Since the end of the nineteenth century the city of Delft has been known culturally for two things: the painter Johannes Vermeer and Delftware. French connoisseurs played a major role in the rediscovery of both. Johannes Vermeer was rediscovered by the art critic Théophile Thoré (1807-1869) – writing under the pseudonym Wilhelm Bürger – while the first scholarly study of Delft pottery was written by Thoré’s fellow countryman Henry Havard (1838-1921). The two men had to leave France because of their political leanings, Thoré during the February Revolution of 1848, Havard as a consequence of the Commune in 1871. They both spent part of their time in exile in the Netherlands.

Havard’s research was pioneering; his research in archives dispelled the myth that had linked the two Delft discoveries. His predecessor, the German art historian, dealer and collector Auguste Demmin, who lived in France, had stated in his Guide de l’amateur de faïences et porcelaines (Paris 1867) that painters such as Jan Steen, Philips Wouwerman, Willem van de Velde and Johannes Vermeer himself, had painted on earthenware. Although this was wishful thinking on Demmin’s part, primarily intended to boost the sales of Delftware, the search for a link is certainly not entirely without founda-
between the painters and the potters. Even Vermeer’s in-laws included owners of Delftware factories. Other factory owners, Wouter van Eenhoorn and Abraham de Cooge for example, owned work by Delft painters like Leonaert Bramer. Yet we only know of a few examples of direct cross-pollination between the Delft painters and the potters. As well as consumer goods, Delftware factories also made ‘plaques’, flat pieces of painted pottery which (framed or unframed) could be hung on walls as paintings. These plaques were usually painted by Delftware painters, but in some cases by painters in oils who had also specialized in Delftware. Isaac Junius, Gijsbrecht Verhaest and Frederick van Frytom worked as independent painters in the Delftware industry.

Earlier authors have remarked that, despite the technical differences in their crafts, it is striking that there had not been more artistic influence moulded, fired and glazed by other specialists. This is why the test that the guild set for these painters consisted not of making a single object, but painting half a dozen large dishes and a fruit bowl. Another essential part of their training was to learn how to work with cobalt oxides on the porous glaze that was applied to the once fired (biscuit) earthenware. Since this is an entirely different speciality from painting in oils, the chance that a large group of Delft painters – including Vermeer – would have been able to devote themselves to painting on earthenware out of the blue seems extremely small.

Fig. 2
Stencil with The Prophet from Judah Killed by a Lion, c. 1658-60. Pen and ink on punched-through paper, diam. approx. 12 cm. Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Tichelaar Makkum Stencil Collection (accession no. 1686), box number 35.
Designs by Bramer
The pottery designs by Leonaert Bramer, a contemporary and friend of Vermeer’s, are perhaps the most interesting example of interactions between the two disciplines. He made designs that were intended to be transferred on to pottery by Delftware painters. They used a spons or stencil (a corruption of the French poncif or Italian spolvero). The outlines of a drawing or print were transferred to another piece of paper by pricking holes through both sheets. The image was then transferred on to the earthenware surface by rubbing charcoal powder, known as pounce, through the perforations in the second piece of paper or stencil. The earthenware painter was then able to further work up the transferred outlines. This technique was widely known and had been used in various crafts since the Middle Ages. In earthenware reference is made to moeder and werksponzen (mother and work stencils). The moederspons contained the original drawing and was used to prick out several werksponzen by placing a number of sheets of paper on top of each other. Some of Bramer’s surviving moedersponzen indeed show the tiny perforations (fig. 2). Various combinations of moeder and werksponzen have survived. When many pottery and tile factories had to close their doors in the nineteenth century, the stencils were acquired by factories still active or found their way into public archives as part of factory archives or into museum collections. Since Plomp’s article, a large number of additional earthenware objects with designs by Bramer have come to light. Also, alongside the eight stencils described by Plomp, a second group of no fewer than six of Bramer’s stencils were found in the same archive: Moses and the Burning Bush, The Sacrifice of Isaac, Tobias Catching a Large Fish, The Expulsion from Paradise, Joseph Thrown into the Well by his Brothers and Christ and the Samaritan Woman. This second group consists of unused work stencils that only contain outlines – none of them contain drawings by Bramer, but they are based on his compositions none-
The reference to the corresponding passage from the Bible (1 Kings 13:24) appears on a tree trunk in the foreground of the object. On the left we can see the body of the prophet from Judah, accompanied by the lion that killed him and the ass which, according to the Bible story, looked on.

