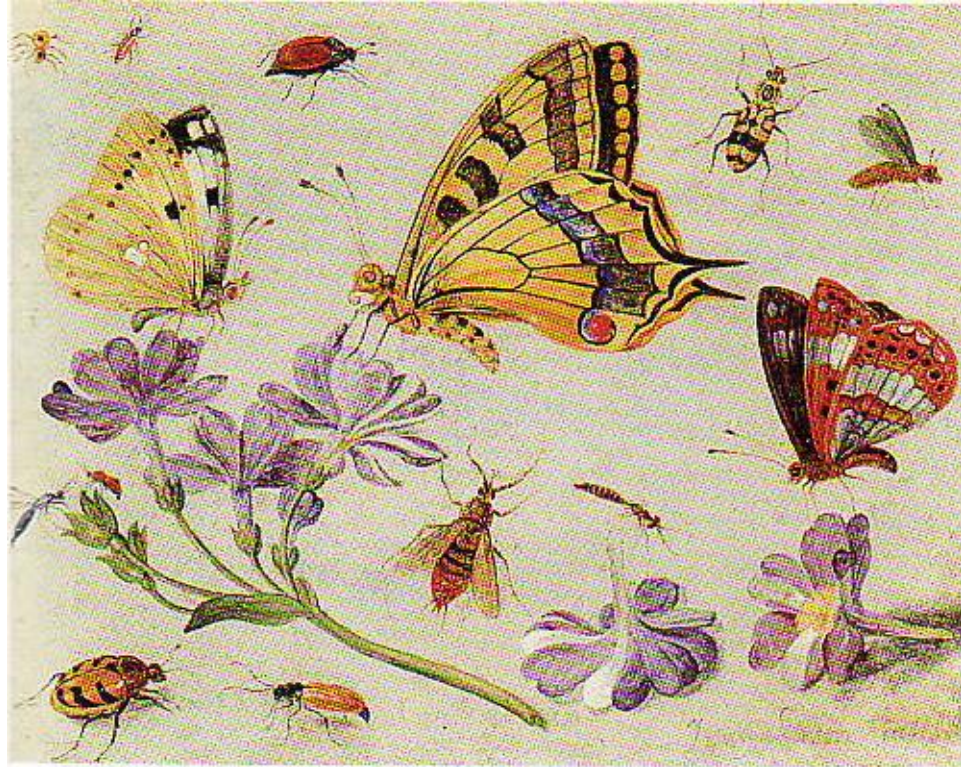
Cat. 84. Jan van Kessel I, *Swallowtail, Red Admiral, and other Insects with Shells and Sprig of Borage*, c.1659, oil on copper, 15.9 x 23.5 cm. New York, Sotheby's, January 29, 2009, lot 20.



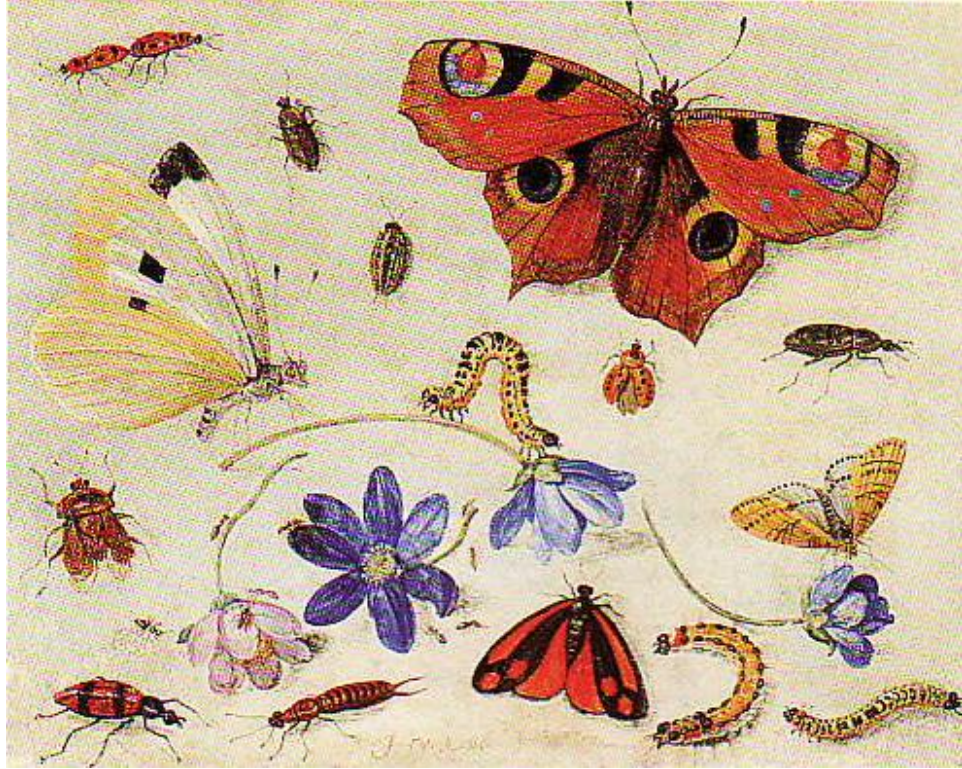


Cat. 85. Jan van Kessel I, *Still life with butterflies, shells and insects*, c.1659, oil on copper, 17.5 x 23 cm. Paris, Paris, Collection Frits Lugt/Fondation Custodia.

Literature: Bergvelt and Kistemaker 1992, 47, no. 67.



Cat. 86. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, other insects, and flowers*, 1659, oil on copper, 11.4 x 14.7 cm. Atlanta, High Museum. Signed and dated lower right: *J.v.Kessel fecit A 16(59)*.



Cat. 87. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, caterpillars, other insects, and flowers*, 1659, oil on copper, 11.4 x 14.7 cm, Atlanta, High Museum. Signed and dated lower center: *J.v.Kessel fecit A 16(59)*.





Cat. 88. Jan van Kessel I, *Study of butterfly and insects*, c.1655-60, oil on copper, 11 x 14.8 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.

Literature: Wheelock 2005, 120-22.



Cat. 89. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects and fruit*, c.1660-65, oil on copper, 11 x 15.5 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum. Signed lower left: *I. V. Kessel. F.*

Literature: Seipel 2002, 94, no. 27b.



Cat. 90. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects*, c.1660, oil on copper, 11.7 x 15.2 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 298.



Cat. 91. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects*, c.1660, oil on copper, 11.8 x 15.1 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 309.





Cat. 92. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects*, c.1660, oil on copper, 11.7 x 15.2 cm.  
Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 312.





Cat. 93. Jan van Kessel I, *Insecten V*, 1660, oil on copper, 17 x 23 cm.  
Strasbourg, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Signed lower center: *J. v. Kessel fecit  
anno 1660.*

Literature: Seipel 2002, 100-101, no. 30.



Cat. 94. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects on a stone slab*, c.1660, oil on copper, 17.5 x 23.5 cm. Basel, Kunstmuseum.

Literature: Sander 2008, 66-67, cat. 14.



Cat. 95. Jan van Kessel I, *Flowers and insects*, c.1661, oil on copper, 28.7 x 22 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A568.

Literature: Hairs 1955, 113, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Greindl 1983, 368, no. 123; Hairs 1985, 300; Meijer 2003, 231.



Cat. 96. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies and insects*, 1661, oil on copper, 19.3 x 29 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 223. Signed: *I.V.KESSEL*.  
*FECIT.Ao.1661*





Cat. 97. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies and insects*, 1661, oil on copper, 19.1 x 28.9 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, Inv. 224. Signed and dated lower right: *I.V.KESSEL FECIT. ANNO. 1661.*



Cat. 98. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, moths, green grasshopper and other insects*, 1660s, oil on copper, 9.4 x 23.3 cm. London, Christie's, July 9, 1999, lot 2.



Cat. 99. Jan van Kessel I, *Butterflies, moths, a blue dragonfly, and beetles*, 1660s, oil on copper, 9.4 x 23.3 cm. London, Christie's, July 9, 1999, lot 2.



Cat. 100. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects, Butterflies, and a Dragonfly*, 1662, black chalk, watercolor, and gouache on parchment, 10.8 x 24.1 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (2004.128). Signed and dated lower right: *JV kessel fecit 1662?*





Cat. 101. Jan van Kessel I, *Insects, Butterflies, and a Grasshopper*, 1664, black chalk, watercolor, and gouache on parchment, 10.8 x 24.1 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (2004.128). Signed and dated lower right: *JV Kessel fecit 1664*.



Cat. 102. Jan van Kessel I, *Study of Butterflies, Bees and Beetles, with a Branch of Cherry Blossom and Borage*, c.1660, gouache on vellum, 16.6 x 23 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2011 (De Jonckheere).



Cat. 103. Jan van Kessel I, *Insecten VI*, c.1660, bodycolor and brown ink, over metalpoint underdrawing on parchment, 12.5 x 16 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum.

## SHELLS



Cat. 104. Jan van Kessel I, *Swag of shells in a niche with lizards, snails, and insects*, 1654, oil on copper, 31 x 34 cm. United Kingdom, Collection of Lt. Col. R.C. Althusen. Signed and dated lower right: *Joannes van Kessel fecit anno 1654.*





Cat. 105. Jan van Kessel I, *Festoons made of seashells*, 1656, oil on copper, 40 x 56 cm. Paris, Collection Frits Lugt/Fondation Custodia. Signed and dated lower left: *Joannes van Kessel, Fecit, Anno. 1656.*

Literature: Van Benthem Jutting 1968; Laureyssens 1980, 328, no. 275; Van 't Zelfde 2001, 61, fig. 11.



