

Are National Museums of Protestant Nations Different? The Process of Modernizing 19th-Century National Art Museums in the Netherlands and in Great Britain 1800–1855*

Dr. Ellinoor Bergvelt

Department History of European Culture,
University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

e.s.bergvelt@uva.nl

I Although 19th-century national museums are supposed to be part of identity politics of the European nation-states, this was not the case in the Netherlands and Great Britain, at least not in the early part of the 19th century. Surprisingly, William I, the first king of the House of Orange-Nassau (1815-1840), never used art museums as part of his politics to unify his nation (consisting of the Northern and Southern Netherlands, nowadays the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg): there existed municipal art museums in Antwerp and Brussels, and two (!), national art museums in the Northern part of the country, i.e. 's Rijks Museum (= National Museum, Amsterdam) and the Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen (= Royal Cabinet of Paintings, The Hague), also known as the Mauritshuis. No “master narrative” was told, nor had one location been chosen to do so. Also in Great Britain the possibilities of a national art gallery were not fully used. It was only after the reorganization of the National Gallery in 1855 that a clear policy was formulated. Protestantism might be one of the explanations for the “backwardness” of the British and Dutch art museums, compared to those in other countries.

Introduction

In the 18th century, museums of art and science arose as an important manifestation of culture found in virtually every corner of Europe. In the 19th century, these early composite museums were divided into two separate entities – museums of art and museums of science. Far from presenting a picture of uniformity, the evolution of the European national museum of art is rich and varied. By the middle of the 19th century, it is clear that there are museums that may be considered “progressive” and other museums that must be viewed as still firmly rooted – at least in part – in the traditions established in the 18th century. Where the Alte Pinakothek in Roman-Catholic Munich and the Gemäldegalerie in Protestant Berlin were to emerge as Europe’s leading museums in the first half of the 19th century, the national art museums in Great Britain and the Netherlands were in many ways still very traditional. The National Gallery in London housed the collection of paintings officially in the possession of the British nation.¹ The Netherlands, by contrast, boasted two national museums, reflecting the two historical centres of power of the Dutch Republic before 1795: the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Mauritshuis in The Hague.² Certainly there are differences to be cited in the factors affecting the British national museum of art as opposed to those in the Netherlands. By the middle of the 19th century, however, in comparison with developments found elsewhere in Europe, both the Dutch and British museums existed in a sleep-like, almost comatose, state. This distinction between the museums of Great Britain and the Netherlands and those found in other countries can be linked to the process of modernization occurring throughout Europe in the early 19th century, which may essentially be described as an evolution of museological nature. It is due to such changes that the museum of the 18th century gradually transformed into an institution that could be considered modern in the 19th-century sense.

By focusing on the origins and course of development of the European museum of art in the 19th century in Great Britain and the Netherlands, it is my aim to examine the underlying factors that ultimately led to this museological transformation. In so doing, one may perhaps also gain insight into the reasons why these two museums were slow to adopt the process of modernization that was well underway in other countries. One could formulate a hypothesis based on the role of Protestantism as the predominate religion in both countries, versus the largely Catholic orientation of those countries in which these museological advances occurred more rapidly.³ Serving as the basis for my analysis are the published findings of an official enquiry into the National Gallery, conducted by a Select Committee of the British House of

* This article presents one subject related to my ongoing research into several aspects of the National Gallery (London) in the 19th century. I would like to thank Gary Thorn (Archives British Museum, London); Isobel Siddons, Jessica Collins, Alan Crookham (all Archives National Gallery, London). This is an adaptation of my article: E. Bergvelt, ‘The process of modernization of 19th-century art museums. The national museums in the Netherlands and in Great Britain 1800-1855’, in: B. Graf and H. Möbius (eds.), *Zur Geschichte der Museen im 19. Jahrhundert 1789-1918*, (Berliner Schriften zur Museumskunde, vol. 22), (Berlin, 2006), p. 41-55

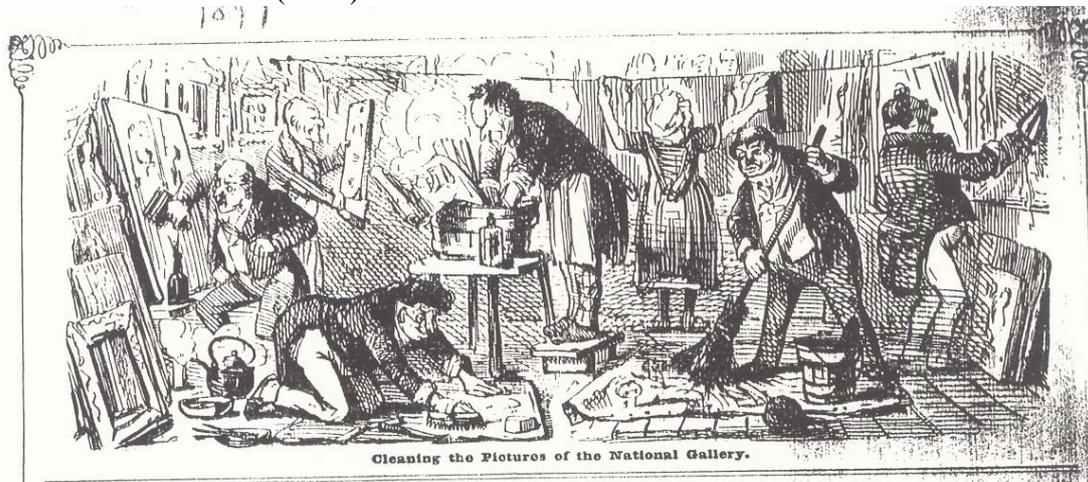
1 For the early history of the National Gallery Jonathan Conlin, *The Nation’s Mantelpiece. A History of the National Gallery* (London, 2006); also: Charles Holmes and Charles Henry Collins Baker, *The Making of the National Gallery, 1824-1924* (London, 1924).

2 See for an explanation of the two centres of power below, in the section about ‘Organizational Structure’. For the situation in the middle of the century in the Dutch national art museums, see: Ellinoor Bergvelt, *Pantheon der Gouden Eeuw. Van Nationale Konst-Gallerij tot Rijksmuseum van Schilderijen (1798-1896)* (Zwolle 1998), p. 138-176; and in the National Gallery: Ellinoor Bergvelt, ‘De Britse Parlementaire Enquête uit 1853. De “modernisering” van de National Gallery in Londen’, in: Ellinoor Bergvelt, Debora J. Meijers and Mieke Rijnders (eds.), *Kabinetten, galerijen en musea. Het verzamelen en presenteren van naturalia en kunst van 1500 tot heden* (Heerlen / Zwolle 2005) [ch.12], p. 319-342.

3 However Protestant Prussia is an interesting exception. See note 45.

Commons in 1853.⁴ The enquiry was initially sparked by the increasingly heated debate sounded in both the British press and parliament, remarking on the careless and haphazard restoration of the museum's collection of paintings.⁵ In a rather benign caricature appearing in a London journal in the year 1847, people are depicted literally cleaning and scrubbing the paintings (fig. 1). The enquiry incorporated interviews not only with those directly affiliated with the museum, such as the past and present museum "keepers" (the 19th-century equivalent of today's museum curator), the trustees and the secretary. Also involved were those critics who had so strongly voiced their opinions in the press and an influential London auctioneer, George Henry Christie. Artists and collectors were also questioned, as was *the* architect of the European museums at the time, Leo von Klenze, who had recently designed museums considered exemplary both in Munich and St. Petersburg.⁶

Figure 1. John Leech (1817-1864), *Cleaning the pictures of the National Gallery*, caricature print in: *Punch Almanac* (1847).



