



Ida Peelen: Making the Museum ‘Fruitful’ for the Public

• RACHEL ESNER •

At the beginning of the present century, the dissertation and other publications by Yvette Marcus-de Groot¹ brought to light the general biographical outline of the pioneering career of Miss Ida C.E. Peelen (1882-1965, fig. 1) – the first female *volontaire* at the Rijksmuseum and the first female director of a national (*rijks*) museum. The present article seeks to move beyond the biography to achieve an understanding of Peelen’s work in the art historical and museological context of her time. How did her experience in the Rijksmuseum – in a period full of controversy about the definition and role of museums, and which also witnessed the definitive establishment of art history as a discipline in the Netherlands – shape her thinking and actions? What were the intellectual and practical inspirations for her work as curator and director? Rather than understanding her as an exception, how might we place her within the international network of museum reformers of the early twentieth century? Taking the notion of museum work as a form of care for both artefacts and society as a lens, the following will examine Peelen and her contributions to the Dutch museum landscape in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

< Fig. 1
Portrait of Ida Peelen in
Museum Huis Lambert
van Meerten in Delft,
by Abraham Favier.
Cover image of *De
Prins der Geïllustreerde
Bladen*, 6 October 1928.
The Hague, KB –
National Library of the
Netherlands (Delpher),
TG 33002.

Making Invisible Labour Visible

In 1987, sociologist Arlene Kaplan Daniels published an article entitled ‘Invisible Work’, in which she described how our common understanding of the idea of ‘work’ focusses on activities for which one is paid.² Women’s work, she argued, is therefore devalued, for it is often underpaid or unpaid, whether on the job or in the home. This view, however, is highly restrictive and, moreover, leads to all kinds of work remaining invisible: for example, work involved in the social construction of daily life and – crucially for the context of this article – *the maintenance and development of institutions*. Daniels proposed an expansion of the concept of ‘labour’ to include many activities not previously considered, positing that a keener awareness of the work involved in *social maintenance and supportive functions* serves to engender respect for the people who do them.

As the COVID-19 crisis amply demonstrated, the most invisible labour forces – in terms of both respect and financial compensation – are those that have a so-called ‘duty of care’. *The Care Manifesto*, published in 2020, suggests that the neo-liberal focus on individuality and autonomy has splintered society so effectively that it has become impossible to imagine a world in which *interdependence* is valued.³ This has had an enormous

impact, for example, on health care, but it could also be understood to affect any form of labour that has care as its core. And here, too, women have had to bear the brunt, as the kinds of work they do are disproportionately in those sectors in which caring is paramount, *including the curatorial sector*.⁴

As part of the overarching and long-term project *Women of the Rijksmuseum*, my research aims to bring the hitherto invisible contribution of female workers of the Rijksmuseum in the period before 1960 to light. Aside from the many practical problems that have been encountered – for example, that many women worked as so-called *volontaires* and have therefore left no administrative records – there are also conceptual issues that stand in the way of a proper understanding of the female contribution to museum work in general. Two that seem fundamental are: 1) how we define ‘curating’; and 2) the role art history has played in how museums are organized and, consequently, the value these institutions place on various types of objects.

To begin with the latter: since the establishment of the discipline and its institutionalization in the nineteenth century, art history has placed oil painting at the top of the pyramid of its objects of study. Museums, invented at the same moment, followed suit. Other kinds of objects were relegated to much lower rungs on the institutional ladder. Not surprisingly perhaps, these domains – the decorative arts, textiles, fashion and costume, etc., i.e. domains traditionally associated with the female realm *outside* the museum – have often fallen under the purview of female labourers considered ‘good enough’ to care for these ‘minor’ collections. Because these departments were considered less significant, they offered women, on the one hand, greater opportunity: women were allowed to work there, to build up

collections and to make their mark. At the same time, however, this same ranking system has meant that they have not received the credit they deserved for their contributions.

Turning to the question of defining the curatorial: problematically, since the mid-twentieth century, ‘curating’ has come to be largely associated with exhibition making. Seen historically, however, the curator’s main task was to care for the collection, by no means limited only to preserving the physical integrity of objects. Traditionally, the curator’s remit included labour such as documentation, cataloguing, research into the collection and writing for a particular field of specialization. These were tasks very often delegated to female workers in the museum – without, however, honouring them with the job title of ‘curator’ often bestowed on their male counterparts. In order, then, to make women’s labour in the museum visible and to better understand its nature, we need to revive the original definition of curating as a form of *care* and refocus on aspects of museum work that in our own time have become undervalued.

Museums in the Netherlands in the Early Twentieth Century

Once we flip the art historical hierarchy and centre the concept of curating as a form of care, women’s work emerges from the shadows. In the early twentieth century, the Rijksmuseum was still very much an institution in the process of becoming. In fact, in this period it was not even one institution at all; instead, it was made up of several museums with collections that to some extent overlapped but had separate staff and policies. One of these institutions was the *Nederlands Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst* (Dutch Museum for History and Art), which – together with the other museums that constituted the Rijksmuseum in this period⁵ – proved to be a breeding

ground for female talent in the period between circa 1906 and 1920.⁶ This collection of applied art and historical artefacts had been brought together initially with the aim of preserving and documenting all aspects of Netherlandish life and cultural production; it was therefore correspondingly diverse in terms of both its contents and its quality. As museum director Adrian Pit put it at one point, it was little more than an assemblage of historical 'junk' (*prullen*).⁷

As elsewhere in Europe at this time, however, Dutch museums were embarking on a process of transformation, moving away from a more documentary approach to collecting and display towards a more aesthetic, art historically informed and educational concept of the museum. An important inspiration in this context had been the conference 'Das Museum als Volksbildungsstätte', held in Mannheim in 1904,⁸ and in particular, the introductory lecture by Alfred Lichtwark, director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle.⁹ In the course of the nineteenth century, according to Lichtwark, museums had become little more than warehouses for historical objects, where artefacts were collected not for their aesthetic value but simply for the sake of completeness, with little to no attention paid to the public and its needs. In Lichtwark's view, the museum was to assume a new and dynamic role as a driving force in the (above all: aesthetic) education of the 'common man'. It was to be an addition to schools and universities and equal in importance, not merely a repository but a disseminator of knowledge. To become 'fruitful'¹⁰ – a word that, as we will see, returns time and again in the Dutch context – museums would have to take on a more public-facing role. Lichtwark made numerous suggestions as to how this could be done, namely with new forms of presentation, programming and publishing, as well as

through collecting policies that would bring the institutions into line with the developments in modern artistic production. Displays were to focus on the most beautiful and important works, to be accompanied by the introduction of exhibitions, guided tours (in particular for schools) and lectures, the publication of catalogues and popularizing guidebooks, and the acquisition of contemporary art and objects to complement existing collections. In the Netherlands, Pit was one of the forerunners of this museum reform movement, which in the early nineteen twenties culminated in the unification of the Rijksmuseum collections and an entirely new display that distinguished art ('masterpieces') from historical objects.

Likewise, and in contrast to Germany, which had an already long-established *academic* art historical tradition, this was also the period in which the first professors of art history were appointed in the Netherlands. Willem Vogelsang, who also propagated the view that art history and aesthetics were inextricably linked, received a chair in Utrecht only in 1907. He was an advocate of the art historical method of Heinrich Wölfflin, who viewed art objects as the result of autonomous artistic and stylistic developments rather than historical circumstances and promoted formal analysis as the best means of understanding the work of art.¹¹ Introducing a series of lectures at the University of Amsterdam in 1900, Vogelsang made his position and his vision for the field of art history clear:

In its fundament, art history is an auxiliary science to none (unlike heraldry and numismatics, which serve history). It is concerned with an expression of the human spirit, an embodiment of human thought, will and enjoyment, much like the history of literature, which no one would ever wish to relegate to a subsidiary subject.

