



The Leeuwarden Lacquer Room: a Royal Puzzle

• JOHAN DE HAAN •

In May 1747 Prince Willem Carel Hendrik Friso left his birthplace of Leeuwarden for ever and moved to The Hague to take the reins of power as William IV, stadholder of all seven Dutch provinces. With the departure of William and his wife Anne, the daughter of the king of England, the palace in the Frisian capital lost its status as the permanent residence of the stadholder and his family, a role the building had played since it was purchased by the States of Friesland in 1587 (fig. 1).¹

In the physical sense, the relocation of William IV and his court had few immediate consequences for the palace. Tourists who visited the building in the

*Detail of
Lacquer room
from the royal court
in Leeuwarden.*

*Fig. 1
ANONYMOUS,
The Stadholders'
Palace in Leeuwarden,
ink on paper, c. 1685,
Historisch Centrum
Leeuwarden Collec-
tion.*

second half of the eighteenth century could still admire the quantities of porcelain in the magnificent kitchen, marvel at the marble bath and peek into the two 'closets' or inner chambers in the stadholder's wife's apartments.

By the time the furniture had been sold after the Velvet Revolution in 1795 and a major part of the building had been demolished at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the former palace of the stadholders had lost much of its charm. Nonetheless what remains stands today, concealed beneath a thick coat of plaster, in Leeuwarden's Hofplein. The staircase built in 1709-1710 to a design by Daniel Marot (later modified) and the 'salle de



cérémonie' of the same date can still be seen in the building, which is now a hotel.² Elsewhere in the building there are remnants of old chimneypieces.



Fig. 2
The Lacquer Room
in the Rijksmuseum,
on view in the Rijks-
museum, 1984-2003.
Rijksmuseum Photo-
graphic Collection,
Amsterdam.

The Lacquer Room in the Rijksmuseum

The glory of the Frisian court is nowhere more effectively illustrated than in the collection of the Rijksmuseum, which has owned the 'lacquer room' from the palace in Leeuwarden since 1880 (fig. 2).³ Until the closure of the main museum building in 2003 this 'period room' could be seen in the Decorative Arts Department – to the annoyance of some Frisians, it must be said. In 1978 S.J. van der Molen asked despairingly in the Leeuwarden Courant newspaper: 'How on earth could Leeuwarden and Friesland have been robbed of such an exotic and valuable work of art?'⁴ In 1994 Peter Karstkarel, who described the room as 'the oldest lacquerwork interior in Europe' and 'the pride of the South-east Asian collection', did not scruple to call its removal 'art theft from the region'.⁵ Two years earlier, members of Leeuwarden council had asked the municipal executive to find out whether it would be possible to get

the lacquer room back from the Rijksmuseum.⁶ The Rijksmuseum's answer was unequivocal: there could be no question of 'return'.⁷

Beautiful and convincing as the lacquer room may have appeared to visitors in the Rijksmuseum, recent research into the layout of the rooms in the Leeuwarden palace has given rise to doubts about the arrangement of the elements that go to make it up.⁸ A combination of eighteenth-century descriptions and nineteenth-century floor plans and elevations suggests that the components of the lacquer room do not all come from the same room.⁹ This seemed to be a good reason to undertake an attempt at a virtual reconstruction.

'Most remarkable Chinese panelling'

The rebuilding of the stadholders' former palace in Leeuwarden that took place in 1880 and 1881 gave us the building we see today. In 1878 King William III transferred responsibility for the building to the State and it was decided to convert it into an official residence for the King's Commissioner.¹⁰ It would also continue to serve as a pied-à-terre for the Royal Family.¹¹ The architect Herman Rudolf Stoett was commissioned to produce a design, and in the years that followed the building underwent a metamorphosis inside and out.

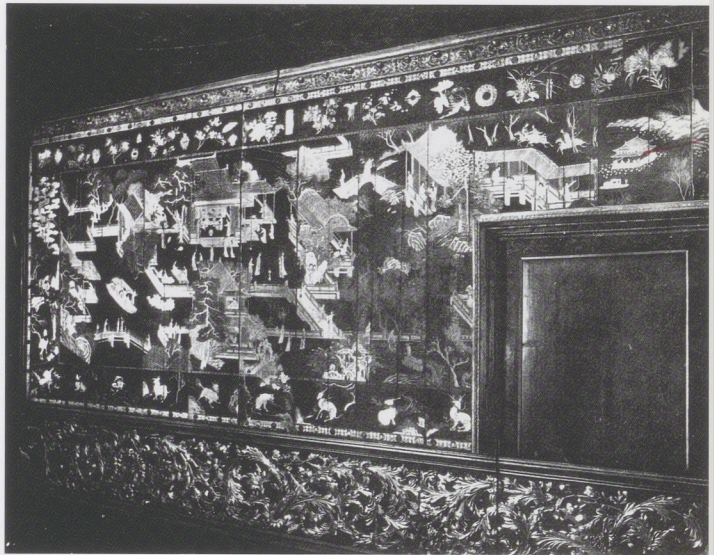
Although Stoett almost certainly did not think that anything of much value was being lost, he nonetheless dealt conscientiously with some of the more important elements. Marot's grand reception room and the staircase he designed remained intact, although they were considerably modified. The stucco ceiling in the reception room – probably executed by Johannes Sima around 1709 – was destroyed, but the eighteenth-century fireplaces and their surrounds in the small rooms on the ground floor were reused in other rooms.¹²

The Minister of the Interior took an extraordinary interest in Leeuwarden Palace. In 1880, with the minister's permission, Jonkheer Victor De Stuers, a senior official at the Ministry of the Interior and pioneer of the Dutch historic buildings trust, and his good friend, the architect of the Rijksmuseum P.J.H. Cuypers, went to Leeuwarden to see whether any parts of the interior of the palace could be used in the new Rijksmuseum, which was then under construction.¹³

The transcript of the letter De Stuers and Cuypers sent to the Provincial States of Friesland after their visit clearly reflects their disappointment. The writers had evidently seen that there was little left of the interior of the palace that evoked the atmosphere of life at the court of the Frisian Nassaus, and they advised the minister to ensure that some '... most remarkable Chinese panelling, which will be lost during this rebuilding, a ceiling decoration and some over-doors are preserved and, having been carefully demolished, are transferred to the National Museum as examples of the decoration of rooms in the eighteenth century'.¹⁴

The minister accepted De Stuers and Cuypers's recommendations. In the archives of the Van Harinxma thoe Slooten family – the first person to occupy the palace as commissioner was Binnert Philip van Harinxma thoe Slooten – there are draft specifications containing the following provisions. '19. Servant's Quarters' above the Kitchen. The panelling, wall covering and ceilings in both the existing small rooms to be carefully dismantled, packed in crates in accordance with the instructions and transported to the berth of one of the steamboats sailing from Leeuwarden to Amsterdam. For each instance of damage to the aforementioned panelling caused by negligence, the contractor shall pay a fine of 50 to 100 guilders depending on the degree of the damage caused.'¹⁵

According to the specifications, the two small rooms were then to be knocked into one to provide a servant's room.