The enquiry of 1853 resulted in a bulky report in which more than 10,000 questions and answers were published, accompanied by no less than 22 separate appendices. As a result of the recommendations made in the report, the National Gallery was reorganized in 1855. The report not only presents an analysis of many aspects of the National Gallery and what was wrong with its organization, but also provides an overview of the situation in other European national museums of art and antiquities. In addition to the main body of the enquiry, a folding appendix cited the results of a 35-question survey submitted to the heads of national museums in nine different countries across Europe: Belgium (Brussels), Prussia (Berlin), Tuscany (Florence), France (Paris), Bavaria (Munich), the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Naples), the Papal States (Rome), Russia (St. Petersburg and Moscow), and the Netherlands (Amsterdam, The Hague, Haarlem and Leyden). Also included in the report was a 36-folio appendix listing the names of artists whose works were deemed important or

4 *Report from the Select Committee on the National Gallery; together with the proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index* ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 4 August 1853 (London, 1853).

5 This harsh criticism is not always shared by experts today; see for conservation: Hero Boothroyd-Brooks, 'Practical Developments in English Easel-Painting Conservation, c. 1824-1968, From Written Sources' (London, 1999; unpublished Ph.D. Courtauld Institute of Art).

6 See Adrian von Buttlar, *Leo von Klenze. Leben – Werk – Vision* (München, 1999) and Winfried Nerdinger (ed.), *Leo von Klenze: Architekt zwischen Kunst und Hof 1784-1864* (München, 2000).

relevant to the collection of the National Gallery.⁷ Names were organized by country and presented in chronological order. In what may be considered perhaps one of the most tangible results of the 1853 enquiry, this list of artists was to serve as a guideline for the museum's acquisition policy – a “shopping list” of masterpieces – that was to commence with the museum's reorganization of 1855.

For the historian of art and museology, the value of the Select Committee's report is not only the wealth of information it provides regarding the situation in Great Britain, but also the insight that can be gained with regards to the state of museums elsewhere in Europe. Through close examination of this report, it is possible to devise a definition of the quintessential, or ideal, national art museum in the 19th century:

The national art museum is housed in its own building, displaying solely art. The museum and its director fall under the direct administration of the nation-state and its bureaucratic system in the form of a governmental department or ministry without interference of a monarch. The position of museum director is a full-time, fully paid function, held by a formally educated historian of art. The art museum's collection is internationally oriented, comprising solely works of European painting and sculpture dating from the early Renaissance through the 18th centuries. There exists an annual budget provided by the government. These funds are spent according to guidelines established in response to a “shopping list” of works deemed important or relevant to the collection, as conceived by the museum's director or curator. The holdings of the museum are geographically arranged by schools of painters. Within these divisions, all works are presented chronologically. There is a catalogue of the holdings, which is academically up to date. The museum's public is the general public. The museum is open every weekday and its entry is free-of-charge (fig. 2).⁸

At the time the report was compiled, no museum in Europe met the standards of this ideal in its totality. In reality, the national museums of Europe developed at different rates and evolved in various manners. The report clearly reveals that, while a museum might be viewed as highly progressive in one aspect, it could as yet be found rather traditional in others. The utility of the report lays therefore in the definition one may derive from its findings and the standard it provides for gauging any one national museum from a 19th-century perspective. To be addressed in this paper are questions concerning the situation in the Netherlands and Great Britain at this time: How did the national museums of these two countries stand in relation to this 19th-century ideal of cultural modernization?⁹ In what areas and based on

7 Prince Albert had this list commissioned to be compiled, see the letter, which was written on his behalf to the chairman of the Select Committee, preceding Appendix XVII (“Plan for a Collection of Paintings, illustrative of the History of the Art”, 793-828), copy of a letter from Colonel Grey to the Chairman [of the Select Committee], Buckingham Palace, 25 April 1853, in: *Report 1853* (see note 4), p. 791-792.

8 This definition is not exhaustive as, for instance, I have not included everything pertaining to conservation. It is based on my findings in the Report of 1853 (see note 4). What I consider to be “modern” (i.e. 19th-century), in contrast to “traditional” (18th-century), is not so much founded on the knowledge of the course museological developments would take in the 20th century, but rather on the difference with the situation in the 18th –century museums. See for a comparable definition: Christoph Martin Vogtherr, ‘Das Königliche Museum zu Berlin. Planungen und Konzeption des ersten Berliner Kunstmuseums’, *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 39 Beiheft (1997), p. 8. Vogtherr sees in the 19th century the start of the modern art museum of today. I, however, would like to emphasize the many differences between the 19th-century museum and that of today, such as the absence of temporary exhibitions, which points to a completely different concept of art and history at the time (a static versus a dynamic concept of art and history).

9 The comparable term “modernity” is also used, but in a much more general way by Nick Prior, *Museums & modernity. Art galleries and the making of modern culture* (Oxford 2002).

Figure 2.

The “ideal” or “typical” national (art) museum 18th Century 19th Century

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. General collections (arts and sciences combined) | 1. Specialized collection of old paintings (international) |
| 2. Specialized public: artists, scientists, tourists (connoisseurs) | 2. General public; free access, all days of the week (artists and scientists disappear) |
| 3. International paintings: emphasis on 16 th and 17 th century (sometimes including contemporary art) | 3. Paintings: emphasis on 14 th -18 th century (contemporary art and historical objects removed). |
| 4. “Gentlemanly hang“ | 4. Geographical-chronological arrangement |
| 5. Founded by monarchs (part of court life) | 5. Subject to a Ministry; links with the monarch severed |
| 6. The director is an amateur (artist or scholar), courtier | 6. The director is a professional, paid, full-time art historian, a civil servant with a yearly budget |

what conditions was this modernization to be realized? In responding to these two questions, it will quickly become apparent that the factors behind the ‘coming of age’ of the 19th-century museum are diverse and complex, based on political, social and religious circumstances that were unique to each country. Within the limits of this preliminary research, I will examine these specific factors from the perspective of five key topics of museological analysis: **organizational structure, specialization, collecting, presentation and public**. In each case I will analyze the importance of the protestant religion.

Organizational Structure

In contrast to the general opinion about the 19th century, and the relation between the state and the arts, in the Netherlands – which knew many changes of government and in the size of the territory between 1795 and 1830 – the ideas about the art museum(s) did not change.¹⁰ The museum was a relatively autonomous element in the infrastructure of the nation-state. The artistic part of the museum was primarily meant to be a school for artists, and only secondary, it could be used to improve the taste of a more general public. In the art museum(s) an overview was given of the work of Dutch and Flemish masters as examples for contemporary artists. However, everybody involved knew that these paintings represented only a small, provincial part of a larger international European canon of art. This restriction to Dutch and Flemish art was not caused by nationalist ideas, but by the very bad economic situation in the Netherlands. If there had been enough money, it would have been spent on paintings by Raphael, Domenichino and Guido Reni, just like in other European capitals.

10 The only change was between the museum of the Batavian Republic (1800-1806) and the Royal Museum of Louis Napoleon (1806-1810), who ended the historical acquisitions. Since that time the history ‘department’, which previously had been as important as the artistic part of the museum, disappeared to the background. That lasted until 1885, when the collection of the Nederlandsch Museum voor Geschiedenis en Kunst (the Dutch Museum for History and Art, that had existed in The Hague since 1877) was included in the new Rijksmuseum building.

From 1815, William I of the House of Orange, the first Dutch King of the Netherlands (1814-1840), was until the Belgian Revolt of 1830, king of the Catholic Southern Netherlands (nowadays Belgium and Luxembourg) as well. The southern part possessed museums in Antwerp and Brussels, originally comprising municipal collections. Since the year 1816, the Northern Netherlands had two national art museums, the so-called 's Rijks museum' [= national museum] in Amsterdam, the smaller predecessor of today's Rijksmuseum, and one in The Hague: the Royal Cabinet of Pictures, where the nationalized paintings of the late Stadtholder were located after their return from Paris. They had been abducted in 1795 by the French troops and were (partly) recuperated in 1815. This Royal Cabinet was, and still is, also called the Mauritshuis, after the building in which the collection was housed since 1821.

