

worm hoog 70,1 / route van as

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21.

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$$3 \cdot 4 = 12$$

$$3 \overline{) 632} \mid 21$$

$$3 \cdot 4 = 7$$

$$3 \overline{) 28} \mid 9,3$$

$$8 = \overline{) 12} \mid 1,5$$

$$8 : 98 = 11,6$$

$$81 \overline{) 13} \mid 10$$

1,5

Carel Willink in the Spotlight: A Painter's Political Pen

• CARO VERBEEK •

'I don't enjoy drawing,' the Dutch painter Carel Willink is reported to have once said.¹ 'As a young man I certainly couldn't draw very well at all and now I'm a good bit older I still can't'.² It seems that Willink found little pleasure in drawing. A dedicated painter, his drawings were essentially functional. Leafing through his sketchbooks, we come across hastily depicted hands and disproportionate body parts, and dark hatching lines that cover faces and townscapes like an untidy blanket. His sketches and preliminary studies – the majority of his drawings – were obviously not intended as attractive finished products. They often marked the first stage of his photo realist paintings – as a number of separate notes that point to a theme, like the opening chords of an orchestral performance with strings and kettledrums. Detail, proportion and expressive means like colour, surface division and perspective only came into being on the canvas. The painter used the preliminary studies 'solely' to establish pose, composition and light – usually by means of outlines, and it is these outlines we examine here.

Carel Willink (1900-1983), who in his early career was still working in an abstract and constructivist manner, became known above all in the nineteen-thirties for his magic realist landscapes. Willink created an alienating

< Fig. 1
CAREL WILLINK,
Detail of *Long
Division*, from
a sketchbook, 1965
or before (detail).
Pencil on paper,
160 x 240 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-T-2004-209-1(V);
gift of S.M.E. Willink-
Quiël, Amsterdam.
Photo: © S.M.E.
Willink-Quiël.

effect in landscapes and portraits by combining elements from reality in an improbable context. His cloudy skies were famous in the Netherlands and became part of the collective memory so that a 'Willink sky' was synonymous with a threatening, dark sky with massed thunderclouds.³

In 2004 researchers at the Rijksmuseum were able to examine in detail some of Carel Willink's sketchbooks that had never been studied before, thanks to a generous gift from the artist's widow, Sylvia Willink-Quiël. Over the course of a year, art historians Laure van Berkel and Caro Verbeek scrutinized 1,500 pages taken from fifteen sketchbooks. The books turned out to cover almost half a century (c. 1915-65) and came in a great variety of sizes, from pocket-sized to A3. The subjects can be grouped into architecture, fauna, portrait, landscape, classical sculpture, townscape and cloudy sky: the elements that form the running theme in his paintings. Other striking categories are the shopping lists and the countless long divisions: Carel Willink worked out precisely in which proportion and size something had to be placed on the canvas (fig. 1).

Some seventy percent of the sketches in the Rijksmuseum could eventually be traced back to finished paintings. A good example is the drawing in which a shell-like shape