The elements of the interior shipped to Amsterdam in 1880 in any event included a dado of carved and gilded limewood 79 cm high, a painted ceiling measuring 505 by 280 cm, parts of a wooden cornice decorated with palmettes and (Orange?) apples, and wall covering composed of various panels of coromandel lacquer, 215 cm high.¹⁶

A trip across the Zuyder Zee brought the components to Amsterdam, where they went on display in the newly opened Rijksmuseum in 1885. Thanks to the 1887 museum guide, *Wegwijzer door het 's Rijks Museum*, we know that they were in the eastern part of gallery 151, on the ground floor.¹⁷ Although the guide does not mention the painted ceiling, photographs dating from 1885 show that it was indeed in the room, complete with the gilded cornice (fig.3).¹⁸ Victor de Stuers also mentioned it in his guided tour of the Rijksmuseum in 1897, but made a mistake in the gallery numbers, placing the ceiling in the adjacent room (152).¹⁹ The photographs show that the 1885

Fig. 3
West wall of the
Lacquer Room in
the Rijksmuseum, on
view in the Rijks-
museum, 1885.
Rijksmuseum Photo-
graphic Collection,
Amsterdam.

display consisted of two long walls. The south wall was angled, while in the north wall there was a door – which subsequently disappeared – incorporating part of the dado. Judging by the museum floor plan, this door could not actually be used. The dado, remarkably, was installed upside down; this can also be seen in a detail illustration in the 1907 catalogue of the furniture in the museum.²⁰ In it the dado is described as ‘part of a continuous dado of a carved openwork vine ornament in limewood, gilded on *pâte*. The ornament itself, which is secured to a separate black wooden ground, consists of elaborate spiral coils and scrolls of acanthus stems, buds, fruit and foliage ...’.

In 1934 a new exhibit was created in the Drucker Annexe, the museum’s south wing. The two walls were assembled differently and displayed as independent elements in gallery 345, so that the ‘period room’ concept was abandoned. Photographs in the *Verlagen’s Rijks Verzamelingen* of 1934 show that the dado was now the right way up, but there was no longer any sign of the door panelling.²¹

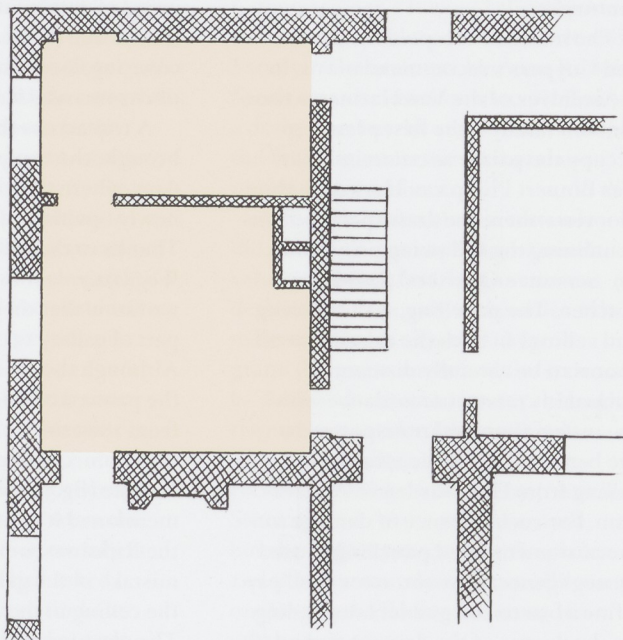
After the war T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, then head of the Department of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, decided that the various components of the lacquer room should be reunited in an attempt to reconstruct the original configuration.²² In the new layout the lacquer panels and dado echoed the dimensions of the ceiling and were divided among three walls – two long and one short. The second short wall in the exhibit was not panelled. In it was an opening through which visitors could look at the interior in the manner of a peep-show. The cornice that had been in place in the 1885 display was restored to the ceiling, but two consoles were added in the corners. These vanished again in modifications made in the 1982-1984 period, when the missing sections of the cornice were reconstructed in plastic.²³ The carved decoration of the

dado in the corners was also restored, partly with old carving, partly with new.²⁴ After this latest remodelling, the lacquer room had become an aesthetically pleasing and natural-looking arrangement in which inconsistencies in the dimensions and in the way the different components fitted together had as far as possible been glossed over. The pieces that had come from Leeuwarden in 1880 now appeared to have been assembled into a single, definitive, indivisible entity – ‘the lacquer room’. But the 1880 specifications said nothing about *one* ‘closet’...

The Components of the Lacquer Room in their Original Setting

The two small rooms in Leeuwarden Palace that were demolished in 1880 are shown on a floor plan of the palace attached to the draft specifications. The new use (‘19. Servant’s Quarters’) is marked on the plan (fig. 4). Eighteenth-century descriptions and inventories of the palace make it plain that these small areas had once been part of the stadholder’s wife’s apartments, also known

Fig. 4
Floor plan of the two small rooms dismantled and knocked together in 1880. Sketch based on the drawing accompanying the 1880 draft specifications.



as the princess's quarters.²⁵ They were closets – private inner chambers that could be reached from the state bedroom.

Closets occupied a specific place in aristocratic and royal apartments: only intimates and very high-ranking guests were received in these private rooms. The closet was usually placed at the end of an enfilade – a suite of rooms with doorways facing one another – such that it looked out on to the park. This was the case in Leeuwarden: the closets on the ground and first floors overlooked the palace's relatively small but sunny garden.²⁶

The bedroom from which the closets could be reached no longer existed in 1880. It had been in a part of the palace that was demolished in 1805.

Fig. 6
Floor plan of part of the apartments on the first floor, situation c. 1795. Sketch based on eighteenth-century descriptions and inventories.

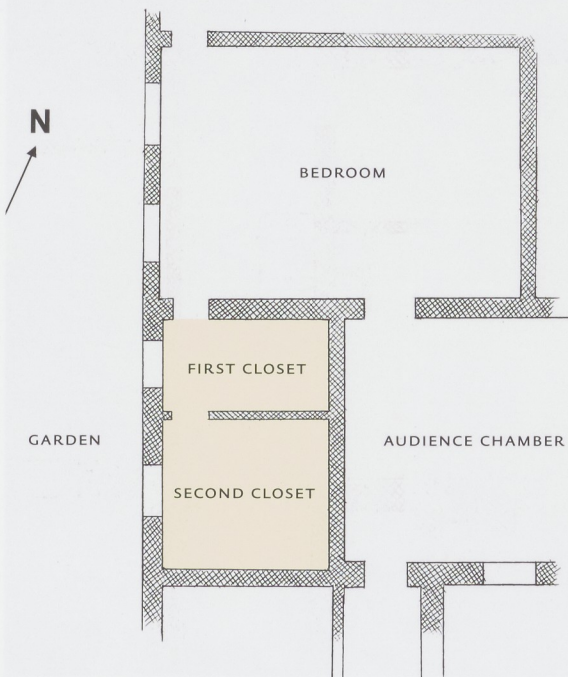
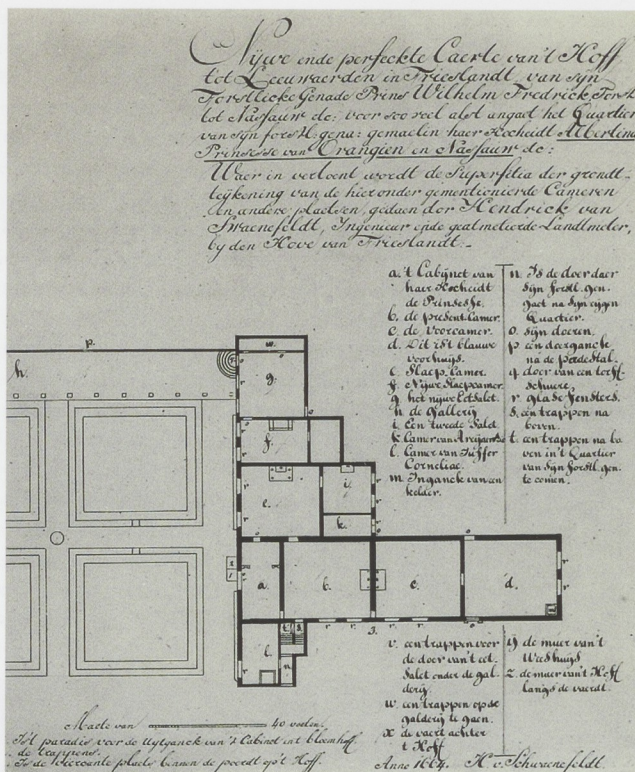