King William I, who, in general, sought unity in his kingdom, never considered using the museums as a unifying force, and for instance, never thought to combine the collections of the Southern and Northern Netherlands, or even combine the collections of both northern museums. However, the museums in the north received far greater subsidies than those in the south.¹¹

The existence of two national art museums in the north is in actuality a reflection of the two centres of power the Dutch Republic prior to the Batavian Revolution in 1795, the year in which French troops invaded the country. This invasion and subsequent revolution signalled the end of the Dutch Republic of the Seven United Provinces. Before 1795, Amsterdam was the most powerful city of the Republic. The Hague was the residence of the Prince of Orange and the seat of the States-General, the rather weak central body of government. Tensions had existed between the two sides as early as the 17th century, ending in 1795 with the victory of the so-called "patriots" over the "Orangists", when the last stadtholder, William V of Orange, fled with his family to Great Britain.

King William I had been very much involved with all national museums in the Netherlands, as had been his French predecessor, Louis Napoleon (1806-1810). William assured that not only ministerial funds were devoted to building the nation's collections, and he even went so far as to utilize a portion of his official governmental salary in doing so, whenever that was necessary. In spite of the different names (Rijksmuseum and Royal Cabinet) the two museums had the same organizational position: Both were subsidized by government, and, if necessary, both were supported financially by the king (fig. 3). This situation lasted until the Belgian Revolt in 1830, after which Belgium became independent.¹²

William's son, King William II (1840-1849), reveals an entirely different approach to the Dutch nation's art and culture. Upon becoming king, William II specifically forbade all acquisitions in the field of art or otherwise for the country's national museums. He was in fact downright hostile towards them. Instead, he devoted all his private funds to his own art museum, including the neo-gothic hall of his royal palace in The Hague, an extension built for viewing art in the 1840s. He even tried, in vain, to re-privatize the nationalized paintings of his grandfather, Stadtholder William V, which were the core of the Mauritshuis collection. William II's private, royal museum was closed after the sudden death of the king in 1849, and the collection was put up for auction.¹³ All ties between the museums and the Dutch king

11 See about William I: Ellinoor Bergvelt, 'Koning Willem I als verzamelaar, opdrachtgever en weldoener van de Noordnederlandse musea', in: Coenraad Arnold Tamse and Els Witte (eds.), *Staats- en natievorming in Willem I's koninkrijk* (Brussels / Baarn, 1992), p. 261-285.

12 However: the Royal Cabinet in the Mauritshuis received more money than the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

13 See about the collection of King William II, Erik Hinterding and Femy Horsch: "A small but choice collection:" the art gallery of King Willem II of the Netherlands (1792-1849)', *Simiolus* 19 (1989), p. 5-54; for an overview of the current whereabouts of the paintings, see: *ibidem*, p. 55-122 (Reconstruction of the collection of old master paintings of King Willem II). See also: Ellinoor Bergvelt, 'Een vorsteljk museum?'

Figure 3. Expenses for Dutch and British art museums (1800–1853).

Purchases	
Netherlands (2 museums)	Great Britain (1 museum)
National Art Gallery, The Hague (1800-1806) 129 old paintings (incl. 6 mod), fl. 50.000	
Royal Museum, Amsterdam (1806-1810) 200 old paintings: fl. 200.000 50 contemporary paintings: fl. 25.000	
's Rijks Museum, Amsterdam (1814-1844): 66 old paintings: fl. 65.000 (of which the King paid ca. fl. 26.000) 150 contemporary paintings fl. 13.815	
(of which the King paid ca. fl. 4.000) (1844-1853): 1 old painting: fl. 646,75	
Royal Cabinet of Paintings, The Hague (1816-1853) 220 old paintings: fl. 250.000 (of which the King paid ca. fl. 47.000) 80 contemporary paintings fl. 45.000 (of which the King paid ca. fl. 18.000)	
Total old paintings Amsterdam/The Hague (1800-1853): 616 paintings = fl. 565.646,75 [average = fl. 918,84]	
	National Gallery, London
	1824: purchase collection Angerstein (38 old paintings):
	£60.000
	1824-1853
	37 old paintings: £67.718 - 8 sh.
	75 old paintings = £127.718 – 8 sh [average = £1.702 = fl. 17.020]
	1 £ (pound) was about 10 fl. (guilders)

NB Dutch guards had a yearly salary of fl.600 and the Amsterdam director (1808-1844) of fl.1.500 (later fl. 3000)

were severed following the alteration of the Dutch Constitution in 1848, after a night in which, allegedly, William II changed his political views from conservative to liberal.

In London, the National Gallery had been founded in 1824 as the department of paintings of the British Museum, which itself was established in the middle of the 18th century. In 1753 British Parliament purchased several collections of Sir Hans Sloane, comprising objects of natural history, drawings, ethnographical objects, and various other collections, such as books. However, European paintings were absent. In the year 1824 the British Parliament acquired 37 European paintings (16th-18th century) from the London banker, John Julius Angerstein.¹⁴ Initially, this collection was to be hung in the new building of the British Museum, but for reasons that remain unapparent, these works stayed in Angerstein's home, and so a separate national gallery, solely for paintings, was started.

In Great Britain, there had never been any regular connection between the museums and galleries and the monarchs. As is the case to this very day, the kings and queens of Great Britain possessed their own private art collections. Apart from a few paintings bestowed to the National Gallery, the British royal family was in no way directly involved with the gallery.¹⁵ Hardly would they have ever considered their private collections as possessions of

De rol van de kunstverzameling aan het Haagse hof van koning Willem II (1840-1850)', in: Johann-Christian Klamt and Kees Veelenturf (eds.), *Representatie: kunsthistorische bijdragen over vorst, staatsmacht en beeldende kunst, opgedragen aan Robert W. Scheller* (Nijmegen, 2004), p. 27-66.

14 See for the early history of the National Gallery also: Gregory Martin, 'The Founding of the National Gallery in London', 9 parts, *The Connoisseur* (1974), no. 185 (April), p. 280-287 (part 1), no 186 (May), p. 24-31 (part 2), no. 187 (June), p. 124-128 (part 3), no. 188 (July), p. 200- 207 (part 4), no. 189 (August), p. 272-279 (part 5), vol. 190 (September), p. 48-53 (part 6), vol. 191 (October), p. 108-113 (part 7), vol. 192 (November), p. 202-205 (part 8), vol. 192 (December), p. 278-283 (part 9).

15 British monarchs presented gifts to the national museums only by exception, as did King George IV, who in 1823 donated the library of his father, King George III, to the nation. As the King's Library, these books are

the state. This can be explained by the fact that the 17th-century king, Charles I, was beheaded in 1649, from which time England was to remain a republic for 11 years. His superb art collections were auctioned.¹⁶ The English royal family, however, was not entirely void of personal interest in the national museums and galleries. One exception was the occasional interference of Queen Victoria's spouse, Prince Albert, who showed a relish for affairs of art and culture in general. Albert's affinity with art sometimes led to his meddling in the affairs of the National Gallery.¹⁷

In the museum culture of 19th century Europe, the "courtier" or "amateur" museum director of the 18th century was eventually replaced with a new concept of the museum (or gallery) director: a formally educated art historian, who receives a salary for his full-time job and who operates under the direction of a governmental ministry: e.g. Interior, Finance or Culture. In both Great Britain and the Netherlands, the museums' structural organization was in effect subject to a governmental department of the bureaucratic nation-state. In London it was the Treasury (the Ministry of Finance), and in the Netherlands the Ministry of the Interior. Even at a time when most of the museums on the continent were headed by a single individual, who was subject to a ministry, the Select Committee of 1853 saw no reason to change the general management structure of the National Gallery, i.e. a Board of Trustees consisting of respected art collectors and members of Parliament. All were subject to the Treasury. The keeper was, in his turn, subordinate to the Board of Trustees.¹⁸ When comparing the manner in which the trustees of the National Gallery functioned with that of their counterparts in the British Museum, one observes a profound difference. The trustees of the British Museum were much more involved in the running of their museum, with its collections of antique sculptures (for instance the Elgin marbles since 1816), objects of natural history, books, manuscripts and drawings. The trustees of the National Gallery, by contrast, were somewhat complacent in their attitude towards the gallery, as its holdings were limited to paintings. In terms of organizational structure, the British Museum was far superior to the gallery.¹⁹ This was true at least up unto the National Gallery's reorganization of 1855, which marked the installation and transfer of power to a triumvirate of three highly knowledgeable art-historians working within the museum's organizational structure. Although the Board of Trustees remained, from this time forward the museum director superseded the keeper as the most important expert on artistic matters. Henceforth, the keeper came to play a subordinate role. Finally, the positions of keeper and director were to be

still, separately, arranged in the national British Library. King George IV also presented one painting to the National Gallery, and King William IV, six paintings. None of these may be judged to be of any significant artistic importance. More interesting were the early paintings (Italian, Flemish and German), which were presented in 1863 after the death of Prince Albert by Queen Victoria, according to his wish.