On the right of the plaque, forming the foreground of the composition, are three reclining cows, a sheep and two figures. This part of the scene is based on a print by Nicolaes Berchem (fig. 3).26

The Prophet from Judah, like other examples of Bramer’s earthenware, is based on a set of drawings with scenes from the Old and New Testament which Bramer made in the mid-sixteen thirties. The drawing of the prophet from Judah from this series, which is also in Museum Prinsenhof Delft, shows the dead prophet and the lion, but not the ass (fig. 4). The corresponding mother stencil in Leeuwarden, though, does feature the ass (fig. 2).27

Plomp’s study had yet to include a seventeenth-century piece of earthenware which could be directly linked to one of Bramer’s surviving stencils. This missing link was found thanks to the acquisition of a plaque by Museum Prinsenhof Delft in 2015. This plaque is dated 1658 and shows The Prophet from Judah Killed by a Lion (fig. 1).

A comparison of the dimensions of the stencil (approx. 12 cm) and the small scene from the Bible on the plaque makes it clear that this part of the
scene must have been applied straight on to the plaque using this stencil or a corresponding work stencil. The use of the stencil also explains the necessity of the addition of Berchem’s group of animals. Bramer had made the mother stencil with a smaller flat base of a plate in mind. A comparison between the drawing and the stencil shows that the addition of the ass and a change in the prophet’s pose makes the composition more compact and thus more suitable for the flat base of a plate. This shows how several stencils could be used for one scene and that the Delftware painters had a great degree of freedom in the combining of sources.

A plaque in the Rijksmuseum’s collection, likewise dated 1658, depicting *The Prophet Elijah Fed by Ravens* has exactly the same image after Berchem on the right side. Plomp had already linked the scene from the Old Testament on the left with Bramer’s set of drawings. In view of the fact that the plaques have exactly the same foregrounds, they would not have been intended to be a series, but rather stand-alone variations. An example dated 1660 in the Rijksmuseum’s collection, built up from three different prints by Berchem, proves that plaques were frequently composed in this way.

**Mythological Scenes**

Mythological Scenes

The stencils in Tresoar not only contain scenes from the Bible but mythological scenes too: *Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Europa* and

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**Fig. 4**

LEONAERT BRAMER,
The Prophet from Judah Killed by a Lion, c. 1635-40. Ink on paper, 400 x 320 mm. Delft, Museum Prinsenhof Delft, inv. no. PDT 1031-K. Photo: Tom Haartsen
However we know of no example of earthenware that depicts *Ajax and Odysseus with the Armour of Achilles*. The quarrel between Ajax and Odysseus over the armour of Achilles is an extremely rare subject anyway; as far as we know Bramer is the only artist to have painted it.  

This painting, now in Museum Prinsenhof Delft (fig. 6), shows great similarities to the stencil. The composition and setting differ, but the concept is the same.

In 2005 Sotheby’s in Amsterdam sold a drawing by Bramer, which formed the basis for the work stencil of the scene showing Ajax and Odysseus. The drawing is round, and the same size as the pattern; it is not the mother stencil as there are no perforations in it. But it was certainly designed by Bramer for a stencil. The drawing was sold as part of a

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### Fig. 5

Stencil with *Ajax and Odysseus with the Armour of Achilles*, c. 1658-60. Perforated paper, diam. approx. 12 cm. Leeuwarden, Tresoar, Tichelaar Makkum Stencil Collection (accession number 1686), box number 35.
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set of five, with two Old Testament and three mythological drawings by Bramer. It is assumed that aside from Old and New Testament drawing series, Bramer also produced a series of scenes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* between 1635 and 1645, but too few of these drawings have been located to be able to reconstruct the series. Bramer’s choice of subjects from the Old and New Testament was also not standard. The fact that his subject matter stood out must have been a reason for the Delft potters to choose Bramer’s drawings and not the more frequently used print sources.

Until now, matching a work stencil to a contemporary earthenware object was a missing link in the chapter of Leonaert Bramer and Delftware. Its discovery gives us new insight into the entire process from design to execution by way of the mother and work stencils. The discovery of the second group of stencils after designs by Bramer not only confirms that the group of mother stencils must originally have been larger, it also shows that his designs circulated in the Delftware industry well after his death. It also sheds light on the production of secondary work stencils, on the basis of existing ones. Because those secondary stencils only contain outlines, and no longer the detailed drawing from the mother stencil, this may help to explain the large differences in quality between the designs and some of the representations on earthenware. Lastly, careful study of the designs reveals considerable large iconographic variety, which goes beyond the usual scenes from the Bible. Bramer’s flexibility in his compositions and the originality in his choice of subjects must certainly have been reasons why the designs were commissioned. These insights bring the painters and the potters in Delft a little closer together.
NOTES


3 Auguste Friedrich Demmin, Guide de l’amateur de faïences et porcelaines: poteries, terres cuites, peintures sur lave, émaux, pierres précieuses artificielles, vitraux et verreries, Paris 1867. See also Van Dam 2001 (previous note), p. 76.