Cat. 106. Jan van Kessel I, *Shells and Flowers in a Marble Niche, Surrounded by Butterflies and Insects spelling the artist's name*, 1670, oil on canvas, 47 x 62 cm. West Yorkshire, Winn Family, on loan to the National Trust, Nostell Priory. Signed and dated.

**CARTOUCHES / THE FOUR ELEMENTS (NON-FIGURAL)**



Cat. 107. Jan van Kessel I, *Frame with Allegorical Images of the Four Elements*, 1664, oil on copper, 28 x 28 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage.

Signed and dated lower center: *I.V. KESSEL FECIT ANNO 1664.*

Literature: Greindl 1956, 176; Hairs 1985, 289, 291; Meijer 2003, 233-34, fig. 46.1; Gritsay and Babina 2008, 166-67, no. 222.



Cat. 108. Jan van Kessel I, *The Four Elements*, c. 1664, oil on copper, 28 x 28 cm. Strasbourg, Musée des Beaux-Arts. Signed lower right: *I.V. KESSEL F.*

Literature: Langemeyer 1980, 150-51, cat. 85; Jacquot 2009, 118, no. 68.





Cat. 109. Jan van Kessel I, *A cartouche with fish, flowers, fruit, game, armour, hunting equipment and other objects, encircling a framed picture of Cupid*, 1664, oil on copper, 28 x 28 cm. London, Sotheby's, December 13, 2001, lot 37. Signed and dated: *J.v.Kessel.F.*

Literature: Hairs 1985, 290-291.



Cat. 110. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *The Soap Bubbles*, 1660s, oil on copper, 68 x 51 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Monogrammed in center medallion: *DTF* (DT interlaced).

Literature: Hairs 1955, 228; Greindl 1956, 177; Lauresseyns 1980, 321; Hairs 1985, 292, 294; Greindl 1983, 368; Díaz Padrón 2003, 225-29; Foucart 2009, 170.



Cat. 111. Jan van Kessel I, *Still Life*, 1672, oil on copper, 49 x 67 cm.  
Solingen, Galerie Mühlenmeister, 1980. Signed and dated: *I.V.Kessel. Fecit  
Ao 1672.*

Literature: Greindl 1956, 176; Hairs 1965, 216, 392.



Cat. 112. Jan van Kessel I, *Cartouche ornamented with flowers*, 1672, oil on canvas, 49 x 64 cm. Solingen, Galerie Mühlenmeister, 1980. Signed and dated lower center: *J.v.Kessel Fecit A°1672*.

Literature: Hairs 1985, 291, 294.



**THE FOUR ELEMENTS (FIGURAL)**



Cat. 113. Jan van Kessel I, *Eros and Venus at the Forge of Hephaistos*, 1650, oil on copper, 70 x 89 cm. Heidelberg, Arno Winterberg, October 13, 2000, lot 551. Inscribed and dated 1650.



Cat. 114. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Air*, 1660, oil on canvas, 60 x 84 cm.  
London, Sotheby's, July 4, 2007, lot 22. Signed and dated: *J.v. kessel fecit  
anno 1660.*

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 320, no. 262.



Cat. 115. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Air*, 1660s, oil on copper, 72 x 91 cm.  
Flint, Michigan, Flint Institute of Arts.

Literature: Vlieghe 1992, 347, no. 308.





Cat. 116. Jan van Kessel I, *Venus at the Forge of Vulcan*, 1662, oil on canvas, 59.5 x 84 cm. St. Petersburg, Hermitage.



Cat. 117. Studio of Jan van Kesse I?, *Venus at the Forge of Vulcan*, 1662, oil on panel, 55 x 93 cm. London, Christie's, December 3, 2008, lot 118. Signed lower left on table: *I.V. KESSEL*.



Cat. 118. Attributed to Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Water*, 1660s, oil on panel, 55 x 95 cm. London, Christie's, April 19, 1996, lot 132.

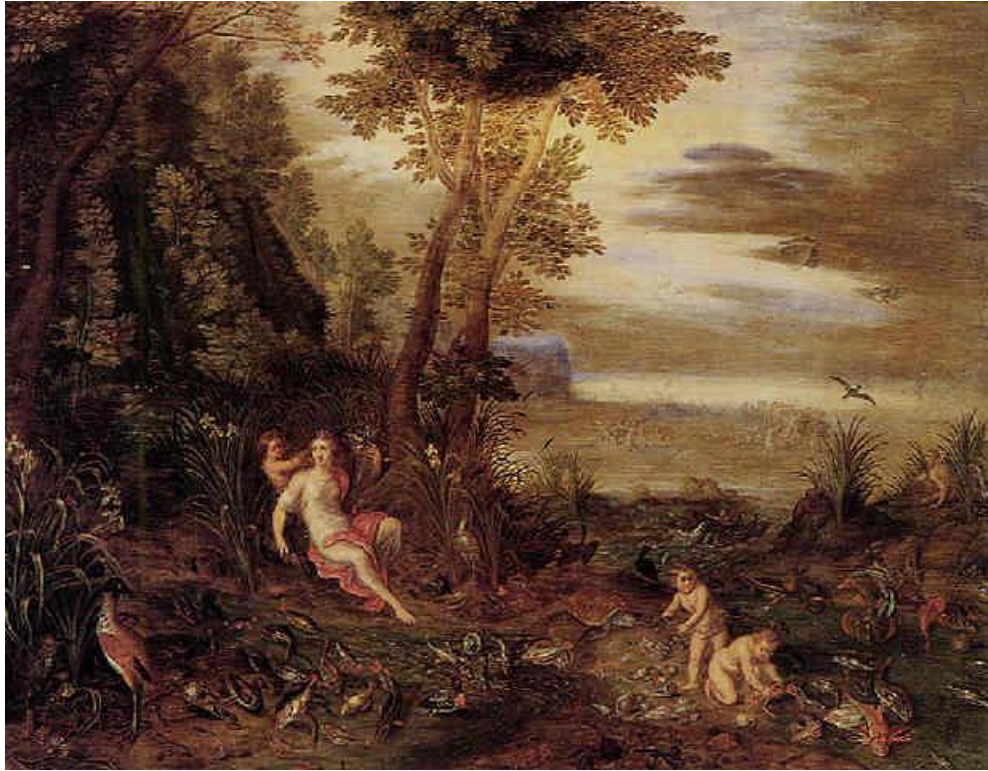


Cat. 119. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *Four Elements*, 1660s, oil on copper, 39.7 x 55.9 cm. London, Christie's, July 3, 1996, lot 1. Signed.





Cat. 120. Jan van Kessel I, *An Allegory of the Earth: one of the Four Elements*, 1660's, oil on copper, 67 x 90 cm. New York, Christie's, January 12, 1996, lot 92.



Cat. 121. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Water*, 1660's, oil on copper, 69 x 87 cm. Venice, Franco Semenzato, July 8, 2001, lot 619.



Cat. 122. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Air*, 1660's, oil on panel, 29.6 x 38.7 cm. Amsterdam, Christie's, May 9, 2001, lot 105. Signed.



ARMS AND ARMOR / ALLEGORIES OF WAR



Cat. 123. Jan van Kessel I, *An Allegory of Fire: arms and armor in a landscape*, 1660, oil on panel, 27.9 x 19.1 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2009 (Johnny van Haefen). Signed and dated lower right: *J v kessel. fecit. anno 1660.*



Cat. 124. Jan van Kessel I, *Trophy of armor and weapons*, 1662, oil on panel, 19 x 24.8 cm. London, Philips, December 10, 1996, lot 106.  
Monogrammed and dated lower right.



Cat. 125. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of War*, 1660s, oil on copper, 25 x 32.2 cm. New York, Christie's, January 26, 2001. Signed lower right: *I.V.*  
*KESSEL FECIT.*

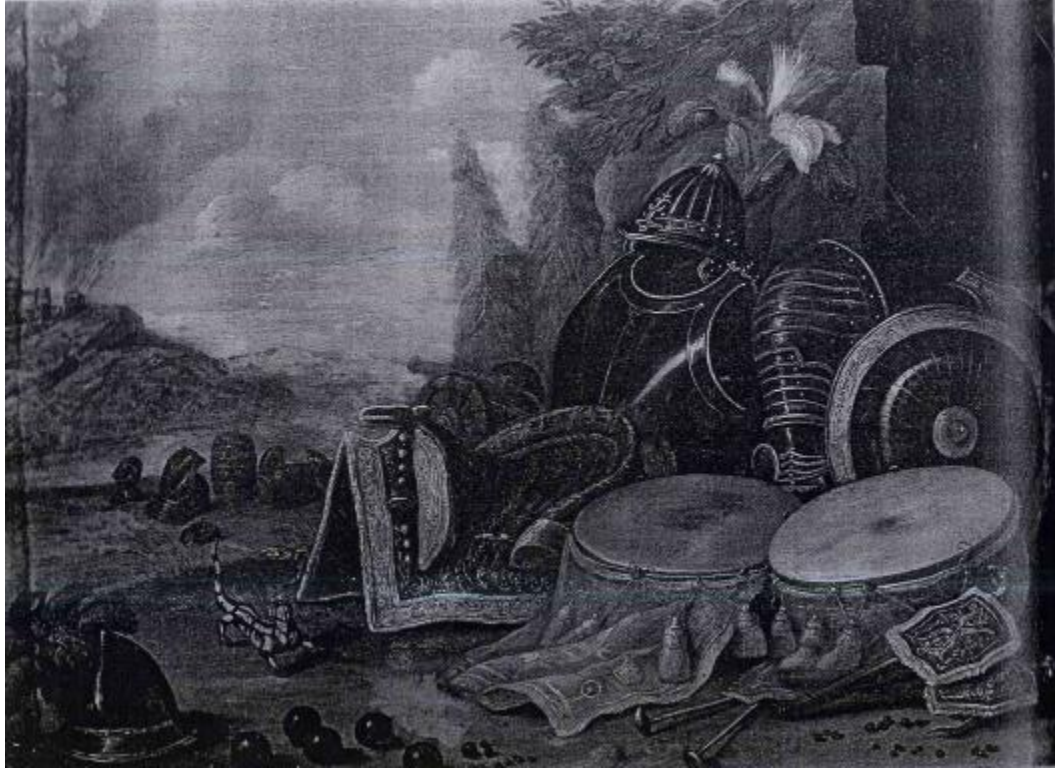


Cat. 126. Jan van Kessel I, *Trophy of arms and weapons*, 1660s, oil on copper, 21 x 31 cm. Dunkirk, Musée de Dunkerque. Signed lower right: *I.V. KESSEL F.*





Cat. 127. Jan van Kessel I, *Trophy of arms and weapons*, 1660s, oil on copper, 20 x 29.5 cm. Location unknown, ex-Utrecht Centraal Museum (sold 1981). Signed center on the tinderbox: *I.V.KESSEL F.*



Cat. 128. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Fire (Emblems of War)*, 1660s, oil on copper, 19.3 x 25.4 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum.