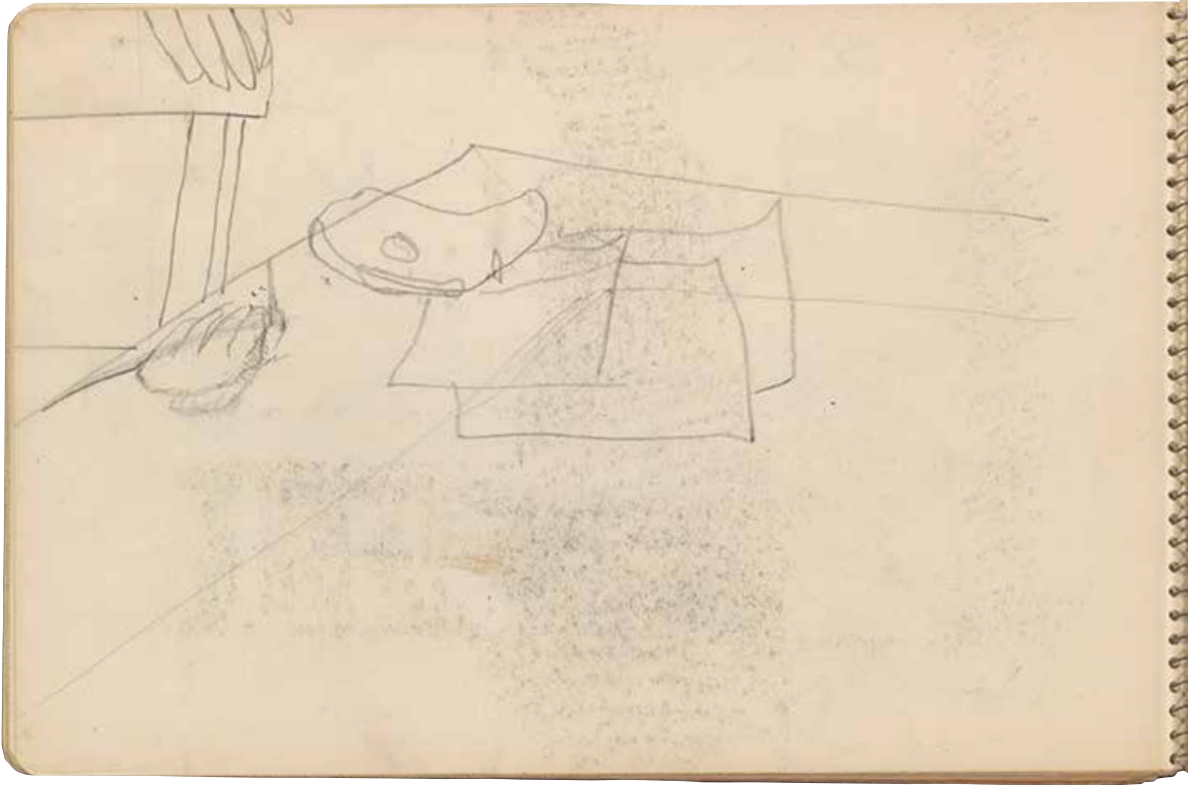


Fig. 2
 CAREL WILLINK,
Preliminary Study
for the Double
Portrait of
A. and J. Klep,
 1957 or before.
 Pencil on paper,
 160 x 245 mm.
 Amsterdam,
 Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
 RP-T-2004-208-8(v);
 gift of S.M.E. Willink-
 Quiël, Amsterdam.
 Photo: © S.M.E.
 Willink-Quiël.

Fig. 3
 CAREL WILLINK,
Double Portrait of
A. and J. Klep, 1957.
 Oil on canvas,
 170 x 135 cm.
 Private collection.
 Photo: © S.M.E.
 Willink-Quiël.



centre left proved to be a man's hand reflected in a table top. The 'painter's palette' to the right of it is in fact a 'klep' – rattle – a pun on the sitters' surname in *Double Portrait of A. and J. Klep* (1957) (see figs. 2-4).

After the initial reconnaissance, we were left with a puzzling group of drawings of labourers, peasants and sailors with caricatural heads, built up in flowing lines, which appeared to bear no relationship whatsoever to Willink's known paintings. The style was so different that we even wondered whether the sketches might have been by another hand, until we turned our attention to his drawn illustrations. A single line in his diary for 1932 set us on a track that proved to be the right one: 'Every week at our regular table in the Café Americain in the Leidseplein, Wilma and I met other magic realist painters and some acquaintances from the magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer*, including the director Henk [actually Riens]

Dijkstra, for whose paper I made illustrations.'⁴ Having gone through every edition of *De Groene Amsterdammer*, we were able to identify almost all the surviving sketches in illustrations and even cartoons published in that one year: 1932. The only ones we could not trace were studies of a boxer, an oil lamp on a table and a violinist. What is particularly striking about the rediscovered preliminary studies and the accompanying end results is that as an illustrator and political cartoonist, Willink used the same pictorial strategies as he did in his paintings.

Cartoons in *De Groene Amsterdammer* in the Nineteen-Thirties and Willink's Political Leanings

Cartoons operate in various arenas: political history, social attitudes, journalism and art. Political prints and caricatures show not only events, but also how a particular group viewed

Fig. 4
Detail of fig. 2,
rattle and hand.





them. Their maker sometimes subordinates his own opinion to that of the group and tries to find an aesthetic solution in order to interpret the story as clearly as possible.⁵ The medium can consequently reflect on political and social ideas as well as propagate them and challenge them.⁶ Willink published his cartoons at a time when cartoons appeared in Dutch magazines and newspapers with large circulations. This gave him a much larger audience than his paintings.

De Groene Amsterdammer, founded in 1877, also had a large readership in the nineteen-thirties. *De Groene* – so called because of the colour of its cover – described itself as a neutral periodical, but nevertheless had a clear socialist and intellectual bias. On a

cultural level this was obvious from the many films, books and learned insights that were discussed weekly by cultural historians and scientists in columns like ‘Bioscopy’ by the film critic L.J. Jordaan. This polymath was also the chief art editor and a committed cartoonist with an acid-filled pen; he was a confirmed anti-nationalist and anti-Nazi. A good example of his work is *The Deceptive Hand*, a parody of Govert Flinck’s painting *Isaac Blessing Jacob* in the Rijksmuseum’s collection (figs. 5-6). A couple of days after Adolf Hitler took power in 1933, Jordaan depicted him as the – Jewish – patriarch Jacob who tried to trick Abraham into handing over power to him. In Jordaan’s case, Abraham is portrayed by the German

Fig. 5
GOVERT FLINCK,
Isaac Blessing Jacob,
c. 1638.
Oil on canvas,
117 x 141 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. SK-A-110.



Fig. 6

L.J. JORDAAN,
*The Deceptive
 Hand*, in *De Groene
 Amsterdammer*,
 4 February 1933.
 Photo: National
 Library of the
 Netherlands,
 The Hague.

president Paul van Hindenburg. Vice Chancellor Franz von Papen, in the role of the deceiver Rebeca, aids and abets Hitler.⁷

At a political level *De Groene* informed its public with its in-depth coverage of domestic and foreign affairs.⁸ The years around 1932 were marked by financial crises and increasing tension in the run-up to the Second World War, with a devastating war still fresh in the memory.⁹ The period was subsequently described as dark. Nevertheless it was certainly not all doom and gloom. The big city dwellers encountered modern culture in the form of large cinemas and new dances like the Charleston.¹⁰ The largest political parties were the liberals in the centre, the social

democrats on the left and the communists on the extreme left. The Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) in particular, initiated – with the paltry resources the State provided – art projects and buildings aimed at uplifting the working class. The Amsterdamse Bos, a huge landscaped park in Amsterdam, and well-ventilated and light housing complexes and other social facilities were designed and built to improve the position of the less fortunate, who 'had a right to happiness'.¹¹ We shall see that Willink's cartoons should be interpreted in this light.