16 Arthur MacGregor (ed.), *The Late King's Goods. Collections, Possessions and Patronage of Charles I in the Light of the Commonwealth Sale Inventories* (London / Oxford, 1989) and Jerry Brotton, *The sale of the late King's goods. Charles I and his art collection* (Basingstoke, 2006). Subsequent kings started to collect anew, and their collections stayed private. See also: Ellinoor Bergvelt, 'Nationale onverschilligheid? Schilderkunst als erfgoed in Nederland en Groot-Brittannië in de negentiende eeuw', in: Rob van der Laarse (ed.), *Bezeten van vroeger. Erfgoed, identiteit en musealisering* (Amsterdam 2005), p. 102-123.

17 See note 7.

18 The archive of the National Gallery (1824-1855) is indeed the archive of the Board of Trustees. As this Board met only three times a year in some periods, this is a rather limited archive. There are almost no letters written by the keeper, in contrast to the Dutch museums, where the directors or curators established and built the archives. Only after 1855 had the director of the National Gallery begun building an archive, and from that year, the archive becomes much more interesting, artistically speaking.

19 This is apparent from my research in the archives of both museums. For instance, the trustees of the British Museum met far more regularly than those of the gallery. Moreover, there were several committees (with their own meetings) formed by the trustees of the British Museum. By contrast, committees were absent in the National Gallery.

complemented with a third function. The ‘travelling agent’ was an art historian hired to travel throughout Europe, and to Italy in particular, in search of artworks on the director’s behalf. This position was only filled for a period of three years.²⁰ In 1858, the British Parliament judged the touring of Europe on behalf of Great Britain too extravagant an expenditure to finance and accordingly decided to abolish his function.²¹

Having received its own building premises in 1838 and with Great Britain boasting more art historians, it is true that the National Gallery’s situation was somewhat more favorable than that of the Netherlands. Yet at least for the years leading up to 1855, we see in London the same reluctance to spend government money on museum acquisitions and to appoint qualified experts as curators, i.e. a willingness to finance their salaries.²² In both Great Britain and the Netherlands, governments were to do nothing more than preserve and maintain the national art museums. In the two countries, culture, and especially art, was a matter for private citizens. In Great Britain this was more or less understood. In the Netherlands, it was official government policy. In both countries, enriching and enlarging a museum’s collection was viewed neither as an obligation nor even a prerogative of government. It was considered a luxury. Such pursuits were therefore chiefly a matter to be addressed by private individuals. In the Netherlands, this was due to a general economic stagnation of the time, but it was also an era of so-called “doctrinaire” liberalism that preceded the days of the welfare state emerging in the early 20th century. Most domains of social life were as yet left to private initiative. This period in Dutch history may therefore be characterized by the high level of governmental restraint advocated by the people in power at the middle of the nineteenth century. This period of so-called “national indifference” lasted until about 1870.²³ The government was not prepared to allocate any funds to art, but neither legacies nor donations were left to the national art museums on behalf of private citizens. Was that because the centralized nation-state was not yet fully accepted by the Dutch? Only after 1870 citizens started to leave legacies and donate gifts to the national art museums. Before that time they were much more interested in municipal, or private, museums.

In Great Britain, by contrast, there had always been a tradition of private legacies and donations made to the museum of art. In essence, the reorganization of the National Gallery in 1855 would signal an end to the British government’s parsimonious attitude. An important recommendation of the report of 1853 that was never to be followed through, however, was the call for the construction of a new National Gallery elsewhere in the city. For consecutive governments of the 19th century, such an undertaking was going too far. It was fine to spend money on art, but only in moderation.

Whereas the organizational structure of the National Gallery was improving, certainly after 1855, the situation in the Dutch museums during the middle of the 19th century only

20 The first director after the reorganization was Sir Charles Eastlake (1855-1865), who had previously been keeper of the National Gallery (1844-1847). See: David Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World* (Princeton, 1978). Ralph Wornum became keeper and from 1855-1858 also a ‘travelling agent’ was working for the National Gallery, Otto Mündler. See about him: Carol Togneri Dowd (ed.), *The Travel Diaries of Otto Mündler: 1855-1858* (London, 1985; Walpole Society [publications] 51).

21 See about the dismissal of the ‘travelling agent’: Holmes / Baker (see note 1), p. 34.

22 New buildings were erected both for the National Gallery and the British Museum, but the gallery was built more cheaply than the museum. For example, sculpture that had been designed for Marble Arch, a monument that was meant to commemorate the recent victories over the French, had been added to the National Gallery’s exterior. These sculptures required some adaptation, and for instance, a sculpture of Britannia was converted into a more suitable Minerva. See: Martin 1974 (see note 14), no. 189 (August), p. 272-279 (part 5; about the building), vol. 190 (September), p. 48-53 (part 6 about the decorations), p. 50-51 (about Flaxman’s Britannia / Minerva).

23 This term is used by Amsterdam alderman Emanuel Boekman in his Ph.D.: *Overheid en kunst in Nederland* (Amsterdam 1939), p. 15-35.

deteriorated. Contrary to the important role of art historians in running the National Gallery, the directors of the national museums in the Netherlands knew everything there was to know about Dutch and Flemish paintings, but shared very outdated views on art. They were amateur scholars, art historians and connoisseurs, but not yet theory-driven in the modern sense. It was first necessary that art history be studied and taken seriously in a country, before its government would understand the importance of such considerations as the appointment of an art historian to the position of museum director, expanding the scope of the collection, and the geographical-chronological presentation. A pre-requisite was that museums had freed themselves of all ties with art education, i.e. the art academies. The official development of art history may be considered as occurring either with the establishment of art history as a university discipline, such as in the German-speaking countries in the 19th century, or with the emergence of a greater general interest in art history by “amateurs”, as was the case in Great Britain.²⁴ An interest in art and art museums was virtually non-existent in the Netherlands up until the 1870s, and the number of experts on Dutch art (to say nothing of foreign art) at this time was negligible.²⁵ There were still very few people in the Netherlands with any knowledge of art, apart from the museums’ two directors, some auctioneers in Amsterdam and The Hague, some rather outdated writers on Dutch art and the private collectors. It was this lack of knowledge that may in part explain the absence of any clear vision. With the death of the director of the Rijksmuseum in 1844, who had been relatively well remunerated for his two jobs as director of the Rijksmuseum and the National Print Room, the function of museum director was turned into a position without salary, backed by an unpaid Supervisory Committee. In 1847, a Board of Governors, also without salary, was appointed to succeed this director. The situation would remain unchanged until 1875. The Mauritshuis was not to have a paid director until 1874.²⁶

It is tempting to think that both the preference of the British trustees for all other kind of collections above art, and the reluctance to spend money for art in general in Great Britain and the Netherlands was caused by Protestantism. However, it is more plausible that this had more to do with the not self-evident link in those countries between the nation-state and the care for arts, because private art collections flourished, in both countries. As long as the welding of a national identity was not the aim of the national museums, spending money for the national art museums was in both countries considered to be a luxury.