Literature: Cavalli-Björkman 2010, 217-19, no. 111.

GALLERY PICTURES / THE FIVE SENSES



Cat. 129. Jan van Kessel I and Abraham Willemsens?, *Kunstammer with Venus at her Toilette*, 1659, oil on copper, 67 x 91 cm. Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle. Signed and dated lower right: *J VAN. KESSEL f.*, on scroll *JK(linked) F*, and on red chalk drawing *1659*. Signed lower right on bottom drawing: *AB(linked) FECIT*.

Literature: Speth-Holterhoff 1957, 124-26; Martin 1993, 99, 101; Beckmann 1995, 66-67, 171; Mai 2000, 262.





Cat. 130. Jan van Kessel I, *Personification and Allegory of Sight: A Collector's Cabinet*, c.1660, oil on canvas, 64 x 94 cm. London, Christie's, December 13, 1991, lot 156.

Literature: Martin 1993, 99, 101.



Cat. 131. Jan van Kessel I, *La Toilette de Venus*, c.1660, oil on panel, 61 x 91 cm. Brussels, Collection of Baron Coppée.

Literature: Speth-Holterhoff 1957, 124-26.



Cat. 132. Jan van Kessel I, *Kunstkamer with a Woman before a Mirror: Allegory of Sight*, c.1660, oil on copper, 62 x 82 cm. London, Christie's, April 22, 2005, lot 87.

Literature: Speth-Holterhoff 1957, 124-26.



Cat. 133. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Sight / gabinetto del naturalista*, 1664, oil on copper, 19 x 25 cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti. Signed upper left on column: *I.V. KESSEL FECIT ANNO 1664.*

Literature: Bodart 1977, 168-69, no. 60; *Gli Uffizi* 1979, 570.



Cat. 134. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Taste*, c. 1664, oil on copper, 19 x 25 cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti.

Literature: Bodart 1977, 168-69, no. 61; *Gli Uffizi* 1979, 570.



## THE FOUR PARTS OF THE WORLD



Cat. 135. Jan van Kessel I, *Los Animales / The Four Parts of the World*, 1660, oil on copper, 17 x 23 cm (individual plates). Madrid, Museo del Prado. Signed lower left plate no. 30: *I.V. KESSEL. FECIT.* Signed and dated lower left plate no. 36: *I.V. KESSEL fecit 1660.*

Literature: Zarco 1934, 21; Greindl 1956, 128; Krempel 1973; Díaz Padrón 1975, 169-71; Laureyssens 1980, 318-19.



Cat. 136. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *The Four Parts of the World*, 1664-1665, oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates). Munich, Alte Pinakothek. Signed and dated in central plate: *Jan van Kessel fecit 1664* (insect signature); *anno 1665* (on epitaph).

Literature: De Bie 1675; Krempel 1973; Langemeyer 1980, 38-42; Findlen 1994, 45-46; Renger 2002; Teixeira 2002; Gormans 2004; Schütz 2004.





Cat. 137. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *The Four Parts of the World: Asia*, 1664-1666, oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates). Munich, Alte Pinakothek. Signed lower right of central plate: *J V. Kessel. fecit.*

Literature: De Bie 1675; Krempel 1973; Langemeyer 1980, 38-42; Renger 2002; Teixeira 2002; Gormans 2004; Schütz 2004.



Cat. 138. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *The Four Parts of the World: Africa*, 1664-1666, oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates). Munich, Alte Pinakothek.

Literature: De Bie 1675; Krempel 1973; Langemeyer 1980, 38-42; Tax 1993; Renger 2002; Teixeira 2002; Gormans 2004; Schütz 2004.



Cat. 139. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *The Four Parts of the World: America*, 1666, oil on copper, 48.5 x 67.5 cm (central plate), 14.5 x 21 cm (peripheral plates). Munich, Alte Pinakothek. Signed and dated lower right of central plate: *Jan Van Kessel Fecit Anno 1666*.

Literature: De Bie 1675; Krempel 1973; Langemeyer 1980, 38-42; Alpers 1983, 163-65; Bhatnagar 1989; Renger 2002; Teixeira 2002; Gormans 2004; Schütz 2004.





Cat. 140. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *The Four Parts of the World: Allegory of Europe*, 1665, oil on copper, 48 x 36.8 cm. Belgium, Private Collection. Monogrammed center left on stringed instrument: *I.V.K.*  
Dated 1665 on Papal bull.

Literature: Tapié 1990, 220; Seipel 2002, 344



Cat. 141. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *The Four Parts of the World: Allegory of Asia*, 1667, oil on copper, 49 x 37.5 cm. Milan, Castello Sforzesco. Signed and dated lower left in Koran: *Johannes Van Kessel Fecit anno. 1667*. Traces of a second signature and date on the box above the right hand of the main figure: *E. Que....cit A° 1667*.

Literature: Meijer 2001, 246, no. 430; Meijer 2002, 79-82.



Cat. 142. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II, *The Four Parts of the World: Allegory of America*, c.1667, oil on copper, 47.5 x 36 cm. Milan, Castello Sforzesco. Signed and partially dated under the cartouche: *Jan van Kessel I Anno 16[.].*

Literature: Meijer 2001, 246, no. 429.





Cat. 143. Jan van Kessel I and Erasmus Quellinus II?, *Allegory of Europe set inside a Kunstkammer*, 1670, oil on copper, 49.5 x 68.6 cm. New York, Sotheby's, January 30, 1997, lot 16. Signed and dated lower right:

*I.V.Kessel.fecit A° 1670.*

Literature: Welu 1983, 82-85; Kenseth 1991, 233-34.



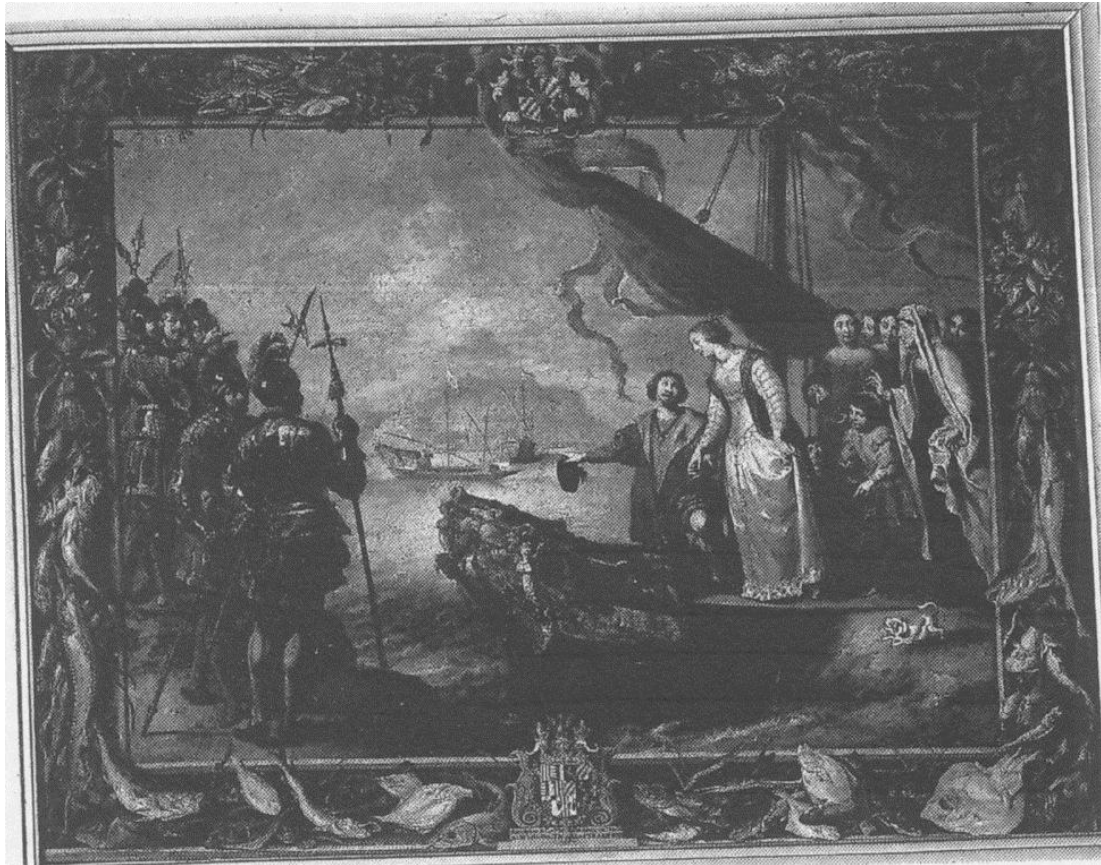


Cat. 144. Studio of Jan van Kessel I?, *Allegory of Europe, seated, being shown paintings by Flemish masters*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17.8 x 24.5 cm.  
London, Phillips, July 4, 1995, lot 92.



