



Editorial

In this issue of *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin*, Maartje van Gelder and Fabio Pauletta discuss a painting by Pieter Isaacsz titled *Uprising of the Women of Rome on the Capitol*, from circa 1600. It depicts the mythical, obscure story of Papirius. Most contemporaneous representations of this event focus on the boy Papirius and members of the Senate. After having been present at a Senate's meeting, Papirius told his mother that the senators were considering bigamy – a lie the boy fabricated to keep the Senate's actual affairs secret. Most of these images served to instruct young men on the virtue of confidentiality and the contrast between men of restraint and overemotional women. In the Rijksmuseum painting, Isaacsz relegates the men to the margins and instead emphasizes the strength of the women who, shown centre stage, stand up for their rights. The theme is too rare for the painting to have been made for the art market. It was more likely commissioned by a wealthy Amsterdam merchant for the occasion of his marriage. The painting would have served the new couple as a conversation piece.

Maartje Brattinga researches a goblet with a stipple engraving of the author Elisabeth Wolff-Bekker (known as Betje Wolff, 1738-1804) and its very unusual inscription referring to her work, the engraver and the person who commissioned it. Glasses with portraits were mostly used in gatherings of patriots, when toasting their leaders. Wolff-Bekker, a patriot herself, was famous for her epistolary novels; in the glass's inscription, however, she is honoured for her active involvement in religious polemics. The glass was most likely made for Pieter Heijnsius, a well-to-do contractor and the father-in-law of Wolff-Bekker's publisher. Brattinga shows that, based on the early provenance, the glass can be linked to two of Wolff-Bekker's closest friends. In this way, a circle of acquaintances is reconstructed, demonstrating how portrait glasses of the eighteenth century were used in celebration of shared values.

Both of these articles pose a methodological research inquiry that is fundamental to art historical practice: how was an object conceived and what was its earliest function and use? Besides researching an object's genesis, another aspect of the art historian's *modus operandi* is labelling artworks and artists. This might be based on style, in which a work is classified into categories of similar works, or quality, in which an artist and his work are assessed in comparison to others. When examining art from past centuries, this labelling might seem useful and harmless. In modern times, however, Jos ten Berge argues that this practice can also prevent artists from receiving the recognition they deserve and can have a major impact on their life, art and career; he does so by analysing the reception of one artist in particular. Willem van Genk (1927-2005), creator of highly detailed drawings and collages, became the target of criticism, in which his mental problems all too often resulted in his disqualification as a professional artist. Labels such as mentally void, maladjusted, naive, amateurish, brutish, and outsider were consequently bestowed on him. At times, Van Genk's works show how these labels wounded him. In 2016, as part of its presentation of the twentieth century, for a period of one year, the Rijksmuseum exhibited his drawing *Moscow* (c. 1955). Even though still accompanied by a museum label mentioning his mental issues, Van Genk's work finally hung alongside works by other acknowledged artists.