[Similarly,] it seeks out the relationship of art and creators across the ages to each other and their surroundings; of these works, it attempts to determine that which still holds a lasting emotional value for us today. An overly historical, one-sided treatment carries the risk, after all, of placing the art of all times on the same level.¹²

Amidst this convergence of the burgeoning museum reform movement and the establishment of the discipline along formalist lines, Ida Peelen began her career, taking up her initial post in the Dutch Museum for History and Art as the first female *volontaire*. Peelen worked under the aforementioned Pit from 1906 to 1912. She had followed Vogelsang's lectures during his time as a private tutor at the University of Amsterdam; and his short stint at the Rijksmuseum coincided with her early years. Peelen's time at the Rijksmuseum, which corresponded with different phases in the museum reform process and the institutionalization of art history, would prove formative for her thinking, as well as her curatorial practices.

Apprenticeship in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

As mentioned above, Peelen worked under the direction of Adrian Pit, who had become director of the Dutch Museum for Art and History in 1898. In line with his training in Paris, Pit's approach was informed from the start by art (rather than cultural) history, and he immediately set about reforming the museum's display to reflect the stylistic development of the various branches of the decorative arts and sculpture represented in the collection. His emphasis lay on quality and authenticity. Pit applied the same principles to his acquisitions, concentrating on furniture and ceramics – especially Delft Blue – and seeking out examples of the highest

artistic calibre, whether of Dutch or foreign origin (a novelty for a Dutch national museum). In addition, he initiated the cataloguing of the collections. In this enterprise, Pit enlisted the help of Vogelsang, who completed the first catalogue of the furniture collection in the period 1903-07.¹³ This background is important for an understanding of the work undertaken by Peelen during her time in the Rijksmuseum, as well as how it influenced her later career.

As a *volontaire* additionally without a doctoral degree,¹⁴ Peelen was not 'authorized' to carry out scholarly work. Nonetheless, she proved essential to Pit's plans. In her first year, Peelen carried out two fundamental tasks in connection with Vogelsang's furniture catalogue: the transcription and making press-ready of the object information and the photographing of the collection. For the latter, she learned both photography and film developing – thereby taking an important step in the professionalization of the care and management of the collection.¹⁵ In the following years, much of her work revolved around ceramics, an area that would become her specialty. During this time, she also published on a variety of objects, from mangle boards to Italian sculpture.¹⁶ Peelen's article on the latter treated the collection of Otto Lanz, on exhibit in the museum in 1907-08. This exhibition had played an important role in Pit's argument for expanding the collection to include masterpieces of foreign art. Works were displayed in a manner highly reminiscent of Wilhelm von Bode's installations in Berlin's Kaiser Friedrich Museum – clearly aiming for an aesthetic experience.¹⁷ Much like Bode, Pit seems to have been interested in forming visitors' taste, educating them through only the best examples of a given genre.

New Curatorial Roles: Municipal Museum The Hague

Peelen's time in the Rijksmuseum proved to be just a first step in what would become a pioneering career, whereby the discussions about art history, aesthetic education, and museums from her early years would bear fruit in her further practice in the museum world. In 1912, she was hired as 'deputy director' (*onderdirectrice*) of the Gemeentemuseum (Municipal Museum) in The Hague. With her subsequent appointment as director of the Huis Lambert van Meerten in Delft in 1918, Peelen became the first woman director of a national museum in the Netherlands.

In 1912, the Municipal Museum in The Hague – like the Rijksmuseum – was in the throes of change, with discussions centring on the same issues as in Amsterdam. At the time, the museum housed an extremely heterogeneous collection, consisting of ceramics, curiosities, historical documentation and modern paintings. The departure from this documentarian approach began with the appointment in that same year of Hendrik Enno van Gelder as director, who would later realize the modernist building of the museum we know today. In this period, he was busy promoting art historical training for museum personnel, and, above all, museum directors. As Marjan Boot pointed out already in 1997, Van Gelder developed a consistent vision for the museum early on, one in which the public – its enjoyment and education – was central.¹⁸ Influenced by Lichtwark and other German and American museum reformers, and art historians like Vogelsang, who propagated the notion that the art historian's task was to understand the artwork not merely as an historical document, but more importantly, as an aesthetic experience, Van Gelder advocated for the museum as the locus of aesthetic education for the broader public. To this end, once

installed in his new post, he immediately embarked on a revamping of the museum rooms, arranging them in a more orderly and visually pleasing manner, and decisively separating art objects from other kinds of artefacts. Van Gelder also commenced with a systematic inventory of the collection, for which he later produced an inexpensive and accessible guide.

Although Peelen would publish on the work of Alfred Lichtwark only later,¹⁹ it can be argued that, as deputy director, she played an important part in both the formulation and realization of this vision. In an article published as early as 1913, Van Gelder had maintained that a 'fruitful' (*vruchtdragend*) visit to a museum could be achieved with a logical, 'restful and balanced installation ... in which every object can be easily viewed for itself, but which also plays a part in the structure of the whole.'²⁰ Equally important, however, were not only object labels and a catalogue or guidebook, but also the aid of knowledgeable guides, who were able to draw attention to and explain the most important objects on display. As the annual reports demonstrate, it was Peelen who was largely responsible for giving such focussed guided tours and lectures. For schoolchildren, she also prepared and supervised object-oriented lessons in the galleries. In the winter months, she led the so-called *kunst-beschouwingen* (art appreciation evenings), where visitors would look at and discuss works from the collection.²¹ Over the years, these activities only seem to have increased:

All these things repeatedly took up the time of both the director and the deputy director, but they gladly made themselves available. This kind of work is part of the social task of museum management ... It also increases the interest in the collections and undoubtedly increases the usefulness that they can have.²²



Figs. 2, 3
Salon and study
in Museum Huis
Lambert van Meerten,
c. 1924.
In J.H.W. Leliman,
*Het Stadswoonhuis in
Nederland gedurende
de laatste 25 jaar*,
The Hague 1924,
p. 28.

Peelen's scholarly work in this period was also aligned with the thinking of the museum reformers. She was tasked with the care for and research into the ceramics collection, with at its heart the important works donated by A.H.H. van der Burgh in 1904.²³ In 1915, she began cataloguing this collection, completing and publishing her work in 1917.²⁴ Drawing on the then prevailing formalist practices of art historical scholarship, the catalogue's introduction focusses on stylistic development, while the catalogue itself is arranged according to 'the latest ideas regarding Delft porcelain' and its different techniques. This enabled the reader to easily compare the different phases and objects in order to learn from them. The previous collection catalogue had been organized along purely historical lines, namely by manufacturer. In his annual report, Van Gelder expresses his confidence that the catalogue would be a success with the public and the reviewers, and that 'the author will certainly receive resounding praise for her conscientious efforts'.²⁵

Huis Lambert van Meerten: Museum Reform in Practice

Until her move to Delft in 1918, Peelen had worked in subordinate positions, under the direction of her male colleagues. An understanding of her work up to this point is therefore possible only in direct relation to Pit and Van Gelder. Her curatorial work thus seems to have been directed by their vision of the role of the museum and its relation to the public, the acquisition and display of objects in its possession, and its further programming. Even so, as a professional Peelen undoubtedly read the same authors as her superiors and was therefore keenly aware of the ongoing museological discussions, both nationally and internationally. Given the swiftness with which she implemented the reform agenda in her new position, it seems tenable, then, that rather than merely following the lead of these men she was their equal.