Cat. 145. Jan van Kessel I and studio?, *The continent Africa*, 1660s, oil on canvas, 108.4 x 148.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, December 9, 2004, lot 119. Signed and dated in center: *AFRICA/ .../ J. v. KESSEL/ F. 1672.*

## HOUSE OF MONCADA



Cat. 146. Jan van Kessel I and Willem van Herp, *Queen Maria, Abducted from Catania, Embarking on a Trireme*, 1663, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.

Private Collection.

Literature: Wauters 1897; Díaz Padrón 1978; Gaskell 1990, 524-31;  
Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.



Cat. 147. Jan van Kessel I and Willem van Herp, *Moncada Named Barón de Cervelló*, 1663, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection.

Literature: Wauters 1897; Díaz Padrón 1978; Gaskell 1990, 524-31;  
Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.



Cat. 148. Jan van Kessel I and Willem van Herp, *King Martin Entrusts Moncada with Regency of the Kingdom*, 1663, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm.  
Private Collection.

Literature: Wauters 1897; Díaz Padrón 1978; Gaskell 1990, 524-31;  
Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.





Cat. 149. Jan van Kessel I and Willem van Herp, *Moncada Receives the Insignia associated with the office of Keeper of the Great Seals of the Kingdom of Sicily*, 1663, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection. Signed in main field lower left: *g.v.herp*. Signed and dated in painted border lower left: *j.v.kessel / fecit 1663*

Literature: Wauters 1897; Díaz Padrón 1978; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.



Cat. 150. Jan van Kessel I and Luigi Gentile, *Moncada in Discussion with the King*, 1663, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection.

Literature: Wauters 1897; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.





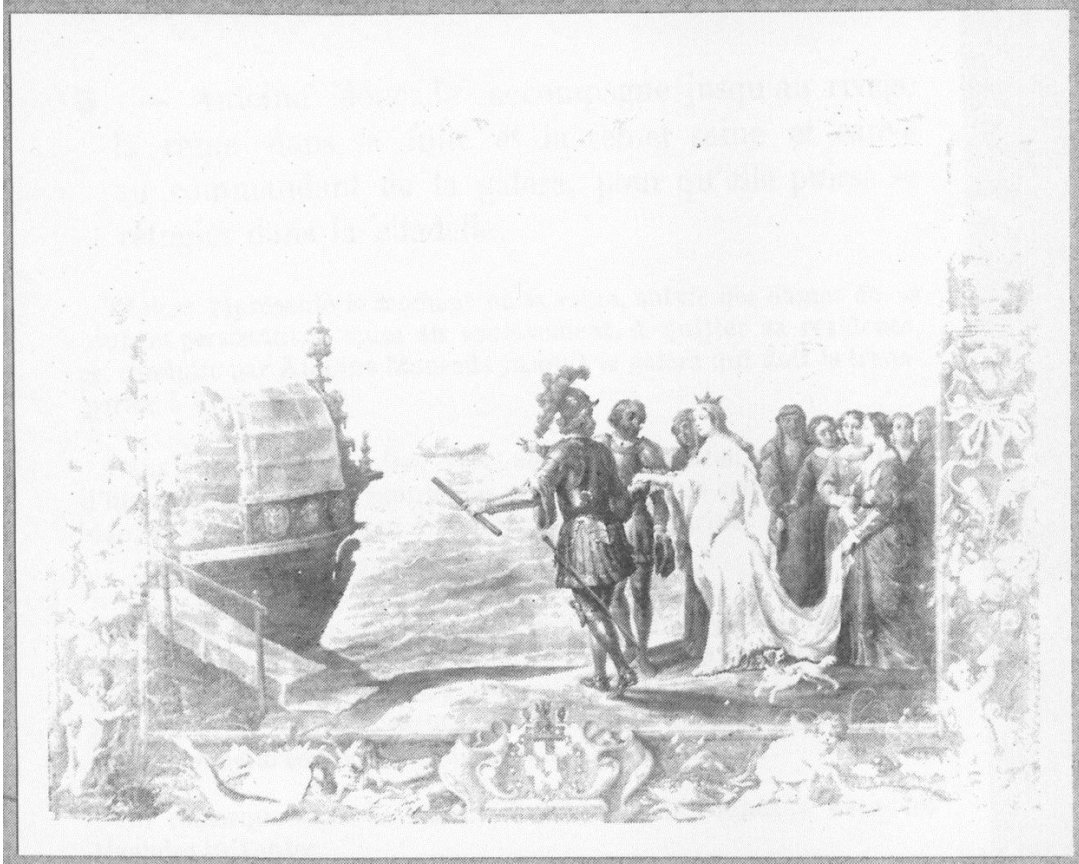
Cat. 151. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *Queen Bianca of Sicily grants Don Antonio Moncada power to convene the States General*, 1663, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection. Signed main field right: *d.teniers fec.* Signed and dated in painted border lower left: *j.v.kessel / fecit 1663.*

Literature: Wauters 1897; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.



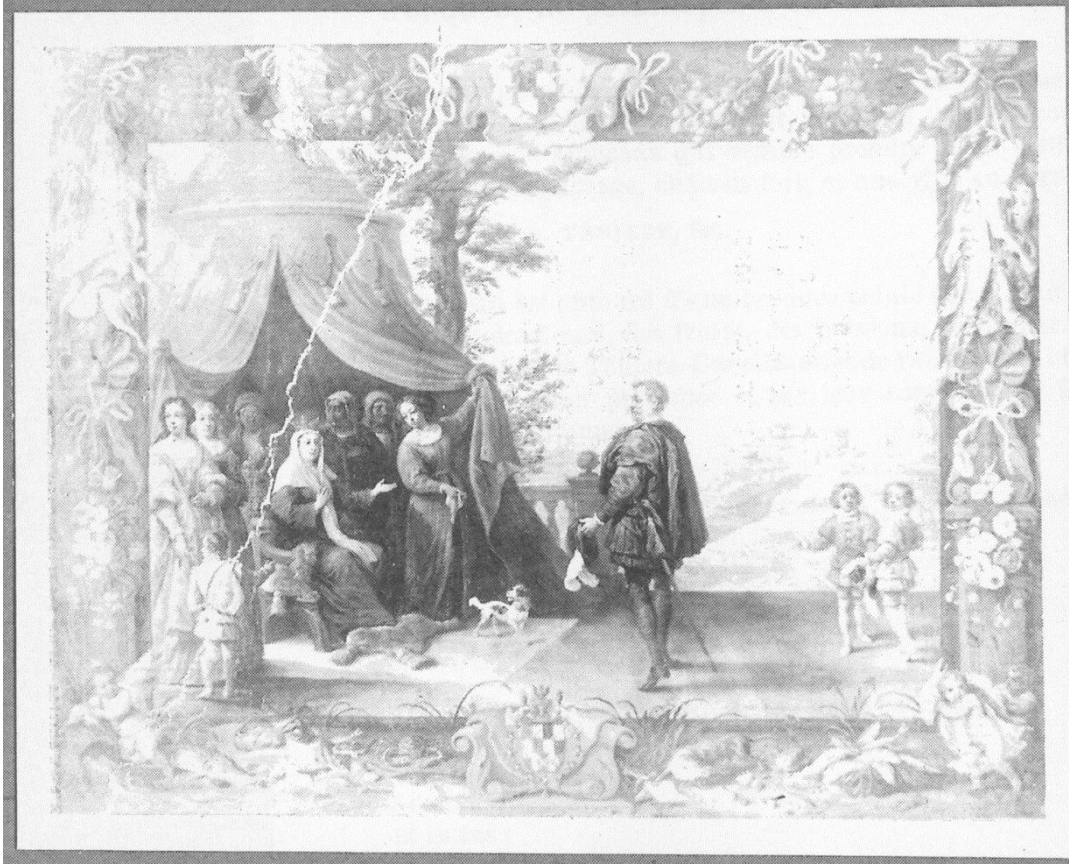
Cat. 152. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *Don Antonio Moncada offering to protect the kingdom of Queen Bianca of Sicily against the rebels*, 1663-1664, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection. Signed and partially dated main field lower left: *van kessel f. Ao 166...* Monogrammed main field lower left: *D.T.*

Literature: Wauters 1897; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.



Cat. 153. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *Antonio Moncada escorting the Queen to the galley that will take her to Syracuse*, 1663-1664, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection. Signed: *D. Teniers f. / J.V. KESSEL*

Literature: Wauters 1897; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.



Cat. 154. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *Antonio Moncada before the Queen, receiving compensation for his royal services*, 1663-1664, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection. Signed.

Literature: Wauters 1897; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.