Although we do not know Carel Willink's exact political leanings during the nineteen-thirties, it is very clear that he was left of centre during the Second World War. Like the

editorial board of *De Groene Amsterdammer* at that time, he strongly disapproved of the right wing sentiments associated with people like the fascist-oriented Magic Realist Pyke Koch. This emerges from sources including an extract from Willink's diary, which he published fifty years later. 'It goes without saying that Koch was a collaborator,' the artist recalled in *Willink's waarheid*.¹² Unlike Koch, Willink did not become a member of the Nederlandsche Kultuurkamer (Dutch Chamber of Culture) during the Nazi occupation in the Second World War. During the war only artists who joined this institution set up by the occupiers were allowed to sell their work. This meant people had almost been forced to join to survive. But Carel Willink stood firm. At the start of the war, when an emissary from Hermann Göring visited Willink's studio and offered a lot of money for his work, the penniless artist lied and told him that everything had already been sold, even though he 'hadn't earned a penny'.¹³ And when Ed Gerdes, a member of the Dutch National Socialist movement, approached Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum during the occupation, the director David Röell declared that Willink 'objects to exhibiting abroad at the moment'.¹⁴ Unfortunately this Nazi interest in Willink's threatening skies, Neo-Classical elements and dignified portraits contributed to his undeserved retrospective association with National Socialism.

Willink's Cartoons

Willink only drew three cartoons for *De Groene*. They are images of local and national events that would have occupied the minds of the residents of Amsterdam, such as the opening of a public recreational facility for workers. Initially the print *The New Swimming and Sun Baths* appears to be a cheerful announcement (fig. 7).¹⁵ Serious-looking men in togas recline, stand and

sit on a terrace, as if they are in a bath house in ancient Rome. However, in the background there is a structure that is certainly not in the Eternal City. It is a building with typical Amsterdam School features, including a round extension in maritime style. A picture postcard published after the opening of the baths shows identical features by the architect Nico Lansdorp from exactly the same angle (fig. 8).¹⁶ By conflating elements that would never be found at the same time in reality – one of the most characteristic aspects of his paintings – Willink conveyed the feeling that something unusual must be going on. It is evident that the location was in the Dutch capital and that the gentlemen were not patricians but contemporary residents of Amsterdam in antique dress. The subtitle confirms this: 'Hoe onze tekenaar zich Burgemeester en Wethouders en Raadsleden bij de opening van de Thermen van de Miranda [*sic*] heeft voorgesteld' (How our artist imagined the Burgomaster and Aldermen and Council Members at the opening of the De Miranda Baths).

These *Thermen* refer to the Amstelparkbad, now known as the De Miranda Baths, which opened on 6 August 1932.¹⁷ As an alderman of Amsterdam, the committed member of the SDAP, Monne De Miranda, had worked hard for years for 'Washing, Bathing and Swimming Establishments' even for the less fortunate. His clever campaign slogan was 'If you want to bathe, if you want to swim, De Miranda's the man, so vote for him.'¹⁸ After a long run-up De Miranda proudly and ceremoniously opened the new complex. Judging by the high number of visitors the initiative was an instant success. The classical setting of the cartoon emphasizes the gulf between the aristocratically dressed gentlemen and the intended public. Nowadays, we associate swimming baths with recreation, but in the nineteen-thirties a visit to a swimming bath was linked

> Fig. 7
 CAREL WILLINK,
*The New Swimming
 and Sun Baths,
 in De Groene
 Amsterdammer,*
 13 August 1932, p. 5.
 Photo: National
 Library of the
 Netherlands, The
 Hague. © S.M.E.
 Willink-Quiel.

Het nieuwe Zwem- en Zonnebad

Teekening door A. C. Willink



Hoe onze teekenaar zich Burgemeester en Wethouders en Raadsleden bij de opening van de Thermen van de Miranda heeft voorgesteld



Fig. 8
Postcard with caption 'Amsterdam. Nieuwe Gemeentelijke Zwem en Zonnebadinrichting a.d. Zuidelijken wandelweg', 1932. Photo: Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad, Amsterdam.

to hygiene, an issue that was high on the city council's agenda. It was not until the nineteen-sixties that social housing had modern bathrooms provided by local authorities.¹⁹ The association of a swimming pool complex with Roman baths may sound rather far-fetched today, but that was certainly not the case in the nineteen-thirties. A bath house after a Roman example with a real *apodyterium* (changing room), *tepidarium* (warm room) and *sudatorium* (sweat room) had already been opened for the well-to-do in Heiligeweg in Amsterdam in 1896.²⁰ Willink chose this thought-provoking context with good reason: 'You use those images that are submerged in the collective memory,' said present-day political cartoonist Tjeerd Royaards.^{21 22} But who or what do those lofty gentlemen represent? To answer this,

it is worth looking at the political function of Roman baths. Illustrious emperors had these huge bathing complexes built to show off their power and status. The fact that we are looking at an emperor and senators in Willink's print and not philosophers, for example, is revealed by an inscription he wrote on one of the drawn preliminary studies: 'TheOur senator at our new baths.'

These political leaders in a bath house may even be a satirical reference to the heated debate about mixed bathing. In ancient Rome from the first century BC both sexes were allowed to use the facilities and the Amstel Bath complex was the first modern venue where, by way of a trial, men and women were allowed to bathe together at least one day a week.²³ On Sundays the men were expected to wear a costume that covered more than their swimming trunks did.²⁴

Fig. 9
CAREL WILLINK,
*Preliminary Study for
the New Swimming
and Sun Baths*, 1932
or before. Pencil on
paper, 335 x 267 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-T-2004-204-16(R);
gift of S.M.E.
Willink-Quïël,
Amsterdam.
Inscriptions, from
l. to r. 'Wijnkoop/
sofoeles/ Wibaut/
Polak (liggend)/
Boekman/ de Vlugt/
Ketelaar/ Miranda'.
Photo: © S.M.E.
Willink-Quïël.