Indeed, at the time of her appointment as director of Huis Lambert van Meerten, a museum originally designed to recreate the atmosphere of a seventeenth-century patrician home (figs. 2, 3),²⁶ the movement towards



museum reform was coming to a head. 1918 saw the publication of a highly critical report on the current organization and administration of the Dutch museums,²⁷ followed by the institution of a government commission for reform in 1919. The commission's report, published in 1921, called for the further professionalization of the museum world, particularly in reference to the (art historical) education of museum staff, and a separation in both the organization and presentation of art objects and historical artefacts. Moreover, the report emphasized that it was the duty of museums not simply to expand and conserve their collections, but more importantly, to provide specifically *aesthetic* enjoyment and education for a broader public.²⁸ This was the subject, for example, of chapter twenty-four of the report, titled 'De vruchtbaarmaking en het beheer der musea' (On making museums fruitful and on their administration), likely written by Peelen's former boss, Hendrik Enno van Gelder.²⁹

The move to Delft provided Peelen with the opportunity to develop these and other ideas regarding the relation-

ship between the museum and the public, as well as museum research and presentation, on her own terms and in her own scholarly domain, Dutch and international ceramics and tiles. Here Lichtwark's *Übungen in der Betrachtung von Kunstwerken* (1906) seems to have played an important role. Peelen published two articles on the book and its application in museum work, in 1918 and 1919 respectively,³⁰ providing direct evidence of her awareness of – and intervention in – the ongoing museum debate. In these articles, she proposes Lichtwark's method be adopted by Dutch museums in order to teach visitors (especially children) 'to see'. As she writes: 'The essence of this teaching method is that the work of art is not superficially viewed as an illustration of a lecture on art history, but that the work of art "an sich" is exclusively discussed.'³¹ For Peelen, the aim of art education in the museum should be to enable the visitor to experience works of art aesthetically: 'Looking at a work of art should have an edifying effect. An artwork should not only be considered and judged, but first and foremost experienced ('erlebt', as the Germans

say), if one wants to feel its great influence.³² Accordingly, education is not merely about disseminating facts; rather, it should be an education of the eye, aesthetic and spiritual in nature.

Moreover, Peelen appears to have followed not only the recommendations of (German) reformers but also the authors of the 1921 report, wherever possible and within the financial means available to her. The aforementioned chapter, for example, contains paragraphs addressing each of the measures the reformers regarded as essential to making the museum 'fruitful for the public, for art, and for science'.³³ These included publications for both a general audience and for academics, lectures

and guided tours, and cooperation with schools in various projects and exhibitions. The same chapter also discusses the professionalization and responsibilities of the director, among the most important being the care for and expansion of the collection with carefully selected and (above all) fitting works of art.³⁴

In the first years of her long tenure at the museum, where she remained until her retirement in 1947, Peelen raised funds for the purchase of the renowned seventeenth-century tile collection of the Delft glazier Jan Schouten (fig. 4). Like Pit before her, she also acquired works by international makers. In doing so, Peelen's acquisitions improved the museum's overall quality. Even if the collections – also comprising second-rate architectural fragments, furniture, painting and other kinds of decorative art objects – remained somewhat heterogenous, her purchases achieved the desired focus, i.e. providing a comprehensive picture of the development of the tile industry from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century.³⁵ She also took the tile collection as a starting point for the formation of a closely related ceramics collection. From this period onwards, the museum thus became a lodestar for national and international visitors and ceramics scholars.

Following the thinking of the museum reformers, Peelen also embarked on an inventory of the entire collection, resulting in the publication of the museum's first comprehensive guide in 1922.³⁶ Drawing on the recommendations of Lichtwark, Benjamin Ives Gilman (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) and other museum reformers, the 1921 report had made the publication of guidebooks for the general public one of its priorities.³⁷ Peelen's publication conforms largely to these recommendations, containing a brief history of the museum, followed by a room-by-room description of the objects. In the introduction, she also clearly states her educational aim:

Fig. 4
Portrait of Ida Peelen
with Schouten
Collection in Museum
Huis Lambert van
Meerten in Delft.
In Yvette Marcus-
de Groot, *Kunst-
historische vrouwen
van weleer: De eerste
generatie in Nederland
vóór 1921*, Hilversum
2003, p. 269.



As we lack the necessary material to compile a comprehensive history of the art of tile and pottery, we will use the many exhibits from the fifteenth, sixteenth and later centuries which are on display in the museum to sketch the development that tiles have undergone in the course of time, both technically and aesthetically.³⁸

In a review published in 1923, Elisabeth Neurdenburg, a friend of Peelen's and fellow scholar of ceramics, stated that the guide mitigated the most pernicious effects of the museum's heterogeneity by carefully and consistently indicating which objects were authentic and directing the visitor's attention to those pieces especially worthy of study:

It is extremely useful that in her guide Miss Peelen steers her visitors through the museum, pointing out that which is truly old, what is new or restored and, finally, those objects that most deserve our notice ... The interested visitor's attention is hereby drawn to the important aspects, so that his unpractised eye, usually inclined to simply glance cursorily at the many, many tiles, is opened to the charm that emanates from them.³⁹

In his writings, Alfred Lichtwark called for the institution of temporary exhibitions as a means to both attract and educate visitors. Similarly, the 1921 report also recommends the realization of small shows featuring pieces from the museum's own collection or works on loan in order to keep the museum lively.⁴⁰ Exhibitions were thus a quintessential aspect of making the museum 'fruitful' for the public. In her first annual report, for the year 1918, Peelen bemoaned the fact that she lacked sufficient financial means to collect contemporary objects – another suggestion borrowed directly from Lichtwark⁴¹ – that she felt would have made the museum particularly useful to the students of the Technische

Hoogeschool in Delft.⁴² Instead, she introduced temporary exhibitions, not only of historical objects but also of contemporary applied and fine art. With the latter, Peelen even went further than the museum reform commission itself. In ensuing years, we see an ever-increasing number of exhibitions on a wide range of topics beyond historic ceramics and tiles: modern Dutch wallpaper, book design and glazier work, and works by contemporary artists, e.g. the painters Joseph Teixeira de Mattos and Harm Kamerlingh Onnes and the ceramicist Chris Lanooy. In 1927, Peelen concluded that it was becoming more and more obvious that the museum's main task should be to organize such exhibitions, 'if this institution is to be able to fulfil its task fully and be made more fruitful with respect to the Delft public and that of the surrounding towns'.⁴³ Many of these exhibitions were accompanied by lectures given by the artists on show, as well as a lively public programme of talks and other events addressing a huge variety of subjects, from the chemistry of ceramics to Goethe's colour theory as interpreted by anthroposophist Rudolph Steiner and its effect on the 'life of the soul'.⁴⁴ The newspapers of the period bear witness to the positive reception of all these activities, as do the ever-increasing visitor numbers.⁴⁵

As we have seen, one of the most important issues for the museum reformers was a rethinking of the way in which collections were presented: not only the collection itself but also its display should follow a guiding (aesthetic) idea; only then could it stimulate the visitor to 'serious study' rather than merely offering the opportunity for 'idle spectators to kill time'.⁴⁶ A logical ordering of rooms, a reduction of the number of objects per room, and display techniques allowing the appreciation of each work based on its individual form and aesthetic:



these were the ingredients of a museum visit deemed 'fruitful' for the public. Although Peelen undoubtedly subscribed to these principles, the nature of her museum made it more or less impossible to achieve. Huis Lambert van Meerten can be described as a 'house museum', with period rooms composed of authentic pieces, copies, and neo-style objects and furniture from the nineteenth century. For whatever reason, the spaces seem to have remained largely intact, with the tile and ceramic collections simply added to existing installations. A comparison of photographs of the interiors taken during the directorship of Peelen's predecessor, Adolf Le Comte, with those of the museum as she left it in 1948 (figs. 5-8) shows little evidence of the aesthetic 'clean-up' one would have expected from this passionate museum reformer. We know of only one – albeit quite significant – improvement to the display, namely the installation of grey linen wall coverings in 1925.⁴⁷ As early as the nineteen tens, the use of neutral backgrounds to concentrate the visitor's gaze, thus enhancing the aesthetic experience, had been tested, for example,



Fig. 5
 Gallery in Museum
 Huis Lambert van
 Meerten, c. 1910?
 Photo: Musea Delft,
 www.delftkijkt.nl

Fig. 6
 That same gallery,
 c. 1949.
 Photo: Hendrick de
 Keyser Monumenten /
 RCE Cultural Heritage
 Agency

Fig. 7
 Vestibule in Museum
 Huis Lambert van
 Meerten, c. 1910.
 Postcard 'Delft
 Rijks Museum:
 Huis Lambert van
 Meerten', publisher:
 Anthonie Jacobus
 Prins. Erfgoed Delft
 Stadsarchief, image
 no. 52866.