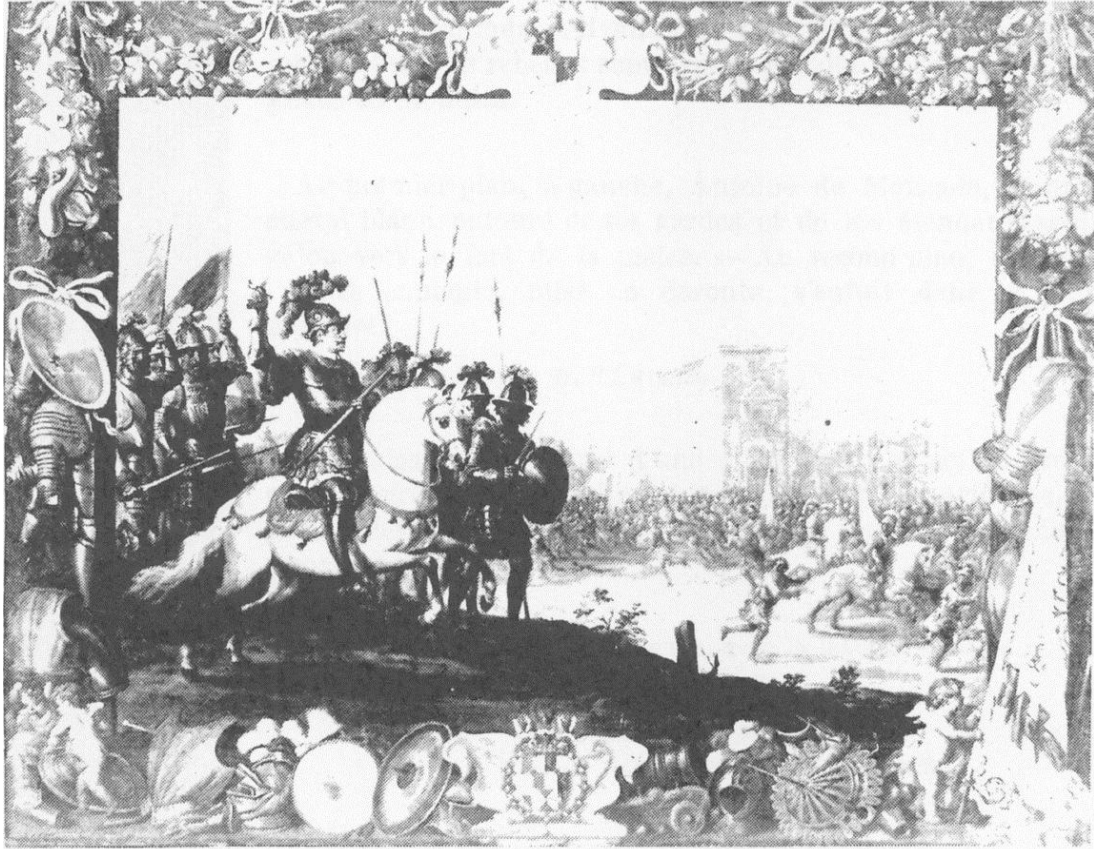
Cat. 155. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *The submission of the Sicilian rebels to Antonio Moncada in 1411*, 1663, oil on copper, 54 x 68.2 cm. Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. Signed in main field lower right: *D TENIERS.FEC.* Signed and dated lower center of painted border on pedestal: *I.V. KESSEL.F.1663*

Literature: Wauters 1897; Laureyssens 1980, 317, no. 259a; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.



Cat. 156. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *The presentation of the Captain General's Baton to Antonio Moncada*, 1664, oil on copper, 54 x 68.9 cm. Madrid, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. Signed in main field lower right: *D TENIERS F.* Signed and dated lower right of painted border: *I.V. KESSEL. F.A. 1664.*

Literature: Wauters 1897; Laureyssens 1980, 317, no. 259b; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704;



Cat. 157. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *Antonio Moncada arriving with troops at the citadel, Cabrera marching on the palace to surprise the Queen*, 1664, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection. Signed and dated.

Literature: Wauters 1897; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.





Cat. 158. Jan van Kessel I and David Teniers II, *Antonio Moncada chasing the rebels, who attacked Queen Bianca of Sicily in her palace*, 1664, oil on copper, 54 x 68 cm. Private Collection. Signed main field right: *D.Teniers*.

Signed and dated in painted border lower right: *j.v. kessel f. A° 1664*.

Literature: Wauters 1897; Gaskell 1990, 524-31; Andrade 1992, 431-32, 704; Delmarcel 2010.

## FISH AND AQUATIC ANIMALS



Cat. 159. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish on the shore with a cityscape in background*, 1656, oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado.  
Inv. P02749. Signed and dated lower right: *J v. KESSEL fecit 1656*.

Literature: Craft-Giepmans 2001, 85, fig. 5.



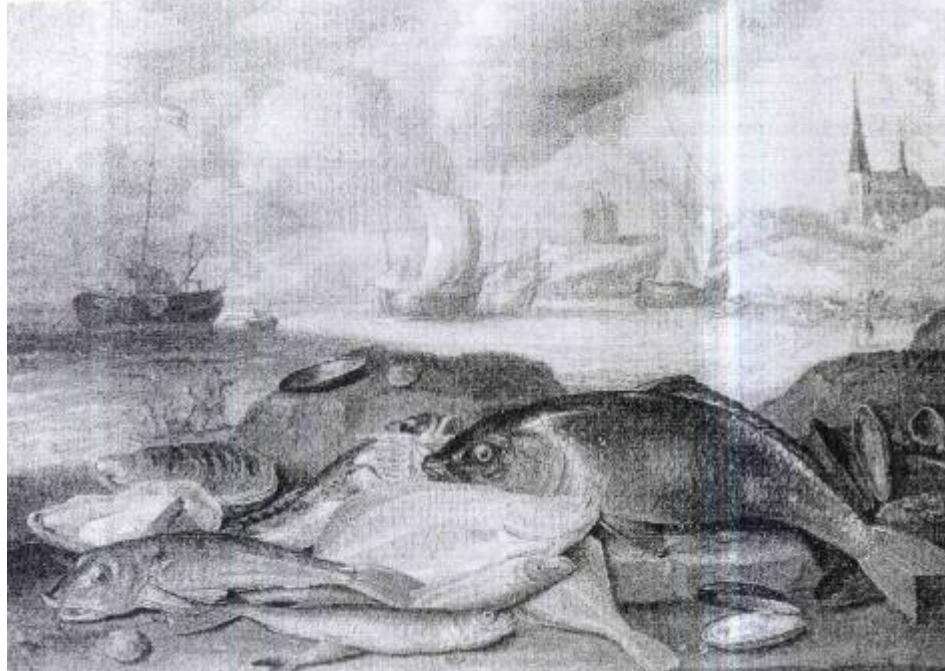
Cat. 160. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and seashells on the seashore*, 1656?, oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado. Inv. P02750.

Literature: Craft-Giepmans 2001, 85, fig. 6.



Cat. 161. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and shells on the shore of a river estuary*, 1660, oil on copper, 19.5 x 25.2 cm. Stuttgart, Statsgalerie. Signed and dated: *I.V.KESSEL F. Ao 1660.*





Cat. 162. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish on the shore: Allegory of Water* (after Joris van Son?), 1660, oil on panel, 28 x 38 cm. New York, Collection of Henry H. Weldon, 1963. Signed and dated: *J.v.Kessel F. 1660*

Literature: Craft-Giepmans 2001, 87, fig. 8; De Jongh 2004, 31, no. 15.



Cat. 163. Jan van Kessel I, *Harbor scene with fish, crustaceans, tortoises, turtles and otters on a beach*, 1660, oil on copper, 20.2 x 30 cm. London, Sotheby's, December 8, 2005, lot 103. Signed and dated lower center:  
*I.V.KESSEL. F. 1660.*



Cat. 164. Jan van Kessel I, *Seashore with seal, otter, and figures on a beach*, 1660, oil on copper, 19 x 28.5 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2010 (Johnny van Haefen). Signed and dated lower left: *I. VKESSEL. F. 1660.*





Cat. 165. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and sea creatures on the shore with a landscape in the background*, 1661, oil on copper, 20 x 30 cm. Frankfurt, Städel Museum. Signed and dated lower center: *I.V.KESSEL FECIT anno 1661.*



Cat. 166. Jan van Kessel I, *Seacoast with fish*, 1663, oil on copper, 28.5 x 35.5 cm. Prague, Národní Galerie. Signed and dated: *I. V. KESSEL FECIT. Ao 1663.*



Cat. 167. Jan van Kessel I, *Seacoast with fish: Allegory of Water*, 1663, oil on copper, 21.8 x 30 cm. New York, Otto Naumann, 1996. Signed and dated: *i.V.KESSEL. F. 1663.*

Literature: Craft-Giepmans 2001, 83, fig. 3.



Cat. 168. Jan van Kessel I, *Water: sea lions, fish, weasel, penguins on a shore*, 1660s, oil on copper, 25.4 x 34.3 cm. Detroit Institute of Arts.



Cat. 169. Jan van Kessel I, *Shore with fishes*, 1660s, oil on copper, 16 x 24 cm. Mainz, Landesmuseum. Signed lower left: *J.v.kessel fecit.*





Cat. 170. Jan van Kessel I, *Flying fish, frogs, penguins, and turtles on the shore*, 1660s, oil on copper, 19.3 x 29 cm. Paris, Christie's, June 22, 2006, lot 17. Signed lower right: *J. V. kessel fecit.*



Cat. 171. Jan van Kessel I, *Hérons and waterfowl near a river with fish and reptiles in the foreground*, 1660s, oil on copper, 19.5 x 29 cm. Amsterdam, Sotheby's, May, 6, 1996, lot 7. Signed.