5 Ibid. The master Delftware painters, assistants and master pottery turners were also members of the guild. Other employees in the factories, such as the turners’ assistants, were members of another guild.

6 Ibid., p. 89.

7 The nineteenth-century Frisian painter Christoffel Bisschop though actually did this. We know of small tests he made, which he had fired at De Porceleyne Fles in Delft.


12 We also know of a number of oil paintings by Van Frytom in addition to his signed plaques as well as a number of oil paintings by Junius. See A. Vecht, Frederik van Frytom 1622-1702: Life and Work of a Delft Pottery-Decorator, Amsterdam 1968; Jeanne de Loos-Haaxman, ‘Isaac Junius als plateelschilder’, Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum 4 (1956), pp. 102-08.

13 Bramer visited Maria Thins to convince her that Vermeer was a good potential husband for her daughter Catharina. Montias 1993 (note 9), p. 118.


15 The stencil with Christ and the Samaritan Woman in Tresoar can be found in the archives of the Frisian Delftware pottery Tichelaar, but were probably not used by this factory.

16 Examples of perforated prints, among others, can be found in the painter’s workshop of the Meissen porcelain factory, where the same method is used.

17 See Aronson and Lambooy 2008-09 (note 11).


20 Plomp 1999 (note 8), p. 208. Three of the stencils in Leeuwarden described by Plomp were donated to Museum Prinsenhof Delft by Mr Tichelaar in 2003; the mother pattern and two work patterns of Jacob’s Dream, inv. nos. PDT 1026-A, -B and -C, diam. c. 13.5 cm.

21 One of the most interesting examples is a vase with scenes from the Bible acquired by Museum Prinsenhof Delft. Museum Prinsenhof Delft Collection, on loan from the Stichting voor Hulp aan Delftse Jongeren (SHDJ), inv. no. B 45-63, h. 54 cm, diam. 27 cm.
23 The stencil can be linked to drawings by Bramer: *The Expulsion from Paradise*, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, *Tobias Catching a Large Fish* (Courtauld Institute, London, inv. nos. D.1952.RW.2951, D.1952.RW.2955 and D.1952.RW.2889); *Moses and the Burning Bush* (sale, Amsterdam (Sotheby’s), 16 November 2005, part of no. 63); *Joseph* (current whereabouts unknown; R.K.D., image no. 109231). In his turn Bramer was inspired by a print by Albrecht Dürer for *Christ and the Samaritan Woman*. The fence in the stencil and on a vase in Museum Prinsenhof Delft (note 22), however, are clear additions by Bramer.

24 Theo and Frans Laurentius, *Watermarks 1650–1700 Found in Zeeland Archives*, Houten 2008, comparable with no. 675 A (1696). *Moses and the Bramble Bush* has an iv as the watermark, which may have been part of this mark.

25 *Joseph Thrown into the Well by his Brothers* is particularly relevant, because Plomp had already linked it to a dish from a group that until a few years ago was attributed to the Haarlem Delftware potter Willem Verstraeten. Plomp’s discovery had already called this attribution into question. Van Aken-Fehmers et al. 1993 (note 10), vol. 1, pp. 228–29. The fact that a corresponding later work stencil is to be found in a little group of Delft stencils makes it even more unlikely that Verstraeten took a number of Bramer stencils with him to Haarlem.

26 See Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1985. There is a smaller plaque with just the cows in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (inv. no. C.1969–1928).

27 The decorative border in brown ink is a later addition. On the back of the pattern there is a fragmentary text in a late seventeenth-century hand which has not as yet provided any new clues for research.


29 See Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-NM-12400-4, approx. 25 x 30 cm. Ibid., pp. 22–23. See also Wuestman 1996 (note 19).


32 See Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-NM-12400-286 (dish with the rape of Europa) and Museum Arnhem, inv. no. GM 04187 (bowl with Venus and Adonis?).

33 See Apeldoorn, Paleis Het Loo, inv. nos. RL 1025 1–2 (a pair of tabletop fountains); Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. BK-18930 (plate); Amsterdam, Aronson Antiquairs, object no. D 2203 (a dish attributed to Het Moriaanshooft).

34 With thanks to Esther van der Hoorn (Museum Prinsenhof Delft).