Fig. 5
HENDRICK VAN SCHWAENENFELDT, Floor plan of Albertine Agnes's apartments on the ground floor of Leeuwarden Palace, 1664, ink on paper, Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden Collection.



The layout of the ground floor of this wing is known from a survey drawing of 1664 (fig. 5).²⁷ It shows the rooms occupied by Princess Albertine Agnes, the daughter of Frederick Henry, the Prince of Orange, and Amalia van Solms. She had had the stadholders' palace considerably extended after her marriage to her cousin William Frederick, and introduced the French system of apartments in Leeuwarden.²⁸ We know from eighteenth-century descriptions and inventories that the layout of the apartments on the first floor was the same as that on the ground floor, so that a reconstruction can be made.²⁹ Leading back from an outer room for the bodyguard there was an antechamber, an audience chamber, a large bedroom and two closets accessed from the bedroom (fig. 6). There were also various private offices, including the bathroom with the marble bath.

Henry Casimir II and Henrietta Amalia of Anhalt-Dessau

The style of the dado and ceiling in the Rijksmuseum indicates that they were made in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The monograms in the corners of the painted ceiling confirm this (fig. 7). They are those of Stadholder Henry Casimir II and his wife Henrietta Amalia of Anhalt-Dessau, who took up residence in the palace in 1684.³⁰ During their occupancy the stadholder's palace and its immediate surroundings were given a considerable face-lift. The canal in front of the palace was vaulted over and transformed into a small parade ground or 'place d'armes', a new barracks for the stadholder's guard was built opposite the court and new iron railings were erected around the palace forecourt.

Henrietta Amalia, in particular, was fond of building and had a great sense of status and appearances, as we see from her later involvement in the rebuilding of Oranienstein, her dower house in Dietz, Nassau, where she commissioned artists and craftsmen who also worked for her cousin, King-Stadholder William III.³¹

Initially major works in the palace were paid for by the Provincial States; they, after all, owned the building. After 1686, however, the States made a sum of 10,000 Pounds available to Henry Casimir II's steward annually for the 'repair and maintenance of His Royal Highness's Court, Stables and Garden'.³² This certainly relieved the Receiver of Excise for the States of Friesland of a significant administrative burden.

Fig. 7
Attributed to Elias and Tobias van Nijmegen,
Monogram in one of the corners of the ceiling of the lacquer room, 1695.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. no. SK-NM-16709)



The earliest references to a closet in Henrietta Amalia's apartments date from 1686. They are the last direct payments for work done in the court that appear in the Receiver of Excise's payment orders and relate to work in 'the Closet of Her Royal Highness'.³³ This reference to 'the Closet' suggests that there was only one closet in Henrietta Amalia's apartments, as there was in those of her mother-in-law, Albertine Agnes, on the ground floor. The sums involved were relatively large: 350 carolus guilders to Philippe Duruel, gilder, 'for gilding some works in Her Royal Highness's Closet' and 382 guilders, 3 stivers and 8 cents to master woodcarver Wytze Allerts 'for some foliage he made'.³⁴

It is tempting to associate the carving on the dado in the Rijksmuseum with these payments. Stylistically, in any event, there is nothing against dating the carving to about 1686. The decoration – acanthus tendrils intertwined with oak leaves, holly and rosehip motifs – is typical of a period preceding the use of French-style strapwork and foliage which Daniel Marot's influence was to make popular a few years later. The carving is also very similar to work of this time that can be placed in the context of commissions for the Frisian court.³⁵ A particularly good example is the carving attributed to Pytter Nauta for the two stadholders' pews that were installed in the two main churches of Leeuwarden in 1696.³⁶ The carvings made by Gerrit Thomas (Payaar) for the tops of the magistrates' benches in the main church of Sneek are also very like that on the dado.³⁷ The gilded pewter coffin in which the body of Henry Casimir II was interred in the tomb in the great church of Leeuwarden in 1696 was likewise decorated with acanthus motifs.³⁸

As yet, we know little about the woodcarver Wytze Allerts. He was in any event involved in making triumphal arches and firework displays

erected in Leeuwarden in 1684 on the occasion of the entry of Henry Casimir II and his young bride. The States paid him for his work in instalments.³⁹ According to a description of the entry by J. Hagenaar in *Nader, en breder beschrijvinge der princelijke inhalinge* (1684), the 'magnificent and Princely arrangements' were 'wrought with such excellent work ... by W. Allerts, Master Woodcarver'.⁴⁰ Might it be that on her entry into the town Henrietta Amalia was so struck by Wytze Allerts's work that she entrusted the carving in her closet to him?⁴¹

The painted ceiling is also associated with particular artists. Niemeijer attributes it to the brothers Elias and Tobias van Nijmegen. We know courtesy of Van Gool that they went to the palace in Leeuwarden in 1695 to work in an unspecified room.⁴² Their clients, Henry Casimir II and Henrietta Amalia, were so delighted, reports Van Gool, that the brothers left Leeuwarden with 'a well-filled purse'. Although an attribution to the Van Nijmegens makes sense, it is not entirely convincing. On closer inspection, the similarity Niemeijer spotted in a ceiling in Den Bosch Town Hall that was certainly painted by Elias van Nijmegen in 1693 is not as great as the photographs suggest.