Specialization

In the early 19th century, there arose a general trend that affected national museums throughout Europe. Firstly, the 18th-century institutions that had previously united the arts and sciences were broken up, hereby giving rise to museums and academies of art, that were independent of science. A subsequent division between the museum and the academy of art would occur in the 19th century. Secondly, a division was made between the later art and the

24 See Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution. Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979). In Great Britain the interest for art and museums was wide-spread, as can be seen in the press, the two Houses of Parliament and the many publications about art and museums, e.g. those written by the self-made art historians, Mrs. Anna Jameson, Sir Charles Eastlake and John Smith.

25 In the year 1844, the famous Dutch author E.J. Potgieter had published an article about the Rijksmuseum, with sharp criticism on the catalogue, the overcrowded rooms and the bad lighting. Instead of a display of works of art (see figs. 4 and 5), he preferred a museum about the history of the Netherlands. No reaction is to be discerned anywhere: neither in the museums, the press, nor parliament. Only in the 1870s were the Dutch museums reorganized. See about Potgieter and his criticism: Bergvelt 1998 (see note 2), p. 154-158.

26 In addition to their, for the most part, unpaid functions as directors of the museums in Amsterdam and The Hague, the management of both museums was likewise responsible for supervising the Museum of Contemporary Art in Haarlem, which existed from 1838 until 1885. For this they were also not paid.

sculptures from Antiquity. Thirdly, the contemporary paintings and sculptures were removed, just like all objects (including paintings) pertaining to the history of the country. This meant that a collection of older paintings (and occasionally sculpture) remained. In terms of specialization, the 19th-century national art museum may therefore be defined as follows: A museum located in its own, independent, building and dedicated solely to paintings and other works of art dating up to the 18th century.

In this aspect, the British National Gallery and the Dutch museums in Amsterdam and The Hague clearly conformed to the general European trend. The National Gallery remained in Angerstein's home until the year 1838, when a new building for the collection was opened on Trafalgar Square. From its inception, the National Gallery has always housed a collection comprising exclusively paintings. But it would not be until 1868 that the museum of art in its 19th-century manifestation was finally to emerge in its purest sense. Prior to this time, the National Gallery housed not only the original 37 paintings, later acquisitions, legacies and gifts received from private citizens, but also served as the location for the studios and offices of the Royal Academy. Contemporary paintings of the 19th century were hung in the National Gallery until 1850. This department of the national collection was then transferred to Marlborough House, afterwards to the South Kensington Museum (nowadays the Victoria & Albert Museum) and, in 1897, later relocated to a museum built specifically for this purpose: the Tate Gallery (today, Tate Britain). Finally, the National Gallery also housed all paintings (mainly portraits) pertaining to the country's national history. Only in 1856 were these paintings removed from the National Gallery's spaces, signalling the foundation of the National Portrait Gallery. In 1896 a new building would be erected for this museum, built immediately adjacent to the National Gallery.

A similar process of museum specialization can be observed in the evolution of the Dutch national museums, though in this case, the origins are very specific to the history of the Dutch Republic. On the one hand there was the museum in The Hague, the collection comprising circa 130 nationalized paintings of the former stadtholder. These paintings were returned in 1815, having been moved to Paris some two decades previous. In 1795, the French occupying troops confiscated the collections of the stadtholder (both the scientific objects, the animals, and circa 200 paintings that had been on show in a special built gallery in the Buitenhof, The Hague) and displayed these works in the national museums for the arts and sciences at various locations in Paris.²⁷ On the other hand there was (and still is) the Amsterdam museum, founded during the revolutionary Batavian Republic (in 1798) and expanded by the French king, Louis Napoleon (1806-1810). In this case, the most important paintings, like Rembrandt's *Night-watch* and his *Syndics*, were loans from the city of Amsterdam – as they still are today. In the fields of antiquity and art, there were two other national museums: the Museum of Antiquities in Leyden (since 1818), and also a Museum for contemporary art in Pavillion Welgelegen near Haarlem (1838-1885). All three-dimensional objects were eventually removed from the Dutch national art museums in 1825, as were all objects pertaining to the country's history. These historical objects were transferred to the Royal Cabinet of Rarities in The Hague (1816-1885). All kinds of rarities could be admired there, e.g. artefacts from China and Japan, but also objects pertaining to Dutch history. Accordingly,

27 C. Willemijn Fock, 'De schilderijengalerij van prins Willem V op het Buitenhof te Den Haag (1)', *Antiek* 11 (1976/1977), 113-137; Beatrijs Brenninkmeijer-de Rooy, 'De schilderijengalerij van prins Willem V op het Buitenhof te Den Haag (2)', *Antiek* 11 (1976 / 1977), 38-176; Florence Pieters, 'Het schatrijke naturaliënkabinet van Stadhouder Willem V onder directoraat van topverzamelaar Arnout Vosmaer', in: Bert C. Sliggers & Marijke H. Besselink (eds.), *Het verdwenen museum. Natuurhistorische verzamelingen 1750-1850* (Blaricum / Haarlem, 2002), p. 20-44.

with the exception of this Cabinet of Rarities, the Dutch museums in the middle of the 19th century were specialized in orientation.

The realization of a specialized museum was essentially dependent upon a modern, 19th-century bureaucracy – as opposed to close ties to court life and the direct involvement of monarchs of the 18th-century – that had arisen as part of the expansion of a nation-state.²⁸ In the 19th century, the monarchical ties that had been so important for the emergence of a national museum in the 18th century were severed throughout most of Europe. In Great Britain and the Netherlands, however, there was nothing to impede the development of specialized museums within a modern 19th-century bureaucracy.

That around 1850 the specialization in both British and Dutch museums was well under way had not such much to do with Protestantism, but with the fact that in both countries relatively new collections had to be started in the beginning of the 19th century. It was not the royal collection that had to be rearranged, as in other European countries. In the Netherlands that was caused by political, and not religious, circumstances at the time. In Britain however the consequences were still felt of the 17th-century rebellion against King Charles I, which was at least partly caused by religious motives.

Collecting

Ideally, the collection of a 19th-century art museum consisted of an international collection of European art dating from the 14th through the 18th century. The director or curator would have comprised a “shopping list” – that is, a list of painters whose works should be represented in the museum’s collection – as was the case with the National Gallery. There was also an annual budget to expand and enlarge the collection. In Great Britain, the most important difference with the period before 1855 was the annual budget of £10.000, which enabled a steady stream of acquisitions. Until the reorganization in 1855, the emphasis in the London collection had been on European paintings of the 16th until the 18th century. Represented on the walls of Angerstein’s house are, from the 16th century, a Sebastiano del Piombo, a Correggio, and a Titian, from the 17th century an Albert Cuyp, and a painting by Claude Lorrain and from the 18th century a Sir Joshua Reynolds. For this selection of artists, which had in the meantime become outdated, the term “Orléans canon” has been coined.²⁹ A shift in emphasis to the collecting of early Italian Renaissance paintings, and occasionally early Flemish art, was not to occur until after the 1855 reorganization.

An interest in earlier periods of art history did not arise in the Dutch national museums until the end of the 19th century. On the contrary, during the reign of King William I, most of the money that was spent on the enlargement of the collection of the Mauritshuis between 1816 and 1830 was expended on foreign paintings, made by artists like the Spaniard Murillo and the Italian Guido Reni, popular artists from the same “Orléans canon” as in London.³⁰ Such an observation is contrary to general opinion, as it is commonly assumed that the Dutch in the 19th century were only interested in the Dutch Golden Age. As for the National Print-room of the Rijksmuseum, which since 1816 was connected to the museum, it was not only

28 With regards to the unification of the Netherlands in the 19th and 20th century, see: Hans Knippenberg & Ben de Pater, *De eenwording van Nederland. Schaalvergroting en integratie sinds 1800* (Nijmegen, 19923; 19881); and about an earlier period in Great Britain: Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the nation 1707-1837* (London, 1996; 19921).

29 After the 18th-century French Duke and collector, Louis-Philippe-Joseph, Duke d’Orléans, whose collection had been on show in London in 1798 and 1799, and whose taste in this way had become very influential. See: Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in art. Some aspects of taste, fashion and collecting in England and France* (London 19802; 19761), p. 25-27.