Fig. 8
 That same vestibule,
 c. 1949.
 Photo: Hendrick de
 Keyser Monumenten /
 RCE Cultural Heritage
 Agency



by Bode and Gilman in their respective museums in Berlin and Boston. In the nineteen twenties, museums of all sorts across Europe and the United States had begun to use lighter wall colours (predominantly white) in their displays. In 1929, electric lighting was installed, 'significantly expanding the possibilities for proper exploitation of the Museum', as Peelen wrote in her annual report.⁴⁸ Given that the nature of the display was essentially unalterable, the museum guide, the temporary exhibitions and the lectures gained in significance, providing the lessons in taste and appreciation necessary for the desired 'fruitful' visit.

And indeed, the museum enjoyed a new-found popularity under Peelen's directorship, attracting large numbers of local and national visitors as well as ceramics scholars from around the world. Her efforts on behalf of the audience were recognized in an interview published in 1929:

During the time that [she] has been director of this museum, she has made important changes and improvements. She strives to make the collections



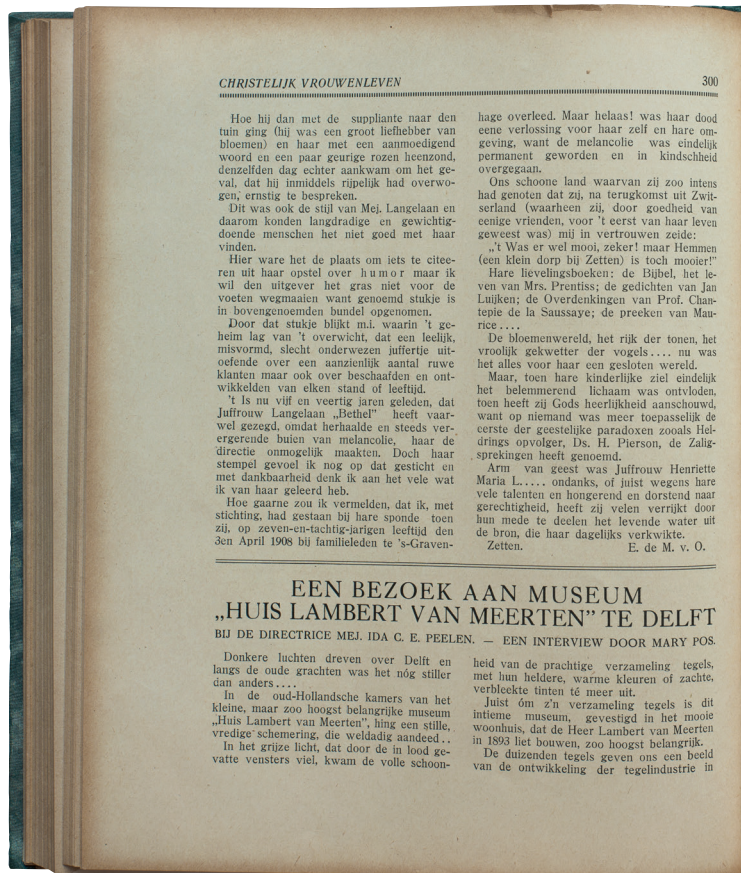
fruitful for the public, in order to increase their knowledge and to awaken the interest in art of those many who do not yet have an eye for it.⁴⁹

Defining Women's Work in the Museum

During the course of her long career, Peelen was interviewed several times. Over the years, she continued to emphasize the museum's aesthetic-educational role and her loyalty to the ideals of the museum reformers. In the aforementioned 1929 interview with Mary Pos in *Christelijk Vrouwenleven* (fig. 9), she expressed this commitment in explicit terms: 'These days it is precisely the task of a museum director to bring art back to the public and to awaken the love for it ... to bring art back to the people is one of the director's main duties.'⁵⁰ Echoing Lichtwark and his *plaidoyer* for museums as educational institutions for the common man, she continued: 'Before, one only had the universities, but these days museums also play a crucial role in human development. And all this work – because it is so important – occupies the whole person.'⁵¹ Likewise, in a 1942 article by Kate de Ridder in *De Vrouw en haar Huis* (fig. 10), Peelen states:

For that is a peculiarity of this work: while on the one hand it is highly individual and requires strict concentration, on the other hand it also implies that the person who has chosen this job should be active for society as well. No museum would benefit if the management thought only of its own development; on the contrary, it must ensure that the public, the crowd, takes an interest in the museum collection.⁵²

Even long after her retirement in 1952, Peelen would garner praise for this engagement:



Hoe hij dan met de suppliante naar den tuin ging (hij was een groot liefhebber van bloemen) en haar met een aanmoedigend woord en een paar keurige rozen heenzond, denzelfden dag echter aankwam om het geval, dat hij inmiddels rippekl had overwogen, ernstig te bespreken.

Dit was ook de stijl van Mej. Langelaan en daarom konden langdradige en gewichtigdoende menschen het niet goed met haar vinden.

Hier ware het de plaats om iets te citeeren uit haar opstel over humor maar ik wil den uitgever het gras niet voor de voeten wegzmaaien want genoemd stukje is in bovengenoemde bundel opgenomen.

Door dat stukje blijkt m.i. waarin 't geheim lag van 't overzicht, dat een leelijk, misvormd, slecht onderwezen juffertje uitoefende over een aanzienlijk aantal ruwe klanten maar ook over beschaafden en ontwikkelden van elken stand of leeftijd.

't Is nu vijf en veertig jaren geleden, dat Juffrouw Langelaan „Bethel“ heeft vaarwel gezegd, omdat herlaalde en steeds vergerende buiten van melancolie, haar de directie onmogelijk maakten. Doch haar stempel gevoel ik nog op dat gesticht en met dankbaarheid denk ik aan het vele wat ik van haar geleerd heb.

Hoe gaarne zou ik vermelden, dat ik, met stichting, had gestaan bij hare sponde toen zij, op zeven-en-tachtig-jarigen leeftijd den 3en April 1908 bij familieleden te 's-Graven-

hage overleed. Maar helaas! was haar dood eene verlossing voor haar zelf en hare omgeving, want de melancolie was eindelijk permanent geworden en in kindscheid overgegaan.

Ons schoone land waarvan zij zoo intens had genoten dat zij, na terugkomst uit Zwitserland (waarheen zij, door goedheid van eenige vrienden, voor 't eerst van haar leven geweest was) mij in vertrouwen zeide:

„'t Was er wel mooi, zeker! maar Hemmen (een klein dorp bij Zetten) is toch mooier!“ Hare lievelingsboeken; de Bijbel, het leven van Mrs. Prentiss; de gedichten van Jan Luijken; de Overdenkingen van Prof. Chantepie de la Saussaye; de preeken van Maurice....

De bloemenwereld, het rijk der tonen, het vrolijk gekwetter der vogels.... nu was het alles voor haar een gesloten wereld.

Maar, toen hare kinderlijke ziel eindelijk het belemmerend lichaam was ontvonden, toen heeft zij Gods heerlijkheid aanschouwd, want op niemand was meer toepasselijk de eerste der geestelijke paradoxen zoals Heldrings opvolger, Dr. H. Pierson, de Zaligsprekingen heeft genoemd.

Arm van geest was Juffrouw Henriette Maria L.... ondanks, of juist wegens hare vele talenten en hongerend en dorstend naar gerechtigheid, heeft zij velen verrijkt door hun mede te deelen het levende water uit de bron, die haar dagelijks werkikte. Zetten. E. de M. v. O.

EEN BEZOEK AAN MUSEUM „HUIS LAMBERT VAN MEERTEN“ TE DELFT

BIJ DE DIRECTRICE MEJ. IDA C. E. PEELLEN. — EEN INTERVIEW DOOR MARY POS.

Donkere lichten dreven over Delft en langs de oude grachten was het nóg stiller dan anders....

In de oud-Hollandsche kamers van het kleine, maar zoo hoogst belangrijke museum „Huis Lambert van Meerten“, hing een stille, vredige schemering, die weldadig aandede.. In het krizke licht, dat door de in lood gezette vensters viel, kwam de volle schoon-

heid van de prachtige verzameling tegels, met hun heldere, warme kleuren of zachte, verbleekte tinten té meer uit.