Whoever painted the ceiling and whatever its date, given the dimensions it must have been done when the original closet was being – or had been – divided into two rooms. This may have happened in 1686, so that the payments to Philippe Duruel and Wytze Allerts relate to this alteration. Details in the inventory of Henrietta Amalia's possessions compiled in 1688 and subsequently updated suggest that there were two closets at that time. It lists two wall coverings of East Indian and French damask for the 'small room', which might imply that there was also another closet.⁴³ It is uncertain, however, whether this other closet already had the lacquer

panelling on the walls referred to in later sources, since the three twelve-leaf screens from which this wall covering was supposedly made are referred to in the inventory as intact screens.⁴⁴

If the painted ceiling really was made by the Van Nijmegen brothers in 1695, we should not be surprised by the gap of almost ten years between the carving on the dado and the painting of the ceiling. Improvements and modifications carried out in phases fit the increasingly clear picture we have of the way wealthy clients in the Netherlands decorated their homes.⁴⁵

The Furnishings of the Closets in the Eighteenth Century

Intriguingly, the earliest eighteenth-century description of the interior of Leeuwarden Palace, which was compiled by the Englishman John Farrington in 1710, refers to just one closet in the first-floor apartments.⁴⁶ However, Farrington made several demonstrable errors in his description, so it is impossible to say with certainty whether or not there really was only one closet in the princess's quarters in 1710. Farrington in any event noted that the room was hung with an 'Abundance of Curious Paintings' and that it contained an 'Amber Table'. He said that this was 'very large' and that it had cost '30,000 Rix Dollars'.⁴⁷

The inventory compiled in 1712 after the death of Stadholder Johan Willem Friso did not include the rooms of his widow, Maria-Louise of Hesse-Cassel, and so it provides no information about the closet or closets in the princess's quarters.⁴⁸ The inventory drawn up in 1731 when William (IV) attained his majority, however, most certainly does.⁴⁹ For the first time there is an unequivocal reference to two closets, which are described as the 'front room' and the 'second room'.⁵⁰ According to the description the front room had two doors, above which there were arrangements of porcelain,



and it was hung with red damask edged with gold braid. The wall covering was already 'old' by then, so it must have been there for some time. The inventory also shows that there were two triads of gilt furniture (mirror, table and two guéridons) in the room and lists a large quantity of porcelain. This was displayed above the doors, on the fireplace panelling and on and under the tables. The greater part of the large collection of miniatures also proves to have been in the first closet. The inventory reports that the second closet is 'panelled with East Indian lacquered woodwork instead of wall hangings'. As for furniture, it lists an amber set – probably with the table Farrington saw in 1710 – an armchair, three tabourets with red covers and three lacquer tables. The inventory also describes pyramid-shaped corner

Fig. 8
FOLLOWER OF
SIMON TROGER,
Three Beggars,
from a set of thirteen
male and female
beggars, probably
from the lacquer room
in Leeuwarden, ivory,
walnut with glass eyes,
approx. 27 cm high.
Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam (inv. no.
BK-NM-7529/7541).



cabinets, 'made of wood, gilded, and decorated with mirrors to display porcelain' in three corners (the door was in the fourth corner so there was no room there for a cabinet).⁵¹ These display cabinets are reminiscent of the – much larger – pieces of furniture dating from around 1695 that a cousin of Henrietta Amalia's commissioned for Oranienburg Castle near Berlin.⁵²

The inventory compiled in 1764 largely follows that of 1731.⁵³ In 1764 the front closet was still hung with the old red silk damask, still had two sets of gilt furniture and was still full of porcelain. The miniatures and paintings were also listed in the inventory, but according to a note on this document they were taken to The Hague that year. There was also a new set of objects in the room: on one of the tables under the mirrors there was a 'a company of

beggars in ivory, consisting of thirteen pieces', most likely the work of the Bavarian carver Simon Troger or one of his followers (fig. 8).⁵⁴ In the second closet, where the wall covering was likewise unchanged, there was more porcelain in 1764 than there had been in 1731. Also new were some wooden figurines and on the amber table there stood a 'modelled stone bust of the Queen of England'. This was probably the bust of Queen Caroline, Princess Anne's mother, sculpted by Michael Rysbrack (fig. 9). It is now in the Rijksmuseum collection.⁵⁵

Information from the inventories is supplemented by descriptions of the interior of the palace dating from the third quarter of the eighteenth century.⁵⁶ They, too, mention the closets in the princess's apartments. The description an anonymous lady gave of her visit to



Fig. 9
 (JOHN) MICHAEL
 RYSBRACK
 (1694-1770),
*Bust of Queen
 Caroline of England,
 Mother of Princess
 Anne, terracotta, 1738.*
 Rijksmuseum,
 Amsterdam (inv. no.
 BK-NM-5760).

the stadholders' palace in August 1774 is brief, but of the four rooms she considers worth mentioning, the first is 'a gold lacquer closet'.⁵⁷ In the much lengthier report of her travels written by a similarly anonymous tourist in 1789, both closets are mentioned: 'a little closet, and another alike with Chinese wall covering, and with tables, mirrors and a chess set, all in amber.'⁵⁸ The mention of both closets in the *Tegenwoordige Staat van Friesland* published in 1786 can serve as a summary of the eighteenth-century situation. After a description of the princess's bedroom, which was 'ceilinged over with a cupola, beauti-

fully decorated and the cornices gilded', the author goes on to discuss the two closets. 'At the side of this room one goes into two extraordinary closets, each overlooking the garden through a sliding window, the rearmost being inlaid with Chinese decorations, and ornamented above with a ceiling with gilded cornices. One also finds here some skilfully made pieces and rarities inlaid with amber, and in the four [sic] corners cabinets set off with gold. In the foremost closet hang two very large mirrors, one above the other, and below the one stands a table on which is placed a company of beggars, very skilfully made of ivory.'⁵⁹

The Revolution of 1795 and the Sale in 1804

The revolution of 1795 put an end to the stadholders' power in the Republic. In 1795 – for the last time – an inventory was drawn up; this one was for the sale of the movable property in the palace.⁶⁰ Since the building had undergone two renovations in the intervening years it might be expected that things would also have been changed in the closets.⁶¹ This proves not to have been the case; the furnishings of the little rooms described in the 1795 inventory correspond with the earlier inventories in almost every detail. In the front room tabourets had replaced the guéridons and in the second closet the exotic aspect had been somewhat enhanced since 1764 with the addition of a Chinese parasol and a woven mat on the floor. The porcelain in this room now had many 'defects'.

The 1795 inventory is the first source to reveal that the front closet was smaller than the rear one. It refers to the former as a 'little room' and to the one behind it as a 'room'. Since virtually nothing had changed in the decorations and furnishings of the closets, we may safely assume that this had been the situation throughout the eighteenth century.

The closets were referred to in their original state for the last time in 1804, in a catalogue compiled by the States of Friesland for the purposes of selling the palace.⁶² It is clear that there had been no changes in the layout of the building, which was offered for sale in three lots.⁶³ The part housing the closets was bought by Pieter Cats, who set about the demolition of the rear wing with a will.⁶⁴ In October 1805 a 'great quantity of demolished building materials' was offered for sale at 'the former Princes' Court'; as well as beams, planks and door frames there were cornices, mantelpieces and large blinds.⁶⁵ Cats moved out a few years later and surprisingly the next owner, Bernhardus Buma, made the building

