Editorial

Benvenuto Cellini, the famous Italian goldsmith, wrote in his treatise that the ability to make an object out of one piece of silver without any seams or the use of solder was the utmost technical feat, stating 'all this I was able to do because of my diligence, my knowledge, my patience and my mastery over all the best methods of workmanship.' Highly accomplished technical skills were crucial to a goldsmith's professional status and reputation and an indication of his ingenuity. Adam van Vianen (c. 1570-1613) certainly achieved 'the best methods of workmanship' in the silver ewer he made in 1614, commissioned by the Amsterdam silversmiths' guild to commemorate his brother, Paulus van Vianen. The ewer, one of the masterpieces in the Rijksmuseum collection, represents the culmination of the auricular, or *kwab* style, developed by Paulus while working at the Habsbourg Court of Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612). Joosje van Bennekom, Ellen van Bork and Arie Pappot test the hypothesis that Adam raised the ewer out of one piece of silver, and guide the reader through the making process, using 3D X-radiography imaging and reconstructions to establish Adam's technical tour de force, as well as the quality of the silver needed to achieve this.

Jessica Whittle, in her article on the ewer, beautifully connects form, style and meaning. She describes the ewer as an 'allegory of creation', represented by the auricular style which she argues is firmly embedded in the contemporary discourse on early modern science. Skilled gold and silversmiths such as Cellini and the Van Vianens, possessed a thorough material knowledge, deeply rooted in empirical experience and connected and influenced by theories from alchemy, theology and natural philosophy. They imitated and emulated nature using life casts of for example, lizards, the latter metaphors for regeneration, and manipulating their materials, such as in this case silver, to mimic and surpass God's creation of the universe.

The marvel of technical skill also features in Ching-Ling Wang and Robert van Liere's article on Chinese puzzle balls. Using computational tomography (CT) scanning, they make it possible to 'look through' the many layers of decorated spheres, cut out of one piece of ivory. The scanning data are used to make 3D reconstructions, and show the maker's toolmarks, and the intricate patterns of the inner spheres. Set against the history of the cultural environment these exquisite objects were made in and for, this is another story of superb craftsmanship, revealing the secrets of what was called 'the devil's work'.

Since the early nineteenth century, the Rijksmuseum has received donations and long-term loans from private individuals. One of the most important private patrons of the museum is The Broere Charitable Foundation. Over the past ten years, the foundation has donated a seventeenth-century painting by Ludolf Bakhuizen and a seventeenth-century Japanese folding screen by Kano Ryusetu Hidenobu, and has given no fewer than eleven important paintings and a sculpture on long-term loan. In his Short Notice, Pieter Roelofs describes the importance of these individual works of art, the common thread within the series of masterpieces and the significance of the generous involvement of The Broere Charitable Foundation for the collection and the Rijksmuseum's permanent display.

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Detail of fig. 9, p. 206