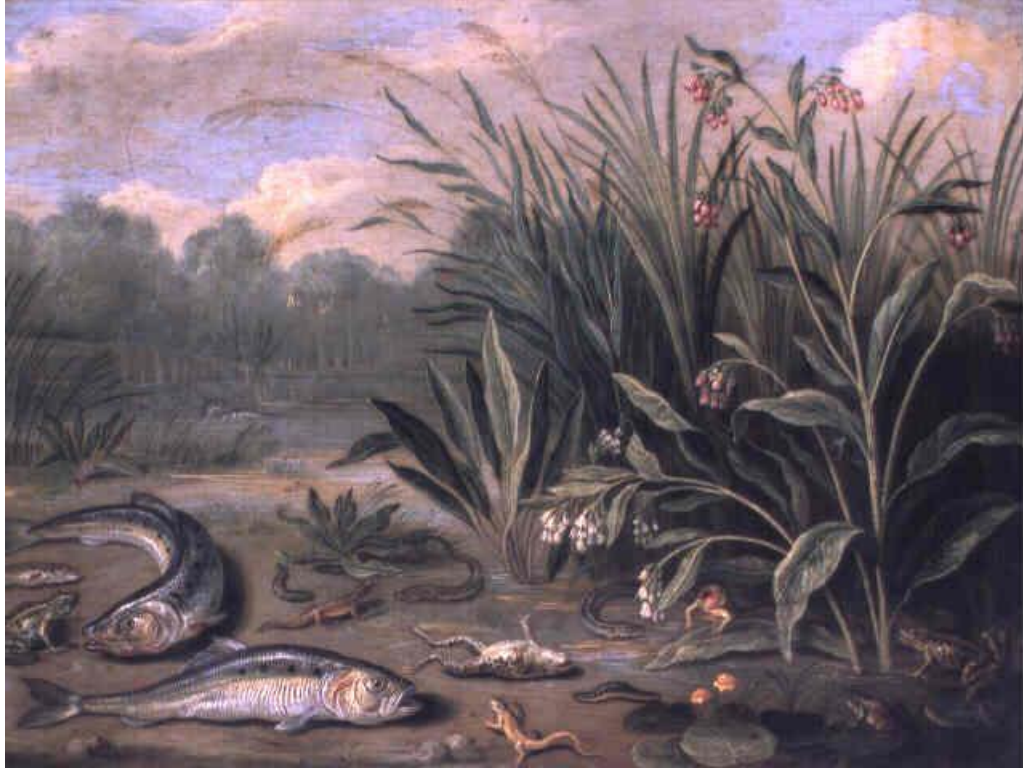


Cat. 172. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish on the shore*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18 x 28 cm. Florence, Palazzo Pitti. Signed.

Literature: Bodart 1977, 165; *Gli Uffizi* 1979, 570.



Cat. 173. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and skate, with a bridge in the background*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17.5 x 24.5 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2011 (De Jonckheere).



Cat. 174. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish, frogs, lizards, and snakes among reeds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17 x 23 cm. Ader Tajan, December 20, 1994, lot 24.



Cat. 175. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and turtles on a rocky shore*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18.4 x 24.2 cm. Paris, Christie's, June 20, 2007, lot 26. Signed lower right: VKESSEL.





Cat. 176. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and shellfish on a shore, with a town and boats in the background*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18 x 25 cm. Poulain Le Fur, December 16, 2001, lot 19.



Cat. 177. Jan van Kessel I, *Lobsters, red mullet, halibut, flounder and other fish, with sea shells on the beach, and ships beyond*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18.7 x 29 cm. London, Christie's, July 7, 2000, lot 1. Signed lower left:

*I.V.KESSEL.Fecit*

Literature: Craft-Giepmans 2001, 79.



Cat. 178. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and crustaceans on a beach, with fishing boats and a town beyond*, 1660s, oil on copper, 12.5 x 17.5 cm. London, Christie's, December, 12, 2002, lot 163. Signed lower right?





Cat. 179. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish on a shore with shells; ships in the distance*, 1660s, oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm. Ader Tajan, March 24, 1994, lot 21.



Cat. 180. Jan van Kessel I, *Various fish including a thornback ray, eels, crabs, and other shellfish*, 1660s, oil on copper, 13.5 x 19.2 cm. London, Sotheby's, December 17, 1998, lot 128.



Cat. 181. Jan van Kessel I, *Sturgeon and thornback ray with a cod, oysters, mussels and other fish on seashore with ship in the distance*, 1660s, oil on copper, 16.5 x 22.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 6, 2006, lot 116. Signed lower right: *I.V.KESSEL*.



Cat. 182. Jan van Kessel I, *Beach scene with rays, eels, a hermit crab, red mullet, a tortoise, and other fish; a castle & ships behind*, 1660s, oil on copper, 20.3 x 30.2 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 6, 2000, lot 104. Signed lower center: *I.V.KESSEL...?*





Cat. 183. Jan van Kessel I, *Cuttle fish, plaice, cod, mussels and other fish on a dune, with a church across a river estuary beyond*, 1660s, oil on panel, 24 x 32.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 6, 2006, lot 115. Signed lower left on rock: *I.V. KESSEL?*



Cat. 184. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish and crustaceans on the shore; a castle in background*, 1660s, oil on panel, 17.5 x 24.5 cm. Beaux-Arts, April 26, 2005, lot 27. Signed lower right: *I.V. Kessel. Fecit.*



Cat. 185. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish, squid, crustaceans on a shore with mountains and ships in background*, 1660s, oil on panel, 15.8 x 22 cm.  
London, Sotheby's, April 16, 1997, lot 102.

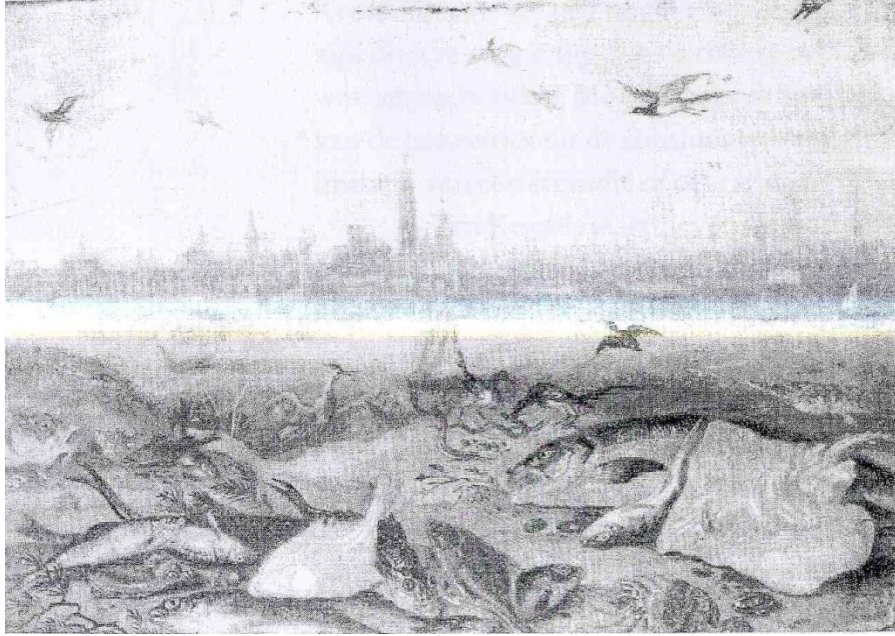




Cat. 186. Jan van Kessel I, *Fish, sea lions, birds, and frogs on a shore*, 1660s, oil on panel, 26 x 37 cm. Alte Meister, Auktion 1733, October, 18, 1994, lot 32.



Cat. 187. Circle of Jan van Kessel I?, *A beach scene with a still life of turtles, fish, a crab, shells and a seal, all on a beach with a ship beyond*, oil on panel, 17.4 x 22.6 cm. Amsterdam, Sotheby's, November 7, 2000, lot 26. Signed and dated lower right: *I.V.KESSEL FA 1675*.



Cat. 188. Jan van Kessel I (copy after?), *View of Antwerp*, oil on copper, 17 x 23 cm. London, Sotheby's, October 27, 1976, lot 26.

Literature: Craft-Giepmans 2001, 81, fig. 2.

## BIRDS



Cat. 189. Jan van Kessel I, *An assembly of birds in a landscape*, 1661, oil on copper, 19.5 x 29.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, October 18, 1989, lot 22.  
Signed and dated.





Cat. 190. Jan van Kessel I, *Bird Concert: Allegory of Air*, 1663, oil on copper, 21.8 x 30 cm. New York, Otto Naumann, 1996. Signed and dated: *i.V.KESSEL 1663*.

Literature: Craft-Giepmans 2001, 83, fig. 4.



Cat. 191. Jan van Kessel I, *Bird Concert (Air from a series of The Four Elements?)*, 1665, oil on copper, 13.4 x 19.2 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 5, 1995, lot 108. Signed and dated lower center: *j v k.*



Cat. 192. Jan van Kessel I, *Peacock and other large birds*, 1666, oil on copper, 21.7 x 31 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 8, 1992, lot 57. Signed and dated.





Cat. 193. Jan van Kessel I, *Hounds frightening ducks and other birds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 19.7 x 29 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2010 (Johnny van Haften). Signed lower center.



Cat. 194. Jan van Kessel I, *Landscape with eagle and other birds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 16.3 x 23 cm. London, Sotheby's, December 9, 1998, lot 72.  
Signed.



Cat. 195. Jan van Kessel I, *Landscape with a Peacock, an Eagle and other Birds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 16.5 x 22.5 cm. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst. Signed lower left: *J.V. KESSEL.F.*

Literature: Koester 2000, 154-55.



Cat. 196. Jan van Kessel I, *A River Landscape with Turkeys and Poultry*, 1660s, oil on copper, 16.5 x 22.5 cm. Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst. Signed lower right: *j.V. KESSEL*.

Literature: Koester 2000, 154-55.