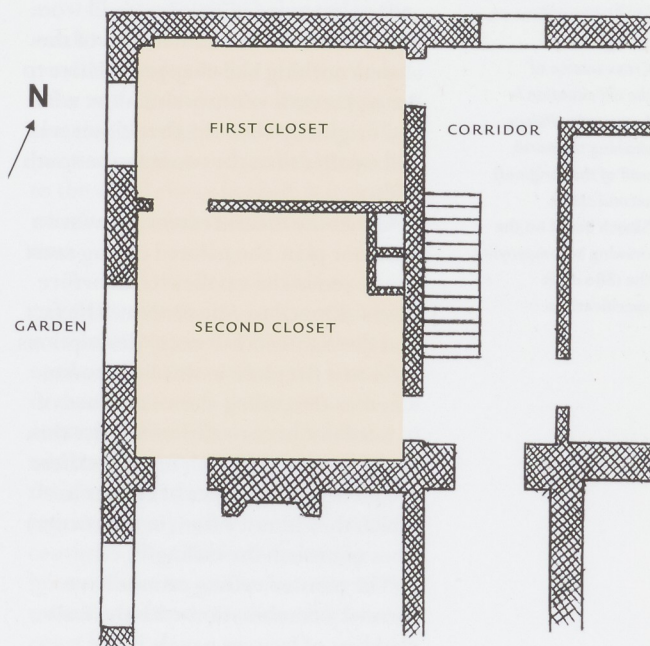
over to the sovereign William I in 1814, so that he became the first member of the House of Orange who could actually say that he owned the palace.⁶⁶

The building known from 1814 on as the Royal Palace had been considerably reduced in size by the demolition in 1805. Because the rear wing of the princess's quarters no longer existed, the closets had lost their place in the sequence of rooms. The door between the first closet and the vanished bedroom opened on to the outdoors after the demolition, so it had to be bricked up. A door to the south wing was created in the second closet, so that henceforth the two little rooms were connected to the rooms in the left foremost wing of the palace. This reversed the routing, so that the small closet, originally at the front, had now become the back one.

Location of Ceiling and Dado

The result of these logistic changes can be easily inferred from a model made around 1841 – now in the Royal Family Archives – and the floor plan drawn up in 1880 for the major rebuilding works (fig. 10).⁶⁷ Both sources clearly show

Fig. 10
Floor plan of the two small rooms in Leeuwarden Palace that were dismantled and knocked together in 1880, showing the original closets. Sketch based on the drawing accompanying the 1880 draft specifications.



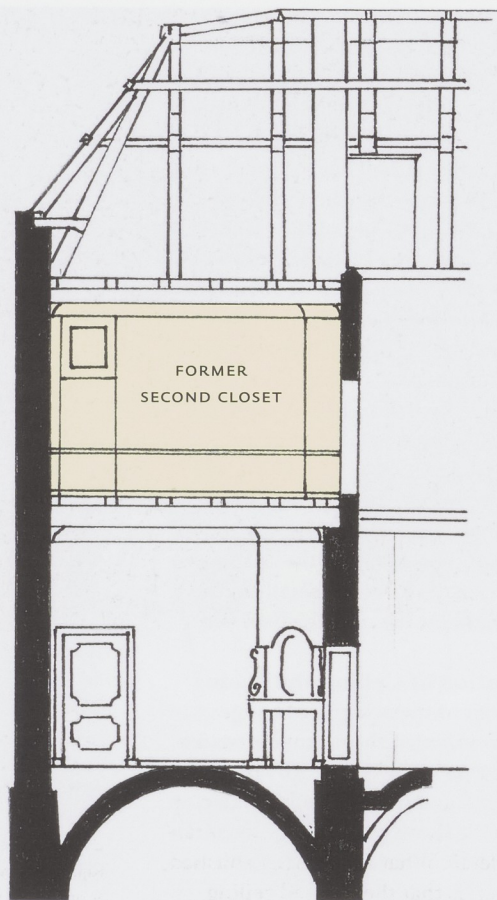


Fig. 11
Cross-section of
the old situation in
Leeuwarden Palace,
showing the north
wall of the (original)
second closet.

Sketch based on the
drawing accompanying
the 1880 draft
specifications.

that in terms of the dimensions of the closets nothing had changed relative to the eighteenth-century situation: what had originally been the first closet was still smaller than the room to the south of it.

Given the measurements shown on the floor plan, the painted ceiling must have been in the smaller room before it was shipped to Amsterdam. The fact that the eighteenth-century descriptions refer to a fireplace in this little room, whereas the ceiling shows no trace of it, need not necessarily contradict this. In the history of Dutch interiors there are plenty of examples of closets in which the chimney flue (in the corner) does not touch the ceiling.⁶⁸

The painted ceiling cannot have formed a combination with the wall cladding of lacquer panels in the

eighteenth century because at that time the panelling was in the second, larger closet. It is not possible to tell from the sources whether it was still in this room in 1880. A cross-section diagram of the old situation dating from 1880 only shows that in terms of height the lacquer panels fitted perfectly between the dado and the cornice (fig. 11). It is conceivable that the lacquer panelling was moved after the demolition of the greater part of the princess's quarters in 1805. The date 1808, which can be found on the back of the lacquer panels, could relate to their transfer to the smaller closet.⁶⁹ Some material must have been lost in the move. The large closet, after all, had three walls of approximately the same length, whereas the small closet had two long walls and one short one. We do not know how the window wall of the large closet was originally finished. It is possible that there were lacquer panels on this wall, too. If so, they did not survive the move in 1808 or 1880.

It is impossible to say for sure which room the dado was in in the eighteenth century. The cross-section of the old situation in any event shows a dado in the larger closet that corresponds in height with the dado of the lacquer room in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 11). If this is the carved dado, it must have formed a coherent whole with the lacquer panels in the eighteenth century, and the two elements may well have been reunited in 1885 for the first exhibit in the Rijksmuseum (albeit with the dado upside down at first, see fig. 3).

The original position of the carved and gilded cornice is likewise uncertain. The 1880 cross-section shows a cornice that is deeper than the one in the Rijksmuseum, which means that the Rijksmuseum's cornice cannot be the one that was in the large closet in 1880. The cornice itself provides few useful clues, although the irregular distances between the palmettes and the diagonal joints do reveal that the

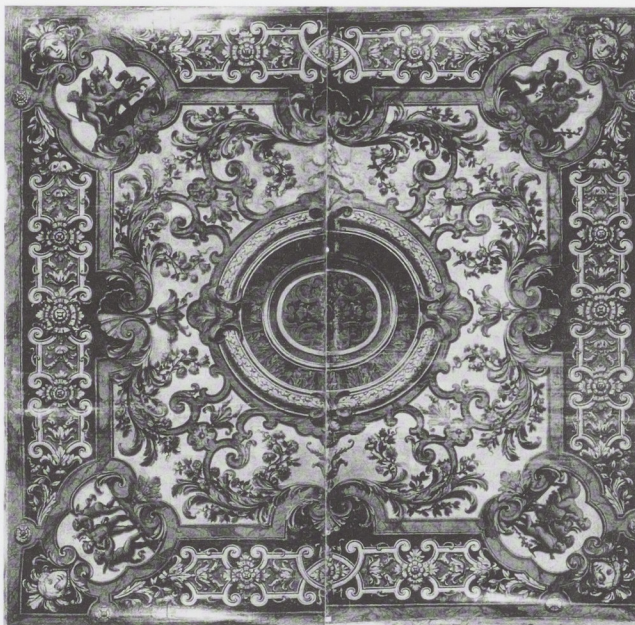
original cornice was cropped in several places. Some of these cuts appear to be the remains of solutions for corners.

