



Rederijersdromen en schildersdaden. De 'Italiaanse Levens' in het 'Schilderboeck' (1604) van Karel van Mander
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Summary

This dissertation discusses the *Italian Lives* in Karel van Mander's *Schilder-boeck* (1604). It addresses the way the text was composed, the connection to its major sources and its place in the book as a whole, thus arriving at a new analysis of the author's intentions with the text as part of what has become one of art history's foremost literary sources. The *Schilder-boeck* consists of six parts constructed as an intentional literary whole, for a public of young painters, art lovers and poets. Parts of the book have been studied intensively, however its layered structure leads to a disparate, fragmented textcritical and art historical valuation of the book, despite the original intentions of its author. Until now research has mainly focussed on two of the six parts. The first, the *Grondt*, was studied from the early twentieth century onwards as a theoretical treatise on painting. The fourth part, the *Netherlandish Lives*, emerged as no less than the foundation for the monographical treatment of Netherlandish painting. Insights formed on the basis of this research, shaped our understanding of the book as a whole.

Up till now, modern literature lacked a critical valuation of the *Italians Lives*, which preceded those better known *Netherlandish Lives*. The biographies of Italian artists (mostly painters) from thirteenth century Cimabue onwards, were mostly based on the second edition of Giorgio Vasari's *Vite*. Towards the end of the text, Van Mander had inserted the lives of a few artists mostly active after 1568, which were thus based on other sources. The suggested limited "originality" of the text, proved problematic for its popularity as a source for art history. On a limited scale quantifying research was done concerning Van Mander's reworking of the *Vite*, yet it never came to integrated study of all of the *Italian Lives* in connection to the other parts of the *Schilder-boeck*. As a whole the *Italian Lives* were regarded as monographically uninteresting for their lack of original and useful source material for describing artistic oeuvres. Art theoretically they were assumed neglectable, while according to common practice theoretical notions did not invade artistic biographies as a literary genre. This meant Van Mander's intentions regarding the place and meaning of this text in the *Schilder-boeck* were disregarded, as were the literary conventions of the period.

For this dissertation the *Italian Lives* as a whole were studied in conjunction to sixteenth century literary conventions as an independent literary invention of Karel van Mander. From the much broader *Vite* he composed his own text, which carried traces of its origin, yet reflected his own insights and ideas throughout the process of adding and selecting material. Especially because the source material, the *Vite*, was largely known, the *Italian Lives* lend

themselves to research into the extent in which the genre of artist's biographies consciously record art theoretical notions. In order to reconstruct Van Manders intentions with the text, his compositional technique is reconstructed on the basis of a word by word comparison between the *Italian Lives* and the *Vite*, while his choice phrasing and artistic terminology is further defined. His sources for passages not based on the *Vite* are researched, as is the way he imbedded the text in the book as a whole, an aspect further evaluated within the context of the paratext. Thus a new picture emerges of the auctorial intentions regarding the *Italian Lives* and the *Schilder-boeck*. The deliberate close bond between the more theoretical *Grondt* and the *Italian Lives* is for the first time established. The composition of the *Italian Lives* showed to follow a pattern unacknowledged earlier, despite Van Manders own description in his introductions. By incorporating the auctorial intentions, a more balanced analysis of the original meaning of the *Italian Lives* in the *Schilder-boeck* was established, while more insight was gained into the functioning of his social network and ideas as a rhetorician for composing the text.

The preface describes these starting points and aims of this research. Noted is how bookhistorical, literary and literary-theoretical treatment of historical texts offer meaningful perspectives and methods for art historical research. My curiosity into the construction of the text in the broader context of the book, proved consistent with the notions of bookhistorians about the relevance of the complexity of the book as a whole. In line with literary-theoretical research into the selective appropriation of texts as a strategy for gaining authority, this approach revealed Karel van Mander as a literary authority displaying personal insights for his own audience in shape of a interconnected complexity of texts. Research regarding the role of marginalia in the active "information management" of the text, was studied to analyze the consistent use of printed marginalia throughout the text. Such research established the backdrop for the way into which printed marginalia led the reader through the text, how they functioned as an index to specific passages, how they indicated themes and specific figures or sometimes offered further information or an explanation of terminology. Genette offered the model by which could be established how parts of the paratext were used by author and publisher and how Van Mander used his position as author and rhetorician for enhancing the development and status of the art of painting. Genette also offered insight into the analysis of the narrative structure of those lives which were not or only in part dependent on the *Vite*. Narrowing down the narrative instance and identifying narrative voice, time and perspective, proved helpful in uncovering the transitions of the use of source material for the text. The transformational relation of the *Italian Lives* in connection to the *Vite*, became apparent in the

adjustment, reform and re-use of terminology by Karel van Mander. The introduction of new terminology was needed in cases where no adequate terms for these concepts were available. Research into word frequency mainly applied for the last chapter, was also introduced in the preface.

On the whole, the research presented in this dissertation shows how generally established ideas about the significance of disparate parts of the *Schilder-boeck* for the development of seventeenth century artistic theory in the Netherlands should be reconsidered. Van Manders selection of Italian artists and their significance for illustrating the application of the so-called *parts of art*, may very well have played a part in the selection of useful models for painters well into the seventeenth century. The *Paradigmata graphices variorum artificum* of Jan de Bisschop points in that direction, for precisely the work of those artists selected by Van Mander, are presented. And the *Italian Lives* seem to also have had their influence elsewhere outside the Netherlands, for instance in texts by Henry Peacham and Joachim von Sandrart. This “afterlife” has not been studied here, yet this study offers a starting point for further research into that area. Whether Van Manders ideas as expressed in the *Italian Lives* were of direct influence on the artistic practice of the day, has not been established. My research interests lay with outlining the ideals of that practice. Karel van Manders leading position in the artistic circles of Haarlem and Amsterdam and the reprint of the *Schilder-boeck* soon after its initial publication, suggests he was read. To what extent he influenced artistic practices might be hard to establish, yet very possibly he chose to discuss issues that reflected discussions in the workshops among artists of the day.