Juist óm z'n verzameling tegels is dit intieme museum, gevestigd in het mooie woonhuis, dat de Heer Lambert van Meerten in 1893 liet bouwen, zoo hoogst belangrijk.

De duizenden tegels geven ons een beeld van de ontwikkeling der tegelindustrie in

One thing that Miss Peelen, as museum director, has always considered of great value is bringing art to people. She once wrote that it is necessary for a museum's inner development to immerse oneself in art because all religions, all wisdom and all beauty that the world has to offer are hidden in truly great works of art. ... Next to scientific work, bringing art to the people must be the main aim of museum managements.⁵³

Returning to the issue of the curator's remit and women's work in the museum, it is interesting to see the ways in which Peelen's commitment to the thinking of the reform movement intersects with questions of gender. Interviewers were always keen to know what exactly a museum director

Fig. 9
Mary Pos, 'Een bezoek aan "Huis Lambert van Meerten" te Delft. Bij de directrice Mej. Ida C.E. Peelen', *Christelijk Vrouwenleven* 13 (1929), no. 10, pp. 300-01. University Library Collection IAV-Atria.

ons land van omstreeks 1500–1800. Zoals wij weten was Delft juist hierom zoo beroemd.



Mrs. Ida C. E. Peelen in haar werkruimte.

In de Gids van het Museum, samengesteld door Meisjefrouw Peelen, die sedert ruim 10 jaar directrice is van het museum, geeft zij een uitvoerige beschrijving van deze tegels, waaronder zich ook buitenlandsche exemplaren als Oostersche, Spaansche en Italiaansche bevinden. Deze binnenlandsche exemplaren zijn er aan toegevoegd om een meer volledig beeld van de tegelindustrie te geven... Hoe belangrijk deze verzameling is, blijkt hieruit, dat in den catalogus van het Victoria en Albert Museum uitdrukkelijk naar de Gids en de verzameling van dit Museum wordt verwezen, terwijl uit verschillende landen, inzonderheid uit Duitschland, museum-directeuren en kunstgeleerden komen om vooral het vroeg-Nederlandsche aardewerk, dat aan het Delftsch vooraf gegaan is, te zien.

Sommige tegels vormen tezamen groote tableaux. Ook zijn er tegels met geestige figurale voorstellingen en sierlijke plantmotieven, terwijl andere versierd zijn met landschappen en zeegezichten.

Doch behalve de tegels, is er op dit oogenblik in het Museum nog iets, dat zich inzon-

derheid in de belangstelling van ons vrouwen mag verheugen, n.l. een verzameling oude kant. Deze verzameling is in bruiden afgestaan en de bezichtiging daarvan is zeker alleen al een bezoek aan het museum waard. Men vindt hier o.a. Iersch haakwerk, Milaansch en Venetiaansche kant uit de 17e eeuw, Strooken Retsella-kant uit de 15e en 16e eeuw, Allerfijnst Fransch naaldwerk en ook veel Venetiaansche kant met het vetermotief, voor kerkelijk gebruik, meest uit de 17e eeuw. Brusselsche kant uit de 18e en 19e eeuw, Vlaamsche gekloste kant, Milaansche kloskant en Binche kloskant.

Zilver passament, gedeeltelijk genaaid en gedeeltelijk geklost, uit de 17e en 18e eeuw. Kloskant van goud en zilverdraad. Kant uit Liere en Mechelen, oud-Hollandsche en Vlaamsche valenciennes. Bovendien eenig oud borduurwerk, waaronder een kinderjakkie en borduurwerk van zilver- en gouddraad, opgelegd op roode zijde, voor kerkelijk gebruik.

Diepe bewondering wordt ons hier afgedwongen voor die arbeidzame vrouwen uit (de) vorige eeuwen, die door hun eindeloze geduld, in staat waren op deze wijze de kunst te beoefenen en met primitieve middelen zulke resultaten bereikt hebben.

De oud-Hollandsche vertrekken, waarin de tegels, het kantwerk, de oude donkere meubelen en zoovele andere kunstvoorwerpen zijn ondergebracht, bieden een buitengewone bevoorijden aanblik, zooals biggande foto's laten zien.

In het Museum bevindt zich o.a. ook een oud-Hollandsche slaapkamer. Als men dit slaapvertrek vergeelikt met de frische, hygiënische slaapkamers van tegenwoordig, verwondert men er zich over, dat onze voorouders niet alleen gezond bleven, doch bovendien misschien nog minder last van vervendheid en zaden hadden dan wij.

Niet alleen, dat ze in donkere, diepe bedsteden sliepen, doch op de slaapkamer bevond zich ook een groote haard, terwijl om toeh maar niet de minste tocht door te laten, de vensters niet alleen voorzien waren van dubbele ramen, maar van luiken bovendien! De inrichting was meest zeer smaakvol en

public), give guided tours, provide information, care for and conserve, repair, and restore.⁵⁶ Other duties include travelling to see museum and private collections, as well as visiting dealers, in order to increase one's specialist knowledge. Interesting here is that the vast majority of these tasks fall under the rubrics of 'care' and the social maintenance of institutions, without which no museum can carry out its obligation to preserve and present the objects consigned to it in public trust.

For many of the journalists – and even Peelen herself – there was a strong connection between her practices as a director/curator and her gender. While insisting that specialized study is a prerequisite for the job – 'the [female] director of a museum is a woman of science'⁵⁷ – Kate de Ridder further introduces her interview with Peelen as follows:

But on one important point, the woman, whatever work she takes on, will always distinguish herself from the man: he prefers to work based on knowledge and reason, she will, however intelligent she may be, also always use two specifically female qualities: her heart and her intuition. There are men who can fulfil their daily duties excellently, but their feelings remain out of the game. For women, with a few exceptions, this is virtually impossible: they put their whole heart, their devoted care, into their work; that is why it often costs them infinitely more effort than it does men to relinquish a duty once taken upon their shoulders.⁵⁸

In her response to Mary Pos in 1929, Peelen reiterated this assessment: 'You ask if my work is actually suitable for a woman? For me, to feel and fathom works of art requires a lot of intuition, and a woman is generally very intuitive. I know of no profession more beautiful and versatile than this, to which one can give oneself

does – one can argue that, given the small size of the museum and its staff, Peelen's role was that of both director and curator – in what ways her work might relate to her sex, and in particular, whether museum work was in some way especially suited to women.

One such interview, from 1928, was published in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* (or *NRC*), under the title 'The Day's Work of the Museum Director Miss Ida C. E. Peelen'.⁵⁴ An analysis of this article, applying the so-called verb-oriented method (developed by the University of Uppsala in the context of the research project *Gender and Work*⁵⁵) turns up the following tasks: study, research, inventory, describe, classify, catalogue, arrange, install, educate, be of service (to the



Fig. 10
Kate de Ridder,
‘Museumdirectrice
Ida C.E. Peelen’, *De
Vrouw en haar Huis.
Het Landhuis op
de Hoogte 4* (1942),
p. 128. Allard Pierson,
University of
Amsterdam, v.v. 6652.

with such heart and soul.⁵⁹ Similarly, De Ridder observed that ‘in addition to the scientific “entrepreneurial spirit” necessary for this, the museum director who wishes to expand the collection should also be able to *sense* the value of something on display.’⁶⁰ One interviewer, in 1952, recorded Peelen’s response to the question of whether a woman possessed the requisite qualities to run a museum: ‘Miss Peelen answers in the affirmative. In fact, it is a superfluous question, for she herself has provided the proof. [This] woman, with her strong intuition, has the special ability to experience works of art and the love that is indispensable for the conservation of a collection.’⁶¹

Peelen thus reiterated these notions throughout her career, often additionally emphasizing the amount of devotion, hard work and sacrifice her position entailed, while nonetheless stressing how much pleasure and

satisfaction it provided, in particular because it combined personal development with making a contribution to society.