Drawing any more definite conclusions is made difficult by the fact that certain components seem to have vanished. The draft specifications of 1880 refer, for instance, to 'ceilings' in the plural. In their recommendations, however, De Stuers and Cuypers only mention one decorated ceiling, and there is no reference to another ceiling in any of the sources dating from after 1880. The possibility that a ceiling decoration in two pieces, painted on canvas, of somewhat obscure provenance could be this supposedly lost ceiling was suggested in correspondence between C.J. de Bruijn Kops and Professor T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer in 1974 (fig. 12).⁷⁰ It measures about 530 by 485 cm and could consequently have fitted in the large closet. However it shows no traces of the nineteenth-century flues which, according to the 1880 floor plan, were definitely in this room.

And what of the over-doors mentioned in the 1880 specifications and De Stuers's recommendations? There is no sign of them in the photographs of the various configurations of the lacquer room in Amsterdam. A hunt through the Rijksmuseum's collection flushed out two potential candidates. The subjects of the two grisailles – figures of angels with an elephant and porcelain objects – dovetail seamlessly with the original concept of the closets. So far, however, attempts to slot them virtually into either of the Leeuwarden closets have raised more questions than they answered. In any event they do not fit the space indicated for the over-door in the second closet in the cross-section diagram of 1880 (fig. 11).

Conclusion

The elements of the Leeuwarden lacquer room were originally divided between two rooms – a small 'front'



or 'first' closet and a large 'rear' or 'second' closet. The exact relationship between the interior components of the two little rooms and the later changes to them cannot be reconstructed in detail. What has been established, however, is that the painted ceiling most likely originally belonged in the small 'first' closet, whereas the lacquer panelling and possibly also the dado were to be found in the larger 'second' closet in the eighteenth century. The lacquer panels were probably moved to the small closet in 1808; it is unclear whether the dado went with it at that time.

From all this it is possible to conclude that the lacquer room which was on display in the Rijksmuseum until 2003 did not reflect the situation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Frisian stadholders and their consorts never knew it in this form, yet despite this the closet remains – more than two and a half centuries after William IV left the house where he was born – one of the most eloquent reminders of Frisian court life.

Fig. 12
Painted ceiling,
possibly from the
stadholders' palace
in Leeuwarden,
c. 1700, oil on canvas,
Rijksmuseum,
Amsterdam (inv. no.
SK-A-4656 and 4657).

NOTES

- 1 On the history of the building and occupancy of the stadholder's palace in Leeuwarden, see A. L. Heerma van Voss, 'De Friese stadhouders uit het huis Nassau en hun residentie-verblijven', in: *De Vrije Fries* 44, 1960, pp. 80-91; W.H. Kuipers, *Leeuwarder huis en hof. Stadhuis en stadhouderlijk hof*, Leeuwarden s.a.; Peter Karstkarel, 'Nassause sporen in Leeuwarden. Hofstad Leeuwarden van 1587 tot 1764. I', in: *Jaarboek Oranje-Nassau Museum* 1985, pp. 30-63; *Ibid.*, 'Nassause sporen in Leeuwarden. Hofstad Leeuwarden van 1587 tot 1764. II' *Jaarboek Oranje-Nassau Museum* 1986, pp. 34-59; *Ibid.*, *Leeuwarden Hofstad (Monument van de Maand*, 5, deel 8), Leeuwarden 1991; *Ibid.*, *Oranje Nassau en Friesland*, Leeuwarden 1994. Specifically on the interior of the court, see Rita Mulder-Radetzky, 'Huizen van Albertine Agnes' in: S. Groenveld, J.J. Huizinga, Y.B. Kuiper (eds.), *Nassau uit de schaduw van Oranje*, Franeker, 2003, pp. 99-112; *Ibid.*, 'Het hof van Willem en Anna', in: J.J. Huizinga (ed.), *Van Leeuwarden naar 's-Gravenhage, Rond de verplaatsing van het stadhouderlijk hof in 1747*, Franeker 1997, pp. 59-72.
- 2 On Daniel Marot's work for the Frisian stadholder and his family see M.D. Ozinga, *Daniel Marot. De schepper van den Hollandschen Lodewijk xiv-stijl*. Amsterdam, 1938; A.L. Heerma van Voss, 'De Friese stadhouders uit het huis Nassau en hun residentie-verblijven' in: *De Vrije Fries* 44, 1960; R.L.P. Mulder-Radetzky & B.H. de Vries, *Geschiedenis van Oranjewoud*, Alphen aan de Rijn 1999, pp. 14-24.
- 3 Rijksmuseum Collection, inv. BK-16709 (dado and lacquer panels), inv. SK-NM-16709 (ceiling); with thanks to Dominique van Loosdrecht, who compiled the material on the measurements, successive installations and photographs of the closet.
- 4 S.J. van der Molen, 'Leeuwarden verloor een vorstelijk kunstwerk. Zeldzaam Chinees lakkabinet verhuisde naar Rijksmuseum', *Leeuwarder Courant*, 2 September 1978.
- 5 Peter Karstkarel, *Leeuwarden Hofstad (Monument van de Maand*, volume 5, part 8), Leeuwarden 1991, pp. 16,17; *Ibid.* *Oranje Nassau en Friesland*, Leeuwarden 1994, pp. 21, 121.
- 6 *Leeuwarder Courant*, 4 February 1992.
- 7 *Leeuwarder Courant*, 27 March 1992.
- 8 See Johan de Haan, 'L'appartement de l'épouse du stadhouder à Leeuwarden, Pays-Bas', in: *L'appartement Princier en Europe*, Paris (Deutsches Kunsthistorisches Forum), forthcoming.
- 9 With thanks to S. ten Hoeve of Nijland and Dr E.F. Koldewij of Arnhem for pointing me towards useful sources.
- 10 Peter Karstkarel, *Oranje Nassau en Friesland*, pp. 119-120.
- 11 The building remained the property of the Crown until 1971, when Queen Juliana sold it to Leeuwarden local authority.
- 12 The attribution of the stucco ceiling to Johannes Sima is based on a remark in a letter written by Daniel Marot in which he says that 'le frère de Sima' has begun installing the reed base on which the stucco ceiling will be made. There is a transcription of this letter in A.L. Heerma van Voss, 'De Friese stadhouders uit het huis Nassau en hun residentie-verblijven', in: *De Vrije Fries* 44, 1960, pp. 90-91. The moving of the chimneypieces is described in the draft specifications for the rebuilding drawn up in 1880: Treasury, Leeuwarden, Van Harinxma thoe Slooten Family archives, inv. 444, 'Bestek en voorwaarden wegens eene verbouwing van het Koninklijk paleis te Leeuwarden'. This panelling was incorporated so convincingly that the Leeuwarden local authority's monument records describe it as late nineteenth century.
- 13 T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Stadhouderlijke lakkabinetten', in: *Opstellen voor H. van de Waal*, Amsterdam/Leiden, 1970, note 17.
- 14 '(...) een zeer merkwaardige Chineesche betimmering, welke bij deze verbouwing komt te vervallen, alsmede een plafonddecoratie en eenige dessus de porte behouden worden en na voorzichtig uitgebroken te zijn, worden overgebracht naar het Nederlandsch Museum als proeve van de decoratie van vertrekken in de 18e eeuw'. Tresoar, Leeuwarden, Provincial Executive Archives, inv. 9361. With thanks to Dr J. van Campen of Amsterdam.
- 15 Tresoar, Leeuwarden, Van Harinxma thoe Slooten Family Archives, inv. 444, 'Bestek en voorwaarden wegens eene verbouwing van het Koninklijk paleis te Leeuwarden': '19. Dienstbodenvertrek boven de keuken. De betimmeringen, wandbekleding en plafonds, in de beide bestaande vertrekjes, voorzigtig weg te breken, volgens aanwijzing in kisten in te pakken en te vervoeren tot de legplaats van een der stoomboten varende van Leeuwarden op Amsterdam. Voor elke beschadiging door onvoorzigtigheid aan bovengenoemde betimmering toegebracht, zal de aannemer eene boete belooften van f 50 tot f 100 naarmate van de veroorzaakte beschadiging.'