Cat. 197. Jan van Kessel I, *Landscape with Birds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 20 x 30 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca Ambrosiana. Signed: *I.V.KESSEL FECIT*.

Literature: Meijer 2001, 247, no. 431.



Cat. 198. Jan van Kessel I, *An eagle, peacocks, doves, herons, a cockerel, a hen, a mallard, a swan, and other birds on a riverbank*, 1660s, oil on copper, 20.4 x 30.1 cm. London, Sotheby's, December 7, 2005, lot 19. Signed.



Cat. 199. Jan van Kessel I, *Chickens and their young disturbed by sparrow hawks*, 1660s, oil on copper, 22.5 x 30 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 6, 2006, lot 117. Signed lower left: *I.V. KESSEL*.





Cat. 200. Jan van Kessel I, *Bird concert in a landscape*, 1660s, oil on copper, 14 x 19 cm. Milan, Pinacoteca di Brera. Signed: *I.V.K.*

Literature: Meijer 2001, 247, no. 432.



Cat. 201. Jan van Kessel I, *Herons, Ducks, Penguins, Owls, and Pair of Swans and other Birds in a Landscape*, 1660s, oil on copper, 13.8 x 19.1 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2011 (Salomon Lilian). Monogrammed lower left: *V K.*



Cat. 202. Jan van Kessel I, *Birds on a Riverbank I*, 1660s, oil on copper, 14.6 x 20.3 cm. London, Christie's, December 8, 1995, lot 204.



Cat. 203. Jan van Kessel I, *Birds on a Riverbank II*, 1660s, oil on copper, 14.6 x 20.3 cm. London, Christie's, December 8, 1995, lot 204.



Cat. 204. Jan van Kessel I, *Owls, birds, and a cat*, 1660s, oil on copper, 13.8 x 19.3 cm. Audap-Solanet, Godeau-Veillet, June 24, 1994, lot 51.





Cat. 205. Jan van Kessel I, *8 waterbirds on the shore*, 1660s, oil on copper, 15.8 x 22 cm. Zurich, Galerie Koller, March 18, 1999, lot 20.



Cat. 206. Jan van Kessel I, *River landscape with birds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 16.7 x 22.5 cm. Picard Scp., December 10, 1993, lot 12. Signed.





Cat. 207. Jan van Kessel I, *Turkey, swans, and birds with a city in background* (replica of *Brussels* from *The Four Parts of the World*, Munich), 1660s, oil on copper, 17.5 x 23.5 cm. Private Collection. Signed.



Cat. 208. Jan van Kessel I, *Landscape with birds and fire*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17.5 x 24.5 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2011 (De Jonckheere).



Cat. 209. Attributed to Jan van Kessel I, *Pheasants and various other fowl in a coastal landscape I*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17.7 x 24.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, April 18, 2002, lot 56.



Cat. 210. Attributed to Jan van Kessel I, *Pheasants and various other fowl in a coastal landscape II*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17.7 x 24.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, April 18, 2002, lot 56.



Cat. 211. Jan van Kessel I, *A cockerel, a turkey, a cockatoo, parrots and other birds in a landscape, a city beyond* (replica of *Mexico* from *The Four Parts of the World*, Munich), 1660s, oil on copper, 18.4 x 24.2 cm. New York, Christie's, January 29, 1999, lot 1. Signed.





Cat. 212. Jan van Kessel I, *Ducks and other birds on the shore with a cityscape and ships in the distance*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18 x 24 cm. Sotheby's, London, July 12, 2001, lot 100. Signed lower left: *I. V. KESSEL F.*



Cat. 213. Jan van Kessel I, *Birds hunting ducks*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18 x 24 cm. St. Omer, Musée Henri Dupuis. Signed: *J.V. Kessel f.*





Cat. 214. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Day: A landscape with ducks and swans on a pond*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17 x 22.5 cm. London, Christie's, December 8, 2004, lot 9. Signed.



Cat. 215. Circle of Jan van Kessel I, *Bird concert*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17 x 22 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes.



Cat. 216. Jan van Kessel I, *Two spoonbills, a heron, swans, moorhens, bullfinches, kingfishers, and a swallow in a coastal landscape*, 1660s, oil on copper, 29 x 42 cm. London, Christie's, April 16, 1999, lot 10. Signed.



Cat. 217. Jan van Kessel I, *Parrots, a heron, kingfishers and other birds in an extensive landscape*, 1660s, oil on copper, 29 x 42 cm. London, Christie's, April 16, 1999, lot 10. Signed.



Cat. 218. Jan van Kessel I, *Eagles and serpents attacking foxes*, 1660s, oil on panel, 27.6 x 37 cm. London, Christie's, November 2, 2001, lot 12.  
Signed.





Cat. 219. Jan van Kessel I, *Waterfowl and dogs*, 1660s, oil on panel, 25 x 34 cm. Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België. Signed center on rock: *J.V. KESSEL. FEC.*





Cat. 220. Jan van Kessel I, *Birds of prey attacking herons and ducks by a pond*, 1660s, oil on panel, 23.5 x 34.2 cm. London, Christie's, July 10, 1998, lot 162.



Cat. 221. Jan van Kessel I, *Birds in a sky with clouds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18.5 x 25 cm. Tajan, December 17, 1997, lot 355.



Cat. 222. Circle of Jan van Kessel I, *Guineafowl, a magpie, a Muscovy duck and other fowl in a farmyard*, 1660s, oil on panel, 15.2 x 20 cm. South Kensington, Christie's, July 12, 2002, lot 91.



Cat. 223. Circle of Jan van Kessel I, *Swans, herons, a crane, a bittern and a mallard by a river*, 1660s, oil on panel, 15.2 x 20 cm. South Kensington, Christie's, July 12, 2002, lot 91.





Cat. 224. Circle of Jan van Kessel I, *Concert of birds*, 1660s, oil on panel, 13 x 18 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.

Literature: Wheelock 2005, 126-28.



Cat. 225. Circle of Jan van Kessel I?, *A turkey, a cockerel, hens, a peacock and other birds, in a landscape*, 1675, oil on canvas, 19 x 26.7 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 6, 2000, lot 103. Signed.





Cat. 226. Circle of Jan van Kessel I?, *A landscape with peacocks, hens, ducks, a turkey and other fowl*, 1677, oil on canvas, 29.6 x 43.5 cm. London, Sotheby's, November 2, 2000, lot 6. Signed.



Cat. 227. Circle of Jan van Kessel I?, *Poultry Farm*, 1677, oil on canvas, 28.5 x 42 cm. Cologne, Lemperts, May 20, 2000, lot 681. Signed.

**FABLE ANIMALS / OTHER LAND ANIMALS**



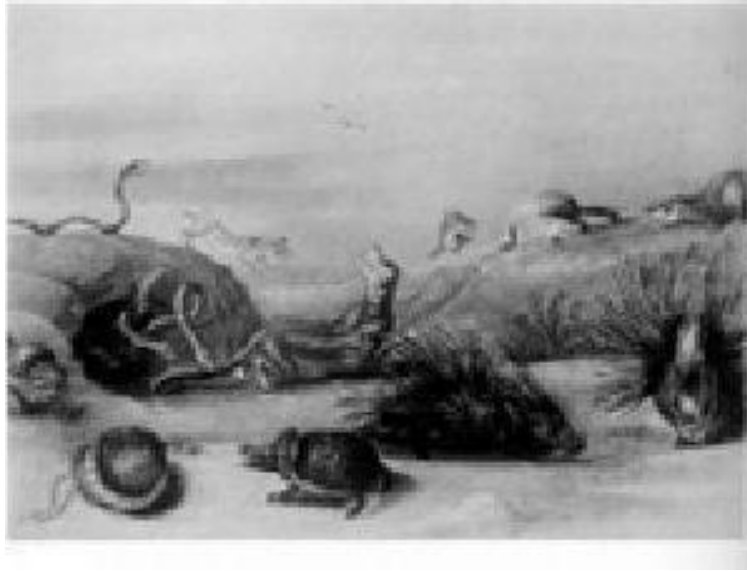
Cat. 228. Jan van Kessel I, *Parable of the Fox and the Heron*, 1661, oil on copper, 18 x 25 cm. Habsburg, January 9, 1990, lot 51. Signed and dated.



Cat. 229. Jan van Kessel I, *Parable of the Fox and the Heron*, c.1660, oil on copper, 19 x 25 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2009 (Johnny van Haften). Signed lower left: *J.v. Kessel f..e?*.



Cat. 230. Jan van Kessel I, *Rabbits, guinea pigs, ducks, waterfowl*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18.4 x 24.2 cm. Paris, Christie's, June 20, 2007, lot 26. Signed lower right: *VKESSEL*.



Cat. 231. Circle of Jan van Kessel I?, *Porcupines, weasels, snakes, and other animals in a landscape*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18.4 x 24.8 cm. New York, Sotheby's, October 14, 1998, lot 47. Signed lower right: VKESSEL.





Cat. 232. Jan van Kessel I, *Hounds chasing hares in a landscape*, 1663, oil on panel, 25 x 42 cm. London, Phillips, July 4, 1995, lot 49. Signed and dated.



Cat. 233. Studio of Jan van Kessel I?, *Replica of Porto Seguro* (no. 7 in *America* from *The Four Parts of the World*, Munich), c.1660-1665, oil on copper, 17.5 x 24 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 8, 1992, lot 326.



Cat. 234. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Air: Birds, amphibians, sea lion, and an otter*, 1660s, oil on panel, 20 x 32 cm. Quimper, Musée des Beaux-Arts.  
Signed: J.V. KESSEL. F.