This situation dismayed Willem de Vlugt, mayor of Amsterdam at that time. Political historian Harm Kaal maintains that he 'was an anti-revolutionary mayor who came from a background in which swimming – mixed swimming in particular – was problematic, and showing one's body invited moral danger'.²⁵ This may explain why one figure in a preliminary study has turned his back on the other politicians. However De Vlugt was not bald, as Willink drew this man, but had luxuriant hair. To date the identity of this figure has not been established. In the final print the man looks at the public.

The same preliminary study contains a textual clue that suggests a different reading (fig. 9). The name Sophocles has been written in the silhouette of the figure on the extreme left. The pose and the clothes are indeed identical to a statue

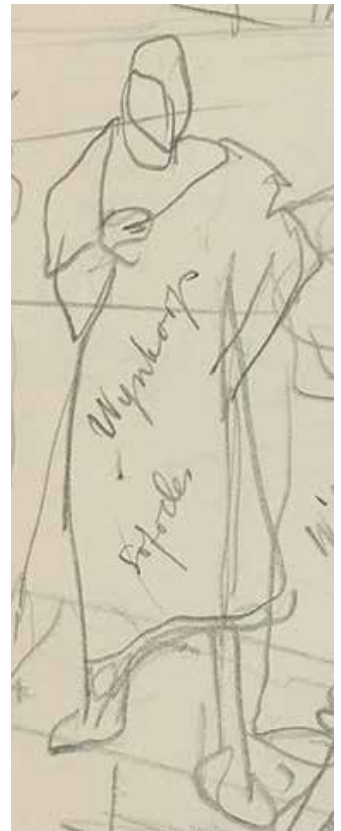
of this Attic tragedian of the fourth century BC (see fig. 10, cf. figs. 11-12). The fact that the communist David Wijnkoop is portrayed in this way suggests that Willink was depicting the enterprise aimed at the working class as a play and those present as actors. However it is more likely that it was only a visual and not an intrinsic reference. The bearded Sophocles was obviously ideally suited to depict the only man with facial hair. As he did for his paintings, Willink drew on a carefully collected image archive of photographs – by others and ones he took himself – print books, newspaper cuttings and post-cards in creating his cartoons.

Comparing the end result with the preliminary studies more closely provides more and more insight into Willink's considerations and his thinking. In the printed version, for example,

Fig. 10
ANONYMOUS,
Sophocles, c. 330 BC
(Roman copy of
another statue).
Rome, Vatican, Museo
Gregoriano Profano.
Photo: © 2016 Scala,
Florence.

Fig. 11
Detail of fig. 7 with
David Wijnkoop.

Fig. 12
Detail of fig. 9 with
David Wijnkoop.



the Jewish SDAP councillor Emmanuel Boekman, portrayed by Willink with his characteristic moustache, serious look, wild curls and hooked nose, sits on the throne, whereas he is still standing in the sketch. Willink had previously assigned this prominent place to De Vlucht (fig. 9). The mayor was known for his love of ostentation and status-enhancing symbolism; he did not hesitate to present himself to the public in full regalia including medals. When he is seated, the extra folds in the ample belly that originally belonged to De Vlucht are eye-catching.²⁶ In the final result, De Vlucht – now standing and positioned between Wijnkoop and the unknown bald man – was able to conceal his torso in a toga (see fig. 7). In the print both Boekman and the man behind him hold a scroll of the law in their left hands, while their right are raised in a gesture of address; a sign of power in Roman iconography.²⁷ All these aspects come together to suggest that he, not De Vlucht, would be the highest placed figure in the distinguished company.

Why did these two people's heads change position? Did the artist think it was too risky to expose an important man like the mayor in that way or was he deliberately depicting a power struggle? Historian Harm Kaal considers the latter unlikely: 'The Boekman – De Vlucht relationship gives no reason to think that rivalry or conflict is being shown here, as De Vlucht was occasionally engaged in a struggle with more social-democratic aldermen. I can well imagine that Willink shied away from portraying De Vlucht naked; he probably considered it too presumptuous.'²⁸ Perhaps toning it down had been an editorial decision. Political cartoonist Tjeerd Royaards says that this was and is common practice. 'Nine times out of ten, a cartoonist gets his work back from the editors with an instruction to soften the message. This is usually because it is rather more critical and savage than

the editors can allow. I can imagine that it loses readers and can have adverse consequences for the paper to make a mayor look so ridiculous.'²⁹ It may not even have been Willink who took it upon himself to swap people by placing some heads on other bodies, but a picture editor.

From Local to International: Borah's Proposal

In *Borah's Proposal*, a print published on 30 July 1932, Willink swapped the local Amsterdam setting for an international context concerning the relationship between Europe and America (see figs. 13-15). Once again the main figures, identified as 'Borah' and 'Hoover', are dressed in clothes recognizable to everyone: a sailor's jumper and a captain's uniform. William Borah was a prominent Republican senator from Idaho and Herbert Hoover, also a Republican,

Fig. 13
CAREL WILLINK,
Preliminary Study
for Borah's Proposal,
1932 or before.
Pencil on paper,
335 x 267 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-T-2004-204-10(R);
gift of S.M.E.
Willink-Quiel,
Amsterdam.
Photo: © S.M.E.
Willink-Quiel.



was the thirty-first president of the United States from 1929 to 1933. Borah, portrayed as a sailor, empties a sandbag with the words 'War debts' written on it. He has averted his gaze from the viewer and his travelling companion alike, but his expression speaks volumes: dismay and dissatisfaction. Interestingly, Willink showed Borah smiling in the preliminary study (fig. 13). His negative emotions are caused by what is happening on the other side: the president alias the captain clutches a rope that leads our gaze upwards to end in an easily removed bung in the hot air balloon. Hoover's face expresses obstinacy.