An outsider can hardly imagine how all-encompassing her daily task of labour is, and of course this task has increased greatly in recent years. ‘And yet you think it is good women’s work? Do you recommend others to take up this study?’ ‘O certainly! Required, of course, are a certain scientific aptitude, devotion to study and a sense of art. Either you have that, or you don’t. Extensive historical knowledge is necessary for the department in which one wants to specialize. The subject is far too extensive to excel in it in general. After a few years of study, everyone chooses a special field in which to develop further. It is beautiful, fascinating work, always alive. One has to make important trips, make pleasant contact with other art lovers, but ... it is also an exhausting and quite costly life!’⁶²

In Peelen’s eyes, all this was exactly what made museum work perfect for women. As she said to Pos: ‘There is so much work today, especially for women, that leaves one unsatisfied, but to give oneself to the study of Art, and to the task of making Art public property again, is one [of the] most beautiful things that can be assigned to a woman.’⁶³ And years later, Kate de Ridder would conclude her interview with: ‘The joy with which Miss Peelen spoke about her work, the heartfelt satisfaction that her job still gives her after all these years of great effort, prove that, also in this direction, an important field of work has been opened up for the working woman.’⁶⁴

This focus on ‘essential’ feminine qualities and intrinsic motivation can of course be read as a way of veiling the fact that museum work was – and is – hard work and not very well paid. Striking as well, is how

Peelen herself seems to reduce her own very important contribution to the field of ceramics studies to meet the expectations of a society yet unwilling to accept women as scholars but very much interested in them as 'caretakers' (in the various senses of the word). Peelen's own – somewhat implicit – definition of her work as a form of care demonstrates, however, what we can learn about women and museums when we leave behind the domains of painting and sculpture and the idea that 'curating' is only about exhibition making. Peelen's commitment to the ideals of the museum reform movement is

evident, as is her adherence to the notion – propagated by the first generation of university art historians – that the discipline should be primarily concerned with the visual, formal and aesthetic aspect of works of art. Moreover, she was one of the first to put these ideals into practice, with a strong emphasis on the duty of museums to aesthetically educate the public. All this makes her contribution to the history of the Dutch museum world not just interesting, but essential.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the career and intellectual development of Ida C.E. Peelen, the first female director of a Dutch national museum, and the influence of the museum-reform movement of the nineteen twenties on her curatorial practice. Beginning her career at the Rijksmuseum in 1907, Peelen engaged deeply in contemporary debates on the role of museums, the presentation of objects and museums' potential contribution to society. Drawing on ideas propagated in Germany and the Netherlands, she applied these concepts during her tenure at Huis Lambert van Meerten in Delft, where she transformed the museum from an inward-looking, documentarian institution into one focussed on offering 'aesthetic education'. In doing so, she aligned with the reformers' vision that a museum should be 'fruitful' for a wide public audience.

NOTES

- 1 Yvette Marcus-de Groot, *Kunsthistorische vrouwen van weleer: De eerste generatie in Nederland vóór 1921*, Hilversum 2003, pp. 133-35, 255-74; and idem, 'Ida Peelen, de eerste en enige vrouwelijke directeur van Museum Mesdag, 1929-1934', *Die Haghe Jaarboek* (1996), pp. 208-25.
- 2 Arlene Kaplan Daniels, 'Invisible work', *Social Problems* 34 (December 1987), no. 5, pp. 403-15.
- 3 The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*, Brooklyn (NY) 2020.
- 4 For decades now, the museum has been developing into a feminine domain. Although the majority of directorial positions are still held by men, female workers are disproportionately represented in curatorial, educational and public programming departments. Women also make up the majority of those pursuing higher degrees in curatorial studies.
- 5 See Marcus-de Groot 2003 (note 1), pp. 129-77.
- 6 Other examples of female museum workers who got their start at the Dutch Museum for History and Art are Elisabeth Hesseling (1887-1970) and Elisabeth Neurdenburg (1882-1957). Hesseling began her art historical career as a *volontaire* in 1909 and would later become a pioneer in museum education; after receiving her doctorate in 1910, Neurdenburg was hired as the museum's first female research assistant (*wetenschappelijke assistent*) in 1912. She would later go on to work briefly as a private tutor at the University of Amsterdam, and from 1918 onwards, as a lecturer at the University of Groningen. In 1948, she received a chair in art history, the first woman in the Netherlands to hold this position. See Marcus-de Groot 2003 (note 1), pp. 226-37, 299-322.
- 7 Gijs van der Ham, *200 jaar Rijksmuseum: Geschiedenis van een nationaal symbool*, Amsterdam/Zwolle 2000, p. 203.
- 8 *Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätte: Ergebnisse des 12. Konferenz der Central-*

- stelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen*, Berlin 1904.
- 9 Alfred Lichtwark, 'Museen als Bildungsstätten', in *ibid.*, pp. 6-12.
- 10 Lichtwark (1904, (note 9), p. 8) uses the word *Nutzbarmachung*, which can mean utilization, exploitation or activation, but in this case should be understood in the sense of making servicable or useful: 'Schon bei der Ausstellung gehen die Meinungen weit auseinander, was die Nutzbarmachung anlangt, genügt der einen Partei die bloße Ausstellung, während die andere eine Lehr- und Anregungstätigkeit der Beamten verlangt.'
- 11 Annemieke Hoogenboom, 'De introductie van kunstgeschiedenis aan de Nederlandse universiteiten: De voorgeschiedenis van de leerstoel van Willem Vogelsang', in Ton Bevers et al., *De Kunstwereld: Produktie, distributie en receptie in de wereld van kunst en cultuur*, Rotterdam/Hilversum 1993, p. 93. See also Jason Gaiger, 'Intuition and Representation: Wölfflin's Fundamental Concepts of Art History', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 73 (2015), no. 2, pp. 164-71.
- 12 Willem Vogelsang, *Kunstwetenschappelijke opmerkingen. Rede, uitgesproken bij de opening zijner lessen in kunstgeschiedenis, op 22 november 1900*, Amsterdam 1900, p. 41: 'De kunsthistorie is en kan in den grond geen hulpwetenschap wezen, zooals de heraldiek en de munt- en zegelkunde dat van de geschiedenis zijn. Ze houdt zich bezig met een uiting van den menschelijken geest, een belichaming van menschelijk denken, willen en genieten zoo goed als de litteratuurgeschiedenis, die toch niemand onder de bijvakken zou willen verstootten. Door de tijden heen zoekt ze de verhouding van kunst en scheppers onderling en tot hun omgeving, tracht ze te bepalen, wat er voor ons heden nog van de werken een blijvende gevoelswaarde behouden heeft. Een al te zeer historisch eenzijdige behandeling brengt het gevaar ten slotte de kunst van alle tijden op ééne lijn te stellen.'
- 13 J.F. (Freek) Heijbroek, 'Adriaan Pit, directeur van het Nederlandsch Museum. Een "vergeten" episode uit de geschiedenis van het Rijksmuseum', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 33 (1985), no. 4, pp. 233-65.
- 14 On Peelen's education see Marcus-de Groot 2003 (note 1), pp. 255-56. Before the institution of Vogelsang's chair in Utrecht in 1907, it was not possible to obtain a doctoral degree in art history in the Netherlands. In any case, Peelen had only attended the Higher Civic School (HBS) for girls and was therefore not qualified to attend university. Instead, she followed a program of secondary education that led to the acquisition of a certificate (*MO-akte*) in history in 1905.
- 15 It is not known from whom she learned photography, whether from someone inside or outside of the museum. What we do know is that the museum had installed a darkroom already in 1904, located in or near the Print Room, where Peelen worked in 1908-12. See *Honderd jaar Rijksmuseum, 1885-1985*, Weesp 1985, p. 86.
- 16 Marcus-de Groot 2003 (note 1), pp. 133-34, 415-16.
- 17 Heijbroek 1985 (note 13), pp. 252-53.
- 18 For an analysis of Lichtwark's influence in the Netherlands in general and on the thought of Van Gelder in relation to the Municipal Museum in The Hague in particular, see Marjan Boot, 'Een museum voor een nieuw tijdperk: H.E. van Gelder en het Gemeentemuseum', *Jaarboek Haags Gemeentemuseum. Jubileumnummer 1995-1996*, The Hague 1997, pp. 10-63.
- 19 In 1918 and 1919, respectively. See note 30.
- 20 Hendrik Enno van Gelder, 'Museum-Gidsen', *Bulletin Oudheidkundige Bond* 6 (1913), pp. 221-25: 'De museum-inrichter kan daaraan veel doen: hij zorgt voor rust en evenwicht: voor niet te volle, maar ook voor niet te leege wanden en kamers, waar ieder voorwerp op zichzelf goed te zien is, maar ook zijn plaats vervult in de structuur van het geheel.'
- 21 See *Jaarverslag van de Commissie van Beheer over het Gemeentemuseum te 's-Gravenhage*, The Hague 1910-18, for the years 1912-18, as well as Marcus-de Groot 2003 (note 1), pp. 258-59.
- 22 *Jaarverslag van de Commissie van Beheer over het Gemeentemuseum te 's-Gravenhage*, 1915, pp. 13-14: 'Door al deze dingen werd meermalen beslag gelegd op den tijd, zoowel van de Directeur als de Onder-directrice; zij stelden zich daarvoor echter gaarne beschikbaar. In dit soort werk ligt immers een deel van de maatschappelijke taak van het museumbeheer, dat wij gaarne tot zijn recht zouden willen laten komen. Het verhoogt bovendien de belangstelling in de verzamelingen en vermeerdert zonder twijfel het nut, dat zij kunnen stichten.'
- 23 The *Jaarverslag* for 1913 (p. 12) mentions that she was (also) responsible for cataloguing the collection of drawings; and in 1915 (p. 14) it is noted that she has just finished describing the portraits in the historical collection.
- 24 Ida C.E. Peelen, *Catalogus van de verzameling Nederlandsch aardwerk*, coll. cat. The Hague (Gemeentemuseum) 1917.