30 For the acquisitions for the Mauritshuis during the reign of William I, see: Bergvelt 1992 (see note 11) and Bergvelt 1998 (see note 2), p. 92-96.

prints by Rembrandt, Rubens, and other Dutch and Flemish masters that were purchased, but also many reproduction prints.³¹ These prints were an inexpensive substitute for the real thing: Italian paintings (for instance by Leonardo or Raphael), which the Amsterdam director would have preferred to supervise, just like his Hague colleague. The function of reproduction prints was to provide examples for artists, who however at the time primarily stayed being influenced by the landscape, interior and still life painters of the Dutch 17th century. The museum directors however, and the people in power, all preferred to see paintings by Raphael in the museum rooms above those by Jan van Eyck.

In contrast to the museum in The Hague, acquisitions for the Rijksmuseum were almost solely restricted to Dutch and Flemish paintings. However, nearly all expenditures for the Dutch national museums were abandoned after the Belgian Revolt in 1830. Two drawings by the print curator Gerrit Lamberts exist, which show the way the two front rooms on the third floor of the Rijksmuseum in the Trippenhuis looked like from the middle of the 1820s until the 1850s (figs. 4-5). On these drawings some of the older holdings of the national museum are visible, but also several recent, or at least 19th-century, acquisitions, like Rubens's *Cimon and Pero* (acquired in 1825; on the left of the doorway on fig. 4) and an *Adoration* and a *Descent from the Cross* by the Flemish artist Caspar de Crayer (acquired in 1818; left and right of the doorway on fig. 5). These acquisitions do not suggest that Protestant, or religious concerns in general, had played any part in the museum's acquisition policy. Archival material, e.g. the letters with which directors of both museums requested funds for additional purchases, reveals no mention of religion. Their acquisition policy is based on artistic and economic points of view. Both museums were expected to provide an overview of Dutch and Flemish art, preferably of each artist a good example of his style, for which "shopping lists" had been made in both museums. Foreign art was also to be acquired for the collection of the Mauritshuis and the National Print Room. This overview was meant to offer examples to contemporary artists, designed to improve the artistic level of painting production in the Netherlands – a potential impulse for the Dutch economy.

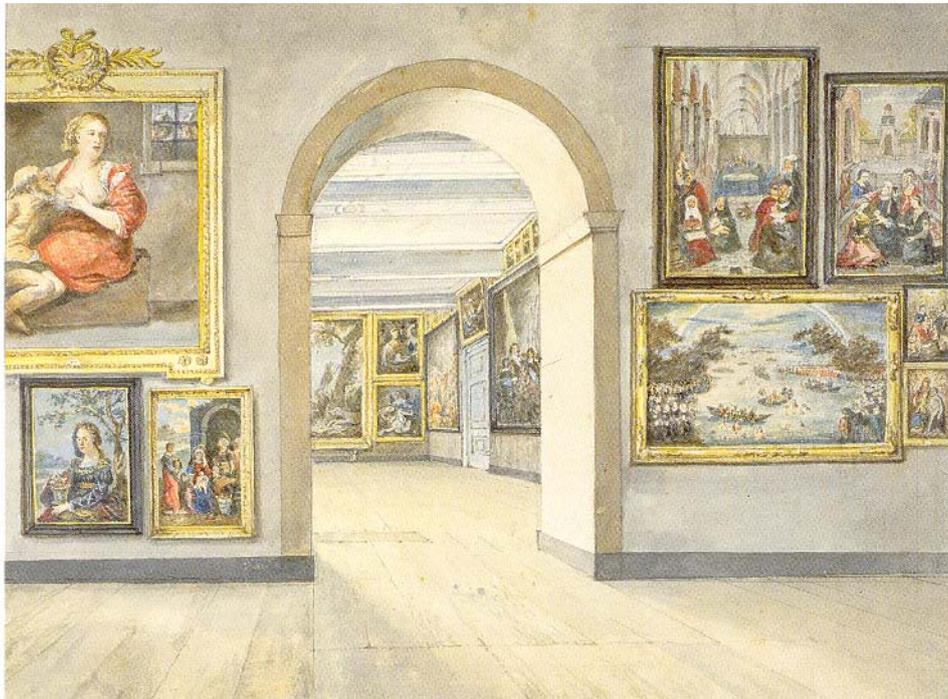
It was only after 1853, when the Roman-Catholic Episcopal hierarchy was reintroduced into the country, that people started thinking about cultural matters in religious terms. After 1875, when a Roman-Catholic lawyer, Victor de Stuers, became the most important civil servant supervising the Dutch national museums, both he and his critics were very conscious, whether paintings by Protestant or Roman-Catholic artists were acquired, or a Protestant or Roman-Catholic architect was given the commission to build the new Rijksmuseum: the Roman-Catholic architect P.J.H. Cuypers was appointed.

In Britain things were different, as most of the acquisitions had a decided Roman-Catholic content, certainly the earlier Italian paintings. During the 1853 Enquiry the early Italian Madonna's were preferred above the "indecent" Old-Testament scenes in the National Gallery, like Lot and his Daughters and Susannah and the Elders (both by the 17th-century Italian painter, Guido Reni). Although Evangelical Christians were trying to make the National Gallery as edifying as possible, this only happened outside the museum, as the Christian content of the paintings was never mentioned in the administration of the National Gallery.³²

31 The "backwardness" of the Rijksmuseum management is also apparent from the fact that only prints had been collected for the National Print-room. The collecting of drawings only started in 1877, when this department received its own director and its own acquisition policy. See: Bergvelt 1998 (see note 2), p. 18 and p. 216-217 and Everhard Korthals Altes, 'Johan Philip van der Kellen (1831-1906), de eerste directeur van het Rijksprentenkabinet', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 45 (1997), p. 206-263.

32 Bergvelt 2005 (see note 2), p. 334. See also the section about 'Presentation'.

Figure 4. Gerrit Lamberts (1776-1850), *Interior of the Rijksmuseum in the Trippenhuys, Amsterdam*, circa 1838, watercolour on paper, 25,5 x 32 cm, Municipal Archive, Amsterdam.



These are the front rooms on the third floor of the building, in which the history paintings were presented, seen from the small to the large room. In the small room, older Dutch paintings could be seen, such as *The Holy Kinship* by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, on the right of the doorway and a *Mary Magdalen* by Jan van Scorel (on the left), but also Italian paintings (Garofalo's *Adoration*, on the left) and Flemish ones (Rubens' *Cimon and Pero*, also on the left). On the right of the doorway, a scene of Dutch history is visible, the *Allegory* of the struggle between the Catholics and the Protestants at the beginning of the 17th century, painted by Adriaan van der Venne.

Presentation

As with the collections of the national museums of art, the decorative presentation (or “gentlemanly hang”) of the 18th century, in which the paintings of all countries and periods were shown together, was also replaced by a new concept in the 19th century. Ideally, the collection had come to be geographically arranged by schools of painters – or at least a division was introduced between the schools of the South (Italy, Spain and France) and the North (Germany and the Netherlands). Moreover, the paintings of the separate schools were presented chronologically.³³ In the 19th-century museum of art, no temporary exhibitions were organized; what was presented belonged to the holdings of the museum itself. Selections of paintings to be displayed were only made in very large collections. Usually, these museums had no depots, and if so, then only of a very limited size.

33 The term “gentlemanly hang” is used, for instance for the way the paintings and sculptures in the Tribuna of the Uffizi in Florence are arranged in the 1770s. See: http://employees.oneonta.edu/farberas/arth/arth200/museum/Zoffany_Tribuna.html (January 7, 2005). Of course, the first steps on the road to the geographical-chronological presentation had been set in the 1780s, both in the Belvedere, Vienna (Christian von Mechel) and the Uffizi, Florence (Luigi Lanzi), see: Debora J. Meijers, ‘Naar een systematische presentatie’, in: Ellinoor Bergvelt, Debora J. Meijers and Mieke Rijnders (eds.), *Kabinetten, galerijen en musea. Het verzamelen en presenteren van naturalia en kunst van 1500 tot heden* (Heerlen / Zwolle, 2005), p. 263-288. However, only in the 19th century this kind of presentation became the most common one.