Cat. 235. Jan van Kessel I, *An otter and an owl guarding their catches on a beach, turkeys on a branch and a kingfisher in flight*, 1660s, oil on copper, 14.3 x 20.6 cm. New York, Sotheby's, May 22, 1997, lot 113.



Cat. 236. Jan van Kessel I?, *Otter on a river*, 1660s, oil on copper, 26 x 22 cm. Hauswedell & Nolte, June 7, 1990, lot 89.





Cat. 237. Jan van Kessel I, *Aesop's Fables: The Bear and the Honey-pot*, 1672?, oil on copper, 15.6 x 20.6 cm. New York, Sotheby's, May 25, 2000, lot 108. Monogrammed left above overturned basket: *I.V.K.*





Cat. 238. Jan van Kessel I, *Aesop's Fables: The Stag, the Wolf, and the Sheep*, 1672?, oil on copper, 15.6 x 20.6 cm. New York, Sotheby's, May 25, 2000, lot 108. Monogrammed lower left: *I.V.K.*



Cat. 239. Jan van Kessel I, *Aesop's Fables: The Lion and the Boar*, 1672?, oil on copper, 15.6 x 20.6 cm. New York, Sotheby's, May 25, 2000, lot 108. Monogrammed lower center under lion's tail.



Cat. 240. Jan van Kessel I, *Aesop's Fables: The Sick Stag*, 1672?, oil on copper, 15.6 x 20.6 cm. New York, Sotheby's, May 25, 2000, lot 108. Signed and dated lower right: *I.V.Kessel. fecit ao 1672.*



Cat. 241. Circle of Jan van Kessel I?, *Birds, fish and animals in landscapes* (set of 12 in compartmentalized frame), 1660s, oil on panel, 18.1 x 23.8 cm.  
London, Christie's, April 19, 1996, lot 113.

## PARADISE LANDSCAPES



Cat. 242. Jan van Kessel I, *The Ark of Noah*, 1650s-early 1660s, oil on panel, 28.6 x 37.1 cm. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten.





Cat. 243. Jan van Kessel I, *The entry to the ark*, 1650s-early 1660s, oil on panel, 45 x 55.5 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rennes.





Cat. 244. Jan van Kessel I, *Noah's Family Assembling Animals before the Ark*, c.1660, oil on panel, 65.4 x 94.5 cm. Baltimore, Walters Art Museum.



Cat. 245. Jan van Kessel I, *Noah, his family and the animals entering the Ark*, c.1660, oil on canvas, 59.6 x 84.4 cm. Amsterdam, Christie's, May 7, 1997, lot 55. Signed.

## BATS AND RODENTS



Cat. 246. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Night: A wooded landscape with bats*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17 x 22.5 cm. London, Christie's, December 8, 2004, lot 9. Signed.



Cat. 247. Studio of Jan van Kessel I?, *Bats in a stormy landscape with a city on an estuary beyond*, 1660s, oil on copper, 17.5 x 24 cm. London, Sotheby's, July 8, 1992, lot 328.





Cat. 248. Jan van Kessel I, *Creatures of the Night*, 1660s, oil on copper, 18.4 x 24.8 cm. Maastricht, TEFAF 2011 (Johnny van Haefen). Signed (indistinctly) lower left: *J v.....ssel fecit.*



Cat. 249. Jan van Kessel I, *Enemies of Snakes*, 1660s, oil on copper, 13.5 x 19.2 cm. Gray, Musée Baron Martin. Signed lower right.

Literature: Mirimonde 1959, 90, no. 293.





Cat. 250. Jan van Kessel I, *Bats and birds*, 1660s, oil on copper, 14 x 20 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Inv. A571. Part of a set with cat. nos. 47, 48, and 49.

Literature: Meijer 2003, 232-35.

## MONKEYS



Cat. 251. Jan van Kessel I, *A family of monkeys with a fox, a goat, and a rat, and starfish and shells*, 1660s, oil on copper, 14.5 x 20.3 cm. London, Christie's, February 25, 1994, lot 45. Monogrammed on well: *I.V.K.*



Cat. 252. Circle/Follower of Jan van Kessel I, *Card-playing monkeys*, 1660s-1670s, oil on copper, 42 x 57 cm. Beijers Klassika, April 25, 1990, lot 119.



Cat. 253. Circle/Follower of Jan van Kessel I, *Monkeys in a Guardroom*, 1660s-1670s, oil on canvas, 28 x 36 cm. Cologne, Lempertz, December 5, 1998, lot 1064.





Cat. 254. Circle/Follower of Jan van Kessel I, *The monkeys' barber shop*, 1660s-1670s, oil on copper laid on panel, 38.1 x 52.6 cm. Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie



Cat. 255. Circle of Jan van Kessel I, *Study of monkey & birds I*, 1660-1670, oil on copper, 10.5 x 17.2 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art.  
Inv. no. 1983.19.1.

Literature: Wheelock 2005, 129-33.

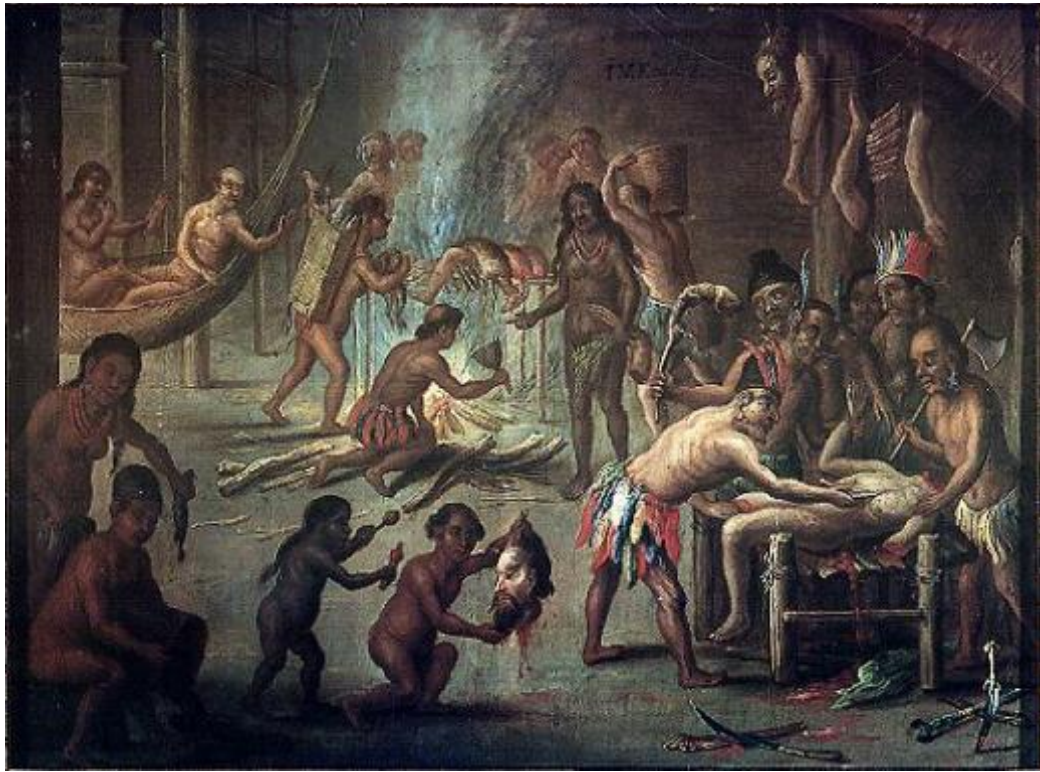




Cat. 256. Circle of Jan van Kessel I, *Study of Birds and Monkeys*, 1660-1670, oil on copper, 10.5 x 17.2 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art. Inv. no. 1983.19.2.

Literature: Wheelock 2005, 129-33.

MISCELLANEOUS



Cat. 257. Jan van Kessel I, *Indians as Cannibals*, 1660s, oil on copper, 21 x 30 cm. La Rochelle, Le Musée du Nouveau Monde. Signed upper right:  
*I.V.Kessel . F.*

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 320, no. 261.



Cat. 258. Jan van Kessel I?, *View of the belly of a tree frog*, 1660s, pen and brown and gray ink, watercolor, and bodycolor on parchment, 16.3 x 13.2 cm. Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België.

Monogrammed lower right in pencil: *JvK*. On verso: '80 c de 3'.

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 332, no. 282; Verbraeken 1985, 13; Baer 1999, 94-95.



Cat. 259. Jan van Kessel I?, *View of the back of a tree frog*, 1660s, pen and gray ink, and watercolor on parchment, 19.4 x 14.7 cm. Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België. Monogrammed lower right in pencil: *JvK*. On verso: '80 de 3'.

Literature: Laureyssens 1980, 332, no. 283;



Cat. 260. Jan van Kessel I?, *View of the head of a tree frog*, 1660s, pen, brown and gray ink, and watercolor on parchment, 7.8 x 8.2 cm. Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten van België. Monogrammed lower right in pencil: *JvK*. On verso: '80 c de 3'.





Cat. 261. Jan van Kessel I, *Allegory of Fire: silver & gold vessels, Delftware in foreground, burning buildings in background*, 1660s, oil on panel, 27.7 x 37.5 cm. United States, Private Collection. Signed lower left: *J v. Kessel.f.*





Cat. 262. Jan van Kessel I, *The Four Elements: Fire* (metal vessels with background of burning church and houses), 1665?, oil on copper, 13.4 x 19.2 cm. De Jonckheere, 1996.



Cat. 263. Jan van Kessel I, *Vanitas Still Life*, c.1665-70, oil on copper, 20.3 x 15.2 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art. Monogrammed below skull: *I.V.K.*

Literature: Wheelock 2005, 123-25.

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