- 25 *Jaarverslag* 1917, pp. 12-13: 'De samenstelster komt zeker openlijk lof toe voor haar conscientieuzen arbeid.'
- 26 Jos Hilkhuijsen, 'Van Huis Oud-Holland tot Huis Lambert van Meerten', in Steven Braat et al., *Museum Huis Lambert van Meerten*, Leiden 1993, pp. 9-56; and idem, 'Kunstverzamelingen en cultuurhistorisch besef', in Jos Hilkhuijsen (ed.), *De stad Delft: Cultuur en maatschappij van 1813 tot 1914*, Delft 1992, pp. 271-89. For a general overview of Peelen's tenure as director, see Marcus-de Groot 2003 (note 1), pp. 260-64.
- 27 Nederlandschen Oudheidkundigen Bond (NOB), *Over hervorming en beheer onzer musea*, Leiden 1918.
- 28 *Rapport der Rijkscommissie van advies in zake reorganisatie van het museumwezen hier te lande*, The Hague 1921. See Debora J. Meijers, "De democratisering van schoonheid": Plannen voor museumvernieuwingen in Nederland 1918-1921', *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 28 (1977), pp. 50-104.
- 29 *Rapport* 1921 (note 28), pp. 119-31. See also Boot 1997 (note 18), p. 24, note 64.
- 30 See Ida C.E. Peelen, 'Museumbezoek door de jeugd', *Schoonheid en opvoeding* (1918), pp. 96-97; and idem, 'Proef van eenige lessen in de kunstbeschouwing', *Schoonheid en opvoeding* (1919), pp. 41-49.
- 31 Peelen 1918 (note 30), p. 97: 'De hoofdzaak van dit onderwijs is, dat het kunstwerk niet als illustratie van een voordracht over kunstgeschiedenis oppervlakkig wordt bekeken, doch dat het kunstwerk "an sich" uitsluitend wordt besproken.'
- 32 Peelen 1919 (note 30), p. 48: 'Van eene kunstbeschouwing moet eene opbouwende werking uitgaan. Een kunstwerk moet niet alleen beschouwd en beoordeeld, doch in de aller-eerste plaats doorleefd ('erlebt', zooals de Duitschers zeggen) worden, wil men den grooten invloed er van ondergaan.'
- 33 *Rapport* 1921 (note 28), p. 119: 'De Commissie meent, dat de voornaamste middelen, waardoor de musea meer vruchtbaar kunnen worden gemaakt voor het publiek, de kunst en de wetenschap de volgende zijn.'
- 34 *Rapport* 1921 (note 28), p. 124: 'ieder museum een organisch geheel moet zijn en naar een eigen formatie, een eigen karakter moet streven, zich tevens beschouwend als een deel van het groote nationale geheel.'
- 35 See Ida C.E. Peelen, 'Musea', *Oudheidkundig jaarboek* 3 (1921), no. 1, pp. 242-43.
- 36 Ida C.E. Peelen, *Gids Rijks-museum 'Huis Lambert van Meerten te Delft'*, Delft 1922.
- 37 *Rapport* 1921 (note 28), p. 120: 'De gids moet dus alleen het algemeen wetenswaardige bevatten in de volgorde, waarin de zalen op de meest doelmatige wijze worden doorwandeld. De vorm moet algemeen bevattelijk en de prijs zoo laag mogelijk zijn.' In 1919, Van Gelder had published his own guide to the Municipal Museum's collection, containing a history of the museum, a floor plan and descriptions of the objects following the order of the rooms: *Dienst voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen, Gids Gemeente-Museum te 's-Gravenhage. K. Vijverberg* 7, The Hague 1919. This guide, as Marjan Boot has noted (1997 (note 18), p. 28) bears a strong resemblance to Lichtwark's illustrated guide to the Hamburger Kunsthalle, published in 1897.
- 38 Peelen 1922 (note 36), p. 25: 'Nu het noodige materiaal ontbreekt om eene uitvoerige geschiedenis der tegel- en plateelbakkerskunst samen te stellen, zullen wij aan de hand van de vele exemplaren uit de 15e, 16e en latere eeuwen, welke in het museum zijn tentoongesteld, ons thans dus hoofdzakelijk bepalen tot het schetsen van de ontwikkeling, welke de tegels in technisch en aesthetisch opzicht in den loop der tijden hebben ondergaan.'
- 39 Elisabeth Neurdenburg, 'Ida C.E. Peelen, Gids Rijksmuseum Huis Lambert van Meerten te Delft. Delft z.j.', *Oudheidkundige Jaarboek*, 3rd series (1923), no. 3, p. 222: 'Stellig nuttig is het daarom, dat Mej. Peelen in haar gids de bezoekers door haar museum voert, vertellend wat er oud is, wat nieuw of vernieuwd, en wat dus tenslotte werkelijk om de aandacht vraagt. ... De belangstellende bezoeker wordt op allerlei opmerkelijk gemaakt, dat zijn niet geoeffend oog, dat zoo licht geneigd is vrij vluchtig langs die vele, vele tegels heen te gaan zal openen voor de charme, die er van uitgaat.'
- 40 *Rapport* 1921 (note 28), p. 122: 'Het is wenschelijk door tijdelijke tentoonstellingen van geringen omvang uit eigen of geleend bezit de belangstelling in de musea levendig te houden.'
- 41 See Boot 1997 (note 18), pp. 27-28.
- 42 *Verslagen omtrent 's Rijksverzamelingen van Geschiedenis en Kunst*, The Hague 1918, p. 56.
- 43 *Verslagen omtrent 's Rijksverzamelingen van Geschiedenis en Kunst*, The Hague 1927, p. 73: 'wil deze instelling haar taak ten volle kunnen vervullen en meer vruchtbaar worden gemaakt ten opzichte van het Delftsche publiek en dat der omliggende plaatsen.'
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