From the archival material one may conclude that no division in schools had been made in the presentation in the Rijksmuseum. It was an arrangement by genre. There were rooms, in which the portraits were hung together, as were the seascapes, the Dutch landscapes, the Italianate landscapes, the still lifes and the genre or interior paintings. In the two drawings of the museum rooms, which have survived, we see the history paintings depicted. In the first one (fig. 4) hang scenes of Roman history (Rubens' *Cimon and Pero*), religious scenes, like the *Holy Kinship* by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, an *Adoration* by the Italian painter Garofalo and a *Mary Magdalen* by Jan van Scorel and on the right of the doorway a scene of Dutch history, an *Allegory* on the struggle between the Catholics and the Protestants in the beginning of the 17th century by Adriaan van der Venne. Though there also was a room filled with portraits, nowhere was there a space in the Rijksmuseum, nor in any other Dutch museum at the time, where a systematic overview of Dutch history (or "master narrative") was given. In the middle of the 19th century, the Rijksmuseum was an art museum, as was the Mauritshuis. In the second drawing of the Rijksmuseum (fig. 5), art also dominates by the paintings by Gerard de Lairese with scenes of the *Life of Odysseus*, and two religious scenes by the Flemish artist Caspar de Crayer (an *Adoration* and a *Descent from the cross*), and by Cornelis van Haarlem's *Fall of Man*, which is partly visible in the small room. No drawings have survived of the other rooms.

Figure 5. Gerrit Lamberts (1776-1850), *Interior of the Rijksmuseum in the Trippenhuys*, circa 1838, watercolour on paper, 23,5 x 41 cm, Municipal Archive, Amsterdam.



These are the front rooms on the third floor of the building, in which the history paintings were presented, seen from the large to the small room. In the large room, several paintings by Gerard de Lairese with scenes of the *Life of Odysseus* could be seen, and an *Adoration* and a *Descent from the Cross* by the Flemish artist Caspar de Crayer (left and right of the doorway), and in the small room Cornelis van Haarlem's *Fall of Man* is partly visible.

The painting by Adriaan van de Venne could have been presented as a sign of the Dutch, Protestant identity, but it was counterbalanced by the two very Roman-Catholic paintings by Caspar de Crayer on the back of the same wall. Although the paintings were arranged by genre, the content of the works was not the focus of this presentation. They were purchased *and* presented as examples of the style of the painters. If there were a "master narrative", it would be this story, about the styles of the Dutch and Flemish painters.

This arrangement of paintings by genres was very practical and useful for the artists, who were the main target group of the Dutch art museums at that time. However, just before the

British Enquiry in 1853, a new presentation had been made in Amsterdam that was certainly a step back in museological terms. Here an aesthetic arrangement had been made, like that of the Mauritshuis and the one in the National Gallery.³⁴

Since the 1830s, nothing much had changed in the presentation in London, even after the gallery had moved into the new building in 1838. Not until much later, after the purchase of Sir Robert Peel's important collection of Dutch and Flemish paintings in 1871, it was possible to introduce a geographical-chronological arrangement. Only at that time a separate room could be filled with paintings of the Northern schools. However, in the year of the Select Committee's enquiry, pictures in London were still arranged in the manner previously found at Angerstein's House, i.e. the rather outdated presentation of 16th, 17th and 18th-century paintings of all countries combined together in one space.

In 1846 certain pictures that were hanging in the National Gallery were criticized by "Clergymen of the Church of England" in a letter to the Trustees, because "the Eternal Father" was depicted, for instance on a painting by the Spaniard Murillo. The Trustees however refused to discuss the matter with these clergymen, as this and other paintings were "purchased by the Nation from their merit as works of Art", and moreover: the Treasury was responsible in these matters, "subject to the authority of Parliament".³⁵ Anyhow, it is clear that not the content, but the style of the paintings were in the centre of attention of the museum people. Just as was the case in the previous section (Collecting), one can say that also the presentation in the British and Dutch museums was a relatively autonomous territory, where art was the most important topic and not politics or religion.

Public

For the typical 19th-century museum, the ideal public was the general public. Artists and other connoisseurs, scholars and scientists, who made up the main public in the 18th century, gradually disappeared, or rather, became part of the new mass audience. This general public was provided access to the museum at least every weekday, and ideally, was welcomed free-of-charge. And indeed, the general public did visit the free museums. All over Europe we hear complaints about shabby people in the museum rooms of Berlin, Paris, London, and Amsterdam.³⁶ In the Rijksmuseum each year in September, when everybody was free during the yearly fair, the police had to be called in to help the regular attendants with the many visitors, who all wanted to see the museum at the same time.

The London National Gallery was open two days in the week for artists, who came to make copies, and four days for the general public. In Amsterdam and The Hague it was the other way around: on four days of the week the artists had access, and only on two days, was the general public allowed to enter. Hence, the Dutch museums were rather traditional when compared to, for instance, the Berlin museums and those in Naples and Florence, which were open on all days of the week, but not as "backward" as the Louvre in Paris, where only on one day in the week the general public could visit the art treasures (fig. 6).³⁷ When compared to other European museums at the time, one may conclude that the Dutch museums were more "traditional" and the London National Gallery more "modern".

34 Bergvelt 1998 (see note 2), p. 168.

35 *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities*, or the "Pedroso Murillo", purchased in 1837, is no. NG13. See the Minutes of the Trustees, Archive National Gallery, London (NG1/1/pp. 309-312, 24.8.1846), p. 311-312.

36 Bergvelt 2005 (see note 2), p. 332.

37 See Answers to Question no. 26 ("On how many days of the week, and during how many hours of each day, are the galleries open to the public?"), in: Appendix, No. VII. 'Answers to Queries on the Galleries and Museums of Fine Arts in different Counties', in: *Report 1853* (see note 4), p. 756.

Figure 6.

National art museums
1853: number of days open for the general public

Paris (Louvre)	Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) The Hague (Mauritshuis)	London (National Gallery)	Berlin (the national museums) Florence (Uffizi) Naples (R. Museo Borbonico)
1 day	2 days	4 days	All days of the week

The formation of a nation-state in the 19th century includes the notion of providing the public-at-large with a general education. The idea that a government has the responsibility of educating its own people is a necessary condition to initiating a policy of art education for the general public. For this to occur, the idea that art is common property, something to be shared by everyone, must prevail. The results of the Enquiry of 1853 do not show a distinction between Roman-Catholic or Protestant countries in their respective policies regarding the publics of museums. However, a study of the policies pertaining to general education and art education in the different countries of Europe from the viewpoint of their religions may very well be of interest.

Where religious motives may have indeed been influential resides in the fact that both in Great Britain and in the Netherlands, the public's attitude toward and treatment of the nation's art collections differed greatly in its relation with other kinds of cultural institutions. In the Netherlands, private associations were established to further the study of history, but not the study of art. As mentioned above, neither the general press nor members of parliament were interested in art. This would remain so for quite some time. Was art itself considered to be a Roman-Catholic issue? Perhaps in general, but not when Dutch 17th-century art was concerned, at least in the Protestant version of Thoré-Bürger's.³⁸ Art history would not be introduced as a discipline at the Dutch universities until the 20th century.³⁹ As mentioned

38 See for Thoré-Bürger's ideas about Dutch art: Frances Suzman Jowell, 'From Thoré to Bürger: the image of Dutch art before and after the Musées de la Hollande', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 49 (2001), p. 44-60; Ellinoor Bergvelt, 'De canon van de Gouden Eeuw. De collectie Van der Hoop en de opvattingen van Thoré-Bürger', in: Ellinoor Bergvelt, Jan Piet Filedt Kok and Norbert Middelkoop (eds.), *De Hollandse meesters van een Amsterdamse bankier. De verzameling van Adriaan van der Hoop (1778-1854)* (Zwolle / Amsterdam, 2004), p. 25-47, 196-204, 208-214.