- 16 The dimensions of the dado and the lacquer panels are taken from *Catalogus van meubelen en betimmeringen*, Amsterdam 1952, cat. no. 54, pp. 129-130. The dimensions of the ceiling were passed on by Dr J. van Campen of Amsterdam, with thanks to Dominique van Loosdrecht.
- 17 F.D.O. Obreen, *Wegwijzer door het 's Rijks Museum*, pp. 120-121.
- 18 Rijksmuseum Photographic Archives. Negative numbers 698 and 699. With thanks to Dr J. van Campen, Amsterdam.
- 19 V. de Stuers, *Het Rijksmuseum te Amsterdam*, 1897, p. 31.
- 20 *Catalogus van de Meubelen in het Nederlands museum voor geschiedenis en kunst te Amsterdam*, 1907, cat. no. 36, plate XVIII: 'deel van een doorlopende lambriseering van à jour gesneden rankornament in linden-hout, verguld op pâte. Het ornament zelf, dat los op een zwart houten fond is gezet, bestaat uit rijke spiraalwindingen en vlechten van acanthusstengels, knoppen, vruchten en loof (...)'.
21 *Verlagen 's Rijks Verzamelingen*, 1934, p. 11 and facing p. 24.
- 22 T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Stadhouderlijke lakkabinetten', in: *Opstellen voor H. van de Waal*, Amsterdam/Leiden, 1970.
- 23 *Jaarverslag Rijksmuseum 1983; Jaarverslag Rijksmuseum 1984*. Information kindly supplied by Dr J. van Campen, Amsterdam.
- 24 Information kindly supplied by Dr J. van Campen, Amsterdam.
- 25 In 1994 Rita Mulder-Radetzky made an initial attempt to reconstruct the floor plan of the palace in Leeuwarden; Rita Mulder-Radetzky, 'Het hof van Willem en Anna', in: J.J. Huizinga (ed.), *Van Leeuwarden naar 's-Gravenhage, Rond de verplaatsing van het stadhouderlijk hof in 1747*, Franeker 1997, pp. 59-72. A second reconstruction, modified in places, appears in: Johan de Haan, 'L'appartement de l'épouse du stadhouder à Leeuwarden, Pays-Bas', in: *L'appartement Princier en Europe*, Paris (Deutsches Kunsthistorisches Forum), forthcoming.
- 26 This was known as the 'small garden' to distinguish it from the large (prince's) park situated some distance from the palace.
- 27 Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, Leeuwarden, large sizes cabinet D 106.
- 28 Rita Mulder-Radetzky, 'Huizen van Albertine Agnes', in: S. Groenveld, J.J. Huizinga, Y.B. Kuiper, *Nassau uit de schaduw van Oranje*, Franeker, 2003, pp. 101-107; Johan de Haan, 'L'appartement de l'épouse du stadhouder à Leeuwarden, Pays-Bas', in: *L'appartement Princier en Europe*, Paris (Deutsches Kunsthistorisches Forum), forthcoming.
- 29 With thanks to H.J. Hijmersma of 's-Hertogenbosch, whose own research led him to the same conclusion.
- 30 Niemeijer mistakenly read the monograms as two interlaced As and inferred from this that it must have been Albertine Agnes who commissioned the ceiling. See J.W. Niemeijer, 'De ateliernalatenschap van het Rotterdamse schildersgeslacht Van Nijmegen', in: *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 17, 1969, pp. 77-79.
- 31 The upholsterer Pierre Courtonne, who worked for King-Stadhouder William III, is among those mentioned in the correspondence between Daniel Marot, Henrietta Amalia and her son. See M.D. Ozinga, *Daniel Marot. De schepper van den Hollandschen Lodewijk XIV-stijl*. Amsterdam, 1938, p. 218.
- 32 Tresoar, States of Friesland Archives, section 11 Friesland Provincial Executive, inv. 2682, Payment Orders of the Receiver of Excise, fo. 200.
- 33 Tresoar, States of Friesland Archives, section 11 Friesland Provincial Executive, inv. 2682, Payment Orders of the Receiver of Excise, fo. 195.
- 34 Tresoar, States of Friesland Archives, section 11 Friesland Provincial Executive, inv. 2682, Payment Orders of the Receiver of Excise 1685-1692, fo. 195: 'wegens het vergulden van eenige werken in't Cabinet van Haar Hoogheit' and 'wegens eenig gemaakt lofwerk'
- 35 Acanthus work like this was not uncommon at the time. The carver Jan de Rijk, who worked in Groningen, made it his trademark. See F.J. Veldman, *Leven en werk van Jan de Rijk, beeldhouwer*, Groningen 1995.
- 36 Sytse ten Hoeve, 'Twee stadhouderlijke gestoelten te Leeuwarden', in: *De Vrije Fries* 51, 1971, pp. 74-75.
- 37 With thanks to S. ten Hoeve, Nijland, who is preparing a publication on Payaar's work.
- 38 Three engravings of views of this gilded pewter coffin made by Petrus Aeneae around 1696 can be found in the Rijksprentenkabinet collection, inv. RP-P-1879-A-2914, RP-P-1879-A-2915 RP-P-1879-A-2916.
- 39 Tresoar, States of Friesland Archives, section 11 Friesland Provincial Executive, inv. 2681, Payment Orders of the Receiver of Excise 1677-1685, fo. 220 verso.
- 40 '(...) magnificentje en Princelijke toestel' 'met zulken uitsteekende arbeit in 't werk (...) gestelt door W. Allerts, Mr. Beeldhouwer'. Information kindly supplied by Professor P. Breuker of Boazum, with thanks to S. ten Hoeve, Nijland.