- 45 Hilkhuijsen 1993 (note 26), note 76. The author references a file of newspaper clippings in the Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof in Delft; unfortunately, it proved impossible for the present author to gain access to this file.
- 46 NOV 1918 (note 27), pp. 5-6: 'elk museum moet in samenstelling en inrichting blijk geven van eene leidende gedachte, en alleen zoodoende kan het, zooals zijn doel behoort te zijn, de grondslag zijn voor ernstige studie, in plaats van eene gelegenheid *pour tuer le temps des badauds*.'
- 47 *Verslagen omtrent 's Rijksverzamelingen van Geschiedenis en Kunst*, The Hague 1925, p. 81.
- 48 *Verslagen omtrent 's Rijksverzamelingen van Geschiedenis en Kunst*, The Hague 1929, p. 66: 'waardoor de mogelijkheden voor een goede exploitatie van het Museum aanmerkelijk worden uitgebreid'.
- 49 Mary Pos, 'Een bezoek aan "Huis Lambert van Meerten" te Delft. Bij de directrice Mej. Ida C.E. Peelen', *Christelijk Vrouwenleven* 13 (1929), no. 10, pp. 300-03, esp. p. 302: 'Gedurende den tijd, dat Mejuffrouw Peelen directrice is van dit Museum, werden door haar belangrijke veranderingen en verbeteringen aangebracht. Zij streeft ernaar om de verzamelingen vruchtbaar te maken voor het publiek, om daardoor de kennis te verrijken en de liefde voor de Kunst op te wekken, bij die velen, welke er nu nog geen oog voor hebben.'
- 50 *Ibid.*, p. 302: 'Nu is juist de taak van een museumdirectie om de Kunst weer tot het publiek te brengen en de liefde ervoor wakker te maken ... De Kunst weer tot de menschen te brengen, is één der voornaamste plichten der Directie.'
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 303: 'Vroeger had men alleen de universiteiten, maar nu nemen de Musea voor de ontwikkeling der menschen eveneens een groote plaats in ... En al dit werk, juist omdat het zoo belangrijk is, neemt den geheelen mensch in beslag.'
- 52 Kate de Ridder, 'Museumdirectrice Ida C.E. Peelen', *De Vrouw en haar Huis. Het Landhuis op de Hoogte* 4 (1942), pp. 128-33, esp. p. 132: 'Want dat is een merkwaardigheid van dezen arbeid: terwijl hij aan den eenen kant hoogst individueel is en een strenge concentratie vereischt, brengt hij tevens mee, dat degeen, die zich dezen werkkring heeft gekozen, ook op sociaal gebied werkzaam moet zijn. Geen enkel museum zou er baat bij hebben, indien de directie uitsluitend aan eigen ontwikkeling dacht; zij moet juist zorgen, dat het publiek, de menigte, belang gaat stellen in de museumcollectie.'
- 53 A.F.L., 'In gesprek met: mej. Ida C.E. Peelen', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 8 November 1952: 'Een werk dat mej. Peelen als museumdirectrice steeds van grote waarde heeft geacht is het brengen van de kunst tot de mensen. Zij heeft eens geschreven, dat het voor de innerlijke ontwikkeling noodzakelijk is zich te verdiepen in kunst omdat in de waarlijk grote kunstwerken alle godsdiensten, alle wijsheid en alle schoonheid, welke de wereld te bieden heeft, verborgen zijn. ... Het brengen van de kunst tot de mensen moet naast de wetenschappelijke arbeid het voornaamste streven van museumdirecties zijn.'
- 54 Anon., 'De dagtaak van de museum-directrice mejuffrouw Ida C.E. Peelen', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 1 and 2 December 1928.
- 55 See <https://www.uu.se/en/research/gender-and-work/research/the-verb-oriented-method> (consulted 30 September 2024). The method is described as follows: 'The notion of the "verb-oriented method" emphasizes the kind of data that is of interest when posing research questions regarding gender and work in the past. While other research has collected information about how people were labeled (job titles) and what they had for resources (property), within Gender and Work we focus on descriptions of what people did. In other words: rather than looking at nouns, we look at verbs. ... The verb-oriented method emphasizes the idea that traces of the past often take linguistic form. As such, these traces are never neutral representations of actual activities, but are instead dependent upon linguistic conventions, cultural concepts, the writers' aims and intentions, and so forth. The verb-oriented method affords the researcher, then, the opportunity to analyze not only what different people did, but also how these activities were described in various contexts.'
- 56 Peelen repeats these and similar tasks in later interviews as well.
- 57 De Ridder 1942 (note 52), p. 129.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 128: 'Maar op één belangrijk punt zal de vrouw, welk werk zij ook op zich neemt, zich steeds van den man blijven onderscheiden: hij werkt bij voorkeur steunend op kennis en verstand, zij zal, hoe intelligent zij ook mag wezen, daarnaast steeds twee specifiek vrouwelijke eigenschappen inschakelen: haar hart en haar intuïtie. Er zijn mannen, die hun dagelijksche plichten uitmuntend kunnen vervullen, maar hun gevoel blijft buiten 't spel. Dat is voor de vrouw, enkele uitzonderingen daargelaten, vrijwel onmogelijk: zij legt héél haar hart, haar

- toegewijde zorg in haar werk; daarom kost het haar ook dikwijls oneindig veel meer moeite dan den man, om afstand te doen van een eens op de schouders genomen plicht.'
- 59 Pos 1929 (note 49), p. 302: 'U vraagt of mijn werk eigenlijk voor een vrouw geschikt is? Ik voor mij vind het voor het aanvoelen en doordringen in kunstwerken veel intuïtie nodig en een vrouw is over het algemeen zeer intuïtief. Ik ken eigenlijk geen vak, dat mooier en veelzijdiger is dan dit, en waaraan men zich zoo met hart en ziel kan geven.'
- 60 De Ridder 1942 (note 52), p. 132: 'Maar naast den hiervoor noodzakelijken wetenschappelijken "koopmansgeest" behoort de museum-directie, die haar verzameling wenscht uit te breiden, ook te kunnen aanvoelen, wát de waarde van iets is, dat haar wordt getoond.'
- 61 A.F.L. 1952 (note 53): 'Onze vraag of de vrouw over de kwaliteiten beschikt die nodig zijn voor het beheren van een museum, beantwoordt mej. Peelen bevestigend. Het is feitelijk een overbodige vraag, want ze heeft zelf het bewijs geleverd. De vrouw met haar sterke intuïtie bezit bij uitstek het vermogen om kunstwerken te beleven, en de liefde, die voor het conserveren van een collectie onmisbaar is.'
- 62 De Ridder 1942 (note 52), p. 133: 'Een buitenstaander kan er zich haast geen voorstelling van maken hoe veelomvattend haar dagelijkse arbeidstaak is, en uiteraard neemt deze taak in de laatste jaren sterk in omvang toe. "En toch vindt u het goed vrouwenwerk? Raadt u het anderen aan, deze studie op zich te nemen?" "O zeker! Vereischt zijn natuurlijk een bepaalde wetenschappelijke aanleg, studiezin en kunstgevoel. Dat heb je of je hebt het niet. Een uitgebreide historische kennis is noodzakelijk voor de afdeling, waarin men zich wil specialiseeren. Het vak is nl. veel te uitgebreid om er in het algemeen in te kunnen uitblinken. Iedereen kiest na eenige jaren van studie een speciaal gebied, waarop men zich verder tracht te ontwikkelen. Het is prachtig, boeiend, altijd levend werk. Men moet belangrijke reizen maken, krijgt prettig contact met vrienden der kunst, máár ... het is een vermoeiend en vrij kostbaar leven!"'
- 63 Pos 1929 (note 49), p. 303: 'Er is tegenwoordig zooveel werk, inzonderheid voor vrouwen, dat onbevredigd laat, maar zich te geven aan de bestudeering der Kunst, en aan de taak om de Kunst weder tot publiek eigendom te maken, is wel één [van de] mooiste dingen, die een vrouw opgedragen kunnen worden.'
- 64 De Ridder 1942 (note 52), p. 132: 'De vreugde, waarmee mejuffrouw Peelen over haar arbeid

sprak, de innige voldoening, die haar werkring na ál die jaren van groote inspanning haar nog steeds geeft, bewijzen wel, dat ook in deze richting een belangrijk arbeidsgebied voor de werkende vrouw ontsloten is.'