Whereas emptying the bag makes the balloon rise, the slightest tug on the rope would reverse this action and have dramatic consequences: a free fall (for both passengers, though). The image is the visual expression of a well-known saying 'two captains on one

ship' – a division of power. There can, after all, only be one who sets the course. What is more, Hoover literally has 'the reins in his hands', another common expression. Willink expressed this by portraying the supreme commander larger than his colleague. The cartoon suggests the stalemate in a political situation that gripped Europe at that time. 'Zal 't helpen?' (Will it help?) reads the rhetorical and somewhat ironic question below the print.

After the First World War, Europe literally and figuratively lay in ruins. The continent owed the United States an astronomical amount of money. Despite the wretched conditions in the old continent, America was by no means inclined to reduce or reschedule the debts; this was laid down in the Treaty of Lausanne (summer 1932). In a radio broadcast a week before the publication of Willink's print, the contrary Borah was the first and only

Fig. 14
 CAREL WILLINK,
*Design Drawing for
 Borah's Proposal*, 1932.
 Pencil on paper,
 355 x 250 mm.
 GorsseL,
 Museum MORE.
 Photo: © S.M.E.
 Willink-Quiël.

Fig. 15
 CAREL WILLINK,
Borah's Proposal,
 in *De Groene
 Amsterdamer*,
 30 July 1932, p. 5.
 Photo: National
 Library of the
 Netherlands, The
 Hague. © S.M.E.
 Willink-Quiël.



American to argue in favour of a review. In the Netherlands reference was made to Borah's proposal in newspapers including the *Schaager Courant* under the heading 'What Senator Borah Wants: Debt Cancellation'.³⁰ The senator maintained that 'cancelling the war debts' would actually be in the interest of the American people. Only a couple of weeks earlier, A.C. Josephus Jitta – chief editor of *De Groene Amsterdammer* – had argued in the same vein in an open letter to President Hoover. Cancellation would benefit the entire world economy. Even though none of Borah's colleagues supported his idea, a number of American journalists did. A *New York Times* leader at the beginning of July contended that it made little sense to try to collect irrecoverable debts.³¹ In England and France, Borah's message was also seen as 'a fact of very great significance'.³² In the conclusion of the article in the *Schaager Courant* we read the following striking metaphor, which may have inspired Willink: 'In general, Borah's speech is regarded as floating a *trial balloon*. It is even thought that Borah is being used as a spokesman for the government and that his speech had been a preparation for the major address President Hoover will deliver on 11 August.'³³ Willink's contribution suggested that all outcomes had been taken into consideration, but that the artist's expectations of Hoover were not high.

And he was proved right; in his speech Hoover ultimately said nothing about a cancellation of debts, nor did he respond to a proposal to lower the tariffs on export products from Europe. The fact that this did not go down well, and certainly not with the members of the paper Willink worked for, is revealed by an opening article in *De Groene* immediately prior to the new presidential elections. 'Nothing more can be expected of Hoover. There is no doubt that he will continue the pernicious policy that has ended in failure in almost every respect.'³⁴

Illustrations

In 1932, the year Willink made the cartoons discussed here, he also produced various illustrations for *De Groene*. The first thing to strike one, as it is in his cartoons, is the consistent use of the single flowing line, without any colouring or hatching to create shadows or contrasts between areas. Most of the preliminary studies for them are in the Rijksmuseum's Print Room, but the final designs are scattered. Placing them side by side in digital form enabled us to follow Willink's train of thought.

Willink once illustrated Albert Helman's imaginative and racy story, *De Begijnen van Woldry* (fig. 16). In the print a somewhat bashful young man stands on the pavement holding his hat in front of his crutch. There are step gables and a clock tower in the background. Head tilted and with a dismayed expression, he looks at the viewer as if he is about to disclose something that cannot stand the light of day. The passage in question in Helman's story makes it clear that this pose is justified. On a languid summer's day the main character visits the little town of Woldry out of boredom. It is not long before a nun invites him to look round the local convent. Before he knows what is happening she tells him about the most terrible events and crimes, in order to overcome her feelings of guilt about a single indiscretion. What she had done remains shrouded in mystery, but in view of the nature of the other offences the reader suspects the worst: '... Beguine Margaretha three murders by poison and four murders by slander; Ignatia a theft of health, adultery six times because of lust, countless acts of fornication ...'. After a long recital the dumbfounded guest has to promise to keep his lips sealed, because the nun is afraid that otherwise she will miss out on her annual bottle of liquor. Through a creaking little door in the garden she unceremoniously returns the young man to the street in the gathering dusk. 'I stood as if in a new

> Fig. 16

CAREL WILLINK,
The Beguines of Woldry, in *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 2 April 1932, p. 21.
Photo: National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague. © S.M.E. Willink-Quïël.

> Fig. 17

CAREL WILLINK,
Portrait of the Painter Charles Roelofs (1897-1962), 1932.
Oil on canvas, 119 x 76 cm.
Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum, no. A 2163.
Photo: © S.M.E. Willink-Quïël.