39 The professional art historians, who headed the Dutch museums at the end of the 19th century, were still educated on the job (such as Abraham Bredius and Frederik Obreen). Only Cornelis Hofstede de Groot had studied in Germany (Leipzig).

above, the situation was quite the opposite in Great Britain. Heated discussions on art and the museums occurred both in the coverage of the press and both houses of parliament and would, in part, ultimately lead to the initiation of the 1853 enquiry. While it must be added that the people who conducted these discussions were often experts in the field, their active participation in overseeing the National Gallery's collection was nonetheless minimal. The important art collectors and members of parliament who made up the museum's board of trustees were reluctant to do anything more than oversee the museum's existing collection. The reason for this still has to be explained.

A similar disparity regarding the interest in the art museum versus other fields of cultural interest can be discerned in the Netherlands. The private association, Artis, founded in 1838, which still exists as the Amsterdam Zoo (albeit in a different form), applied itself to the organizing of musical performances and the furthering of science through the formation of collections based on animals (living or dead) and ethnographical objects. Compared to the Dutch national art museums, this association was highly prosperous. With its private money, Artis could afford to build new museums. Many gifts and legacies poured in, this, in glaring contrast with the national art museums.⁴⁰ This point is still not clear; research should be done into the question why, both in the Netherlands and in Great Britain, it took some time before art collections and art museums received the same treatment from the public as museums with other collections. Protestantism could be one of the explanations.⁴¹

At what point did the British and Dutch museums become modern?

The museums in Great Britain and the Netherlands may have been slow to develop in various areas. The question then arises: At what point did they ultimately meet all these conditions in order to be called modern, 19th-century museums? The National Gallery had already met most of these conditions in 1855, the year of its reorganization. However, the Royal Academy was not to depart until 1868. Only then was there ample space available to permit a geographic-chronological presentation of the museum's paintings. This did not actually occur until 1871, with the acquisition of Sir Robert Peel's collection cited above. With this important step, the National Gallery had come to fulfill the ideal of the 19th-century museum as defined above in every aspect.

The Dutch national museums of art would not meet such criteria until many years later. Through the initiatives of the French king, Louis Napoleon, this process of modernization had received an early impulse: a knowledgeable director was appointed and received a reasonable salary. Such efforts were able to continue under William I, until abruptly ended by the Belgian Revolt of 1830. Only circa 1870 were such efforts renewed, at which time the positions of directors and curators at both museums were slowly starting to be filled by "real" art historians. The Mauritshuis and Rijksmuseum were actually museums specialized in sixteenth to nineteenth-century art from the moment they were founded. Contemporary nineteenth-century painting, however, had not as yet been separated from the rest. This occurred in 1838, when these works were removed from both museums in Amsterdam and The Hague and collectively hung in the Pavillion Welgelegen in Haarlem. All three-dimensional objects were removed from both museums of art somewhat earlier, in 1825.

The Dutch museums' bureaucratic structures were well organized from the start, but new regulations were not devised until after 1875. From that time forward, professional museum

40 See about Artis: D.Chr. Mehos, *Science and Culture for Members only. The Amsterdam Zoo Artis in the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam, 2006).

41 The interest in Dutch art museums only emerged in the 1870s, when the new, "Protestant" canon of Dutch art, which was formulated by Thoré-Bürger in the 1850s and 1860s, had begun to gain adherents in the Netherlands. This may be seen as a further substantiation of this point. See also note 38.

directors who were expected to provide new forms of practical information, such as an annual financial report. With the disbandment of the Royal Cabinet of Rarities, the Royal Cabinet of Paintings was able to take complete possession of the Mauritshuis premises. In terms of public, the shift from one of artists to the general public would occur much later in the Netherlands than in Great Britain. Although in Amsterdam and The Hague there had been a peak in visitors' numbers in September (because of the yearly fair), until the 1860s the general public could visit the museums on two days only. Even when, at that time, the museums had been made fully accessible to the general public (open every weekday), there would not be a steady stream of the Dutch public until the opening of P.J.H. Cuypers' design for the new Rijksmuseum building in 1885. The modernization of the Rijksmuseum's presentation would require even more time. There would not be a truly chronological presentation in the museum until the 1920's.⁴² Since the installation of the new building in 1885, spaces devoted to individual donors and benefactors had stood in the way of introducing any other approach. As the international orientation initiated at the beginning of the nineteenth century had begun to make way for an acquisition policy oriented towards an exclusively Netherlandish works of art, introducing a chronological order was the only "modern" aspect of the museum's presentation. The introduction of a presentation based on national schools of artists was, in part, impeded by the lack of funds necessary to acquire foreign art. In this area, the Mauritshuis met the definition of the 19th-century museum in a manner the Rijksmuseum never did. Foreign paintings were purchased for the Mauritshuis up until 1830. This was (almost) never the case for the Amsterdam Museum. Contrary to common thought, this was not the product of any cultural nationalism. Instead, the cause for this reticence was economic (the financial circumstances in the Netherlands were extremely poor until circa 1870), political, i.e. the unwillingness of consecutive liberal governments and King William II to spend anything on the national art museums and also the lack of ideology in museum matters: the target group of the museum were the artists and not the general public. It was only after 1875 that Victor de Stuers and ministers used ideological terms: one of the aims of the national museums was the welding of a national identity. At that time the general public had become the main target group, instead of the artists.

In the first half of the 19th century, there were two moments in which the Netherlands was presented with an opportunity to acquire important international works of art. In the early 19th century, Louis Napoleon is known to have considered the purchase of two important international collections.⁴³ Due to what he viewed as the prohibitive cost, the king would fail to act upon these undertakings. A similar inaction would befall the Dutch parliament, which in 1850 clearly felt no urgency in acquiring even a single work from the formidable art collection of King William II that was sold at auction in that year. It has since been mistakenly argued that the Dutch government's "disinterest" was in fact due to the collection's decidedly "Catholic" character.⁴⁴ While the role of Protestantism is to be ruled out in this specific case, it is an

42 Regarding the changes in presentation during the 1920s, see: Ger Luijten, "'De veelheid en de eelheid': een Rijksmuseum Schmidt-Degener", in: *Het Rijksmuseum. Opstellen over de geschiedenis van een nationale instelling* (Weesp, 1985; = *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 35 (1984)), p. 351-429.

43 Regarding Louis Napoleon's failed purchases of the collections of Lucien Bonaparte and the Galleria Giustiniani, see: Ellinoor Bergvelt, "Tussen geschiedenis en kunst. Nederlandse nationale kunstmusea in de negentiende eeuw", in: E. Bergvelt / D.J. Meijers / M. Rijnders (eds.), *Kabinetten, galerijen en musea. Het verzamelen en presenteren van naturalia en kunst van 1500 tot heden* (Heerlen / Zwolle, 2005) [ch. 13], p. 332.

44 See the authors mentioned in: Hinterding / Horsch 1989 (see note 13), 26-28. This religious interpretation of the art of the past only occurred in the Netherlands after 1853, when the Roman-Catholic Episcopal hierarchy was reintroduced into the country. See also: Bergvelt 2004 (see note 13), p. 44-46.

important point to be further considered when examining the relative backwardness that characterized the museums in Great Britain and the Netherlands.⁴⁵

As the arguments in this paper clearly suggest, the necessary conditions for the development of a modern, 19th-century museum are varied, ranging from attitudes towards art history and education in general to the most mundane of bureaucratic and political circumstances. However, the slow process of modernization that affected the art museums in London, Amsterdam and The Hague cannot be explained by Protestantism alone.

45 A hypothesis in which Protestantism figures as a central influence may also be rejected by the fact that the situation in Prussia, a predominately Protestant country, clearly demonstrates that the art museums in Berlin were relatively progressive (except for their relation with the King). Whether Protestantism should be considered an explanation for the backwardness of the British and Dutch museums is a point that should be further investigated.