- 41 We know that her grandson William (IV) was so impressed by the triumphal arches set up for him in Breda in 1734 that he took their designer, Pieter de Swart, into his service and paid for him to be trained in Paris; R. Baarsen, 'Willem IV, prins van het rococo' in: *Rococo in Nederland*, Amsterdam-Zwolle 2001, pp. 85-86, here p. 86.
- 42 J. van Gool, *De nieuwe schouwburg der Nederlantsche kunstschilders en schilderessen*, The Hague 1750-1751, volume I, p. 258; J.W. Niemeijer, 'De ateliernalatenschap van het Rotterdamse schildersgeslacht Van Nijmegen', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 17, 1969, p. 77.
- 43 S.W.A. Drossaers & T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume II, 'Inventaris van roerende goederen van Henriette Amalia van Nassau-Dietz, geboren van Anhalt-Dessau in het hof te Leeuwarden 1688-1694', pp. 135-158, here p. 141.
- 44 S.W.A. Drossaers & T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume II, 'Inventaris van roerende goederen van Henriette Amalia van Nassau-Dietz, geboren van Anhalt-Dessau in het hof te Leeuwarden 1688-1694', pp. 135-158, here p. 147.
- 45 Cf. C.W. Fock, *Het stempel van de bewoner. Rede uitgesproken door Prof. Dr C.W. Fock ter gelegenheid van haar afscheid als hoogleraar in de Geschiedenis van de Kunstnijverheid aan de Universiteit Leiden op donderdag 14 juni 2007*, Leiden 2007.
- 46 C.D. van Strien and P.H. Breuker, 'Van Britse reizigers omstreeks 1700. Mei in útjefte fan it part oer Fryslân út Farrington (1710)', in: *It Beaken* 52 (1990), pp. 194-216, here p. 206.
- 47 In Henrietta Amalia's inventory (1688, updated in 1694) various objects and pieces of furniture made of amber are listed, but there is no mention of an amber table: S.W.A. Drossaers, T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume II, 'Inventaris van roerende goederen van Henriette Amalia van Nassau-Dietz, geboren van Anhalt-Dessau in het hof te Leeuwarden 1688-1694', pp. 135-158, here p. 153.
- 48 S.W.A. Drossaers & T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume II, 'Inventaris van de inboedel van het hof te Leeuwarden 1712', pp. 260-284.
- 49 S.W.A. Drossaers & T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume II, 'Inventaris van de inboedel van het hof te Leeuwarden 1731', pp. 388-425.
- 50 S.W.A. Drossaers & T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume II, 'Inventaris van de inboedel van het hof te Leeuwarden 1731', pp. 388-425, here pp. 391-393.
- 51 'van hout, verguld, en met spijgels versierd werk omme porcelijn op te setten', see S.W.A. Drossaers & T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume II, 'Inventaris van de inboedel van het hof te Leeuwarden 1731', pp. 388-425, here pp. 393-400. King William I gave some of these miniatures to the national collections; they are now held in the Mauritshuis and the Rijksmuseum.
- 52 Samuel Wittwer, 'Porzellan und Fayence im Schloss Oranienburg 1699 und 1743', in: *Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Schloss Oranienburg. Ein Inventar aus dem Jahre 1743*, Berlin, 2001, p. 34-52, here p. 38.
- 53 S.W.A. Drossaers & T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Inventarissen van de inboedels in de verblijven van de Oranjes en daarmede gelijk te stellen stukken*, 1567-1795, The Hague, 1974-1976, volume III, 'Inventaris van de inboedel van het hof te Leeuwarden 1764', pp. 32-81: 'een bedelaarsgeselschap van ivoor, bestaande uit dertien stukken'.
- 54 This is probably the set of thirteen figures of beggars in the manner of Troger in the Rijksmuseum, see J. Leeuwenberg & W. Halsema-Kubes, *Beeldhouwkunst in het Rijksmuseum*, The Hague 1973, no. 846; they came from the collection of a private individual in Leeuwarden in 1817.
- 55 'geboetseert steenen borstbeeld van de koningin van Engeland'. Rijksmuseum Collection, inv. BK-NM-5760. See F. Scholten, *Gebeeldhouwde portretten, Portrait sculptures*, Amsterdam & Zwolle 1995, no. 35.
- 56 Comparison with other sources reveals that neither woman copied existing descriptions.

- 57 National Archives, The Hague, Collot d'Escury Family Archives, inv. 208, 'Journaal of beschrijving van een zomerreis van een jeugdige bewoonster van de buitenplaats Middenburg (onder Voorburg) door verscheidene Nederlandse provincies in augustus 1774'.
- 58 Private collection, Groningen, 'Aantekening onzer reijze, over de Zuiderzee, door Friesland, Groningen, Overijssel etc. gedaan in den Jaare 1789': 'een cabinetje, nog een dito met chinees behang, en met tafels, spiegels, en een schaakspel, alles van barnsteen.'
- 59 *Hedendaagsche Historie of Tegenwoordige staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, volume 14: *Friesland*, Amsterdam, 1785-1786, pp. 97-107: 'van boven geplafoneerd [was] met een Koepel, fraai geschilderd en de lysten verguld.[...] Bezyden deeze kamer gaat men in twee byzondere kabinetjes, yder door een schuifraam in den tuin uitziende, zynde het achterste ingelegd met Chinees schilderwerk, en van boven versierd met een plafon met vergulde lysten. Ook vindt men hier eenige konstig gemaakte stukken en zeldzaamheden met brandsteen ingelegd, en in de vier [sic] hoeken boefetten met goud afgezet. In het voorste kabinetje hangen over malkander twee zeer grootte Spiegels, en onder den eenen staat eene tafel waarop geplaatst is een gezelschap Bedelaars, zeer konstig van yvoor gemaakt.'
- 60 Tresoar, Leeuwarden, Old BRF, inv. 194.
- 61 Peter Karstkarel, *Oranje Nassau en Friesland*, Leeuwarden 1994, p. 118.
- 62 National Archives, The Hague, Archives of the Nassau Estates Council, inv. 10211-160.
- 63 *Leeuwarder Courant*, 29 September 1804; 20 October 1804; 27 October 1804. The highest bids were announced in the Leeuwarder Courant of 7 and 14 November of the same year, where it was also reported that the allotment would take place on 19 November.
- 64 W.H. Kuipers, *Leeuwarder huis en hof. Stadhuis en stadhouderslijk hof*, Leeuwarden s.a., p. 29.
- 65 'grootte quantiteit afgesloopte bouwmaterialen', Leeuwarder Courant, 25 September 1805.
- 66 W.H. Kuipers, *Leeuwarder huis en hof. Stadhuis en stadhouderslijk hof*, Leeuwarden s.a., p. 29; Peter Karstkarel, 'Oranje Nassau en Friesland', p. 119.
- 67 The model is said to have been made by the palace concierge to commemorate the royal family's visit to Leeuwarden in 1841 and it gives a reliable idea of the layout of the palace. The dimensions of the rooms are actually shown on the model. This dependability does not, though, extend to the decoration of the rooms: a charming ensemble of coloured cardboard, small cut-out prints (used as over-mantel paintings) and patterned paper (wall covering). With thanks to M. Loonstra and M. de Beijer of the Royal Family Archives. The floor plan belongs with the 'Bestek en voorwaarden wegens eene verbouwing van het Koninklijk paleis te Leeuwarden' (see note 15).
- 68 For instance the chimneybreast panelling in the closet in the east bay of Middachten Castle in De Steeg (1694-1687), in the closet in the Cannenburgh in Vaassen (c. 1700), formerly in De Ehze House (c. 1700, now in Nederhemert Castle), in a room in De Voorst House near Eefde (c. 1697, destroyed in a fire in 1943), and examples in prints by Daniel Marot.
- 69 *Catalogus van meubelen en betimmeringen*, Amsterdam 1952, cat. no. 54, pp. 129-130.
- 70 Rijksmuseum Collection, inv. no. SK-A-4656; letter from C.J. de Bruijn Kops to Professor T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, dated 19 July 1974; reply from van Professor T. H. Lunsingh Scheurleer to C.J. de Bruijn Kops, dated 5 August 1974. With thanks to Dr J. van Campen.