Willink regularly illustrated the stories of Jef Last (1898-1972), a socialist and communist writer, poet and journalist. Last wrote stories for *De Groene* about his travels in the Netherlands, examining the conditions, appearance and idiosyncrasies of the local population of labourers, fishermen, prostitutes and farmers. Although the stories do attest to social engagement, they did not convey any explicitly socialist messages. Willink made two or three illustrations for each story.

‘Naar het land van koning Douwe’ (‘To the Land of King Douwe’) was published on 11 June 1932. It was a story about a voyage to Friesland on the ‘Lemmer Boat’, which left Amsterdam and sailed to Lemmer. By ‘King Douwe’ Last was referring to Douwe Kalma, a Frisian poet he admired: ‘a blond son of a farmer who once dreamed about the resurrected kingdom of Aldgillis with the boys from my community’.³⁶ (Aldgillis was a fictional Frisian king from the Middle Ages.) Last believed that the voyage was a true experience for anyone who wanted to find out about the soul of the Frisian people – provided, at least, that they dared to travel ‘second class’. For ‘this is where you will hear Frisian spoken, in all its different harmonious dialects, by the children who play among the sandbanks, by the women with gold brooches under their lace caps’.³⁷ Last continues: ‘Friesland, with its own language, its own culture, its own jubilant songs ... The sound of an accordion rises up from second class. What are these Frisians singing? “Waarom, waarom zijn de bananen krom?” I smile. The mail boat from Holland imports Hollandish culture from the land of King Douwe.’³⁸ The author did not seem to realize that this well-known sentimental song was originally Flemish. However this does not detract from the musical essence. Willink transformed this atmospheric description into the print *The Sound of an Accordion* (fig. 19), in which he

combined passages from the story. In the hold a strapping fellow in a cap plays an accordion. Beside him on the simple wooden bench sits a woman in traditional Frisian dress with a basket on her lap. Although simplicity dominates, Willink devoted particular attention to a number of details, like the shape of the cap brooches and the Frisian peasant woman’s cap. The typical Frisian chain is present too, although Last does not describe it. For this detail Willink may have used a book on Dutch national costume that his widow said he had. Unfortunately it has not been found in his book collection.

All Willink’s preliminary studies prove to be extremely close to the final results (cf. figs. 19-21). In the illustration in ink there are some ‘pentimenti’ or improvements in white gouache over the black lines (fig. 20). They show precisely what Willink changed in the last stage, such as the position of the beam on the far left and the musician’s right hand. In this last stage simplification was the main thing. The changes had no effect on the iconography or content, as was the case in the cartoons, and even stylistically there are no great differences.

Lines of Inspiration: Ingres, Picasso and Le Fauconnier

The white pentimenti in the ink drawing make it likely that it was a final design for line engravings. This technique enables a printer to transfer a drawing on to a transparent sheet and print it cheaply, easily and in quantity. Only pure black comes across with the transfer. The simple black line is thus the only means of expression the artist has at his disposal. In other words, as well as a functional reason for omitting shading – to transmit his message as clearly as possible – Willink could also have had a technical one.³⁹ The changes made in gouache do not create a problem; the white paint that stands out against the off-white paper is transparent after the transfer and

> Fig. 19
CAREL WILLINK,
The Sound of an Accordion,
in *De Groene Amsterdammer*,
11 June 1932, pp. 16-17.
Photo: National Library of the Netherlands, The Hague. © S.M.E. Willink-Quiel.

> Fig. 20
CAREL WILLINK,
Final Design for The Sound of an Accordion, 1932.
Ink and gouache on paper.
Amsterdam, City Archives.
Photo: © S.M.E. Willink-Quiel.

> Fig. 21
CAREL WILLINK,
Preliminary Study for The Sound of an Accordion,
1932 or before.
Pencil on paper,
335 x 267 mm.
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-T-2004-204-38(v); gift of S.M.E. Willink-Quiel, Amsterdam.
Photo: © S.M.E. Willink-Quiel.



invisible in the end result. Lithography – the only other technique for large print runs – is a much more complicated and lengthier process and in the case of a colour lithograph, necessitates several printings. Nevertheless, the artist or illustrator always steers a middle course within the given constraints and possibilities to achieve a satisfactory aesthetic solution, not solely governed by practicality. In other words, as an artist Willink would have enjoyed the simple, distinct lines. He had used identical flowing lines in 1926 in a number of drawn nudes that are regarded as autonomous works. At that time Willink was studying with Henri Le Fauconnier in Paris.⁴⁰ There are no shadows or planes; most lines are simply convincing outlines. And what is even more important: the work is strongly figurative and naturalistic. Willink did not make the figures abstract, as he had done shortly before in *Silver Wedding* (1924). In his transition from abstract-





tion to figuration he was invigorated by Picasso's recent 'return to order',⁴¹ which had been influenced by Ingres and Cézanne. Inspired by Picasso's change of course, Willink also decided 'to throw the whole ragbag of constructivist elements overboard'.⁴²

The significance of Willink's announcement immediately becomes clear when we compare one of his nudes to Picasso's work from the early nineteen-twenties (fig. 22). There are even more similarities in a preliminary study for the painting *Nude with Towel* of 1926 built up in lines (fig. 23). Picasso used the same (painted) line with powerful contours in *Olga in a Hat with Feather* (fig. 24). However, Willink's contemporary and great example varied the thickness of the line far more strongly in order to express the difference in haptic quality: the soft feather and the light underclothes are depicted by means of narrower, interrupted brushstrokes.



Fig. 22

CAREL WILLINK,
Seated Nude, 1926.
Pencil on paper,
645 x 500 mm.
Amsterdam,
Stedelijk Museum,
no. 1999.2.0162.
Photo: © Sylvia
Willink-Quiël.

Fig. 23

CAREL WILLINK,
*Preliminary Study
for Nude with Towel*,
1926 or before.
Pencil on paper,
335 x 267 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-T-2004-203-1(R);
gift of S.M.E.
Willink-Quiël,
Amsterdam.
Photo: © Sylvia
Willink-Quiël.

Willink's Pen Strokes: Conclusion

In his cartoons and book illustrations Willink shows a previously unknown side: where he portrayed his subjects in his oil paintings in minute detail with peerlessly captured wrinkles, moles and proportions measured with a compass, his drawing in his sketches and preliminary studies was absolutely basic. Nevertheless, Willink succeeded in creating striking likenesses with both means of expression.

Did the fact that Willink captured people's most obvious characteristics with simple lines make him a caricaturist? In his theoretical treatise *100 jaar spotprent* (1958), L.J. Jordaan, the political cartoonist and senior art editor of *De Groene Amsterdammer*, wrote about the different forms of appropriate visual commentary on political events. Jordaan called the portrayals of people like those by Willink caricature portraits ('*portretcharges*') and deemed them appropriate for



Fig. 24

PABLO PICASSO,
*Olga in a Hat with
Feather*, 1920.
Oil on canvas.
Private collection.

small, local events: 'The artist is sent there. He looks at the famous object, notes with a keen eye the small, characteristic peculiarities, exaggerates them a lot or a little ... and there you have a caricature portrait.'

The clear pictorial language Willink used for his caricature portraits, cartoons and illustrations was born in Paris and influenced above all by Picasso. His own ingenious pictorial strategy did the rest. *Borah's Proposal*, for example, provides an accessible and instant image that even modern viewers understand; a ship can only be steered by one captain. Contemporary readers of *De Groene* found information about the context in which this cartoon should be 'read' in the media – radio, magazines and newspapers. Willink reinforced his message by using the cartoonist's traditional method of the unfinished narrative. This means the artist asks questions rather than giving answers. Will the balloon fall or rise? What are these gentlemen doing at the swimming

baths? Implicit messages are more powerful when the viewers themselves are allowed to finish the story. This state of uncertainty is precisely what the majority of Willink's canvases, like *Bad Tidings* convey (fig. 25). Here a threatening sky acts as a metaphor for the message in the letter, which will soon be read by a still unsuspecting passerby. While the artist makes the first move, the viewer gives the final push.

In other respects, too, the 1932 drawings have things in common with the paintings from that time. In both cases he started with reality, witness the copy of the statue of Sophocles, the true-to-life caricature portraits of well-known political figures and the architecture of the De Miranda Baths. The print *The Beguines of Woldry* even has an identical structure to the *Portrait of Charles Roelofs*. On his excursions Willink stayed close to home.

It is unclear why Willink only ventured into cartoons and socialist illustrations in 1932. According to his widow, Sylvia Willink-Quïël, her late husband made illustrations to earn money when times were hard.⁴³ Driven by circumstances or not, Willink's messages illustrated by pen strokes are still crystal clear.

Fig. 25
CAREL WILLINK,
Bad Tidings, 1932.
Tempera on linen,
61.5 x 92 cm.

Amsterdam,
Stedelijk Museum,
no. A 741.
Photo: © Sylvia
Willink-Quïël.



NOTES

- 1 Jurrie Poot, *Carel Willink. Tekeningen en aquarellen*, exh. cat Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1992, p. 3.
- 2 *Het Parool*, 1 December 1973.
- 3 Anonymous, 'Willink-beeld onthuld onder Willink-lucht', *De Volkskrant*, 4 March 2000, <http://www.volkskrant.nl/beeldende-kunst/willink-beeld-onthuld-onder-willink-lucht-a555325/>, consulted on 25 March 2016.
- 4 'In café Americain op het Leidseplein troffen Wilma en ik wekelijks aan onze vaste tafel andere magisch-realistische schilders en enkele bekenden van het weekblad *De Groene Amsterdammer*, onder wie directeur Henk [dit moet zijn Riens] Dijkstra, voor wiens blad ik illustraties maakte.' Jouke Mulder, *Willinks waarheid. En het dagboek van Sylvia*, Baarn 1983, p. 51
- 5 Hans Mulder, *Inkspot. 100 jaar politieke spotprent in Nederland*, Amsterdam 1983, p. 6.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Interpretation and observation by political historian Tjalling Bouma, 8 February 2016, personal archives.
- 8 Hans Mulder, *Een groote laars, een plumpe voet. Nederland en de Nazi's in spotprent en karikatuur 1933-1945*, Amsterdam 1985, p. 34.
- 9 Jan Luiten van Zanden, *De dans om de gouden standaard. Economisch beleid in de depressie van de jaren dertig*, Amsterdam 1988 (inaugural speech Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam).
- 10 Auke van der Woud, *De nieuwe mens. De culturele revolutie in Nederland rond 1900*, Amsterdam 2015, pp. 130-31.
- 11 Harm Kaal, *Het hoofd van de stad. Amsterdam en zijn burgemeester tijdens het interbellum*, Amsterdam 2008, p. 59.
- 12 'Koch was zonder meer fout.' Mulder 1983 (note 4), p. 59.
- 13 '... geen stuiver verdiende.' Jouke Mulder and Adriaan Venema, *Kunsthandel in Nederland 1940-1945*, Amsterdam 1986, p. 164.
- 14 '... bezwaar heeft op dit oogenblik in het buitenland tentoon te stellen.' Claartje Wesselink, *Kunstenaars van de Kulturkamer. Geschiedenis en herinnering*, Amsterdam 2014 (diss. University of Amsterdam), p. 48.
- 15 Carel Willink, 'Het nieuwe zwem- en zonnebad', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 13 August 1932, p. 5.
- 16 H. Aukes, 'Van ijskoud Vechtwater naar subtropische golven', *Ons Amsterdam*, 12 June 2014, <http://www.zuidelijkewandelweg.nl/index.php/architectuur/568-recreatie-het-bad-van-de-miranda>, consulted on 25 March 2016.
- 17 Piet de Rooy, 'Oorlog en Revolutie 1914-1925', in Piet de Rooy (ed.), *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam. Tweestrijd in de hoofdstad*, Amsterdam 2007, p. 101.
- 18 'Wil je bajen, wil je zwemmen, moet je De Miranda stemmen.' H. Aukes, 'Het bad van De Miranda', *Ons Amsterdam* 7/8, August 2007.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Van der Woud 2015 (note 10), pp. 130-31.
- 21 At the author's request, as an expert on modern and historical cartoons, Tjeerd Rooyaards looked at Willink's drawings.
- 22 'Je maakt gebruik van die beelden die verzonken zijn in het collectieve beeldgeheugen.' From an interview with Tjeerd Rooyaards, 8 February 2016, personal archives.
- 23 Garrett G. Fagan, *Bathing in Public in the Roman World*, Michigan 2002, pp. 26-27.
- 24 Aukes 2007 (note 18).
- 25 '... een antirevolutionaire burgemeester die uit een omgeving kwam waarin zwemmen – met name gemengd zwemmen – problematisch was, en lichamelijke al snel zedelijk gevaar in hield.' Exchange of emails between the author and Harm Kaal, 10 February 2016, personal archives.
- 26 H. Kaal, 'Vader Willem de Vlucht', *Ons Amsterdam* 3, March 2005, p. 7.
- 27 J. Pageau, 'Authority on the Right: Power on the Left', *Orthodox Arts Journal*, 17 February 2013, <http://www.orthodoxartsjournal.org/authority-on-the-right-power-on-the-left/>, consulted on 15 December 2015
- 28 'De verhouding Boekman – De Vlucht geeft geen aanleiding om te veronderstellen dat hier een concurrentie of tweestrijd wordt verbeeld, want De Vlucht bond met meer sociaaldemocratische wethouders af en toe de strijd aan. Ik kan me wel voorstellen dat Willink ervoor is teruggedeinsd om De Vlucht ontbloot af te beelden; dat achtte hij wellicht toch te aanmatigend.' Exchange of emails between the author and Harm Kaal, 10 February 2016, personal archives.
- 29 'Negen van de tien keer krijgt een spotprenten-tekenaar zijn werk terug van de redactie met een aanmerking om de boodschap wat terug te schroeven. Die is meestal wat kritischer en feller dan de redactie kan toestaan. Ik kan me voorstellen dat het lezers kost en nadelige gevolgen kan hebben voor het blad om een burgemeester zo potsierlijk neer te zetten.' From an interview with Tjeerd Rooyaards, 8 February 2016, personal archives.

- 30 'Wat senator Borah wil: schuldschrapping.'
Schager Courant, 26 July 1932, no. 9112.
- 31 See *IJmuider Courant*, 12 July 1932, <http://nba.courant.nu/issue/IJC/1932-07-12/edition/0/page/5>, consulted on 31 January 2016.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 'Van Hoover valt niets meer te verwachten. Het staat vast, dat hij zou doorgaan met de verderfelijke politiek die in vrijwel alle opzichten op een mislukking is uitgelopen.'
Anonymous, 'De nieuwe president van de Vereenigde Staten', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 12 November 1932, p. 1.
- 35 '... begijn Margaretha driemaal moord door gif en viermaal moord door laster; van Ignatia een diefstal van gezondheid, zesmaal echtbreuk van begeerte, hoererij ontelbaar ...'. 'Ik stond als in een nieuwe wereld, herademend', 'Zeldzaam blank en open lag de winkelstraat', Albert Helman 'De Begijnen van Woldry', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 2 April 1932, p. 21.
- 36 '... een blonden boerenzoon die eens met de jongeren van zijn mienskip [gemeenschap] droomde over het herleefde koninkrijk van Aldgillis ...'. *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 11 June 1932, pp. 16-17.
- 37 '... daar zult gij het Friesch hooren, in al zijn verschillende swietludiche dialekten, van de kinderen die tusschen de banken spelen, van de vrouwen met gouden ijzers onder het kanten kapje ...'. J. Last, 'Naar het land van koning Douwe', *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 11 June 1932, pp. 16-17.
- 38 Ibid., p. 17.
- 39 Fons van der Linden, *De grafische technieken*, De Bilt 1979, pp. 145-49.
- 40 H.L.C. Jaffé, *Willink*, Bloemendaal 2000, p. 30.
- 41 Elizabeth Cowling, *Picasso: Challenging the Past*, London 2009, pp. 70-71.
- 42 'de hele santekraam van constructivistische elementen overboord te gooien';
A.C. Willink, *De schilderkunst in een kritiek stadium*, Amsterdam 1951, p. 30.
- 43 Note from Sylvia Willink-Quiel to the author on 10 February 2016.